

QUESTION 71

Vices and Sins in Themselves

Next we have to consider vices and sins (*vitia et peccata*). On this topic there are six things to consider: first, vices and sins in themselves (question 71); second, the distinctions among them (question 72); third, a comparison of sins and vices to one another (question 73); fourth, the subject of sin (question 74); fifth, the causes of sin (questions 75-84); and, sixth, the effects of sin (questions 85-89).

On the first topic there are six questions: (1) Is vice contrary to virtue? (2) Is vice contrary to nature? (3) Which is worse, a vice or a vicious act? (4) Can a vicious act exist together with virtue? (5) Does every sin involve an act? (6) What about Augustine's definition of sin, posited in *Contra Faustum* 22, viz., that a sin is "a word or deed or desire contrary to the eternal law"?

Article 1

Is vice contrary to virtue?

It seems that vice (*vitium*) is not contrary to virtue (*non contrarietur virtuti*):

Objection 1: As *Metaphysics* 10 proves, a single thing has a single contrary. But sin and badness (*peccatum et malitia*) are contrary to virtue. Therefore, vice is not contrary to virtue, since something is called a 'vice' or 'blemish' (*vitium*) even if it is an unsuitable disposition on the part of bodily members or on the part of anything whatsoever.

Objection 2: 'Virtue' (*virtus*) designates a certain sort perfection that belongs to a power (*potentia*). But 'vice' does not designate anything that has to do with a power. Therefore, vice is not contrary to virtue.

Objection 3: In *De Tusculanis Quaestionibus* 4 Tully says, "Virtue is a certain sort of health of the soul." But it is a sickness or a disease (*aegritudo vel morbus*), rather than a vice or a blemish, that is opposed to health. Therefore, vice is not contrary to virtue.

But contrary to this: In *De Perfectione Iustitiae* Augustine says, "A vice is a quality because of which the mind is bad." But as is clear from what was said above (q. 55, aa. 3-4), a virtue is a quality that makes the one who has it good. Therefore, a vice is contrary to virtue.

I respond: There are two things we can think about with regard to a virtue, viz., (a) *the very essence of the virtue (ipsam essentiam virtutis)* and (b) *what the virtue is ordered toward (id ad quod est virtus)*.

As regards *the essence of a virtue*, there is (a) something that can be considered *directly* and (b) something that can be thought of *as a consequence*.

Thus, 'virtue' *directly* implies a certain disposition of something that behaves appropriately, given the mode of its nature (*dispositionem quandam alicuius convenienter se habentis secundum modum suae naturae*). Hence, in *Physics* 2 the Philosopher says, "A virtue is a disposition of what is complete toward what is best (*dispositio perfecti ad optimum*), where by 'complete' I mean 'disposed in accord with its nature'." And the *consequence* that follows is that a virtue is a certain sort of goodness. For each thing's goodness consists in its behaving appropriately, given the mode of its nature.

On the other hand, as is clear from what was said above (q. 56, a. 3), *what a virtue is ordered toward* is a good act.

Accordingly, there are three things opposed to virtue (*virtus*):

(a) One of them is a *mistake* or *sin (peccatum)*, which is opposed to virtue in the sense of being opposed to what a virtue is ordered toward. For 'mistake' or 'sin' (*peccatum*) properly names a disordered act (*actus inordinatus*), just as an act of virtue is an act that is rightly ordered and fitting (*actus ordinatus et debitus*).

(b) On the other hand, insofar as it follows upon the notion of a virtue that a virtue is a certain sort

of goodness, it is *badness* (*malitia*) that is opposed to virtue.

(c) But as regards what belongs directly to the notion of a virtue, it is *vice* (*vitium*) that is opposed to virtue. For the vice of any given thing seems to be that it is not disposed in a way that is appropriate to its nature. Hence, in *De Libero Arbitrio* 3 Augustine says, “Look for what is lacking to the perfection of the nature, and call it vice.”

Reply to objection 1: The three things in question are not contrary to virtue in the same respect. Instead, a mistake or sin (*peccatum*) is contrary to virtue insofar as a virtue is productive of what is good (*est operativa boni*); badness (*malitia*) is contrary to virtue insofar as a virtue is a certain sort of goodness; and vice (*vitium*) is contrary to virtue insofar as a virtue is a virtue.

Reply to objection 2: ‘Virtue’ not only implies the perfection of a power that is a principle of acting, but also implies the right sort of disposition on the part of the one whose virtue it is—and this because each thing operates to the extent that it is actualized (*secundum quod actu est*). Therefore, in order for something to be productive of what is good, it is required that it should be well-disposed within itself. And this is the sense in which vice is opposed to virtue.

Reply to objection 3: As Tully says in *De Tusculanis Quaestionibus* 4, “Sickness and disease are parts of viciousness (*partes sunt vitiositatis*). For among bodies what is called a ‘sickness’ (*morbus*) is a corruption of the whole body, e.g., a fever or something of that sort, whereas what is called a ‘disease’ (*aegrotatio*) is a sickness accompanied by feebleness, and there is a ‘blemish’ (*vitium*) when the parts of the body do not fit well with one another.” And even though in the body there is sometimes a sickness without a disease, e.g., when someone is not well disposed interiorly, but is not exteriorly kept from his usual actions, still, “in the soul,” as Tully says, “these two things cannot be separated except in thought.” For it is necessary that whenever someone is not well disposed interiorly and has disordered affections, this renders him too weak to perform the actions he ought to perform, since “every tree is known by its fruit”—i.e., a man is known by his works, as Matthew 12:33 says.

However, as Tully says in the same place, “The mind’s vice is a habit or affection of the mind that is capricious and in conflict with itself throughout a whole lifetime.” And this sort of thing is also found in the absence of sickness or disease—as, for instance, when one sins from weakness or from passion. Hence, ‘vice’ extends to more things than ‘disease’ or ‘sickness’ does, just as ‘virtue’ extends to more things than ‘health’ does. Indeed, health is even posited as a certain sort of virtue in *Physics* 7. And so ‘vice’ or ‘blemish’ is more appropriately opposed to ‘virtue’ than is either ‘disease’ or ‘sickness’.

Article 2

Are vices contrary to nature?

It seems that vices are not contrary to nature:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), vice is contrary to virtue. But virtues do not exist in us by nature; instead, as has been explained (q. 63, aa. 1-3), they are caused in us either by infusion or by habituation (*per infusionem aut ab assuetudine*). Therefore, vices are not contrary to nature.

Objection 2: Things that are contrary to nature cannot be made habitual; for instance, as *Ethics* 2 puts it, “A rock is never habituated to being borne upwards.” But some individuals are habituated to vices. Therefore, vices are not contrary to nature.

Objection 3: Nothing that is contrary to a nature is found in a great number of things that have that nature (*in habentibus illam naturam ut in pluribus*). But vices are found in a great number of men; for as Matthew 7:13 says, “Wide is the way that leads to perdition, and many there are who walk along it.” Therefore, vices are not contrary to nature.

Objection 4: As is clear from what was said above (a. 1), a sin is related to a vice as an act is

related to its habit. But as is clear from Augustine in *Contra Faustum*, a sin is “a word or deed or desire contrary to Divine law.” But Divine law is beyond nature (*supra naturam*). Therefore, one should claim that a vice is contrary to *law* rather than contrary to *nature*.

But contrary to this: In *De Libero Arbitrio* Augustine says, “Every vice, by the very fact that it is a vice, is contrary to nature.”

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), a vice is contrary to virtue. But as was explained above (a. 1), the virtue of each thing consists in its being well disposed in a way appropriate to its nature. Hence, it must be the case that in any given thing, a vice is so-called by the fact that the thing is disposed in a way that is contrary to what is appropriate to its nature. And, thus, each thing is blamed for this, given that, as Augustine says in *De Libero Arbitrio* 3, the name ‘blame’ (*vituperatio*) is taken to be drawn from ‘vice’ (*vitium*).

However, notice that the nature of each thing is first and foremost (*potissime*) the form in accord with which the thing receives its species. Now a man is constituted in his species by the rational soul. And so what is contrary to the order of reason is, properly speaking, contrary to the nature of a man insofar as he is a man, whereas what accords with reason accords with the nature of a man insofar as he is a man. But as Dionysius puts it in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, “What is good for man is to be in accord with reason, whereas what is bad for man is to be outside of reason (*praeter rationem*).” Hence, human virtue, which makes a man good and renders his work good, is in accord with man’s nature to the extent that it agrees with reason, whereas vice is contrary to man’s nature to the extent that it is contrary to the order of reason.

Reply to objection 1: Even if the virtues are not caused by nature with respect to their perfect *esse*, they nonetheless incline one toward what is in accord with nature, i.e., in accord with the order of reason. For instance, in his *Rhetorica* Tully says, “A virtue is a habit in the mode of a nature that agrees with reason.” And this is the sense in which a virtue is said to be in accord with nature and in which, on the other side, a vice is understood to be contrary to nature.

Reply to objection 2: The Philosopher is here talking about what is contrary to nature in the sense in which *being contrary to nature* (*esse contra naturam*) is opposed to *being from nature* (*esse a natura*), but not in the sense in which *being contrary to nature* is opposed to *being in accord with nature* (*esse secundum naturam*). For virtues are said to be in accord with nature in the sense that they incline one toward what agrees with one’s nature.

Reply to objection 3: There are two natures in a man, viz., rational and sentient. And since it is through the operation of the sensory power that a man arrives at an act of reason, more men follow the inclinations of their sentient nature than the order of reason; for there are more men who attain the beginning of a given matter than make it all the way to the end (*plures sunt qui assequuntur principium rei quam qui ad consummationem perveniunt*). Now vices and sins proliferate among men because they follow the inclination of their sentient nature in opposition to the order of reason.

Reply to objection 4: Whatever is contrary to the conception of an artifact (*contra rationem artificiati*) is also contrary to the nature of the craft by which the artifact is produced. But the eternal law is related to the order of human reason in the way that a craft is related to an artifact. Hence, the fact that a vice or sin is contrary to the order of human reason is of a piece with (*eiusdem rationis*) the fact that it is contrary to the eternal law. This is why, in *De Libero Arbitrio* 3, Augustine says, “All natures have from God the fact that they are natures, and they are vicious to the extent that they depart from that craft by which they were made.”

Article 3

Is a vice, i.e., a bad habit, worse than a sin, i.e., a bad act?

It seems that a vice, i.e., a bad habit, is worse than a sin, i.e., a bad act (*vitium, id est habitus malus, est peius quam peccatum, id est actus malus*):

Objection 1: Just as something good that is long-lasting is better, so something bad that is long-lasting is worse. But a vicious habit is more long-lasting than are vicious acts, which pass away at once. Therefore, a vicious habit is worse than a vicious act.

Objection 2: A plurality of bad things is more to be avoided than is a single bad thing. But a bad habit is a virtual cause (*virtualiter est causa*) of many bad acts. Therefore, a vicious habit is worse than a vicious act.

Objection 3: A cause is more powerful than its effect. But a habit brings its act to completion both in its goodness and in its badness. Therefore, a habit is more powerful than its act both in its goodness and in its badness.

But contrary to this: One is justly punished for a vicious act, but not for a vicious habit, as long as the habit does not proceed into an act. Therefore, a vicious act is worse than a vicious habit.

I respond: A habit is situated midway between a power and its act. Now it is clear that, as *Metaphysics 9* says, an act exceeds its power in goodness and badness; for it is better to act well than to be able to act well and, similarly, it is more blameworthy to act badly than to be able to act badly. Hence, it also follows that a habit has a middle level of goodness and badness between a power and its act—so that, more specifically, just as a good (or bad) habit exceeds its power in goodness (or badness), so too it is likewise exceeded by its act.

This is also clear from the fact that a habit is called good or bad only because it inclines one toward a good or bad act. Hence, it is because of the goodness or badness of the act that a habit is called ‘good’ or ‘bad’. And so the act is more potent in goodness or badness than the habit is; for that because of which a thing is such-and-such is itself more such-and-such.

Reply to objection 1: Nothing prevents one thing from exceeding another absolutely speaking (*nihil prohibet aliquid esse simpliciter altero potior*), even though it falls short of the other in some respect (*secundum quid ab eo deficit*). For something is judged to exceed another absolutely speaking when it exceeds the other with respect to what is thought of as being *per se* in each of them, whereas it is judged to exceed it in a certain respect when it exceeds the other with respect to what is related to each of them *per accidens*.

Now it has been shown on the basis of the very conceptions of an act and of a habit that an act exceeds the corresponding habit in goodness and badness. But the fact that a habit is more long-lasting than an act stems from the fact that both of them are found in a nature that is such that it cannot always be acting and such that its action occurs in a passing movement. Hence, absolutely speaking, an act exceeds the corresponding habit both in goodness and in badness, whereas the habit exceeds the act in a certain respect.

Reply to objection 2: It is in a certain respect, viz., virtually (*virtute*)—and not absolutely speaking—that a habit is a plurality of acts. Hence, one cannot infer from this that a habit exceeds an act absolutely speaking in goodness or badness.

Reply to objection 3: A habit is a cause of an act in the genus *efficient cause*, but an act is a cause of a habit in the genus *final cause*, in accord with which the notions of goodness and badness are thought of. And this is why an act exceeds the corresponding habit in goodness and badness.

Article 4

Can a vicious act, i.e., a sin, exist together with a contrary virtue?

It seems that a vicious act, i.e., a sin or mistake, cannot exist together with a virtue (*actus vitiosus sive peccatum non possit simul esse cum virtute*):

Objection 1: Contraries cannot exist together in the same subject. But as has been explained (a. 1), a sin or mistake is in a certain sense contrary to virtue. Therefore, a sin cannot exist together with virtue.

Objection 2: A sin or mistake is worse than a vice; that is, a bad act is worse than a bad habit. But a vice cannot exist together with a virtue in the same subject. Therefore, neither can a sin.

Objection 3: As *Physics 2* says, a sin or mistake occurs in natural affairs in the same way that it occurs in voluntary affairs. But a sin or mistake never occurs in natural affairs except through some sort of corruption in a natural power, in the way that “monsters occur because of some corrupt principle in the seed,” as *Physics 2* puts it. Therefore, it is likewise the case in voluntary affairs that a sin or mistake does not occur except through some corrupted power of the soul (*nisi corrupta aliqua virtute animae*). And so a sin and a virtue cannot exist in the same subject.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics 2* the Philosopher says that a virtue is generated and corrupted by contraries. But as was established above (q. 51, a. 3), a single virtuous act does not cause a virtue. Therefore, neither does a single sinful act destroy a virtue. Therefore, they can exist together in the same subject.

I respond: A sin is related to a virtue in the way that a bad act is related to a good habit. But a habit in the soul behaves differently from a form in a natural thing. For a natural form necessarily produces an operation that agrees with the form, and so an act of a contrary form cannot exist together with a natural form; for instance, an act of cooling cannot exist together with heat, and an act of descending cannot exist together with lightness, except perhaps because of the violence caused by an exterior mover. By contrast, a habit in the soul does not necessarily produce its own operation; instead, a man makes use of the habit when he wills to. Hence, even while the habit exists in a man, he is able not to use the habit and able to perform a contrary act. And so it is possible for someone who has a virtue to proceed into a sinful act.

Now if a sinful act is compared to the virtue itself insofar as the virtue is a certain habit, the act cannot corrupt it as long as it is just a single act; for as was explained above (q. 63, a. 2), just as a habit cannot be generated by a single act, so, too, neither can it be corrupted by a single act.

But if a sinful act is compared to the cause of the virtues, then it is possible for certain virtues to be corrupted by a single sinful act. For every mortal sin is contrary to charity, which is the root of all the infused virtues insofar as they are virtues, and so, given that charity has been excluded, a single mortal sin excludes as a result all the infused virtues insofar as they are virtues. (I add this qualifier because of faith and hope, whose habits, unformed [by charity], remain after a mortal sin; and so these habits are not virtues.) On the other hand, a venial sin, which is not contrary to charity and does not exclude it, consequently does not exclude the other virtues, either.

By contrast, acquired virtues are not destroyed by a single sinful act of any type whatsoever.

So, then, a mortal sin cannot exist together with the infused virtues, although it can exist together with acquired virtues. On the other hand, a venial sin can exist together with both infused virtues and acquired virtues.

Reply to objection 1: A sin is not contrary to a virtue as such (*non secundum se*), but is instead contrary to the virtue’s act (*sed secundum suum actum*). And so a sin cannot exist together with the act of the relevant virtue, but it can nonetheless exist together with the habit.

Reply to objection 2: A vice is directly contrary to a virtue, just as a sin is directly contrary to a

virtuous act. And so the vice excludes the virtue, just as the sin excludes an act of the virtue.

Reply to objection 3: Natural powers (*virtutes*) act by necessity and so, as long as a given power remains intact, a sin or mistake is never found in its act. But the virtues (*virtutes*) of the soul do not produce their acts by necessity, and so the line of reasoning is not parallel.

Article 5

Does every sin involve an act?

It seems that every sin involves an act (*in quolibeto peccato sit aliquis actus*):

Objection 1: Sin is related to a vice in the way that merit is related to a virtue. But there cannot be any merit in the absence of an act. Therefore, neither can there be any sin in the absence of an act.

Objection 2: In *De Libero Arbitrio* Augustine says, “Every sin is voluntary to such an extent that if it is not voluntary, it is not a sin.” But nothing can be voluntary except through an act of willing. Therefore, every sin involves some act.

Objection 3: If there were a sin in the absence of any act, it would follow that someone sinned by the very fact that he desisted from doing a required act. But there is someone who continually desists from a required act, viz., the one who never does the required act. Therefore, it would follow that he is sinning continually—which is false. Therefore, there is no sin in the absence of an act.

But contrary to this: James 4:17 says, “For one who knows he is to do good and does not do it, to him it is a sin.” Therefore, there can be a sin in the absence of an act.

I respond: This question is raised mainly because of sins of omission, concerning which different people have different opinions.

For there are those who claim that in every sin of omission there is some act, either *interior* or *exterior*: (a) an interior act, as when someone wills not to go to church when he is obligated to go, (b) an exterior act, as when someone, at the very hour he is supposed to go to church (or even before), occupies himself with something by which he is kept from going to church. And the second case seems in some sense to reduce to the first. For someone who wills something with which something else cannot simultaneously exist wills as a consequence to lack that something else—unless perhaps he does not take into consideration that by willing to do the one thing he is prevented from doing what he is supposed to do, in which case he could be judged blameworthy because of negligence.

By contrast, others claim that no act is required in the case of a sin of omission. For it is a sin not to do what one is obligated to do.

Now each of these opinions is true in a certain respect. For if the only thing understood in a sin of omission is what belongs *per se* to the nature of a sin, then in this sense (a) it is sometimes the case that a sin of omission occurs with an interior act, as when someone wills not to go to church, whereas (b) it is sometimes the case that it occurs without any interior or exterior act at all, as when, at the hour at which someone is supposed to go to church, he has no thought at all about going or not going to church.

On the other hand, if the causes or occasions for the omission are also understood in a sin of omission, then there has to be some act involved in every sin of omission. For there is no sin of omission unless someone omits something that he is able to do and able not to do. But the fact that someone ends up not doing something that he is able to do and able not to do stems only from some antecedent or concomitant cause or occasion (*non est nisi ex aliqua causa vel occasione coniuncta vel praecedente*).

Now if the cause in question is not within the man’s power, then the omission does not have the character of a sin—as, for instance, when someone omits going to church because of an illness. By contrast, if the cause or occasion of the omission is subject to the man’s will, the omission has the character of a sin, and in that case it is always necessary for the cause, insofar as it is voluntary, to

involve some act, at least an interior act of willing.

This act is sometimes directed immediately toward the omission itself, as when someone wills not to go to church in order to avoid the effort. And in such a case the act belongs *per se* to the omission, since the act of willing any sort of sin belongs *per se* to that sin, given that voluntariness belongs to the nature of a sin.

But sometimes the act of willing is immediately directed toward something else by which the man is kept from the required act—either because (a) what the act of willing is directed toward is *conjoined* to the omission, as when someone wills to engage in some amusement (*vult ludere*) when he should be going to church, or because (b) what the act of willing is directed toward is something antecedent to the omission, as when someone wills to stay up too late at night (*diu vigilare de sero*) and from this it follows that he will not go to church the next morning (*non vadat hora matutinali ad ecclesiam*). And in this sort of case the interior or exterior act is related *per accidens* to the omission, since the omission follows outside [the agent's] intention, and, as is clear from *Physics 2*, we call something '*per accidens*' when it falls outside [the agent's] intention. Hence, it is clear that in such a case the sin of omission does, to be sure, involve some concomitant or antecedent act, and yet this act is related *per accidens* to the sin of omission.

Now one's judgment about things should be made on the basis of what is *per se* and not on the basis of what is *per accidens*. Hence, it is closer to the truth to say that there can be a sin in the absence of any act. Otherwise, circumstantial acts and occasions would likewise belong to the essence of other sins that consist in acts (*alioquin etiam ad essentiam aliorum peccatorum actualium pertinerent actus et occasiones circumstantes*).

Reply to objection 1: More things are required for goodness than for badness, because, as Dionysius says in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, "Goodness results from an entire integrated cause, whereas badness results from a single defect (*bonum contingit ex tota integra causa, malum autem ex singularibus defectibus*).” And so a sin can occur regardless of whether someone does what he ought not to do or does not do what he ought to do, whereas merit is impossible unless someone voluntarily does what he ought to do. And so merit cannot exist in the absence of an act, whereas sin can exist in the absence of an act.

Reply to objection 2: As *Ethics 3* points out, something is called 'voluntary' not only because an act of willing is directed toward it, but also because its being done or not being done lies within our power. Hence, even an instance of not willing can itself be called voluntary, insofar as it is within the man's power to will or not to will.

Reply to objection 3: A sin of omission is contrary to an affirmative precept that always imposes an obligation, but not *for all times* (*contrariatur praecepto affirmativo quod obligat semper sed non ad semper*). And so the only time at which someone sins by ceasing to perform an act is the time *for* which the affirmative precept imposes an obligation on him.

Article 6

Is it correct to define a sin as “a word or deed or desire contrary to the eternal law”?

It seems that it is incorrect to define a sin as “a word or deed or desire contrary to the eternal law”:

Objection 1: 'Word or deed or desire' implies an act. But as has been explained (a. 5), not every sin involves an act. Therefore, the definition in question does not include every sin.

Objection 2: In *De Duabus Animabus* Augustine says, "A sin is an act of willing to hold on to or to pursue what justice forbids." But an act of willing is included under 'desire' (*concupiscentia*), insofar as 'desire' is taken in a broad sense for any sort of appetite (*pro omni appetitu*). Therefore, it would have

been sufficient to say, “A sin is a desire contrary to the eternal law,” and it was not necessary to add “a word or a deed.”

Objection 3: A sin seems properly to consist in a turning away from an end, since, as was explained above (q. 18, a. 6), goodness and badness are mainly thought of in connection with an end. Hence, in *De Libero Arbitrio* 1 Augustine defines a sin by its relation to an end when he says, “To sin is nothing other than to pursue temporal things while neglecting eternal things.” And in 83 *Quaestiones* he says, “Every form of human perversity consists in using what should be enjoyed and enjoying what should be used.” But in the definition in question there is no mention of a turning away from the correct end. Therefore, that definition of sin is inadequate.

Objection 4: Something is said to be forbidden by reason of the fact that it is contrary to the law. But not all sins are bad because they are forbidden; instead, some of them are forbidden because they are bad. Therefore, “contrary to Divine law” should not be put into the general definition of a sin.

Objection 5: As is clear from what has been said (a. 1 and q. 21, a. 1), ‘sin’ signifies a bad act on the part of a man. But as Dionysius says in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, a bad act on the part of a man is contrary to reason. Therefore, one should say, “A sin is contrary to reason” rather than “A sin is contrary to the eternal law.”

But contrary to this is the authority of Augustine.

I respond: As is clear from what has been said (a. 1 and q. 21, a. 1), a sin is nothing other than a bad human act. Now as was explained above (q. 1, a. 1), an act is a human act from the fact that it is voluntary, regardless of whether it is voluntary in the sense of being *elicited* by the will, as in the case of an act of willing or an act of choosing, or in the sense of being *commanded* by the will, as in the case of exterior acts of speaking or operating.

Now a human act is bad from the fact that it lacks a due measure. And every measure of any given thing involves a comparison to some rule which is such that if the thing departs from that measure, it will lack measure (*incommensurata erit*). And there are two measures of the human will: One is a proximate and homogeneous measure, viz., human reason itself, whereas the other is the first measure, viz., the eternal law, which is, as it were, God’s reason.

This is why Augustine posits two things in his definition of sin. One of them pertains to a human act’s *substance*, which is, as it were, the *material* element in a sin; this is where he says, “A word or deed or desire.” The other pertains to the *nature of evil* and is, as it were, the *formal* element in a sin; this is where he says, “contrary to the eternal law.”

Reply to objection 1: An affirmation and corresponding negation belong to the same genus, in the way that, in the case of God, *begotten* and *unbegotten* belong to the genus of relation, as Augustine points out in *De Trinitate* 5. And so ‘word’ and ‘non-word’ and ‘deed’ and ‘non-deed’ should be taken for the same thing.

Reply to objection 2: The first cause of sin exists in the will, which commands other voluntary acts, and it is in voluntary acts alone that sin is found. This is why Augustine sometimes defines sin just in terms of the act of willing. But since, as has been explained (q. 20, aa. 1-3), exterior acts themselves likewise belong to the substance of a sin when they are bad in their own right, something pertaining to exterior acts also had to be put into the definition of a sin.

Reply to objection 3: The eternal law primarily and principally orders a man toward his end, and yet as a consequence it makes a man to be related in a good way to the means to the end. And so by the fact that it says “contrary to the eternal law” it touches on both (a) turning away from the end and (b) all the other types of disorderliness.

Reply to objection 4: When the objection says, ‘Not every sin is bad because it is forbidden’, this is understood of a prohibition that is made through positive law. By contrast, if it were referring to natural law, which is contained primarily in the eternal law and secondarily in human reason’s natural judgement, then *every* sin is bad because it is forbidden. For by the very fact that a sin is disordered, it is

in conflict with natural law.

Reply to objection 5: Theologians consider sin mainly insofar as it is an offense against God, whereas a moral philosopher considers sin mainly insofar as it is contrary to reason. And so it was more appropriate for Augustine to define sin on the basis of its being contrary to the eternal law than on the basis of its being contrary to reason, especially given that we are regulated by the eternal law in many matters that exceed human reason, as in the case of those matters that belong to the Faith.