

QUESTION 74

The Subject of Sins

Next we have to consider the subject of vices or sins (*de subiecto vitiorum vel peccatorum*). On this topic there are ten questions: (1) Can the will be the subject of sin? (2) Is the will alone a subject of sin? (3) Can sensuality or the sentient appetite (*sensualitas*) be a subject of sin? (4) Can the sentient appetite be the subject of a mortal sin? (5) Can reason be the subject of sin? (6) Does lingering or non-lingering pleasure have lower reason as its subject? (7) Does the sin of consenting to an act have higher reason as its subject? (8) Can lower reason be the subject of a mortal sin? (9) Can higher reason be the subject of a venial sin? (10) Can there be a venial sin in higher reason with respect to its proper object?

Article 1

Can the will be the subject of sin?

It seems that the will cannot be the subject of a sin:

Objection 1: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, “What is bad lies outside the will and outside one’s intention.” But sin has the character of something bad. Therefore, sin cannot exist in the will.

Objection 2: The will is directed toward a good or an apparent good (*voluntas est boni vel apparentis boni*). But the will does not sin by reason of the fact that it wills a good, whereas the fact that it wills an apparent good that is not truly good seems to involve a defect in the apprehensive power rather than a defect in the will. Therefore, there is no way in which sin exists in the will.

Objection 3: The subject of a sin cannot be the same as its efficient cause, since, as *Physics 2* says, the efficient cause and material cause do not coincide (*non incidunt in idem*). But the will is an efficient cause of a sin, since “the first cause of sinning is the will,” as Augustine puts it in *De Duabus Animalibus*. Therefore, the will is not the subject of sin.

But contrary to this: In *Retractiones* Augustine says, “The will is that by which one sins and that by which one lives in an upright way.”

I respond: As was explained above (q. 71, aa. 1 and 6), a sin is a certain sort of act.

Now some acts, e.g., burning and cutting, pass into an exterior matter, and acts of this sort have as their matter and their subject the thing into which the action passes; as the Philosopher says in *Physics 3*, “A movement is the act of the thing moved as coming from the thing that effects the movement.”

By contrast, other acts, e.g., desiring and having a cognition, do not pass into an exterior matter but remain within the agent. All moral acts—whether they are acts of virtue or sinful acts—are acts of this sort.

Hence, the proper subject of a sinful act has to be the power that is the source (*principium*) of the act. But since, as was established above (q. 1, a. 1 and q. 18, a. 6) it is proper to moral acts to be voluntary, it follows that the will, which is the source of voluntary acts—whether good acts or bad acts, i.e., sins—is the source of sins. And so it follows that sins exist in the will as their subject.

Reply to objection 1: What is bad is said to lie “outside” the will in the sense that the will does not tend toward anything under the concept *bad*. But the will sometimes desires what is bad because something bad is an apparent good. And it is in this way that sin exists in the will.

Reply to objection 2: If the defect in the apprehensive power were in no way subject to the will, as is clearly the case with those who have invincible ignorance, then no sin would exist in either the will or the apprehensive power. And so it follows that a defect in the apprehensive power that is subject to the will is also counted as a sin.

Reply to objection 3: This argument goes through for the case of efficient causes whose acts pass into an exterior matter and which effect movement in other things and not in themselves. But the opposite is true in the case of the will. Therefore, the argument does not follow.

Article 2

Is the will alone a subject of sin?

It seems that the will alone is a subject of sin:

Objection 1: In *De Duabus Animabus* Augustine says, “One does not sin except by means of the will.” But a sin exists, as in a subject, in the power by means of which one sins. Therefore, the will alone is a subject of sin.

Objection 2: A sin is something bad that is contrary to reason. But *good* and *bad* as they pertain to reason are the objects of the will alone. Therefore, the will alone is a subject of sin.

Objection 3: Every sin is a voluntary act, since, as Augustine says in *De Libero Arbitrio*, “A sin is voluntary to such an extent that if something is not voluntary, then it is not a sin.” But acts of the other powers are not voluntary except insofar as those powers are moved by the will. However, this is not sufficient for their being a subject of sin, since if it were sufficient, then even the exterior bodily members, which are moved by the will, would be a subject of sin—which is clearly false. Therefore, the will alone is a subject of sin.

But contrary to this: Sin is contrary to virtue. But contraries have to do with the same thing and, as was explained above (q. 65, aa. 3-4), other powers besides the will are also the subject of virtues. Therefore, it is not the case that the will alone is a subject of sin.

I respond: As is clear from what was said above (a. 1), anything that is a source of a voluntary act is a subject of sin. Now as was explained above when we were discussing voluntariness (q. 6, a. 4), the acts that are called voluntary include not only those that are *elicited* by the will, but also those that are *commanded* by the will. Hence, it is not just the will that can be a subject of sin, but all the other powers that are moved to their acts by the will or held back from their acts by the will. Moreover, these same powers are the subjects of good or bad moral habits, since the acts and the habits belong to the same subject.

Reply to objection 1: One does not sin except by means of the will as a first mover, and one sins by means of the other powers insofar as those powers are moved by the will.

Reply to objection 2: *Good* and *bad* [in general] belong to the will as its *per se* objects, whereas the other powers have a determinate *good* and *bad* by reason of which virtue or vice or sin can exist in them insofar as they take part in will and reason.

Reply to objection 3: It is not the members of the body, but only the organs (*solum organa*), that are sources of acts (*principia actuum*); and so the members of the body are related to the soul that moves them like a *servant* that is acted upon and does not act. By contrast, as is clear from what is said in *Politics* 1, the interior appetitive powers are related to reason as *free powers*, since they both act in a certain sense and are acted upon.

Furthermore, the acts of the exterior members are actions that pass into an exterior matter, as is clear in the case of someone’s being struck down in the sin of homicide. And for this reason the arguments are not parallel.

Article 3

Can sin exist in the sentient appetite?

It seems that sin cannot exist in the sentient appetite (*in sensualitate non possit esse peccatum*):

Objection 1: Sin is proper to man, who is praised or blamed because of his actions. But the sentient appetite (*sensualitas*) is common to us and brute animals. Therefore, sin cannot exist in the sentient appetite.

Objection 2: As Augustine says in *De Libero Arbitrio*, “No one sins in what he cannot avoid.” But a man is unable to avoid an act of his sentient appetite being disordered, since, as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 12, “The sentient appetite is continually corrupt (*est sensualitas perpetuae corruptionis*) for as long as we abide in this mortal life, and this is why it is signified by a serpent.” Therefore, disorder in a movement of the sentient appetite is not a sin.

Objection 3: What a man does not do himself is not imputed to him as a sin. But as the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 9, “We ourselves seem to do only that which we do with reason’s deliberation.” Therefore, a movement of the sentient appetite that occurs without deliberation is not imputed to a man as a sin.

But contrary to this: Romans 7:15 says, “The good which I will I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do.” Augustine comments that this concerns an evil of concupiscence, which is clearly a certain movement of the sentient appetite. Therefore, sin exists in the sentient appetite.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 2), sin can be found in any power whose act can be *voluntary* and *disordered*—which is what the character of sin consists in. But it is clear that an act of sensuality can be voluntary insofar as sensuality, i.e., the sentient appetite (*inquantum sensualitas, idest appetitus sensitivus*), is apt to be moved by the will. Hence, it follows that sin can exist in the sentient appetite.

Reply to objection 1: Even though some powers of the sentient part of the soul are common to us and brute animals, they nonetheless have in us a certain excellence because they are joined to reason. For instance, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 78, a. 4), we have, beyond the other animals (*prae aliis animalibus*), the cogitative power and the power of reminiscing. And in this way the sentient appetite in us likewise has a certain preeminence over the other animals, viz., because it is apt to obey reason. And on this score, it can be a source of a voluntary act and, consequently, a subject of sin.

Reply to objection 2: The sentient appetite’s “continual corruptness” has to be understood in terms of the stimulant [to sin] (*quantum ad fomitem*), which is never totally excluded in this life. For original sin passes away in its guilt of punishment and remains in its act (*transit enim peccatum originale reatu et remanet actu*). But this sort of corruptness on the part of the stimulant does not prevent a man from being able, by his rational will (*rationabili voluntate*), to fight off each disordered movement of the sentient appetite if he anticipates it, viz., by diverting his thoughts to other things.

However, while a man is diverting his thoughts to something else, there can likewise arise a disordered movement with respect to that other thing; for instance, when someone, wishing to avoid the movements of concupiscence, redirects his thoughts away from the pleasures of the flesh to some scientific speculation, an unpremeditated movement of vanity sometimes arises. And so because of the aforementioned corruptness, a man cannot avoid *all* movements of this sort; however, it is sufficient for the character of a voluntary sin just that he be able to avoid *each* such movement.

Reply to objection 3: What a man does without reason’s deliberation he does not do completely (*perfecte*), since nothing that is central (*principale*) to a man is operating in such a case. Hence, the act in question is not a completely human act (*non est perfecte actus humanus*). And, as a result, it cannot be a completely virtuous act or a completely sinful act (*non potest esse perfecte actus virtutis vel peccati*); instead, it is something incomplete within those genera. Hence, the sort of movement of the sentient

appetite that precedes an act of reason is a venial sin, i.e., something incomplete in the genus *sin*.

Article 4

Can a mortal sin exist in the sentient appetite?

It seems that a mortal sin can exist in the sentient appetite (*in sensualitate*):

Objection 1: An act is known from its object. But one can sin mortally with respect to the objects of the sentient appetite, e.g., with respect to the pleasures of the flesh. Therefore, an act of the sentient appetite can be a mortal sin. And so mortal sin is found in the sentient appetite.

Objection 2: A mortal sin is contrary to a virtue. But it is possible for a virtue to exist in the sentient appetite; for as the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 3, “Temperance and fortitude are virtues of the non-rational parts of the soul.” Therefore, it is possible for a mortal sin to exist in the sentient appetite, since contraries are apt to be effected with respect to the same subject.

Objection 3: A venial sin is a disposition toward a mortal sin. But the disposition and the habit exist in the same subject. Therefore, since, as has been explained (a. 3), there is venial sin in the sentient appetite, it is likewise the case that there can be mortal sin in that same subject.

But contrary to this: Augustine says in *Retractationes*—and the same thing is found in a Gloss on Romans 7:14—that “a disordered movement of concupiscence,” i.e., a sin belonging to the sentient appetite, “can likewise exist in those who are in the state of grace”—in whom mortal sin is not found. Therefore, a disordered movement of the sentient appetite is not a mortal sin.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 72, a. 5), just as a disorder that corrupts the source of corporeal life causes corporeal death, so too a disorder that corrupts the source of spiritual life, i.e., the ultimate end, causes spiritual death. But it belongs to reason, and not to the sentient appetite, to order something toward its end. Moreover, to throw something into disorder with respect to its end (*inordinatio a fine*) belongs to the same thing whose role it is to order it toward its end. Therefore, mortal sin can exist only in reason and not in the sentient appetite.

Reply to objection 1: An act of the sentient appetite can *concur in* a mortal sin, but an act of mortal sin has its character as an act of mortal sin not from the fact that it belongs to the sentient appetite (*ex eo quod est sensualitatis*), but from the fact that it belongs to reason, the role of which is to order a thing toward its end. And this is why mortal sin is attributed only to reason and not to the sentient appetite.

Reply to objection 2: An act of virtue is likewise brought to completion (*perficitur*) not by the fact that it belongs only to the sentient appetite, but rather by the fact that it belongs to reason and to the will, whose role it is to choose. For an act of moral virtue does not occur without an act of choosing. Hence, it is always the case that an act of moral virtue, which perfects the appetitive power, occurs with an act of prudence, which perfects the rational power. And, as has been explained, the same thing holds for mortal sin.

Reply to objection 3: There are three ways in which a disposition is related to what it disposes something toward:

Sometimes they are the same thing and they exist in the same thing; for instance, inchoative scientific knowledge (*scientia inchoata*) is said to be a disposition toward perfect scientific knowledge.

Sometimes they exist in the same thing but are not themselves the same thing; for instance, heat is a disposition toward the form of fire.

Sometimes they are not the same thing and do not exist in the same thing, as in the case of those things that are ordered to one another in such a way that a thing arrives at the one from the other; for instance, excellence in the power of imagining (*bonitas imaginationis*) is a disposition toward scientific

knowledge, which exists in the intellect. It is in this last way that a venial sin existing in the sentient appetite is a disposition toward a mortal sin, which exists in reason.

Article 5

Can sin exist in reason?

It seems that sin cannot exist in reason (*peccatum non possit esse in ratione*):

Objection 1: A mistake or sin (*peccatum*) in any power is a defect in that power. But a defect in reason is not a sin; instead, it excuses a sin, since someone is excused from sin because of ignorance. Therefore, sin cannot exist in reason.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 1), the first subject of sin is the will (*voluntas*). But the act of reason precedes the act of willing, since it directs the act of willing. Therefore, sin cannot exist in reason.

Objection 3: There cannot be a sin or mistake except with respect to what is within our power (*nisi circa ea quae sunt in nobis*). But perfection and defectiveness in reason are not among the things that are within our power. For there are those whose reason is naturally deficient and those whose reason is naturally brilliant (*quidam sunt naturaliter ratione deficientes vel ratione solertes*). Therefore, sin does not exist in reason.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine says that sin exists both in lower reason and in higher reason.

I respond: As is clear from what was said above (aa. 1-3), a mistake or sin (*peccatum*) in any power consists in that power's act. Now reason has two acts: (a) it has one act *in its own right* (*secundum se*), viz., in relation to its proper object, and this is the act of having a cognition of something true; (b) the second act of reason is the act it has insofar as it *directs other powers* (*est directiva aliarum virium*). Thus, sin can exist in reason in each of these ways.

First, there is a mistake or sin (*peccatum*) insofar as reason errs in its cognition of what is true. This is imputed to it as a mistake (*peccatum*) when it has ignorance or error with respect to what it can know and ought to know.

Second, there is a mistake or sin either when (a) reason commands disordered acts of the lower powers or when (b) it does not constrain (*non coercet*) such acts even after deliberation.

Reply to objection 1: This argument goes through with respect to a defect in reason that has to do with its proper act regarding its proper object, and this when there is a lack of cognition of something that one is unable to have knowledge of. For in such a case this sort of defect in reason is not a sin, but instead excuses one from sin, as is clear in the case of acts that are committed by madmen. However, if the defect in reason has to do with what a man can and should know, then the man is not altogether excused from sin, but instead the defect itself is imputed to him as a sin.

On the other hand, a defect that has to do only with reason's directing the other powers is always imputed to it as a sin, since reason is able to prevent (*occurrere potest*) this sort of defect by its own act.

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above when we were discussing acts of reason and will (q. 17, a. 1), there is a way in which an act of willing moves and precedes an act of reason, and there is a way in which an act of reason moves and precedes an act of willing; hence, a movement of the will can be called 'rational' and an act of reason can be called 'voluntary'. Accordingly, sin is found in reason either (a) insofar as there is a voluntary defect in reason or (b) insofar as an act of reason is the source of an act of willing.

Reply to objection 3: The reply to the third objection is clear from what has already been said.

Article 6

Does the sin of lingering pleasure exist in reason?

It seems that the sin of lingering pleasure (*peccatum morosae delectationis*) does not exist in reason:

Objection 1: As was explained above (q. 31, a. 1), ‘pleasure’ implies a movement of the appetitive power. But the appetitive power is distinct from reason, which is an apprehensive power. Therefore, lingering pleasure does not exist in reason.

Objection 2: From the objects one can know which power an act belongs to, and it is through the act that a power is ordered toward its object. But sometimes there is lingering pleasure with respect to sensible goods and not goods of reason. Therefore, the sin of lingering pleasure does not exist in reason.

Objection 3: ‘Lingering’ denotes a thing by reason of its temporal duration (*propter diuturnitatem temporis*). But temporal duration is not a reason in virtue of which a given act belongs to a given power. Therefore, lingering pleasure does not belong to reason.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine says, “If the consent to an enticement is limited to just pleasure at the thought of it, then this, I think, would be as if the woman alone had eaten of the forbidden fruit.” But *the woman* here stands for lower reason, as he himself explains in the same place. Therefore, the sin of lingering pleasure exists in reason.

I respond: As has already been explained (a. 5), sometimes a sin exists in reason insofar as reason directs human acts. But it is clear that reason directs not only exterior acts but also the interior passions. And so when reason falls short in directing the interior passions, this is called a sin in reason, just as it is also called a sin in reason when reason falls short in directing exterior acts.

Now there are two ways in which reason falls short in directing the interior passions:

First, when it *commands* illicit passions, as when a man, upon deliberation, provokes in himself a movement of anger or of concupiscence.

Second, when it *does not suppress* an illicit movement of passion, as when someone, having concluded upon deliberation that an oncoming movement of passion is disordered, nonetheless delays with respect to it and does not drive it away. And this is the sense in which a sin of lingering pleasure is said to exist in reason.

Reply to objection 1: Pleasure exists in the appetitive power as in its proximate principle but in reason as in its first mover—in accord with what was said above (a. 1), viz., that actions that do not pass into an exterior matter exist in their principles as in a subject.

Reply to objection 2: Reason has a proper illicit act with respect to its proper object, but it has an act of directing with respect to all the objects of the lower powers that can be directed by reason. And it is in this sense that pleasure with respect to sensible objects belongs to reason as well.

Reply to objection 3: Pleasure is called ‘lingering’ not because of its temporal duration (*non ex mora temporis*), but because reason, though deliberating about it, nonetheless does not drive it away, “willingly holding on to and dwelling on what should have been cast aside as soon as it entered the mind,” as Augustine puts it in *De Trinitate* 12.

Article 7

Does the sin of consenting to an act exist in higher reason?

It seems that the sin of consenting to an act (*peccatum consensus in actu*) does not exist in higher reason:

Objection 1: As was explained above (q. 15, a. 1), consenting is an act of the appetitive power. But reason is an apprehensive power. Therefore, the sin of consenting to an act does not exist in higher reason.

Objection 2: As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 12, “Higher reason focuses on (*intendit*) contemplating and consulting the eternal conceptions.” But one sometimes consents to an act without consulting the eternal conceptions; for a man is not always thinking about divine things when he consents to an act. Therefore, the sin of consenting to an act does not always exist in higher reason.

Objection 3: Just as a man regulates his exterior acts by reference to the eternal conceptions, so too with his interior pleasures and other passions. But as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 12, “It belongs to lower reason to consent to a pleasure without deciding to fulfill it with a deed.” Therefore, it is also the case that consenting to a sinful act must sometimes be attributed to lower reason.

Objection 4: Reason exceeds the imaginative power in just the way that higher reason exceeds lower reason. But sometimes a man proceeds into an action through the imaginative power’s apprehension without any deliberation on the part of reason, as when someone moves his hand or foot without premeditation. Therefore, it is likewise the case that sometimes lower reason can consent to a sinful act without higher reason.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine says, “If, in the consent to the evil use of what can be perceived by the bodily senses, any sin is judged to be such that, if possible, it would be brought to completion corporeally, then this should be understood as the woman’s having given the forbidden fruit to the man”—where *the man* signifies higher reason. Therefore, consenting to a sinful act belongs to higher reason.

I respond: ‘Consent’ implies a judgment about what one is consenting to. For just as speculative reason judges and decides (*iudicat et sententiat*) regarding intelligible things, so too practical reason judges and decides about actions.

Now note that in every judgment the final decision belongs to the supreme court (*supremum iudicatorium*); for instance, we see that in speculative matters the final decision about a proposition is given by resolving it into its first principles (*per resolutionem ad prima principia*). For as long as there is a higher principle remaining, what is being inquired into can still be examined by reference to that principle, and so judgment is still being suspended in the sense that a final decision has not yet been handed down.

Now it is clear that human acts can be regulated (a) *by the rule of human reason*, which is taken from the created things that man has cognition of naturally, and, further, (b) *by the rule of divine law*, as was explained above (q. 19, a. 4 and q. 71, a. 6). Hence, since the rule of divine law is higher, it follows that the final decision by which judgment is in the end terminated belongs to higher reason, which focuses on the eternal conceptions.

Now when there are many things to be judged, the final judgment has to do with what occurs last. But in the case of human acts, the last thing to occur is the act itself, whereas what leads up to it (*praeambula*) is the pleasure that induces one toward the act. And so consent to the act properly belongs to higher reason, whereas the judgment that leads up to it and has to do with the pleasure belongs to lower reason, which has the lower judgment—though higher reason can likewise pass judgment concerning the pleasure, since whatever is subject to the judgment of lower reason is also subject to the judgment of higher reason, though not vice versa.

Reply to objection 1: As was explained above (q. 15, a. 3), consent is an act of the appetitive power not absolutely speaking, but insofar as it follows upon an act of reason that deliberates and judges. For an act of consent terminates in the will’s tending toward what reason has judged. Hence, consent can be attributed both to the will and to reason.

Reply to objection 2: Higher reason is said to consent to human acts by the very fact that it does not direct them in accord with them eternal law and thereby prevent a sinful act—regardless of whether

or not it is thinking about the eternal law. For when it is thinking about God's law, it shows actual contempt for it, whereas when it is not thinking about God's law, it is neglecting it in the manner of an omission. Hence, consent to a sinful deed proceeds from higher reason in every way, since, as Augustine puts it *De Trinitate* 12, "The mind cannot decide to perpetrate a sin effectively, unless that intention by which mind has the highest power to move the bodily members to action or to constrain them from action yields to the bad action or becomes its servant."

Reply to objection 3: Just as higher reason, by considering the eternal law, can direct or constrain the exterior act, so too it can direct or constrain the interior pleasure. And yet before one arrives at higher reason's judgment, and as soon as the sentient appetite proposes the pleasure, lower reason sometimes accepts this sort of pleasure while deliberating with reference to temporal conceptions; and in such a case consent to the pleasure belongs to lower reason. However, if the man perseveres in the same act of consent after eternal conceptions have also been taken into consideration, then consent of this sort will belong to higher reason.

Reply to objection 4: The imaginative power's apprehension is sudden and without deliberation, and so it can cause an act before higher or lower reason even have time to deliberate. By contrast, lower reason's judgment involves deliberation, which requires a temporal interval in which higher reason can also deliberate. Hence, if higher reason does not back away from the sinful act through its own deliberation, then the sinful act is imputed to it.

Article 8

Is the act of consenting to the pleasure a mortal sin?

It seems that the act of consenting to the pleasure (*consensus in delectationem*) is not a mortal sin:

Objection 1: Consenting to the pleasure belongs to lower reason, which does not focus on the eternal conceptions or on divine law and, consequently, is not turned away from the eternal conceptions or from divine law, either. But every mortal sin occurs through one's being turned away from divine law; this is clear from the definition, posited above (q. 71, a. 6), which Augustine gives of a mortal sin. Therefore, the consent to the pleasure is not a mortal sin.

Objection 2: It is bad to consent to something only because what is being consented to is bad. But "that because of which something is such-and-such is itself more such-and-such," or at least not less such-and-such. Therefore, what is consented to cannot be less bad than the act of consenting itself. But the pleasure without the deed (*delectatio sine opere*) is only a venial sin and not a mortal sin. Therefore, the consent to the pleasure is not a mortal sin, either.

Objection 3: As the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 10, pleasures differ in goodness or badness because of differences in the operations. But the interior act of thinking is one operation and the exterior act is another, e.g., an act of fornicating. Therefore, the pleasure that follows upon the interior act of thinking differs in goodness or badness from the pleasure of the act of fornicating to the extent that the interior act of thinking differs from the exterior act. And, as a result, the acts of consenting to each of them differ from one another in the same way. But the interior act of thinking is not a mortal sin; therefore, neither is the act of consenting to the thinking. Therefore, neither is the act of consenting to the pleasure.

Objection 4: An exterior act of fornication or adultery is a mortal sin not by reason of the pleasure, which is also found in the matrimonial act, but by reason of the disorderliness of the act itself. But someone who consents to the pleasure does not thereby consent to the act's disorderliness. Therefore, he does not seem to sin mortally.

Objection 5: The sin of homicide is more grave than the sin of simple fornication. But consenting

to the pleasure that follows upon the thought of homicide is not a mortal sin. Therefore, *a fortiori*, consenting to the pleasure that follows upon the thought of fornication is not a mortal sin.

Objection 6: As Augustine says, the Lord's prayer is recited for the remission of venial sins. But Augustine teaches that consenting to the pleasure ought to be retarded by the Lord's prayer. For in *De Trinitate* 12 he says, "This is far less of a sin than if one decided to fulfill it in deed; and so we ought to seek forgiveness for such thoughts as well, and we should strike our breasts and say, 'Forgive us our trespasses'." Therefore, the act of consenting to the pleasure is a venial sin.

But contrary to this: A little later Augustine adds, "The whole man is damned unless, through the grace of the Mediator, those things are forgiven which are thought of as sins of thought alone, i.e., where there is no willing to do the deeds, but there is a willing to delight the mind with them." But no one is damned except for a mortal sin. Therefore, the consent to the pleasure is a mortal sin.

I respond: On this matter various thinkers have had diverse opinions. Some have claimed that the consent to the pleasure is only a venial sin and not a mortal sin. By contrast, others have claimed that it is a mortal sin, and this opinion is more common and closer to the truth (*communior et versimilior*).

For notice that since, as *Ethics* 10 explains, every instance of pleasure follows upon some operation and, again, since every instance of pleasure has an object, there are two things that every instance of pleasure can be thought of in relation to, viz., (a) the *operation* that it follows upon and (b) the *object* in which one takes pleasure.

Now it happens that certain operations are the object of pleasure in just the way that any other thing is, since an operation can itself be taken as a good and an end. And sometimes the very operation which pleasure follows upon is itself an object of pleasure, viz., insofar as the appetitive power, whose role it is to take pleasure, is turned back toward the operation itself as a certain good—as, for instance, when someone engages in thinking and takes pleasure in the very fact that he is engaged in thinking insofar as his act own act of thinking pleases him.

On the other hand, the pleasure that follows upon an operation, e.g., some act of thinking, has for its object another operation in the sense of the thing that has been thought of, and in such a case the pleasure proceeds not from the appetite's inclination toward the act of thinking, but from its inclination toward the operation that has been thought of.

So, then, there are two ways in which someone who is thinking about fornication can take pleasure: (a) with respect to the act of thinking itself and (b) with respect to the act of fornicating that is being thought of:

Now the pleasure with respect to the act of thinking follows upon an affective inclination toward the act of thinking itself. But this act of thinking is not a mortal sin in its own right (*secundum se*)—in fact, sometimes it is a venial sin, as when someone is engaged in idle thinking (*cum aliquis inutiliter cogitat*), and sometimes it involves no sin at all, as when someone is engaged in purposefully thinking about [fornication] (*utiliter de ea cogitat*), e.g., because he wants to preach about it or to carry on a disputation about it. And so, as a result, the affection and pleasure which one has in this sense from thinking about fornication does not belong to the genus *mortal sin*, but instead is sometimes a venial sin and sometimes no sin at all. Hence, neither is the consent to such pleasure a mortal sin. And in this sense the first opinion [mentioned above] has truth.

On the other hand, when someone who is thinking about fornication takes pleasure in the very act that is being thought of, this stems from the fact that his affections are inclined toward this act. Hence, someone's consenting to such pleasure is nothing other than his consenting to his affections' being inclined toward an act of fornication; for no one takes pleasure except in what is conformed to his appetite. But it is a mortal sin for someone to deliberately choose (*ex deliberatione eligat*) that his affections should be conformed to what is in its own right a mortal sin. Hence, as the second opinion claims, this sort of consent to the pleasure of a mortal sin is itself a mortal sin.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained (a. 7), consent to the pleasure can belong not only to

lower reason but also to higher reason. And yet lower reason can itself be turned away from the eternal conceptions. For even though it does not focus on them in the sense that it gives rules in accord with them (something that is proper to higher reason), it nonetheless focuses on them in the sense of being regulated by them. And in this sense it is able to sin mortally by turning itself away from them. For the acts of the lower powers and even the acts of the bodily members can be mortal sins insofar as there is a defect in the ordering that belongs to higher reason in its role of regulating those acts in accord with the eternal conceptions.

Reply to objection 2: Consenting to a sin which is venial by its genus is itself a venial sin. And one can accordingly conclude that consenting to the pleasure which comes from a vain thought about fornication is a venial sin.

However, the pleasure that exists in the very act of fornicating is by its genus a mortal sin, and the fact that prior to the act of consenting it is only a venial sin is incidental (*per accidens*), viz., because of the act's incompleteness. And this incompleteness is removed by the later deliberate consent (*per consensum deliberatum supervenientem*). Hence, the fact that it is a mortal sin is traced to its nature.

Reply to objection 3: This argument goes through for the case of pleasure which has the act of thinking for its object.

Reply to objection 4: The pleasure that has an exterior act for its object cannot exist without one's being pleased with the exterior act in its own right—even if one decides not to fulfill it because it is forbidden by something higher. Hence, the act is disordered and, as a result, the pleasure will be disordered.

Reply to objection 5: Likewise, consenting to the pleasure that proceeds from one's being pleased with an act of homicide that one is thinking about is a mortal sin—but not consenting to the pleasure that proceeds from being pleased with an act of thinking about homicide.

Reply to objection 6: The Lord's prayer should be said to counter not only venial sins, but also mortal sins.

Article 9

Can there be a venial sin in higher reason insofar as it directs the lower powers?

It seems that there cannot be a venial sin in higher reason insofar as it directs the lower powers, i.e., insofar as it consent to a sinful act:

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine says that higher reason “focuses on (*inhaeret*) the eternal conceptions.” But sinning mortally involves turning away from the eternal conceptions (*peccare mortaliter est per aversionem a rationibus aeternis*). Therefore, it seems that in higher reason there cannot be any sin except a mortal sin.

Objection 2: Higher reason behaves like a principle in the spiritual life, just as the heart does in corporeal life. But diseases of the heart are mortal. Therefore, the sins of higher reason are mortal sins.

Objection 3: A venial sin becomes mortal if it is done out of contempt [for divine law]. But contempt seems to be involved in someone's deliberately committing even a venial sin (*quod aliquis ex deliberatione peccet etiam venialiter*). Therefore, since higher reason's consent is always accompanied by deliberation about divine law, it seems that there cannot be a sin in higher reason without its being a mortal sin, and this because of a contempt for divine law.

But contrary to this: As has been explained (a. 7), it belongs to higher reason to consent to a sinful act. But consenting to an act of venial sin is itself a venial sin. Therefore, venial sin can exist in higher reason.

I respond: As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 12, higher reason “focuses on examining or

consulting the eternal conceptions”—“examining” insofar as it thinks about their truth, and “consulting” insofar as it judges and orders other things by reference to the eternal conceptions. And it is in this latter role that, in deliberating by reference to the eternal conceptions, it consents to or dissents from an act.

Now it can happen that the disorderedness of the act to which it consents is not contrary to the eternal conceptions, since it does not involve a turning away from the last end, but instead lies outside the eternal conceptions in the way that an act of venial sin does (*sed est praeter eas sicut actus peccati venialis*). Hence, when higher reason consents to an act of venial sin, it does not turn itself away from the eternal conceptions. Hence, it sins venially and not mortally.

Reply to objection 1: The reply to the first objection is clear from what has been said.

Reply to objection 2: There are two sorts of heart disease. One exists in the very substance of the heart and alters its natural condition; and this sort of disease is always mortal. The other sort of heart disease stems from a disorder either in the heart’s movement or in something that is in the vicinity of the heart; and this sort of disease is not always mortal.

Similarly, in higher reason there is always a mortal sin when the ordering of higher reason to its proper object, i.e., eternal conceptions, is destroyed. However, when there is [only] a disorder with respect to this object, then the sin is venial and not mortal.

Reply to objection 3: Deliberate consent to a sin does not always involve contempt for divine law, but only when the sin is contrary to divine law (*solum quando peccatum legi divinae contrariatur*).

Article 10

Can a venial sin exist in higher reason with respect to itself, i.e., insofar as it examines the eternal conceptions?

It seems that a venial sin cannot exist in higher reason with respect to itself (*secundum seipsam*), i.e., insofar as it examines the eternal conceptions (*secundum quod inspicit rationes aeternas*):

Objection 1: A power’s act is not defective except because it is related to its object in a disordered way. But higher reason’s object consists in the eternal conceptions, and disorder regarding the eternal conceptions does not occur without a mortal sin. Therefore, in higher reason there cannot be a venial sin with respect to itself.

Objection 2: Since reason is a deliberative power, reason’s act always involves deliberation (*actus rationis semper est cum deliberatione*). But every disordered movement in matters that pertain to God is such that if it occurs with deliberation, then it is a mortal sin. Therefore, there is never a venial sin in higher reason with respect to itself.

Objection 3: It sometimes happens that a sin that sneaks up on one (*peccatum ex subreptione*) is a venial sin, whereas a sin that proceeds from deliberation (*peccatum ex deliberatione*) is a mortal sin, since when reason deliberates, it has recourse to some greater good which is such that a man sins more gravely when he acts contrary to it. For instance, when reason deliberates about a disordered pleasurable act and concludes that it is contrary to God’s law, then by consenting it sins more gravely than if it had merely taken into consideration that the act is contrary to moral virtue. But higher reason cannot have recourse to anything higher than its own object. Therefore, if a movement that sneaks up on one (*motus ex subreptione*) is not a mortal sin, then not even a subsequent deliberation will make it a mortal sin—which is clearly false. Therefore, a venial sin cannot exist in higher reason with respect to itself.

But contrary to this: A movement of unbelief that sneaks up on one is a venial sin. But it belongs to higher reason with respect to itself. Therefore, a venial sin can exist in higher reason with respect to itself.

I respond: There is one way in which higher reason is directed (*fertur*) toward its own object and

another way in which it is directed toward the objects of the lower powers that are directed by it.

For higher reason is directed toward the objects of the lower powers only insofar as it consults the eternal conceptions about them. Hence, it is directed toward them only in a manner that involves deliberation. But deliberate consent in matters that are mortal by their genus is a mortal sin. And so higher reason always sins mortally if the acts of the lower powers to which it consents are themselves mortal sins.

With respect to its own object, higher reason has two acts, viz., (a) simple intuition (*simplex intuitus*) and (b) deliberation (*deliberatio*), insofar as it likewise consults the eternal reasons about its own object.

As regards simple intuition, it can have a disordered movement with respect to divine matters—as, for instance, when someone undergoes a sudden movement of unbelief. Even though unbelief is by its genus a mortal sin, nonetheless, a sudden movement of unbelief is a venial sin. For a sin is not mortal unless it is contrary to God's law, and something that pertains to the Faith can occur to reason unexpectedly under some rubric other [than the Faith] (*sub quadam alia ratione*) before eternal reason, i.e., God's law, is consulted or can be consulted about it—as, for instance, when someone suddenly apprehends that the resurrection of the dead is impossible according to nature, and resists this apprehension as soon as he has it, before he has time to deliberate about the fact that this [article of the Faith] has been handed down to us as something to be accepted on faith according to divine law. On the other hand, if the movement of unbelief persists after this deliberation, then it is a mortal sin.

And so with respect to its own proper object, even if the sin in question is mortal by its genus, higher reason can sin venially in the case of sudden movements—or it can also sin mortally through deliberate consent. On the other hand, in those matters that pertain to the lower powers, it always sins mortally in cases in which the sins are mortal by their genus, though not in cases in which the sins are venial by their genus.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, even if a sin that is contrary to the eternal conceptions is mortal by its genus, it can nonetheless be a venial sin because of the incompleteness of a sudden act (*propter imperfectionem actus subiti*).

Reply to objection 2: In matters of action, reason, to which deliberation belongs, also has simple intuition of those things from which deliberation proceeds—just as, in speculative matters, it belongs to reason both to syllogize and to form propositions. And so even reason can have a sudden movement.

Reply to objection 3: One and the same thing can be subject to different sorts of consideration, one of which is higher than another. For instance, it is possible for God to be thought of insofar as He is knowable by human reason or insofar as He is believed in by divine revelation, which is a higher sort of consideration. And so even though higher reason's object is the highest according to the thing's nature, there is nonetheless a higher consideration to which it can be brought back. It is for this reason that, as was explained above, what was not a mortal sin in a sudden movement becomes a mortal sin because of a deliberation that has recourse to a higher consideration.