

QUESTION 77

The Sentient Appetite as a Cause of Sin

Next we have to consider the sentient appetite as a cause of sin (*considerandum est de causa peccati ex parte sensitivi appetitus*), i.e., whether the passions of the soul are causes of sin.

On this topic there are eight questions: (1) Can a passion of the soul move or incline the will? (2) Can a passion overcome reason against its own knowledge? (3) Is a sin that stems from a passion a sin of weakness (*utrum peccatum quod ex passione provenit sit peccatum ex infirmitate*)? (4) Is the passion which is love for oneself a cause of every sin? (5) What of the three causes of sin that are posited in 1 John 2:16, viz., “concupiscence of the eyes, concupiscence of the flesh, and pride of life”? (6) Does a passion that is a cause of a sin diminish that sin? (7) Does it totally excuse one from the sin? (8) Can a sin of passion be a mortal sin?

Article 1

Is the will moved by a passion of the sentient appetite?

It seems that the will is not moved by a passion of the sentient appetite:

Objection 1: No passive power is moved except by its own object. But the will is a power that is at the same time both passive and active, since, as the Philosopher says in general about the appetitive power in *De Anima* 3, “it both effects movement and is moved.” Therefore, since the will’s object is the good of reason rather than a passion of the sentient appetite, it seems that a passion of the sentient does not move the will.

Objection 2: A higher mover is not moved by a lower mover; for instance, the soul is not moved by the body. But the will, which is reason’s appetite, is related to the sentient appetite as a higher mover to a lower mover; for in *De Anima* 3 the Philosopher says, “Reason’s appetite moves the sentient appetite in the way that one sphere moves another in the case of the celestial bodies.” Therefore, the will cannot be moved by a passion of the sentient appetite.

Objection 3: Nothing immaterial can be moved by anything material. But the will is an immaterial power; for it does not make use of a corporeal organ, since, as *De Anima* 3 says, it exists in reason. But the sentient appetite is a material power insofar as it is grounded in a corporeal organ (*utpote fundata in organo corporali*). Therefore, a passion of the sentient appetite cannot move the intellectual appetite.

But contrary to this: Daniel 13:56 says, “Concupiscence (*concupiscentia*) has perverted your heart.”

I respond: A passion of the sentient appetite cannot *directly* draw or move the will, but it can do this *indirectly*—and this in two ways:

First, by way of *a sort of weakening of attention (secundum quandam abstractionem)*. For since all the powers of the soul are rooted in the single essence of the soul, when one power is intensified in its act, another has to become less intensified in its act or even totally impeded. This is because (a) every power that is dispersed toward several things is weakened (*fit minor*), and so, conversely, when it is intensified with respect to a single thing, it is less able to be dispersed toward other things; and also because (b) the soul’s works require a certain level of attention such that when the soul is strongly applied to one thing, it cannot be strongly attentive to something else. Accordingly, when the sentient appetite’s movement is strengthened in accord with a given passion, then through a certain sort of weakening the proper movement of the rational appetite, i.e., the will, is lessened or totally impeded.

The second way is *on the part of the will’s object*, i.e., the good that is apprehended by reason. For as is clear in those who have lost their minds, reason’s judgment and apprehension, along with the estimative power’s judgment, are impeded by vehement and disorderly apprehensions on the part of the

imagination. But it is clear that the imagination's apprehension, along with the estimative power's judgment, follow the passions of the sentient appetite, just as the judgment of the sense of taste follows the tongue's disposition. Hence, we see that men who are in a passion do not easily turn away from the things by which they are being affected. Hence, as a result, reason's judgment very often follows a passion of the sentient appetite. And as a result of this, so does the movement of the will, which is apt to follow reason's judgment.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, because of the sentient appetite's passion a change occurs in the judgment about the will's object—even though the sentient appetite's passion is not directly the will's object.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained, what is higher is not moved directly by something lower than it, but it can be moved by it indirectly in a certain way.

Reply to objection 3: The same thing should be said in reply to the third objection.

Article 2

Can reason be overcome by a passion against its own knowledge?

It seems that reason cannot be overcome by a passion against its own knowledge (*non possit superari a passione contra suam scientiam*):

Objection 1: What is stronger is not overcome by what is weaker. But because of its certitude, knowledge is the strongest thing that exists within us. Therefore, it cannot be overcome by passion, which is weak and quickly passes.

Objection 2: An act of willing is directed only at a good or at an apparent good. But when a passion draws the will toward what is truly good, then it does not incline reason against its own knowledge. On the other hand, when it draws the will toward what is an apparent and non-existent good, then it draws it toward what seems to reason to be the case; but the fact that something seems to it to be the case falls within reason's knowledge. Therefore, a passion never inclines reason against its own knowledge.

Objection 3: If someone replies that passion draws reason, which knows something in general, to make a contrary judgment in the particular case, then against this:

If a universal proposition and a particular proposition are opposed to one another, then they are opposed as contradictories, in the way that 'Every man is such-and-such' and 'Not every man is such-and-such' are contradictories. But as *De Interpretatione* 2 says, two opinions that fall under contradictories are contraries (*duae opiniones quae sunt contradictoriarum sunt contrariae*). Therefore, if anyone who knew something in general made an opposed judgment in the singular case, then it would follow that he has contrary opinions at the same time—which is impossible.

Objection 4: Whoever knows a universal likewise knows a particular that he realizes is contained under that universal. For instance, whoever knows that every mule is sterile knows that *this animal* is sterile, as long as he knows that this animal is a mule; this is clear from what is said in *Posterior Analytics* 1. But one who knows something in general, e.g., that one should not commit any act of fornication, knows that *this particular* is contained under the universal, e.g., that *this* is an act of fornication. Therefore, it seems that he also knows in particular [that he should not commit this act].

Objection 5: According to the Philosopher, "Spoken expressions (*ea quae sunt in voce*) are signs of what the soul understands intellectually (*signa intellectus animae*). But a man in the throes of a passion (*homo in passione existens*) often admits that that what he is choosing is bad even in the particular case. Therefore, he has knowledge even of the particular. So, then, it seems that the passions cannot draw reason against its universal knowledge, since it cannot be the case that it has the universal

knowledge and thinks the opposite in the particular case.

But contrary to this: In Romans 7:23 the Apostle says, “I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin.” But the law that is in the members is concupiscence, of which he had previously spoken. Therefore, since concupiscence is a passion, it seems that a passion draws reason even against what it knows.

I respond: As the Philosopher reports in *Ethics 7*, Socrates was of the opinion that knowledge can never be overcome by a passion. Hence, he claimed that all the virtues are types of knowledge, and that all sins are types of ignorance (*omnes virtutes esse scientias et omnia peccata esse ignorantias*).

To be sure, there is a sense in which his reasoning was correct in this matter. For since an act of willing is directed toward the good or toward an apparent good, the will is never directed toward what is bad unless what is not good appears to reason to be good in some way. And because of this, the will never tends toward what is bad except when there is some sort of ignorance or error on the part of reason (*nisi cum aliqua ignorantia vel errore rationis*). Hence, Proverbs 14:22 says, “They are ignorant who do evil.”

However, because it is clear from experience that many individuals act against what they have knowledge of—and this is confirmed as well by divine authority in Luke 12:47 (“The servant who knew his master’s will and did not do it will be beaten with many stripes”) and in James 4:17 (“To him who knows to do good and does not do it, it is to him sin”)—what Socrates said is not true absolutely speaking. Instead, we have to draw a distinction, as the Philosopher teaches in *Ethics 7*. For there are two sorts of knowledge by which a man is directed toward acting uprightly, viz., *universal* knowledge and *particular* knowledge, and, as was explained above (q. 76, a. 1), a defect in either of them is sufficient to block the rectitude of a deed and the rectitude of an act of willing (*sufficit ad hoc quod impediatur rectitudo operis et voluntatis*).

Thus, it can happen that someone has an instance of general knowledge, e.g., that one should not commit any act of fornication, and yet he does not recognize in particular that he should not commit *this* act, which is an act of fornication (*sed tamen non cognoscat in particulari hunc actum qui est fornicatio non esse faciendum*). And this is sufficient for the will’s not following reason’s general knowledge.

Again, notice that nothing prevents something from being known habitually and yet not actually being taken into account. Therefore, it is possible for someone to have correct *singular* knowledge—and not just correct *universal* knowledge—and yet not actually take it into account. And in such a case it does not seem difficult for a man to act outside of what he does not actually take into account.

Now the fact that in a particular case a man does not take into account what he knows habitually sometimes occurs only because of a *lack of the relevant intention*—as, for instance, when a man who knows geometry does not intend to consider the conclusions of geometry, which he can promptly consider at any moment. On the other hand, sometimes it is because of *some supervening obstacle* that a man does not take account of what he knows habitually—as, for instance, because of some extraneous occupation or because of some bodily sickness. And it is in this latter way that someone who is experiencing a passion (*in passione constitutus*) does not take into account in a particular case what he knows in general, and this because the passion impedes his taking it into account.

Now there are three ways in which a passion does this:

First, *by weakening one’s attention (per quamdam distractionem)*, as was explained above (a. 1).

Second, *by contrariety*, in the sense that a passion often inclines one toward the contrary of what the general knowledge dictates (*inclinat ad contrarium huius quod scientia universalis habet*).

Third, *through some sort of bodily change* by which reason is in some sense kept from freely going into action (*ex qua ratio quodammodo ligatur ne libere in actum exeat*)—in the same way that sleep or inebriation likewise prevent the use of reason (*sicut etiam somnus vel ebrietas ligant usum rationis*) by effecting certain bodily changes. The fact that this occurs in the case of the passions is clear from the fact that sometimes, when the passions are intense, a man totally loses the use of reason; for there are

many who go mad (*in insaniam conversi*) because of excessive love or anger. And in this way a passion draws reason into making a judgment in a particular case that runs contrary to the general knowledge it has.

Reply to objection 1: General or universal knowledge, which has the most certitude, does not occupy the principal place in operations; rather, particular knowledge does, because operations have to do with singulars. Hence, it is not surprising if, in the case of actions, a passion runs contrary to general or universal knowledge in the absence of the consideration of the particular.

Reply to objection 2: The very fact that in a particular case something appears good which is not good stems from a passion. And yet the particular judgment is contrary to reason's general or universal knowledge.

Reply to objection 3: To be sure, it could not happen that someone has at the same time both (a) an *actual* instance of knowledge or true opinion with respect to a universal affirmative proposition and (b) an *actual* instance of false opinion with respect to a corresponding particular negative proposition, or vice versa. However, it can indeed happen that someone has both (a) *habitual* true knowledge with respect to a universal affirmative proposition and (b) an *actual* false opinion with respect to a corresponding particular negative proposition. For an act is directly contrary to an act and not to a habit.

Reply to objection 4: Someone who has general or universal knowledge is impeded by a passion from being able to subsume something under that universal and arrive at the conclusion. Instead, he subsumes it under *another* universal that the inclination of the passion has suggested to him, and he draws the conclusion under this latter universal. Hence, as the Philosopher explains in *Ethics 7*, an incontinent man's syllogism involves four propositions, two of which are universal: one of them comes from reason, e.g., *One should not commit any act of fornication*, and the other comes from the passion, e.g., *One should pursue pleasure*. Thus, the passion binds reason so that it does not subsume and reach a conclusion under the *first* universal proposition. Hence, for as long as the passion persists, reason subsumes and reaches a conclusion under the *second* universal proposition.

Reply to objection 5: An inebriated man is sometimes able to speak words that signify profound sentiments, which he nonetheless cannot pass judgment on with his mind because his drunkenness prevents this. In the same way, as *Ethics 7* explains, even if someone in the grip of a passion pronounces with his mouth, "I should not do this," he is nonetheless thinking interiorly in his mind that he *should* do it.

Article 3

Should a sin of passion be called a sin of weakness?

It seems that a sin of passion should not be called a sin of weakness (*peccatum quod est ex passione non debeat dici ex infirmitate*):

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), a passion is a sort of vehement movement on the part of the sentient appetite. But a movement's vehemence attests more to strength than to weakness. Therefore, a sin of passion should not be called a sin of weakness.

Objection 2: A man's weakness especially involves that which is more fragile within him. But this is his flesh (*caro*); hence, Psalm 77:39 says, "He remembered that they are flesh." Therefore, one should say that a sin of weakness is a sin that stems from some bodily defect rather than a sin that stems from a passion of the soul.

Objection 3: A man does not seem to be weak with respect to what is subject to his will. But it is subject to a man's will to do or not to do what a passion inclines him toward—this according to Genesis 4:7 ("Your appetite shall be subject to you, and you shall have dominion over it"). Therefore, a sin of

passion is not a sin of weakness.

But contrary to this: In *De Tusculanis Quaestionibus* 4 Tully calls the passions “sicknesses of the soul.” But ‘sickness’ is another name for ‘weakness’. Therefore, a sin of passion should be called a sin of weakness.

I respond: The proper cause of a sin belongs to the part of the soul in which the sin mainly exists. Now weakness in the soul can be thought of by comparison to weakness in the body. A man’s body is said to be weak when it is weakened or impeded in the execution of its proper operation because of some disorder in the parts of the body, so that a man’s humors and bodily members are not subject to the power that rules and moves the body. Hence, a member is likewise said to be weak if it cannot perform the operation of the member when healthy—e.g., as Aristotle says in *De Historiis Animalium*, an eye is said to be weak when it cannot see clearly.

Hence, weakness is likewise said to belong to the soul when the soul is impeded in its proper operation because of a disorder in its parts. Now just as bodily parts are said to be disordered when they do not follow the order of nature, so too the parts of the soul are said to be disordered when they are not subordinated to the order of reason. For reason is the ruling power for the parts of the soul. So, then, when the concupiscible or irascible power is affected by some passion in a way contrary to the order of reason (*extra ordinem rationis*), and when, because of this obstacle, it stands in opposition—in the way explained above (a. 2)—to an action required of a man, then the sin is called a sin of weakness. Hence, in *Ethics* 1 the Philosopher compares the incontinent man to someone with palsy, whose bodily parts move in opposition to what he himself intends.

Reply to objection 1: Just as, in the case of the body, the stronger the movement that is opposed to reason, the greater the weakness, so, too, the stronger the movement of a passion in opposition to the order of reason, the greater the soul’s weakness.

Reply to objection 2: Sin consists principally in the act of a will that is not impeded by a bodily weakness. For as was explained above (a. 1), someone who is weak in body can have a will that is prone toward doing something and yet be impeded by a passion. Hence, when a sin is called a sin of weakness, this should be taken to refer to a weakness of the soul rather than to a weakness of the body.

Still, a weakness of the soul can itself be called a ‘weakness of the flesh’, since it is from the condition of the flesh that the passions of the soul arise in us; for the sentient appetite is a power that makes use of a corporeal organ.

Reply to objection 3: It is within the will’s power to assent or not to assent to what a passion inclines us toward, and to that extent our appetite is said to be subject to us. However, the will’s assent or dissent is itself impeded by a passion in the way explained above.

Article 4

Is love of self a source of every sin?

It seems that love of self is not a source of every sin (*amor sui non sit principium omnis peccati*):

Objection 1: What is good and right in itself is not a proper cause of sin. But love of self is in itself good and right; this is why man is commanded in Leviticus 19:18 to love his neighbor as himself. Therefore, love of self cannot be a proper cause of sin.

Objection 2: In Romans 7:8 the Apostle says, “Through the commandment sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence,” where a Gloss says, “The law is good, since by forbidding concupiscence, it forbids all evils.” It says this because concupiscence is a cause of every sin. But as was shown above (q. 23, a. 4 and q. 30, a. 2), desire is a passion that is different from love. Therefore, love of self is not a cause of every sin.

Objection 3: In commenting on Psalm 39:17 (“Things set on fire and burned through”), Augustine says, “Every sin stems either from a love that inflames one in a bad way or from a fear that abases one in a bad way.” Therefore, love of self is not by itself a cause of every sin.

Objection 4: Just as man sometimes sins because of a disordered love of self, so too he sometimes sins because of a disordered love of his neighbor. Therefore, love of self is not a cause of every sin.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei* 14 Augustine says, “Love of self that leads to contempt for God builds up the city of Babylon.” But a man belongs to the city of Babylon by any sort of sin. Therefore, love of self is a cause of every sin.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 75, a. 1), the proper and *per se* cause of a sin has to be taken from the side of one’s turning toward a changeable good, and from this side that every sinful act proceeds from a disordered desire for some temporal good. Now the fact that someone desires a temporal good in a disordered way stems from his loving himself in a disordered way; for to love someone is to will some good for him. Hence, it is clear that disordered love of self is a cause of every sin.

Reply to objection 1: Well-ordered love of self is right and natural (*amor sui ordinatus est debitus et naturalis*), in the sense that one wills himself a good that is fitting. By contrast, Augustine is claiming that disordered love of self, which leads to contempt for God, is a cause of sin.

Reply to objection 2: As has already been explained, the concupiscence by which one desires a good for himself is traced back to love of self as its cause.

Reply to objection 3: An individual is said to love both (a) the good that he wants for himself and (b) himself, for whom he wants the good. Therefore, love in the sense in which love is said to be directed at what is wanted—in the way that someone is said to love wine or money—is susceptible to fear as a cause that has to do with drawing back from what is bad. For every sin stems either from a disordered desire for something good or from a disordered drawing back from something bad. But both of these are traced back to love of self. For it is because he loves himself that a man desires good things and draws back from bad things.

Reply to objection 4: A friend is, as it were, another self (*est alter ipse*). And in this way a sin that is committed out of love for a friend is seen to be committed out of love for oneself.

Article 5

Are ‘concupiscence of the flesh’, ‘concupiscence of the eyes’, and ‘pride of life’ appropriately posited as causes of sins?

It seems that ‘concupiscence of the flesh’, ‘concupiscence of the eyes’, and ‘pride of life’ (1 John 2:16) are not appropriately posited as causes of sins:

Objection 1: According to the Apostle in 1 Timothy 6:10, “The avid desire for money is the root of every bad thing.” But pride of life is not contained under the avid desire for money. Therefore, it should not be posited among the causes of sins.

Objection 2: Concupiscence of the flesh is especially excited by the eye’s act of seeing—this according to Daniel 13:56 (“Beauty (*species*) has deceived you”). Therefore, concupiscence of the eyes should not be divided off on the same level from concupiscence of the flesh (*non debet concupiscentia oculorum contra concupiscentiam carnis*).

Objection 3: As was established above (q. 30, a. 2), concupiscence is the desire for what is pleasurable. But pleasures occur not only because of vision, but also because of the other senses. Therefore, concupiscence of hearing and of the other senses should also be posited.

Objection 4: As has been explained (a. 4), just as a man is induced to sin by a disordered desire

for something good, so too he is induced to sin by a disordered aversion to something bad. But there is nothing enumerated here that has to do with the avoidance of what is bad. Therefore, the causes of sin are not sufficiently touched upon.

But contrary to this: 1 John 2:16 says, “All that is in the world is concupiscence of the flesh, or concupiscence of the flesh, or pride of life.” Now something is said to be “in the world” because of sin; this is why it says in the same place, “The whole world is set in sin (*in maligno positus est*).” Therefore, the three things under discussion are causes of sins.

I respond: As has already been explained (a. 4), disordered love of self is a cause of every sin. Now [disordered] love of self includes a disordered desire for something good, since each individual desires some good for whomever he loves. Hence, it is clear that a disordered desire for a good is a cause of every sin.

Now as was explained above (q. 23, a. 1), there are two ways in which a good is an object of the sentient appetite—which is where the passions of the soul, which are a cause of sin, exist—viz., (a) *absolutely speaking*, insofar as it is an object of the *concupiscible* power, and (b) *under the concept of the arduous*, insofar as it is an object of the *irascible* power.

Now as was established above (q. 30, a. 3), there are two sorts of concupiscence or concupiscible desire (*duplex concupiscentia*):

The first is *natural concupiscence*, which is directed toward things by which our corporeal nature is sustained, either with respect to the conservation of the individual, e.g., food and drink and other things of this sort, or with respect to the conservation of the species, as in the case of sexual pleasure. And a disordered desire for such things is called *concupiscence of the flesh*.

The second is *concupiscence belonging to a soul* or *spiritual concupiscence* (*concupiscentia animalis*), which is directed not at things that afford sustenance or pleasure through the senses of the flesh, but instead at things that are pleasing to the apprehension of the imagination or of some such sort of perception, e.g., money, ornate clothes, etc. This spiritual concupiscence is called *concupiscence of the eyes*, regardless of whether (a) this is understood as a desire that belongs to the eyes, i.e., a desire for the very act of seeing that occurs through the eyes, so that it refers to *curiosity*, in the way that Augustine explains it in *Confessiones* 10, or whether (b) it has to do with a desire for things that are proposed from the outside to the eyes, so that it refers to *avid desire* (*cupiditas*), in the way that others explain it.

On the other hand, it is a disordered desire for an arduous good that pertains to *pride of life*. For as will be explained below (*ST* 2-2, q. 162, a. 1), pride is a disordered desire for excellence.

And so it is clear that all the passions that are a cause of sin can be traced back to the three things under discussion. For all the passions of the concupiscible power are traced back to the first two, while all the passions of the irascible part are traced back to the third. The reason why the third one is not divided into two is that all the passions of the irascible part fit in with spiritual concupiscence.

Reply to objection 1: Insofar as ‘avid desire’ (*cupiditas*) implies a desire for any good in general, even pride of life is contained under *avid desire*.

On the other hand, it will be explained below (q. 84, a. 1) how avid desire as a specific vice, which is called ‘avarice’, is a root of all sins.

Reply to objection 2: ‘Concupiscence of the eyes’ as used here does not mean a desire for everything that can be seen with the eyes, but only a desire for those things in which what is sought is not carnal pleasure, which occurs through the sense of touch, but rather the pleasure of the eye, i.e., the pleasure of an apprehensive power.

Reply to objection 3: As *Metaphysics* 1 explains, the sense of sight (*sensus visus*) is the most excellent of the senses and extends to the most things. And so, as Augustine explains in *De Verbis Domini*, the name of the sense of sight is transferred to all the other senses and even to all interior apprehensions.

Reply to objection 4: As was explained above (q. 25, a. 2 and q. 29, a. 2), an aversion to what is

bad is caused by a desire for the good. And so only the passions that incline one toward something good are posited here, given that they are causes of the things that effect a disordered aversion to what is bad.

Article 6

Is a sin lessened by passion?

It seems that a sin is not lessened by passion (*peccatum non alleviatur propter passionem*):

Objection 1: An increase in the cause increases the effect; for instance, if something hot dissolves a given thing, then what is hotter will dissolve it to a greater degree. But as has been established, passion is a cause of sin. Therefore, the more intense the passion, the greater the sin. Therefore, passion increases the sin and does not diminish it.

Objection 2: A bad passion is related to sin in the same way that a good passion is related to merit. But a good passion increases merit, since the greater the mercy with which someone aids a poor man, the more he seems to merit. Therefore, a bad passion likewise aggravates a sin rather than lessening it.

Objection 3: The more intense the act of willing by which someone commits a sin, the more grave the sin seems to be. But when a passion impels the will, it makes it to be directed more strongly toward the sinful act in question. Therefore, passion aggravates the sin.

But contrary to this: The very passion of concupiscence is called a ‘temptation of the flesh’. But as is clear from Augustine, the greater the temptation that someone is subverted by, the less of a sin he commits. Therefore, passion diminishes a sin.

I respond: A sin consists essentially in an act of free choice, which is a power of the will and reason. A passion, on the other hand, is a movement of the sentient appetite.

Now the sentient appetite can be related to free choice both (a) antecedently and (b) consequently:

It is related to it *antecedently* insofar as a passion of the sentient appetite draws or inclines reason and the will; this was explained above (q. 9, a. 1 and q. 10, a. 3). On the other hand, it is related to it *consequently* insofar as the movements of the higher powers, if they are strong, flow over into the lower powers. For the will cannot be moved intensely toward something without some passion being excited in the sentient appetite.

Therefore, if a passion is being thought of insofar as it *precedes* the sinful act, then it must be the case that it diminishes the sin. For an act is a sin to the extent that it is voluntary and is within our power (*in nobis*), where something is said to be ‘within our power’ because of reason and will. Hence, to the extent that reason and will do something of themselves (*ex se*) and not because of the impulse of passion, that thing is more voluntary and more within our power. And a passion diminishes a sin to the extent that it diminishes voluntariness.

On the other hand, a *consequent* passion does not diminish a sin but instead increases it—or, better, it is a sign of its magnitude insofar as it exhibits the will’s intensity with respect to the sinful act. And in this sense it is true that the more eagerness or concupiscence someone sins with (*maiori libidine vel concupiscentia peccat*), the greater the degree to which he sins (*magis peccat*).

Reply to objection 1: A passion is a sin on the side of the turning-toward (*ex parte conversione*). By contrast, the gravity of the sin has more to do with the turning-away (*magis attenditur ex parte aversione*), which follows upon the turning-toward *per accidens*, i.e., outside of the sinner’s intention. But *per accidens* causes do not increase their effects when they themselves are increased; it is only *per se* causes that do this.

Reply to objection 2: A good passion that follows upon reason’s judgment increases merit. By contrast, if it precedes reason’s judgment—so that, namely, the man is moved to act well more by the passion than by reason’s judgment—then this sort of passion diminishes the act’s goodness and

praiseworthiness.

Reply to objection 3: Even if the will's movement is more intense when it is incited by a passion, this movement is nonetheless not proper to the will in the way that it would be if the will were being moved by reason alone.

Article 7

Does passion totally excuse one from sin?

It seems that passion totally excuses one from sin (*totaliter excuset a peccato*):

Objection 1: Whatever causes involuntariness excuses one totally from a sin. But concupiscence of the flesh, which is a passion, is a cause of involuntariness—this according to Galatians 5:17 (“The flesh lusts against the spirit so that you do not do the things that you want to do”). Therefore, passion totally excuses one from sin.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 2), passion is a cause of a certain sort of ignorance with respect to a particular case. But as was established above (q. 19, a. 6), ignorance of the particular totally excuses one from sin. Therefore, passion totally excuses one from sin.

Objection 3: Weakness of soul is worse than weakness of body. But weakness of body totally excuses one from sin, as is clear in the case of those who are insane. Therefore, *a fortiori*, passion, which is a weakness of soul, excuses one from sin.

But contrary to this: In Romans 7:5 the Apostle speaks of the “passions of sins,” and for no reason other than that they are causes of sins. But this would not be the case if they totally excused one from sin. Therefore, passions do not totally excuse one from sin.

I respond: An act that is bad by its genus is totally excused from sin only by being rendered totally involuntary. Hence, if a passion is such that it renders the act that follows upon it totally involuntary, then it totally excuses one from sin; otherwise, it does not totally excuse one.

On this score, there are two things that have to be taken into account:

The first is that something can be voluntary either (a) *in its own right (secundum se)*, as when the will is moved directly toward it, or (b) *in its cause (secundum suam causam)*, as when the will is moved toward its cause and not toward its effect; this is clear in the case of one who becomes voluntarily inebriated, since voluntariness is imputed to what he does because of his drunkenness.

The second thing to be taken into account is that something is called ‘voluntary’ either (a) *directly* or (b) *indirectly—directly*, as in the case of what the will is directly moved toward, and *indirectly*, as in the case of what the will is able to prevent but does not prevent.

Accordingly, then, one must draw distinctions:

A passion is sometimes such that it totally removes the use of reason, as is clear in the case of those who go insane because love or anger. In such a case, if the passion was voluntary from the start, then the act is imputed as a sin, since it is voluntary in its cause—as was explained above concerning drunkenness. On the other hand, if the cause was natural and not voluntary—as, for instance, when because of sickness or some other cause of this sort someone falls into a passion that totally removes the use of reason—then the act is rendered completely involuntary and, as a result, the individual is totally excused from sin.

However, a passion is sometimes such that it does not totally interrupt the use of reason. And in such a case reason is able either (a) to exclude the passion by diverting itself to other thoughts or (b) to keep its effect from following upon it; for as was explained above (q. 17, a. 9), the bodily members are applied to a deed only through reason's consent. Hence, a passion of this sort does not totally excuse one from sin.

Reply to objection 1: The phrase “so that you do not do the things that you want to do” should be taken to refer not to what is done through the exterior act, but instead to the interior movement of concupiscence. For a man will never to desire what is bad. This is also the way to interpret Romans 7:15 (“The evil which I will not, that I do”).

An alternative reply is that these words can be taken to refer to an act of will that precedes the passion, as is clear in the case of those continent individuals who because of their concupiscence act contrary to what they intend.

Reply to objection 2: The sort of ‘particular ignorance’ that totally excuses one from a sin is ignorance of a circumstance which one cannot know even when due diligence is taken. By contrast, a passion causes ignorance of the law in a particular case by impeding the application of one’s general knowledge to a particular act. As has been explained, this sort passion is such that reason is able to repel it.

Reply to objection 3: Weakness of body is involuntary. However, there would be a parallel if it were voluntary, as has been explained for the case of drunkenness, which is a sort of bodily weakness.

Article 8

Can a sin of passion be mortal?

It seems that a sin of passion cannot be mortal (*peccatum quod ex passione non possit esse mortale*):

Objection 1: Venial sin is divided off against mortal sin. But a sin of weakness is venial (*peccatum quod est ex infirmitate est veniale*), since it has within itself a reason for leniency. Therefore, since a sin of passion arises from weakness, it seems that it cannot be mortal

Objection 2: A cause is not more powerful than its effect. But a passion cannot be a mortal sin, since, as was explained above (q. 74, a. 4), there is no mortal sin in the sentient appetite. Therefore, a sin of passion cannot be mortal.

Objection 3: As is clear from what has been said (aa. 1-2), a passion leads one away from reason. But it is the role of reason either to be turned toward God or to turn away from Him, and it is turning away from God that the nature of a mortal sin consists in. Therefore, a sin of passion cannot be mortal.

But contrary to this: In Romans 7:5 the Apostle says, “The passions of the sins work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” But it is proper to a mortal sin “to bring forth fruit unto death” (*quod fructificet morti*). Therefore, a sin of passion can be a mortal.

I respond: As has been explained (q. 72, a. 5), a mortal sin consists in turning away from the ultimate end, which is God. This turning-away pertains to deliberative reason (*ratio deliberans*), the role of which is precisely to order one toward his end. Therefore, the only way in which it can happen that an inclination in the soul that is contrary to the ultimate end is not a mortal sin is that deliberative reason cannot occur—and this happens in the case of sudden movements.

Now when someone proceeds from passion into an act of sin or into deliberate consent, this does not happen suddenly. Hence, deliberative reason can occur in such a case; for, as has been explained (a. 7), it can exclude, or at least impede, a passion. Hence, if deliberative reason does not occur, then there is a mortal sin, just as we see that many instances of homicide and adultery are committed through passion.

Reply to objection 1: There are three senses ‘venial’:

In one sense, something is venial *because of its cause (ex causa)*, i.e., because it has a cause of leniency that diminishes the sin. And this is the sense in which a sin of weakness or of ignorance is called ‘venial’.

In the second sense, something is venial *because of its outcome (ex eventu)*. In this sense through repentance every sin becomes venial; that is, it attains forgiveness (*venial consecutum*).

In the third sense, something is called 'venial' *by its genus (ex genere)*, in the way that engaging in an idle conversation (*verbum otiosum*) is a venial sin.

This last sense is the only sense in which 'venial' is opposed to 'mortal', whereas the objection has to do with the first sense.

Reply to objection 2: A passion is a cause of a sin on the part of the turning-toward (*ex parte conversionis*). By contrast, the fact that a sin is mortal stems from the side of the turning-away (*ex parte aversionis*), which, as has been explained (a. 6), follows *per accidens* upon the turning-toward. Hence, the argument does not go through.

Reply to objection 3: Reason is not always totally impeded in its act by a passion. Hence, free choice remains in it, so that it is able to turn away from God or to turn toward God. On the other hand, if the use of reason were totally removed, then there would no longer be either a mortal sin nor a venial sin.