

QUESTION 80

The Devil as a Cause of Sin

Next we have to consider the devil as a cause of sin.

On the first topic there are four questions: (1) Is the devil a direct cause of sin (*sit directe causa peccati*)? (2) Does the devil induce one to sin by persuading him interiorly? (3) Can the devil impose a necessity for sinning (*possit necessitatem peccandi inducere*)? (4) Do all sins come at the devil's suggestion?

Article 1

Is the devil a direct cause of a man's sinning?

It seems that the devil is a direct cause of a man's sinning (*sit homini directe causa peccandi*):

Objection 1: Sin consists directly in an affection. But in *De Trinitate* 4 Augustine says, "The devil inflames his associates with evil affections." And in *Super Acta* Bede says, "The devil draws the soul toward an affection for badness." And in *De Summo Bono* Isidore says, "The devil fills men's hearts with hidden lusts." Therefore, the devil is a direct cause of sin.

Objection 2: Jerome says, "Just as God perfects the good, so the devil perfects the bad." But God is a direct cause of our good deeds. Therefore, the devil is a direct cause of our sins.

Objection 3: In one of the chapters of *Eudemian Ethics* the Philosopher shows that "there must be some extrinsic principle of human deliberation." But human deliberation (*consilium humanum*) is not only about good things, but about bad things as well. Therefore, just as God moves a man toward good deliberation and is thereby a direct cause of good, so the devil moves a man toward bad deliberation. And it thereby follows that the devil is a direct cause of sin.

But contrary to this: In *De Libero Arbitrio* 1 and 3 Augustine shows that a man's mind becomes the slave of lust (*serva libidinis*) by nothing other than the man's own will. But a man becomes a slave of lust only through sin. Therefore, only possible cause of sin is one's own will and not the devil (*causa peccati non potest esse diabolus sed sola propria voluntas*).

I respond: A sin is a certain sort of act. Hence, something can be a direct cause of a sin in the way that someone is a direct cause of an act. But the latter happens only by means of one's moving a proper principle of that act toward acting. Now the proper principle of a sinful act is the will, since every sin is voluntary. Hence, nothing can be a direct cause of a sin unless it is able to move the will toward acting.

Now as was explained above (q. 10, aa. 1 and 2), there are two things by which the will can be moved, viz., (a) by *an object*, in the way that something desirable that is apprehended moves an appetite, and (b) by *what inclines the will interiorly toward willing*:

Now as was shown above (q. 9, a. 3), the latter is none other than either the will itself or God. But as was explained above (q. 79, a. 1), God cannot be a cause of sin. Therefore, it follows that in this respect only a man's will is a direct cause of his sin.

On the other hand, as regards the object, there are three ways in which something can be understood to move the will:

In one way, the proposed object itself moves the will, as when we say that food excites a man's desire to eat.

In a second way, it is the one who proposes or offers this sort of object who moves the will.

In a third way, the one who makes the argument (*persuadet*) that the proposed object has the character of the good moves the will, because in some way he, too, proposes to the will a proper object that is a real or apparent good of reason.

Thus, it is in the first way that sensible things which appear exteriorly move a man's will toward

sin, whereas in the second and third ways the devil—or likewise a man—is able to incite a man to sin, either by offering something that is desirable to the sensory power or by persuading the man’s reason.

However, in none of these three ways can anything be a *direct* cause of sin, since, as was explained above (q. 10, aa. 1 and 2), the will is not moved with necessity by any object other than the ultimate end. Hence, neither the object offered exteriorly, nor the one who proposes the object, nor the one who makes a persuasive argument for it is a sufficient cause of the sin. Hence, it follows that the devil is not a direct and sufficient cause of sin; instead, he is a cause of sin only in the manner of one who makes a persuasive argument for a desirable object or in the manner of one who proposes such an object.

Reply to objection 1: All of these passages, along with any similar ones that might be found, should be taken to be referring to the fact that the devil leading men into a sinful affection by suggesting or proposing desirable objects.

Reply to objection 2: There is a similarity in the devil’s being in some sense a cause of our sins, just as God is in some way a cause of our good acts. Yet there is no similarity with respect to the mode of causing. For God is a cause of good acts through His moving the will interiorly—a mode of causing that cannot belong to the devil.

Reply to objection 3: God is a general principle (*universale principium*) of every human interior movement, whereas the fact that a human will is directed toward an evil deliberation comes (a) *directly* from the human will and (b) from the devil by way of his *persuasion* or of his *proposing* desirable objects.

Article 2

Can the devil induce a man to sin by instigating him interiorly?

It seems that the devil cannot induce a man to sin by instigating him interiorly (*non possit inducere ad peccandum interius instigando*):

Objection 1: The interior movements of the soul are certain vital works (*opera vitae*). But a vital work can come only from an intrinsic principle—even a work of the vegetative soul, which is the lowest among the vital works. Therefore, the devil cannot instigate a man toward evil with respect to his interior movements.

Objection 2: According to the order of nature, all interior movements arise from the exterior sensory powers. But as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 110, a. 4), it belongs to God alone to do something outside the order of nature. Therefore, the devil cannot do anything within a man’s interior movements except by means of things that are apparent to the exterior sensory powers (*nisi secundum ea quae exterioribus sensibus apparent*).

Objection 3: Understanding and imagining are interior acts of the soul. But the devil cannot do anything with respect to either of them. For as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 111, a. 2), the devil does not imprint anything on the human intellect. It also seems that he cannot imprint anything on the imagination, since imagined forms, given that they are rather spiritual, have a higher dignity than the forms that exist in sensible matter. Yet, as is clear from what was said in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 110, a. 2), the devil cannot imprint the forms that exist in sensible matter. Therefore, the devil cannot induce a man to sin by means of the man’s interior movements (*secundum interiorem motus*).

But contrary to this: According to the objections, the devil would never tempt a man except by appearing to him visibly. But this is obviously false.

I respond: The interior part of the soul consists of the intellectual part and the sentient part.

Now the intellectual part contains the intellect and the will. As regards the will, it has already been explained (a. 1) how the devil is related to it. The intellect, on the other hand, is moved *per se* by what

illuminates it for the cognition of truth. The devil does not want this for a man, but wants instead to darken a man's intellect so that he might consent to sin. This sort of darkening comes from the imagination and the sentient appetite.

Hence, the entirety of the devil's interior operation seems to focus on the imagination and sentient appetite. By moving the two of them, he is able to induce a man to sin, since he can operate in such a way as to present certain imagined forms to the imagination, and he can likewise bring it about that the sentient appetite is excited with some passion. For it was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 110, a. 3) that a corporeal nature naturally obeys a spiritual nature with respect to local motion. Hence, the devil, too, is able to cause everything that can arise from the local motion of lower bodies, unless he is held back by God's power. Now the fact that forms are represented to the imagination follows sometimes from local motion. For in *De Somno et Vigilia* the Philosopher says, "When an animal sleeps and the blood descends to the sentient principle in a large quantity, the movements or impressions that are left by sensible motions and that are conserved in the sensible species descend at the same time and move the apprehensive principle in such a way that the impressions appear in the way they would if the sentient principle were at that time being affected by the exterior things themselves." Hence, this sort of local motion on the part of the humors or [animal] spirits can be procured by demons whether the man in question is asleep or awake, and in this way it follows that the man imagines certain things. Similarly, the sentient appetite is likewise excited toward certain passions in accord with certain determinate movements of the heart and [animal] spirits; hence, the devil can likewise operate to effect this. And from the fact that certain passions are excited in the sentient appetite, it follows that the man perceives more acutely the sensible movement or tendency that is traced back, in the way just explained, to the apprehensive principle; for as the Philosopher says in the same book, "Lovers are moved to the apprehension of the beloved even by a slight similarity." Again, because the passion is excited, it happens that what is proposed to the imagination is judged to be something that should be pursued; for someone who is in the grips of a passion (*ei qui a passione detinetur*) is such that what he is inclined toward by the passion seems good to him. And it is in this way that the devil induces a man interiorly to sin.

Reply to objection 1: Even if vital works are always from an intrinsic principle, it is nonetheless the case that some exterior agent can contribute to them, just as exterior heat contributes to the works of the vegetative soul in order that food might be digested more easily.

Reply to objection 2: This sort of apparition of imaginable forms does not lie altogether outside the order of nature. And, as has been explained, it occurs through local motion and not just at someone's command.

Reply to objection 3: This makes clear the reply to the third objection. For the forms in question are in the first instance (*primorialiter*) taken from the sensory powers.

Article 3

Can the devil impose a necessity for sinning?

It seems that the devil can impose a necessity for sinning (*possit necessitatem inferre ad peccandum*):

Objection 1: A greater power can impose necessity on a lesser power. But Job 41:24 says of the devil that "there is no power on earth that can compare to him." Therefore, he can impose a necessity for sinning on an earthly man.

Objection 2: Man's reason can be moved only with respect to things that are proposed by the exterior senses and represented by the imagination, since, as it says in *De Anima*, "All our cognition has

its origin in the sensory powers and we have no intellectual understanding without phantasms.” But the devil can effect movement in a man’s imagination, as has been explained (a. 2), and even in his exterior sensory powers; for in *83 Quaestiones* Augustine says, “This evil,” i.e., the evil that is from the devil, “creeps gradually through all the sensory openings, giving itself shapes and accommodating itself to colors and mingling with sounds and infusing itself into smells.” Therefore, he is able to incline a man’s reason to sin by necessity.

Objection 3: According to Augustine, “there are sins in which the flesh lusts against the spirit.” But the devil can be a cause of the concupiscence of the flesh, just as he can be a cause of the other passions, in the way explained above (a. 2). Therefore, he can induce a man to sin by necessity.

But contrary to this: 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Your adversary the devil roams around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour. Resist him strong in the faith.” But such a warning would be useless if a man succumbed to the devil by necessity. Therefore, it is not the case that the devil can impose a necessity for sinning on a man.

I respond: Unless he is restrained by God, the devil can by his own power lead someone to do by necessity an act which is a sin by its genus, but he cannot impose a necessity for sinning.

This is clear from the fact that a man resists a movement toward sinning only through his reason, the use of which the devil can totally impede by effecting movements in the imagination and sentient appetite, as is obvious in the case of those who are possessed (*sicut in arreptitiis*). But in such a case, since reason is bound in this way, nothing that the man does is imputed to him as a sin. On the other hand, if his reason is not totally bound, then, as was explained above (q. 77, a. 7), to the extent that he is free, he is able to resist sinning.

Hence, it is clear that the devil can in no way impose a necessity for sinning on a man.

Reply to objection 1: Not just any power greater than a man can move a man’s will; rather, as was explained above (q. 9, a. 6), only God can.

Reply to objection 2: What is apprehended through the sensory power or the imagination does not move the will with necessity, as long as the man has the use of reason. Nor does an apprehension of the sort in question always bind his reason.

Reply to objection 3: When reason is actively resisting it (*quando ratio ei actu aliter resisti*), the lust of the flesh against the spirit (*concupiscentia carnis contra spiritum*) is not a sin, but is instead the stuff of an exercise of virtue (*materia exercendae virtutis*). On the other hand, reason’s not resisting it is not something that is in the devil’s power. And so the devil is unable to impose a necessity for sinning.

Article 4

Do all of men’s sins come at the devil’s suggestion?

It seems that all of men’s sins come at the devil’s suggestion (*omnia peccata hominum sint ex suggestionibus diabolicis*):

Objection 1: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, “The multitude of demons is a cause of all evils, both for themselves and for others.”

Objection 2: Anyone who sins mortally becomes a slave of the devil—this according to John 8:34 (“Whoever sins is a slave of sin”). But as 2 Peter 2:19 says, “One is led into the service of the one by whom he has been conquered.” Therefore, whoever sins has been conquered by the devil.

Objection 3: Gregory says that the devil’s sin is irreparable because he did not fall at anyone else’s suggestion. Therefore, if there were men who sinned through free choice at no one’s suggestion, then their sin would be irremediable—which is clearly false. Therefore, all human sins are suggested by the devil.

But contrary to this: *De Ecclesiasticis Dogmatibus* says, “Not all of our bad thoughts are instigated by the devil; rather, at times they emerge from the movement of our own free choice.”

I respond: The devil is an occasional and indirect cause of all our sins, insofar as he induced the first man to sin and insofar as, because of the first man’s sin, human nature has been vitiated to such an extent that we are all inclined toward sinning. In the same way, one might say that he who dries the wood is a cause of the wood’s burning, since his action resulted in the wood’s being more easily set on fire (*ex quo sequeretur quod ligna facile incenderentur*).

However, the devil is not a direct cause of all human sins in the sense of inducing each sin. Origen proves this from the fact that even if there were no devil, men would still have a desire for food and sexual pleasure and other such things, and this desire would still be able to be disordered if it were not directed by reason—something that is subject to free choice.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, the multitude of demons is a cause of all our sins with respect to their first origin.

Reply to objection 2: It is not just the one who is conquered by someone who becomes his slave, but also the one who voluntarily subjects himself to him. And it is in this latter way that someone who sins by his own proper movement becomes the devil’s slave.

Reply to objection 3: The devil’s sin was irremediable because he neither sinned at anyone else’s suggestion nor had any tendency to sin that was caused by a previous suggestion. The same cannot be said of any human sin.