

QUESTION 85

The Corruption of the Good of the Nature as an Effect of Sin

Next we have to consider the effects of sin: first, the corruption of the good of the nature (*de corruptione boni naturae*) (question 85); second, the stain of sin (*de macula peccati*) (question 86), and third, the debt or deservingness of punishment (*de reatu poenae*) (question 87).

On the first topic there are six questions: (1) Is the good of the nature diminished by sin? (2) Can the good of the nature be totally destroyed by sin? (3) What of the four wounds, posited by Bede, by which human nature has been wounded because of sin? (4) Is the privation of mode, species, and order an effect of sin? (5) Are death and other bodily defects the effects of sin? (6) Are death and other bodily defects in some way natural to man?

Article 1

Does sin diminish the good of the nature?

It seems that sin does not diminish the good of the nature:

Objection 1: A man's sin is not more grievous than a demon's sin. But as Dionysius claims in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, natural goods remain untouched (*manet integra*) in the demons after sin. Therefore, sin likewise does not diminish the good of human nature.

Objection 2: Even if what is posterior changes, what is prior does not change; for instance, the substance remains the same even when the accidents change. But the nature exists prior to any voluntary action. Therefore, even after a disorder is effected in voluntary action because of sin, the nature is not thereby changed in such a way that the good of the nature is diminished.

Objection 3: A sin is a certain act, whereas diminution involves being acted upon (*diminutio autem passio*). But no agent is acted upon by its very acting (*nullum agens ex hoc ipso quod agit patitur*), though it can happen that it acts on one thing and is acted upon by something else. Therefore, one who sins does not diminish the good of his nature by his sin.

Objection 4: No accident acts on its own subject, since what is acted upon is a being in potentiality (*quia quod patitur est potentia ens*), whereas the subject of an accident is already a being in actuality with respect to that accident (*quod subiicitur accidenti iam est actu ens secundum accidens illud*). But a sin exists in the good of the nature as an accident in a subject. Therefore, a sin does not diminish the good of the nature, since to diminish something is a certain sort of acting.

But contrary to this: Luke 10:30 says. "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho ..." —that is, as Bede expounds the passage, the man was going down into the defect of sin, and he was stripped of his gifts and wounded in his nature. Therefore, sin diminishes the good of the nature.

I respond: There are three possible ways to understand the good of human nature:

First, *the very principles of the nature*, by which the nature is constituted, along with the properties caused by these principles, such as the powers of the soul and other such things.

Second, since, as was explained above (q. 60, a. 1 and q. 63, a. 1), man has by his nature an *inclination toward virtue*, this inclination toward virtue is itself a certain good of the nature.

Third, one can call the *gift of original justice* a certain good of the nature that was given to the whole of human nature in the first man.

Thus, the first good of the nature is neither destroyed nor diminished by sin. The third good of the nature, on the other hand, was completely taken away because of the sin of the first parent. By contrast, the second good of the nature, viz., the natural inclination toward virtue, is diminished by sin. For as was established above (q. 50, a. 1), human acts effect a certain inclination toward similar acts (*per actus humanos fit quaedam inclinatio ad similes actus*). But by the fact that something is inclined toward one of two contraries, it must be the case that its inclination toward the other contrary is diminished. Hence,

since sin is contrary to virtue, by the very fact that a man sins, the good of his nature, i.e., his inclination toward virtue, is diminished.

Reply to objection 1: As is clear to one who reads Dionysius's words carefully, he is talking about the *first* good of the nature, i.e., existing, living, and understanding (*esse, vivere et intelligere*).

Reply to objection 2: Even though the nature is prior to voluntary action, it nonetheless has an inclination to a certain sort of voluntary action. Hence, the nature, taken by itself, does not vary because of the variation of voluntary action, but the inclination itself varies as regards its being ordered to a terminus.

Reply to objection 3: Voluntary action proceeds from diverse powers, some of which are active and others of which are passive. And as is clear from what was said above when we were talking about the generation of a habit (q. 51, a. 2), the result is that by voluntary actions something is either caused in, or taken away from, a man who acts in such-and-such a way.

Reply to objection 4: An accident does not act as an efficient cause (*non agit effective*) on its subject, and yet it does act on it as a formal cause (*agit formaliter*), in the manner of speaking according to which one says. "Whiteness makes a thing white."

And so nothing prevents a sin from diminishing the good of the nature, yet in the sense that the sin is itself the very diminution of the good of the nature insofar as the diminution belongs to the *act's* disorder.

On the other hand, as far as the *agent's* disorder is concerned, one must claim that this sort of disorder is caused by the fact that in the acts of the soul there is something active and something passive; for instance, as was explained above (q. 77, aa. 1 and 2), the sensible object moves the sentient appetite, and the sentient appetite inclines reason and the will. And that is how the disorder is caused—not, to be sure, in such a way that an accident acts on its proper subject, but rather in such a way that the object acts on a power, and the one power acts on another and disorders it.

Article 2

Can the whole of the good of human nature be destroyed by sin?

It seems that the whole of the good of human nature can be destroyed by sin:

Objection 1: The good of human nature is finite, since human nature is itself likewise finite. But everything finite is totally destroyed (*consumitur*) if it is continuously subtracted from (*facta continua ablatione*). Therefore, since the good of the nature can be continuously diminished by sin, it seems that at some point it can be totally destroyed.

Objection 2: Things that have a uniform nature (*quae sunt unius naturae*) are such that the definition of the whole is similar to the definition of the parts (*similis est ratio de toto et de partibus*), as is clear in the case of air and water and flesh, and of all corporeal things composed of similar parts. But the good of the nature is totally uniform (*totaliter uniforme*). Therefore, since a part of that good can be destroyed by sin, it seems that the whole of it can likewise be destroyed by sin.

Objection 3: The good of the nature that can be diminished by sin is the aptitude for virtue. But in certain individuals this aptitude is completely destroyed because of sin, as is clear in the case of the damned, who cannot be restored to virtue, just as a blind man cannot be restored to sight. Therefore, sin can totally destroy the good of the nature.

But contrary to this: In *Enchiridion* Augustine says, "Evil does not exist except in something good." But the evil of sin cannot exist in the good of virtue or of grace, since it is contrary to it. Therefore, it must exist in the good of the nature. Therefore, sin does not totally destroy that good.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), the good of the nature that is diminished by sin is the

natural inclination toward virtue. This belongs to a man by the very fact that he is rational, since by virtue of being rational he is such that he operates in accord with reason, which is what it is to act in accord with virtue. But sin cannot totally remove from a man the fact that he is rational, since he would not longer be capable of sin. Hence, it is impossible that the good of the nature just alluded to should be totally destroyed.

Now given that a good of this sort might be continuously diminished by sin, some authors, in order to illustrate this fact, have used a certain example in which something finite is diminished *ad infinitum* and yet is never totally destroyed. For in *Physics* 3 the Philosopher points out that if something of the same quantity is continuously taken away from a finite magnitude, then in the end that magnitude will be totally consumed—as, for instance, if from some finite quantity I will always have subtracted the measure of the palm of a hand. By contrast, if the subtraction always involves the same ratio and not the same quantity, then the subtraction will be able to go on *ad infinitum*—as, for instance, if a quantity is divided into two [equal] parts, and then a half is subtracted from that half, one will be able so to proceed *ad infinitum*, and yet in such a way that what is subtracted later will always be less than what was subtracted earlier.

However, this example has no place in the matter under discussion. For it is not the case that a later sin diminishes the good of the nature less than an earlier sin; it might diminish it more, if it is a more grievous sin.

And so one has to reply in an alternative way that the inclination in question is to be understood as something in the middle between two things, since it is grounded in the rational nature as in a root, and it tends toward the good of the nature as its terminus and end. Therefore, there are two ways to understand its being diminished: in one way, on the part of the *root*; and in the other way, on the part of the *terminus*.

In the first way, the inclination is not diminished by sin, since, as was explained above (a. 1), sin does not diminish the nature itself. But the inclination is diminished in the second way, viz., insofar as an obstacle is posed to its reaching its terminus.

Now if it were diminished in the first way, then it would in some cases (*quandoque*) have to be totally destroyed when the rational nature was destroyed. But because it is diminished by an obstacle which is posed in order that it not reach its terminus, it is clear that it can be diminished *ad infinitum*, since obstacles can be posed *ad infinitum* insofar as a man is able to add sin upon sin *ad infinitum*; and yet it would not be totally destroyed, since the root of this inclination always remains.

Something similar is clear in the case of a diaphanous body. It has an inclination toward receiving light by the fact that it is diaphanous, but this inclination or aptitude is diminished because of intervening clouds (*diminuitur haec inclinatio vel habilitas ex parte nebularum supervenientium*), even though the inclination always remains in the root of the nature.

Reply to objection 1: This objection goes through when the diminution occurs through subtraction. But the diminution in question is effected by the posing of an obstacle, which, as has been explained, neither destroys nor diminishes the root of the inclination.

Reply to objection 2: A natural inclination is, to be sure, a uniform whole, but it nonetheless has a relation both to its source and also to its terminus (*habet respectum et ad principium et ad terminum*), and because of this it is diminished in one respect and not diminished in another respect (*quodammodo diminuitur et quodammodo non diminuitur*).

Reply to objection 3: The natural inclination toward virtue remains even in the damned; otherwise, remorse of conscience would not exist in them. But the fact that this inclination is not actualized (*non reducatur in actum*) occurs, in accord with God's justice, because of a lack of grace. In the same way, the aptitude for seeing remains in a blind man in the root of his nature itself, but it is not actualized because it lacks a cause that can actualize it by fashioning the organ that is required in order to have sight.

Article 3

Is it appropriate to claim that there are wounds of the nature that follow from sin, viz., weakness, ignorance, malice, and concupiscence?

It seems that it is inappropriate to claim that there are wounds of the nature that follow from sin, viz., weakness, ignorance, malice, and concupiscence:

Objection 1: The effect of a thing is not the same as the cause of that same thing. But as is clear from what was said above (q. 76, a. 1 and q. 77, aa. 3 and 5, and q. 78, a. 1), the four things mentioned are causes of sins. Therefore, they should not be posited as effects of sin.

Objection 2: ‘Malice’ names a certain sin. Therefore, it should not be posited among the effects of sin.

Objection 3: Concupiscence is something natural, since it is an act of the concupiscible power. But what is natural should not be posited as a wound of the nature. Therefore, concupiscence should not be posited as a wound of the nature.

Objection 4: It has been explained (q. 77, a. 3) that sinning from weakness is the same thing as sinning from passion. But concupiscence is a certain passion. Therefore, it should not be divided off against weakness.

Objection 5: In *De Natura et Gratia* Augustine posits that there are “two penalties for the soul that sins, viz., ignorance (*ignorantio*) and difficulty (*difficultas*),” which are the sources of “error (*error*) and anguish (*cruciatu*s).” But these four things do not seem to harmonize with the four things in questions. Therefore, it seems that one or the other of these lists is posited inappropriately.

But contrary to this is the authority of Bede.

I respond: Through original justice reason perfectly restrained the lower powers of the soul, and reason itself was perfected by God and subject to Him. But as has already been explained (q. 81, a. 2), this original justice was taken away because of the sin of the first parent. And so all the powers of the soul remain in some way deprived of the proper ordering by which they are naturally ordered toward virtue, and this deprivation is itself called a wounding of the nature.

Now as was explained above (q. 61, a. 2), there are four powers of the soul that can be the subject of virtue, viz., (a) *reason*, in which *prudence* exists, (b) the *will*, in which *justice* exists, (c) the *irascible power*, in which *fortitude* exists, and (d) the *concupiscible power*, in which *temperance* exists.

Thus, insofar as *reason* is deprived of its ordering toward the truth, there is the wound of *ignorance*; insofar as the *will* is deprived of its ordering toward the good, there is the wound of *malice*; insofar as the *irascible power* is deprived of its ordering toward the arduous, there is the wound of *weakness*; and insofar as *concupiscence* is deprived of its ordering toward the pleasurable as moderated by reason, there is the wound of *concupiscence*. So, then, there are four wounds inflicted on the whole of human nature by *the sin of the first parent*.

However, since, as is clear from what has been said (aa. 1 and 2), the inclination toward virtue in each individual is diminished by *actual* sin, these are also the four wounds that result from other sins, insofar as through sin reason is clouded, especially in matters of action; the will becomes hardened with respect to the good; more difficulty accrues to acting well; and concupiscence becomes more feverish.

Reply to objection 1: Nothing prevents that which is an effect of one sin from being a cause of another sin. For given that the soul has been disordered by a previous sin, it is more easily inclined toward sinning.

Reply to objection 2: ‘Malice’ is being taken here not for a sin but instead for a certain proneness of the will toward evil—this according to Genesis 8:21 (“Man’s senses are prone toward evil from his youth”).

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 82, a. 3), concupiscence is natural to a man to the extent that it is subject to reason. On the other hand, it is contrary to nature in a man for concupiscence to exceed the limits of reason.

Reply to objection 4: Every passion in general is called a weakness insofar as it weakens the soul's strength and impedes reason. But Bede is taking 'weakness' in the strict sense insofar as it is opposed to fortitude, which belongs to the irascible power.

Reply to objection 5: The 'difficulty' posited in Augustine's book includes the three things that belong to the appetitive powers, viz., malice, weakness, and concupiscence; for because of these three things it happens that one does not easily tend toward the good. On the other hand, error and sorrow are subsequent wounds (*vulnera consequentia*); for someone is sorrowful because he is weakened with respect to those things that he desires.

Article 4

Is the privation of mode, species, and order an effect of sin?

It seems that the privation of mode, species, and order is not an effect of sin:

Objection 1: In *De Natura Boni* Augustine says, "Where these three things are great, goodness is great; where they are small, goodness is small; and where they are missing (*nulla*), goodness is missing." But sin does not destroy the good of the nature. Therefore, it does not deprive the nature of mode, species, and order.

Objection 2: Nothing is a cause of its very self. But as Augustine says in *De Natura Boni*, sin is itself "a privation of mode, species, and order." Therefore, the privation of mode, species, and order is not an effect of sin.

Objection 3: Diverse sins have diverse effects. But since mode, species, and order are diverse, they seem to involve diverse privations. Therefore, it is through diverse sins that these privations arise (*per diversa peccata privantur*). Therefore, the privation of mode, species, and order is not the effect of every sin.

But contrary to this: Sin exists in the soul in the same way that weakness exists in the body—this according to Psalm 6:3 ("Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak"). But weakness deprives the body itself of mode, species, and order. Therefore, sin deprives the soul of mode, species, and order.

I respond: As was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 5, a. 5), mode, species, and order follow upon each created good insofar as it is a created good and even insofar as it is a created being.

For every sort of *esse* and goodness is thought of through some form, from which its *species* is taken. And the form of each thing—no matter what sort of form it is, a substantial form or an accidental form—exists in accord with some measure; this is why *Metaphysics* 8 says that the forms of things are like numbers. And because of this, each thing has a certain *mode*, which has to do with measure. Moreover, each thing is *ordered* by its form toward something else. So, then, corresponding to the diverse grades of goods, there are diverse grades of mode, species, and order.

Therefore, there is a certain good that belongs to the very *substance of the nature*, which has its own mode, species, and order; and this is neither negated (*privatur*) nor diminished by sin.

There is also the good of *the natural inclination*, and this likewise has its own mode, species, and order. And this good, as was explained above (aa. 1 and 2), is diminished by sin but not totally destroyed by it.

And there is also the good of *virtue and grace*, which likewise has its own mode, species, and order, and this is totally destroyed by mortal sin.

There is also the good which is the *well-ordered act itself* and which likewise has its own mode,

species, and order; and the privation of this good is sin itself in its essence (*est essentialiter ipsum peccatum*).

And so it is clear both (a) how sin is a privation of mode, species, and order, and (b) how sin negates or diminishes mode, species and order.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2: From this the reply to the first two objections is clear.

Reply to objection 3: As is clear from what has been said, the mode, the species, and the order follow from one another. Thus, they are all negated or diminished together.

Article 5

Are death and other bodily defects the effects of sin?

It seems that death and other bodily defects are not the effects of sin:

Objection 1: If the cause is equal, the effect will be equal. But defects of the sort in question are not equal in everyone; instead, there are those in whom such defects are more abundant. Yet as was explained above (q. 82, a. 4), original sin is equal in everyone, and defects of this sort seem to be the effects especially of original sin. Therefore, death and defects of the sort in question are not the effects of sin.

Objection 2: When a cause is taken away, its effect is taken away. But when every sin is taken away through Baptism or Penance, defects of the sort in question are not taken away. Therefore, they are not the effects of sin.

Objection 3: Actual sin has more of the nature of guilt than original sin does. But actual sin does not change the nature of a body with respect to any defect. Therefore, *a fortiori*, original sin does not do so. Therefore, it is not the case that death and other bodily defects are the effects of sin.

But contrary to this: In Romans 5:12 the Apostle says, “Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death.”

I respond: There are two ways in which one thing is a cause of another, viz., (a) *per se* and (b) *per accidens*.

One thing is a *per se* cause of another when it produces the effect by the power of its own nature or form, and so it follows that the effect is intended *per se* by the cause. Hence, since death and defects of this sort lie outside of the sinner’s intention, it is clear that sin is not a *per se* cause of these defects.

On the other hand, one thing is a *per accidens* cause of another if it is a cause by virtue of its removing an obstacle; for instance, *Physics* 8 says, “One who displaces a column moves *per accidens* a stone that has been placed on the top of the column.” And it is in this way that the sin of the first parent is a cause of death and of all the defects under discussion in human nature, viz., insofar as through the sin of the first parent original justice was lost. For as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 97, a. 1), through original justice it was the case not only that the lower powers of the soul were held together by reason without any disorder (*continebantur sub ratione absque omni deorindatione*), but also that the whole of the body was held together by the soul without any defects. And so, once this original justice was removed by the sin of the first parent, human nature was rendered corruptible by disorder within the body itself, in the same way that, as was explained above (a. 3), human nature was wounded in the soul by the disorder among its powers.

Now the removal of original justice has the character of a punishment, just as the removal of grace does. Hence, death and all the accompanying bodily defects are punishments of original sin. And even though these defects were not intended by the sinner, they were nonetheless ordained by the justice of God as a punisher.

Reply to objection 1: Equality of the *per se* cause is a cause of equal effects, since when a *per se*

cause is increased or decreased, the effect is increased or decreased. But equality of the sort of cause that removes an obstacle does not entail an equality of effects. For instance, if someone displaces two columns with equal force, it does not follow that the stones placed on top of those columns will move in equal ways; instead, the one that is heavier will move more swiftly in accord with the property of its own nature, since it is left to its own nature when the obstacle is removed.

So, then, when original justice is removed, the nature of the human body is left to itself. As a result, in accord with the diversity of natural dispositions, the bodies of some individuals will be subject to more defects and the bodies of others to fewer defects, even though original sin is equal in both.

Reply to objection 2: Original sin and actual sin are removed by the same cause by which defects of the sort in question are also removed—this according to the Apostle in Romans 8:11 (“He shall give life to your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit who dwells within you”). But these two effects take place at fitting times according to the order of God’s wisdom. For we must arrive at the immortality and impassibility of the state of glory, which was begun in Christ and which is acquired for us through Christ, after having been previously conformed to His sufferings (*conformati prius passionibus eius*). Hence, passibility must remain in our bodies for a time in order that we might merit the impassibility of glory in conformity with Christ.

Reply to objection 3: In the case of an actual sin, there are two things to take into consideration, viz., (a) the very substance of the act and (b) its character as a sin (*rationem culpae*). As for the substance of the act, an actual sin can cause a bodily defect; for instance, there are those who become ill and die because of an excess of food. But as for the act’s character as a sin, a sin deprives one of grace, which is given to a man in order to rectify the acts of his soul, though not in order to ward off bodily defects, in the way that original justice did.

Article 6

Are death and bodily defects natural to man?

It seems that death and bodily defects are natural to man:

Objection 1: As *Metaphysics* 10 says, “The corruptible and the incorruptible differ in species.” But man belongs to same genus as other animals, and the other animals are naturally corruptible. Therefore, man is naturally corruptible.

Objection 2: Everything that is composed of contraries is naturally corruptible, having within itself, as it were, the cause of its own corruption. But the human body is like this. Therefore, the human body is naturally corruptible.

Objection 3: The hot naturally consumes the moist. But a man’s life is conserved through the hot and the moist. Since, therefore, as *De Anima* 2 says, the vital operations are brought to completion through the act of natural heat, it seems that death and bodily defects are natural to man.

But contrary to this:

1. Whatever is natural to man is such that God made it in man. But as Wisdom 1:13 says, “God did not make death.” Therefore, death is not natural to man.

2. What accords with nature cannot be called a punishment or an evil, since each thing is such that what is natural to it is appropriate for it. But as was explained above (a. 5), death and bodily defects are a punishment for original sin. Therefore, they are not natural to man.

3. Matter is proportioned to form, and each thing is proportioned to its end. But as was explained above (q. 2, a. 7 and q. 5, a. 3), man’s end is everlasting beatitude. Also, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 75, a. 6), the form of the human body is the rational soul, which is incorruptible. Therefore, the human body is naturally incorruptible.

I respond: There are two ways in which we can talk about a given corruptible thing: (a) with respect to its universal nature (*secundum naturam universalem*) and (b) with respect to its particular nature (*secundum naturam particularem*).

The *particular nature* is each thing's proper active and conserving power (*est propria virtus activa et conservativa uniuscuiusque rei*). And on this score, as *De Caelo* 2 says, every corruption and defect is contrary to the nature, since power of this sort intends the *esse* and conservation of what it belongs to.

By contrast, the *universal nature* is the active power in some universal principle of nature—for instance, the active power in some celestial bodies or the active power that belongs to some higher substance, in accord with which even God is called the 'Nature that makes nature' (*natura naturans*) by some authors. This power intends the good and the conservation of the whole universe, and this requires alternating generation and corruption among things. And in this sense, the corruptions and defects of things are natural—not, to be sure, because of the inclination of their forms, which are principles of *esse* and perfection, but because of the inclination of their matter, which is assigned proportionately to such-and-such forms according to the universal agent's distribution. And even though every form intends perpetual *esse* to the extent that it can, still, no corruptible entity's form can attain perpetuity for itself—except for the rational soul, because it itself is not completely subject to corporeal matter in the way that the other forms are. To the contrary, the rational soul has its own proper immaterial operation, as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 75, a. 2). Hence, as far as his form is concerned, incorruption is more natural to man than to other corruptible things. However, because that form has a matter that is composed of contraries, corruptibility in the whole composite follows from the inclination of the matter. Accordingly, man is naturally corruptible with respect to the nature of his matter left to itself, but not with respect to the nature of his form.

The first three of the above arguments have to do with the matter, whereas the other three arguments have to do with the form. Hence, in order to reply to these arguments, notice that man's form, i.e., the rational soul, is, because of its incorruptibility, proportionate to its end, which is everlasting beatitude.

By contrast, the human body, which is corruptible considered in its own nature, is in one sense proportionate to its form and in another sense not. For with respect to any sort of matter there are two circumstances (*conditiones*) that can be considered, viz., (a) what the agent chooses and (b) other things that are not chosen by the agent but exist because of the natural condition of the matter. For instance, in order to make a knife a craftsman chooses hard and flexible matter that can be sharpened so as to be capable of cutting. But the fact that the iron is breakable and subject to rust follows from iron's natural disposition, and the craftsman does not choose this for the iron, but would reject it if he could. Hence, this disposition of the matter is not proportionate to the craftsman's intention or to the intention of his craft. Similarly, the human body is matter chosen by nature for its temperate constitution, in order for the organ of touch and the organs of the other sentient and moving powers to be as suitable as possible. But the fact that the human body is corruptible stems from the matter's condition and is not chosen by nature—just the opposite, nature would choose incorruptible matter if it could.

Now God, to whom every nature is subject, made up for the defect of the matter in the very creation of man; and, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 97, a. 1), by the gift of original justice He gave a sort of incorruptibility to the human body. And this is why it is said that God did not make death and that death is a punishment for sin.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: The replies to the objections are clear from what has been said.