

QUESTION 18

The Goodness and Badness of Human Acts in General

Next we have to consider the goodness and badness of human acts: first, the way in which a human action is good or bad (questions 18-20) and, second, what follows from the goodness or badness of human acts, viz., merit and demerit, sin and guilt (question 21).

On the first point, there are three topics to consider: first, the goodness and badness of human acts in general (question 18); second, the goodness and badness of interior acts (question 19); and, third, the goodness and badness of exterior acts (question 20).

On the first topic there are eleven questions: (1) Is every action good, or are some actions bad? (2) Does a man's action have goodness or badness from its object? (3) Does it have goodness or badness from its circumstances? (4) Does it have goodness or badness from its end? (5) Are some human actions good or bad by their species? (6) Does an act have its species of goodness or badness from its end? (7) Is the species derived from the end contained under—as under a genus—the species derived from the object, or vice versa? (8) Is any act indifferent by its species? (9) Is any act indifferent as an individual? (10) Does a circumstance confer on a moral act its species of goodness or badness? (11) Does every circumstance that adds to a moral act's goodness or badness confer on it its species of goodness or badness?

Article 1

Is every human action good, or are some actions bad?

It seems that every human action is good and that none is bad:

Objection 1: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says that what is bad does not act except by the power of what is good (*nisi virtute boni*). But what is bad is not effected by the power of what is good. Therefore, no action is bad.

Objection 2: Nothing acts except insofar as it is actual. But a thing is bad not insofar as it is actual, but insofar as a potentiality is deprived of actuality—while, as *Metaphysics* 9 says, what is good exists insofar as a potentiality is perfected by actuality. Therefore, nothing acts insofar as it is bad; rather, it acts only insofar as it is good. Therefore, every action is good, and none is bad.

Objection 3: As is clear from Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, what is bad can be a cause only *per accidens*. But every action has a *per se* effect. Therefore, no action is bad, but instead every action is good.

But contrary to this: In John 3:20 our Lord says, “Everyone who acts badly hates the light.” Therefore, some human actions are bad.

I respond: It is necessary to speak about good and evil in actions in the same way that one speaks of good and evil in things, since each thing produces actions that are such as it itself is. Now in the case of things, each thing has as much goodness as it has *esse*, since, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 5, aa. 1 and 3), ‘good’ and ‘being’ are convertible.

God alone has the whole fullness of His *esse* as something one and simple, whereas every other thing has a fullness of *esse* that belongs to it through diverse aspects (*secundum diversa*). Hence, with some things it happens that they have *esse* in certain respects and yet they lack something of the fullness of *esse* that is appropriate for them. For instance, the fullness of human *esse* requires that a man be a certain sort of composite of soul and body and that he have all the powers and instruments for cognition and movement. Hence, if a particular man lacks some of these things, then he is lacking in something of the fullness of his *esse*. Therefore, he has as much goodness as he has *esse*, whereas to the extent that he lacks something of the fullness of *esse*, he is lacking in goodness and is called bad. For instance, a blind man has goodness in the fact that he is alive, and it is bad for him that he lacks sight. By contrast, if he

had no being or goodness at all, then he would not be able to be called either bad or good. But because the very fullness of *esse* belongs to the notion of the good (*de ratione boni est ipsa plentitudo essendi*), if a thing lacks something of the fullness of *esse* that it ought to have (*aliquid defuerit de debita essendi plenitudine*), then it will not be called *good absolutely speaking*, but will instead be called *good in a certain respect* (*non dicitur simpliciter bonum sed secundum quid*), insofar as it is a being—though, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 5, a. 1), it can be called a *being* absolutely speaking and a *non-being* in a certain respect.

So, then, one should reply that every action is such that (a) to the extent that it has something of *esse*, it has something of goodness, but such that (b) to the extent that it lacks something of the fullness of *esse* that a human action ought to have, it lacks something of goodness and so is called ‘bad’—as, e.g., when it lacks either the determinate quantity prescribed by reason, or the right place, or something else of this sort.

Reply to objection 1: What is bad acts in the power of a good thing that is defective (*in virtute boni deficientis*). For if there were nothing there of goodness, then the thing in question would not be a being and would be unable to act. On the other hand, if it were not defective, it would not be bad. Hence, the action caused is a certain defective good that is good in a certain respect, but bad absolutely speaking.

Reply to objection 2: Nothing prevents a thing from (a) being actual in a certain respect and so able to act, and yet (b) being deprived of actuality in some other respect and so the cause of a defective action. For instance, a blind man has in actuality the ambulatory power by which he is able to walk, but because he lacks vision, which directs one in walking, he suffers a defect in his walking when he walks by stumbling around.

Reply to objection 3: A bad action can have a *per se* effect insofar as it has something of goodness and being. For instance, an act of adultery is a cause of human generation insofar as it involves the sexual union of a man and a woman, though not insofar as it lacks the order prescribed by reason (*non inquantum caret ordine rationis*).

Article 2

Does an action have goodness or badness from its object?

It seems that an action does not have goodness or badness from its object:

Objection 1: The object of an action is a thing (*res*). But as Augustine says in *De Doctrina Christiana* 3, “Evil lies not in things, but in the use sinners make of them.” Therefore, a human action does not have goodness or badness from its object.

Objection 2: The object is related as matter to the action. However, a thing’s goodness comes not from its matter but rather from its form, which is its actuality. Therefore, it is not the case that goodness and badness exist in acts because of the object.

Objection 3: The object of an active power is related to its action in the way that an effect is related to its cause. But a cause’s goodness does not depend on its effect; rather, it is just the opposite. Therefore, a human action does not have goodness or badness from its object.

But contrary to this: Hosea 9:10 says, “They became abominable, just like the things that they loved.” But a man becomes abominable to God because of the badness of his actions. Therefore, the badness of an action stems from the bad objects that a man loves. And the same explanation holds for the goodness of an action.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), an action’s goodness or badness, just like the goodness or badness of other things as well, depends on its fullness of being or lack of being. Now what seems

relevant in the first place to a thing's fullness of being is that which gives the thing its species. And just as a natural thing has its species from its form, so an action has its species from its object, in the way that a movement has its species from its terminus.

And so just as a natural thing's first goodness (*prima bonitas*) comes from its form, which gives it its species, so a moral act's first goodness comes from an appropriate object. Hence, some call this sort of action one that is 'good of its kind' (*bonum ex genere*), e.g., making use of what is one's own.

And just as in natural things the first badness occurs if a generated thing does not attain to the form of the species—for instance, if what is generated is not a man but something instead of a man—so too the first badness in moral actions is something that comes from the object, e.g., taking what belongs to another. And this sort of action is called 'bad of its kind' (*malum ex genere*)—where 'kind' (*genus*) is being taken for the species, in the manner of speaking in which we call the whole human species 'mankind'.

Reply to objection 1: Even though exterior things are good in themselves, they still do not always have the right sort of relation to this or that action. And so insofar as they are thought of as objects of the actions in question, these things do not have the character of goodness.

Reply to objection 2: The object of an action is not a matter *out of which* (*materia ex qua*) but a *matter with respect to which* (*materia circum quam*), and so insofar as the object gives an act its species, it has the character in some sense of a form.

Reply to objection 3: It is not always the case that the object of a human action is the object of an active power. For an appetitive power is in some sense passive, insofar as it is moved by something desirable, and yet it is the principle of human acts. Nor is it the case that the objects of active powers always have the character of an effect. This is so only when they have already been transformed. For instance, transformed food is the effect of the nutritive power, but it is food that has not yet been transformed that is related to the nutritive power as the matter with respect to which it operates.

Now from an object's being in some sense the effect of an active power it follows that it is the terminus of that action and, as a result, that it gives the action its form and species. For a movement has its species from its termini. And even though an action's goodness is not caused by its effect's goodness, the action is called a good action from the fact that it is able to induce a good effect. And so the relation of the action to the effect is itself the reason for its goodness.

Article 3

Does an action have goodness or badness from its circumstances?

It seems that an action does not have goodness or badness from its circumstances (*actio non sit bona vel mala ex circumstantia*):

Objection 1: As has been explained (q. 7. a. 1), the circumstances 'surround' an act in the sense of existing outside of it. But as *Metaphysics* 6 says, "Good and bad exist within the things themselves." Therefore, it is not the case that an action has goodness or badness because of its circumstances.

Objection 2: The goodness or badness of acts is considered especially in moral theory (*in doctrina morum*). But since the circumstances are certain accidents of acts, they seem to lie outside the consideration of art, since, as *Metaphysics* 4 says, "No art takes account of what exists *per accidens*." Therefore, the goodness or badness of an action is not from its circumstances.

Objection 3: What belongs to something with respect to its substance is not attributed to it through an accident. But *good* and *bad* belong to an action with respect to its substance, since, as has been explained (a. 2), an action can be good or bad of its kind (*ex suo genere potest esse bona vel mala*). Therefore, it does not belong to an action to be good or bad because of its circumstances.

But contrary to this: In the *Ethics* the Philosopher says that the virtuous man acts “in the way he should, and when he should, and so on for the other circumstances.” Therefore, conversely, the vicious man acts, in the case of each vice, when he should not, and where he should not, and so on for the other circumstances. Therefore, human actions are good or bad according to their circumstances.

I respond: Among natural things the fullness of perfection that the thing should have does not come from the substantial form that confers the species; instead, much is added by the supervening accidents, e.g., in the case of man, the shape and color and others of this sort, which are such that badness results if they are not present in the right proportion.

The same thing holds for an action as well. For an action’s fullness of goodness does not consist wholly in its species; instead, something is added to the goodness by things that accrue to the action as accidents. And appropriate circumstances are accidents of this sort. Hence, if something required for appropriate circumstances is lacking, then the action will be bad.

Reply to objection 1: The circumstances exist outside of an action to the extent that they are not part of the action’s essence, but they exist within the action itself as certain of its accidents. The accidents that exist in natural things likewise exist outside their essences in this same sense.

Reply to objection 2: Not all accidents are related *per accidens* to their subjects; instead, some of them are the *per se* accidents, and *per se* accidents are studied in each art. This is the way in which the circumstances of acts are considered in moral theory.

Reply to objection 3: Since ‘good’ and ‘being’ are convertible, it follows that just as ‘being’ is said with respect to substance and with respect to accident, so too ‘good’ is likewise attributed to something both with respect to its essential *esse* and with respect to its accidental *esse*—and this holds for both natural things and moral actions.

Article 4

Does a human act have goodness or badness from its end?

It seems that a human act does not have goodness or badness from its end:

Objection 1: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, “Nothing acts with a view toward evil.” Therefore, if an act’s goodness or badness were derived from its end, then no actions would be bad. But this is clearly false.

Objection 2: An act’s goodness is something that exists within the act. But the end is an extrinsic cause. Therefore, it is not because of its end that an action is called good or bad.

Objection 3: It is possible for a good act to be ordered toward a bad end—as, for instance, when someone gives alms out of vainglory. And, conversely, it is possible for a bad action to be ordered toward a good end—as when someone steals something in order to give it to a poor man. Therefore, an action is not good or bad because of its end.

But contrary to this: In *Topica* Boethius says, “If something’s end is good, then it itself is likewise good; and if something’s end is bad, then it itself is likewise bad.”

I respond: The disposition of things in goodness is the same as their disposition in *esse*. For instance, there are some things whose *esse* does not depend on another, and in the case of such things it is enough to consider their *esse* itself, absolutely speaking. However, there are other things whose *esse* does depend on another, and they have to be studied by considering the cause on which they depend.

Now just as a thing’s *esse* depends on its agent and its form, so too a thing’s goodness depends on its end. Hence, in the case of the divine Persons, who do not have a goodness that depends on another, no explanation of their goodness is taken from the end. By contrast, human actions and other things whose goodness depends on another have a reason for their goodness in the end on which they depend,

and this reason goes beyond the absolute goodness that exists in them.

So, then, there can be four sort of goodness that exist in a human action:

(a) *being good with respect to its kind (bonitas secundum genus)*, i.e., being good insofar as it is an action, since, as has been explained (a. 1), it has as much goodness as it has action and being;

(b) *being good by its species (bonitas secundum species)*, which is taken from an appropriate object;

(c) *being good with respect to its circumstances (bonitas secundum circumstantias)* in the sense of being good with respect to certain accidents;

(d) *being good with respect to its end (bonitas secundum finem)* in the sense of being good with respect to its relation to a cause of goodness.

Reply to objection 1: The good that someone looks to in acting is not always a genuine good. Rather, sometimes it is a genuine good and sometimes it is an apparent good. And in the latter case, a bad action follows from the end.

Reply to objection 2: Even though the end is an extrinsic cause, it is nonetheless the case that the right sort of proportion to and relation to the end inhere in the action.

Reply to objection 3: Nothing prevents an action from having one of the sorts goodness listed above while lacking another. Accordingly, it is possible for an action that is good by its species or with respect to its circumstances to be ordered toward a bad end, and vice versa. But an action is not good absolutely speaking unless *all* these sorts of goodness come together in it. For as Dionysius says in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, “Any single defect is a cause of badness, whereas goodness results from the whole cause.”

Article 5

Do moral acts differ in species because of their goodness and badness?

It seems that moral acts do not differ in species because of their goodness and badness:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), goodness and badness in acts are like goodness and badness among things. But goodness and badness do not make for a diversity of species among things; for instance, a good man and a bad man are the same in species. Therefore, neither do goodness and badness in acts make for a diversity of species.

Objection 2: Since badness is a privation, it is a certain sort of non-being (*quoddam non ens*). But according to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics 3*, *non-being* cannot be a specific difference. Therefore, since it is the specific difference that constitutes a species, it seems that an act is not constituted in a species by the fact that it is bad. And so goodness and badness do not make for a diversity of species among human acts.

Objection 3: Acts that are diverse in species have diverse effects. But effects that are the same in species can follow from a good act and from a bad act. For instance, a man is generated from adultery and from marital intercourse. Therefore, a good act and a bad act do not differ in species.

Objection 4: As has been explained (a. 3), goodness and badness sometimes exist in acts because of a circumstance. But since a circumstance is an accident, it does not give an act its species. Therefore, human acts do not differ in species because of their goodness and badness.

But contrary to this: According to the Philosopher in *Ethics 2*, similar habits result in similar acts. But a good habit and a bad habit, e.g., generosity (*liberalitas*) and prodigality (*prodigalitas*), differ in species. Therefore, a good act and a bad act likewise differ in species.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 2), every act has its species from its object. Hence, it must be the case that some difference on the part of the object makes for a diversity of species among acts.

Notice, however, that a difference on the part of an object that makes for a difference of species among acts insofar as these acts are related to *one* active principle does not make for a difference of species among the acts insofar as they are related to *another* principle. For only something that is *per se*, and nothing that is *per accidens*, constitutes a species. But it is possible for a given difference on the part of the object to be *per se* in relation to one active principle and *per accidens* in relation to another; for instance, having a cognition of color and having a cognition of sound differ *per se* in relation to the sensory power, but not in relation to the intellect.

Now in the case of human acts, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are predicated in relation to reason, since, as Dionysius says in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, a man’s good is “to be in conformity to reason” (*secundum rationem esse*), whereas the bad is what lies “outside of reason” (*praeter rationem*). For each thing is such that (a) the good for it is what is appropriate for it given its form, and (b) the bad for it is that which lies outside what is prescribed by its form (*praeter ordinem suae formae*). Therefore, it is clear that the differences *good* and *bad*, thought of in regard to the object, are related *per se* to reason, viz., insofar as the object either conforms to or does not conform to reason (*secundum quod obiectum est rationi conveniens vel non conveniens*).

Now acts are called ‘human’ or ‘moral’ insofar as they come from reason. Hence, it is clear that goodness and badness make for diverse species among moral acts, since specific differences make for diverse species *per se*.

Reply to objection 1: Even in the case of natural things goodness and badness, i.e., being consonant with nature (*secundum naturam*) and being contrary to nature (*contra naturam*), make for diverse natural species. For instance, a dead body and a living body do not belong to the same species. Similarly, goodness, i.e., being in accord with reason, and badness, i.e., being outside of reason, make for diverse moral species.

Reply to objection 2: ‘Bad’ does not imply an absolute privation, but instead implies a privation that affects such-and-such a potentiality. For instance, an act is called bad by its species not because it has no object, but because it has an object that is not in accord with reason, e.g., taking what belongs to another. Hence, insofar as the object is something positively speaking, it can constitute a species of bad acts.

Reply to objection 3: Insofar as a conjugal act and an act of adultery are related to reason, they differ in species and have effects that differ in species, since the one deserves praise and reward, whereas the other deserves blame and punishment.

However, insofar as they are related to the generative power, they do not differ in species. So taken, they have the same effect in species.

Reply to objection 4: Sometimes a circumstance is taken as an *essential difference* on the part of the object insofar as the object is related to reason, and in such a case that circumstance can confer a species on a moral act. This has to be the case whenever the circumstance in question changes the act from goodness to badness. For a circumstance would not make an act bad except by being opposed to reason.

Article 6

Do the goodness and badness derived from the end make for diverse species among acts?

It seems that the goodness and badness derived from the end do not make for diverse species among acts:

Objection 1: Acts have their species from their object. But the end lies outside the notion of the object (*praeter rationem obiecti*). Therefore, the goodness and badness derived from the end do not

make for diverse species of acts.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 5), what is *per accidens* does not constitute a species. But it is accidental to an act that it is ordered toward a given end; for instance, it is accidental that someone should give alms for the sake of vainglory. Therefore, acts are not diverse in species because of the goodness and badness derived from the end.

Objection 3: Acts that are diverse in species can be ordered toward a single end; for instance, acts of diverse virtues and of diverse vices can be ordered toward the end of vainglory. Therefore, it is not the case that the goodness and badness taken from the end make for diverse species of acts.

But contrary to this: It was shown above (q. 1, a. 3) that human acts have their species from their end. Therefore, the goodness and badness taken from the end make for diverse species of acts.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 1, a. 1), acts are called human insofar as they are voluntary. But among voluntary acts, there are two sorts of acts, viz., (a) an *interior act* of willing and (b) an *exterior act*, and each of these acts has its own object.

Now the end is, properly speaking, the object of the interior voluntary act, whereas the object of the exterior action is what that action has to do with (*circa quod est actio exterior est obiectum eius*). Therefore, just as the exterior act takes its species from the object that it has to do with, so the interior act of willing takes its species from the end as from its proper object. The result is that what exists on the side of the will is like a form (*se habet ut formale*) with respect to what exists on the side of the exterior act, since the will uses the members of the body as instruments in order to act. Nor do the exterior acts have the nature of moral acts (*neque actus exteriores habent rationem moralitatis*) except insofar as they are voluntary.

And so the species of a human act is thought of *formally* in accord with *the end* and *materially* in accord with *the object of the exterior act*. Hence, in *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher says, “Someone who steals in order to commit adultery is, speaking *per se*, more an adulterer than a thief.”

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, the end also has the character of an object.

Reply to objection 2: Even if being ordered toward the sort of end in question is accidental to the exterior act, it is nonetheless not accidental to the interior act of willing, which is related to the exterior act in the way that what is formal is related to what is material.

Reply to objection 3: When many acts that differ from one another in species are ordered toward a single end, there is, to be sure, a diversity of species among the exterior acts, but there is a oneness of species on the part of the interior act.

Article 7

Is the species of goodness derived from the end contained under the species of goodness derived from the object in the way that a species is contained under a genus?

It seems that the species of goodness derived from the end is contained under the species of goodness derived from the object in the way that a species is contained under a genus, as, for instance, when someone steals in order to give alms:

Objection 1: As has been explained (aa. 2 and 6), an act has its species from its object. But it is impossible for something to be contained under a second species that is not itself contained under the act’s proper species, since the same thing cannot be in diverse non-subordinated species (*in diversis speciebus non subalternis*). Therefore, the species derived from the end is contained under the species derived from the object.

Objection 2: The ultimate difference (*ultima differentia*) constitutes the lowest-level species (*constituit speciem specialissimam*). But the difference derived from the end seems to come later

(*videtur esse posterior*) than the difference derived from the object, since the end has the character of something ultimate (*habet rationem ultimi*). Therefore, the species derived from the end is contained as a lowest-level species under the species derived from the object.

Objection 3: To the extent that a specific difference is more formal, it is more specific, since the difference is related to the genus as a form is related to matter. But as has been explained (a. 6), the species derived from the end is more formal than the species derived from the object. Therefore, the species derived from the end is contained under the species derived from the object in the way that a species is contained under a genus.

But contrary to this: For every genus there are determinate specific differences. But acts of the same species, where the species is derived from the object, can be ordered toward infinitely many ends; for instance, theft can be ordered toward infinitely many good or bad ends. Therefore, the species derived from the end is not contained under the species derived from the object in the way that a species is contained under a genus.

I respond: There are two ways in which the object of the exterior act can be related to the will's end: (a) the object can be ordered *per se* toward the end, in the way that fighting well is ordered *per se* toward victory, or (b) the object can be ordered *per accidens* toward the end, in the way that taking what belongs to another is ordered *per accidens* toward giving alms.

Now as the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics 7*, the differences that divide a genus and constitute the species of that genus have to divide the genus *per se*. By contrast, if they divide the genus *per accidens*, then the division does not proceed in the right way—as, for instance, if someone were to say: “Rational animal and non-rational animal; non-rational animal with wings and non-rational animal without wings.” For *with wings* and *without wings* are not determinative *per se* of *non-rational*. Rather, one has to make the division as follows: “..... animal with feet and animal without feet; animal with two feet and animal with four feet and animal with many feet.” For these latter differences determine the prior difference *per se*.

So, then, when the object is not ordered *per se* toward the end, then the specific difference derived from the object is not *per se* determinative of what is derived from the end, and vice versa. Hence, it is not the case that one of the species is contained under the other; instead in this sort of case the moral act falls under two disparate species, as it were. Hence, we say that someone who steals in order to commit adultery commits two evils in one act (*committit duas malitias in uno actu*).

By contrast, if the object is ordered *per se* toward the end, then one of the differences in question is *per se* determinative of the other. Hence, one of the species will be contained under the other. What remains to be considered is which species falls under which. To make this issue clearer, notice, first, that the more particular the form is from which a given difference is taken, the more specific it is. Second, notice that the more universal the agent is, the more universal the form that comes from that agent. Third, notice that the more remote (*posterior*) an end is, the more universal the agent it corresponds to; for instance, victory, which is the ultimate end of an army, is the end intended by the highest leader, whereas the disposition of this or that line of battle is the end intended by some lower leader.

From these premises it follows that (a) the specific difference derived from the end is more general, and that (b) the difference derived from an object that is ordered *per se* toward such an end is a specific difference in relation to that end. For the act of willing (*voluntas*), whose proper object is the end, is a universal mover with respect to all the soul's powers, whose proper objects are the objects of particular acts.

Reply to objection 1: As regards its substance, nothing can be in two species that are such that it is not the case that one of them falls under the other. But as regards what accrues to a thing, that thing can be contained under diverse species. For instance, as regards its color, this piece of fruit is contained under one species, viz., *white thing*, and as regards its odor, it is contained under the species *good-smelling thing*. Similarly, as was explained above (q. 1, a. 3), an act which, as regards its

substance, is in a given natural species (*est in una specie naturae*) can, given the supervening moral conditions, be in two species.

Reply to objection 2: The end is the last thing in execution, but it is the first thing in reason's thought (*primum in intentione rationis*), and it is from the latter that the species of moral acts are taken.

Reply to objection 3: The specific difference is related to the genus as a form is related to matter, insofar as it makes the genus exist in actuality.

On the other hand, there is also a sense in which the genus is thought of as being more formal than the species, viz., because the genus is more unconditioned and less contracted (*absolutius et minus contractum*). Hence, as the *Physics* says, the parts of a definition are traced back to the genus of the formal cause. On this score, the genus is a formal cause of the species, and the more general it is, the more formal it is.

Article 8

Is any act indifferent by its species?

It seems that no act is indifferent by its species:

Objection 1: According to Augustine, evil is "a privation of good." But according to the Philosopher, a privation and the corresponding disposition (*privation et habitus*) are direct opposites (*opposita immediata*). Therefore, there is no act that is indifferent by its species in the sense of being in between goodness and badness.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 6), human acts derive their species from the end or from the object. But every object and every end has the character of goodness or the character of badness. Therefore, every human act is either good by its species or bad by its species. Therefore, no human act is indifferent by its species.

Objection 3: As has been explained (a. 1), an act is called good because it has the right sort of perfection of goodness, and an act is called bad because it lacks something of this goodness. But it is necessary for every act either (a) to have the entire fullness of its goodness or (b) to lack something of the entire fullness of its goodness. Therefore, it is necessary that every act be either good by its species or bad by its species, and that no act be indifferent.

But contrary to this: In *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine says, "There are certain acts in between that can be done with a good intention or with a bad intention, and about these it would be rash to pass judgment." Therefore, there are some acts that are indifferent by their species.

I respond: As has been explained (aa. 2 and 5), every act has a species from its object, and every human act that is called moral has a species from an object related to the principle of human acts, viz., reason. Hence, if an act's object contains something that belongs to the order of reason, then it will be an act that is good by its species, e.g., giving alms to a poor man. On the other hand, if it contains something that is opposed to the order of reason, then it will be an act that is bad by its species, e.g., stealing, i.e., taking what belongs to someone else.

However, it is possible for an act's object not to contain anything that is relevant to the order of reason, e.g., picking up a leaf from the ground, or taking a walk, etc.; and acts such as these are indifferent by their species.

Reply to objection 1: There are two sorts of privations:

One sort of privation consists in *having already been deprived* (*consistit in privatum esse*), and this sort of privation leaves nothing behind, but instead removes everything—in the way that blindness totally removes sight, and darkness totally removes light, and death totally removes life. Between this sort of privation and the opposed disposition there cannot be any middle ground for a property that might be

received (*circa proprium susceptibile*).

However, there is another sort of privation that consists in *being in the process of being deprived* (*privari*), in the way that sickness is a privation of health—where health is not totally removed, but instead the privation is, as it were, a path toward the total removal of health (*quasi quaedam via ad totalem ablationem sanitatis*) that would come with death. And so since this sort of privation leaves something behind, it is not always such that it leaves no middle ground in relation to the opposed disposition (*non semper est immediata cum opposito habitu*). And this is the sense in which evil is a privation of good, as Simplicius points out in his commentary on the *Categories*. For evil does not remove the totality of goodness, but leaves something behind. It is in this way that there can be a middle ground between good and evil.

Reply to objection 2: Every object or end has some goodness or some badness, at least natural goodness or badness, but it does not always imply *moral* goodness or *moral* badness, which, as has been explained, are thought of in relation to reason. And this is the sort of goodness and badness that we are talking about here.

Reply to objection 3: Not everything had by an act is relevant to its species. Hence, even if the concept of an act's species does not contain everything that pertains to the fullness of the act's goodness, it is not because of this that the act is bad by its species, or even good by its species—in the same way that a man is not by his species either virtuous or vicious.

Article 9

Is any act indifferent as an individual?

It seems that some acts are indifferent as individuals:

Objection 1: Every species is such that it contains or can contain an individual under itself. But as has been explained (a. 8), some acts are indifferent by their species. Therefore, some individual acts can be indifferent.

Objection 2: As *Ethics 2* says, individual acts are a cause of habits conformed to those acts. But some habits are indifferent. For instance, in *Ethics 4* the Philosopher says of those who are easy-going and extravagant (*de placidis et prodigis*) that they are not bad; and yet it is clear that they are not good, since they are moving away from virtue. And so they are indifferent in their habits. Therefore, some individual acts are indifferent.

Objection 3: Moral good pertains to virtue, whereas moral badness pertains to vice. But it sometimes happens that a man does not order an act that is indifferent by its species toward any end of either virtue or vice. Therefore, it is possible for an individual act to be indifferent.

But contrary to this: In a certain homily Gregory says, “Idle speech (*otiosum verbum*) lacks the usefulness of rectitude, or the rationale of upright necessity, or pious usefulness.” But idle speech is bad, because, as Matthew 12:36 says, a man shall render an account of it on the day of judgment. Therefore, every instance of speech (*omne verbum*) is either good or bad. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, every other act is either good or bad. Therefore, no individual act is indifferent.

I respond: It sometimes happens that an act is indifferent in its *species* and yet is good or bad when thought of as an *individual* act. This is because, as has been explained (a. 3), a moral act has its goodness not only from its object, from which it has its species, but also from its circumstances, which are, as it were, certain accidents—just as something belongs to an individual man because of his individual accidents that does not belong to him because of the essence of his species. And it is necessary for each individual act to have some circumstance through which it is drawn toward goodness or badness, at least on the part of the act of intending the end. For since reason's role is to order, if an act

that proceeds from deliberative reason is not ordered toward the right sort of end, then by this very fact it has the character of badness. On the other hand, if it is ordered toward the right sort of end, then it is consonant with the order of reason and thus has the character of goodness.

Hence, it is necessary that every one of a man's acts that proceeds from deliberative reason is, considered as an individual, either good or bad. On the other hand, if an act proceeds not from deliberative reason but instead from some act of imagining, as when someone scratches his beard or moves his hand or foot, then such an act is not, properly speaking, a moral or human act, since an act has the character of being moral or human from reason. And so an act of this sort will be indifferent in the sense of falling outside the genus of moral acts.

Reply to objection 1: There is more than one possible way for an act to be indifferent by its species (*secundum suam speciem*).

In one way, it is such that, given its species (*ex sua species*), the act *has to be* indifferent. And it is on this interpretation that the objection goes through.

However, there is no act that is indifferent by its species in this sense. For there is no object of a human act that cannot be ordered toward goodness or badness through some end or circumstance.

In a second sense, an act can be called indifferent by its species because it does not have goodness or badness by its species. Hence, it can become good or bad through something else. In the same way, a man does not by his species have whiteness or blackness, and he does not by his species have it that he is not white or not black. For whiteness or blackness can supervene on a man from somewhere other than from the principles of his species.

Reply to objection 2: The Philosopher is claiming that it is someone who is dangerous to other men who is, properly speaking, called 'bad'. Accordingly, he says that one who is extravagant is not bad because he harms no one other than himself. And the same thing holds for all others who are not dangerous to their neighbors.

We ourselves, however, are here calling 'bad' everything that is opposed to right reason (*omne quod est rationi rectae repugnans*). And in this sense, as has been explained, every individual act is either good or bad.

Reply to objection 3: Every end intended by deliberative reason is relevant to the goodness of some virtue or the badness of some vice. For instance, the very fact that someone acts in an well-ordered way to give his body sustenance or rest is ordered toward the good of virtue in one who orders his body to the good of virtue. And the same thing is clear in other cases as well.

Article 10

Can a circumstance constitute a species of good or bad act?

It seems that a circumstance cannot constitute a species of good or bad act:

Objection 1: An act's species comes from its object. But the circumstances differ from the object. Therefore, the circumstances do not give an act its species.

Objection 2: As has been explained (q. 7, a. 1), the circumstances are related to a moral act as its accidents. But an accident does not constitute the species. Therefore, a circumstance does not establish a moral act in a species of goodness or badness.

Objection 3: A single thing cannot have more than one species. But a single thing has more than one circumstance. Therefore, a circumstance does not constitute a species of goodness or badness.

But contrary to this: Place is a circumstance. But there are certain species of badness in which place constitutes moral acts; for instance, to steal something from a sacred place is a sacrilege. Therefore, a circumstance establishes a moral act in a species of goodness or badness.

I respond: Just as the species of natural things are constituted by natural forms, so, as is clear from what has been said above (a. 5), the species of moral acts are constituted by forms as conceived by reason. But since nature is delimited to a single outcome and since there cannot be an infinite natural process, one must arrive at some ultimate form from which the specific difference is taken and after which there cannot be any other specific difference. And so it is that among natural things, what is accidental to a thing cannot be taken as the difference that constitutes the species.

By contrast, reason's process is not delimited to some one outcome; instead, given any outcome, one is able to proceed further. And so, in the case of a particular act, what is taken as a circumstance and so as an addition to the object determining the act's species is such that reason in its ordering function can consider it yet again as a principal aspect (*principalis conditio*) of the object determining the act's species. For instance, an act of taking what belongs to someone else has its species from the concept *belonging to someone else*, and from this it is constituted in the species *theft*; and if one thinks beyond this to the notion of time or place, then time or place will have the character of a circumstance. But because reason can give prescriptions (*ratio ordinare potest*) concerning time and place and other things of this sort, it is possible for the aspect of place to be assumed into the object as something that is contrary to the order of reason; for instance, reason ordains that one should do no harm to a sacred place. Hence, an act of taking something belonging to someone else *from a sacred place* adds a special opposition to the order of reason. And so place, which before was thought of as a circumstance, is now being thought of as a principal aspect of an object that is opposed to reason.

In this way, whenever some circumstance has to do with—either for or against—some special prescription of reason, the circumstance has to give the species to a moral act, whether a good one or a bad one.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, insofar as a circumstance gives an act its species, it is being thought of as an aspect of the object and, as it were, a certain specific difference of the object.

Reply to objection 2: Since a circumstance that retains the character of a circumstance has the character of an accident, it does not give the act its species. But insofar a circumstance is changed into a principal aspect of the object, it does give the species.

Reply to objection 3: Not every circumstance constitutes a moral act in some species of goodness or badness, since not every circumstance implies an agreement or disagreement with reason. Hence, even though a single act has many circumstances, it is not necessary for a single act to have many species—though, as has been explained (a. 7), it is not absurd for a single moral act to be in several moral species, even disparate species.

Article 11

Does every circumstance relevant to goodness and badness give an act its species?

It seems that every circumstance relevant to goodness and badness gives an act its species:

Objection 1: *Good* and *bad* are specific differences of *moral acts*. Therefore, what makes for a difference in the goodness or badness of a moral act makes for a difference in the specific difference, and this is just what it is to differ in species. But that which adds to the goodness or badness of an act makes for a difference with respect to goodness and badness. Therefore, it makes for a difference in species. Therefore, every circumstance that adds to the goodness or badness of an act constitutes a species.

Objection 2: An adjoined circumstance (*circumstantia adveniens*) either does or does not have within itself some element of goodness or badness (*habet in se aliquam rationem bonitatis vel malitiae aut non*). If it does not, then it cannot add to an act's goodness or badness, since what is not good cannot make an act better and what is not bad cannot make an act worse. But if it does have within itself an

element of goodness or badness, then by that very fact it has a certain species of goodness or badness. Therefore, every circumstance that increases an act's goodness or badness constitutes a new species of good acts or of bad acts.

Objection 3: According to Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, "What is bad is caused by single defects." But every circumstance that aggravates an act's badness has a specific defect. Therefore, each circumstance adds a new species of sin. And for the same reason, every circumstance that increases an act's goodness seems to add a new species of good act—in the same way that a unit, when added to a number, makes for a new species of number. For the good consists "in number, weight, and measure."

But contrary to this: *More* and *less* do not make for diverse species. But *more* and *less* are circumstances that add to goodness and to badness. Therefore, not every circumstance that adds goodness or badness establishes a moral act in a species of goodness or badness.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 10), a circumstance confers a species of good or bad acts insofar as it relates to some special prescription on the part of reason (*inquantum respicit specialem ordinem rationis*).

Now sometimes it happens that a circumstance relates to a special prescription of reason with respect to goodness and badness only if some other circumstance, from which the moral act has its species of goodness or badness, is presupposed. For instance, taking something in a large or small quantity relates to reason's prescription concerning goodness and badness only if one presupposes another condition through which the act has goodness or badness, e.g., the condition, opposed to reason, that the thing in question belongs to someone else. Hence, taking what belongs to another in a large or small quantity does not itself make for a diversity of species—even though it can still aggravate or diminish the sin. And the same thing holds for other cases of bad or good acts.

Hence, not every circumstance that adds goodness or badness makes for a variation in the species of a moral act.

Reply to objection 1: In things that are subject to intensification and remission, the differences *intense* and *remiss* do not make for a diversity of species; for instance, things that differ with respect to more whiteness and less whiteness do not differ in their species of color. Similarly, what makes for a diversity with respect to more intense goodness or badness or more remiss goodness or badness does not make for difference in species among moral acts.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained, in some cases a circumstance that aggravates a sin or increases an act's goodness does not have goodness or badness in its own right (*secundum se*), but has it in relation to another of the act's conditions. And so such a circumstance does not confer a new species, but instead augments the goodness or badness that belongs to the act because of some other condition.

Reply to objection 3: Not every circumstance introduces a special defect in its own right, but sometimes it induces a defect only in relation to something else. And, similarly, a circumstance does not always add a new perfection, except in relation to something else. And even if it does increase the goodness or badness, it does not always make for a different species of goodness or badness.