

## St. Thomas Aquinas

# The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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### OF GOOD AND EVIL IN THE PASSIONS OF THE SOUL (FOUR ARTICLES)

We must now consider good and evil in the passions of the soul: and under this head there are four points of inquiry:

- [\(1\)](#) Whether moral good and evil can be found in the passions of the soul?
  - [\(2\)](#) Whether every passion of the soul is morally evil?
  - [\(3\)](#) Whether every passion increases or decreases the goodness or malice of an act?
  - [\(4\)](#) Whether any passion is good or evil specifically?
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### Whether moral good and evil can be found in the passions of the soul?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that no passion of the soul is morally good or evil. For moral good and evil are proper to man: since "morals are properly predicated of man," as Ambrose says (Super Luc. Prolog.). But passions are not proper to man, for he has them in common with other animals. Therefore no passion of the soul is morally good or evil.

**Objection 2:** Further, the good or evil of man consists in "being in accord, or in disaccord with reason," as Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv). Now the passions of the soul are not in the reason, but in the sensitive appetite, as stated above ([Question \[22\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)). Therefore they have no connection with human, i.e. moral, good or evil.

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blamed for our passions." But we are praised and blamed for moral good and evil. Therefore the passions are not morally good or evil.

**On the contrary**, Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xiv, 7) while speaking of the passions of the soul: "They are evil if our love is evil; good if our love is good."

**I answer that**, We may consider the passions of the soul in two ways: first, in themselves; secondly, as being subject to the command of the reason and will. If then the passions be considered in themselves, to wit, as movements of the irrational appetite, thus there is no moral good or evil in them, since this depends on the reason, as stated above ([Question \[18\]](#), [Article \[5\]](#)). If, however, they be considered as subject to the command of the reason and will, then moral good and evil are in them. Because the sensitive appetite is nearer than the outward members to the reason and will; and yet the movements and actions of the outward members are morally good or evil, inasmuch as they are voluntary. Much more, therefore, may the passions, in so far as they are voluntary, be called morally good or evil. And they are said to be voluntary, either from being commanded by the will, or from not being checked by the will.

**Reply to Objection 1:** These passions, considered in themselves, are common to man and other animals: but, as commanded by the reason, they are proper to man.

**Reply to Objection 2:** Even the lower appetitive powers are called rational, in so far as "they partake of reason in some sort" (Ethic. i, 13).

**Reply to Objection 3:** The Philosopher says that we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions considered absolutely; but he does not exclude their becoming worthy of praise or blame, in so far as they are subordinate to reason. Hence he continues: "For the man who fears or is angry, is not praised... or blamed, but the man who is angry in a certain way, i.e. according to, or against reason."

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## Whether every passion of the soul is evil morally?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that all the passions of the soul are morally evil. For Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 4) that "some call the soul's passions diseases or disturbances of the soul" [\*Those things which the Greeks call {pathe}, we prefer to call disturbances rather than diseases (Tusc. iv. 5)]. But every disease or disturbance of the soul is morally evil. Therefore every passion of the soul is evil morally.

**Objection 2:** Further, Damascene says (De Fide Orth. ii, 22) that "movement in accord with nature is an action, but movement contrary to nature is passion." But in movements of the soul, what is against nature is sinful and morally evil: hence he says elsewhere (De Fide Orth. ii, 4) that "the devil turned from that which is in accord with nature to that which is against nature." Therefore these passions are morally evil.

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sin: wherefore they are called "the passions of sins" ([Rm. 7:5](#)). Therefore it seems that they are morally evil.

**On the contrary**, Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xiv, 9) that "all these emotions are right in those whose love is rightly placed... For they fear to sin, they desire to persevere; they grieve for sin, they rejoice in good works."

**I answer that**, On this question the opinion of the Stoics differed from that of the Peripatetics: for the Stoics held that all passions are evil, while the Peripatetics maintained that moderate passions are good. This difference, although it appears great in words, is nevertheless, in reality, none at all, or but little, if we consider the intent of either school. For the Stoics did not discern between sense and intellect; and consequently neither between the intellectual and sensitive appetite. Hence they did not discriminate the passions of the soul from the movements of the will, in so far as the passions of the soul are in the sensitive appetite, while the simple movements of the will are in the intellectual appetite: but every rational movement of the appetitive part they call will, while they called passion, a movement that exceeds the limits of reason. Wherefore Cicero, following their opinion (De Tusc. Quaest. iii, 4) calls all passions "diseases of the soul": whence he argues that "those who are diseased are unsound; and those who are unsound are wanting in sense." Hence we speak of those who are wanting in sense of being "unsound."

On the other hand, the Peripatetics give the name of "passions" to all the movements of the sensitive appetite. Wherefore they esteem them good, when they are controlled by reason; and evil when they are not controlled by reason. Hence it is evident that Cicero was wrong in disapproving (De Tusc. Quaest. iii, 4) of the Peripatetic theory of a mean in the passions, when he says that "every evil, though moderate, should be shunned; for, just as a body, though it be moderately ailing, is not sound; so, this mean in the diseases or passions of the soul, is not sound." For passions are not called "diseases" or "disturbances" of the soul, save when they are not controlled by reason.

Hence the reply to the First Objection is evident.

**Reply to Objection 2:** In every passion there is an increase or decrease in the natural movement of the heart, according as the heart is moved more or less intensely by contraction and dilatation; and hence it derives the character of passion. But there is no need for passion to deviate always from the order of natural reason.

**Reply to Objection 3:** The passions of the soul, in so far as they are contrary to the order of reason, incline us to sin: but in so far as they are controlled by reason, they pertain to virtue.

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**Whether passion increases or decreases the goodness or malice of an act?**

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anything that hinders the judgment of reason, on which depends the goodness of a moral act, consequently decreases the goodness of the moral act. But every passion hinders the judgment of reason: for Sallust says (Catilin.): "All those that take counsel about matters of doubt, should be free from hatred, anger, friendship and pity." Therefore passion decreases the goodness of a moral act.

**Objection 2:** Further, the more a man's action is like to God, the better it is: hence the Apostle says ([Eph. 5:1](#)): "Be ye followers of God, as most dear children." But "God and the holy angels feel no anger when they punish... no fellow-feeling with misery when they relieve the unhappy," as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 5). Therefore it is better to do such like deeds without than with a passion of the soul.

**Objection 3:** Further, just as moral evil depends on its relation to reason, so also does moral good. But moral evil is lessened by passion: for he sins less, who sins from passion, than he who sins deliberately. Therefore he does a better deed, who does well without passion, than he who does with passion.

**On the contrary,** Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 5) that "the passion of pity is obedient to reason, when pity is bestowed without violating right, as when the poor are relieved, or the penitent forgiven." But nothing that is obedient to reason lessens the moral good. Therefore a passion of the soul does not lessen moral good.

**I answer that,** As the Stoics held that every passion of the soul is evil, they consequently held that every passion of the soul lessens the goodness of an act; since the admixture of evil either destroys good altogether, or makes it to be less good. And this is true indeed, if by passions we understand none but the inordinate movements of the sensitive appetite, considered as disturbances or ailments. But if we give the name of passions to all the movements of the sensitive appetite, then it belongs to the perfection of man's good that his passions be moderated by reason. For since man's good is founded on reason as its root, that good will be all the more perfect, according as it extends to more things pertaining to man. Wherefore no one questions the fact that it belongs to the perfection of moral good, that the actions of the outward members be controlled by the law of reason. Hence, since the sensitive appetite can obey reason, as stated above ([Question \[17\]](#), [Article \[7\]](#)), it belongs to the perfection of moral or human good, that the passions themselves also should be controlled by reason.

Accordingly just as it is better that man should both will good and do it in his external act; so also does it belong to the perfection of moral good, that man should be moved unto good, not only in respect of his will, but also in respect of his sensitive appetite; according to Ps. 83:3: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God": where by "heart" we are to understand the intellectual appetite, and by "flesh" the sensitive appetite.

**Reply to Objection 1:** The passions of the soul may stand in a twofold relation to the judgment of reason. First, antecedently: and thus, since they obscure the judgment of reason, on which the goodness of the moral act depends, they diminish the goodness of the act; for it is more praiseworthy to do a work of charity from the judgment of reason than from the mere passion of pity. In the second place, consequently: and this in two ways. First, by way of redundancy: because, to wit, when the higher part of the soul is intensely moved to anything, the lower part also follows that movement: and thus the passion that results in consequence, in the sensitive appetite, is a sign of the intensity of the will, and so indicates greater moral goodness. Secondly, by way of choice; when, to wit, a man, by the judgment of his reason, chooses to be

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**Reply to Objection 2:** In God and the angels there is no sensitive appetite, nor again bodily members: and so in them good does not depend on the right ordering of passions or of bodily actions, as it does in us.

**Reply to Objection 3:** A passion that tends to evil, and precedes the judgment of reason, diminishes sin; but if it be consequent in either of the ways mentioned above (Reply OBJ 1), it aggravates the sin, or else it is a sign of its being more grievous.

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## Whether any passion is good or evil in its species?

**Objection 1:** It would seem that no passion of the soul is good or evil morally according to its species. Because moral good and evil depend on reason. But the passions are in the sensitive appetite; so that accordance with reason is accidental to them. Since, therefore, nothing accidental belongs to a thing's species, it seems that no passion is good or evil according to its species.

**Objection 2:** Further, acts and passions take their species from their object. If, therefore, any passion were good or evil, according to its species, it would follow that those passions the object of which is good, are specifically good, such as love, desire and joy: and that those passions, the object of which is evil, are specifically evil, as hatred, fear and sadness. But this is clearly false. Therefore no passion is good or evil according to its species.

**Objection 3:** Further, there is no species of passion that is not to be found in other animals. But moral good is in man alone. Therefore no passion of the soul is good or evil according to its species.

**On the contrary,** Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ix, 5) that "pity is a kind of virtue." Moreover, the Philosopher says (Ethic. ii, 7) that modesty is a praiseworthy passion. Therefore some passions are good or evil according to their species.

**I answer that,** We ought, seemingly, to apply to passions what has been said in regard to acts ([Question \[18\]](#), [Articles \[5\],6](#); [Question \[20\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#))---viz. that the species of a passion, as the species of an act, can be considered from two points of view. First, according to its natural genus; and thus moral good and evil have no connection with the species of an act or passion. Secondly, according to its moral genus, inasmuch as it is voluntary and controlled by reason. In this way moral good and evil can belong to the species of a passion, in so far as the object to which a passion tends, is, of itself, in harmony or in discord with reason: as is clear in the case of "shame" which is base fear; and of "envy" which is sorrow for another's good: for thus passions belong to the same species as the external act.

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[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [FS](#) » [FS024.html](#) as the sensitive appetite is considered in itself. But in so far as the sensitive appetite obeys reason, good and evil of reason are no longer accidentally in the passions of the appetite, but essentially.

***Reply to Objection 2:*** Passions having a tendency to good, are themselves good, if they tend to that which is truly good, and in like manner, if they turn away from that which is truly evil. On the other hand, those passions which consist in aversion from good, and a tendency to evil, are themselves evil.

***Reply to Objection 3:*** In irrational animals the sensitive appetite does not obey reason. Nevertheless, in so far as they are led by a kind of estimative power, which is subject to a higher, i.e. the Divine reason, there is a certain likeness of moral good in them, in regard to the soul's passions.