

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF THE EFFECTS OF SIN, AND, FIRST, OF THE CORRUPTION OF THE GOOD OF NATURE (SIX ARTICLES)

We must now consider the effects of sin; and (1) the corruption of the good of nature; (2) the stain on the soul; (3) the debt of punishment.

Under the first head there are six points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether the good of nature is diminished by sin?
 - (2) Whether it can be taken away altogether?
 - (3) Of the four wounds, mentioned by Bede, with which human nature is stricken in consequence of sin.
 - (4) Whether privation of mode, species and order is an effect of sin?
 - (5) Whether death and other bodily defects are the result of sin?
 - (6) Whether they are, in any way, natural to man?
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Whether sin diminishes the good of nature?

Objection 1: It would seem that sin does not diminish the good of nature. For man's sin is no worse than the devil's. But natural good remains unimpaired in devils after sin, as Dionysius

Objection 2: Further, when that which follows is changed, that which precedes remains unchanged, since substance remains the same when its accidents are changed. But nature exists before the voluntary action. Therefore, when sin has caused a disorder in a voluntary act, nature is not changed on that account, so that the good of nature be diminished.

Objection 3: Further, sin is an action, while diminution is a passion. Now no agent is passive by the very reason of its acting, although it is possible for it to act on one thing, and to be passive as regards another. Therefore he who sins, does not, by his sin, diminish the good of his nature.

Objection 4: Further, no accident acts on its subject: because that which is patient is a potential being, while that which is subjected to an accident, is already an actual being as regards that accident. But sin is in the good of nature as an accident in a subject. Therefore sin does not diminish the good of nature, since to diminish is to act.

On the contrary, "A certain man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho ([Lk. 10:30](#)), i.e. to the corruption of sin, was stripped of his gifts, and wounded in his nature," as Bede [*The quotation is from the Glossa Ordinaria of Strabo] expounds the passage. Therefore sin diminishes the good of nature.

I answer that, The good of human nature is threefold. First, there are the principles of which nature is constituted, and the properties that flow from them, such as the powers of the soul, and so forth. Secondly, since man has from nature an inclination to virtue, as stated above ([Question \[60\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#); [Question \[63\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), this inclination to virtue is a good of nature. Thirdly, the gift of original justice, conferred on the whole of human nature in the person of the first man, may be called a good of nature.

Accordingly, the first-mentioned good of nature is neither destroyed nor diminished by sin. The third good of nature was entirely destroyed through the sin of our first parent. But the second good of nature, viz. the natural inclination to virtue, is diminished by sin. Because human acts produce an inclination to like acts, as stated above ([Question \[50\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). Now from the very fact that thing becomes inclined to one of two contraries, its inclination to the other contrary must needs be diminished. Wherefore as sin is opposed to virtue, from the very fact that a man sins, there results a diminution of that good of nature, which is the inclination to virtue.

Reply to Objection 1: Dionysius is speaking of the first-mentioned good of nature, which consists in "being, living and understanding," as anyone may see who reads the context.

Reply to Objection 2: Although nature precedes the voluntary action, it has an inclination to a certain voluntary action. Wherefore nature is not changed in itself, through a change in the voluntary action: it is the inclination that is changed in so far as it is directed to its term.

Reply to Objection 3: A voluntary action proceeds from various powers, active and passive. The result is that through voluntary actions something is caused or taken away in the man who acts, as we have stated when treating of the production of habits ([Question \[51\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)).

Reply to Objection 4: An accident does not act effectively on its subject, but it acts on it formally, in the same sense as when we say that whiteness makes a thing white. In this way there is nothing to hinder sin from diminishing the good of nature; but only in so far as sin is

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regards the inordinateness of the agent, we must say that such like inordinateness is caused by the fact that in the acts of the soul, there is an active, and a passive element: thus the sensible object moves the sensitive appetite, and the sensitive appetite inclines the reason and will, as stated above ([Question \[77\]](#), [Articles \[1\]](#), 2). The result of this is the inordinateness, not as though an accident acted on its own subject, but in so far as the object acts on the power, and one power acts on another and puts it out of order.

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Whether the entire good of human nature can be destroyed by sin?

Objection 1: It would seem that the entire good of human nature can be destroyed by sin. For the good of human nature is finite, since human nature itself is finite. Now any finite thing is entirely taken away, if the subtraction be continuous. Since therefore the good of nature can be continually diminished by sin, it seems that in the end it can be entirely taken away.

Objection 2: Further, in a thing of one nature, the whole and the parts are uniform, as is evidently the case with air, water, flesh and all bodies with similar parts. But the good of nature is wholly uniform. Since therefore a part thereof can be taken away by sin, it seems that the whole can also be taken away by sin.

Objection 3: Further, the good of nature, that is weakened by sin, is aptitude for virtue. Now this aptitude is destroyed entirely in some on account of sin: thus the lost cannot be restored to virtue any more than the blind can to sight. Therefore sin can take away the good of nature entirely.

On the contrary, Augustine says (Enchiridion xiv) that "evil does not exist except in some good." But the evil of sin cannot be in the good of virtue or of grace, because they are contrary to it. Therefore it must be in the good of nature, and consequently it does not destroy it entirely.

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)), the good of nature, that is diminished by sin, is the natural inclination to virtue, which is befitting to man from the very fact that he is a rational being; for it is due to this that he performs actions in accord with reason, which is to act virtuously. Now sin cannot entirely take away from man the fact that he is a rational being, for then he would no longer be capable of sin. Wherefore it is not possible for this good of nature to be destroyed entirely.

Since, however, this same good of nature may be continually diminished by sin, some, in order to illustrate this, have made use of the example of a finite thing being diminished indefinitely, without being entirely destroyed. For the Philosopher says (Phys. i, text. 37) that if from a finite magnitude a continual subtraction be made in the same quantity, it will at last be entirely destroyed, for instance if from any finite length I continue to subtract the length of a span. If, however, the subtraction be made each time in the same proportion, and not in the same

diminished by half, it will be possible to go on thus indefinitely, provided that what is subtracted in each case be less than what was subtracted before. But this does not apply to the question at issue, since a subsequent sin does not diminish the good of nature less than a previous sin, but perhaps more, if it be a more grievous sin.

We must, therefore, explain the matter otherwise by saying that the aforesaid inclination is to be considered as a middle term between two others: for it is based on the rational nature as on its root, and tends to the good of virtue, as to its term and end. Consequently its diminution may be understood in two ways: first, on the part of its root, secondly, on the part of its term. In the first way, it is not diminished by sin, because sin does not diminish nature, as stated above ([Article \[1\]](#)). But it is diminished in the second way, in so far as an obstacle is placed against its attaining its term. Now if it were diminished in the first way, it would needs be entirely destroyed at last by the rational nature being entirely destroyed. Since, however, it is diminished on the part of the obstacle which is place against its attaining its term, it is evident that it can be diminished indefinitely, because obstacles can be placed indefinitely, inasmuch as man can go on indefinitely adding sin to sin: and yet it cannot be destroyed entirely, because the root of this inclination always remains. An example of this may be seen in a transparent body, which has an inclination to receive light, from the very fact that it is transparent; yet this inclination or aptitude is diminished on the part of supervening clouds, although it always remains rooted in the nature of the body.

Reply to Objection 1: This objection avails when diminution is made by subtraction. But here the diminution is made by raising obstacles, and this neither diminishes nor destroys the root of the inclination, as stated above.

Reply to Objection 2: The natural inclination is indeed wholly uniform: nevertheless it stands in relation both to its principle and to its term, in respect of which diversity of relation, it is diminished on the one hand, and not on the other.

Reply to Objection 3: Even in the lost the natural inclination to virtue remains, else they would have no remorse of conscience. That it is not reduced to act is owing to their being deprived of grace by Divine justice. Thus even in a blind man the aptitude to see remains in the very root of his nature, inasmuch as he is an animal naturally endowed with sight: yet this aptitude is not reduced to act, for the lack of a cause capable of reducing it, by forming the organ requisite for sight.

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Whether weakness, ignorance, malice and concupiscence are suitably reckoned as the wounds of nature consequent upon sin?

Objection 1: It would seem that weakness, ignorance, malice and concupiscence are not suitably reckoned as the wounds of nature consequent upon sin. For one same thing is not both effect and cause of the same thing. But these are reckoned to be causes of sin, as appears

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Objection 2: Further, malice is the name of a sin. Therefore it should have no place among the effects of sin.

Objection 3: Further, concupiscence is something natural, since it is an act of the concupiscible power. But that which is natural should not be reckoned a wound of nature. Therefore concupiscence should not be reckoned a wound of nature.

Objection 4: Further, it has been stated ([Question \[77\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)) that to sin from weakness is the same as to sin from passion. But concupiscence is a passion. Therefore it should not be condivided with weakness.

Objection 5: Further, Augustine (De Nat. et Grat. lxvii, 67) reckons "two things to be punishments inflicted on the soul of the sinner, viz. ignorance and difficulty," from which arise "error and vexation," which four do not coincide with the four in question. Therefore it seems that one or the other reckoning is incomplete.

On the contrary, The authority of Bede suffices [*Reference not known].

I answer that, As a result of original justice, the reason had perfect hold over the lower parts of the soul, while reason itself was perfected by God, and was subject to Him. Now this same original justice was forfeited through the sin of our first parent, as already stated ([Question \[81\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)); so that all the powers of the soul are left, as it were, destitute of their proper order, whereby they are naturally directed to virtue; which destitution is called a wounding of nature.

Again, there are four of the soul's powers that can be subject of virtue, as stated above ([Question \[61\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)), viz. the reason, where prudence resides, the will, where justice is, the irascible, the subject of fortitude, and the concupiscible, the subject of temperance. Therefore in so far as the reason is deprived of its order to the true, there is the wound of ignorance; in so far as the will is deprived of its order of good, there is the wound of malice; in so far as the irascible is deprived of its order to the arduous, there is the wound of weakness; and in so far as the concupiscible is deprived of its order to the delectable, moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence.

Accordingly these are the four wounds inflicted on the whole of human nature as a result of our first parent's sin. But since the inclination to the good of virtue is diminished in each individual on account of actual sin, as was explained above ([Articles \[1\]](#), [2](#)), these four wounds are also the result of other sins, in so far as, through sin, the reason is obscured, especially in practical matters, the will hardened to evil, good actions become more difficult and concupiscence more impetuous.

Reply to Objection 1: There is no reason why the effect of one sin should not be the cause of another: because the soul, through sinning once, is more easily inclined to sin again.

Reply to Objection 2: Malice is not to be taken here as a sin, but as a certain proneness of the will to evil, according to the words of Gn. 8:21: "Man's senses are prone to evil from his youth" [*Vulgate: "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth."].

Reply to Objection 3: As stated above ([Question \[82\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#), ad 1), concupiscence is natural to man, in so far as it is subject to reason: whereas, in so far as it goes beyond the

Reply to Objection 4: Speaking in a general way, every passion can be called a weakness, in so far as it weakens the soul's strength and clogs the reason. Bede, however, took weakness in the strict sense, as contrary to fortitude which pertains to the irascible.

Reply to Objection 5: The "difficulty" which is mentioned in this book of Augustine, includes the three wounds affecting the appetitive powers, viz. "malice," "weakness" and "concupiscence," for it is owing to these three that a man finds it difficult to tend to the good. "Error" and "vexation" are consequent wounds, since a man is vexed through being weakened in respect of the objects of his concupiscence.

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Whether privation of mode, species and order is the effect of sin?

Objection 1: It would seem that privation of mode, species and order is not the effect of sin. For Augustine says (De Natura Boni iii) that "where these three abound, the good is great; where they are less, there is less good; where they are not, there is no good at all." But sin does not destroy the good of nature. Therefore it does not destroy mode, species and order.

Objection 2: Further, nothing is its own cause. But sin itself is the "privation of mode, species and order," as Augustine states (De Natura Boni iv). Therefore privation of mode, species and order is not the effect of sin.

Objection 3: Further, different effects result from different sins. Now since mode, species and order are diverse, their corresponding privations must be diverse also, and, consequently, must be the result of different sins. Therefore privation of mode, species and order is not the effect of each sin.

On the contrary, Sin is to the soul what weakness is to the body, according to Ps. 6:3, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." Now weakness deprives the body of mode, species and order.

I answer that, As stated in the FP, Question [5], Article [5], mode, species and order are consequent upon every created good, as such, and also upon every being. Because every being and every good as such depends on its form from which it derives its "species." Again, any kind of form, whether substantial or accidental, of anything whatever, is according to some measure, wherefore it is stated in Metaph. viii, that "the forms of things are like numbers," so that a form has a certain "mode" corresponding to its measure. Lastly owing to its form, each thing has a relation of "order" to something else.

Accordingly there are different grades of mode, species and order, corresponding to the different degrees of good. For there is a good belonging to the very substance of nature, which good has its mode, species and order, and is neither destroyed nor diminished by sin. There is

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This suffices for the Replies to the first two Objections.

Reply to Objection 3: Mode, species and order follow one from the other, as explained above: and so they are destroyed or diminished together.

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Whether death and other bodily defects are the result of sin?

Objection 1: It would seem that death and other bodily defects are not the result of sin. Because equal causes have equal effects. Now these defects are not equal in all, but abound in some more than in others, whereas original sin, from which especially these defects seem to result, is equal in all, as stated above ([Question \[82\]](#), [Article \[4\]](#)). Therefore death and suchlike defects are not the result of sin.

Objection 2: Further, if the cause is removed, the effect is removed. But these defects are not removed, when all sin is removed by Baptism or Penance. Therefore they are not the effect of sin.

Objection 3: Further, actual sin has more of the character of guilt than original sin has. But actual sin does not change the nature of the body by subjecting it to some defect. Much less, therefore, does original sin. Therefore death and other bodily defects are not the result of sin.

On the contrary, The Apostle says ([Rm. 5:12](#)), "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death."

I answer that, One thing causes another in two ways: first, by reason of itself; secondly, accidentally. By reason of itself, one thing is the cause of another, if it produces its effect by reason of the power of its nature or form, the result being that the effect is directly intended by the cause. Consequently, as death and such like defects are beside the intention of the sinner, it is evident that sin is not, of itself, the cause of these defects. Accidentally, one thing is the cause of another if it causes it by removing an obstacle: thus it is stated in Phys. viii, text. 32, that "by displacing a pillar a man moves accidentally the stone resting thereon." In this way the sin of our first parent is the cause of death and all such like defects in human nature, in so far as by the sin of our first parent original justice was taken away, whereby not only were the lower powers of the soul held together under the control of reason, without any disorder whatever, but also the whole body was held together in subjection to the soul, without any defect, as

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the sin of our first parent; just as human nature was stricken in the soul by the disorder among the powers, as stated above ([Article \[3\]](#); [Question \[82\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)), so also it became subject to corruption, by reason of disorder in the body.

Now the withdrawal of original justice has the character of punishment, even as the withdrawal of grace has. Consequently, death and all consequent bodily defects are punishments of original sin. And although the defects are not intended by the sinner, nevertheless they are ordered according to the justice of God Who inflicts them as punishments.

Reply to Objection 1: Causes that produce their effects of themselves, if equal, produce equal effects: for if such causes be increased or diminished, the effect is increased or diminished. But equal causes of an obstacle being removed, do not point to equal effects. For supposing a man employs equal force in displacing two columns, it does not follow that the movements of the stones resting on them will be equal; but that one will move with greater velocity, which has the greater weight according to the property of its nature, to which it is left when the obstacle to its falling is removed. Accordingly, when original justice is removed, the nature of the human body is left to itself, so that according to diverse natural temperaments, some men's bodies are subject to more defects, some to fewer, although original sin is equal in all.

Reply to Objection 2: Both original and actual sin are removed by the same cause that removes these defects, according to the Apostle ([Rm. 8:11](#)): "He... shall quicken... your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you": but each is done according to the order of Divine wisdom, at a fitting time. Because it is right that we should first of all be conformed to Christ's sufferings, before attaining to the immortality and impassibility of glory, which was begun in Him, and by Him acquired for us. Hence it behooves that our bodies should remain, for a time, subject to suffering, in order that we may merit the impassibility of glory, in conformity with Christ.

Reply to Objection 3: Two things may be considered in actual sin, the substance of the act, and the aspect of fault. As regards the substance of the act, actual sin can cause a bodily defect: thus some sicken and die through eating too much. But as regards the fault, it deprives us of grace which is given to us that we may regulate the acts of the soul, but not that we may ward off defects of the body, as original justice did. Wherefore actual sin does not cause those defects, as original sin does.

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Whether death and other defects are natural to man?

Objection 1: It would seem that death and such like defects are natural to man. For "the corruptible and the incorruptible differ generically" (Metaph. x, text. 26). But man is of the same genus as other animals which are naturally corruptible. Therefore man is naturally corruptible.

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within itself the cause of corruption. But such is the human body. Therefore it is naturally corruptible.

Objection 3: Further, a hot thing naturally consumes moisture. Now human life is preserved by hot and moist elements. Since therefore the vital functions are fulfilled by the action of natural heat, as stated in De Anima ii, text. 50, it seems that death and such like defects are natural to man.

On the contrary, (1) God made in man whatever is natural to him. Now "God made not death" (Wis. 1:13). Therefore death is not natural to man.

(2) Further, that which is natural cannot be called either a punishment or an evil: since what is natural to a thing is suitable to it. But death and such like defects are the punishment of original sin, as stated above ([Article \[5\]](#)). Therefore they are not natural to man.

(3) Further, matter is proportionate to form, and everything to its end. Now man's end is everlasting happiness, as stated above ([Question \[2\]](#), [Article \[7\]](#); [Question \[5\]](#), [Articles \[3\]](#),4): and the form of the human body is the rational soul, as was proved in the FP, Question [75], Article [6]. Therefore the human body is naturally incorruptible.

I answer that, We may speak of any corruptible thing in two ways; first, in respect of its universal nature, secondly, as regards its particular nature. A thing's particular nature is its own power of action and self-preservation. And in respect of this nature, every corruption and defect is contrary to nature, as stated in De Coelo ii, text. 37, since this power tends to the being and preservation of the thing to which it belongs.

On the other hand, the universal nature is an active force in some universal principle of nature, for instance in some heavenly body; or again belonging to some superior substance, in which sense God is said by some to be "the Nature Who makes nature." This force intends the good and the preservation of the universe, for which alternate generation and corruption in things are requisite: and in this respect corruption and defect in things are natural, not indeed as regards the inclination of the form which is the principle of being and perfection, but as regards the inclination of matter which is allotted proportionately to its particular form according to the discretion of the universal agent. And although every form intends perpetual being as far as it can, yet no form of a corruptible being can achieve its own perpetuity, except the rational soul; for the reason that the latter is not entirely subject to matter, as other forms are; indeed it has an immaterial operation of its own, as stated in the FP, Question [75], Article [2]. Consequently as regards his form, incorruption is more natural to man than to other corruptible things. But since that very form has a matter composed of contraries, from the inclination of that matter there results corruptibility in the whole. In this respect man is naturally corruptible as regards the nature of his matter left to itself, but not as regards the nature of his form.

The first three objections argue on the side of the matter; while the other three argue on the side of the form. Wherefore in order to solve them, we must observe that the form of man which is the rational soul, in respect of its incorruptibility is adapted to its end, which is everlasting happiness: whereas the human body, which is corruptible, considered in respect of its nature, is, in a way, adapted to its form, and, in another way, it is not. For we may note a twofold condition in any matter, one which the agent chooses, and another which is not chosen by the agent, and is a natural condition of matter. Thus, a smith in order to make a knife, chooses a matter both hard and flexible, which can be sharpened so as to be useful for

breakable and inclined to rust, results from the natural disposition of iron, nor does the workman choose this in the iron, indeed he would do without it if he could: wherefore this disposition of matter is not adapted to the workman's intention, nor to the purpose of his art. In like manner the human body is the matter chosen by nature in respect of its being of a mixed temperament, in order that it may be most suitable as an organ of touch and of the other sensitive and motive powers. Whereas the fact that it is corruptible is due to a condition of matter, and is not chosen by nature: indeed nature would choose an incorruptible matter if it could. But God, to Whom every nature is subject, in forming man supplied the defect of nature, and by the gift of original justice, gave the body a certain incorruptibility, as was stated in the FP, Question [97], Article [1]. It is in this sense that it is said that "God made not death," and that death is the punishment of sin.

This suffices for the Replies to the Objections.