

Summa of the Summa Part 7 on Ethics

Question 19 Of the Goodness and Malice of the Interior Act of the Will

Article One: Whether the Goodness of the Will Depends on the Object?

Obj. 3: The moral goodness of the will does not depend on the object because of the reason of the goodness of nature since the object of the will is good or by reason of the goodness. Therefore it cannot give moral goodness to the will.

Reply Obj. 3: “Good is presented to the will as its object by the reason: and in so far as it is in accord with reason, it enters the moral order, and causes moral goodness in the act of the will; because the reason is the principle of human and moral acts, as stated above (Q. 18, A.5).”

Article Three: Whether the Goodness of the Will Depends on Reason?

On the contrary: “Hilary says (De Trin. X): *It is an unruly will that persists in its desires in opposition to reason.* But the goodness of the will consists in not being unruly. Therefore the goodness of the will depends on its being subject to reason.”

I answer that: “The goodness of the will depends on reason, in the same way as it depends on the object because the good understood is the proportionate object of the will, while sensitive or imaginary good is proportionate not to the will but to the sensitive appetite; since the will can tend to the universal good, which reason apprehends; whereas the sensitive appetite tends only to the particular good, apprehended by the sensitive power.” (TA)

Article Four: Whether the Goodness of the Will Depends on the Eternal Law?

Obj. 1: The goodness of the will depends on right reason not the eternal law.

Obj. 2: According to (Metaph. x.1) *a measure is homogeneous with the thing measured.* “But the eternal law is not homogeneous with the human will. Therefore the eternal law cannot be the measure on which the goodness of the human will depends.”

Obj. 3: Since eternal law is unknown to us it cannot be the measure on which the goodness of our will depends.

On the contrary: “The goodness of the will depends on the eternal law. Augustine says that *sin is a deed, word or desire against the eternal law.* But malice of the will is the root of sin.”

I answer that: The goodness of the human will depends on the eternal law much more than on human reason and when human reason fails we fall to Eternal Reason. Psalm 4:6,7 tells us “*Many say: Who showeth us good things? The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon*

Question 19 Article four cont.

us; as though to say: “The light of our reason is able to show us good things, and guide our will, in so far as it is the light of Thy countenance.”

Reply Obj. 2: “A proximate measure is homogeneous with the thing measured; a remote measure is not.”

Reply Obj. 3: “We employ natural reason to arrive at the eternal law according to the Divine Mind: nevertheless, it becomes known to us somewhat, either by natural reason which is derived as its proper image; or by some sort of additional revelation.”

Article Five: Whether the Will Is Evil When it is a Variance with Erring Reason?

On the contrary: The will is evil when it is at variance with erring reason because to act against our conscience is to sin. For it is written in Roms 14:23 that All that is not of faith... all that is against conscience is sin. (PM)

I answer that: “Since conscience is a kind of dictate of the reason...to inquire whether the will is evil when it is at variance with erring reason, is the same as to inquire *whether an erring conscience binds*...To believe in Christ is good in itself, and necessary for salvation;; but the will does not tend thereto, except inasmuch as it is proposed by the reason. Consequently if it be proposed by the reason as something evil, the will tends to it as to something evil, not as if it were evil itself, but because it is evil accidentally, through the apprehension of the reason...When erring reason proposes something as being commanded by God, then to scorn the dictate of reason is to scorn the commandment of God...”

Article Six: Whether the Will Is Good When It Abides by Erring Reason?

On the contrary: The will can be evil when it acts upon erring reason. The example given is the Apostles were killed by people with evil intentions and it was in conjunction with erring reason. John 16:2 gives the picture of evil people killing the Apostles and at the same time thinking that they are doing God a favor. Take Saul who was dragging Christians to prison and to death, but he erred in his reasoning. Also, he didn't understand what God was doing. When God turned his heart toward him his erring reasoning came to an end and he no longer thought killing Apostles as something that pleased God. There is a potential of acting out of ignorance and this can be excuse to be not accountable to acting in an evil manner. In this case it wouldn't be erring reason.

Article Eight: Whether the Degree of Goodness or Malice in the Will Depends on the Degree of Good or Evil in the Intention?

Question 19 Article Eight cont.

Reply Obj. 2: "The goodness of the intention is not the whole cause of a good will..."

Reply Obj. 3: "The mere malice of the intention suffices to make the will evil: and therefore to, the will is as evil as the intention is evil. But the same reasoning does not apply to goodness."

Questions and Answers for Chapter 19

1. Does the Goodness of the will depend on the object? "Good is presented to the will as its object by the reason: and in so far as it is in accord with reason, it enters the moral order, and causes moral goodness in the act of the will; because the reason is the principle of human and moral acts, as stated above (Q. 18, A.5)."

2. Does the goodness of the will depend on reason? "The goodness of the will depends on reason, in the same way as it depends on the object because the good understood is the proportionate object of the will, while sensitive or imaginary good is proportionate not to the will but to the sensitive appetite; since the will can tend to the universal good, which reason apprehends; whereas the sensitive appetite tends only to the particular good, apprehended by the sensitive power." (TA)

3. Does the goodness of the will depend on the eternal law? I answer that: The goodness of the human will depends on the eternal law much more than on human reason and when human reason fails we fall to Eternal Reason. Psalm 4:6,7 tells us "Many say: Who showeth us good things? The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us; as though to say: "The light of our reason is able to show us good things, and guide our will, in so far as it is the light of Thy countenance."

4. Is the will evil when it is at variance with erring reason? "Since conscience is a kind of dictate of the reason...to inquire whether the will is evil when it is at variance with erring reason, is the same as to inquire whether an erring conscience binds...To believe in Christ is good in itself, and necessary for salvation; but the will does not tend thereto, except inasmuch as it is proposed by the reason. Consequently if it be proposed by the reason as something evil, the will tends to it as to something evil, not as if it were evil itself, but because it is evil accidentally, through the apprehension of the reason...When erring reason proposes something as being commanded by God, then to scorn the dictate of reason is to scorn the commandment of God..."

5. Can the will be good when it abides by erring reason? The will can be evil when it acts upon erring reason. The example given is the Apostles were killed by people with evil intentions and it was in conjunction with erring reason. John 16:2 gives the picture of evil people killing the Apostles and at the same time thinking that they are doing God a favor. Take Saul who was dragging Christians to prison and to death, but he erred in his reasoning. Also, he didn't understand what God was doing. When God turned his heart toward him his erring reasoning came to an end and he no longer thought killing Apostles as something that pleased God. There is a potential of acting out of ignorance and this can be excuse to be not accountable to acting in an evil manner. In this case it wouldn't be erring reason.

6. Does the degree of goodness or malice in the will depend on the degree of good or evil in the intention? "The goodness of the intention is not the whole cause of a good will..." "The mere malice of the intention suffices to make the will evil: and therefore to, the will is as evil as the intention is evil. But the same reasoning does not apply to goodness."