

Objection 1. It would seem that the consequences of the external action increase its goodness or malice. For the effect pre-exists virtually in its cause. But the consequences result from the action as an effect from its cause. Therefore they pre-exist virtually in actions. Now a thing is judged to be good or bad according to its virtue, since a virtue “makes that which has it to be good” (Ethic. ii, 6). Therefore the consequences increase the goodness or malice of an action.

Objection 2. Further, the good actions of his hearers are consequences resulting from the words of a preacher. But such goods as these redound to the merit of the preacher, as is evident from Phil. 4:1: “My dearly beloved brethren, my joy and my crown.” Therefore the consequences of an action increase its goodness or malice.

Objection 3. Further, punishment is not increased, unless the fault increases: wherefore it is written (Dt. 25:2): “According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be.” But the punishment is increased on account of the consequences; for it is written (Ex. 21:29): “But if the ox was wont to push with his horn yesterday and the day before, and they warned his master, and he did not shut him up, and he shall kill a man or a woman, then the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death.” But he would not have been put to death, if the ox, although he had not been shut up, had not killed a man. Therefore the consequences increase the goodness or malice of an action.

Objection 4. Further, if a man do something which may cause death, by striking, or by sentencing, and if death does not ensue, he does not contract irregularity: but he would if death were to ensue. Therefore the consequence of an action increase its goodness or malice.

On the contrary, The consequences do not make an action that was evil, to be good; nor one that was good, to be evil. For instance, if a man give an alms to a poor man who makes bad use of the alms by committing a sin, this does not undo the good done by the giver; and,

in like manner, if a man bear patiently a wrong done to him, the wrongdoer is not thereby excused. Therefore the consequences of an action do not increase its goodness or malice.

I answer that, The consequences of an action are either foreseen or not. If they are foreseen, it is evident that they increase the goodness or malice. For when a man foresees that many evils may follow from his action, and yet does not therefore desist therefrom, this shows his will to be all the more inordinate.

But if the consequences are not foreseen, we must make a distinction. Because if they follow from the nature of the action and in the majority of cases, in this respect, the consequences increase the goodness or malice of that action: for it is evident that an action is specifically better, if better results can follow from it; and specifically worse, if it is of a nature to produce worse results. On the other hand, if the consequences follow by accident and seldom, then they do not increase the goodness or malice of the action: because we do not judge of a thing according to that which belongs to it by accident, but only according to that which belongs to it of itself.

Reply to Objection 1. The virtue of a cause is measured by the effect that flows from the nature of the cause, not by that which results by accident.

Reply to Objection 2. The good actions done by the hearers, result from the preacher’s words, as an effect that flows from their very nature. Hence they redound to the merit of the preacher: especially when such is his intention.

Reply to Objection 3. The consequences for which that man is ordered to be punished, both follow from the nature of the cause, and are supposed to be foreseen. For this reason they are reckoned as punishable.

Reply to Objection 4. This argument would prove if irregularity were the result of the fault. But it is not the result of the fault, but of the fact, and of the obstacle to the reception of a sacrament.