

FIRST PART OF THE SECOND PART, QUESTION 42

Of the Object of Fear (In Six Articles)

We must now consider the object of fear: under which head there are six points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether good or evil is the object of fear?
- (2) Whether evil of nature is the object of fear?
- (3) Whether the evil of sin is an object of fear?
- (4) Whether fear itself can be feared?
- (5) Whether sudden things are especially feared?
- (6) Whether those things are more feared against which there is no remedy?

Whether the object of fear is good or evil?

Ia IIae q. 42 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that good is the object of fear. For Augustine says (QQ. 83, qu. 83) that “we fear nothing save to lose what we love and possess, or not to obtain that which we hope for.” But that which we love is good. Therefore fear regards good as its proper object.

Objection 2. Further, the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 5) that “power and to be above another is a thing to be feared.” But this is a good thing. Therefore good is the object of fear.

Objection 3. Further, there can be no evil in God. But we are commanded to fear God, according to Ps. 33:10: “Fear the Lord, all ye saints.” Therefore even the good is an object of fear.

On the contrary, Damascene says (De Fide Orth. ii, 12) that fear is of future evil.

I answer that, Fear is a movement of the appetitive power. Now it belongs to the appetitive power to pursue and to avoid, as stated in Ethic. vi, 2: and pursuit is of good, while avoidance is of evil. Consequently whatever movement of the appetitive power implies pursuit, has some good for its object: and whatever movement implies avoidance, has an evil for its object. Wherefore, since fear implies an avoidance, in the first place and of its very nature it regards evil as its proper object.

It can, however, regard good also, in so far as referable to evil. This can be in two ways. In one way, inasmuch as

an evil causes privation of good. Now a thing is evil from the very fact that it is a privation of some good. Wherefore, since evil is shunned because it is evil, it follows that it is shunned because it deprives one of the good that one pursues through love thereof. And in this sense Augustine says that there is no cause for fear, save loss of the good we love.

In another way, good stands related to evil as its cause: in so far as some good can by its power bring harm to the good we love: and so, just as hope, as stated above (q. 40, a. 7), regards two things, namely, the good to which it tends, and the thing through which there is a hope of obtaining the desired good; so also does fear regard two things, namely, the evil from which it shrinks, and that good which, by its power, can inflict that evil. In this way God is feared by man, inasmuch as He can inflict punishment, spiritual or corporal. In this way, too, we fear the power of man; especially when it has been thwarted, or when it is unjust, because then it is more likely to do us a harm.

In like manner one fears “to be over another,” i.e. to lean on another, so that it is in his power to do us a harm: thus a man fears another, who knows him to be guilty of a crime lest he reveal it to others.

This suffices for the Replies to the Objections.

Whether evil of nature is an object of fear?

Ia IIae q. 42 a. 2

Objection 1. It would seem that evil of nature is not an object of fear. For the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 5) that “fear makes us take counsel.” But we do not take counsel about things which happen naturally, as stated in Ethic. iii, 3. Therefore evil of nature is not an object of fear.

Objection 2. Further, natural defects such as death and the like are always threatening man. If therefore such

like evils were an object of fear, man would needs be always in fear.

Objection 3. Further, nature does not move to contraries. But evil of nature is an effect of nature. Therefore if a man shrinks from such like evils through fear thereof, this is not an effect of nature. Therefore natural fear is not of the evil of nature; and yet it seems that it should be.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (Ethic. iii, 6)

that “the most terrible of all things is death,” which is an evil of nature.

I answer that, As the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 5), fear is caused by the “imagination of a future evil which is either corruptive or painful.” Now just as a painful evil is that which is contrary to the will, so a corruptive evil is that which is contrary to nature: and this is the evil of nature. Consequently evil of nature can be the object of fear.

But it must be observed that evil of nature sometimes arises from a natural cause; and then it is called evil of nature, not merely from being a privation of the good of nature, but also from being an effect of nature; such are natural death and other like defects. But sometimes evil of nature arises from a non-natural cause; such as violent death inflicted by an assailant. In either case evil of nature is feared to a certain extent, and to a certain extent not. For since fear arises “from the imagination of future evil,” as the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 5), whatever removes the imagination of the future evil, removes fear also. Now it may happen in two ways that an evil may not appear as about to be. First, through being remote and far off: for, on account of the distance, such a thing is considered as though it were not to be. Hence we either do not fear it, or fear it but little; for, as the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 5), “we do not fear things that are very far off; since all know that they shall die, but as death is not near,

they heed it not.” Secondly, a future evil is considered as though it were not to be, on account of its being inevitable, wherefore we look upon it as already present. Hence the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 5) that “those who are already on the scaffold, are not afraid,” seeing that they are on the very point of a death from which there is no escape; “but in order that a man be afraid, there must be some hope of escape for him.”

Consequently evil of nature is not feared if it be not apprehended as future: but if evil of nature, that is corruptive, be apprehended as near at hand, and yet with some hope of escape, then it will be feared.

Reply to Objection 1. The evil of nature sometimes is not an effect of nature, as stated above. But in so far as it is an effect of nature, although it may be impossible to avoid it entirely, yet it may be possible to delay it. And with this hope one may take counsel about avoiding it.

Reply to Objection 2. Although evil of nature ever threatens, yet it does not always threaten from near at hand: and consequently it is not always feared.

Reply to Objection 3. Death and other defects of nature are the effects of the common nature; and yet the individual nature rebels against them as far as it can. Accordingly, from the inclination of the individual nature arise pain and sorrow for such like evils, when present; fear when threatening in the future.

Whether the evil of sin is an object of fear?

Ia IIae q. 42 a. 3

Objection 1. It would seem that the evil of sin can be an object of fear. For Augustine says on the canonical Epistle of John (Tract. ix), that “by chaste fear man fears to be severed from God.” Now nothing but sin severs us from God; according to Is. 59:2: “Your iniquities have divided between you and your God.” Therefore the evil of sin can be an object of fear.

Objection 2. Further, Cicero says (Quaest. Tusc. iv, 4,6) that “we fear when they are yet to come, those things which give us pain when they are present.” But it is possible for one to be pained or sorrowful on account of the evil of sin. Therefore one can also fear the evil of sin.

Objection 3. Further, hope is contrary to fear. But the good of virtue can be the object of hope, as the Philosopher declares (Ethic. ix, 4): and the Apostle says (Gal. 5:10): “I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will not be of another mind.” Therefore fear can regard evil of sin.

Objection 4. Further, shame is a kind of fear, as stated above (q. 41, a. 4). But shame regards a disgraceful deed, which is an evil of sin. Therefore fear does so likewise.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 5) that “not all evils are feared, for instance that someone be

unjust or slow.”

I answer that, As stated above (q. 40, a. 1; q. 41, a. 2), as the object of hope is a future good difficult but possible to obtain, so the object of fear is a future evil, arduous and not to be easily avoided. From this we may gather that whatever is entirely subject to our power and will, is not an object of fear; and that nothing gives rise to fear save what is due to an external cause. Now human will is the proper cause of the evil of sin: and consequently evil of sin, properly speaking, is not an object of fear.

But since the human will may be inclined to sin by an extrinsic cause; if this cause have a strong power of inclination, in that respect a man may fear the evil of sin, in so far as it arises from that extrinsic cause: as when he fears to dwell in the company of wicked men, lest he be led by them to sin. But, properly speaking, a man thus disposed, fears the being led astray rather than the sin considered in its proper nature, i.e. as a voluntary act; for considered in this light it is not an object of fear to him.

Reply to Objection 1. Separation from God is a punishment resulting from sin: and every punishment is, in some way, due to an extrinsic cause.

Reply to Objection 2. Sorrow and fear agree in one

point, since each regards evil: they differ, however, in two points. First, because sorrow is about present evil, whereas fear is future evil. Secondly, because sorrow, being in the concupiscible faculty, regards evil absolutely; wherefore it can be about any evil, great or small; whereas fear, being in the irascible part, regards evil with the addition of a certain arduousness or difficulty; which difficulty ceases in so far as a thing is subject to the will. Consequently not all things that give us pain when they are present, make us fear when they are yet to come, but only some things, namely, those that are difficult.

Reply to Objection 3. Hope is of good that is obtain-

able. Now one may obtain a good either of oneself, or through another: and so, hope may be of an act of virtue, which lies within our own power. On the other hand, fear is of an evil that does not lie in our own power: and consequently the evil which is feared is always from an extrinsic cause; while the good that is hoped for may be both from an intrinsic and from an extrinsic cause.

Reply to Objection 4. As stated above (q. 41, a. 4, ad 2,3), shame is not fear of the very act of sin, but of the disgrace or ignominy which arises therefrom, and which is due to an extrinsic cause.

Whether fear itself can be feared?

Ia IIae q. 42 a. 4

Objection 1. It would seem that fear cannot be feared. For whatever is feared, is prevented from being lost, through fear thereof: thus a man who fears to lose his health, keeps it, through fearing its loss. If therefore a man be afraid of fear, he will keep himself from fear by being afraid: which seems absurd.

Objection 2. Further, fear is a kind of flight. But nothing flies from itself. Therefore fear cannot be the object of fear.

Objection 3. Further, fear is about the future. But fear is present to him that fears. Therefore it cannot be the object of his fear.

On the contrary, A man can love his own love, and can grieve at his own sorrow. Therefore, in like manner, he can fear his own fear.

I answer that, As stated above (a. 3), nothing can be an object of fear, save what is due to an extrinsic cause; but not that which ensues from our own will. Now fear partly arises from an extrinsic cause, and is partly subject to the will. It is due to an extrinsic cause, in so far as it is a passion resulting from the imagination of an imminent evil. In this sense it is possible for fear to be the object of

fear, i.e. a man may fear lest he should be threatened by the necessity of fearing, through being assailed by some great evil. It is subject to the will, in so far as the lower appetite obeys reason; wherefore man is able to drive fear away. In this sense fear cannot be the object of fear, as Augustine says (QQ. 83, qu. 33). Lest, however, anyone make use of his arguments, in order to prove that fear cannot be at all be the object of fear, we must add a solution to the same.

Reply to Objection 1. Not every fear is identically the same; there are various fears according to the various objects of fear. Nothing, then, prevents a man from keeping himself from fearing one thing, by fearing another, so that the fear which he has preserves him from the fear which he has not.

Reply to Objection 2. Since fear of an imminent evil is not identical with the fear of the fear of imminent evil; it does not follow that a thing flies from itself, or that it is the same flight in both cases.

Reply to Objection 3. On account of the various kinds of fear already alluded to (ad 2) a man's present fear may have a future fear for its object.

Whether sudden things are especially feared?

Ia IIae q. 42 a. 5

Objection 1. It would seem that unwonted and sudden things are not especially feared. Because, as hope is about good things, so fear is about evil things. But experience conduces to the increase of hope in good things. Therefore it also adds to fear in evil things.

Objection 2. Further, the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 5) that "those are feared most, not who are quick-tempered, but who are gentle and cunning." Now it is clear that those who are quick-tempered are more subject to sudden emotions. Therefore sudden things are less to be feared.

Objection 3. Further, we think less about things that

happen suddenly. But the more we think about a thing, the more we fear it; hence the Philosopher says (Ethic. iii, 8) that "some appear to be courageous through ignorance, but as soon as they discover that the case is different from what they expected, they run away." Therefore sudden things are feared less.

On the contrary, Augustine says (Confess. ii, 6): "Fear is startled at things unwonted and sudden, which endanger things beloved, and takes forethought for their safety."

I answer that, As stated about (a. 3; q. 41, a. 2), the object of fear is an imminent evil, which can be repelled,

but with difficulty. Now this is due to one of two causes: to the greatness of the evil, or to the weakness of him that fears; while unwontedness and suddenness conduce to both of these causes. First, it helps an imminent evil to seem greater. Because all material things, whether good or evil, the more we consider them, the smaller they seem. Consequently, just as sorrow for a present evil is mitigated in course of time, as Cicero states (*De Quaest. Tusc. iii, 30*); so, too, fear of a future evil is diminished by thinking about it beforehand. Secondly, unwontedness and suddenness increase the weakness of him that fears, in so far as they deprive him of the remedies with which he might otherwise provide himself to forestall the coming evil, were it not for the evil taking him by surprise.

Reply to Objection 1. The object of hope is a good that is possible to obtain. Consequently whatever increases a man's power, is of a nature to increase hope, and, for the same reason, to diminish fear, since fear is about an evil which cannot be easily repelled. Since, therefore, experience increases a man's power of action, therefore, as it increases hope, so does it diminish fear.

Reply to Objection 2. Those who are quick-tempered do not hide their anger; wherefore the harm they do others is not so sudden, as not to be foreseen. On the other hand, those who are gentle or cunning hide their anger; wherefore the harm which may be impending from them, cannot be foreseen, but takes one by surprise. For this reason the Philosopher says that such men are feared more than others.

Reply to Objection 3. Bodily good or evil, considered in itself, seems greater at first. The reason for this is that a thing is more obvious when seen in juxtaposition with its contrary. Hence, when a man passes unexpectedly from penury to wealth, he thinks more of his wealth on account of his previous poverty: while, on the other hand, the rich man who suddenly becomes poor, finds poverty all the more disagreeable. For this reason sudden evil is feared more, because it seems more to be evil. However, it may happen through some accident that the greatness of some evil is hidden; for instance if the foe hides himself in ambush: and then it is true that evil inspires greater fear through being much thought about.

Whether those things are more feared, for which there is no remedy?

Ia IIae q. 42 a. 6

Objection 1. It would seem that those things are not more to be feared, for which there is no remedy. Because it is a condition of fear, that there be some hope of safety, as stated above (a. 2). But an evil that cannot be remedied leaves no hope of escape. Therefore such things are not feared at all.

Objection 2. Further, there is no remedy for the evil of death: since, in the natural course of things, there is no return from death to life. And yet death is not the most feared of all things, as the Philosopher says (*Rhet. ii, 5*). Therefore those things are not feared most, for which there is no remedy.

Objection 3. Further, the Philosopher says (*Ethic. i, 6*) that "a thing which lasts long is no better than that which lasts but one day: nor is that which lasts for ever any better than that which is not everlasting": and the same applies to evil. But things that cannot be remedied seem to differ from other things, merely in the point of their lasting long or for ever. Consequently they are not therefore any worse or more to be feared.

On the contrary, the Philosopher says (*Rhet. ii, 5*) that "those things are most to be feared which when done wrong cannot be put right. . . or for which there is no help, or which are not easy."

I answer that, The object of fear is evil: consequently whatever tends to increase evil, conduces to the increase of fear. Now evil is increased not only in its species of evil, but also in respect of circumstances, as stated above

(q. 18, a. 3). And of all the circumstances, longlastingness, or even everlastingness, seems to have the greatest bearing on the increase of evil. Because things that exist in time are measured, in a way, according to the duration of time: wherefore if it be an evil to suffer something for a certain length of time, we should reckon the evil doubled, if it be suffered for twice that length of time. And accordingly, to suffer the same thing for an infinite length of time, i.e. for ever, implies, so to speak, an infinite increase. Now those evils which, after they have come, cannot be remedied at all, or at least not easily, are considered as lasting for ever or for a long time: for which reason they inspire the greatest fear.

Reply to Objection 1. Remedy for an evil is twofold. One, by which a future evil is warded off from coming. If such a remedy be removed, there is an end to hope and consequently to fear; wherefore we do not speak now of remedies of that kind. The other remedy is one by which an already present evil is removed: and of such a remedy we speak now.

Reply to Objection 2. Although death be an evil without remedy, yet, since it threatens not from near, it is not feared, as stated above (a. 2).

Reply to Objection 3. The Philosopher is speaking there of things that are good in themselves, i.e. good specifically. And such like good is no better for lasting long or for ever: its goodness depends on its very nature.