

Objection 1. It would seem that there cannot be sin in the excess of play. For that which is an excuse for sin is not held to be sinful. Now play is sometimes an excuse for sin, for many things would be grave sins if they were done seriously, whereas if they be done in fun, are either no sin or but slightly sinful. Therefore it seems that there is no sin in excessive play.

Objection 2. Further, all other vices are reducible to the seven capital vices, as Gregory states (*Moral.* xxxi, 17). But excess of play does not seem reducible to any of the capital vices. Therefore it would seem not to be a sin.

Objection 3. Further, comedians especially would seem to exceed in play, since they direct their whole life to playing. Therefore if excess of play were a sin, all actors would be in a state of sin; moreover all those who employ them, as well as those who make them any payment, would sin as accomplices of their sin. But this would seem untrue; for it is related in the *Lives of the Fathers* (ii. 16; viii. 63) that it was revealed to the Blessed Paphnutius that a certain jester would be with him in the life to come.

On the contrary, A gloss on Prov. 14:13, "Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy," remarks: "A mourning that will last for ever." Now there is inordinate laughter and inordinate joy in excessive play. Therefore there is mortal sin therein, since mortal sin alone is deserving of everlasting mourning.

I answer that, In all things dirigible according to reason, the excessive is that which goes beyond, and the deficient is that which falls short of the rule of reason. Now it has been stated (a. 2) that playful or jesting words or deeds are dirigible according to reason. Wherefore excessive play is that which goes beyond the rule of reason: and this happens in two ways. First, on account of the very species of the acts employed for the purpose of fun, and this kind of jesting, according to Tully (*De Offic.* i, 29), is stated to be "discourteous, insolent, scandalous, and obscene," when to wit a man, for the purpose of jesting, employs indecent words or deeds, or such as are injurious to his neighbor, these being of themselves mortal sins. And thus it is evident that excessive play is a mortal sin.

Secondly, there may be excess in play, through lack of due circumstances: for instance when people make use of fun at undue times or places, or out of keeping with the matter in hand, or persons. This may be sometimes a mortal sin on account of the strong attachment to play, when a man prefers the pleasure he derives therefrom to

the love of God, so as to be willing to disobey a commandment of God or of the Church rather than forego, such like amusements. Sometimes, however, it is a venial sin, for instance where a man is not so attached to amusement as to be willing for its sake to do anything in disobedience to God.

Reply to Objection 1. Certain things are sinful on account of the intention alone, because they are done in order to injure someone. Such an intention is excluded by their being done in fun, the intention of which is to please, not to injure: in these cases fun excuses from sin, or diminishes it. Other things, however, are sins according to their species, such as murder, fornication, and the like: and fun is no excuse for these; in fact they make fun scandalous and obscene.

Reply to Objection 2. Excessive play pertains to senseless mirth, which Gregory (*Moral.* xxxi, 17) calls a daughter of gluttony. Wherefore it is written (Ex. 32:6): "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play."

Reply to Objection 3. As stated (a. 2), play is necessary for the intercourse of human life. Now whatever is useful to human intercourse may have a lawful employment ascribed to it. Wherefore the occupation of play-actors, the object of which is to cheer the heart of man, is not unlawful in itself; nor are they in a state of sin provided that their playing be moderated, namely that they use no unlawful words or deeds in order to amuse, and that they do not introduce play into undue matters and seasons. And although in human affairs, they have no other occupation in reference to other men, nevertheless in reference to themselves, and to God, they perform other actions both serious and virtuous, such as prayer and the moderation of their own passions and operations, while sometimes they give alms to the poor. Wherefore those who maintain them in moderation do not sin but act justly, by rewarding them for their services. on the other hand, if a man spends too much on such persons, or maintains those comedians who practice unlawful mirth, he sins as encouraging them in their sin. Hence Augustine says (*Tract. c. in Joan.*) that "to give one's property to comedians is a great sin, not a virtue"; unless by chance some play-actor were in extreme need, in which case one would have to assist him, for Ambrose says (*De Offic.**): "Feed him that dies of hunger; for whenever thou canst save a man by feeding him, if thou hast not fed him, thou hast slain him."

* Quoted in Canon Pasce, dist. 86