

Ethics Seminar, February 9, 2014 (Text: Aquinas, Summa, I-II, Q. 18, On the Good and Evil of Human Acts, in General)

<u>Data</u>	<u>Object</u>	<u>Intention/End</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>References</u>
Man aims his cross-bow at his hunting companion and from a distance of 200 yards shoots him in the heart, killing him instantly. A third companion shouts: "Wow, what a great shot!"	Deliberately taking the life of another without justification	Not stated	Cross-bow, hunting, distance	Murder	I-II, Q. 18, Art. 1: "Every action has goodness, in so far as it has being; whereas it is lacking in goodness, in so far as it is lacking in something that is due to its fullness of being; and thus is said to be evil."
Married woman conceives child with husband					I-II, Q. 18, Art. 5 (Reply Obj. 3): "The conjugal act and adultery, as compared to reason, differ specifically and have effects specifically different; because the other deserves praise and reward, the other, blame and punishment. But as compared to the generative power, the do not differ in species; and thus they have one specific effect."
Married woman conceives child with unmarried man					I-II, Q. 18, Art. 1: "An evil action can have a proper effect, according to the goodness and being that it has."
Albanian religious sister begs baker for bread to give to hungry children. Baker spits in nun's					I-II, Q. 18, Art. 2: "[T]he good or evil of an action, as of other things, depends on its fullness of being or its lack of fullness. Now the first thing that belongs to the fullness of

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face. Sister replies: "That was for me—thank you. Now how about something for the children?"					being seems to be that which gives a thing its species. And just as a natural thing has its species from its form, so an action has its species from its object." [Example from nature: we say that an individual man is a member of the human race or species because he has the "form" of humanity, regardless of whatever it is about him that makes him unique. Form is a principle of similarity or commonality.]
Husband and wife exchange Christmas gifts. / Husband sells his only valuable possession (a watch) to buy a brush for his wife, who has beautiful long hair. Unknown to husband, wife sells her hair to buy a chain for her husband's watch.					I-II, Q. 18, Arts. 3, 10: "[C]ircumstances stand around (circumstant) an action," BUT "the fullness of perfection due to a thing, is not from the mere substantial form, that gives it its species; since a thing derives much from supervening accidents. . . . So it is with action. For the plenitude of goodness does not consist wholly in its species, but also in certain additions which accrue to it by reason of certain accidents." Also: "Circumstances are outside an action inasmuch as they are not part of its essence; but they are in an action as accidents thereof."
See above example of cross-bow hunter					I-II, Q. 18, Art. 4: the disposition of things as to goodness is the same as their disposition to being, since goodness and being are convertible.

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					In the natural world, a thing's being depends on its end. In the moral sphere, too, a thing's goodness depends on its end (also known as the intention of the agent).
Man takes another's car without permission	Taking another's property	Unknown	It's a car that was taken	Probably theft – can it be anything other than theft?	I-II, Q. 18, Art. V: "I answer that every action derives its species from its object. Hence it follows that a difference of object causes a difference of species in actions."
Husband and wife have intercourse. [Wife has recently given birth, and the intercourse causes cause significant pain and bleeding.]					I-II, Q. 18, Art. V Reply Obj. 4: "A circumstance is sometimes taken as the essential difference of the object, as compared to reason; and then it can specify a moral act. And it must needs be so whenever a circumstance transforms an action from good to evil; for a circumstance would not make an action evil, except through being repugnant to reason."

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See example of cross-bow hunter					<p>I-II, Q. 18, Art. VI: [I]n a voluntary action, there is a twofold action, viz. the interior action of the will, and the external action: and each of these actions has its object. The end is properly the object of the interior act of the will; while the object of the external action is that on which the action is brought to bear. Therefore, just as the external action takes its species from the object on which it bears; so the interior act of the will takes its species from the end, as from its proper object.”</p> <p>Also, Reply Obj. 2: “Although it is accidental to the external action to be ordained for some particular end, it is not accidental to the interior act of the will.”</p>
Man strokes his beard					<p>I-II, Q. 18, Art. 9: “Every human action that proceeds from deliberate reason, if it be considered in the individual, must be good or bad. If, however, it does not proceed from deliberate reason, but from some act of the imagination . . .; such an action, properly speaking, is not moral or human.”</p>
Man takes crucifix from church without permission					<p>I-II, Q. 18, Art. 10. Circumstances altering the species, as vs. circumstances not altering the</p>

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					species.
Peter, James, and John fall asleep late at night / They fall asleep late at night having been warned by Jesus to stay awake					I-II, Q. 18, Art. 10
Without permission, cloth merchant's son sells father's cloth and uses the proceeds to rebuild a ruined church					I-II, Q. 18, Art. 11: not every circumstance changes the species of a moral act [Same can be said of intention]