

QUESTION 127

The Vice of Daring

Next we have to consider [the vice of] daring [or recklessness or boldness] (*audacia*). And on this topic there are two questions: (1) Is daring a sin? (2) Is daring opposed to fortitude?

Article 1

Is daring a sin?

It seems that daring or boldness (*audacia*) is not a sin:

Objection 1: Job 39:21 says of a horse, which according to Gregory in *Moralia* signifies a good preacher, “He goes forth boldly (*audacter*) to meet armed men.” But no vice redounds to anyone’s praise. Therefore, it is not a sin to be daring (*esse audacem non est peccatum*).

Objection 2: As the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 6, “Take your time deliberating, but once you have finished deliberating, act quickly.” But daring contributes to this swiftness in acting. Therefore, daring is not a sin, but is instead something praiseworthy.

Objection 3: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 45, a. 2) when we were talking about the passions, daring is a passion that is caused by hope. But hope is posited as a virtue and not as a sin. Therefore, neither should daring be posited as a sin.

But contrary to this: Ecclesiasticus 8:18 says, “Do not accompany a bold man, lest he burden you with his evils.” But no one’s company should be declined except because of sin. Therefore, daring is a sin.

I respond: As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 23, aa. 1 and 4, and q.45, a. 2), daring is a passion. Now a passion is sometimes moderated by reason; at other times, however, it lacks the mode of reason, either by way of *excess* or by way of *deficiency* and is, accordingly, a morally bad passion (*passio vitiosa*).

Now sometimes the names of [morally good or morally bad] passions are taken from the side of abundance, in the way that what is called anger, insofar as it is morally bad, is not just any anger, but abundant anger. And it is likewise in this way that what is called daring, said by way of abundance, is posited as a sin.

Reply to objection 1: Daring is being taken in this objection insofar as it is moderated by reason. For, so taken, it belongs to the virtue of fortitude.

Reply to objection 2: Prompt action is commendable after deliberation, which is an act of reason. But if someone wanted to act quickly before deliberating, this would be morally bad (*vitiosum*) and not praiseworthy, since this would be an instance of precipitousness in action—which, as was explained above (q. 53, a. 3), is a vice opposed to prudence. And so daring, which operates with a quickness of acting, is praiseworthy to the extent that it is ordered by reason.

Reply to objection 3: As is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 4, some vices are unnamed and, similarly, some virtues. And so it was necessary to use [the names of] some passions as the names of virtues and vices. Now we mainly use those passions whose object is *the bad* to designate vices; this is clear in the case of *hatred*, *fear*, and *anger*—and in the case of *daring* as well.

On the other hand, *hope* and *love* have *the good* as their object. And so we use their names to designate virtues instead.

Article 2

Is daring opposed to fortitude?

It seems that daring is not opposed to fortitude:

Objection 1: An overabundance of daring seems to proceed from the mind's presumption. But presumption pertains to *pride*, which is opposed to *humility*. Therefore, *daring* is opposed to *humility* rather than to *fortitude*.

Objection 2: Daring seems to be blameworthy only insofar as what comes from it is either (a) some harm to the audacious individual himself, who throws himself into danger in a disordered way, or (b) harm to others whom he either attacks or puts into danger through his daring. But this seems to pertain to *injustice*. Therefore, insofar as daring is a sin, it is opposed to *justice* and not to *fortitude*.

Objection 3: As was established above (q. 123, a. 3), fortitude has to do with [the passions of] fear and daring. But since *timidity* or *cowardice* is opposed to *fortitude* by way of an *excess of fear*, there is another vice opposed to *timidity* by way of a *deficiency of fear*. Therefore, if daring were opposed to fortitude because of an *excess of daring*, then by parity of reasoning there would be a vice opposed to fortitude because of a *deficiency of daring*. But there is no such vice. Therefore, neither should one posit daring as a vice that is opposed to fortitude.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics* 2 and 3 the Philosopher claims that [the vice of] daring is opposed to fortitude.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 126, a. 2), a moral virtue involves observing the mode of reason in the subject matter it has to do with. And so every vice that implies a lack of moderation with respect to the subject matter of a given moral virtue is opposed to that moral virtue in the way that what is unmoderated is opposed to what is moderated. But daring, insofar as the term is used for a vice, implies an excess of the passion that is called daring. Hence, it is clear that [the vice of] daring is opposed to the virtue of fortitude, which, as was explained above (q. 123, a. 3), has to do with [the passions of] fear and daring.

Reply to objection 1: The opposition of a vice to a virtue does not have to do mainly with the *cause* of the vice, but instead has to do with the very *species* of the vice. And so [the vice of] daring need not be opposed to the same virtue that the mind's presumption, which is the cause of the vice, is opposed to.

Reply to objection 2: Just as the direct opposition of a vice [to a virtue] does not have to do with the *cause* of the vice, so neither does it have to do with the vice's *effect*. Now the harm which proceeds from [the vice of] daring is its effect. Hence, the opposition of [the vice of] daring [to fortitude] does not have to do with that harm, either.

Reply to objection 3: The movement of [the passion of] daring consists in attacking what is contrary to a man, and nature inclines one toward this except insofar as the inclination is impeded by the fear of suffering harm from that contrary. And so the vice that is excessive in [the passion of] daring does not have a contrary defect except for *timidity* or *fearfulness* alone.

However, [the vice of] daring is not always joined only to a deficiency of fear. For as the Philosopher explains in *Ethics* 3, "The daring are precipitate and eager before the danger, yet waver when the danger is present"—namely, through fear.