

The morality of a human act (its goodness or badness) depends on:

- o the object chosen; that is, the nature of the act itself
- o the purpose or intention of the one performing the act
- o the circumstances, including the consequences, of the act.

All three must be good, or at least neutral, for an act to be permissible. If any one of the three is evil, the act is evil in its entirety.

Some actions, such as murder, are evil in themselves (intrinsically evil) and no intention or circumstances can transform them into good actions.

A good intention cannot justify an action that is otherwise evil. One may not do evil so that goodness may result from it.

But an evil intention can make the total action evil, even if the thing done is normally good.

Circumstances never change the underlying moral quality of an act, but they increase or diminish the moral goodness or evil of the act.

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Conscience is a judgment of the intellect regarding the rightness or wrongness of an act.

The intellect investigates and discovers whether an action is right or wrong, independently of oneself; the will does not decide for itself the rightness or wrongness of the act.

A person is obliged to follow the conclusions of his conscience. This requires that every person must educate their conscience regarding the moral law. A person who performs an evil act because his conscience made an erroneous judgment may or may not be responsible for the evil act, depending on whether the person is responsible for the erroneous judgment.

One may not act with a doubtful conscience, but must first resolve the doubt by some form of investigation.

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For a mortal sin, three conditions must all be met:

- o serious matter -- See Morality of a Human Act, above
- o full knowledge of the sinful character and serious nature of the act
- o complete consent of the will -- a deliberate, personal choice