

## Summa of the Summa

### Question 79

#### Of the Intellectual Powers

##### Article Two: Whether the Intellect Is a Passive Power?

Obj. one: The intellect seems not to be a passive power. It would seem that the intellect is of immateriality of the intelligent substance and thereby having its form by act and not like matter which is by passive means.

Obj. two: The intellect is not corruptible like the material side which is corruptible and therefore the intellectual power is not passive

Obj. three: The active is a more noble experience than the passive one. As Augustine and Aristotle say that among the powers of the soul, all the powers of the vegetative part are active; yet they are the lowest.

I answer that: There are three ways to understand passive. 1) Most restrictively when from a thing is taken something which belongs to it by virtue of its nature, or of its proper inclination: as when water loses coolness by heating, and as when a man becomes ill or sad. 2) When something is taken from it. 3) In the widest sense a thing is said to be passive, from the very fact that what is in potentiality to something receives that to which it was in potentiality, without being deprived of anything. The intellect is a passive power in the passive in the third sense.

Reply to Obj. one: "This objection is verified of passion in the first and second senses, which belong to primary matter. But in the third sense passion is in anything which is reduced from potentiality to act."

Reply to Obj. two: "The intellect which is in potentiality to things intelligible, and which for this reason Aristotle calls the 'possible intellect (De Anima iii. 4), is not passive except in the third sense: for it is not an act of a corporeal organ. Hence it is incorruptible."

## Question 79 Cont. Reply to Obj. three

Reply to obj. 3: “The agent is nobler than the patient, if the action and the passion are referred to the same thing: but not always, if they refer to different things. Now the intellect is a passive power in regard to the whole universal being: while the vegetative power is active in regard to some particular thing, namely, the body as united to the soul.” Perhaps the passive is nobler than the active one

Article Three: Whether There Is an Active Intellect?

Obj. One: The intellect can only be active if it is in potentiality to things intelligible. Since our intellect is in potentiality to things intelligible, it seems that we cannot say that the intellect is active, but only that it is passive...

Obj. three: The passive intellect is an immaterial power. Therefore its immaterial nature suffices for forms to be received into it immaterially. “Now a form is intelligible in act {actually intelligible} from the very fact that it is immaterial. Therefore there is no need for an active intellect to make the species actually intelligible.”

On the contrary: “The Philosopher says (Ed Anima iii. 5), As is every nature, so in the soul is there something by which it becomes all things, and something by which it makes all things. Therefore we must admit an active intellect.”

I answer that: “Since Aristotle did not allow that forms of natural things exist apart from matter, and as forms existing in matter are not actually intelligible [cf. n. 7], it follows that the natures or forms of the sensible things which we understand are not actually intelligible. Now nothing is reduced from potentiality to act except by something in act, as the senses are made actual by what is actually sensible. We must therefore assign on the part of the intellect some power to make things actually intelligible, by abstraction of the species from material conditions. And such is necessity for an active intellect.”

Reply Obj. One: “Sensible things are found in act outside the soul; and hence there is no need for an active sense. Wherefore...in the sensitive part are all passive...is passive; but in the intellectual part, there is something active and something passive...”

Reply Obj. three: “If we consider the nature of things sensible, which do not subsist apart from matter and therefore in order to understand them, the immaterial nature of the passive intellect would not suffice but for the presence of the active intellect, which makes things actually intelligible by the way of abstraction.”

Article Four: Whether the Active Intellect Is Something in the Soul?

Obj. one: It would seem that the active intellect is something that comes into the soul per John 1:9 which says, “He was the true light that enlighteneth every man coming into this world.”

Obj. two: The active intellect is not something in our soul for our soul does not always understand.

Obj. four: Nothing can be in potentiality and in act with regard to the same thing. “If, therefore, the passive intellect, which is in potentiality to all things intelligible, is something in the soul, it seems impossible for the active intellect to be also something in our soul...”

I answer that: There appears to be a higher intellect, by which the soul is helped to understand. The soul doesn’t understand everything, but what it does understand it is because, in those things which it does understand, it passes from potentiality to act. Therefore there must be some higher intellect, by which the soul is helped to understand. “The human soul derives its intellectual light from Him, according to Psalm 4:7: “Thy light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us.”

Reply Obj. one: “That true light enlightens as a universal cause, from which the human soul derives a particular power, as we have explained.”

## Article Four Reply Obj. 2

Reply Obj. two: “The Philosopher says those words not of the active intellect, but of the intellect in act, of which had had already said, “knowledge in act is the same as the thing” Or. If we refer those words to the active intellect, then they are said because it is not owing to the active intellect that sometimes we do, and sometimes we do not understand, but to the intellect which is in potentiality...

Reply Obj. four: “The intellectual soul is indeed actually immaterial, but it is in potentiality to [receiving] determinate species. On the contrary, phantasms are actual images of certain [determinate] species, but are immaterial in potentiality [not actually immaterial]. Wherefore nothing prevents one and the same soul, inasmuch as it is actually immaterial, having one power by which it makes things [species] actually immaterial, by abstraction from the conditions of individual matter [phantasms, or sense images]; which power is called the active intellect; and another power, receptive of such species. Which is called the passive intellect by reason of its being in potentiality to [determination by] such species.... “

## Article Five: Whether the Active Intellect Is One in All?

Obj. One: The active intellect is in all. It is not separate from the body and not multiplied according to the number of bodies. The Philosopher says (De Anima iii. 5) that there is not multiplied in the many human bodies, but is one for all men...

On the Contrary: “The Philosopher says (De Anima iii, l.c.) that the active intellect is as a light. But light is not the same in the various things enlightened. Therefore the same active intellect is not in various men.”

I answer that: “The truth about this question depends on what we have already said (A.4). For if the active intellect were not something belonging to the soul, but were some separate substance, there would be one active intellect for all men.” But the active intellect is something belonging to the soul, as one of its powers, we are bound to say that there are as many active intellects as there are souls.” One power does not belong to various souls. If this were the case humanness would be trans-human or not fully human and not fully mechanical.

## Article five cont. Reply to Obj. one

Reply to Obj. One: The passive intellect is said to be separate, because it is not the act of any corporeal organ. The active intellect is separate by the fact that the passive intellect is separate due to the agent being more noble than the patient.

Reply to Obj. Three: Identical intellects are not necessary even though it must be derived by all from one principle. Thus the possession by all men in common of the first principles proves the unity of the separate intellect [the divine mind], which Plato compares to the sun, but not the unity of the active intellect, which Aristotle compares to light.

## Article Eight: Whether the Reason Is Distinct from the Intellect?

On the contrary: Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. iii. 20) that man excels irrational animals by reason, or mind, or intelligence, or whatever appropriate name we give to it. As a result, reason, intellect and mind are on power.

I answer that: Reason and intellect in man cannot be distinct powers. Man learns by adding one reason to another or deducing one reason from another. Angels understand all at once. Dionysius says (Div. Nom. vii), "But man arrives at the knowledge of intelligible truth by advancing from one thing to another; and therefore he is called rational. In man reason and intellect are the same power for human reasoning, by way of inquiry and discovery, advances from certain things simply understood such as the first principles and then on by way of judgment returns by analysis to first principles, in the light of which it examines what it has found."

## Article Nine: Whether the Higher and Lower Reason Are Distinct Powers?

I answer that: "The higher and lower reason, as they are understood by Augustine, can in no way be two powers of the soul. For he says that the higher reason is that which is intent on the contemplation and consultation of things eternal, forasmuch as in contemplation it sees them in themselves, and in consultation it takes its rules of action from them. But the power of the reason is such that both medium and term belong to it. For the act of the reason is, as it

#### Article Nine: I answer that cont.

were, a movement from one thing to another. But the same movable thing passes through the medium and reaches the end. Wherefore the higher and lower reasons are one and the same power. They are distinguished by the functions of their actions.

#### Article Eleven: Whether the Speculative and Practical Intellects Are Distinct Powers?

I answer that: “The speculative and practical intellects are not distinct powers.” This one pertains to vantage. For the Philosopher says in (De Anima iii, loc. Cit.); “*The speculative differs from the practical in its end.*” Whence each is named from its end: the one speculative, the other practical—i.e., operative...Now, to a thing apprehended by the intellect, it is accidental whether it be directed to operation or not, and according to this the speculative and practical intellects differ. For it is the speculative intellect which directs what it apprehends, not to operation, but to the consideration of truth; while the practical intellect is that which directs what it apprehends to operation.”

#### Article Twelve: Whether Synderesis Is a Special Power of the Soul Distinct from the Others?

I answer that: “Synderesis is not a power but a habit; though some held that it is a power higher than reason; while others said that it is reason itself, not as reason, but as a nature.” Now the first speculative principles are clear showing that speculative reason argues about speculative things, so that practical reason argues about practical things. Therefore we must have bestowed on us by nature, not only speculative principles, but also practical principles. Now the first speculative principles bestowed on us by nature do not belong to a special power, but to a special habit, which is called the understanding of principles...Wherefore, the first practical principles, bestowed on us by nature, do not belong to a special power, but to a special natural habit, which we call *syndersis*. Therefore, this is a habit and not a power.

## Article Thirteen

### Article Thirteen: Whether Conscience Be a Power?

I answer that: Here is where synderesis is linked with conscience. As was shown in article twelve that synderesis is a habit and not a power. So too conscience is also a habit and not a power. The habit to consider conscience can be broken in people and they will be humans anyway. But they will not or choose not to operate by their conscience. They feel helpless because it is not a power they can control or manipulate. It is either there or not. "Properly speaking conscience is not a power, but an act." It is the application of right knowledge to a given set of circumstances or persons. Relationships are always linked with conscience. When with others we have a choice to exercise our conscience habits or to ignore them. "For conscience is said to be a witness, to bind, or incite, and also to accuse, torment, and or rebuke." There are three ways in which knowledge or science applies in so far as we recognize that we have done or not done something; 1) We know something we have done or not done and the evil thereof, 2) We judge that something should be done or not done in a sense of loosening or binding, and 3) so far as by conscience we judge that something done is well or not so well done. Conscience excuses us, torments us or condemns us. Since habit is a principle of act, conscience is given to the first natural habit and that is synderesis.

### Questions and Answers for Question 79

#### 1. Does the Intellect operate as a passive Power?

There are three ways to understand passive. 1) Most restrictively when from a thing is taken something which belongs to it by virtue of its nature, or of its proper inclination: as when water loses coolness by heating, and as when a man becomes ill or sad. 2) When something is taken from it. 3) In the widest sense a thing is said to be passive, from the very fact that what is in potentiality to

## Q & A Question 1 cont.

something, receives that to which it was in potentiality, without being deprived of anything. The intellect is a passive power in the passive in the third sense.

### 2. Is There Is an Active Intellect?

“Since Aristotle did not allow that forms of natural things exist apart from matter, and as forms existing in matter are not actually intelligible [cf. n. 7], it follows that the natures or forms of the sensible things which we understand are not actually intelligible. Now nothing is reduced from potentiality to act except by something in act, as the senses are made actual by what is actually sensible. We must therefore assign on the part of the intellect some power to make things actually intelligible, by abstraction of the species from material conditions. And such is necessity for an active intellect.”

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### 4. Is the Active Intellect One in All?

“The truth about this question depends on what we have already said (A.4). For if the active intellect were not something belonging to the soul, but were some separate substance, there would be one active intellect for all men.” But the active intellect is something belonging to the soul, as one of its powers, we are bound to say that there are as many active intellects as there are souls.” One power does not belong to various souls. If this were the case humanness would be trans-human or not fully human and not fully mechanical.



## Q & A Question 5

### 5. Is Reason Distinct from the Intellect?

Reason and intellect in man cannot be distinct powers. Man learns by adding one reason to another or deducing one reason from another. Angels understand all at once. Dionysius says (Div. Nom. vii), "But man arrives at the knowledge of intelligible truth by advancing from one thing to another; and therefore he is called rational. In man reason and intellect are the same power for human reasoning, by way of inquiry and discovery, advances from certain things simply understood such as the first principles and then on by way of judgment returns by analysis to first principles, in the light of which it examines what it has found."

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"The speculative and practical intellects are not distinct powers." This one pertains to vantage. For the Philosopher says in (De Anima iii, loc. Cit.); "The speculative differs from the practical in its end." Whence each is named from its end: the one speculative, the other practical—i.e., operative...Now, to a thing apprehended by the intellect, it is accidental whether it be directed to operation or not, and according to this the speculative and practical intellects differ. For it is the speculative intellect which directs what it apprehends, not to operation, but to the consideration of truth; while the practical intellect is that which directs what it apprehends to operation."

## Q & A Question 8

### 8. Is Synderesis a Special Power of the Soul Distinct from the Others?

“Synderesis is not a power but a habit; though some held that it is a power higher than reason; while others said that it is reason itself, not as reason, but as a nature.” Now the first speculative principles are clear showing that speculative reason argues about speculative things, so that practical reason argues about practical things. Therefore we must have bestowed on us by nature, not only speculative principles, but also practical principles. Now the first speculative principles bestowed on us by nature do not belong to a special power, but to a special habit, which is called the understanding of principles...Wherefore, the first practical principles, bestowed on us by nature, do not belong to a special power, but to a special natural habit, which we call synderesis. Therefore, this is a habit and not a power.

### 9. Is Conscience a Power?

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## Q & A Question 9

condemns us. Since habit is a principle of act, conscience is given to the first natural habit and that is synderesis.