

QUESTION 117

Things Relevant to Human Action

Next we have to consider those things that are relevant to the action of man, who is composed of a spiritual creature and a corporeal creature. We have to consider, first, man's action (question 117) and, second, the propagation of man from man (questions 118-119).

On the first topic there are four questions: (1) Can one man teach another by causing knowledge in him? (2) Can a man teach an angel? (3) Can a man affect corporeal matter by the power of his soul? (4) Can the separated soul of a man move bodies by local motion?

Article 1

Can one man teach another?

It seems that one man cannot teach another:

Objection 1: Matthew 23:8 says, "Do not be called Rabbi," where Jerome's gloss says, "Lest God's honor be given to men." Therefore, being a teacher (*esse magister*) pertains properly to God's honor. But to teach (*docere*) is proper to a teacher. Therefore, a man cannot teach, but this is instead proper to God.

Objection 2: If one man teaches another, this is only insofar as he acts by his own knowledge (*per scientiam suam*) to be a cause of knowledge in the other man. But the quality by which someone acts to effect something similar to himself is an active quality. Therefore, it follows that knowledge is an active quality, like heat is.

Objection 3: What is required for knowledge are (a) the intelligible light (*lumen intelligibile*) and (b) the species of the thing that is understood (*species rei intellectae*). But one man cannot be a cause of either of these in another man. Therefore, it is impossible for one man to be a cause of knowledge in another man by teaching him.

Objection 4: A teacher (*doctor*) does not act on his student except by proposing certain signs to him, signifying something through either words or gestures. But no one can teach another by proposing signs to him and by thereby causing knowledge in him. For he will propose either signs of things that are known to the other man or signs of things that are not known to him. If he proposes signs of things that are known to him, then the one to whom the signs are proposed already has the knowledge and does not acquire it from the teacher (*a magistro*). On the other hand, if he proposes signs of things that are not known to him, then he will not learn anything through such signs—in the same way that if one man were to propose Greek words to another man who spoke Latin and did not know the meaning of the Greek words, then the first man would not be able to teach the second man anything in this manner. Therefore, there is no way in which one man can be a cause of knowledge in another man by teaching him.

But contrary to this: In 1 Timothy 2:7 the Apostle says, "In this I have been appointed preacher and apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in the faith and in the truth."

I respond: On this matter there have been different opinions.

As was explained above (q. 76, a. 2), in his commentary on *De Anima* 3 Averroes claimed that there is a single passive intellect for all men. And from this it followed that all men have the same intelligible species. Accordingly, he claims that it is not the case that in teaching one man is a cause in another man of a knowledge distinct from the knowledge that he himself has; instead, he communicates to the other man the very same knowledge that he himself has by moving him to order the phantasms in his own soul in such a way that they are appropriately disposed to an intellectual apprehension.

This opinion is true to the extent that the same knowledge does indeed exist in the student and the teacher, if we are thinking of an identity with respect to the oneness of the thing known. For it is the same real truth (*rei veritas*) that both the student (*discipulus*) and the teacher (*magister*) know. However, as was shown above (q. 76, a. 2), Averroes's opinion is false to the extent that he claims that there is a single passive intellect for all men and that the intelligible species are the same, differing only in their relations to the diverse phantasms.

A second opinion is that of the Platonists, who, as has been explained (q. 84, aa. 3-4), claimed that knowledge exists in our souls from the beginning through participation in the separated forms, but that because of its union with the body the soul is prevented from being able to freely consider the things of which it has knowledge. On this opinion, the student does not acquire knowledge *de novo* from the teacher, but is instead stimulated by the teacher to consider the things that he has knowledge of, so that learning is nothing other than remembering—just as they likewise claimed that natural agents are merely disposing causes (*solummodo disponunt*) for the reception of the forms that corporeal matter acquires through participation in the separated species.

But against this opinion it was shown above (q. 79, a. 2 and q. 84, a. 3) that, in accord with what Aristotle says in *De Anima* 3, the human soul's passive intellect is in *pure* potentiality with respect to intelligible things.

So one must respond in a different way by claiming that the one who teaches causes knowledge in the learner (*in addiscente*) by leading him from potentiality to actuality, as *Physics* 8 puts it.

To see this clearly, notice that among the effects that come from an exterior principle, some come only from an exterior principle; for instance, the form of a house is caused in the matter only by the relevant craft (*ars*). On the other hand, there are some effects that come sometimes from an exterior principle and sometimes from an interior principle; for instance, health is caused in the sick sometimes by an exterior principle, viz., the art of medicine, and sometimes by an interior principle, as when someone is cured by the power of nature.

In effects of this latter sort, there are two things to be noted. First, in its own operation art imitates nature. For instance, just as nature cures by altering, digesting, and expelling the matter that causes a sickness, so too does the art of medicine. The second thing to be noted is that the exterior principle, viz., the art, does not operate as a principal agent, but instead operates insofar as it assists the principal agent, which is the interior principle, by strengthening it and providing it with instruments and aids that it uses in producing its effect. For instance, a physician strengthens nature and provides it with foods and medicines that nature uses for the sake of its intended end.

Now a man acquires knowledge both (a) from an interior principle, as is clear in the case of one who acquires his own knowledge through discovery, and also (b) from an exterior principle, as is clear in the case of one who learns by being taught (*qui addiscit*). For within every man there is a principle of knowledge, viz., the light of the active intellect, and through this principle there is—naturally and right from the beginning—a cognition of certain universal principles of all knowledge. And when someone applies general principles of this sort to the particulars that he has memory and experience of through the sensory power, it is by his own discovery that he acquires knowledge of things he was previously ignorant of, proceeding from what is known to what is unknown. Hence, it is likewise the case that a teacher (*docens*) leads his student (*discipulus*) from things that the student knows to a cognition of things that he did not previously know—this according to *Posterior Analytics* 1 (“Every instance of teaching and learning (*omnis doctrina et disciplina*) comes from a preexistent cognition”).

Now there are two ways in which a teacher leads a student to a cognition of what is unknown from what was previously known:

First, by proposing to him certain aids or instruments that his intellect uses to acquire knowledge—as, for instance, when he proposes to him certain less general propositions that the student

can judge on the basis of what he knew beforehand, or when he proposes to him certain sensible examples, either similar things or opposites or something of this sort, from which the learner's intellect can be led step by step to the cognition of an unknown truth.

Second, he does this when he strengthens the student's intellect. He does not, to be sure, do this by an active power of a higher nature—as was described above (q. 106, a. 1 and q. 111, a. 1) in the case of an angel who illuminates another angel—since all human intellects occupy the same grade in the order of nature. Rather, he does it insofar as he proposes to his student the ordering of principles to conclusions when the student might not have on his own enough reasoning ability to be able to deduce the conclusions from the principles. And this is why *Posterior Analytics* 1 says that “a demonstration is a syllogism that gives knowledge.” It is in this way that one who presents a demonstration makes his listener have knowledge.

Reply to objection 1: As has already been explained, a man who teaches, like a physician who heals, exercises only an exterior function. By contrast, just as the interior nature is the principal cause of healing, so too the interior light of the intellect is the principal cause of knowledge. Now both of these principal causes are from God. And so just as it is said of God that “He heals all your infirmities” (Psalm 102:3), so it is said of Him that “He teaches man knowledge” (Psalm 93:10) insofar as “the light of His countenance,” through which all things are shown to us, “is signed upon us” (Psalm 4:7).

Reply to objection 2: The teacher does not, as Averroes claims, cause knowledge in his student in the manner of a natural agent. Hence, his knowledge does not have to be an active quality. Instead, his knowledge is a principle by which he is directed in his teaching, in the way that an art is a principle by which someone is directed in his acting.

Reply to objection 3: A teacher does not cause the intelligible light in his student, nor does he directly cause the intelligible species. Rather, through his teaching (*per suam doctrinam*) the teacher moves his student to fashion, through the power of the latter's own intellect, the intelligible conceptions whose signs the teacher proposes to him exteriorly.

Reply to objection 4: The signs that a teacher proposes to his student are signs of things that (a) are known in general and with some vagueness (*sub quadam confusione*), but that (b) are not known in particular and with distinctness (*sub quadam distinctione*). And so when someone acquires knowledge on his own, he cannot be said to teach himself or to be his own teacher, since the sort of complete knowledge required in a teacher does not preexist in him.

Article 2

Can men teach angels?

It seems that men can teach angels:

Objection 1: In Ephesians 3:10 the Apostle says, “... that the manifold wisdom of God may be made known to the Principalities and Powers in heaven through the Church.” But the Church is a congregation of faithful men. Therefore, some things are made known to the angels by men.

Objection 2: As was explained above (q. 106, a. 1 and q. 112, a. 3), the higher angels, who are directly illuminated by God regarding divine matters, are able to instruct the lower angels. But some men have been directly instructed by the Word of God regarding divine matters; this is especially obvious in the case of the apostles—this according to Hebrews 1:2 (“Last of all, in these days He has spoken to us in his Son”). Therefore, some men were able to have taught some angels.

Objection 3: The lower angels are instructed by the higher angels. But some men are higher than

some angels, since as Gregory says in one his homilies, some men are assumed into the highest orders of angels (cf. q. 108, a. 8). Therefore, some lower angels can be instructed by some men regarding divine matters.

But contrary to this: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says that God's illuminations are conveyed to men by the mediation of the angels. Therefore, it is not the case that the angels are instructed by men regarding divine matters.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 107, a. 2), the lower angels are able to speak to the higher angels by making known their own thoughts to them, but the higher angels are never illuminated by the lower angels regarding divine matters.

Now it is obvious that the highest men are subordinated to even the lowest angels in the way that the lower angels are subordinated to the higher angels. This is clear from what our Lord says in Matthew 11:11: "There has not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist; yet he that is the lesser in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

So, then, the angels are never illuminated by men regarding divine matters. However, men are able, in the mode of speaking, to make known to the angels the thoughts of their own hearts, since it belongs to God alone to know the secrets of the heart.

Reply to objection 1: Augustine explains this passage from the Apostle in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 5. The Apostle had prefaced the passage with these words: "To me, the least of all the saints, is given this grace ... to enlighten all men, that they may see what is the dispensation of the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in God." Augustine says, "The manifold wisdom of God was 'hidden', and yet in such a way that it was made known to the Principalities and Powers in heaven, viz., through the Church. It is as if he were saying, 'This mystery was hidden from men, and yet in such a way that to the heavenly Church, which is contained in the Principalities and Powers, it was made known *from* the ages (*a saeculis*)—though not *before* the ages (*ante saecula*), since the Church first existed in heaven (*ibi primitus ecclesia fuit*), and the present Church of men was to be brought together after the resurrection."

But there can also be an alternative reply, viz., that, as Augustine adds in the same place, "What was hidden is not only made known to the angels in God, but also becomes apparent to them when it is brought about and made public." And so when the mysteries of Christ and the Church were being fulfilled by the apostles, certain aspects of these mysteries which had previously been hidden from the angels became clear to them. And in this way one can understand what Jerome says, viz., that when the apostles preached, the angels learned certain mysteries in the sense that through the preaching of the apostles the mysteries were fulfilled in the things themselves—for instance, when Paul preached, the Gentiles were converted. This is what the Apostle is talking about in the passage in question.

Reply to objection 2: The apostles were directly instructed by the Word of God not through His divine nature, but rather insofar as His human nature was speaking. Hence, the argument does not go through.

Reply to objection 3: Even in the state of the present life, some men are greater than some angels—not, to be sure, in actuality, but rather virtually (*non quidem actu, sed virtute*), viz., insofar as they have charity of a such great force (*caritatem tantae virtutis*) that they are able to merit a greater degree of beatitude than some angels have—just as we might say that the seed of some large tree is virtually greater than some small tree, even though it is much smaller than that tree in actuality.

Article 3

Can a man affect corporeal matter through the power of his soul?

It seems that a man can affect corporeal matter through the power of his soul:

Objection 1: In *Dialogi* 2 Gregory says, “The saints work miracles sometimes by their prayers and sometimes by their power. For instance, Peter resuscitated the deceased Tabitha by praying, whereas it was by reproving the liars Ananias and Saphira that he delivered them to death.” But in the working of a miracle some change is effected in corporeal matter. Therefore, men can by the power of their soul affect corporeal matter.

Objection 2: The Gloss on Galatians 3:1 (“Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?”) says, “Some have blazing eyes that bewitch others, especially children, by a single glance.” But this would not be the case unless the power of the soul were able to affect corporeal matter. Therefore, through the power of his soul a man can affect corporeal matter.

Objection 3: The human body is more noble than other lower bodies. But through the human soul’s apprehension the human body is affected with respect to hot and cold, as is clear in the case of those who become angry or afraid; and in some cases a change of this sort leads even to sickness and death. Therefore, *a fortiori*, man’s soul is able by its power to affect corporeal matter.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 3 Augustine says, “It belongs to God alone to have corporeal matter obey Him at will.”

I respond: As was explained above (q. 110, a. 2), corporeal matter is changed with respect to its form only by either (a) an agent composed of form and matter or (b) God Himself, in whom both matter and form virtually preexist as in the primordial cause of them both. Accordingly, it was explained above (*ibid.*) that the angels can affect corporeal matter with their natural power only by applying corporeal agents to the production of certain effects. Therefore, *a fortiori*, the soul by its natural power cannot affect corporeal matter except by the mediation of certain bodies.

Reply to objection 1: The saints are said to work miracles by the power of grace and not by the power of nature. This is clear from what Gregory says in the same place, “Those who are sons of God in power, as John puts it—what wonder is it if they perform signs by their power?”

Reply to objection 2: Avicenna assigns as a cause of bewitchment that corporeal matter is more apt to obey a spiritual substance than it is to obey contrary agents in nature. And so when a soul has a strong imagination (*quando anima fuerit fortis in sua imaginatione*), corporeal matter is affected by it. And this, he claims, is the cause of the bewitching glance (*causa oculi fascinantis*).

However, it was shown above (q. 110, a. 2) that corporeal matter does not obey a spiritual substance at will, except for the creator alone. And so it is better to reply that the bodily spirits of the conjoined body (*spiritus corporis coniuncti*) are affected by a strong imagination on the part of the soul. This effect in the bodily spirits occurs especially in the eyes, which the more subtle bodily spirits reach. Now the eyes infect the surrounding air to a set distance—in the same way that new and pure mirrors contract a certain impurity from the gaze of a menstruating woman, as Aristotle says in *De Somno et Vigilia*. So, then, when a soul is vehemently moved to malice, as happens especially in the case of little old women (*in vetulabus*), what is effected in the way described above is a gaze that is poisonous and noxious especially to children, who have a body that is tender and readily receptive to impressions. It is also possible that by God’s permission, or even because of some occult work, the wickedness of the demons with whom the soothsayers have a pact also cooperates in this.

Reply to objection 3: The soul is united to the human body as its form, and, as was explained above (q. 81, a. 3), the sentient appetite, which in some sense obeys reason, is the act of a corporeal

organ. And so for an apprehension of the human soul the sentient appetite has to be moved in conjunction with some corporeal operation (*oportet quod commoveatur appetitus sensitivus cum aliqua operatione coporali*). But, as has been explained, the human soul's apprehension is not sufficient for affecting exterior bodies except through the mediation of a change in its own body.

Article 4

Can a separated soul affect bodies at least with respect to place?

It seems that a separated soul can affect bodies at least with respect to place:

Objection 1: As was explained above (q. 110, a. 3), with respect to its local motion a body naturally obeys a spiritual substance. But a separated soul is a spiritual substance. Therefore, it can move exterior bodies at its command.

Objection 2: In *Itinerarium Clementis*, Niceta's narrative to Peter reports that through his magical arts Simon the magician held on to the soul of a child he had killed and worked magical acts through it. But this could not have been the case without changes, at least local motions, in certain bodies. Therefore, a separated soul has the power to move bodies with respect to place.

But contrary to this: In *De Anima* the Philosopher says that the soul can move only its own body and not all bodies.

I respond: A separated soul is not by its natural power able to move a body. For it is clear that when a soul is united to its body, it moves its body only insofar as that body is vivified. Hence, if some member of its body dies, that member does not obey the soul with respect to local motion. But it is obvious that there is no body vivified by a separated soul. Hence, with respect to local motion there is no body that obeys a separated soul, as regards the power of its own nature—over and beyond which something can be conferred on it by God's power.

Reply to objection 1: There are some spiritual substances, viz., the angels, who are naturally free of bodies and whose powers are not limited (*determinatur*) to particular bodies. And so diverse bodies can obey them with respect to motion.

However, if a separated substance's moving power were naturally limited to effecting motion in some particular body, then that substance would be able to effect motion in a smaller body but not a bigger body—just as, according to the Philosopher, the mover of a lower celestial body would not be able to effect motion in a higher celestial body.

Hence, since a soul by its nature is limited to effecting motion in a body of which it is the form, it cannot by its natural power effect motion in any other body.

Reply to objection 2: As Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 10 and as Chrysostom says in *Super Matthaicum*, the demons often pretend to be souls of the dead in order to confirm the error of the Gentiles, who believed this. And so it is plausible to think that Simon the magician was tricked by some demon who was pretending to be the soul of a child whom he had killed.