Questions on Virtue, Goodness, and the Will
Questions about Created Wills
1 Are Memory, Intellect, and Will Really Distinct Powers? (Rep. II, q. 20)

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Text

That memory, intellect, and will are distinct powers:

This is argued for on the basis that really distinct operations issue from really distinct powers. But the operations of intellect and will are

1 OTh V: 425–447.
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really distinct; therefore, etc. The major premise is argued for in two ways. First, in *Metaphysics* XII the Philosopher argues for the distinction of the [celestial] intelligences on the basis of the plurality of [heavenly] motions, and this argument would not be valid unless a plurality of powers follows from a plurality of operations.\(^2\) Second, in *On the Soul* II the Philosopher says that powers are distinguished by acts.\(^3\)

In support of the opposite answer there is what Augustine says: memory, intelligence, and will are not three substances but one substance; not three minds, but one mind.\(^4\)

### Aquinas’s View

One view about this is that the powers of the soul are absolute accidents, added onto the essence of the soul. This view is argued for in several ways.

First, operating is related to a power in the same way that being is related to an essence. Therefore, by substitution, being is related to operating in the same way that an essence is related to a power. But only in God’s case are being and operating the same; therefore, etc.\(^5\)

Likewise, power \([potentia]\) and act are in the same genus, and operation is in the genus of accident, therefore, etc.\(^6\)

Likewise, anything that is a principle of operating by its essence is always in act. But the soul is not always in act, because the soul is the act of a being in potentiality. Therefore, etc.\(^7\)

Likewise, some operations are so different that in no way can they be from the same principle and power, e.g., an operation that cannot be exercised without a bodily organ is different from an operation that does occur without an organ. Therefore, there will be a similar difference between a power that is based in an organ \([organica]\) and a power that is not. And this [difference] is not located in the essence of the soul. Therefore, etc.\(^8\)

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\(^5\) Aquinas, *QDA*, q. 12, sc. The unstated final inference is that, since operating and existing are not identical in creatures, no creaturely power is identical to a creaturely essence.

\(^6\) Ockham’s reply to this argument relies on an ambiguity in the Latin word *potentia*. See [15].

\(^7\) Aquinas, *ST* Ia, q. 77, a. 1.

\(^8\) Aquinas, *ST* Ia, q. 77, a. 1.

\(^9\) Aquinas, *ST* Ia, q. 77, a. 5.
Likewise, a natural power belongs to the second species of [the category of] Quality, and the powers of the soul are natural powers, therefore, etc.10

Likewise, one and the same thing cannot receive different and contrary forms through the same principle. Consequently, a thing needs to be made determinate by some other absolute things. For if this were not so, anything could be generated from anything. So then, since the soul can receive different operations, it follows that, etc.11

Furthermore, according to the Commentator accidents are always attributed to substances.12 But operations are the sort of thing [attributed to a substance] and consequently they are accidents. Therefore, etc.13

Likewise, accidents that are themselves changing [in fluxu] are received into a substance by means of a permanent accident. Now understanding and willing are of this sort, and they are received by means of the powers. Therefore, etc.14

Objections to Aquinas’s Arguments

However, these arguments do not conclusively demonstrate what was claimed, and so I respond to them.

To the first argument,15 I say that it accepts a falsehood. This is so as follows: By ‘operation’ he means either (i) the very thing produced by a producing power, (ii) the principle of producing, or (iii) some relation [respectum] that designates the thing that is producing; for he cannot mean several different things by ‘operation.’ If the first is meant, then what is assumed is false; for in that case God’s existence and God’s operation are different, just as God and what is produced are different (whether what is produced is internal or external). If the second is meant, in that case being an operation and being a principle of operation are the same thing in creatures just as they are the same in God, because in this sense ‘operation’ is taken for the operative principle according to him. If the third is meant, then since that relation is a relation of reason according to him (whether in the case of God or in the case of creatures), that relation is not the same thing as

10 Aquinas, QDA, q. 12, sc. Aristotle says that natural capacities are the second kind of quality in Categories 8 (9a14–28).
11 Aquinas, QDA, q. 12, resp.
12 E.g., Averroes, In Metaphysics IV, t. 25 and In Metaphysics VII, t. 4.
13 This argument appears in the late fifteenth-century edition of Ockham’s works, but does not appear in any of the earlier manuscripts canvassed by the critical edition. However, Ockham does reply to this argument (or, at least, one similar to it); see [23].
14 The edition ascribes this argument to Giles of Rome, Quodlibeta III, q. 11.
15 See [5].
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God nor the same thing as a creature. So, I respond to the argument that an operation (i.e., the thing produced) is universally and in all cases distinct from the being and the essence of the producer.

To the next argument I say that potentia is taken in multiple senses. In one sense, it is taken for an attribute [passio] or differentiating feature of being. In this sense it is an objective potentiality [potentia] and it is in the same genus as act. Indeed, it is the same thing as an act, because it becomes an act; for one and the same human being is first in potentiality and afterwards is in act, and similarly the same act of understanding is first in potentiality and afterwards in act.

In another sense, potentia is taken insofar as it is a part of being; in this case it is taken for either an active or a passive power [potentia]. If taken for an active power, then that is false [that power and act are in the same genus], and this is clear from itself. If taken for a passive power, then that is also false according to him, because it is necessary that some substance be immediately able to receive some accident or else there will be an infinite regress. Similarly, supposing that he indeed proves that an act is received in the soul by means of some other accident, still one need not posit that there are as many receptive accidents as there are acts. This is clear since understanding and willing are no less compatible with each other in the same immediate subject than are two sensible qualities of different species. (E.g., whiteness and sweetness in milk: neither of them is received in the other because they can be separated, since something can be white and not sweet, and vice versa.) Therefore, understanding and willing can be received in the soul by means of one accident if such an accident is posited. Consequently, one need not posit as many powers as there are acts.

To the next argument I say that it assumes something false, unless it is meant that the essence is its own sufficient basis for acting without positing anything else; but this is only the case for God.

To the next argument I concede that there is a distinction between powers that are based in an organ and those that are not, as will be made clear elsewhere. But this question concerns the intellect and the will.

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15, 16, 17 See [6].

15 Ockham’s reply here depends on an ambiguity in the Latin word potentia that does not entirely correspond to an ambiguity in any possible English translation (e.g., “power,” “potency,” “potentiality,” etc.), and so I have left this occurrence untranslated.

18 See [7].

19 See [8].


21 The unstated assumption is that neither the intellect nor the will is dependent on a bodily organ, and so this point is irrelevant to whether the intellect and will are distinct.
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To the next argument I say that one need not posit a distinction between powers because of a difference in acts, and so there need not be as many powers as there are acts. For otherwise there would be as many intellective powers as there are acts of understanding.

You might object that one power extends itself to all acts of the same genus, but not to the acts of a different genus. Contrary to this, the acts of every power are in the genus of Quality, and so then there is no distinction of powers.

You might then object that acts that belong to the same proximate genus can have the same power, but this is not the case for acts that only belong to the same more remote genus.

Contrary to this, I hold that there is some [genus] common to all vital acts. That common [genus] has different species under it, such that one of those species belongs to one power and another belongs to another power. Therefore, etc.

To the next argument I say that prime matter is an immediate principle of many substantial forms, and the intellective power is a principle of different acts of understanding. When he says that “then anything is generated from anything” and so on, I reply that when something is generated from multiple things, a determination by different absolute things is not required. And in fact the same form can be generated both from fire and from water. Therefore, matter can receive forms without any absolute things [determining it to one form or another].

To the next argument I say that the Commentator’s meaning is that an accident is always attributed to a substance as to its subject, but not [always] as to its efficient or final cause (although sometimes this can be so).

To the next argument I say that a changeable [fluxibile] accident can be immediately received in a substance. This is clear because the substance of an angel can be moved from place to place, but according to him motion is a changeable accident and is immediately received in the substance of the angel. Similarly, quantity is a changeable accident, because if it were separated from a substance it could be compressed or expanded; nevertheless, quantity is immediately received in a substance.

18 It is unclear to which argument this is intended to be a response; perhaps it is a second objection to [8]. Cf. the argument in [9], which Ockham seems to not address.

19 See [10].


21 See [12].

22 I.e., Giles of Rome. See n. 14 above.
Similarly, what he assumes is false: according to their own nature, the existence of understanding and willing does not consist in changing and becoming any more than does the existence of a stone or an angel (except perhaps that they do not endure as long, just as one angel might endure less than another). For just as a stone or an angel have existence only because of their cause's production and conservation, so understanding and willing have existence from their cause's production and conservation. They have existence just as long as they are conserved; so one act of understanding, in and of itself, can endure for a long time, and the same is the case for an act of willing. Similarly, just as the whole angel or the whole stone is produced and persists both all at once and once and for all (and not as one part following another part), so it is for acts of understanding and willing, according to everyone.

So, I say that the existence of an act of understanding does not consist in changing and becoming any more than does the existence of an angel or of light in a medium (if the sun were to forever stand still in the same position), or of an angel or a whiteness. So, therefore, an act of understanding is one static [fixum] accident, just like the [whiteness] is.

This argument also fails in another way. Supposing that the existence of those acts of understanding and willing consisted only in changing and becoming, and supposing that a changeable accident has existence only by means of a static accident, then one would still not need to posit a plurality of receiving accidents on the basis of a plurality of changeable accidents that are being received, because all those changeable accidents can be received by means of one accident, and so by means of one power, as has been said.

You might object that understanding is a second act (and likewise for willing), and therefore it has existence in a different way than a first act does, and consequently it has a kind of existence that consists in changing.

I reply that an act of understanding is a second act, because it presupposes a prior act in the thing from which it comes (i.e., a power and a habit, or at least one of them); but a first act does not do this. Similarly, an act of understanding can be called a second act because it is terminated in another thing; but a first act is not. But it is not in any way called a second act on the basis that its existence consists in

25 The contrast here is between entities like stones, whose parts all exist simultaneously, and so-called successive entities like musical performances, one part of which exists at one time and another part at another time.
26 The sense of “first act” and “second act” used here comes from Aristotle, On the Soul II.1 (412a20–30), where he refers to the powers of a substance as the substance’s first act and the acts of those powers as the substance’s second act.

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becoming or changing more than does the existence of a power or a habit, and these are [not called] first acts on the basis that they have their whole existence at a time (even though, as a matter of fact, the second acts do not remain for as long a time as the first act remains).

Henry of Ghent's View

There is another view, that the powers add nothing to the essence of the soul except relations [respectus] to different objects. This is argued for as follows: When a thing is indifferently related to multiple things, it only engages in an act concerning one thing rather than another when it is more determined to the one than to the other. But the soul is like this [i.e., indifferently related] with respect to various objects, and this determination cannot be due to absolute items; therefore, it is due to relational items. So, it is posited that various relations to various objects are established in the essence of the soul, and a variety of powers are posited according to the variety of relations. He puts forward the example of prime matter; in it there are various powers to various forms, and this variety is only due to relational items, not due to some absolute items.

Against this:

If there were a relation of this sort in the soul, it would be either a real relation or a relation of reason. It is not a relation of reason, because a relation of reason is due to some intellect's act of comparing; but the powers exist completely [perfecte] in the essence of the soul prior to any act of the intellect. Nor is it a real relation, because even he agrees that there is never a real relation without a really existing terminus; but the powers of the soul can be complete when no object exists, since God can make an intellective soul without making any object in the world. In that case the powers of the soul would be complete and yet there would be no actual terminus (since there are no objects); therefore, etc. (The same argument also holds against his example of [prime] matter.)

Likewise, a relation of this sort is posited in matter only because matter is in potency to form. But that is not compelling, because matter that has been annihilated is still in potency to form and to various forms; for when no matter exists, “matter can receive form” is true, yet at that time no relation obtains. So, it is not the case that this sort of relation ought to be posited on the basis that matter is said to be in potency to form. As for the Commentator,

28 Henry of Ghent, Quodlibeta III, q. 14.
29 Averroes, In Physics I, t. 70, cited by Henry in the text noted above.
30 I say that he means by
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‘relation’ a relational extrinsic denomination, namely that there is some word or concept that principally signifies matter and that connotes a determinate form. E.g., matter can naturally receive the form of a donkey from a natural agent; matter thus signified can be called a potency to the form of a donkey. And a different word or concept principally signifies that same matter and connotes some other form (e.g., the form of a cow); matter signified by this sort of utterance or concept is called a potency to that other form. So, in this way various relations can be said to be in matter due to various relational extrinsic denominations, and otherwise this cannot be said, as will be discussed elsewhere.31

Scotus’s View

32 There is another view that the powers are really the same, both with each other and with the essence of the soul, but they differ formally, not as relations but as absolute things.32 (He does not put this view forward because of any argument, but only because of authoritative texts.) Also, he says that the powers are virtually contained in the soul, though he distinguishes two senses of virtual containment: in one sense when what is contained belongs to the essence of what contains it (as when what is higher is virtually contained in what is lower33), and in another sense when what is contained does not belong to the essence of what contains it (it is in this way that a subject virtually contains an attribute). Search John for this.

33 Against his way of positing two kinds of containment: Items that are really the same are either per se one thing in a genus or are parts of something that exists per se in a genus. But according to him a subject and an attribute (a soul and a power) are really the same even though they are formally distinct. Therefore, either they are one thing per se existing in a genus or they are parts of something that exists per se in a genus. Whichever it is, they always belong to the essence of that thing that is per se in a genus, just as the parts that constitute some whole existing per se in a genus belong to the essence of that whole. So, a power cannot be supposed to be an attribute of the soul any more than a differentiating feature of the genus can be. This is proved as follows: Wherever there is a formal distinction, there are some things neither of which is contained in the other. But according to him the genus and the differentiating feature are formally distinct; therefore, therefore,

33 By “the higher is virtually contained in the lower,” Scotus means that a species virtually contains the genera that it falls under.