

## FIRST PART, QUESTION 78

### Of the Specific Powers of the Soul (In Four Articles)

We next treat of the powers of the soul specifically. The theologian, however, has only to inquire specifically concerning the intellectual and appetitive powers, in which the virtues reside. And since the knowledge of these powers depends to a certain extent on the other powers, our consideration of the powers of the soul taken specifically will be divided into three parts: first, we shall consider those powers which are a preamble to the intellect; secondly, the intellectual powers; thirdly, the appetitive powers.

Under the first head there are four points of inquiry:

- (1) The powers of the soul considered generally;
- (2) The various species of the vegetative part;
- (3) The exterior senses;
- (4) The interior senses.

---

#### Whether there are to be distinguished five genera of powers in the soul?

Ia q. 78 a. 1

**Objection 1.** It would seem that there are not to be distinguished five genera of powers in the soul—namely, vegetative, sensitive, appetitive, locomotive, and intellectual. For the powers of the soul are called its parts. But only three parts of the soul are commonly assigned—namely, the vegetative soul, the sensitive soul, and the rational soul. Therefore there are only three genera of powers in the soul, and not five.

**Objection 2.** Further, the powers of the soul are the principles of its vital operations. Now, in four ways is a thing said to live. For the Philosopher says (*De Anima* ii, 2): “In several ways a thing is said to live, and even if only one of these is present, the thing is said to live; as intellect and sense, local movement and rest, and lastly, movement of decrease and increase due to nourishment.” Therefore there are only four genera of powers of the soul, as the appetitive is excluded.

**Objection 3.** Further, a special kind of soul ought not to be assigned as regards what is common to all the powers. Now desire is common to each power of the soul. For sight desires an appropriate visible object; whence we read (*Ecclus.* 40:22): “The eye desireth favor and beauty, but more than these green sown fields.” In the same way every other power desires its appropriate object. Therefore the appetitive power should not be made a special genus of the powers of the soul.

**Objection 4.** Further, the moving principle in animals is sense, intellect or appetite, as the Philosopher says (*De Anima* iii, 10). Therefore the motive power should not be added to the above as a special genus of soul.

**On the contrary,** The Philosopher says (*De Anima* ii, 3), “The powers are the vegetative, the sensitive, the appetitive, the locomotion, and the intellectual.”

**I answer that,** There are five genera of powers of the soul, as above numbered. Of these, three are called souls,

and four are called modes of living. The reason of this diversity lies in the various souls being distinguished accordingly as the operation of the soul transcends the operation of the corporeal nature in various ways; for the whole corporeal nature is subject to the soul, and is related to it as its matter and instrument. There exists, therefore, an operation of the soul which so far exceeds the corporeal nature that it is not even performed by any corporeal organ; and such is the operation of the “rational soul.” Below this, there is another operation of the soul, which is indeed performed through a corporeal organ, but not through a corporeal quality, and this is the operation of the “sensitive soul”; for though hot and cold, wet and dry, and other such corporeal qualities are required for the work of the senses, yet they are not required in such a way that the operation of the senses takes place by virtue of such qualities; but only for the proper disposition of the organ. The lowest of the operations of the soul is that which is performed by a corporeal organ, and by virtue of a corporeal quality. Yet this transcends the operation of the corporeal nature; because the movements of bodies are caused by an extrinsic principle, while these operations are from an intrinsic principle; for this is common to all the operations of the soul; since every animate thing, in some way, moves itself. Such is the operation of the “vegetative soul”; for digestion, and what follows, is caused instrumentally by the action of heat, as the Philosopher says (*De Anima* ii, 4).

Now the powers of the soul are distinguished generically by their objects. For the higher a power is, the more universal is the object to which it extends, as we have said above (q. 77, a. 3, ad 4). But the object of the soul’s operation may be considered in a triple order. For in the soul there is a power the object of which is only the body that is united to that soul; the powers of this genus are

called “vegetative” for the vegetative power acts only on the body to which the soul is united. There is another genus in the powers of the soul, which genus regards a more universal object—namely, every sensible body, not only the body to which the soul is united. And there is yet another genus in the powers of the soul, which genus regards a still more universal object—namely, not only the sensible body, but all being in universal. Wherefore it is evident that the latter two genera of the soul’s powers have an operation in regard not merely to that which is united to them, but also to something extrinsic. Now, since whatever operates must in some way be united to the object about which it operates, it follows of necessity that this something extrinsic, which is the object of the soul’s operation, must be related to the soul in a twofold manner. First, inasmuch as this something extrinsic has a natural aptitude to be united to the soul, and to be by its likeness in the soul. In this way there are two kinds of powers—namely, the “sensitive” in regard to the less common object—the sensible body; and the “intellectual,” in regard to the most common object—universal being. Secondly, forasmuch as the soul itself has an inclination and tendency to the something extrinsic. And in this way there are again two kinds of powers in the soul: one—the “appetitive”—in respect of which the soul is referred to something extrinsic as to an end, which is first in the intention; the other—the “locomotive” power—in respect of which the soul is referred to something extrinsic as to the term of its operation and movement; for every animal is moved for the purpose of realizing its desires and intentions.

The modes of living are distinguished according to the degrees of living things. There are some living things in which there exists only vegetative power, as the plants. There are others in which with the vegetative there exists also the sensitive, but not the locomotive power; such as immovable animals, as shellfish. There are others which besides this have locomotive powers, as perfect animals, which require many things for their life, and consequently

movement to seek necessities of life from a distance. And there are some living things which with these have intellectual power—namely, men. But the appetitive power does not constitute a degree of living things; because wherever there is sense there is also appetite (De Anima ii, 3).

Thus the first two objectives are hereby solved.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The “natural appetite” is that inclination which each thing has, of its own nature, for something; wherefore by its natural appetite each power desires something suitable to itself. But the “animal appetite” results from the form apprehended; this sort of appetite requires a special power of the soul—mere apprehension does not suffice. For a thing is desired as it exists in its own nature, whereas in the apprehensive power it exists not according to its own nature, but according to its likeness. Whence it is clear that sight desires naturally a visible object for the purpose of its act only—namely, for the purpose of seeing; but the animal by the appetitive power desires the thing seen, not merely for the purpose of seeing it, but also for other purposes. But if the soul did not require things perceived by the senses, except on account of the actions of the senses, that is, for the purpose of sensing them; there would be no need for a special genus of appetitive powers, since the natural appetite of the powers would suffice.

**Reply to Objection 4.** Although sense and appetite are principles of movement in perfect animals, yet sense and appetite, as such, are not sufficient to cause movement, unless another power be added to them; for immovable animals have sense and appetite, and yet they have not the power of motion. Now this motive power is not only in the appetite and sense as commanding the movement, but also in the parts of the body, to make them obey the appetite of the soul which moves them. Of this we have a sign in the fact that when the members are deprived of their natural disposition, they do not move in obedience to the appetite.

---

**Whether the parts of the vegetative soul are fittingly described as the nutritive, augmentative, and generative?**

---

Ia q. 78 a. 2

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the parts of the vegetative soul are not fittingly described—namely, the nutritive, augmentative, and generative. For these are called “natural” forces. But the powers of the soul are above the natural forces. Therefore we should not class the above forces as powers of the soul.

**Objection 2.** Further, we should not assign a particular power of the soul to that which is common to living and non-living things. But generation is common to all things that can be generated and corrupted, whether living

or not living. Therefore the generative force should not be classed as a power of the soul.

**Objection 3.** Further, the soul is more powerful than the body. But the body by the same force gives species and quantity; much more, therefore, does the soul. Therefore the augmentative power of the soul is not distinct from the generative power.

**Objection 4.** Further, everything is preserved in being by that whereby it exists. But the generative power is that whereby a living thing exists. Therefore by the

same power the living thing is preserved. Now the nutritive force is directed to the preservation of the living thing (De Anima ii, 4), being “a power which is capable of preserving whatever receives it.” Therefore we should not distinguish the nutritive power from the generative.

**On the contrary,** The Philosopher says (De Anima ii, 2,4) that the operations of this soul are “generation, the use of food,” and (cf. De Anima iii, 9) “growth.”

**I answer that,** The vegetative part has three powers. For the vegetative part, as we have said (a. 1), has for its object the body itself, living by the soul; for which body a triple operation of the soul is required. One is whereby it acquires existence, and to this is directed the “generative” power. Another is whereby the living body acquires its due quantity; to this is directed the “augmentative” power. Another is whereby the body of a living thing is preserved in its existence and in its due quantity; to this is directed the “nutritive” power.

We must, however, observe a difference among these powers. The nutritive and the augmentative have their effect where they exist, since the body itself united to the soul grows and is preserved by the augmentative and nutritive powers which exist in one and the same soul. But the generative power has its effect, not in one and the same body but in another; for a thing cannot generate itself. Therefore the generative power, in a way, approaches to the dignity of the sensitive soul, which has an operation extending to extrinsic things, although in a more excellent and more universal manner; for that which is highest in an inferior nature approaches to that which is lowest in the higher nature, as is made clear by Dionysius (Div. Nom. vii). Therefore, of these three powers, the generative has the greater finality, nobility, and perfection, as the Philosopher says (De Anima ii, 4), for it belongs to

a thing which is already perfect to “produce another like unto itself.” And the generative power is served by the augmentative and nutritive powers; and the augmentative power by the nutritive.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Such forces are called natural, both because they produce an effect like that of nature, which also gives existence, quantity and preservation (although the above forces accomplish these things in a more perfect way); and because those forces perform their actions instrumentally, through the active and passive qualities, which are the principles of natural actions.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Generation of inanimate things is entirely from an extrinsic source; whereas the generation of living things is in a higher way, through something in the living thing itself, which is the semen containing the principle productive of the body. Therefore there must be in the living thing a power that prepares this semen; and this is the generative power.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Since the generation of living things is from a semen, it is necessary that in the beginning an animal of small size be generated. For this reason it must have a power in the soul, whereby it is brought to its appropriate size. But the inanimate body is generated from determinate matter by an extrinsic agent; therefore it receives at once its nature and its quantity, according to the condition of the matter.

**Reply to Objection 4.** As we have said above (a. 1), the operation of the vegetative principle is performed by means of heat, the property of which is to consume humidity. Therefore, in order to restore the humidity thus lost, the nutritive power is required, whereby the food is changed into the substance of the body. This is also necessary for the action of the augmentative and generative powers.

---

### Whether the five exterior senses are properly distinguished?

Ia q. 78 a. 3

**Objection 1.** It would seem inaccurate to distinguish five exterior senses. But there are many kinds of accidents. Therefore, as powers are distinguished by their objects, it seems that the senses are multiplied according to the number of the kinds of accidents.

**Objection 2.** Further, magnitude and shape, and other things which are called “common sensibles,” are “not sensibles by accident,” but are contradistinguished from them by the Philosopher (De Anima ii, 6). Now the diversity of objects, as such, diversifies the powers. Since, therefore, magnitude and shape are further from color than sound is, it seems that there is much more need for another sensitive power than can grasp magnitude or shape than for that which grasps color or sound.

**Objection 3.** Further, one sense regards one contrariety; as sight regards white and black. But the sense of

touch grasps several contraries; such as hot or cold, damp or dry, and suchlike. Therefore it is not a single sense but several. Therefore there are more than five senses.

**Objection 4.** Further, a species is not divided against its genus. But taste is a kind of touch. Therefore it should not be classed as a distinct sense of touch.

**On the contrary,** The Philosopher says (De Anima iii, 1): “There is no other besides the five senses.”

**I answer that,** The reason of the distinction and number of the senses has been assigned by some to the organs in which one or other of the elements preponderate, as water, air, or the like. By others it has been assigned to the medium, which is either in conjunction or extrinsic and is either water or air, or such like. Others have ascribed it to the various natures of the sensible qualities, according as such quality belongs to a simple body or results from

complexity. But none of these explanations is apt. For the powers are not for the organs, but the organs for the powers; wherefore there are not various powers for the reason that there are various organs; on the contrary, for this has nature provided a variety of organs, that they might be adapted to various powers. In the same way nature provided various mediums for the various senses, according to the convenience of the acts of the powers. And to be cognizant of the natures of sensible qualities does not pertain to the senses, but to the intellect.

The reason of the number and distinction of the exterior senses must therefore be ascribed to that which belongs to the senses properly and “per se.” Now, sense is a passive power, and is naturally immuted by the exterior sensible. Wherefore the exterior cause of such immutation is what is “per se” perceived by the sense, and according to the diversity of that exterior cause are the sensitive powers diversified.

Now, immutation is of two kinds, one natural, the other spiritual. Natural immutation takes place by the form of the immuter being received according to its natural existence, into the thing immuted, as heat is received into the thing heated. Whereas spiritual immutation takes place by the form of the immuter being received, according to a spiritual mode of existence, into the thing immuted, as the form of color is received into the pupil which does not thereby become colored. Now, for the operation of the senses, a spiritual immutation is required, whereby an intention of the sensible form is effected in the sensible organ. Otherwise, if a natural immutation alone sufficed for the sense’s action, all natural bodies would feel when they undergo alteration.

But in some senses we find spiritual immutation only, as in “sight” while in others we find not only spiritual but also a natural immutation; either on the part of the object only, or likewise on the part of the organ. On the part of the object we find natural immutation, as to place, in sound which is the object of “hearing”; for sound is caused by percussion and commotion of air: and we find natural immutation by alteration, in odor which is the object of “smelling”; for in order to exhale an odor, a body must be in a measure affected by heat. On the part of an organ, natural immutation takes place in “touch” and “taste”; for the hand that touches something hot becomes hot, while the tongue is moistened by the humidity of the flavored morsel. But the organs of smelling and hearing are not affected in their respective operations by any natural immutation unless indirectly.

Now, the sight, which is without natural immutation either in its organ or in its object, is the most spiritual, the most perfect, and the most universal of all the senses. After this comes the hearing and then the smell, which require a natural immutation on the part of the object; while local motion is more perfect than, and naturally prior to,

the motion of alteration, as the Philosopher proves (Phys. viii, 7). Touch and taste are the most material of all: of the distinction of which we shall speak later on (ad 3,4). Hence it is that the three other senses are not exercised through a medium united to them, to obviate any natural immutation in their organ; as happens as regards these two senses.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Not every accident has in itself a power of immutation but only qualities of the third species, which are the principles of alteration: therefore only suchlike qualities are the objects of the senses; because “the senses are affected by the same things whereby inanimate bodies are affected,” as stated in Phys. vii, 2.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Size, shape, and the like, which are called “common sensibles,” are midway between “accidental sensibles” and “proper sensibles,” which are the objects of the senses. For the proper sensibles first, and of their very nature, affect the senses; since they are qualities that cause alteration. But the common sensibles are all reducible to quantity. As to size and number, it is clear that they are species of quantity. Shape is a quality about quantity. Shape is a quality about quantity, since the notion of shape consists of fixing the bounds of magnitude. Movement and rest are sensed according as the subject is affected in one or more ways in the magnitude of the subject or of its local distance, as in the movement of growth or of locomotion, or again, according as it is affected in some sensible qualities, as in the movement of alteration; and thus to sense movement and rest is, in a way, to sense one thing and many. Now quantity is the proximate subject of the qualities that cause alteration, as surface is of color. Therefore the common sensibles do not move the senses first and of their own nature, but by reason of the sensible quality; as the surface by reason of color. Yet they are not accidental sensibles, for they produce a certain variety in the immutation of the senses. For sense is immuted differently by a large and by a small surface: since whiteness itself is said to be great or small, and therefore it is divided according to its proper subject.

**Reply to Objection 3.** As the Philosopher seems to say (De Anima ii, 11), the sense of touch is generically one, but is divided into several specific senses, and for this reason it extends to various contrarieties; which senses, however, are not separate from one another in their organ, but are spread throughout the whole body, so that their distinction is not evident. But taste, which perceives the sweet and the bitter, accompanies touch in the tongue, but not in the whole body; so it is easily distinguished from touch. We might also say that all those contrarieties agree, each in some proximate genus, and all in a common genus, which is the common and formal object of touch. Such common genus is, however, unnamed, just as the proximate genus of hot and cold is unnamed.

**Reply to Objection 4.** The sense of taste, according

to a saying of the Philosopher (De Anima ii, 9), is a kind of touch existing in the tongue only. It is not distinct from touch in general, but only from the species of touch distributed in the body. But if touch is one sense only, on account of the common formality of its object: we must say that taste is distinguished from touch by reason of a different formality of immutation. For touch involves a natural, and not only a spiritual, immutation in its organ,

by reason of the quality which is its proper object. But the organ of taste is not necessarily immuted by a natural immutation by reason of the quality which is its proper object, so that the tongue itself becomes sweet and bitter: but by reason of a quality which is a preamble to, and on which is based, the flavor, which quality is moisture, the object of touch.

---

### Whether the interior senses are suitably distinguished?

Ia q. 78 a. 4

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the interior senses are not suitably distinguished. For the common is not divided against the proper. Therefore the common sense should not be numbered among the interior sensitive powers, in addition to the proper exterior senses.

**Objection 2.** Further, there is no need to assign an interior power of apprehension when the proper and exterior sense suffices. But the proper and exterior senses suffice for us to judge of sensible things; for each sense judges of its proper object. In like manner they seem to suffice for the perception of their own actions; for since the action of the sense is, in a way, between the power and its object, it seems that sight must be much more able to perceive its own vision, as being nearer to it, than the color; and in like manner with the other senses. Therefore for this there is no need to assign an interior power, called the common sense.

**Objection 3.** Further, according to the Philosopher (De Memor. et Remin. i), the imagination and the memory are passions of the "first sensitive." But passion is not divided against its subject. Therefore memory and imagination should not be assigned as powers distinct from the senses.

**Objection 4.** Further, the intellect depends on the senses less than any power of the sensitive part. But the intellect knows nothing but what it receives from the senses; whence we read (Poster. i, 8), that "those who lack one sense lack one kind of knowledge." Therefore much less should we assign to the sensitive part a power, which they call the "estimative" power, for the perception of intentions which the sense does not perceive.

**Objection 5.** Further, the action of the cogitative power, which consists in comparing, adding and dividing, and the action of the reminiscence, which consists in the use of a kind of syllogism for the sake of inquiry, is not less distant from the actions of the estimative and memorative powers, than the action of the estimative is from the action of the imagination. Therefore either we must add the cognitive and reminiscitive to the estimative and memorative powers, or the estimative and memorative powers should not be made distinct from the imagination.

**Objection 6.** Further, Augustine (Gen. ad lit. xii,

6,7,24) describes three kinds of vision; namely, corporeal, which is the action of the sense; spiritual, which is an action of the imagination or phantasy; and intellectual, which is an action of the intellect. Therefore there is no interior power between the sense and intellect, besides the imagination.

**On the contrary,** Avicenna (De Anima iv, 1) assigns five interior sensitive powers; namely, "common sense, phantasy, imagination, and the estimative and memorative powers."

**I answer that,** As nature does not fail in necessary things, there must needs be as many actions of the sensitive soul as may suffice for the life of a perfect animal. If any of these actions cannot be reduced to the same one principle, they must be assigned to diverse powers; since a power of the soul is nothing else than the proximate principle of the soul's operation.

Now we must observe that for the life of a perfect animal, the animal should apprehend a thing not only at the actual time of sensation, but also when it is absent. Otherwise, since animal motion and action follow apprehension, an animal would not be moved to seek something absent: the contrary of which we may observe specially in perfect animals, which are moved by progression, for they are moved towards something apprehended and absent. Therefore an animal through the sensitive soul must not only receive the species of sensible things, when it is actually affected by them, but it must also retain and preserve them. Now to receive and retain are, in corporeal things, reduced to diverse principles; for moist things are apt to receive, but retain with difficulty, while it is the reverse with dry things. Wherefore, since the sensitive power is the act of a corporeal organ, it follows that the power which receives the species of sensible things must be distinct from the power which preserves them.

Again we must observe that if an animal were moved by pleasing and disagreeable things only as affecting the sense, there would be no need to suppose that an animal has a power besides the apprehension of those forms which the senses perceive, and in which the animal takes pleasure, or from which it shrinks with horror. But the animal needs to seek or to avoid certain things, not only

because they are pleasing or otherwise to the senses, but also on account of other advantages and uses, or disadvantages: just as the sheep runs away when it sees a wolf, not on account of its color or shape, but as a natural enemy: and again a bird gathers together straws, not because they are pleasant to the sense, but because they are useful for building its nest. Animals, therefore, need to perceive such intentions, which the exterior sense does not perceive. And some distinct principle is necessary for this; since the perception of sensible forms comes by an immutation caused by the sensible, which is not the case with the perception of those intentions.

Thus, therefore, for the reception of sensible forms, the “proper sense” and the “common sense” are appointed, and of their distinction we shall speak farther on (ad 1,2). But for the retention and preservation of these forms, the “phantasy” or “imagination” is appointed; which are the same, for phantasy or imagination is as it were a storehouse of forms received through the senses. Furthermore, for the apprehension of intentions which are not received through the senses, the “estimative” power is appointed: and for the preservation thereof, the “memorative” power, which is a storehouse of such-like intentions. A sign of which we have in the fact that the principle of memory in animals is found in some such intention, for instance, that something is harmful or otherwise. And the very formality of the past, which memory observes, is to be reckoned among these intentions.

Now, we must observe that as to sensible forms there is no difference between man and other animals; for they are similarly immuted by the extrinsic sensible. But there is a difference as to the above intentions: for other animals perceive these intentions only by some natural instinct, while man perceives them by means of coalition of ideas. Therefore the power by which in other animals is called the natural estimative, in man is called the “cogitative,” which by some sort of collation discovers these intentions. Wherefore it is also called the “particular reason,” to which medical men assign a certain particular organ, namely, the middle part of the head: for it compares individual intentions, just as the intellectual reason compares universal intentions. As to the memorative power, man has not only memory, as other animals have in the sudden recollection of the past; but also “reminiscence” by syllogistically, as it were, seeking for a recollection of the past by the application of individual intentions. Avicenna, however, assigns between the estimative and the imaginative, a fifth power, which combines and divides imaginary forms: as when from the imaginary form of

gold, and imaginary form of a mountain, we compose the one form of a golden mountain, which we have never seen. But this operation is not to be found in animals other than man, in whom the imaginative power suffices thereto. To man also does Averroes attribute this action in his book *De sensu et sensibilibus* (viii). So there is no need to assign more than four interior powers of the sensitive part—namely, the common sense, the imagination, and the estimative and memorative powers.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The interior sense is called “common” not by predication, as if it were a genus; but as the common root and principle of the exterior senses.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The proper sense judges of the proper sensible by discerning it from other things which come under the same sense; for instance, by discerning white from black or green. But neither sight nor taste can discern white from sweet: because what discerns between two things must know both. Wherefore the discerning judgment must be assigned to the common sense; to which, as to a common term, all apprehensions of the senses must be referred: and by which, again, all the intentions of the senses are perceived; as when someone sees that he sees. For this cannot be done by the proper sense, which only knows the form of the sensible by which it is immuted, in which immutation the action of sight is completed, and from immutation follows another in the common sense which perceives the act of vision.

**Reply to Objection 3.** As one power arises from the soul by means of another, as we have seen above (q. 77, a. 7), so also the soul is the subject of one power through another. In this way the imagination and the memory are called passions of the “first sensitive.”

**Reply to Objection 4.** Although the operation of the intellect has its origin in the senses: yet, in the thing apprehended through the senses, the intellect knows many things which the senses cannot perceive. In like manner does the estimative power, though in a less perfect manner.

**Reply to Objection 5.** The cogitative and memorative powers in man owe their excellence not to that which is proper to the sensitive part; but to a certain affinity and proximity to the universal reason, which, so to speak, overflows into them. Therefore they are not distinct powers, but the same, yet more perfect than in other animals.

**Reply to Objection 6.** Augustine calls that vision spiritual which is effected by the images of bodies in the absence of bodies. Whence it is clear that it is common to all interior apprehensions.