

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the intellect can be false; for the Philosopher says (*Metaph.* vi, *Did.* v, 4) that “truth and falsehood are in the mind.” But the mind and intellect are the same, as is shown above (q. 79, a. 1). Therefore falsehood may be in the mind.

**Objection 2.** Further, opinion and reasoning belong to the intellect. But falsehood exists in both. Therefore falsehood can be in the intellect.

**Objection 3.** Further, sin is in the intellectual faculty. But sin involves falsehood: for “those err that work evil” (*Prov.* 14:22). Therefore falsehood can be in the intellect.

**On the contrary,** Augustine says (*QQ.* 83, qu. 32), that “everyone who is deceived, does not rightly understand that wherein he is deceived.” And the Philosopher says (*De Anima* iii, 10), that “the intellect is always true.”

**I answer that,** The Philosopher (*De Anima* iii, 6) compares intellect with sense on this point. For sense is not deceived in its proper object, as sight in regard to color; has accidentally through some hindrance occurring to the sensible organ—for example, the taste of a fever-stricken person judges a sweet thing to be bitter, through his tongue being vitiated by ill humors. Sense, however, may be deceived as regards common sensible objects, as size or figure; when, for example, it judges the sun to be only a foot in diameter, whereas in reality it exceeds the earth in size. Much more is sense deceived concerning accidental sensible objects, as when it judges that vinegar is honey by reason of the color being the same. The reason of this is evident; for every faculty, as such, is “per se” directed to its proper object; and things of this kind are always the same. Hence, as long as the faculty exists, its judgment concerning its own proper object does not fail. Now the proper object of the intellect is the “quiddity”

of a material thing; and hence, properly speaking, the intellect is not at fault concerning this quiddity; whereas it may go astray as regards the surroundings of the thing in its essence or quiddity, in referring one thing to another, as regards composition or division, or also in the process of reasoning. Therefore, also in regard to those propositions, which are understood, the intellect cannot err, as in the case of first principles from which arises infallible truth in the certitude of scientific conclusions.

The intellect, however, may be accidentally deceived in the quiddity of composite things, not by the defect of its organ, for the intellect is a faculty that is independent of an organ; but on the part of the composition affecting the definition, when, for instance, the definition of a thing is false in relation to something else, as the definition of a circle applied to a triangle; or when a definition is false in itself as involving the composition of things incompatible; as, for instance, to describe anything as “a rational winged animal.” Hence as regards simple objects not subject to composite definitions we cannot be deceived unless, indeed, we understand nothing whatever about them, as is said *Metaph.* ix, *Did.* viii, 10.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The Philosopher says that falsehood is in the intellect in regard to composition and division. The same answer applies to the Second Objection concerning opinion and reasoning, and to the Third Objection, concerning the error of the sinner, who errs in the practical judgment of the appetible object. But in the absolute consideration of the quiddity of a thing, and of those things which are known thereby, the intellect is never deceived. In this sense are to be understood the authorities quoted in proof of the opposite conclusion.