

QUESTION 106

How One Angel Illuminates Another

The next thing we have to consider is how one creature moves another. This consideration will have three parts: first, we will consider how angels, who are purely spiritual creatures, effect movement (questions 106-114); second, we will consider how corporeal things effect movement (questions 115-116); and, third, we will consider how men, who are composed of a spiritual and corporeal nature, effect movement (questions 117-119).

On the first topic there are three things to be considered: first, how an angel acts on another angel (questions 106-109); second, how an angel acts on corporeal creatures (question 110); and, third, how an angel acts on men (questions 111-114).

On the first topic, we must consider the illumination (question 106) and speech (question 107) of angels, along with their ordering with respect to one another, both among the good angels (question 108) and among the bad angels (question 109).

As for illumination, there are four questions: (1) Does one angel move the intellect of another angel by illuminating him? (2) Does one angel move the will of another angel? (3) Can a lower angel illuminate a higher angel? (4) Does a higher angel illuminate a lower angel about all the things he knows?

Article 1

Does one angel illuminate another?

It seems that it is not the case that one angel illuminates another:

Objection 1: Angels now possess the same beatitude that we ourselves hope for in the future. But according to Jeremiah 31:34 (“A man will no longer teach his neighbor, and a man will no longer teach his brother”), at that time it will not be the case that one man illuminates another. Therefore, it is likewise not now the case that one angel illuminates another.

Objection 2: In angels there are three kinds of light (*lumen*): the light of *nature*, the light of *grace*, and the light of *glory*. But it is the creator who illuminates an angel by the light of nature; and it is the one who justifies him who illuminates an angel by the light of grace; and it is the one who beatifies him who illuminates an angel by the light of glory—and in each case this is God. Therefore, it is not the case that one angel illuminates another.

Objection 3: Light is a certain form in the mind. But as Augustine says in *83 Quaestiones*, the rational mind is formed by God alone, without a mediating creature. Therefore, it is not the case that one angel illuminates another.

But contrary to this: In *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 8, Dionysius says, “The angels of the second hierarchy are cleansed, illuminated, and perfected by the angels of the first hierarchy.”

I respond: One angel illuminates another. To see this clearly, note that light, as applied to the intellect, is nothing other than a certain manifestation of the truth—this according to Ephesians 5:13 (“All that is made manifest is light”). Hence, to illuminate is nothing other than to pass on to another the manifestation of a truth that one knows. It is in this sense that at Ephesians 3:8-9 the Apostle says, “To me, the least of all the saints, is given this grace, to illuminate all men about the dispensation of the mystery which has been hidden from the ages in God.” So, then, one angel is said to illuminate another insofar as he makes manifest to him a truth that he himself knows. Hence, in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 7, Dionysius says, “Theologians demonstrate plainly that the orders of heavenly substances are taught the deifying sciences by the highest minds.”

Now as was explained above (q. 105, a. 3), two things must come together in order for understanding to occur, viz., (a) the intellective power and (b) a likeness of the thing that is understood. And it is in these two respects that one angel is able to make known to another a truth that he himself knows.

He does this, first, by fortifying the other's intellective power. For just as the power of a less perfect body is strengthened because of the spatial proximity of a more perfect body—e.g., a body that is less hot increases in heat because of the presence of a body that is more hot—so too the intellective power of a lower angel is strengthened because a higher angel turns toward him. For the order of 'turning toward one another' (*ordo conversionis*) plays the role among spiritual beings that the order of spatial proximity plays among corporeal things.

Second, one angel manifests a truth to another with respect to the likeness of the thing that he himself understands. For the higher angel receives his knowledge of the truth in a type of universal conception that the lower angel's intellect would not be capable of grasping, since it is natural for the lower angel to receive truth in a more particularized way. Therefore, the higher angel somehow draws distinctions within the truth that he conceives of in a universal way in order for the lower angel to be able to grasp it, and this is the way in which he presents to the lower angel that which the latter comes to know—just as, in our own case, teachers make many distinctions within what they know in a unified way in order to accommodate it to the capacity of others. This is how Dionysius puts it in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 15: "Each intellectual substance, by his provident power, divides and multiplies the understanding given to him by a substance closer to God (*a diviniore*) in order to fashion a comparison that leads the lower substance upward."

Reply to objection 1: All the angels, both higher and lower, see God's essence directly, and it is not the case that one teaches another in this respect. This is the sort of teaching that the prophet is talking about, and that is why he says, "A man will no longer teach his brother, from the least of them even to the greatest."

However, the reasons behind God's works, which are known in God as in the cause of those works, are such that God knows them all in Himself, because He comprehends Himself, whereas everyone else who sees God knows more of these reasons to the extent that he sees God more perfectly. Hence, a higher angel knows more of the reasons behind God's works than a lower angel does, and he illuminates the lower angel about them. This is how Dionysius puts it in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, "The angels are illuminated with the reasons for the things that exist."

Reply to objection 2: One angel illuminates another not by giving him the light of nature or the light of grace or the light of glory, but rather, as has been explained, by strengthening his natural light and by making manifest to him the truth concerning things that pertain to the state of nature, the state of grace, and the state of glory.

Reply to objection 3: The rational mind is formed directly by God either (a) as an image from an exemplar, since it is made to no other image than the image of God, or (b) as a subject completed by an ultimate form, since a created mind is always thought of as unformed unless it adheres to the first truth itself. By contrast, other kinds of illumination, which are from a man or an angel, are, as it were, dispositions with respect to the last form.

Article 2

Can one angel move the will of another?

It seems that one angel can move the will of another:

Objection 1: According to Dionysius, as is clear from the passage quoted above, just as one angel illuminates another, so one angel cleanses and perfects another. But cleansing and perfecting seem to involve the will; for cleansing seems to be a cleansing from the filth of sin, which pertains to the will, whereas perfecting seems to occur through the acquisition of an end, which is the object of the will. Therefore, one angel can move the will of another.

Objection 2: In *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 7, Dionysius says, “The names of the angels designate their properties.” But the Seraphim are so called because they are ‘fiery’ or ‘ardent’, and they are this way through love, which pertains to the will. Therefore, one angel moves the will of another.

Objection 3: In *De Anima* 3 the Philosopher says that a higher appetite moves a lower appetite. But just as a higher angel’s intellect is higher, so also his appetite is higher. Therefore, it seems that a higher angel can alter the will of another.

But contrary to this: Altering the will belongs to the one who justifies, since to justify is to rectify the will. But it is only God who justifies. Therefore, one angel cannot alter the will of another.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 105, a. 4), there are two ways in which the will is altered: first, on the part of the object, and, second, on the part of the power of willing itself.

Now on the part of the *object*, the will is moved both by (a) the good itself, which is the object of the will and moves the will in the way that what is desirable moves an appetite, and (b) by the one who exhibits the object—as, for instance, by showing that something is good. But as was explained above (*ibid.*), while other goods may incline the will in some way, nothing moves the will with necessity (*sufficienter*) except the universal good, viz., God. And this is the good which He alone exhibits in order to be seen through His essence by those who are beatified; and as we read in Exodus 33:18-19, it is He alone who, when Moses says, “Show me your glory,” replies, “I will show you all good.” Therefore, an angel does not move the will with necessity (*sufficienter*), either as an object or as someone exhibiting an object. However, an angel does incline the will both as (a) a certain lovable object and as (b) one who manifests certain created goods that are ordered to God’s goodness. And in this way he is able to incline the will of another, by means of persuasion, toward the love of a creature or the love of God.

On the other hand, as far as the *power* itself is concerned, the will cannot be moved in any way except by God. For the will’s operation is a certain inclination toward what is willed on the part of the one who wills, and this inclination can be altered only by the one who conferred the power of willing on the creature—just as a natural inclination can likewise be altered only by an agent who can give the power that the natural inclination follows upon. But it is God alone who confers the power of willing on a creature, since He alone is the author of an intellectual nature. Hence, one angel cannot move the will of another.

Reply to objection 1: ‘Cleansing’ and ‘perfecting’ are to be taken here in a sense that goes along with ‘illuminating’. Since God illuminates both the intellect and will by altering them, He cleanses both the intellect and the will of defects and perfects both the intellect and the will with respect to their ends. By contrast, as has been explained (a. 1), illumination by an angel has to do [only] with the intellect. And so *cleansing* by an angel means cleansing the intellect of a defect, viz., ignorance, whereas *perfecting* by an angel means bringing to fulfillment the intellect’s end, viz., to know the truth. This is why in *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 6, Dionysius says, “In the heavenly hierarchy, the cleansing of lower essences is an illumination with respect to unknown things which leads them to a more perfect knowledge.” In the same way, we say that bodily sight is cleansed insofar as darkness is removed, whereas it is illuminated insofar as it is suffused with light, and it is perfected insofar as it is led to the cognition of things that are colored.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained, it is by means of persuasion that one angel can induce another toward the love of God.

Reply to objection 3: The Philosopher is talking here about the lower, i.e., sentient, appetite, which can be moved by the higher, i.e., intellectual, appetite. For the higher appetite belongs to the same nature of the soul, and the lower appetite is a power that exists in a corporeal organ—something that has no place in angels.

Article 3

Can a lower angel illuminate a higher angel?

It seems that a lower angel can illuminate a higher angel:

Objection 1: The Church's hierarchy is derived from and represents the heavenly hierarchy; hence, the heavenly Jerusalem is called "our mother" in Galatians 4:26. But according to what the Apostle says at 1 Corinthians 14:31 ("You are all able to prophesy, one by one, that all may learn and all may be exhorted"), in the Church those who are higher are illuminated and taught by those who are lower. Therefore, in the heavenly hierarchy those who are higher can likewise be illuminated by those who are lower.

Objection 2: Just as the order of corporeal substances depends on God's will, so too does the order of spiritual substances. But as has been explained (q. 105, a. 6), God sometimes operates outside the order of corporeal substances. Therefore, He likewise sometimes operates outside the order of spiritual substances by illuminating those who are lower without the mediation of those who are higher. Therefore, the lower angels who are illuminated in this way by God can illuminate those who are higher.

Objection 3: As has been explained (a. 1), one angel illuminates another by turning toward him. But since this 'turning toward another' is voluntary, the highest angel can turn toward the lowest angel while skipping over the ones in between. Therefore, the highest angel can illuminate the lowest angel directly, and so the latter can in turn illuminate those who are higher than himself.

But contrary to this: Dionysius says, "It is a divine law, fixed immovably, that lower things are led back to God through the mediation of higher things."

I respond: Lower angels never illuminate higher angels, but instead are always illuminated by them. The reason for this is that, as was explained above (q. 105, a. 6), one order is contained under another in the same way that one cause is contained under another. Hence, one order is ordered to another in the same way that one cause is ordered to another.

So it is not unfitting if something is sometimes done outside the order of lower causes in order to direct things to a higher cause—as happens, for instance, when in human affairs someone preempts a governor's precept in order to obey the prince. And so it happens that God sometimes operates miraculously outside the order of corporeal nature in order to direct men toward knowing Him.

However, the preemption of the order that should obtain among spiritual substances has nothing to do with directing men to God, since the operations of angels are not manifest to us in the way that the operations of visible bodies are. And so the order that is fitting among spiritual substances is never preempted by God and, as a result, the lower angels are always moved by the higher angels, and not vice versa.

Reply to objection 1: The Church's hierarchy imitates the heavenly hierarchy in some respects, but does not attain a perfect likeness of it. For in the heavenly hierarchy the whole reason for the ordering is based on closeness to God. And so those who are closer to God belong to a more sublime grade [of angel] and have clearer knowledge, and because of this the higher angels are never illuminated by the lower ones. By contrast, in the ecclesiastical hierarchy it sometimes happens that (a) those who

are closer to God because of their sanctity belong to the lowest grade and are not eminent in knowledge, and that (b) some who are eminent in knowledge in one area are deficient in knowledge in another area. And because of this the higher can be taught by the lower.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained, there is no parallel in the arguments regarding God's acting outside the order of corporeal nature and His acting outside the order of spiritual nature. Hence, the conclusion does not follow.

Reply to objection 3: An angel voluntarily turns toward another angel in order to illuminate him, but an angel's will is always regulated by God's law, which instituted the ordering among angels.

Article 4

Does a higher angel illuminate a lower angel about everything he knows?

It seems that a higher angel does not illuminate a lower angel about everything he knows:

Objection 1: In *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 9, Dionysius says that the higher angels have a knowledge that is more universal, whereas lower angels have knowledge that is more particularized and subordinate. But there are more things contained under universal knowledge than under particularized knowledge. Therefore, in being illuminated by the higher angels, the lower angels do not know everything that the higher angels know.

Objection 2: In 2 *Sentences*, dist. 9, the Master says that the higher angels knew the mystery of the Incarnation from the beginning, whereas this mystery was unknown to the lower angels up to the time that it was accomplished. This is evident from the fact that, as Dionysius explains in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 7, when certain angels asked as if they did *not* know, "Who is this king of glory?"—other angels, as if they *did* know, responded, "The Lord of hosts, He is the king of glory." But this would not be the case if the higher angels illuminated the lower angels about everything they know. Therefore, they do not illuminate them about all the things that are known to them.

Objection 3: If the higher angels make known to the lower angels everything they know, then nothing that the higher angels know remains unknown to the lower angels. But this seems absurd. Therefore, the higher angels do not illuminate the lower angels about everything.

But contrary to this: Gregory says, "In that heavenly homeland, even though some are more excellently gifted, nonetheless, nothing is possessed in a unique way." And in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 15, Dionysius says that each heavenly essence, having been given knowledge by a higher essence, communicates it to a lower essence. This is clear from the passage cited above.

I respond: All creatures participate in God's goodness in order to diffuse to others the good that they have within themselves, since it is part of the notion of goodness that it communicates itself to others. This is why even corporeal agents pass on to others a likeness of themselves as far as this is possible. Therefore, the greater the participation in God's goodness that given agents have, the greater is their inclination to diffuse their own perfections to others as far as this is possible. Thus, in 1 Peter 4:10 St. Peter warns those who participate in God's goodness through grace, "As each has received grace, administer it one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

A fortiori, the holy angels, who have the most complete participation in God's goodness, impart to those below them whatever they receive from God. Still, the lower angels do not receive it in as excellent a way as it exists in the higher angels. And so the higher angels always remain in their higher order and always have a more perfect knowledge—just as the very same thing is understood more completely by the teacher than by the student who is learning from him.

Reply to objection 1: The knowledge that belongs to the higher angels is called ‘more universal’ to indicate a more eminent mode of understanding (*cf.* q. 55, a. 3).

Reply to objection 2: The Master’s words should be understood to imply not that the lower angels were completely ignorant of the mystery of the Incarnation, but that they did not understand it as completely as the higher angels did and that their cognition of it increased later on when the mystery was accomplished.

Reply to objection 3: Until judgment day new things are being continually revealed to the higher angels concerning what pertains to the condition of the world and especially to the salvation of the elect. Hence, until then, there will always be something about which the higher angels are illuminating the lower angels.