

QUESTION 52

The Relation of an Angel to Places

The next thing to ask about is an angel's place. On this topic there are three questions: (1) Does an angel exist in a place? (2) Can an angel be in more than one place at the same time? (3) Can more than one angel be in the same place?

Article 1

Does an angel exist in a place?

It seems that an angel does not exist in a place.

Objection 1: In *De Hebdomadibus* Boethius says, "Among the wise, the common view of the soul is that incorporeal things do not exist in a place." And in *Physics* 4 Aristotle says, "Not everything that exists in a place, but only movable bodies do." But as was shown above (q. 50, a. 1), an angel is not a body. Therefore, an angel does not exist in a place.

Objection 2: A place is a quantity that has a position (*positio*). Therefore, everything that exists in a place has some position (*situm*). But *having a position* cannot belong to angel, since his substance is devoid of quantity, a proper difference of which is *having a position*. Therefore, an angel does not exist in a place.

Objection 3: As is clear from the Philosopher in *Physics* 4, to exist in a place is to be measured by the place and to be contained by the place. But an angel can be neither measured nor contained by a place, since, as *Physics* 4 says, that which contains is more form-like (*formalius*) than that which is contained, in the sense in which air is more form-like than water. Therefore, an angel does not exist in a place.

But contrary to this: The Collect [at Compline] says, "May Your holy angels, who live in this dwelling, preserve us in peace."

I respond: It belongs to angels to exist in a place, though an angel and a body are said to exist in a place in different senses. For a body exists in a place in virtue of being applied to the place through the contact had by its dimensional quantity (*quantitas dimensiva*). This is not so in the case of angels; instead, they have quantity of power (*quantitas virtutis*). Thus, it is through the application of an angel's power in some way or other to a given place that the angel is said to exist in a corporeal place.

Accordingly, it is clear that an angel should not be said to be measured by his place or to have a position within a continuum, since these features belong to a located body insofar as it is a quantum through its dimensional quantity.

Again, an angel should likewise not be said to be contained by his place. For an incorporeal substance that touches a corporeal thing by its power contains that corporeal thing and is not contained by it. For instance, the soul exists in the body as something that contains the body and not as something that is contained by the body. Similarly, an angel is said to exist in a place not as a thing contained by the place, but rather as a thing that in some sense contains the place.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: The reply to the objections is clear from what has been said.

Article 2

Can an angel be in more than one place at the same time?

It seems that an angel can be in more than one place at the same time:

Objection 1: An angel does not have less power than a soul does. But the soul is able to be in more than one place at the same time, since, as Augustine says, it exists as a whole in each part of the body. Therefore, an angel can be in more than one place at the same time.

Objection 2: An angel exists in a body that he assumes, and when he assumes a continuous body, he seems to exist in each part of it. But diverse places are thought of as corresponding to the parts of the body. Therefore, an angel exists in more than one place at the same time.

Objection 3: Damascene says that angels exist where they operate. But as is clear in the case of the angel who destroyed Sodom (Genesis 19:25), sometimes an angel operates in more than one place at the same time. Therefore, an angel can exist in more than one place at the same time.

But contrary to this: Damascene says that when angels are in heaven, they are not on earth.

I respond: An angel has finite power and a finite essence. By contrast, God's power and essence are infinite, and He is a universal cause of all things; and so He touches all things by His power, and He exists not just in more than one place, but everywhere. By contrast, since an angel's power is finite, it extends only to a single determinate thing and not to all things. For whatever is related to a single power must be related to it as a single thing. Therefore, just as the totality of being is related to God's universal power as a single thing, so too a particular being is related as a single thing to an angel's power. Hence, since an angel exists in a place through the application of his power to that place, it follows that he is in just one place and not everywhere or even in more than one place.

However, certain authors have made a mistake about this. For some, unable to transcend the imagination, thought that an angel's indivisibility is like the indivisibility of a point, and hence they believed that an angel could exist only in a point-sized place (*in loco punctuali*).

However, they were manifestly mistaken. For a point is an indivisible that has a position, whereas an angel is an indivisible that is outside the genus of quantity and the genus of position. Hence, it is not necessary for an angel to be limited to a single indivisible place as far as his position is concerned; instead, his place may be either divisible or indivisible and either greater or smaller, depending upon whether he voluntarily applies his power to a bigger body or a smaller one. And so the whole body to which he is applied through his power is related to him as a single place.

And even if a given angel moves a celestial body, it is not necessary for him to be everywhere. For, first of all, his power is applied only to that which is primarily moved by him, and there is just one part of a celestial body, viz., the eastern part, in which the motion primarily exists. Hence, in *Physics* 8 the Philosopher likewise attributes the power of the mover of a celestial body to the eastern part. Second, philosophers do not hold that a single separated substance is an immediate mover of all the spheres. Thus, it is not necessary that the angel should be everywhere.

So, then, it is clear that place belongs in different ways to a body, to an angel, and to God. For a body exists in a place *circumscriptively* (*circumscriptive*), since it is measured by the place. An angel, on the other hand, does not exist in a place circumscriptively, since he is not measured by the place; instead, an angel exists in a place *definitively* (*definitive*), since he exists in one place in such a way that he does not exist in some other place. Finally, God exists in a place neither circumscriptively nor definitively, since He exists everywhere.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: The reply to the objections is easily seen from what has been said. For the whole to which an angel's power is immediately applied counts as his

single place, even if that whole is a continuum.

Article 3

Can more than one angel be in the same place at the same time?

It seems that more than one angel can be in the same place at the same time:

Objection 1: The reason that not more than one body can be in the same place at the same time is that bodies fill their place. But angels do not fill their place, since, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Physics* 4, only a body fills a place in such a way that the place is not empty. Therefore, more than one angel can be in the same place at the same time.

Objection 2: An angel differs from a body more than two angels differ from one another. But an angel and a body can both be in the same place at the same time, since, as *Physics* 4 proves, there is no place that is not filled with a sensible body. Therefore, *a fortiori*, two angels can be in the same place.

Objection 3: According to Augustine, the soul exists in every part of the body. But demons, even if they do not penetrate minds, do sometimes penetrate bodies, and in such a case the soul and the demon are in the same place at the same time. By the same line of reasoning, then, any other spiritual substances can be in the same place at the same time.

But contrary to this: It is not the case that two souls exist in the same body. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, it is not the case that two angels are in the same place.

I respond: It is not the case that two angels are in the same place at the same time. The reason for this is that it is impossible for there to be two complete and immediate causes of one and the same thing. This is clear in every genus of cause. For instance, there is a single proximate form of a single thing; and there is a single proximate mover, even though there can be more than one remote mover. Nor is the case of several men dragging a boat a counterexample, since none of the men is a complete mover, given that the power of each of them is insufficient to move the boat. Rather, all of them together take the place of a single mover insofar as all their powers are brought together to produce a single movement.

Hence, since, as has been explained, an angel is said to exist in a place by virtue of the fact that his power immediately touches the place in the manner of something that completely contains the place, there can be only one angel in a single place.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, what prevents there from being more than one angel in the same place has to do with something other than the filling of the place.

Reply to objection 2: An angel and a body are not in a place in the same way, and thus the argument does not go through.

Reply to objection 3: A demon and a soul are not related to a body by the same causal relation. For the soul is the form of the body, but the demon is not. Hence, the argument does not go through.