

QUESTION 71

The Work of the Fifth Day

The next thing to consider is the work of the fifth day.

The Only Article

Is the Work of the Fifth Day Appropriately Described?

It seems that the work of the fifth day is not appropriately described:

Objection 1: Waters produce what the power of water is sufficient to produce. But the power of water is not sufficient to produce all the fish and birds, since we see that many of them are generated by insemination (*ex semine*). Therefore, it is not appropriate to say, “Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life, and the creature that flies over the earth” (Genesis 1:20).

Objection 2: Fish and birds are not produced from just water; rather, earth seems to be more dominant in their composition than water is. For their bodies naturally move toward the earth, and so they also come to rest on the earth. Therefore, it is not appropriate to say that fish and birds are produced from water.

Objection 3: Just as fish have motion in the waters, so birds have motion in the air. Therefore, if fish are produced from the waters, then birds should be produced from the air and not from the waters.

Objection 4: Not all fish creep in the waters, since some, like sea lions, have feet with which to walk on land. Therefore, the production of fish is not sufficiently captured by saying, “Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life” (Genesis 1:20).

Objection 5: Terrestrial animals are more perfect than birds and fish. This is clear from the fact that their parts are more distinct and that they have a more perfect type of generation. For they generate animals, whereas fish and birds generate eggs. But the more perfect is prior in the order of nature. Therefore, fish and birds should not have been generated on the fifth day, before the terrestrial animals.

But contrary to this: The authority of Scripture suffices for the contrary.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 70, a. 1), the work of adornment corresponds in its ordering to the ordering of the divisions. Hence, just as the middle day of the three days given over to division, i.e., the second day, is devoted to the division of the middle body, viz., the waters, so too the middle day of the three days given over to adornment, i.e., the fifth day, is devoted to adornment through the production of birds and fish. Hence, just as on the fourth day Moses refers to “the lights” and “light” in order to signal that the fourth day corresponds to the first day, on which he had said that light was made, so on this fifth day he makes mention of “the waters” and “the firmament of heaven” in order to signal that the fifth day corresponds to the second day.

Note, however, that just as Augustine differs from the others over the production of plants, so too he differs from them over the production of the fish and birds. For the others claim that on the fifth day the fish and birds were produced in actuality, whereas in *Super Genesim ad Litteram 5* Augustine claims that on the fifth day the nature of the waters produced the fish and birds in potentiality.

Reply to objection 1: Avicenna claimed that all the animals can be generated by mixing the elements together in some combination or other, even through a natural process, in the absence of semen.

But this seems wrong. For nature proceeds to its effects by determinate means, and so what is naturally generated from semen cannot be naturally generated without semen.

So one should reply in a different way: In the natural generation of animals the active principle is a formative power that exists in the semen in the case of those animals that are generated from semen. What takes the place of this power in animals that are generated from putrefaction is the power of a

celestial body. And in both kinds of generation the material principle is an element or something elemental.

Now in the first establishment of things the active principle was the word of God, which produced animals out of elemental matter either in actuality (according to the other saints) or virtually (according to Augustine). It is not that water or earth has within itself the power to produce all the animals, as Avicenna claimed, but rather that the very fact that animals can be produced out of elemental matter by the power of semen or by the power of the stars is itself the result of the power originally given to the elements.

Reply to objection 2: There are two possible ways to consider the bodies of birds and fish.

The first way is to consider them in themselves. And if we consider them in this way, then the earthly element must be more dominant in them, because in order for the right mixture to be effected in an animal body, the element that is less active, viz., earth, must be the quantitatively most abundant element in that body.

However, if the bodies in question are considered insofar as they are apt to move with certain particular movements, then in this sense they have an affinity with the bodies within which they move. And their generation is being described along these lines in the present context.

Reply to objection 3: Because air is not sensed, it is not counted by itself, but is instead counted along with the others—(a) partly with water, as far as the lower part of the air is concerned, since this part is made more thick by water vapors, and (b) partly with the heavens, as far as the higher part of the air is concerned.

Now birds have their motion in the lower part of the air, and so they are said to fly “under the firmament of heaven” (Genesis 1:20), even if ‘firmament’ is being taken for the cloudy part of the air. And this is why the production of birds is ascribed to water.

Reply to objection 4: Nature passes from one extreme to another through what lies in between them. And so there are certain animals that lie between terrestrial animals and aquatic animals. They share something in common with both kinds, and they are numbered among those with which they have the most in common, in accord with what they share in common with them, and not with the other extreme.

Still, in order to include all animals of this sort, which have something that is specific to the fish, the text adds “God created the great whales” (Genesis 1:21) after it had already said, “Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life” (Genesis 1:20).

Reply to objection 5: The production of these animals is ordered in accord with the order of the bodies that are adorned by them more than in accord with their own proper dignity.

In any case, the path of generation goes from the less perfect animals to the more perfect animals.