

QUESTION 8

God's Existence in Things

Since it seems to belong to what is infinite that it should exist everywhere and in all things, we have to ask whether this is true of God. And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Does God exist in all things? (2) Is God everywhere? (3) Is God everywhere by His essence, power, and presence? (4) Is being everywhere proper to God alone?

Article 1

Does God exist in all things?

It seems that God does not exist in all things:

Objection 1: That which is above all things does not exist in all things. But according to Psalm 112:4 (“The Lord is high above all nations, etc.”), God is above all things. Therefore, God does not exist in all things.

Objection 2: That which exists in something is contained by that thing. But God is not contained by things; rather, He contains things. Therefore, God does not exist in things; rather, things exist in Him. This is why in 83 *Quaestiones* Augustine says, “[It is better to say that] all things are in Him than that He is everywhere.”

Objection 3: An agent is more powerful to the extent that its action reaches out to a greater distance. But God is the most powerful of agents. Therefore, His action can reach even to those things that are distant from Him, and so He does not have to exist in all things.

Objection 4: The demons are certain things. Yet God does not exist in the demons, since, as 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, light has no fellowship with darkness. Therefore, God does not exist in all things.

But contrary to this: A thing exists wherever it operates. But God operates in all things—this according to Isaiah 26:12 (“For You have wrought all our works in us, Lord”). Therefore God exists in all things.

I respond: God exists in all things—not, to be sure, as a part of their essence or as an accident, but in the way an agent is present in that which it acts on.

For every agent must be conjoined to that which it directly acts on, and it must touch that thing by its power. This is how *Physics* 7 proves that what moves and what is moved must exist together. Now since God is *esse* itself through His essence, created *esse* must be His proper effect, in the same way that fire’s proper effect is to ignite. And God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to exist, but also for as long as they are conserved in *esse*—just as the sun causes light in the air for as long as the air remains illuminated. Therefore, for as long as a thing has *esse*, God must be present to it in a way befitting the *esse* it has. But *esse* is that which is most intimate to any given thing and that which is in all things most deeply. For, as is clear from what was said above (q. 4, a. 1), *esse* is formal with respect to everything that exists within a given entity. Hence, it must be the case that God exists within all things and intimately so.

Reply to Objection 1: God is above all things because of the excellence of His nature, and yet, as just explained, He exists in all things insofar as He causes the *esse* of all things.

Reply to Objection 2: Even though corporeal entities are said to exist in something as that which contains them, spiritual entities contain those things in which they exist, in the way that the soul contains the body. Hence, God, too, exists in things as that which contains them. Still, by a certain analogy with corporeal entities, all things are said to exist in God insofar as they are contained by Him.

Reply to Objection 3: Regardless of how powerful an agent is, its action extends to a distant thing only insofar as it acts on that thing through some medium. But it pertains to God's maximal power that he acts immediately in all things. Hence, nothing is distant from Him in the sense that it does not have God within itself. Still, things are said to be distant from God because of a dissimilarity in nature or grace, just as He Himself is indeed above all things because of the excellence of His nature.

Reply to Objection 4: In the case of the demons, one may consider both their nature, which is from God, and the deformity of sin, which is not from Him. And so one should concede that God exists in the demons—not absolutely speaking, but with the qualification that He exists in them insofar as they are certain entities. By contrast, in the case of things which bespeak an undeformed nature, one should say that God exists in them absolutely speaking.

Article 2

Is God everywhere?

It seems that God is not everywhere:

Objection 1: *To be everywhere* signifies being in every place. But it does not befit God to be in every place, since it does not befit Him to be in a place; for, as Boethius says in *De Hebdomadibus*, incorporeal beings do not exist in a place. Therefore, God is not everywhere.

Objection 2: Place is related to permanent entities as time is related to successive entities. But an indivisible unit of action or motion cannot exist at different times. Therefore, an indivisible unit in the genus of permanent things cannot exist in all places. But to be divine is to be a permanent entity and not a successive entity. Therefore, God cannot exist in more than one place. And so He is not everywhere.

Objection 3: That which exists as a whole in a given place is such that nothing of it exists outside that place. But if God exists in some given place, then He is wholly there, since He does not have parts. Therefore, nothing of Him exists outside that place. Therefore, God is not everywhere.

But contrary to this: Jeremiah 23:24 says, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?"

I respond: Since a place is a certain entity, there are two ways in which a thing can be understood to be in a place. Either (a) it is in a place in the mode of other things (i.e., corresponding to one of the ways in which one thing is said to exist in other things), as the accidents of a given place exist in that place; or (b) it is in a place in the mode proper to a place, as are the things that are located in the place.

Now in a certain sense it is in both of these ways that God is in every place—which is what it is to be everywhere.

In the first way, just as He is in all things insofar as He gives them their *esse*, power, and operation, so too He is in every place insofar as He gives that place its *esse* and locative power.

Second, things are located in a place insofar as they fill that place, and God fills every place. He does not do this in the way a body does, since a body is said to fill a place insofar as another body is incompatible with it in that place, whereas the fact that God is in a given place does not exclude other things from being there. Rather, God fills all places by the fact that He gives *esse* to all the located things that fill all the places.

Reply to Objection 1: Incorporeal things are in a place not through a contact of dimensional quantity, in the way that bodies are, but instead through a contact of power.

Reply to Objection 2: There are two kinds of indivisibles.

One kind is the terminus of a continuous thing, such as a point in the case of permanent entities and a moment in the case of successive entities. And because, in the case of permanent entities, this sort of

indivisible has a determinate position, it cannot be in many parts of a place or in many places. The same thing holds for an indivisible with respect to action or motion. Since it occurs within a determinate ordering in the motion or action, it cannot exist in more than one part of time.

On the other hand, the second type of indivisible is such that it is outside the whole genus of continuous things. And this is the sense in which incorporeal substances such as God, an angel, and a soul are said to be indivisible. This sort of indivisible is related to a continuous thing not as a part of it, but rather insofar as it touches it by its power. Hence, such an individual is in one place or many, and in a small place or a large one, insofar as its power can extend to one or many places and to a small place or a large one.

Reply to Objection 3: *Whole* is predicated relative to *part*. However, there are two types of parts: (a) parts of an *essence*, in the way that the form and the matter are called parts of a composite, and in the way that the genus and the difference are called parts of the species; and (b) parts of a *quantity*, viz., the parts into which a quantity is divided.

That which is a whole in a given place by a totality of quantity cannot [at the same time] be outside that place. For the quantity of a located body is commensurate with the quantity of the place, and so there is no totality of quantity unless there is a totality of place.

On the other hand, a totality of essence is not commensurate with the totality of the place. Hence, that which is a whole in a given place by a totality of essence is not such that it does not exist in any way outside that place.

This distinction is apparent in the case of those accidental forms that have quantity insofar as they are accidents. For if a whiteness is taken as a totality of essence, then it is a whole in each part of the surface, since the complete nature of its species is found in each part of the surface; on the other hand, if it is taken as a totality of quantity—which it is *per accidens*—then it is not a whole in each part of the surface.

In incorporeal substances, however, there is no totality—either *per se* or *per accidens*—except the complete nature of the essence. And so, in the same way that a soul exists as a whole in each part of a body, so too God exists as a whole in each and every place.

Article 3

Is God everywhere by His essence, presence, and power?

It seems that when God is said to be in all things by His essence, presence, and power, the modes of God's existence in things are mistakenly designated:

Objection 1: That which is in something by its essence is essentially in it. But God is not in things essentially, since He is not part of the essence of any entity. Therefore, it should not be said that God is in things by His essence, presence, and power.

Objection 2: To be present to a given thing is to be not absent from it. But for God to be in things by His essence is precisely this, viz., that He is not absent from anything. Therefore, God's existing in all things by His essence is the same as His existing in all things by His presence. Therefore, it is redundant to say that God is in all things by His essence, presence, and power.

Objection 3: Just as God is a principle of all things by His power, so too He is a principle of all things by His knowledge and will. But God is not said to be in things by His knowledge and will. Therefore, He should not be said to be in all things by His power.

Objection 4: Just as grace is a certain perfection added to the substance of an entity, so too there

are many other added perfections. Therefore, if God is said to be in certain things in a special way by grace, it seems that a special mode of God's existence in things should be assigned for every perfection whatsoever.

But contrary to this: In his commentary on the Cantic of Canticles, Gregory says, "While God is in all things in a general way by His presence, power, and substance, He is said to be in some entities in a more intimate way by grace."

I respond: There are two ways in which God is said to be in a given entity.

In the first way, He is in a thing as an agent cause, and in this way He is in all the things created by Him.

In the second way, He is in a thing in the way that an object of acting is in the one who acts. This mode is proper to the operations of the soul, in the way that what is known is in the knower and what is desired is in the one who desires. In this second way God exists in a special sense in a rational creature who knows and loves Him either actually or habitually. And since, as will become clear below (q. 43, a. 3), a rational creature has this condition by grace, it is in this way that God is said to be in the saints by grace.

But the question of how it is with regard to the other things created by Him should be looked at by way of a comparison with what we say about human affairs. For a king is said to be in his entire kingdom by his power, even though he is not present everywhere. On the other hand, something is said to be in all things by its presence when those things are within its purview. For example, all the things in a given house are said to be present to someone, even though he is not in every part of the house by his substance. Again, something is said to be in a place by its substance or essence when its substance is there in that place.

Thus, there were some—viz., the Manicheans—who claimed that spiritual and incorporeal entities are subject to God's power, whereas they claimed that visible and corporeal things are subject to the power of a contrary principle. Against them, then, one should say that God is in all things by his power.

Again, there were others who, even though they believed that God is in all things by his power, nonetheless did not extend divine providence all the way to the lower bodies here below. Job 22:14 says on their behalf, "He walks about the poles of heaven, and He does not consider our things." And against these, one should claim that God is in all things by His presence.

There were still others who, even though they acknowledged that God's providence extends to all things, nonetheless held that not all things are immediately created by God, but that instead He immediately created the first creatures and that these first creatures created the others. And against these one should say that He is in all things by His essence.

So, then, He is in all things by His power insofar as all things are subject to His power. He is in all things by His presence insofar as all things are bare and open to His eyes. He is in all things by His essence insofar as He is the cause of being for all things, as has been explained (a. 1).

Reply to Objection 1: God is said to be in all things by essence—not, to be sure, by the essence of the things, as if He were part of the essence of the things, but by *His own* essence, since, as has been explained (a. 1), His substance is present to all things as the cause of their being.

Reply to Objection 2: One thing is said to be present to another to the extent that the latter falls within its purview, even if, as has been explained, it is far removed from that thing according to its substance [or essence]. Therefore, it is necessary to posit two modes, viz., by essence and by presence.

Reply to Objection 3: The nature of knowing and willing are such that what is known exists in the one who knows and what is willed exists in the one who wills. Hence, when it comes to knowing and willing, things exist in God rather than God in things. By contrast, the nature of power is such that it is a principle of acting on another. Hence, when it comes to power, the agent is related and applied to an

exterior thing. And this is why the agent can be said to be in the other by its power.

Reply to Objection 4: Other than grace, there is no perfection added to a substance that makes God exist in another as an object that is known and loved. And so grace alone effects a special mode of God's existing in things. However, there is yet another special mode, by which God exists in man through union. This mode will be discussed in its own place (*ST* 3, q. 2).

Article 4

Is it peculiar to God to be everywhere?

It seems that it is not peculiar to God to be everywhere:

Objection 1: According to the Philosopher, a universal is everywhere and always, and primary matter is likewise everywhere, since it exists in all bodies. Neither of these is God, as is clear from what has been said (q. 3, aa. 5 and 8). Therefore, it is not peculiar to God to be everywhere.

Objection 2: Number exists in the things that are numbered. But, as is clear from Wisdom 11:21, the whole universe is constituted in number. Therefore, there is some number that exists in the whole universe and thus is everywhere.

Objection 3: According to *On the Heavens and the World* 1, the entire universe is a sort of whole and complete body. But the entire universe is everywhere, since there is no place outside of it. Therefore, it is not the case that God alone is everywhere.

Objection 4: If there were an infinite body, there would be no place outside of it. Therefore, it would be everywhere. So it does not seem peculiar to God to be everywhere.

Objection 5: As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 6, "the soul is a whole in the whole body and a whole in each part of it." Therefore, if there were nothing in the world except a single animal, then the soul of that animal would be everywhere. And so it is not peculiar to God to be everywhere.

Objection 6: As Augustine says in his letter *Ad Volusianum*, "Wherever the soul sees, there it senses; and wherever it senses, there it lives; and wherever it lives, there it exists." But the soul sees everywhere, as it were, since it sees in succession the whole of the heavens. Therefore, the soul is everywhere.

But contrary to this: In *De Spiritu Sancto* Ambrose says, "Who would dare call the Holy Spirit a creature, given that He exists in all things and everywhere and always—which is peculiar to the divine nature?"

I respond: It is peculiar to God to be everywhere primarily and *per se*.

When I say "to be everywhere primarily," I mean that He is everywhere according to Himself as a whole. If something were everywhere in such a way that diverse parts of it existed in different places, then it would not be everywhere primarily. For being everywhere would belong to it by reason of its parts and not primarily. In the same way, if a man is white with respect to his teeth, the whiteness does not belong primarily to the man, but instead belongs primarily to his teeth.

When I say "to be everywhere *per se*," I mean that being everywhere does not belong to Him *per accidens*, in light of some assumption that is being made. For in this latter sense a millet grain would be everywhere on the assumption that no other body existed. Therefore, being everywhere *per se* belongs to something when that thing is such that, given any assumption whatsoever, it exists everywhere. And this belongs solely to God. For no matter how many places are posited—even if one posited infinitely many places over and beyond those that in fact exist—God would have to exist in all of them, since nothing can exist except through Him.

So, then, it belongs to God to be everywhere primarily and *per se*, and this belongs to Him alone. For no matter how many places are posited, God has to exist in each of them, not with some part of Himself, but according to Himself [as a whole].

Reply to Objection 1: Universals and primary matter are, to be sure, everywhere, but they are not everywhere with the same *esse*.

Reply to Objection 2: Since number is an accident, it is in a place *per accidens* and not *per se*. Nor is it a whole in each of the things that is numbered; rather, number is in them through its parts. And so it does not follow that it is everywhere *per se* and primarily.

Reply to Objection 3: The whole body of the universe is everywhere, but not everywhere primarily, since it is not a whole in each place; rather, it exists in each place through its parts. Again, it is not everywhere *per se*, since if other places were posited, it would not exist in them.

Reply to Objection 4: If there were an infinite body, it would exist everywhere, but it would do so through its parts.

Reply to Objection 5: If there were just a single animal, its soul would indeed be everywhere primarily, but *per accidens*.

Reply to Objection 6: When the soul is said to see somewhere, this can be understood in two ways:

In one way, insofar as the adverb ‘somewhere’ determines the act of seeing as an object. And in this sense it is true that when one looks at the heavens one sees ‘in’ the heavens and likewise senses ‘in’ the heavens. But it does not follow that one lives or exists in the heavens, since to live or to exist does not involve a *transeunt* action on an exterior object.

In the second way, it can be understood insofar as the adverb determines the act of the one who sees in the sense that it goes forth from the one who sees. Accordingly, it is true that the soul exists and lives where it senses and sees, given that way of speaking. And so it does not follow that it exists everywhere.