

QUESTION 53

An Angel's Local Motion

The next thing to consider is the local motion of angels. On this topic there are three questions: (1) Can an angel have local motion? (2) Does an angel move from one place to another by passing through the middle? (3) Does an angel's motion take time (*est in tempore*) or is it instantaneous (*est in instanti*)?

Article 1

Can an angel have local motion?

It seems that an angel cannot have local motion (*moveri localiter*):

Objection 1: As the Philosopher proves in *Physics* 6, nothing without parts is moved. For when a thing is at the *terminus a quo*, it is not being moved; and, likewise, when it is at the *terminus ad quem*, it is not being moved but has by that time already been changed. Hence, it follows that everything that is moved is such that while it is being moved, it is partly at the *terminus a quo* and partly at the *terminus ad quem*. But an angel is without parts. Therefore, an angel cannot have local motion.

Objection 2: As *Physics* 3 explains, movement is an act of what is imperfect. But a beatified angel is not imperfect. Therefore, a beatified angel does not have local motion.

Objection 3: Movement exists only because of some need. But the holy angels have no such need. Therefore, the holy angels do not have local motion.

But contrary to this: A beatified angel's being moved is the same in nature as a beatified soul's being moved. But one must say that a beatified soul has local motion, since it is an article of the Faith that Christ descended into hell with respect to his soul. Therefore, a beatified angel has local motion.

I respond: A beatified angel can have local motion. However, just as *being in a place* belongs in different ways to a body and to an angel, so too with *being moved with respect to place*.

For a body exists in a place insofar as it is contained by that place and measured by it. Hence, the local motion of a body must likewise be measured by place and satisfy its requirements. This is why the continuity of movement derives from the continuity of magnitude, and also why, as *Physics* 4 puts it, *before* and *after* in a body's local motion stems from *before* and *after* in a magnitude.

By contrast, an angel exists in a place not as a thing measured and contained by the place, but rather as a thing that contains the place. Hence, an angel's local motion need not be measured by its place, and it does not have to satisfy the requirements of place so as to derive continuity from place; instead, it is a non-continuous movement. For since, as has been explained (q. 52, a. 1), an angel exists in a place only by a contact of power, the angel's movement in place must be nothing other than his having diverse contacts with diverse places successively rather than simultaneously—for, as was explained above (q. 52, a. 2), an angel cannot be in more than one place at the same time.

Now successive contacts of this sort need not be continuous. Yet it is possible for a sort of continuity to be found in these contacts. For, as has been explained (q. 52, a. 2), nothing prevents an angel from having a divisible place through contact with his power, just as a body has a divisible place through contact with its magnitude. Hence, just as a body leaves a place it previously occupied successively and not all at once, and just as there is continuity in its local motion because of this, so too an angel can successively leave a divisible place he previously occupied, and in that case his local motion will be continuous. Yet he is also able to leave the entire place all at once and apply himself all at once to some entirely different place, and in that case his movement will not be continuous.

Reply to objection 1: There are two respects in which this argument fails in what it intends to do.

First of all, Aristotle's demonstration has to do with a *quantitative* indivisible, and what corresponds to a quantitative indivisible is necessarily an indivisible place—something that cannot be said of an angel.

Second, Aristotle's demonstration has to do with continuous movement. For if the movement were not continuous, then one could claim that a thing is being moved both when it is at the *terminus a quo* and when it is at the *terminus ad quem*, since the very succession of diverse places with respect to the same thing would be called a movement. Hence, whichever of the places the thing existed in, one could say that it was being moved. However, the continuity of the movement prevents this, since, as is obvious, nothing continuous exists in its terminus; for instance, a line does not exist in its endpoint (*punctum*). And so that which is being moved must not be totally in either terminus while it is being moved; rather, it must be partly in the one terminus and partly in the other.

Therefore, to the extent that an angel's movement is non-continuous, Aristotle's demonstration does not prove what it intends to. On the other hand, to the extent that a given movement of an angel is posited as continuous, one can concede that while the angel is moving, he is partly in the *terminus a quo* and partly in the *terminus ad quem* (though the partialness in question has to do with the angel's place and not with his substance). For at the beginning of his continuous movement, the angel is in the whole divisible place from which he begins to move, whereas when he is in the very condition of moving, he is in a part of the first place, which he is leaving, and in a part of the second place, which he is taking possession of. And the reason why it belongs to the angel to be able to occupy parts of two places is that he is able to occupy a divisible place through the application of his power in just the way that a body is able to do so through the application of its magnitude. Hence, it follows in the case of a body movable with respect to place that it is divisible with respect to its magnitude, whereas it follows in the case of an angel that his power can be applied to something divisible.

Reply to objection 2: It is the movement of what exists in potentiality that is the act of what is imperfect. But a movement that occurs by an application of power belongs to what exists in actuality, since the power of a thing exists insofar as that thing is actual.

Reply to objection 3: The movement of what exists in potentiality occurs because of its own need, whereas the movement of what exists in actuality occurs not because of its own need, but because of the need of another. And it is in this sense, according to Hebrews 1:14 (“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?”), that an angel has local motion because of our need.

Article 2

Does an angel pass through the middle in moving from one place to another?

It seems that an angel does not pass through the middle (*transeat per medium*) in moving from one place to another:

Objection 1: Everything that passes through the middle passes through a place equal to itself before passing through a greater place. But the place equal to an angel, who is indivisible, is a point-sized place. Therefore, if in his movement the angel passes through the middle, then he must number infinitely many points by his movement—which is impossible.

Objection 2: An angel is a more simple substance than our soul is. But our soul can pass in thought from one endpoint to another without passing through the middle. For instance, I can think of France and afterwards of Syria without thinking at all about Italy, which lies between them. Therefore, *a fortiori*, an angel can pass from one endpoint to the other without passing through the middle.

But contrary to this: If an angel moves from one place to another, then when he is at the *terminus ad quem*, he is not moving but has already been changed. But every instance of having-being-changed is preceded by an instance of being-changed. Therefore, there was some place such that he was moving when he was there. But he was not moving when he was at the *terminus a quo*. Therefore, he was moving when he was in the middle. And so it must be that he passes through the middle.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1), an angel's local motion can be either continuous or non-continuous.

If his motion is continuous, then the angel cannot move from one endpoint to the other without passing through the middle. For as *Physics* 5 says, the middle is what a continuously changing thing arrives at before arriving at the last terminus (*ultimum*) into which it is changing. And, as *Physics* 4 says, the ordering of *before* and *after* in a continuous movement corresponds to the ordering of *before* and *after* in a magnitude.

On the other hand, if the angel's movement is non-continuous, then it is possible for him to pass from one endpoint to the other without having passed through the middle. This is clear as follows:

Between any two end-places there are infinitely many places in the middle, regardless of whether these places are thought of as divisible or indivisible.

This is obvious in the case of *indivisible* places. For given any two points, there are infinitely many points in between them, since, as *Physics* 6 proves, no two points follow one another without there being points in between them.

Moreover, it is still necessary to say this even in the case of *divisible* places. This is proved from the continuous motion of a given body. For a body does not move from one place to another unless this takes time. But in the whole time that measures the movement of the body one cannot designate two *nows* at which the moving body is not in two different places, since if it were in one and the same place at two *nows*, then it would be at rest in that place. For to be at rest is nothing other than to be in the same place both now and before now. Therefore, since there are infinitely many *nows* between the first *now* and the last *now* of the time that measures the motion, there must be infinitely many places between the first place, from which the movement begins, and the last place, at which the movement is terminated.

This is obvious even to the senses. For instance, let there be a body the size of the palm of one's hand, and let there be a path through which it passes that is the size of the two palms together. It is clear that the first place, from which the movement begins, is the size of the one palm, and that the place at which the movement is terminated is the size of the other palm. Now it is clear that when the body begins to move, it leaves the first palm little by little and enters the second palm. Therefore, to the extent that the palm's magnitude is divided, the places in the middle are multiplied, since any designated point in the magnitude of the first palm is the beginning of a place, and a determinate point in the magnitude of the other palm is the terminus of that same place. Hence, since the magnitude is divisible *ad infinitum*, and since, likewise, infinitely many points exist in potentiality in any magnitude, it follows that between any two places there are infinitely many places in the middle.

Now a movable thing completely covers (*consumit*) the infinitely many places in the middle only through the continuity of its movement. For just as the places in the middle are infinitely many in potentiality, so, too, in a continuous movement there is a certain infinity [of parts] in potentiality. Therefore, if the movement is not continuous, then all the parts of the motion will be numbered in actuality. Therefore, if any movable thing is moved by a non-continuous movement, it follows either that (a) it does not pass through all the places in the middle or that (b) it numbers the infinitely many middle places in actuality—which is impossible.

So, then, insofar as an angel's movement is non-continuous, he does not pass through all the places in the middle. Now this feature, viz., moving from one terminus to the other without passing through the middle, can befit an angel, but not a body. For a body is measured and contained by its place, and so it

must follow the ‘laws of place’ in its movement. By contrast, an angel’s substance is not subject to a place as something contained by that place; instead, it is superior to a place as something that contains that place. Hence, it is within an angel’s power to apply himself to a place in whichever way he wishes, either by passing through the middle or without passing through the middle.

Reply to objection 1: An angel’s place is understood as equal not with respect to magnitude, but with respect to a contact of power, and so an angel’s place can be divisible and is not always point-sized. Still, as has been explained, the places in the middle, even if they are divisible, are infinitely many—although, as is clear from what has been said, they are completely covered because of the continuity of the movement.

Reply to objection 2: When an angel moves in place, his essence is applied to diverse places. By contrast, the soul’s essence is not applied to the things it thinks of; just the opposite, the things that are thought of exist in the soul. And so the arguments are not parallel.

Reply to argument for the contrary: In a continuous movement, the having-been-changed is not a part of the being-moved, but is instead the terminus of the being-moved. Hence, the being-moved must precede the having-been-changed. And so such a movement must go through the middle.

By contrast, in a non-continuous movement, the having-been-changed counts as a part of the being-moved, in the way that *one* counts as a number (*sicut unitas est pars numeri*). Hence, such a movement is constituted by the very succession of diverse places, even without the middle.

Article 3

Is an angel’s movement instantaneous?

It seems that an angel’s movement is instantaneous (*in instanti*):

Objection 1: The stronger the mover’s power is, and the less resistant the movable thing is to the mover, the faster the movement is. But the power of an angel who is moving himself exceeds any power that moves a body in such a way that there is no proportion between them. Now the proportion among velocities has to do with a decrease in the time, and every time has a proportion to every other time. Therefore, if a body’s movement takes time (*movetur in tempore*), then an angel moves instantaneously (*movetur in instanti*).

Objection 2: An angel’s movement is more simple than any corporeal change. But some corporeal changes are instantaneous—e.g., illumination, both because a thing is not illuminated progressively (*successive*) in the way that a thing becomes hotter progressively, and also because a ray of light does not reach what is closer prior to reaching what is farther away. Therefore, *a fortiori*, an angel’s movement is instantaneous.

Objection 3: If an angel takes time to move from place to place, then it is clear that at the last instant of that time he is at the terminus *ad quem*, whereas for the whole of the preceding time he is either (a) in the immediately preceding place, which we are taking to be the *terminus a quo*, or (b) partly in the one place and partly in the other. But if he is partly in the one place and partly in the other, then it follows that he has parts—which is impossible. Therefore, in the whole of the preceding time he is at the *terminus a quo*. Therefore, he is at rest there, since, as was explained above (a. 2), to be at rest is to be in the same place now and before now. And so it follows that he is moving only at the last instant of the time in question.

But contrary to this: In every change there is a *before* and an *after*. But the *before* and *after* of a movement are numbered by time. Therefore, every movement—even an angel’s movement—takes time,

since there is a *before* and an *after* in that movement.

I respond: Some have claimed that an angel's local motion is instantaneous. For they maintained that when an angel moves from one place to another, the angel is at the *terminus a quo* for the whole preceding time, whereas he is at the *terminus ad quem* at the last instant of that time. And there does not have to be any middle between the two termini, just as there is no middle between the preceding time and the terminus of that time. However, between any two *nows* of time, there is time in the middle, and so they claim that there is no last *now* at which the angel was at the *terminus a quo*—just as in illumination (or in the substantival generation of a fire) there is no last instant at which the air was dark (or at which the matter had the privation of the form of fire), but instead there is a last temporal interval (*ultimum tempus*) such that at the last instant of that temporal interval (*in ultimo illius temporis*) there is light in the air (or the form of fire in the matter). And it is in this sense that illumination and substantival generation are called instantaneous movements.

However, this example is out of place in the present discussion. This is shown as follows:

It is part of the nature of rest that what is at rest is in the same condition now as it was before now, and so a thing at rest is in the same condition at every *now* of the time that measures the rest, whether it be the first *now* of that time, a *now* in the middle, or the last *now*. By contrast, it is part of the nature of movement that what is moving is different now from the way it was before now, and so at each of the *nows* of the time that measures the movement, the movable thing is in a different condition (*in alia et alia dispositione*), and so at the last *now* it must have a form that it did not have before that *now*. And so it is clear that to be at rest for the whole time in a given condition, e.g., the condition of being white, is to be in that condition at each instant of that time; and thus it is not possible for something to be at rest in one terminus for the whole preceding time and then to be in the other terminus at the last instant of that time. On the other hand, this is indeed possible in the case of a movement, since to be moved for some entire time is not to be in the same condition in any [two] instants of that time. Therefore, every instantaneous change of the sort in question is the terminus of a continuous movement. For instance, generation is the terminus of the alteration of the matter, and illumination is the terminus of the local motion of the illuminating body.

By contrast, an angel's local motion is not the terminus of any other continuous movement, but exists on its own (*per seipsum*) without depending on any other movement. Hence, it is impossible to claim that the angel is in one place for the whole time and in another place at the last *now*. Instead, one must designate a *now* at which he was last in the preceding place. But where there are many *nows* succeeding one another, there must be time, since time is nothing other than the numbering of *before* and *after* in a movement. Hence, it follows that an angel's movement takes time—a continuous time if his movement is continuous, and a non-continuous time if his movement is non-continuous. (For as has been explained (a. 1), an angel's movement can be of either type.) For as *Physics* 4 says, the continuity of time derives from the continuity of movement. But the time in question, regardless of whether or not it is continuous, is not the same as the time which measures the movement of the heavens and by which all corporeal things that have mutability because of the movement of the heavens are themselves measured. For an angel's movement does not depend on the movement of the heavens.

Reply to objection 1: If the time of the angel's movement is not continuous, but is instead a certain succession of the *nows* themselves, then it will not be proportionate to the time that measures the movement of corporeal things, which is continuous. For the time of the angel's movement will not be of the same nature.

On the other hand, if the time of the angel's movement is continuous, then it is, to be sure, proportionate, not because of a proportion between the mover and what is moved, but rather because of a proportion between the magnitudes in which the movement exists. Furthermore, the velocity of the angel's movement does not stem from the quantity of his power; instead, it stems from the determination

of his will.

Reply to objection 2: Illumination is the terminus of a movement. Moreover, it is an alteration—and it is not a local motion in which the light might be thought of as moving to what is closer before moving to what is farther away. By contrast, an angel's movement is a local motion and is not the terminus of any movement. Hence, the two cases are not parallel.

Reply to objection 3: This objection proceeds on the assumption that time is continuous. However, the time of an angel's movement can be non-continuous. And so it is possible for an angel to be in one place at one instant and in another place at another instant without there being any time in the middle.

On the other hand, if the time of the angel's movement is continuous, then, as was explained above (a. 2), in the whole of the time preceding the last *now*, the angel goes through infinitely many places. And yet he is partly in one of the continuous places and partly in the other—not because his substance can have parts, but because, as was also explained above (a. 1), his power is applied to a part of the first place and a part of the second place.