

QUESTION 65

The Work of Creating Corporeal Creatures

Now that we have considered the spiritual creature, we next have to consider the corporeal creature. In the production of corporeal creatures Scripture recalls three works, viz., (a) the work of *creation* (*opus creationis*), when it says, “In the beginning God created heaven and earth,” and (b) the work of *division* (*opus distinctionis*), when it says, “He divided the light from the darkness, and the waters that are above the firmament from the waters that are below the firmament,” and (c) the work of *adornment* (*opus ornatus*), when it says, “Let there be lights in the firmament” Therefore, we must consider, first, the work of creation (questions 65-66); second, the work of division (questions 67-69); and, third, the work of adornment (questions 70-74).

On the first topic there are four questions: (1) Are corporeal creatures from God? (2) Are they made for the sake of God’s goodness? (3) Are they made by God through the mediation of angels? (4) Are the forms of bodies from angels or directly from God?

Article 1

Are corporeal creatures from God?

It seems that corporeal creatures are not from God:

Objection 1: Ecclesiastes 3:14 says, “I have learned that all the works which God has made last forever.” But visible bodies do not last forever; for 2 Corinthians 4:18 says, “The things that are seen are temporary (*temporalia*), whereas the things that are not seen are eternal.” Therefore, God did not make visible bodies.

Objection 2: Genesis 1:31 says, “God saw all the things He had made, and they were very good.” But corporeal creatures are evil. For we experience them to be harmful in many ways, as is clear with many kinds of snakes, with the heat of the sun, and with other things of this sort; and the reason why something is called evil is that it does harm. Therefore, corporeal creatures are not from God.

Objection 3: What is from God does not draw us away from God, but instead leads us to Him. But corporeal creatures draw us away from God; thus, in 2 Corinthians 4:18 the Apostle says, “While we look not at the things which are visible” Therefore, corporeal creatures are not from God.

But contrary to this: Psalm 145:6 says, “..... who made heaven and earth, the sea and all the things that are in them.”

I respond: The position of certain heretics is that visible things were created not by a good God, but by an evil principle. And in support of their error they appropriate what the Apostle says at 2 Corinthians 4:4: “The god of this world (*deus huius saeculi*) has blinded the minds of unbelievers.”

However, this position is altogether impossible. For if diverse things are united in some one feature (*uniantur in uno*), then there must be a cause of this union, since diverse things are not united of themselves (*secundum se*). And so it is that whenever some one feature is found in diverse things, those diverse things must receive that one feature from a unitary cause (*ab aliqua una causa*), in the way that diverse hot bodies have their heat from fire. Now the feature which is *esse* is found universally in all things, regardless of how diverse they are. Therefore, there must be some one principle of being from which all things have *esse*, regardless of whether they are invisible and spiritual or whether they are visible and corporeal.

Now the devil is called “the god of this world” not because he is a creator (*non creatione*), but because those who live in a worldly fashion serve him. This is the same manner of speaking the Apostle uses in Philippians 3:19, when he says, “Their god is their belly.”

Reply to objection 1: All God's creatures endure forever in some sense, at least with respect to their matter. For creatures are never reduced to nothingness, even if they are corruptible. But the closer creatures are to God, who is altogether unchangeable, the more unchangeable they are. For corruptible creatures endure forever with respect to their matter, but change with respect to their substantial form. On the other hand, incorruptible creatures do, to be sure, endure with respect to their substance, but they are changeable with respect to other things, viz., place in the case of celestial bodies, and affections in the case of spiritual creatures.

As for what the Apostle says, "The things that we see are temporary"—although this is true even with respect to [visible] things considered in themselves, given that every visible creature is subject to time, still, the Apostle means to be speaking about visible things insofar as they are man's rewards. For those of man's rewards that consist in these visible things pass away with time, whereas the rewards that consist in invisible things remain forever (*permanent in aeternum*). Thus, he had said just before this, "..... works in us an eternal weight of glory."

Reply to objection 2: A corporeal creature is good with respect to its nature, but it is not a universal good. Rather, it is a particular and contracted good, and as a result of this particularity and contraction there exists among corporeal creatures a contrariety in virtue of which one is contrary to another, even though both are good in themselves.

Now there are those who, considering things not on the basis of their natures, but rather on the basis of what is suited to them as individuals (*ex suo proprio commodo*), think that whatever is harmful to them in some respect is evil absolutely speaking—not taking into account that what is evil for one of them in some respect is either beneficial for another or beneficial for that same one in some [other] respect. This would in no way be the case if bodies were of themselves evil and harmful.

Reply to objection 3: Taken in themselves, creatures do not draw us away from God, but instead lead us to Him; for as Romans 1:20 says, "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood through the things that have been made."

The fact that they turn us away from God is the fault of those who use them unwisely. Hence, Wisdom 14:11 says, "Creatures have become a snare to the feet of the unwise." And the very fact that they lead us away from God in this way testifies to the fact that they are from God. For they do not lead the unwise away from God except by attracting them with something good that exists in them, and they have this something good from God.

Article 2

Were corporeal creatures made for the sake of God's goodness?

It seems that corporeal creatures were not made for the sake of God's goodness:

Objection 1: Wisdom 1:14 says, "God created in order that all things might exist." Therefore, all things were created for the sake of their own proper *esse*, and not for the sake of God's goodness.

Objection 2: The good has the character of an end. Therefore, that which is a greater good among things is the end of that which is a lesser good. But spiritual creatures are related to corporeal creatures as a greater good to a lesser good. Therefore, corporeal creatures exist for the sake of spiritual creatures, and not for the sake of God's goodness.

Objection 3: Justice does not give unequally except to unequals. But God is just. Therefore, prior to any inequality created by God, there is an inequality not created by God. But an inequality not created by God cannot exist unless it stems from free choice. Therefore, every inequality follows from the

diverse movements of free choice. But corporeal creatures are not equal to spiritual creatures. Therefore, corporeal creatures were made because of certain movements of free choice and not for the sake of God's goodness.

But contrary to this: Proverbs 16:4 says, "The Lord has made all things for Himself."

I respond: Origen claimed that corporeal creatures were made not because of God's primary intention, but in order to punish sinful spiritual creatures. For he claimed that in the beginning God made spiritual creatures alone, and He made them all equal to one another. Given that they had free choice, some among them turned toward God and, corresponding to the intensity (*quantitas*) of their conversion to Him, they were given higher and lower ranks while retaining their simplicity. Others, however, having turned away from God, were tied to (*alligatae*) different kinds of bodies according to the manner of their turning away from God.

This position is erroneous.

First of all, it is contrary to Sacred Scripture, which, having recounted the production of each kind of corporeal creature, adds, "God saw that it was good"—as if to say, "Each of them was made because its very existence is good." By contrast, according to Origen's opinion, corporeal creatures were made not because it was good for them to exist, but in order to punish the evil of the other sort of being.

Second, it would follow that the present arrangement of the corporeal world exists by chance. For if the body of the sun was made the way it was in order to be a fitting punishment for a spiritual creature's sin, then if many spiritual creatures had sinned in the same way as the one whose sin the sun was created as a punishment for, then it follows that there would be more suns in the world. And the same thing would hold for the other cases. But these consequences are altogether absurd.

Now that this position has been eliminated as erroneous, note that the entire universe is made up of all things in the way that a whole is made up of its parts. And if we want to ascribe an end to a given whole along with its parts, we will discover, first, that the individual parts exist for the sake of their own acts, in the way that an eye exists for the sake of seeing. Second, a less noble part exists for the sake of a more noble part, in the way that the senses exist for the sake of the intellect, and in the way that the lung exists for the sake of the heart. Third, the parts together (*omnes partes*) exist for the sake of the perfection of the whole, in the way that matter exists for the sake of form; for the parts are, as it were, the matter of the whole. Further, a man as a whole exists for the sake of an extrinsic end, viz., to enjoy God.

So, then, likewise in the case of the parts of the universe, each creature exists for the sake of its own act and perfection. Second, the less noble creatures exist for the sake of the more noble creatures; for instance, the creatures below man exist for the sake of man. Further, each creature exists for the sake of the whole universe. Further, the universe as a whole, with all its individual parts, is ordered to God as its end, insofar as God's goodness is represented in the whole and parts through a sort of imitation, and this for God's glory—though there is a special way that goes beyond this in which rational creatures have God as an end whom they can attain to by their action, viz., knowing and loving.

In this way it is clear that God's goodness is the end of all corporeal beings.

Reply to objection 1: By the very fact that a creature has *esse*, it represents God's *esse* and His goodness. And so the fact that God created all things in order that they might exist does not rule out His having created all things for the sake of His goodness.

Reply to objection 2: A proximate end does not exclude an ultimate end. Hence, the fact that corporeal creatures were in some sense made for the sake of spiritual creatures does not rule out their having been made for the sake of God's goodness.

Reply to objection 3: The equality of justice has a place in retributive matters (*in retributione*), since it is just that what is equal should be repaid with what is equal.

However, there is no room for this point in the initial establishment of things. For just as a

craftsman, without any injustice, places stones of the same kind in different parts of a building—not because of any prior differences among the stones but with an eye toward the building’s perfection as a whole, which would not exist unless the stones were positioned in different ways in the building—so, too, in the beginning God, in order that there might be perfection in the universe, made diverse and unequal creatures according to His wisdom—with no injustice, and yet without presupposing any differences of merit.

Article 3

Were corporeal creatures produced by God through the mediation of angels?

It seems that corporeal creatures were produced by God through the mediation of angels:

Objection 1: All things were created by God’s wisdom in just the way that things are governed by God’s wisdom—this according to Psalm 103:24 (“You have made all things in wisdom”). But as the beginning of the *Metaphysics* puts it, “One who is wise has the role of ordering.” Hence, in the governance of things, lower things are ruled by higher things, as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 3. Therefore, the order present in the production of things was likewise such that corporeal creatures, as lower creatures, were produced by spiritual creatures, as higher creatures.

Objection 2: A diversity of effects points to a diversity of causes, since one and the same cause always does the same thing. Therefore, if all creatures, both spiritual and corporeal, were directly (*immediate*) produced by God, there would be no diversity among creatures; nor would one creature be more distant from God than another. But this is clearly false, since the Philosopher says that certain corruptible things are “too far distant from God.”

Objection 3: An infinite power is not required to produce a finite effect. But each body is finite. Therefore, it could have been produced by the finite power of a spiritual creature. And it was in fact so produced, since in spiritual creatures actuality (*esse*) does not differ from possibility (*posse*)—especially given that no dignity which belongs to a thing by its nature is denied to it, except perhaps because of sin.

But contrary to this: Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created heaven and earth,” where ‘earth’ is understood to mean corporeal creatures. Therefore, corporeal creatures were directly produced by God.

I respond: Some have claimed that things proceeded from God step by step, so that the first creature proceeded directly from Him, and this creature produced another one, and so on down to corporeal creatures.

But this position is impossible. The initial production of a corporeal creature is through an act of creation, by which even the matter itself is produced; for the imperfect is prior to the perfect in being made. But it is impossible for anything to be created except by God alone.

To see this clearly, notice that the higher a cause is, the more things it extends to in its causing. But it is always the case that what is underlying (*id quod substernitur*) in things is more general (*communius*) than that which forms (*informat*) and limits (*restringit*) it. For instance, to exist (*esse*) is more general than to be alive (*vivere*), and to be alive is more general than to be intelligent (*intelligere*), and matter is more general than form. Therefore, the more of an underlying substratum something is, the more it must proceed directly from a higher cause. Therefore, that which is the most basic substratum in all things (*est primo substratum in omnibus*) properly involves the causality of the highest cause. Therefore, no secondary cause can produce anything without presupposing, within the thing produced, something that is caused by a higher cause. But creation is the production of a thing with respect to its *entire* substance,

presupposing *nothing* that is uncreated or has been created by some cause. Hence, it follows that nothing is able to create except God alone, who is the first cause. And this is why, in order to show that all bodies are directly created by God, Moses said, “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.”

Reply to objection 1: In the production of things there is a certain order—not, to be sure, an order such that one creature is created by another creature (for this is impossible), but rather an order such that diverse grades are established among creatures by God’s wisdom.

Reply to objection 2: As was shown above (q. 15, a. 2), the one God Himself, without prejudice to His simplicity, has knowledge of diverse things. And so likewise, in keeping with the diverse things known, He is through His wisdom a cause of the diverse things produced—just as a craftsman, by apprehending diverse forms, produces a diversity of artifacts.

Reply to objection 3: The quantity of an agent’s power is measured not only by the thing made but also by the manner of making it. For the same thing is made in different ways by a greater power and by a lesser power. But it is proper to an infinite power to produce something finite in such a way that nothing is presupposed. Hence, this mode of production cannot belong to any creature.

Article 4

Are the forms of bodies derived from angels?

It seems that the forms of bodies are derived from angels (*formae corporum sint ab angelis*):

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* Boethius says, “From the forms that exist without matter come the forms that exist in matter.” But the forms that exist without matter are the spiritual substances, whereas the forms that exist in matter are the forms of bodies. Therefore, the forms of bodies are from the spiritual substances.

Objection 2: Everything that is such-and-such by participation is traced back to what is such-and-such through its essence. But spiritual substances are forms through their essence, whereas corporeal creatures participate in forms. Therefore, the forms of corporeal things are derived from the spiritual substances.

Objection 3: Spiritual substances have more causal power than celestial bodies do. But the celestial bodies are causes of forms in things here below, and thus they are said to be a cause of generation and corruption. Therefore, *a fortiori*, the forms that exist in matter are derived from the spiritual substances.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 3 Augustine says, “Do not think that corporeal matter obeys the angels at will (*ad nutum servire*); rather, it obeys God.” But corporeal matter is said to obey at will the one from whom it receives form. Therefore, corporeal forms are from God and not from angels.

I respond: Some have held the opinion that all corporeal forms are derived from the spiritual substances we call angels. And they have posited this in two ways:

Plato claimed that the forms which exist in corporeal matter are derived (*derivari*) from and shaped by (*formari*) Forms that subsist without matter, by way of a kind of participation. For he posited a sort of Man that subsists immaterially, and likewise Horse, and so on for the other Forms, from which singular sensible things are constituted insofar as an impression from those separated Forms is found in corporeal matter, in the manner of an assimilation that he called ‘participation’. And the Platonists posited an order among the separated substances that corresponds to the order of the [corporeal] forms, viz., that there is a separated substance Horse that is a cause of all horses; and beyond this there is a separated Life, which they called Life itself and a cause of all life; and, further, there is a separated substance they called Being

itself and a cause of all *esse*.

By contrast, Avicenna and certain others claimed that the forms of corporeal things do not subsist *per se* in matter but subsist *per se* only in an intellect. Thus, they asserted that all the forms that exist in corporeal matter proceed from the forms that exist in the intellect of spiritual creatures (whom they call ‘intelligences’, while we call them ‘angels’) in the way that the forms of artifacts proceed from the forms in the mind of a craftsman. And this seems to amount to the same thing that is proposed by certain modern heretics when they claim that while God is the creator of all things, it is the devil who shaped corporeal matter and divided it into the various species.

Now all these opinions seem to have proceeded from a single source. For they were asking about the cause of [corporeal] forms as if the forms themselves are made in their own right (*fierent secundum seipsas*). But as Aristotle shows in *Metaphysics* 7, what is made, properly speaking, is the composite, whereas the forms of corruptible things are such that they exist at some times and not at others without themselves being generated or corrupted, but rather because the composites are generated and corrupted. For the forms do not have *esse*, but instead it is the composites that have *esse* through the forms; for *being made* belongs to a thing in the same sense in which *esse* belongs to it. And so, since the similar is made by what is similar to it, it is not any immaterial form that one should look for as the cause of corporeal forms. Rather, one should look for some composite; for *this* fire is generated by *that* fire. So, then, corporeal forms are caused not in the sense that they flow from some immaterial form (*influxae ab aliqua immateriali forma*), but rather in the sense that their matter is reduced (*reducta*) from potentiality to actuality by some composite agent.

However, since, as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 3, a composite agent, which is a body, is moved by a created spiritual substance, it follows further that corporeal forms are also derived from spiritual substances—not in the sense that the spiritual substances ‘pour’ the forms [into bodies] (*influxantibus formis*), but in the sense that they move [bodies] toward the forms (*moventibus ad formas*). Moreover, corporeal forms are further traced back to God as their first cause, as are the [intelligible] species of the angelic intellect, which are like seminal ideas (*seminales rationes*) of corporeal forms.

Now in the initial production of corporeal creatures there is no thought of any transition from potentiality to actuality. And so the corporeal forms that bodies had in this initial production were produced by God alone as a proper cause, and God is the only one whom matter obeys at will. Hence, to signal this, Moses premised each of the works with “God said, ‘Let there be this or that.’” This signifies the formation of things effected by God’s Word, from whom, as Augustine puts it, “comes every form and structure and agreement of parts.”

Reply to objection 1: By ‘forms that exist without matter’ Boethius means the conceptions of things that exist in God’s mind, just as in Hebrews 11:3 the Apostle says, “By faith we believe that the world was framed by the word of God, that from invisible things visible things might be made.”

However, if by ‘forms that exist without matter’ one means the angels, then one must claim that the forms that exist in matter come from the angels not by being poured into things, but through movement.

Reply to objection 2: Participated forms that exist in matter are traced back not to forms of the same type that subsist *per se*, as the Platonists held, but either (a) to the intelligible forms that belong to the angelic intellect and are such that corporeal forms proceed from them through movement or (b), further back, to the conceptions of God’s intellect, from which the seeds of the forms are instilled into created things, so that they can be educed into actuality through movement.

Reply to objection 3: The celestial bodies cause forms in bodies here below not by pouring those forms into the bodies but by moving the bodies.