

QUESTION 25

God's Power

Now that we have considered God's intellect and will and the things pertaining to them, we must next consider God's power. On this topic there are six questions: (1) Is there power in God? (2) Is God's power infinite? (3) Is God omnipotent? (4) Can God bring it about that past things have never existed? (5) Is God able to do things which He does not in fact do, or able not to do things which He in fact does? (6) As regards the things He makes, could God make them better than He does?

Article 1

Is there power in God?

It seems that there is no power (*potentia*) in God:

Objection 1: God, who is the first agent, is related to actuality as primary matter is related to potentiality (*potentia*). But primary matter, considered in itself, lacks all actuality. Therefore, the first agent, which is God, lacks potentiality.

Objection 2: According to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* 9, the actuality of a thing is better than any potentiality; for instance, form is better than matter, and action is better than active power, since it is the latter's purpose. But nothing is better than that which exists in God, since, as was shown above (q. 3, a. 3), whatever exists in God is God. Therefore, there is no power in God.

Objection 3: Power is a principle of action. But God's action is His essence, since there are no accidents in God, and nothing is a principle of God's essence. Therefore, the concept of power does not apply to God (*Deo non convenit*).

Objection 4: As was shown above (q. 14, a. 8 and q. 19, a. 4), God's knowledge and His will are a cause of things. But a cause is the same as a principle. Therefore, one should ascribe only knowledge and will to God—and not power.

But contrary to this: Psalm 88:9 says, "You are powerful, O Lord, and Your truth is round about You."

I respond: There are two kinds of power or potentiality (*potentia*), viz., (a) *passive* power, which in no way exists in God, and (b) *active* power, which one must especially posit in God. For it is clear that each thing, insofar as it has actuality and perfection, is an active principle of something, whereas each thing is acted upon insofar as it is deficient and imperfect.

Now it was shown above (q. 3, a. 1 and q. 4, a. 1-2) that God is pure actuality, and that He is perfect absolutely speaking and in every way, and that imperfection has no place in Him. Hence, it especially belongs to Him to be an active principle and in no way to be acted upon. But the nature of an active principle belongs to an active power. For as the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* 5, an active power is a principle of acting upon another, whereas a passive power is a principle of being acted upon by another. Therefore, it follows that active power exists especially in God.

Reply to objection 1: Active power, far from being contrasted with actuality, is instead grounded in actuality. For each thing acts insofar as it is actual.

Passive power, on the other hand, is indeed contrasted with actuality, since a thing is acted upon insofar as it is in potentiality. Hence, passive power is excluded from God—but not active power.

Reply to objection 2: Whenever an actuality is distinct from a power, the actuality must be more noble than the power. But God's action is not distinct from His power; instead, both of them are God's essence, since His *esse* is not distinct from His essence. Hence, it is not the case that something has to be more noble than God's power.

Reply to objection 3: The power in created things is a principle not only of the action, but also of the effect. Therefore, the nature of power is salvaged in God with respect to its being a principle of the effect, though not with respect to its being a principle of the action, since God's action is just the divine essence.

Perhaps, though, God's power can be thought of as a principle of action according to our mode of understanding. For God's essence, which in itself possesses in a simple way whatever perfections exist in created things, can be thought of by us both under the concept of action and under the concept of power, just as He is also thought of by us both under the concept of a suppositum that has a nature and under the concept of a nature.

Reply to objection 4: Power is posited in God as something that differs from His knowledge and will not in reality, but only conceptually—viz., insofar as 'power' implies the nature of a principle that executes what the will commands it to do and what the knowledge directs it to do. All three of these coincide in God.

An alternative reply is that God's knowledge or will itself, insofar it is an efficient principle, has the nature of power. This is why a consideration of God's knowledge and will precedes a consideration of His power, in the way that a cause precedes its action and its effect.

Article 2

Is God's power infinite?

It seems that God's power is not infinite:

Objection 1: According to the *Philosopher* in *Physics* 3, everything infinite is imperfect. But God's power is not imperfect. Therefore, it is not infinite.

Objection 2: Every power is manifested by its effect; otherwise, it would be useless. Therefore, if God's power were infinite, then He could bring about an infinite effect. But this is impossible.

Objection 3: In *Physics* 8 the *Philosopher* proves that if a body had infinite power, it would effect an instantaneous movement. But God does not effect an instantaneous movement; instead, "He moves a spiritual creature through time and a corporeal creature through space and time," as Augustine puts it in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 8. Therefore, His power is not infinite.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 8 Hilary says that God "is of immense power, living, and powerful." But everything immense is infinite. Therefore, God's power is infinite.

I respond: As has already been explained (a. 1), active power is found in God insofar as He is actual. But His *esse* is infinite, since it is not limited by anything receiving it. This is clear from what was said above (q. 7) when we were discussing the infinity of God's essence. Hence, it must be the case that God's active power is infinite. For with all agents we find that the more perfectly the agent has the form through which it acts, the more power it has in acting. For instance, the hotter something is, the more power it has to produce heat; and it would have an infinite power to produce heat if its own heat were infinite. Hence, since, as was shown above (q. 7, a. 1), the divine essence, through which God acts, is infinite, it follows that His power is infinite.

Reply to objection 1: The *Philosopher* is talking about an infinity that exists on the part of a matter which is not terminated by a form, i.e., an infinity that has to do with quantity. But, as has been shown (q. 7, a. 1), God's essence is not infinite in this sense—and, consequently, neither is His power infinite in this sense. Hence, it does not follow that God's power is imperfect.

Reply to objection 2: The entire power of a univocal agent is manifested in its effect. For

instance, the generative power of a man can do no more than generate a man. However, the power of a non-univocal agent is not wholly manifested in the production of its effect. For instance, the sun's power is not wholly manifested in the production of an animal that is generated by putrefaction.

Now it is clear that God is not a univocal agent, since, as was shown above (q. 3, a. 5), nothing can agree with him in either species or genus. Hence, it follows that His effect is always such that it falls short of His power. Therefore, God's infinite power does not have to be manifested by His producing an infinite effect.

And yet even if God were to produce no effect at all, His power would not be useless. For a power is useless when it does not attain the end toward which it is ordered. But God's power is not ordered toward any effect as an end; rather, it itself is the end of its own effect.

Reply to objection 3: In *Physics* 8 the Philosopher proves that if a body had infinite power, then it would effect a movement that takes no time at all. And yet he shows that the power of the mover of a celestial body is infinite because it can effect movement through an infinite stretch of time. It follows, then, that he intends to show that if there were an infinite *corporeal* power, it would effect movement that took no time at all, but that this does not hold for the power of an *incorporeal* mover. The reason is that a body which moves another body is a univocal agent, and thus all the agent's power would be manifested in the motion. Therefore, since the more power had by a body that effects movement, the faster the movement it effects, it has to be the case that if its power were infinite, then it would effect an immeasurably fast movement, which is just to effect a movement that takes no time at all. However, an incorporeal mover is a non-univocal agent. Hence, its entire power need not be manifested in the movement in such a way that it effects a movement that takes no time at all—especially in light of the fact that it effects movement according to the disposition of its will.

Article 3

Is God omnipotent?

It seems that God is not omnipotent (*non sit omnipotens*):

Objection 1: To be moved and acted upon is counted among all things (*aliquid omnium est*). But God is not able to be moved and acted upon, because, as was shown above (q. 9, a. 1), He is immutable. Therefore, He is not omnipotent.

Objection 2: To sin is to do something. But God cannot sin or “deny Himself,” as 2 Timothy 2:13 puts it. Therefore, God is not omnipotent.

Objection 3: [In the Collect for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost] it is said of God that “He manifests His omnipotence especially in pardoning and showing mercy.” Therefore, the ultimate effect of which God's power is capable is to pardon and to show mercy. But there are things much greater than pardoning and showing mercy, e.g., creating another world, or something of that sort. Therefore, God is not omnipotent.

Objection 4: A Gloss on 1 Corinthians 1:20 (“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”) says, “God made the wisdom of this world foolish by showing to be possible what the wisdom of this world judged to be impossible.” Hence, it seems that one should judge something to be possible or impossible not according to lower causes, in the way that the wisdom of this world judges, but according to God's power. Therefore, if God is omnipotent, then all things will be possible. Therefore, nothing is impossible. But if the impossible is eliminated, then so too is the necessary, since *necessary to be* is the same as *impossible not to be*. Therefore, if God is omnipotent, then nothing will be necessary

among things. But this is impossible. Therefore, God is not omnipotent.

But contrary to this: Luke 1:37 says, “No word shall be impossible with God.”

I respond: Everyone commonly confesses that God is omnipotent. But it seems difficult to formulate an account of omnipotence, since there can be doubts about what is included under the distribution of ‘all’ when one says that God is capable of all things (*cum dicitur omnia posse Deum*). However, if one considers the matter correctly, then since power is said in relation to possible things, it follows that when God is said to be capable of all things, the right way to understand this is that God is capable of all possible things and that this is why He is called omnipotent.

Now according to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* 5, there are two senses of ‘possible’:

In the first sense, ‘possible’ is said *with respect to some power*, in the way that what is subject to human power is said to be ‘possible for man’. However, one cannot claim that the reason why God is called omnipotent is that He is capable of all the things that are possible for a created nature. For God’s power extends to more things. On the other hand, if one claims that the reason why God is omnipotent is that He is capable of all the things that are possible for His own power, then there will be a circularity in the explication of omnipotence. For this will be just to say that the reason why God is omnipotent is that He is capable of all the things that He is capable of.

It follows, then, that the reason why God is called omnipotent is that He is capable of all the things that are possible *absolutely speaking*—which is the second sense of ‘possible’. Now something is said to be absolutely possible or absolutely impossible because of the relation between the terms. More specifically, something is called possible because the predicate is compatible with the subject, as with ‘Socrates is sitting’, whereas something is called absolutely impossible because the predicate is incompatible with the subject, as with ‘A man is a donkey’.

Now notice that since each agent effects what is similar to itself, there is something possible that corresponds as a proper object to each active power, in keeping with the nature of the actuality in which that active power is grounded. For instance, the power to produce heat has possibly-heated *esse* (*esse calfactibile*) as its proper object. Now divine *esse*, in which the nature of God’s power is grounded, is infinite *esse*—i.e., *esse* which is not limited to any particular genus of being, but which contains within itself the perfection of the totality of *esse*. Hence, whatever can have the nature of being is included among the things which are absolutely possible and with respect to which God is called omnipotent.

Now nothing except non-being is opposed to the nature of being. Therefore, that which implies within itself both being and non-being at the same time is incompatible with the nature of the absolutely possible, which is subject to God’s omnipotence. For it is not because of a defect in God’s power that this sort of thing is not subject to omnipotence; rather, it is because it cannot have the nature of something that is possible or able to be effected.

Therefore, whatever does not imply a contradiction is included among those possible things with respect to which God is called omnipotent. But those things that do imply a contradiction are not contained under God’s omnipotence, since they cannot have the nature of something possible. Hence, it is more fitting to say that they cannot be effected than to say that God cannot effect them. Nor is this contrary to what the angel asserted when he said, “No word shall be impossible with God.” For that which implies a contradiction cannot be a ‘word’, since no intellect can conceive it.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), God is called omnipotent because of His active power and not because of any passive power. Hence, it is not incompatible with His omnipotence that He cannot be moved or acted upon.

Reply to objection 2: To sin is to lapse from a perfect action; hence, to be able to sin is to be able to be defective in one’s acting—which is incompatible with omnipotence. Because of this, God, who is omnipotent, cannot sin.

To be sure, in *Topics* 4 the Philosopher says that God is able and eager to do evil things. But this

has to be understood in one of three ways:

Either (a) it is to be understood as a conditional, the antecedent of which is impossible, as if it meant ‘God can do evil things if He wills to’. For nothing prevents a conditional from being true if both its antecedent and its consequent are impossible. In the same way, one may assert ‘If a man is a donkey, then he has four feet’.

Or else (b) it should be taken to mean that God can do certain things that now appear evil but are such that if He were to do them, then they would be good.

Or else (c) the Philosopher is speaking in accord with the common opinion of the Gentiles, who claimed that men are transformed into gods, e.g., Jupiter and Mercury.

Reply to objection 3: The reason why God’s omnipotence is manifested especially in pardoning and showing mercy is that the fact that He freely forgives sins shows that He has the greatest power. For someone who is bound by a higher law may not freely forgive sins.

An alternative reply is that in forgiving men and showing them mercy, God leads them to participate in an infinite good, which is the ultimate effect of the divine power.

Yet another reply is that, as was explained above (q. 21, a. 4), the effect of God’s mercy is the foundation for all of God’s works. For nothing is owed to anything except in virtue of what has been given to it by God without being owed to it. And God’s omnipotence is especially manifested in the fact that it is responsible for the initial creation of all goods.

Reply to objection 4: It is with respect to itself—and not with respect to either higher or lower causes—that something is called absolutely possible.

On the other hand, something that is called possible with respect to a given power is called possible with respect to its proximate causes. Hence, those things that are apt to be effected immediately by God alone—e.g., creating, justifying, etc.—are called possible with respect to a higher cause, whereas those things that are apt to be effected by lower causes are called possible with respect to lower causes. For as was explained above (q. 14, a. 13), effects have contingency or necessity according to the status of their proximate causes. Now the wisdom of the world is counted as foolish because it judges that things which are impossible for nature are also impossible for God. And so it is clear that God’s omnipotence excludes neither impossibility nor necessity from things.

Article 4

Can God bring it about that past things have never existed?

It seems that God can bring it about that past things have never existed:

Objection 1: That which is impossible *per se* is more impossible than that which is impossible *per accidens*. But God can do that which is impossible *per se*, e.g., give sight to the blind or resuscitate the dead. Therefore, *a fortiori*, He can do that which is impossible *per accidens*. But it is impossible *per accidens* for past things not to have existed; for instance, Socrates’s not having run is impossible *per accidens*, because Socrates’s running is past. Therefore, God can bring it about that past things have not existed.

Objection 2: Whatever God was able to effect, He is even now able to effect; for His power does not diminish. But before Socrates ran, God was able to bring it about that he would not run. Therefore, after he has run, God can bring it about that he has not run.

Objection 3: Charity is a greater virtue than virginity. But God can restore lost charity. Therefore, He can also restore lost virginity. Therefore, He can bring it about that what was corrupted

has not been corrupted.

But contrary to this: Jerome says, “Even though God is capable of all things, He cannot make a woman uncorrupted after she has been corrupted.” Therefore, for the same reason, He cannot bring it about, with respect to any other past thing, that that thing has not existed.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 3), nothing that implies a contradiction falls under God’s omnipotence. But it implies a contradiction for past things not to have existed, since just as it implies a contradiction to assert that Socrates is both sitting and not sitting, so too it implies a contradiction to assert that Socrates both did and did not sit. For to assert that he did sit is to assert that his sitting is a past thing, whereas to assert that he did not sit is to assert that his sitting did not exist.

Hence, for past things not to have existed does not fall under God’s power. And this is why, in *Contra Faustum*, Augustine says, “Whoever says, ‘If God is omnipotent, then let Him bring it about that things which have been effected have not been effected’, does not see that he is saying, ‘If God is omnipotent, let Him bring it about that things that are true, by the very fact that they are true, are false.’” And in *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher says, “This alone is denied to God, that He should make undone that which has been done.”

Reply to objection 1: Even though it is impossible *per accidens* for past things not to have existed as long as one considers just the thing that is past, e.g., Socrates’s running, nonetheless, if one considers a past thing *as* a past thing, then it is not only impossible *per se*, but absolutely impossible, that this thing did not exist—for it implies a contradiction. And so this is more impossible than raising the dead, which does not imply a contradiction but is instead called impossible with respect to a certain kind of power, viz., a natural power. For things that are impossible in this sense are subject to God’s power.

Reply to objection 2: As far as the perfection of the divine power is concerned, God is capable of all things, and yet certain things are not subject to His power because they lack the nature of the possible. In the same way, given the immutability of God’s power, whatever God was capable of, He is even now capable of, and yet certain things once had the nature of the possible while they were yet to be effected, but lack the nature of the possible now that they have been effected. And so God is said not to be able to effect them, because they themselves are not now able to be effected.

Reply to objection 3: God can remove all mental and physical corruption from a woman who has been corrupted, but the fact that she was once corrupted cannot be removed from her. In the same way, God cannot remove from a sinner the fact that he once sinned and lost charity.

Article 5

Is God able to effect what He does not in fact effect?

It seems that God is not able to effect things other than those that He in fact effects (*Deus non possit facere nisi ea quae facit*):

Objection 1: It seems that God is not able to effect anything unless He foreknew and preordained that He would effect it. But He foreknew and preordained that He would effect only those things that He in fact effects. Therefore, He is not able to effect anything other than what He in fact effects.

Objection 2: God is not able to effect anything other than what He ought to effect and what it is just for Him to effect. But it is not the case that God ought to effect what He does not in fact effect; nor is it just for Him to effect what He does not in fact effect. Therefore, God is not able to effect anything other than what He in fact effects.

Objection 3: God is not able to effect anything except what is good and fitting for the things He

has made. But it is not good or fitting for the things God has made to be otherwise than they are. Therefore, God is not able to effect anything other than what He in fact effects.

But contrary to this: Matthew 26:53 says, “Think you that I cannot ask my Father, and He will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels?” But He did not ask for this, and neither did the Father aid Him in repelling the Jews. Therefore, God is able to effect what He does not in fact effect.

I respond: On this topic there have been two errors.

Some have claimed that God acts, as it were, *by a necessity of nature*, so that just as nothing other than what actually happens can issue forth from the action of natural things—e.g., nothing other than a man can come from a man’s semen, and nothing other than an olive tree can come from an olive seed—so too from God’s action there can flow no things, or order of things, other than what now exists.

However, we showed above (q. 19, a. 3-4) that God does not act by any necessity of nature, but that His will is a cause of all things and that His will is not itself determined naturally or by necessity to the particular things that now exist. Hence, there is no sense in which the present course of things issues forth by necessity from God in such a way that other things could not have issued forth.

Others, by contrast, have claimed that God’s power is determined to the present course of things *because of the order of God’s wisdom and justice*, without which God does nothing. For since God’s power, which is His essence, does not differ from God’s wisdom, one can appropriately claim that there is nothing in God’s power that does not also exist in the order of God’s wisdom. For God’s wisdom includes all that can be effected by His power.

However, as was explained above (q. 21, a. 4), the order which is imposed on things by God’s wisdom, and in which the nature of justice consists, does not exhaust God’s wisdom in such a way that the divine wisdom is limited to just this order. For it is clear that the whole nature of the order which someone who is wise imposes on the things he has made is taken from the end. Therefore, when an end is exactly proportioned to the things that have been made for the sake of that end, the wisdom of the maker is restricted to some determinate order. But God’s goodness is an end that immeasurably exceeds created things. Hence, God’s wisdom is not determined to any particular order of things in such a way that no other course of things could flow from it.

Therefore, one must assert, absolutely speaking, that God is able to effect things other than the things He in fact effects.

Reply to objection 1: Our own power and essence are different from our will and intellect; and, again, our intellect is different from our wisdom, and our will is different from our justice. So with us there can be something which is within our power and yet which cannot exist in a just will or in a wise intellect. By contrast, God’s power and essence and will and intellect and wisdom and justice are all the same. Hence, there can be nothing which is within God’s power and yet which cannot exist in His just will or in His wise intellect.

Still, since (a) God’s will is not determined by necessity to these particular things or those particular things—except, perhaps on some assumption, as was explained above (q. 19, a. 3)—and since, as has just been explained, (b) God’s wisdom and justice are likewise not determined to this particular order, nothing prevents it from being the case that there is something in God’s power which He does not will and which is not contained under the order that He has in fact established for things. And since the power is thought of as *executing* (whereas the will is thought of as *commanding*, and the intellect and wisdom as *directing*), whatever is attributed to the power considered in itself is such that God is said to be capable of it according to His *absolute power* (*potentia absoluta*). And, as was explained above (a. 3), this includes everything in which the nature of being can be preserved. On the other hand, whatever is attributed to God’s power insofar as it executes the command of His just will is such that God is said to be able to effect it by His *ordained power* (*potentia ordinata*).

Accordingly, then, one should claim that God is able by His absolute power to effect things other

than the things He foreknew and preordained that He would effect, even though it cannot be the case that He effects things which He did not foreknow and preordain that He would effect. For His *acting* is subject to His foreknowledge and preordination, but His *ability to act* is not, since it is natural. For God *effects* something because He wills it, but it is not the case that He *is able to effect* something because He wills it; rather, He is able to effect something because this ability lies within His nature.

Reply to objection 2: God owes nothing to anything except Himself. Hence, the claim that God cannot effect anything except what He ought to effect signifies nothing other than that God is able to effect only that which is fitting and just for Him to effect.

But what I am calling ‘just and fitting’ can be thought of in two ways:

In one way, what I am calling just and fitting is such that it is thought of as already coupled with the verb ‘is’, so that it is restricted to standing for present things and is related in this way to God’s power. On this reading, what is asserted in the objection is false, for its sense is this: ‘Only that which is now fitting and just is such that God is able to effect it.’

On the other hand, if ‘fitting and just’ is understood as being first coupled with the verb ‘is able to be’—which has the force of amplifying the description—and afterwards with the verb ‘is’, then what will be signified is a certain general present. And in that case the statement will be true, since it will have this sense: ‘God is able to effect only that which is such that, if He were to effect it, it would be fitting and just.’

Reply to objection 3: Even though the present course of things is limited to the things which now exist, it is nonetheless not the case that God’s wisdom and power are limited to this present course of things. Hence, even if no other course would be good and fitting for the things which now exist, it is still the case that God could make other things and impose a different order on them.

Article 6

Is God able to make the things that He makes better?

It seems that God is not able to make the things He makes better (*non possit meliora facere ea quae facit*):

Objection 1: Whatever God makes, He makes with the utmost power and wisdom. But He makes a thing better to the extent that He makes it with more power and wisdom. Therefore, God cannot make anything better than He makes it.

Objection 2: In *Contra Maximinum* Augustine argues as follows: “If God were able to and yet willed not to generate a Son equal to Himself, then He would be envious.” For the same reason, if God could have made things better than He has and yet willed not to do so, then He was envious. But envy is altogether foreign to God. Therefore, God has made each thing the best He can (*Deus unumquodque fecit optimum*). Therefore, God cannot make anything better than He has.

Objection 3: That which is maximally and utterly good cannot be made better, since there is nothing greater than the maximum. But, as Augustine says in the *Enchiridion*, “Each one of the things God made is good, but taken together they are utterly good, since the admirable beauty of the whole is constituted from all of them.” Therefore, the good of the universe cannot be made better by God.

Objection 4: The man Christ is full of grace and truth and has the Spirit without measure, and so He cannot be better. Likewise, created happiness is said to be the highest good, and so it cannot be better. Again, the Blessed Virgin Mary is exalted above all the choirs of angels, and so she cannot be better. Therefore, not all the things that God has made are such that He can make them better.

But contrary to this: Ephesians 3:20 says that God “is able to make all things more abundantly than we desire or understand.”

I respond: There are two kinds of goodness in a thing:

The one kind is that which belongs to the thing’s essence, in the way that being rational belongs to the essence of a man. With respect to this sort of goodness, God cannot make anything better than it is, even though He could make some other thing that is better than that thing. In the same way, He cannot make the number four greater, since if it were greater, then it would be some other number and no longer four. For as *Metaphysics* 8 says, the addition of a substantival difference to a definition is like the addition of a unit to a number.

The second sort of goodness in a thing is that which lies outside the thing’s essence, in the way that a man’s good is to be virtuous or wise. And with respect to this kind of goodness, God is able to make the things made by Him better.

However, absolutely speaking, for anything that has been made by Him, God is able to make some other thing that is better.

Reply to objection 1: The claim that God can make something better than He does is true as long as the term ‘better’ is taken as a noun (*nomen*), because for any given thing, He is able to make some other thing that is better than that thing. On the other hand, as has been explained, one and the same thing is such that in one sense He is able to make it better and in another sense He is not able to make it better.

However, if ‘better’ is taken as an adverb and implies a mode on the part of the maker, then in that sense God is not able to make something better than He does, because He is not able to make anything with more wisdom and goodness on His part.

By contrast, if ‘better’ is taken as an adverb and implies a mode on the part of the thing made, then in that sense God is able to make things better, since He is able to give to the things He has made a better mode of being with respect to their accidental features, though not with respect to their essential features.

Reply to objection 2: It is part of the nature of a son that he should be equal to his father when he comes to maturity, but it is not part of the nature of any creature that it should be better than it has been made by God. Hence, the two lines of reasoning are not parallel.

Reply to objection 3: Given the things that actually exist, the universe cannot be better. This is because of the utter appropriateness of the order that God has established among the things that actually exist, and it is in this order that the good of the universe consists. If just one of these things were better, then the balance of the order would be upset, in just the same way that if one string of a harp were tightened more than it should be, then the sound of the harp would be ruined.

However, God could make other things, or add other things to those He has in fact made, and in that case this other universe would be better.

Reply to objection 4: From the fact that (a) Christ’s human nature (*humanitas*) is united to God, and that (b) created happiness is the enjoyment of God, and that (c) the Blessed Virgin is the mother of God, it follows that they have a certain infinite dignity that stems from the infinite goodness which is God. And in this respect nothing can be made that is better than they are, just as there cannot be anything that is better than God.