

QUESTION 47

The Diversity among Things in General

After the production of creatures in *esse*, the next thing to consider is the diversity among them. This discussion will have three parts. First, we will consider the diversity among things in general (question 47); second, the distinction between good and evil (questions 48 and 49); and, third, the distinction between spiritual creatures and corporeal creatures (question 50).

On the first topic we will ask about three things: (1) the very multiplicity or diversity of things, (2) the inequality among things, and (3) the oneness of the world.

Article 1

Is God the source of the multiplicity and diversity among things?

It seems that God is not the source of the multiplicity and distinction among things:

Objection 1: One single agent is always apt to effect just one thing. But as is clear from what was said above (q. 11, a. 4), God is maximally one. Therefore, He produces just one effect.

Objection 2: An exemplifier is similar to its exemplar. But as was explained above (q. 44, a. 3), God is an exemplar cause of His effect. Therefore, since God is one, His effect is just one and not multiple (*distinctus*).

Objection 3: Things that are ordered to an end are proportioned to that end. But as was shown above (q. 44, a. 4), the end of creatures is one thing, viz., God's goodness. Therefore, God's effect is just one thing.

But contrary to this: Genesis 1:4-7 says, "God separated the light from the darkness . . . and He divided the waters . . . from the waters . . ." Therefore, God is the source of the diversity and multiplicity among things.

I respond: Different writers have assigned different causes to the diversity among things.

Some have attributed it to *matter*, either by itself or along with some agent. For instance, Democritus and all the ancient natural philosophers attributed it to matter alone, positing only a material cause in virtue of which the diversity of things happens by chance because of the movement of matter. Anaxagoras, on the other hand, attributed the diversity and multiplicity among things to matter along with an agent. For he posited Mind (*Intellectus*), which distinguished things by extracting what had been mixed together in the matter.

However, there are two reasons why this position cannot be sustained. First, it was shown above (q. 44, a. 2) that even matter itself was created by God. Hence, if there is any diversity on the part of the matter, it must likewise be traced back to a higher cause. Second, matter exists for the sake of form, and not vice versa. But the diversity among things derives from their proper forms. Therefore, it is not the case that diversity occurs among things because of the matter; just the opposite, differentiation was created in the matter in order that it might be accommodated to diverse forms.

Again, some have attributed the diversity among things to *secondary agents*. For instance, Avicenna claimed that in understanding Himself, God produced the first intelligence, in which—as will become clear below (q. 50, a. 2)—there is necessarily a composition of potentiality and actuality, since it is not its own *esse*. So, then, insofar as the first intelligence understands the first cause, it produced the second intelligence; on the other hand, insofar as it understands itself with respect to what it has of potentiality, it produced the body of the heavens, which it moves; and insofar as it understands itself with respect to what it has of actuality, it produced the soul of the heavens.

However, there are two reasons why this position cannot be sustained. First, it was shown above

(q. 45, a. 5) that it belongs to God alone to create. Hence, things that cannot be caused except through creation are produced by God alone, and these include all the things that are not subject to generation and corruption. Second, according to this position the totality of things comes about not by the first agent's intention, but rather by the coincidence of many agent causes. But this is what we call coming about by chance. Hence, the perfection (*complementum*) of the universe, which consists in the diversity among things, would exist by chance—which is impossible.

Instead, one should claim that the diversity and multiplicity among things comes about by the intention of the first agent, who is God. For He brought things into existence in order to communicate His goodness to creatures and to represent His goodness through them. And since His goodness cannot be adequately represented by any one creature, He produced many diverse creatures, so that what was lacking in one's representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For the goodness that exists in a simple and uniform way in God exists in a multiple and divided way among creatures. Hence, the universe as a whole participates in and represents God's goodness in a more perfect way than any other creature does. And it is because the reason for the diversity of things lies in God's wisdom that Moses says that things are divided by God's Word, which is the conception of His wisdom. Thus it is that Genesis 1:3-4 says, "God said, 'Let there be light' . . . and He separated the light from the darkness."

Reply to objection 1: That which acts through its nature acts through the form by which it exists, and there is just one form for each thing. That is why such an agent effects just one thing. But as was shown above (q. 19, a. 4), a voluntary agent like God acts through a conceived form. Therefore, since, as was shown above (q. 15, a. 2), the fact that God understands many things is not incompatible with His oneness and simplicity, it follows that even though He is one, He is able to make many things.

Reply to objection 2: This objection would hold good in the case of an exemplifier that represents its exemplar perfectly and is multiplied only materially. Hence, there is just a single uncreated Image, which is perfect. But no creature is a perfect representation of the first exemplar, which is God's essence, and so God's essence can be represented through many things.

Still, to the extent that ideas are called exemplars, there is a plurality of ideas in God's mind corresponding to the plurality of things.

Reply to objection 3: In speculative matters, there is just one middle term of demonstration that perfectly demonstrates the conclusion, though there are many middle terms for probable proofs. Similarly, in practical matters, when the means, as I will put it, measure up fully (*adaequat*) to the end, then all that is required is a single means. But creatures are not related in this way to the end which is God. Hence, it was necessary for creatures to be multiplied.

Article 2

Is God the source of the inequality among things?

It seems that God is not the source of the inequality among things:

Objection 1: It belongs to the best to bring about the best. But among things that are the best, it is not the case that one is greater than another. Therefore, it belongs to God, who is the best, to make all things equal.

Objection 2: As *Metaphysics* 5 says, equality is an effect of oneness. But God is one. Therefore, He made all things equal.

Objection 3: It is part of justice to treat unequals unequally. But God is just in all of His operations. Therefore, since the operation by which He communicates *esse* to things does not presuppose

any inequality among the things, it seems that He made all things equal.

But contrary to this: Ecclesiasticus 33:7-8 says, “Why does one day surpass another, and one light another light, and one year another year, and one sun another sun? It is by the Lord’s knowledge that they were distinguished.”

I respond: Wishing to rule out the position of those who claimed that the diversity of things comes from the opposition between a principle of good and a principle of evil, Origen claimed that in the beginning all things were created equal by God. For he asserts that at first God created only rational creatures, all of whom were equal and among whom inequality first arose because of free choice, with some turning toward God to greater and lesser degrees and others turning away from God to greater and lesser degrees. Thus, those rational creatures who had turned toward God through their free choice were promoted to the different orders of angels in proportion to the differences among their merits, whereas those who had turned away from God were tied to different bodies according to the differences among their sins. And Origen claims that this is the reason for the creation of bodies and their diversity.

However, according to this view, the totality of corporeal creatures would exist not for the sake of communicating God’s goodness to creatures, but in order to punish sin—which is contrary to Genesis 1:31 (“God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good”). Moreover, as Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 11, “What claim could be more stupid than that the craftsman God did not choose this sun, as the one sun in the one world, for the embellishment of the world’s beauty or for the well-being of corporeal things, but that instead it came to exist because some soul sinned in a given way? On this account, if a hundred souls had sinned in the same way, this world would have had a hundred suns.”

One should reply instead that just as God’s wisdom is the cause of the diversity of things, so too it is the cause of their inequality. This is made clear as follows:

There are two kinds of diversity among things—(a) *formal* diversity among things that differ in species and (b) *material* diversity among things that differ only in number. Now since matter exists for the sake of form, material diversity exists for the sake of formal diversity. For we see that among incorruptible things there is just one individual to a species, since the species is sufficiently conserved in the one individual; by contrast, among generable and corruptible things there are many individuals belonging to the same species, and this for the sake of conserving the species. From this it is clear that formal diversity is more central than material diversity. But formal diversity always requires inequality, since, as *Metaphysics* 8 says, the forms of things are like numbers, in which the species are differentiated by the addition or subtraction of a unit. Hence, among natural things the species seem to be ordered step by step, so that mixed bodies are more perfect than the elements, and plants are more perfect than minerals, and animals are more perfect than plants, and men are more perfect than the other animals; and within each of these divisions, one species is found to be more perfect than another.

Therefore, just as God’s wisdom is the cause of the diversity among things for the sake of the perfection of the whole universe, so too it is the cause of the inequality among things. For the universe would not be perfect if just one grade of goodness were found among things.

Reply to objection 1: It belongs to the best agent to produce his best *overall* effect—not to make each part of the whole the best absolutely speaking, but rather to make each part the best in its proportion to the whole. By way of example, an animal’s goodness would be destroyed if each of its parts had the dignity that belongs to the eyes. So too, then, God made the universe the best it can be as a whole, given its status as a creature. But He did not make each creature the best; instead, He made one better than another. Thus, it is of *each* creature that Genesis 1:4 says, “God saw the light, that it was good,” and so on for each individual, but it is of *all of them together* that Genesis 1:31 says, “God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good.”

Reply to objection 2: The first thing that comes from oneness is equality, and then comes

multiplicity. And so the Son, to whom equality is appropriated, proceeds from the Father, to whom oneness is appropriated, according to Augustine. And then comes the creature, to which inequality belongs. Still, creatures participate in a certain kind of equality, viz., an equality of proportion.

Reply to objection 3: This is the argument that moved Origen, but it has a place only in the giving of rewards, where unequal rewards are owed for unequal merits. By contrast, in the very establishment of things it is not the case that the inequality among the parts derives from a prior inequality of merits or even from a prior inequality in the disposition of the matter; rather, the inequality exists for the sake of the perfection of the whole. This is clear from the works of a craft. For the roof of a house does not differ from the foundation because they are made out of diverse materials. To the contrary, it is in order to make a perfect house from diverse parts that the craftsman looks for diverse materials—and he would make those materials himself if he were able to.

Article 3

Is there just one world?

It seems that there is not just one world, but many worlds:

Objection 1: As Augustine says in *83 Quaestiones*, it is ridiculous to claim that God created things for no reason. But He could have created many worlds for the same reason that He created one world; for His power is not limited to the creation of just one world, but is instead infinite, as was shown above (q. 25, a. 2). Therefore, God has produced more than one world.

Objection 2: Nature does what is better and, *a fortiori*, God does, too. But it would be better for many worlds to exist rather than just one, since more good things are better than fewer good things. Therefore, more than one world was made by God.

Objection 3: Everything that has a form in matter can be numerically multiplied while remaining the same in species, since numerical multiplication is based on matter. But the world has a form in matter. For just as when I say ‘man’, I signify a form, whereas when I say ‘this man’, I signify a form in matter, so too when I say ‘world’, I signify a form, whereas when I say ‘this world’, I signify a form in matter. Therefore, nothing prevents there from being more than one world.

But contrary to this: John 1:10 says, “The world was made by Him,” where ‘the world’ names in the singular, as if only one world exists.

I respond: The order that exists among the things created by God is such that it makes manifest the oneness of the world. For this world is called one by a oneness of order, insofar as some things are ordered to others. But as was shown above (q. 11, a. 3 and q. 21, a. 1), all the things that come from God have an ordering both with respect to one another and with respect to God. Hence, it is necessary that all of them belong to a single world.

For this reason, those who were able to posit many worlds were the ones who claimed that chance—and not any ordering wisdom—is the cause of the world, e.g., Democritus, who said that this world and infinitely many others had been made from the convergence of atoms.

Reply to objection 1: The reason why the world is one is that all things are duly ordered by a single ordering and to a single end. Thus, in *Metaphysics* 12 Aristotle infers the oneness of God as governor from the oneness of the ordering that exists among things. And Plato proves the oneness of the world as an exemplifier from the oneness of the exemplar.

Reply to objection 2: No agent intends material plurality itself as an end. For material multiplicity has no set terminus and of itself tends toward unlimitedness (*de se tendit in infinitum*), where

unlimitedness is incompatible with the notion of an end. Now when the objection claims that many worlds are better than just one world, it is talking about material multiplicity. But such multiplicity is not better in the case of God's intention as an agent. For by the same line of reasoning one could assert that if He had made two worlds, it would have been better if there were three worlds, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Reply to objection 3: The world consists of the totality of its matter. For it is not possible for there to be an earth other than this one, since every 'earth', wherever it might be, would naturally tend toward this central earth. And the same line of reasoning holds for the other bodies that are parts of the world.