

QUESTION 67

The Work of Division: The First Day

The next thing to consider is the work of division in its own right (*opus distinctionis secundum se*): First, the work of the first day (question 67); second, the work of the second day (question 68); and, third, the work of the third day (question 69).

On the first topic there are four questions: (1) Is ‘light’ properly predicated in the case of spiritual things? (2) Is corporeal light a body? (3) Is corporeal light a quality? (4) Was it appropriate for light to be made on the first day?

Article 1

Is ‘light’ properly predicated in the case of spiritual things?

It seems that ‘light’ (*lux*) is properly predicated in the case of spiritual things:

Objection 1: In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 4 Augustine says that in the case of spiritual things “light is better and more certain, and Christ is not called the ‘Light’ in the same way He is called the ‘stone’ (*lapis*) (cf. Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:4); the former is said properly, whereas the latter is said figuratively.”

Objection 2: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius places ‘Light’ (*lumen*) among the intelligible names of God. But intelligible names are properly predicated in the case of spiritual things. Therefore, ‘light’ (*lux*) is properly predicated in the case of spiritual things.

Objection 3: In Ephesians 5:13 the Apostle says, “All that is made manifest is light.” But manifestation exists more properly in the case of spiritual things than in the case of corporeal things. Therefore, so does light.

But contrary to this: In *De Fide* Ambrose posits ‘Light’ (*splendor*) among those names that are predicated of God metaphorically.

I respond: There are two ways in which it is proper (*convenit*) for a name to be predicated: (a) in accord with the name’s *first imposition* and (b) in accord with the *usage* of the name. This is clear in the case of the name ‘see’ (*visio*), which was first imposed to signify the act of the sense of sight. But then, because of the dignity and certitude of this sense, the name ‘see’, in accord with the usage of speakers, was extended to all cognition on the part of the other senses (for we say, “See how it tastes” or “See how it smells” or “See how hot it is”), and, further, even to the intellect’s cognition—this according to Matthew 5:8 (“Happy are the clean of heart, for they shall see God”).

Something similar should be said about the name ‘light’ (*lux*). For it was first instituted to signify that which effects manifestation in the case of the sense of sight, and then afterwards it was extended to signify everything that effects manifestation in the case of any kind of cognition whatsoever.

Therefore, if the name ‘light’ is taken according to its first imposition, then it is predicated metaphorically in the case of spiritual things, as Ambrose claims. However, if it is taken according to the way it is extended in the usage of speakers to any kind of manifestation, then it is properly predicated in the case of spiritual things.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: The replies to the objections are clear from what has been said.

Article 2

Is light a body?

It seems that light (*lux*) is a body:

Objection 1: In *De Libero Arbitrio* Augustine says, “Light holds first place among bodies.” Therefore, light is a body.

Objection 2: The Philosopher says that light (*lumen*) is a species of fire. But fire is a body. Therefore, light is a body.

Objection 3: It is proper to bodies to be carried (*ferrī*), to be intersected (*intersecari*), and to be reflected (*reflecti*). But all these things are attributed to light (*lumen*) or light rays (*radīi*). Again, according to Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 2, different light rays are joined and separated, which likewise seems to be able to belong only to bodies. Therefore, light (*lumen*) is a body.

But contrary to this: Two bodies cannot be in the same place at the same time. But light (*lumen*) is in the same place as air. Therefore, light is not a body.

I respond: It is impossible for light (*lumen*) to be a body. This is clear in three ways.

First, by appeal to *place*. For the place of a given body is different from the place of any other body. Nor is it possible, in accord with nature, for two bodies to be in the same place at the same time, no matter what sort of bodies they are; for contiguity (*contiguum*) requires a difference in position (*in situ*).

Second, the same thing is clear by appeal to *motion*. For if light were a body, then illumination would be the local motion of a body. But no local motion on the part of a body can be instantaneous (*in instanti*), since everything that is moved with respect to place (*movetur localiter*) must reach the middle (*medium*) of the relevant magnitude before reaching the end (*extremum*). But illumination is effected instantaneously. Nor can one reply that illumination is effected within an imperceptible temporal interval (*in tempore imperceptibili*). For a temporal interval could be hidden in the case of a small spatial distance (*in parvo spatio*), but a temporal interval could not be hidden in the case of a large spatial distance (*in magno spatio*), e.g., from the east to the west; for when the sun is at its easternmost point, the whole hemisphere is immediately illuminated all the way to the opposite point. There is also a second consideration based on motion. Each body has a determinate natural motion, whereas the motion of illumination is in all directions and is no more circular than straight. Hence, it is clear that illumination is not the local motion of a body.

Third, the same thing is clear by appeal to *generation and corruption*. For if light were a body, then when the air became dark because of the absence of a light source (*per absentiam luminaris*), it would follow that the body of light had been corrupted and that its matter had received another form. But this does not appear to be the case—unless one claims that darkness is a body as well. Nor is it clear from what matter such a large body is generated every day, given that it completely fills the hemispheric medium. Again, it is ridiculous to claim that such a large body is corrupted merely because of the absence of a light source. And if someone asserts that the light is not corrupted, but instead comes with and moves around with the sun, what can he possibly say about the fact that when a body is interposed around a candle, the whole house is darkened? Nor does the light seem to collect around the candle, since the brightness around the candle is not greater in that place than it was before.

Thus, since all these claims are contrary (*repugnant*) not only to reason, but also to the senses, one should say that it is impossible for light to be a body.

Reply to objection 1: Augustine is taking ‘light’ here for a body that is luminous in actuality, viz., fire, which is the most noble of the four elements.

Reply to objection 2: Aristotle is calling fire in its proper matter ‘light’, just as fire is called a ‘flame’ (*flamma*) in airy matter and a ‘coal’ (*carbo*) in earthy matter.

Still, the examples that Aristotle uses in his logical works do not matter much, since he introduces them as probable according to the opinion of others.

Reply to objection 3: All the things in question are attributed to light metaphorically, in the same way that they can also be attributed to heat. For since, as is shown in *Physics* 8, local motion is naturally the first of movements, we use names pertaining to local motion in the case of alteration and all other movements—in the same way that, as *Metaphysics* 10 explains, the name ‘distance’, which is derived from place, is applied to all contraries.

Article 3

Is light a quality?

It seems that light (*lux*) is not a quality:

Objection 1: Every quality remains in its subject even after the agent ceases to act; for instance, heat remains in the water after it is been removed from the fire. But light (*lumen*) does not remain in the air when the light source (*luminare*) withdraws. Therefore, light is not a quality.

Objection 2: Every sensible quality has a contrary; for instance, hot has cold as a contrary, and black has white as a contrary. But there is no contrary for light (*lumen*), since darkness is the privation of light. Therefore, light is not a sensible quality.

Objection 3: A cause is more powerful than its effect. But the light (*lux*) of the celestial bodies is a cause of substantial forms in things here below. Also, it gives spiritual *esse* to colors, since it makes them visible in actuality. Therefore, light is not a sensible quality, but is instead a substantial or spiritual form.

But contrary to this: In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 1 Damascene says that light is a certain quality.

I respond: Some have claimed that light (*lumen*) in the air does not have *natural esse* in the way that the color in a wall does, but that it instead has *intentional esse* in the way that the likeness (*similitudo*) of a color in the air does. However, this cannot be the case, and for two reasons.

First, ‘light’ (*lumen*) denominates the air, since the air becomes luminous in actuality (*luminosus in actu*). By contrast, ‘color’ does not denominate the air, since the air is not said to be colored.

Second, light has an effect in nature, since through the sun’s rays bodies become warm. Intentions, on the other hand, do not cause natural transmutations.

Others have claimed that light (*lux*) is the substantial form of the sun. But this, too, seems impossible, and for two reasons.

First, no substantial form is *per se* able to be sensed, since, as *De Anima* 3 says, what a thing is (*quod quid est*) is an object of the intellect. But light (*lux*) is visible in itself (*secundum se*).

Second, it is impossible for something that is a substantial form in one thing to be an accidental form in another thing, since it belongs *per se* to a substantial form to constitute a thing within a species, and so to be present to that thing always and in all respects. But light is not the substantial form of the air; otherwise, when it withdrew, the air would be corrupted. Hence, it cannot be the substantial form of the sun.

Therefore, one should claim that just as heat is an active quality that follows upon the substantial form of fire, so too light is an active quality that follows upon the substantial form of the sun or of any other body that gives light of itself, if there is any other such body. An indication of this is that the rays

of different stars have different effects corresponding to the different natures of the bodies.

Reply to objection 1: Since a quality follows upon a substantial form, a subject can be related in different ways to the reception of the quality, just as it is related in different ways to the reception of the form:

For when the matter receives a form in a complete way (*perfecte*), then the quality that follows upon the form is likewise had firmly, as when water is converted into fire.

On the other hand, if the substantial form is received imperfectly, in a certain inchoative way, then the consequent quality remains for a while but not permanently, as is clear in the case of hot water that returns to its own nature.

By contrast, illumination is not effected through a transmutation of matter aimed at the reception of a substantial form, so that there might be something like the inchoative reception of a form. For this reason, light does not remain unless the agent is present.

Reply to objection 2: Light does not have a contrary because it is a natural quality of the first corporeal cause of alteration, and this cause is far removed from contrariety.

Reply to objection 3: Just as heat acts instrumentally in the power of the substantial form to induce the form of fire, so light acts instrumentally in the power of the celestial bodies (a) to produce substantial forms and (b) to make colors visible in actuality, insofar as it is a quality of the first sensible body.

Article 4

Was it appropriate for the production of light to be put on the first day?

It seems that it was not appropriate for the production of light to be put on the first day:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 3), light is a certain quality. But since a quality is an accident, it has the character of something last and not of something first. Therefore, the production of light should not have been put on the first day.

Objection 2: It is through light that night is distinguished from day. But this distinction is effected by the sun, which, we read, was made on the fourth day. Therefore, the production of light should not have been put on the first day.

Objection 3: Night and day come about because of the circular motion of a luminous body. But circular motion is proper to the firmament, which, we read, was made on the second day. Therefore, the production of light, which divides night and day, should not have been put on the first day.

Objection 4: Someone might reply that the verse is to be understood as applying to *spiritual* light. Against this: The light which, we read, was made on the first day effects a division from darkness. But there were no dark spirits at the beginning, since, as was explained above (q. 63, a. 5), the demons were good at the beginning. Therefore, the production of light should not have been put on the first day.

But contrary to this: That without which day cannot exist had to be made on the first day. But without light there can be no day. Therefore, light had to be made on the first day.

I respond: There are two opinions about the production of light.

It seems to Augustine that it would not have been appropriate for Moses to omit the production of spiritual creatures. And so he claims that when it says, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," what is meant by 'heaven' is a still unformed spiritual nature, whereas what is meant by 'earth' is the unformed matter of corporeal creatures. And since spiritual nature has more dignity than corporeal nature, it was the first to be formed. Therefore, it is the formation of spiritual nature that is signified by

the production of light, so that what is meant is spiritual light. For the formation of a spiritual nature is effected by his being illuminated in such a way that he adheres to the word of God.

To others, however, it seems that the production of spiritual creatures was indeed omitted by Moses. But they have given different explanations for this.

Basil claims that Moses began his narration from that ‘beginning’ which has to do with the time of sensible things, and that he omitted spiritual, i.e., angelic, nature because it had been created before this beginning.

Chrysostom, however, gives a different explanation: Moses was addressing an uneducated people who could understand nothing except corporeal things and whom he wanted to call back from idolatry. But if substances above all corporeal creatures had been presented to them, they would have seized the occasion to commit idolatry. For they would have thought of these substances as gods, since they were already prone to worship even the sun and the moon and the stars as gods—something forbidden them by Deuteronomy 4:19.

Now Genesis 1:2 had earlier talked about different kinds of formlessness (*informitas*) with respect to corporeal creatures: (a) one, when it said, “The earth was void and empty,” and (b) the other, when it said, “Darkness was upon the face of the deep.”

Now the formlessness involving darkness had to be removed first through the production of light, and this for two reasons.

First, because, as has been explained (a. 3), light is a quality of the first body, and so the world had first to be formed in accord with light.

Second, because of the commonality of light. For the lower bodies share in light with the higher bodies. And just as one proceeds in *cognition* from what is more common, so too in *operation*. For, as is explained in *De Generatione Animalium*, the living thing is generated before the animal, and the animal before the man. Therefore, the order of God’s wisdom had to be made manifest in such a way that what was produced first of all among the works of division was light, as the form of the first body and as a more common [quality].

Basil posits a third reason, viz., that all other things are made manifest through light.

Moreover, a fourth reason, touched on in the objections, can be added: Day cannot exist without light, and so light had to be made on the first day.

Reply to objection 1: Given the opinion that matter’s being unformed temporally (*duratione*) preceded its being formed, one must claim that matter was created from the beginning as the subject of substantial forms, but was later formed with respect to certain accidental conditions, among which light holds the first place.

Reply to objection 2: Some claim that the light in question was a kind of luminous cloud, which afterwards, once the sun was made, returned to its original matter. But this is implausible. For at the beginning of Genesis Scripture commemorates the establishment of nature, which afterwards perseveres. Hence, one should not claim that something which had been made at that point ceased to exist later on.

Accordingly, others claim that this luminous cloud remains even now and is conjoined to the sun in such a way that it cannot be distinguished from the sun. However, on this view the cloud would remain to no purpose (*remaneret superflua*); yet among the works of God there is nothing useless.

And so others claim that the body of the sun was formed from that cloud. However, this claim cannot be made if one posits that the body of the sun is not made from the nature of the four elements, but is instead incorruptible by its nature (cf. q. 66, a. 2). For according to this opinion, the sun’s matter could not have been the subject of any other form.

Therefore, one should claim, with Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, that the light in question was the light of the sun, but that the sun was as yet unformed in the sense that the substance of the sun existed and had the power to illuminate in general, but was only afterwards given a special and

determinate power with respect to particular effects. On this view, there were three respects in which light was divided from darkness in the production of this light:

First, with respect to its *cause*, since the cause of the light existed in the substance of the sun, whereas the cause of darkness lay in the opaqueness of the earth.

Second, with respect to *place*, since there was light in one hemisphere and darkness in the other.

Third, with respect to *time*, since within the same hemisphere there was light for one part of the time and darkness for the other part. And this is what it means when it says, “The light He called day, and the darkness night.”

Reply to objection 3: Basil claims that at the time in question light and darkness were effected not by motion, but by the emission and retraction (*contractio*) of light. But against this Augustine objects that there would be no reason for this alternation of the emitting and retracting of light, since there were as yet no men or animals whose uses this would serve. In addition, the nature of a luminous body is not such that light retracts in its presence; and even though this could be done miraculously, it is not, as Augustine points out, the miraculous that is to be sought in the first establishment of nature, but rather what the nature of the things dictates.

And so one should reply that there are two motions in the heavens. One is common to the whole of the heavens, and it causes day and night; and it is this motion that seems to have been established on the first day. The second motion is the one that is diversified by different bodies, and it is according to these motions that there is a diversity of days with respect to one another, and months, and years. And so on the first day mention is made only of the distinction between night and day, which is effected by the common motion. But on the fourth day there is mention of the diversity of days and seasons (*tempora*) and years, when it says, “... and let them be for seasons and for days and for years.” This diversity is effected by the particular motions.

Reply to objection 4: According to Augustine, formlessness does not temporally precede formation. Hence, he has to say that what the production of light means here is the formation of spiritual creatures—not of spiritual creatures perfected by glory, with which they were not created, but of spiritual creatures perfected by grace, with which they were indeed created, as has been explained (q. 62, a. 3). Thus, through this light there was a division of light from darkness, i.e., from the formlessness of [corporeal] creatures, which had not yet been formed.

Alternatively, if both kinds of creatures (*tota creatura*) were simultaneously formed, then the division was of light from that spiritual darkness which did not then exist (since the devil was not created evil), but which God foresaw would exist in the future.