

QUESTION 91

The Production of the First Man's Body

The next thing we have to consider is the production of the first man's body. On this topic there are four questions: (1) What was the matter from which it was produced? (2) Which agent was it produced by? (3) What sort of constitution (*dispositio*) was given it through its production? (4) What was the manner and order of its production?

Article 1

Was the first man's body made from the slime of the earth?

It seems that the first man's body was not made from the slime of the earth (*de limo terrae*):

Objection 1: It takes more power to make something from nothing (*ex nihilo*) than to make it from something, since non-being (*non ens*) is more distant from actuality than is being-in-potentiality (*ens in potentia*). But since man is the most dignified of the lower creatures (*dignissima creaturarum inferiorum*), it was fitting that God's power should be manifested to the highest degree in the production of man's body. Therefore, it ought to be the case that man's body was made from nothing and not from the slime of the earth.

Objection 2: Celestial bodies are more noble than earthly bodies are. But the human body has the greatest nobility, since it is perfected by the most noble form, viz., the rational soul. Therefore, it ought to be the case that it was made from a celestial body rather than from an earthly body.

Objection 3: As is clear from their subtlety, fire and air are more noble bodies than earth and water. Therefore, since the human body is the most dignified of all bodies, it ought to be the case that it was made from fire and air rather than from the slime of the earth.

Objection 4: The human body is composed of the four elements. Therefore, it was made from all the elements and not from the slime of the earth.

But contrary to this: Genesis 2:7 says, "God formed man from the slime of the earth."

I respond: Since God is perfect, He has given to His works a perfection corresponding to their mode [of being]—this according to Deuteronomy 32:4 ("God's works are perfect"). Now He Himself is perfect absolutely speaking because He contains all things within Himself antecedently—not in the mode of composition, but "in a simple and unified way (*simpliciter et unite*)," as Dionysius puts it, in the manner in which diverse effects preexist in a cause in accord with its unified essence (*secundum unam eius essentiam*).

Now this perfection flows into the angels insofar as all the things produced by God in nature fall within their cognition through diverse [intelligible] forms. By contrast, perfection of this sort flows into man in a lower-level way (*inferiori modo*). For man does not have within his natural cognition a knowledge of all natural things. Instead, he is in a certain sense *composed of* all things. For (a) he has within himself a rational soul from the genus of spiritual substances, and (b) he is, by way of likeness to the celestial bodies, far removed from contraries because of the exceptional balance of his constitution (*habet elongationem a contrariis per maximam aequalitatem complexionis*), whereas (c) he has the elements with respect to his substance. However, he has the elements in such a way that the higher elements, viz., fire and air, dominate in him with respect to their *power* (since life consists principally in heat, which comes from fire, and in moistness, which comes from air), whereas the lower elements are abundant in him with respect to their *substance*. For a balanced mixture would not be possible if the lower elements, which have less power, were not quantitatively more abundant in man; and the reason why man's body is said to have been formed from the slime of the earth is that slime is earth mixed with

water. And because all the creatures of the world are in some sense found in him, man is called a ‘miniature world’ (*minor mundus*).

Reply to objection 1: God’s creative power is manifested in man’s body because its matter was produced through creation.

Now the human body had to be made from the matter of the four elements in order that man might share something in common with the lower bodies (*haberet convenientiam cum inferioribus corporibus*), constituting, as it were, a certain middle ground between spiritual substances and corporeal substances.

Reply to objection 2: Even though a celestial body is, absolutely speaking, more noble than an earthly body, nonetheless, a celestial body shares less in common with the activity of the rational soul. For the rational soul takes its knowledge of truth in a certain way from the sensory powers, whose organs cannot be formed from a celestial body, because a celestial body cannot be acted upon (*cum sit impassibile*).

Nor is it true that a bit of the fifth essence (*aliquid de quinta essentia*) enters materially into the composition of the human body; this claim is made by some who hold that the soul is united to the body by the mediation of a certain sort of light (cf. q. 76, a. 7).

First of all, their claim that light is a body is false (cf. q. 67, a. 2).

Second, it is impossible for any part of the fifth essence to be divided off from a celestial body or to be mixed in with the elements—and this because of the celestial body’s impassibility. Hence, a celestial body can enter into the composition of mixed bodies only through the effect of its power.

Reply to objection 3: If fire and air, which are more powerful in their action, also abounded quantitatively in the composition of the human body, then they would completely draw the other elements to themselves, and it would be impossible to fashion the balanced mixture that man’s composition needs in order to have a good sense of touch, which is the foundation for the other senses. For the organ associated with each sense must have only in potentiality—and not in actuality—the contraries which are perceived by that sense. This must be so either in such a way that (a) the organ lacks the whole genus of relevant contraries, in the way that the pupil lacks color, so that it might be in potentiality with respect to all colors—something not possible in the case of the organ of touch, since it is composed of the elements, whose qualities the sense of touch perceives—or in such a way that (b) the organ is midway between the contraries, as is necessary in the case of the sense of touch. For the middle is in some sense in potentiality with respect to both extremes.

Reply to objection 4: The slime of the earth contains both earth and also water cementing the parts of earth together. Scripture does not make mention of the other [two] elements, both because (a) they are quantitatively less abundant in man’s body, as has been explained, and also because (b) in the whole account of the production of things Scripture, which was handed down to an uneducated people, does not make mention of fire and air, which uneducated people do not perceive with their sensory power.

Article 2

Was the human body produced directly by God?

It seems that the human body was not produced directly by God (*non sit immediate a Deo*):

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 3 Augustine says that God takes care of corporeal things through the angelic creature. But, as has been explained (a. 1), the human body was formed from corporeal matter. Therefore, it ought to be the case that it was produced by the mediation of angels and not directly by

God.

Objection 2: It is unnecessary for anything that can be effected by a created power to be produced directly by God. But the human body can be produced through the created power of a celestial body; for instance, certain animals are generated by putrefaction through the active power of a celestial body, and Albumasar says that men are generated only in places with temperate climates (*in locis temperatis tantum*) and not in places where heat or cold is excessive. Therefore, it was unnecessary for the human body to be formed directly by God.

Objection 3: Nothing is made from corporeal matter except through matter's being transformed (*per aliquam materiae transmutationem*). But every corporeal transformation has as a cause that movement of a celestial body that is the first of the movements. Therefore, since the human body is produced from corporeal matter, it seems that a celestial body contributed something to the human body's being formed.

Objection 4: In *Super Genesim ad Litteram* Augustine says that man's body was made during the work of the six days in the sense that God placed certain causal principles within corporeal creation (*secundum causales rationes quas Deus inseruit creaturae coporali*), whereas later on man's body was formed in actuality. But that which preexists by means of its causal principles in corporeal creation can be produced through a corporeal power. Therefore, the human body was produced by some created power and not directly by God.

But contrary to this: Ecclesiasticus 17:1 says, "God created man out of the earth."

I respond: The first formation of the human body could not have occurred through any created power, but was instead directly from God.

To be sure, some have claimed that the forms existing in corporeal matter are derived from certain immaterial forms. But as has already been explained (q. 63, a. 4), the Philosopher fends off this position in *Metaphysics* 7 by appeal to the fact that it is composite things, and not forms, that are made *per se*. And since an agent is similar to what it makes, it is not fitting that a pure form, which exists without matter, should produce a form which exists in matter and which is made only in virtue of the fact that the relevant composite is made. And so it has to be the case that the cause of a form that exists in matter is itself a form that exists in matter; for what is composite is generated from what is composite.

On the other hand, even though God is altogether immaterial, it is He alone who through His power can produce matter by creating it. Hence, it belongs to Him alone to produce a form in matter without the assistance of a preexisting material form. For this reason, angels cannot transform bodies with respect to any form unless they are aided by certain 'seeds', as Augustine puts it in *De Trinitate* 3.

Therefore, since the human body—by the power of which another similar in species might be formed by way of generation—had never previously been formed, it was necessary for the first human body to be formed directly by God.

Reply to objection 1: Even if angels provide some sort of ministry to God in what He does with respect to bodies, it is nonetheless the case that God does certain things among corporeal creatures that angels cannot in any way do—e.g., bringing back the dead and giving sight to the blind. It was likewise this sort of power by which He formed the body of the first man from the slime of the earth.

Still, it could have happened that angels provided some sort of ministry in the formation of the body of the first man—like the ministry they will provide at the last resurrection by collecting the dust.

Reply to objection 2: Perfect animals, which are generated from semen, cannot be generated solely through the power of a celestial body in the way that Avicenna imagines—this, despite the fact that the power of a celestial body does cooperate in the natural generation of perfect animals, in keeping with the Philosopher's claim in *Physics* 2 that "a man and the sun generate a man from matter." This is why a place with a temperate climate is required for the generation of men and other perfect animals.

However, the power of celestial bodies is indeed sufficient for generating certain imperfect animals from properly disposed matter, since it is clear that more is required for the production of a perfect entity than for the production of an imperfect entity.

Reply to objection 3: The movement of the heavens is a cause of natural transformations, but not of transformations that are effected outside the order of nature (*praeter naturae ordinem*) and by God's power alone, e.g., raising the dead and giving sight to the blind. It is these transformations that are similar to a man's being formed from the slime of the earth.

Reply to objection 4: There are two ways in which, among creatures, something is said to preexist through its causal principles.

In the first way it preexists in virtue of both an active and a passive power; that is, the thing preexists not only in the sense that it can be made out of preexisting matter, but also in the sense that there is some preexisting creature that is able to make it.

In the second way it preexists in virtue of a passive power alone, i.e., in the sense that it can be made by God from preexisting matter. It is in this sense that, according to Augustine, the human body preexisted through causal principles in the works that were produced.

Article 3

Is the human body appropriately constituted?

It seems that the human body is not appropriately constituted (*non habuerit convenientem dispositionem*):

Objection 1: Since man is the most noble of the animals, the human body should be optimally constituted for doing what is proper to animals, viz., sensing and moving about. But some animals have a more acute sensory power than man, and some have swifter movement; for instance, dogs have a better sense of smell than man, and birds move more swiftly. Therefore, man's body is not appropriately constituted.

Objection 2: The perfect is that which is lacking in nothing. But the human body lacks more things than do the bodies of other animals, which have hides and natural weapons for their protection—something that man lacks. Therefore, the human body is very imperfectly constituted.

Objection 3: Man is more distant from the plants than from the brute animals. But plants have an upright stature, whereas brute animals are on all fours. Therefore, it ought not to have been the case that man has an upright stature.

But contrary to this: Ecclesiastes 7:30 says, "God made man upright."

I respond: All natural things have been produced by God's craftsmanship (*ab arte divina*), and so they are in a certain sense the artifacts of God Himself (*sunt quodammodo artificata ipsius Dei*). Now every craftsman intends to give the best constitution to his work—not the best constitution absolutely speaking, but the best constitution relative to its end. And if such a constitution has some defect associated with it, the craftsman does not care. For instance, a craftsman who makes a saw for cutting makes it out of iron in order that it might be fit for cutting, and he does not care to make it out of glass, which is a more beautiful material, since such beauty would pose an obstacle to its end.

So, then, God gave the best constitution to each natural thing—not, to be sure, the best constitution absolutely speaking, but rather the best constitution relative to its being ordered toward its proper end. As the Philosopher puts it in *Physics 2*, "... because it is more worthy—not absolutely speaking, but relative to the substance of each one."

Now the proximate end of the human body is the rational soul and its operations, since matter is for the sake of form and instruments are for the sake of the agent's actions. Therefore, I claim that God made (*instituit*) the human body with the best constitution as far as appropriateness for this sort of form and its operations is concerned. And if there seems to be any defect in the constitution of the human body, notice that such a defect follows by material necessity from what is required in the body in order for it have a due proportion to the soul and to the soul's operations.

Reply to objection 1: The sense of touch, which is the basis for the other sensory powers, is more perfect in man than in any other animal, and for this reason it was necessary for man to have the most balanced physical constitution (*haberet temperatissimam complexionem*) of all the animals. Moreover, as is clear from what was said above (q. 78, a. 4), man is superior to all the other animals with respect to the interior sentient powers.

On the other hand, as far as some of the exterior sensory powers are concerned, it happens by a certain necessity that man falls short of the other animals. For instance, among all the animals, man has the worst sense of smell. For it was necessary that man, among all the animals, should have the largest brain in relation to his body (*respectu sui corporis haberet maximum cerebrum*), both in order to perfect in a less restricted way (*liberius*) the operations of the interior sentient powers—which, as was explained above (q. 84, a. 7), are necessary for the intellect's operation—and in order for the brain's cool temperature (*frigiditas cerebri*) to moderate the heart's heat, which has to abound in man in order for him to have an upright stature. But because of the brain's moistness, its size is an impediment to the sense of smell, which requires dryness.

In this same way, one can likewise give reasons for why certain animals have more acute vision or more sensitive hearing than man—because the obstacles to these senses must follow in man from the perfect balance of his constitution. And the same reason is also to be given for why other animals are swifter than man; for the balance of the human constitution is incompatible with excessive swiftness.

Reply to objection 2: Horns and hooves, which are the weapons of certain animals, along with a toughness of hide and a multitude of hair or feathers, which are the coverings of animals, attest to an abundance of the element earth, which is incompatible with the balance and tenderness of the human constitution. And so such things were not fitting for man. Rather, in place of these things man has his reason and his hands, by which he can make for himself, in an unlimited number of ways, weapons and coverings and the other things necessary for life. Hence, in *De Anima* 3 the hand is called “the organ of organs.” This was more appropriate for a rational nature, which has an unlimited number of ideas, with the result that it has the capacity to make an unlimited number of instruments.

Reply to objection 3: There are four reasons why having an upright stature was appropriate for man.

First, the sensory powers were given to man not only, as with the other animals, in order to procure the necessities of life, but also in order to have cognition. Hence, whereas the other animals do not delight in sensible things except in their relation to food and sexual attraction, man alone takes delight in the very beauty of sensible things in its own right. And so since the sensory powers are particularly strong in the facial area, the other animals have their faces turned toward the earth, as if in order to seek food and provide nourishment for themselves, whereas man has his face held up, in order that through the senses—and chiefly through the sense of sight, which is more subtle and reveals the many differences among things—he might be able in an unrestricted way (*libere*) to have cognition of sensible things, both earthly and celestial, from every angle, so that he might gather intelligible truth from all things.

Second, he has an upright stature so that the interior powers might have their operations more freely, given that the brain, in which the interior powers are in some sense activated (*perficiuntur*), is not close to the ground (*non depressum*) but is instead elevated over all the parts of the body.

Third, if man had a prone posture, he would have to use his hands as front feet. And so the hands

would cease to be useful for performing diverse works.

Fourth, if man had a prone posture and used his hands as front feet, then he would have to capture food with his mouth. And so, as is clear from the case of the other animals, he would have an oblong mouth, and hard and large lips, and a hardened tongue as well, so as not to be harmed by exterior things. And this sort of arrangement would completely impede speech, which is a proper work of reason.

And yet even though he has an upright stature, man is still maximally remote from plant life. For man has his superior part, i.e., the head, facing the higher part of the world, and he has his inferior part facing the lower part of the world, and so he is optimally arranged in his entire constitution. By contrast, plants have their superior part facing the lower part of the world (for their roots are, as it were, their mouths), whereas their inferior part is found in the higher part of the world. On the other hand, brute animals lie between the two, since the superior part of an animal is the part which takes in nourishment, whereas the inferior part is the part that emits waste products.

Article 4

Is the production of the human body appropriately described in Scripture?

It seems that the production of the human body is not appropriately described in Scripture:

Objection 1: Just as the human body was made by God, so too were the other works of the six days. But in the case of the other works it says, “God said, ‘Let such-and-such be made’, and it was made.” Therefore, something similar should have been said concerning the production of man.

Objection 2: As was explained above (a. 2), the human body was made directly by God. Therefore, it is inappropriate to say, “Let *us* make man.”

Objection 3: The form of the human body is the soul itself, which is the breath of life. Therefore, after it had said, “God formed man from the slime of the earth,” it was not appropriate to add, “... and He breathed into his face the breath of life.”

Objection 4: The soul, which is the breath of life, is in the whole body and most especially in the heart. Therefore, it was inappropriate to say, “He breathed into his face the breath of life.”

Objection 5: The male and female sexes have to do with the body, whereas the image of God has to do with the soul. But according to Augustine, the soul was made before the body. Therefore, after it had said, “To His image He made him,” it was not appropriate to add, “... male and female He created them.”

But contrary to this is the authority of Scripture.

I respond [by replying to the objections]:

Reply to objection 1: As Augustine says in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 6, the reason why man is preeminent over other things is not that God Himself made man—as if He Himself did not make the other things. For it is written, “The heavens are the works of your hands” (Psalm 101:26), and in another place, “His hands laid down the dry land” (Psalm 94:5). Rather, man is preeminent over other things because man was made to the image of God.

Nonetheless, in the case of the production of man Scripture uses a special way of speaking in order to indicate that the other things were made for the sake of man. For we normally make with greater thought and care those things that we principally intend.

Reply to objection 2: This phrase should not be taken to mean—as some have perversely taken it to mean—that God was saying to the *angels*, “Let us make man.” Instead, this is said in order to signify the plurality of the divine persons, whose image is found explicitly in man.

Reply to objection 3: Some have claimed that the [first] man’s body was formed antecedently in time, and that later on God infused a soul into the already formed body. But it is contrary to the nature of the perfection of the first institution of things that God would make either the body without the soul or the soul without the body; for each of them is a part of human nature.

It is especially inappropriate to make the body without the soul, since the body depends on the soul, but not vice versa. And so to rule this out, some have claimed that (a) when it says, “God formed man,” this means that the production of the body was simultaneous with the soul, and that (b) when it is added, “... and He breathed (*inspiravit*) into his face the breath of life,” this is referring to the Holy Spirit—just as our Lord breathed (*insufflavit*) on the Apostles, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

However, as Augustine points out in *De Civitate Dei*, this reading is ruled out by the words of Scripture. For the following is added to what was just cited: “And man was made a living soul”—but in 1 Corinthians 15:45 the Apostle relates this phrase to man’s animal life and not to his spiritual life. Therefore, the words “breath of life” refer to the soul, so that when it says, “He breathed into his face the breath of life,” this serves as an explanation, so to speak, of what had gone before; for the soul is the form of the body.

Reply to objection 4: The reason why it says that the breath of life was breathed into the man’s face is that the vital operations (*operationes vitae*) are more manifest in man’s face because of the sensory powers that exist there.

Reply to objection 5: According to Augustine, all the works of the six days were effected simultaneously. Hence, he does not hold that the first man’s soul, which he claims to have been made simultaneously with the angels, was made before the sixth day. Instead, he claims that on the sixth day itself (a) the first man’s soul was made in actuality and (b) his body was made with respect to its causal principles.

By contrast, the other doctors claim that both the man’s soul and his body were made in actuality on the sixth day.