

Reply to the Sixteenth Objection. The darkness mentioned as existing at the beginning of the creation was not a creature, but simply the absence of light in the atmosphere. It was not however an evil, since absence of good is an evil only when that good can and ought to be present. Thus it is not an evil in a stone that it cannot sense, nor is it an evil in a newly born child that it cannot walk. Nor was it owing to imperfection in the active cause that the air was created without light, but through its wisdom that so orders things that they are brought from imperfection to perfection.

Reply to the Seventeenth Objection. This argument supposes that evil has a cause *per se*: and we have shown this to be false.

The Eighteenth Objection is met with the same reply.

Reply to the Nineteenth Objection. Nature stands in relation to generation otherwise than to corruption. The form that is the term of generation is directly intended by nature both universal and particular, whereas privation of a form is beside the intention of a particular nature, although it is intended by universal nature, not indeed directly but as necessary for the introduction of another form. Hence generation is natural in every way, whereas corruption is sometimes against nature, if we refer it to a nature in particular.

Reply to the Twentieth Objection. Whatever there is of entity or action in a sinful act is referred to God as first cause: while the element of deformity is referred to the free will as cause. Thus when a man limps his walking is due to the motive power as first cause, but that he walks awry is due to a deformity in his leg.

Reply to the Twenty-first Objection. This argument applies to two agents entirely unrelated, but not when one of them operates in the other: for then one effect can proceed from both. Now God operates in every nature and in every will: hence the argument does not prove.

Reply to the Twenty-second Objection. This argument refers to an agent that acts of natural necessity: and one such agent is confined to one effect. Nor does it follow that an effect must be simple because its cause is simple: because

an effect need not equal its cause either in universality or in simplicity. But God does not act of natural necessity, but of his own will: wherefore he is able to make both simple things and composite things, things mutable and things immutable.

Reply to the Twenty-third Objection. The stain of sin does not impose a nature on the soul, but only the privation of grace: which privation is referred to the preceding sinful act, that caused or might have caused it. Consequently it does not follow that one who has not committed the act of a particular sin, has the stain of that sin.

Reply to the Twenty-fourth Objection. God's works continue for ever not in number but in species or genus; in their substance, but not in their mode of being, *for the fashion of this world passeth away* (1 Cor. vii, 31).

Reply to the Twenty-fifth Objection. Although God is a spirit his wisdom contains the ideas of bodies; and bodies are made like them in the same way as a craftsman's work is like him in respect of his art. However, bodies are like God in respect of his nature, in so far as they have being, goodness and a certain unity.

Reply to the Twenty-sixth Objection. Nature always does what is best, not with regard to the part but with regard to the whole: otherwise it would make a man's body all eye or all heart: for it would be better for the part but not for the whole. In like manner, although it would be better for this or that thing to be placed in a higher order, it would not be better for the universe, which would remain imperfect if all creatures were of one order.

ARTICLE VII

DOES GOD WORK IN OPERATIONS OF NATURE?

Sum. Th. I, Q. cv, A. 5: C.G. III. lxxvii

THE seventh point of inquiry is whether God works in the operations of nature: and apparently the answer should be in the negative.

1. Nature neither fails in necessary things nor abounds in the superfluous. Now the action of nature requires nothing more than an active force in the agent, and passivity in the recipient. Therefore there is no need for the divine power to operate in things.

2. It may be replied that the active force of nature depends in its operation on the operation of God.—On the contrary as the operation of created nature depends on the divine operation, so the operation of an elemental body depends on the operation of a heavenly body: because the heavenly body stands in relation to the elemental body, as a first to a second cause. Now no one maintains that the heavenly body operates in every action of an elemental body. Therefore we must not say that God operates in every operation of nature.

3. If God operates in every operation of nature God's operation and nature's are either one and the same operation or they are distinct. They are not one and the same: since unity of operation proves unity of nature: wherefore as in Christ there are two natures, so also are there two operations: and it is clear that God's nature and man's are not the same. Nor can they be two distinct operations: because distinct operations cannot seemingly terminate in one and the same product, since movements and operations are diversified by their terms. Therefore it is altogether impossible that God operate in nature.

4. It will be replied that two operations can have the same term, if one is subordinate to the other.—On the contrary, when several things are immediately related to some one thing, one is not subordinate to the other. Now both God and nature produce the natural effect immediately. Therefore of God's operation and nature's one is not subordinate to the other.

5. Whenever God fashions a nature, by that very fact he gives it all that belongs essentially to that nature: thus by the very fact that he makes a man he gives him a rational soul. Now strength is essentially a principle of action, since it is the perfection of power, and power is a principle of acting on another which is distinct (*Metaph.* v, 12). There-

fore by implanting natural forces in things, he enabled them to perform their natural operations. Hence there is no need for him also to operate in nature.

6. It might be replied that natural forces like other beings cannot last unless they be upheld by the divine power.—On the contrary, to operate on a thing is not the same as to operate in it. Now the operation whereby God either produces or preserves the forces of nature, has its effect on those forces by producing or preserving them. Therefore this does not prove that God works in the operations of nature.

7. If God works in the operations of nature, it follows that by so doing he imparts something to the natural agent: since every agent by acting makes something to be actual. Either then this something suffices for nature to be able to operate by itself, or it does not suffice. If it suffices, then since God also gave nature its natural forces, for the same reason we may say that the natural forces were sufficient for nature to act: and there will be no further need for God to do anything towards nature's operation besides giving nature the natural forces. If on the other hand it does not suffice, he will need to do something more, and if this is not sufficient, more still and so on indefinitely, which is impossible: because one effect cannot depend on an infinite number of actions, for, since it is not possible to pass through an infinite number of things, it would never materialise. Therefore we must accept the alternative, namely that the forces of nature suffice for the action of nature without God operating therein.

8. Further, given a cause that acts of natural necessity, its action follows unless it be hindered accidentally, because nature is confined to one effect. If, then, the heat of fire acts of natural necessity, given heat, the action of heating follows, and there is no need of a higher power to work in the heat.

9. Things that are altogether disparate can be separate from each other. Now God's action and nature's are altogether disparate, since God acts by his will and nature by necessity. Therefore God's action can be separated from

the action of nature, and consequently he need not operate in the action of nature.

10. A creature, considered as such, is like God inasmuch as it actually exists and acts: and in this respect it participates of the divine goodness. But this would not be so if its own forces were not sufficient for it to act. Therefore a creature is sufficiently equipped for action without God's operation therein.

11. Two angels cannot be in the same place, according to some, lest confusion of action should result: because an angel is where he operates. Now God is more distant from nature than one angel from another. Therefore God cannot operate in the same action with nature.

12. Moreover, it is written (Ecclus. xv, 14) that *God made man and left him in the hand of his own counsel*. But he would not have so left him, if he always operated in man's will. Therefore he does not operate in the operation of the will.

13. The will is master of its own action. But this would not be the case, if it were unable to act without God operating in it, for our will is not master of the divine operation. Therefore God does not operate in the operation of the will.

14. To be free is to be the cause of one's own action (*Metaph. i, 2*). Consequently that which cannot act without receiving the action of another cause is not free to act: now man's will is free to act. Therefore it can act without any other cause operating in it: and the same conclusion follows.

15. A first cause enters more into the effect than does a second cause. If, then, God operates in will and nature as a first in a second cause, it follows that the defects that occur in voluntary and natural actions are to be ascribed to God rather than to nature or will: and this is absurd.

16. Given a cause whose action suffices, it is superfluous to require the action of another cause. Now it is clear that if God operates in nature and will, his action is sufficient, since *God's works are perfect* (Deut. xxii, 4). Therefore all action of nature and will would be superfluous. But nothing

in nature is superfluous, and consequently neither nature nor will would do anything, and God alone would act. This, however, is absurd: therefore it is also absurd to state that God operates in nature and will.

On the contrary it is written (Isa. xxvi, 12): *Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us*.

Moreover, even as art presupposes nature, so does nature presuppose God. Now nature operates in the operations of art: since art does not work without the concurrence of nature: thus fire softens the iron so as to render it malleable under the stroke of the smith. Therefore God also operates in the operation of nature.

Again, according to the Philosopher (*Phys. ii, 2*) man and the sun generate man. Now just as the generative act in man depends on the action of the sun, so and much more does the action of nature depend on the action of God. Therefore in every action of nature God operates also.

Further, nothing can act except what exists. Now nature cannot exist except through God's action, for it would fall into nothingness were it not preserved in being by the action of the divine power, as Augustine states (*Gen. ad lit.*). Therefore nature cannot act unless God act also.

Again, God's power is in every natural thing, since he is in all things by his essence, his presence and his power. Now it cannot be admitted that God's power forasmuch as it is in things is not operative: and consequently it operates as being in nature. And it cannot be said to operate something besides what nature operates, since evidently there is but one operation. Therefore God works in every operation of nature.

I answer that we must admit without any qualification that God operates in the operations of nature and will. Some, however, through failing to understand this aright fell into error, and ascribed to God every operation of nature in the sense that nature does nothing at all by its own power. They were led to hold this opinion by various arguments. Thus according to Rabbi Moses some of the sages in the Moorish books of law asserted that all these natural forms are accidents, and since an accident cannot pass from

one subject to another, they deemed it impossible for a natural agent by its form to produce in any way a similar form in another subject, and consequently they said that fire does not heat but God creates heat in that which is made hot. And if it were objected to them, that a thing becomes hot whenever it is placed near the fire, unless some obstacle be in the way, which shows that fire is the *per se* cause of heat; they replied that God established the order to be observed according to which he would never cause heat except at the presence of fire: and that the fire itself would have no part in the action of heating. This opinion is manifestly opposed to the nature of sensation: for since the senses do not perceive unless they are acted upon by the sensible object—which is clearly true in regard to touch and the other senses except sight, since some maintain that this is effected by the visual organ projecting itself on to the object—it would follow that a man does not feel the fire's heat, if the action of the fire does not produce in the sensorial organ a likeness of the heat that is in the fire. In fact if this heat-species be produced in the organ by another agent, although the touch would sense the heat, it would not sense the heat of the fire, nor would it perceive that the fire is hot, and yet the sense judges this to be the case, and the senses do not err about their proper object.

It is also opposed to reason which convinces us that nothing in nature is void of purpose. Now unless natural things had an action of their own the forms and forces with which they are endowed would be to no purpose; thus if a knife does not cut, its sharpness is useless. It would also be useless to set fire to the coal, if God ignites the coal without fire.

It is also opposed to God's goodness which is self-communicative: the result being that things were made like God not only in being but also in acting.

The argument which they put forward is altogether frivolous. When we say that an accident does not pass from one subject to another, this refers to the same identical accident, and we do not deny that an accident subjected in a natural thing can produce an accident of like species in

another subject: indeed this happens of necessity in every natural action. Moreover, they suppose that all forms are accidents, and this is not true: because then in natural things there would be no substantial being, the principle of which cannot be an accidental but only a substantial form. Moreover, this would make an end of generation and corruption: and many other absurdities would follow.

Avicebron (*Fons Vita*) says that no corporeal substance acts, but that a spiritual energy penetrating all bodies acts in them, and that the measure of a body's activity is according to the measure of its purity and subtlety, whereby it is rendered amenable to the influence of a spiritual force. He supports his statement by three arguments. His first argument is that every agent after God requires subject-matter on which to act: and no corporeal agent has matter subject to it, wherefore seemingly it cannot act. His second argument is that quantity hinders action and movement: in proof of which he points out that a bulky body is slow of movement and heavy: wherefore a corporeal substance being inseparable from quantity cannot act. His third argument is that the corporeal substance is furthest removed from the first agent, which is purely active and nowise passive, while the intermediate substances are both active and passive: and therefore corporeal substances which come last, must needs be passive only and not active.

Now all this is manifestly fallacious in that he takes all corporeal substances as one single substance; and as though they differed from one another only in accidental and not in their substantial being. If the various corporeal substances be taken as substantially distinct, every one will not occupy the last place and the furthest removed from the first agent, but one will be higher than another and nearer to the first agent, so that one will be able to act on another.—Again in the foregoing arguments the corporeal substance is considered only in respect of its matter and not in respect of its form, whereas it is composed of both. It is true that the corporeal substance belongs to the lowest grade of beings, and has no subject beneath it, but this is by reason of its matter, not of its form: because in respect of its form a

corporeal substance has an inferior subject in any other substance whose matter has potentially that form which the corporeal substance in question has actually. Hence it follows that there is mutual action in corporeal substances, since in the matter of one there is potentially the form of another, and vice versa. And if this form does not suffice to act, for the same reason neither does the energy of a spiritual substance, which the corporeal substance must needs receive according to its mode.—Nor does quantity hinder movement and action, since nothing is moved but that which has quantity (*Phys.* vi, 10). Nor is it true that quantity causes weight. This is disproved in *De Caelo* iv, 2. In fact, quantity increases the speed of natural movement, thus a weighty body, the greater it is, the greater the velocity of its downward movement, and in like manner that of a light body in its movement upwards. And although quantity in itself is not a principle of action, no reason can be given why it should hinder action, seeing that rather is it the instrument of an active quality; except in so far as active forms in quantitative matter receive a certain limited being that is confined to that particular matter, so that their action does not extend to an extraneous matter. But though they receive individual being in matter, they retain their specific nature, by reason whereof they can produce their like in species, and yet are unable themselves to be in another subject. Hence we are to understand that God works in every natural thing not as though the natural thing were altogether inert, but because God works in both nature and will when they work. How this may be we must now explain.

It must be observed that one thing may be the cause of another's action in several ways. First, by giving it the power to act: thus it is said that the generator moves heavy and light bodies, inasmuch as it gives them the power from which that movement results. In this way God causes all the actions of nature, because he gave natural things the forces whereby they are able to act, not only as the generator gives power to heavy and light bodies yet does not preserve it, but also as upholding its

very being, forasmuch as he is the cause of the power bestowed, not only like the generator in its becoming, but also in its being; and thus God may be said to be the cause of an action by both causing and upholding the natural power in its being. For secondly, the preserver of a power is said to cause the action; thus a remedy that preserves the sight is said to make a man see. But since nothing moves or acts of itself unless it be an unmoved mover; thirdly, a thing is said to cause another's action by moving it to act: whereby we do not mean that it causes or preserves the active power, but that it applies the power to action, even as a man causes the knife's cutting by the very fact that he applies the sharpness of the knife to cutting by moving it to cut. And since the lower nature in acting does not act except through being moved, because these lower bodies are both subject to and cause alteration: whereas the heavenly body causes alteration without being subject to it, and yet it does not cause movement unless it be itself moved, so that we must eventually trace its movement to God, it follows of necessity that God causes the action of every natural thing by moving and applying its power to action. Furthermore we find that the order of effects follows the order of causes, and this must needs be so on account of the likeness of the effect to its cause. Nor can the second cause by its own power have any influence on the effect of the first cause, although it is the instrument of the first cause in regard to that effect: because an instrument is in a manner the cause of the principal cause's effect, not by its own form or power, but in so far as it participates somewhat in the power of the principal cause through being moved thereby: thus the axe is the cause of the craftsman's handiwork not by its own form or power, but by the power of the craftsman who moves it so that it participates in his power. Hence, fourthly, one thing causes the action of another, as a principal agent causes the action of its instrument: and in this way again we must say that God causes every action of natural things. For the higher the cause the greater its scope and efficacy: and the more efficacious the cause, the more deeply does it penetrate into its effect,

and the more remote the potentiality from which it brings that effect into act. Now in every natural thing we find that it is a being, a natural thing, and of this or that nature. The first is common to all beings, the second to all natural things, the third to all the members of a species, while a fourth, if we take accidents into account, is proper to this or that individual. Accordingly this or that individual thing cannot by its action produce another individual of the same species except as the instrument of that cause which includes in its scope the whole species and, besides, the whole being of the inferior creature. Wherefore no action in these lower bodies attains to the production of a species except through the power of the heavenly body, nor does anything produce being except by the power of God. For being is the most common first effect and more intimate than all other effects: wherefore it is an effect which it belongs to God alone to produce by his own power: and for this reason (*De Causis*, prop. ix) an intelligence does not give being, except the divine power be therein. Therefore God is the cause of every action, inasmuch as every agent is an instrument of the divine power operating.

If, then, we consider the subsistent agent, every particular agent is immediate to its effect: but if we consider the power whereby the action is done, then the power of the higher cause is more immediate to the effect than the power of the lower cause; since the power of the lower cause is not coupled with its effect save by the power of the higher cause: wherefore it is said in *De Causis* (prop. i) that the power of the first cause takes the first place in the production of the effect and enters more deeply therein. Accordingly the divine power must needs be present to every acting thing, even as the power of the heavenly body must needs be present to every acting elemental body. Yet there is a difference in that wherever the power of God is there is his essence: whereas the essence of the heavenly body is not wherever its power is: and again God is his own power, whereas the heavenly body is not its own power. Consequently we may say that God works in everything forasmuch as everything needs his power in order that it may act: whereas it cannot

properly be said that the heaven always works in an elemental body, although the latter acts by its power. Therefore God is the cause of everything's action inasmuch as he gives everything the power to act, and preserves it in being and applies it to action, and inasmuch as by his power every other power acts. And if we add to this that God is his own power, and that he is in all things not as part of their essence but as upholding them in their being, we shall conclude that he acts in every agent immediately, without prejudice to the action of the will and of nature.

Reply to the First Objection. The active and passive powers of a natural thing suffice for action in their own order: yet the divine power is required for the reason given above.

Reply to the Second Objection. Although the action of the forces of nature may be said to depend on God in the same way as that of an elemental body depends on the heavenly body, the comparison does not apply in every respect.

Reply to the Third Objection. In that operation whereby God operates by moving nature, nature itself does not operate: and even the operation of nature is also the operation of the divine power, just as the operation of an instrument is effected by the power of the principal agent. Nor does this prevent nature and God from operating to the same effect, on account of the order between God and nature.

Reply to the Fourth Objection. Both God and nature operate immediately, although as already stated there is order between them of priority and posteriority.

Reply to the Fifth Objection. It belongs to the lower power to be a principle of operation in a certain way and in its own order, namely as instrument of a higher power: wherefore, apart from the latter it has no operation.

Reply to the Sixth Objection. God is the cause of nature's operation not only as upholding the forces of nature in their being, but in other ways also, as stated above.

Reply to the Seventh Objection. The natural forces implanted in natural things at their formation are in them

by way of fixed and constant forms in nature. But that which God does in a natural thing to make it operate actually, is a mere intention,¹ incomplete in being, as colours in the air and the power of the craftsman in his instrument. Hence even as art can give the axe its sharpness as a permanent form, but not the power of the art as a permanent form, unless it were endowed with intelligence, so it is possible for a natural thing to be given its own proper power as a permanent form within it, but not the power to act so as to cause being as the instrument of the first cause, unless it were given to be the universal principle of being. Nor could it be given to a natural power to cause its own movement, or to preserve its own being. Consequently just as it clearly cannot be given to the craftsman's instrument to work unless it be moved by him, so neither can it be given to a natural thing to operate without the divine operation.

Reply to the Eighth Objection. The natural necessity whereby heat acts is the result of the order of all the preceding causes: wherefore the power of the first cause is not excluded.

Reply to the Ninth Objection. Although nature and will are disparate in themselves, there is a certain order between them as regards their respective actions. For just as the action of nature precedes the act of our will, so that operations of art which proceed from the will presuppose the operation of nature: even so the will of God which is the origin of all natural movement precedes the operation of nature, so that its operation is presupposed in every operation of nature.

Reply to the Tenth Objection. The creature has a certain likeness to God by sharing in his goodness, in so far as it exists and acts, but not so that it can become equal to him through that likeness being perfected: wherefore as the imperfect needs the perfect, so the forces of nature in acting need the action of God.

¹ i.e. not a permanent quality but something flowing 'like colours in the air, or the energy of a craftsman in his tools,' as St. Thomas explains elsewhere.

Reply to the Eleventh Objection. One angel is less distant from another in the degree of nature than God from created nature; and yet in the order of cause and effect God and the creature come together, whereas two angels do not: wherefore God operates in nature, but one angel does not operate in another.

Reply to the Twelfth Objection. God is said to have left man in the hand of his counsel not as though he did not operate in the will: but because he gave man's will dominion over its act, so that it is not bound to this or that alternative: which dominion he did not bestow on nature since by its form it is confined to one determinate effect.

Reply to the Thirteenth Objection. The will is said to have dominion over its own act not to the exclusion of the first cause, but inasmuch as the first cause does not act in the will so as to determine it of necessity to one thing as it determines nature;¹ wherefore the determination of the act remains in the power of the reason and will.

Reply to the Fourteenth Objection. Not every cause excludes liberty, but only that which compels: and it is not thus that God causes our operations.

Reply to the Fifteenth Objection. Forasmuch as the first cause has more influence in the effect than the second cause, whatever there is of perfection in the effect is to be referred chiefly to the first cause: while all defects must be referred to the second cause which does not act as efficaciously as the first cause.

Reply to the Sixteenth Objection. God acts perfectly as first cause: but the operation of nature as second cause is also necessary. Nevertheless God can produce the natural effect even without nature: but he wishes to act by means of nature in order to preserve order in things.

¹ *Sum. Theol.* I-II, Q. x, art. 4.