

40. *Summa Theologiae*

First Part

Selections from the “Treatise on Creation”

Question 45

The Mode of Emanation of Things from the First Principle

*Article 1. Is to create to make
something from nothing?*

It would seem that to create is not to make anything from nothing.

1. For Augustine says: “To make concerns what did not exist at all; but to create is to make something by bringing it forth from what was already existing.”¹

2. Further, the nobility of action and of motion is considered from their terms. On this basis, action is nobler if it is from good to good, and from being to being, than if it is from nothing to something. But creation appears to be the most noble action, and first among all actions. Therefore it is not from nothing to something, but rather from being to being.

3. Further, the preposition ‘from’ [*ex*] expresses the relation of some cause, and especially of the material cause; as when we say that a statue is made from brass. But *nothing* cannot be the matter of being, nor in any way its cause. Therefore to create is not to make something from nothing.

On the contrary. On the text of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created heaven,” etc., the *Gloss* says: “To create is to make something from nothing.”²

From *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, tr. English Dominican Fathers and Anton Pegis (New York: Random House, 1945; reprinted by Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). Reprinted by permission of Hackett Publishing Company.

1. *Contra adv. legis et proph* 1.23.

2. *Glossa ordinaria*, on Gen. 1:1.

Reply. As was said above, we must consider not only the emanation of a particular being from a particular agent, but also the emanation of all being from the universal cause, which is God;³ and this emanation we designate by the name of *creation*. Now what proceeds by a particular emanation is not presupposed to that emanation. Thus, in the generation of man, we must say that he does not exist before being generated; but man is made from *not-man*, and white from *not-white*. Hence if the emanation of the whole universal being from the first principle be considered, it is impossible that any being should be presupposed to this emanation. Now *nothing* is the same as *no being*. Therefore as the generation of a man presupposes the *non-being* which is *non-man*, so creation, which is the emanation of all being, presupposes the *non-being* which is *nothing*.

Response to 1. Augustine uses the term *creation* in an equivocal sense, according as to be created signifies improvement in things; as when we say that a bishop is created. This is not the way in which we here use the term creation, but in the way already stated.

Response to 2. Changes receive their species and dignity, not from the term *wherfrom*, but from the term *whereto*. Therefore a change is more perfect and excellent when the term *whereto* of the change is more noble and excellent, although the term *wherfrom*, corresponding to the term *whereto*, may be more imperfect: thus generation is absolutely nobler and more excellent than alteration, because the substantial form is nobler than the accidental form; and yet the privation of the substantial form, which is the term *wherfrom* in generation, is more imperfect than the contrary

3. *Q. 44, a. 2.*

which is the term *wherfrom* in alteration. Similarly, creation is more perfect and more excellent than generation and alteration, because the term *whereto* is the whole substance of the thing; whereas what is understood as the term *wherfrom* is absolutely non-being.

Response to 3. When anything is said to be made from nothing, the preposition ‘from’ [*ex*] does not signify a material cause, but only an order, as when we say, “From morning comes midday”—i.e., *after* morning comes midday. But we must understand that this preposition ‘from’ [*ex*] can either include the negation expressed when I say the *nothing*, or it can be included in it. If taken in the first sense, then we affirm the order by stating the relation of what now is to its previous non-being. But if the negation includes the preposition, then the order is denied, and the sense is, “It is made from nothing—i.e., it is not made from anything”; just as if we were to say, “He speaks of nothing,” because he does not speak of anything. Both uses of ‘from’ are present when we say that something is made from nothing. But in the first way, the preposition ‘from’ [*ex*] expresses order, as has been said. In the second sense, it expresses a relation to a material cause, and denies it.

Article 2. Can God create anything?

It would seem that God cannot create anything.

1. For according to the Philosopher, the ancient philosophers considered it as a commonly received axiom that “nothing is made from nothing.”⁴ But the power of God does not extend to the contraries of first principles; as, for instance, that God could make the whole to be less than its part, or that affirmation and negation be both true at the same time. Therefore God cannot make anything from nothing, or create.

2. Further, if to create is to make something from nothing, to be created is to be made. But to be made is to be changed. Therefore creation is change. But every change occurs in some subject, as appears by the definition of motion: for motion is the act of what is in

potentiality. Therefore it is impossible for anything to be made out of nothing by God.

3. Further, what has been made must have at some time been becoming. But it cannot be said that, at the same time, what is created is becoming and has been made, because in permanent things what is becoming, is not, and what has been made, already is; and so, if we said that it was both, it would follow that something would be, and not be, at the same time. Therefore, when anything is made, its becoming precedes its having been made. But this is impossible, unless there is a subject in which the becoming is sustained. Therefore it is impossible that anything should be made from nothing.

4. Further, an infinite distance cannot be crossed. But an infinite distance exists between being and nothing. Therefore it does not happen that something is made from nothing.

On the contrary. It is said (Gen. 1:1): “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”; on which the *Gloss* says that “to create is to make something from nothing.”⁵

Reply. Not only is it not impossible that anything should be created by God, but it is necessary to say that all things were created by God, as appears from what has been said. For when anyone makes one thing from another, the thing from which he makes it is presupposed to his action, and is not produced by his action; and thus the craftsman produces his works from natural things such as wood or brass, which are caused, not by the action of art, but by the action of nature. So, too, nature itself causes natural things so far as concerns their form, but presupposes matter. If, therefore, God acted only on the condition of a subject presupposed to His action, it would follow that the thing presupposed would not be caused by Him. Now it was shown above that nothing can be unless it is from God, Who is the universal cause of all being.⁶ Hence it is necessary to say that God brings things into being from nothing.

4. *Physics* 1.4, 187a28.

5. *Glossa ordinaria*, on Gen. 1:1.

6. Q. 44, a. 1 and 2.

Response to 1. The ancient philosophers, as was said above, considered only the emanation of particular effects from particular causes, which necessarily presuppose something in their action;⁷ whence came their common opinion that "nothing is made from nothing." But this dictum has no place in the first emanation from the universal principle of things.

Response to 2. Creation is not change, except according to our way of understanding. For change means that the same thing should be different now from what it was previously. Sometimes it is the same actual reality which is different now from what it was before, as happens when the motion is according to quantity, quality, and place; but sometimes it is the same being only in potentiality, as in substantial change, the subject of which is matter. But in creation, by which the whole substance of a thing is produced, the same thing can be taken as different now and before only according to our way of understanding, so that a thing is understood as first not existing at all, and afterwards as existing. But "as action and passion coincide as to the substance of motion," and differ only according to diverse relations,⁸ it must follow that, when motion is withdrawn, there remain only the diverse relations in the Creator and in the creature. But because the mode of signification follows the mode of understanding, as was said above,⁹ creation is signified as a change; and on this account it is said that to create is to make something from nothing. And yet *to make* and *to be made* are more suitable expressions here than *to change* and *to be changed*, because *to make* and *to be made* import a relation of cause to the effect, and of effect to the cause, and imply change only as a consequence.

Response to 3. In things which are made without motion, to become and to be already made are simultaneous, whether such making is the term of motion, as illumination (for a thing is being illuminated and is illuminated at the same time), or whether it is not the

term of motion, as the concept is being made in the mind and is made at the same time. In things of this kind, what is being made, is; but when we speak of their being made, we mean that they are from another, and that previously they did not exist. Hence, since creation is without motion, a thing is being created and has been created at the same time.

Response to 4. This objection proceeds from a false imagination, as if there were an infinite medium between nothing and being; which is plainly false. This false imagination comes from the fact that creation is signified as a change existing between two terms.

Article 5. Does it belong to God alone to create?

It would seem that it does not belong to God alone to create.

1. For according to the Philosopher, that is perfect which can make something like itself.¹⁰ But immaterial creatures are more perfect than material creatures, which nevertheless can produce their like; for fire generates fire, and man begets man. Therefore an immaterial substance can make a substance like to itself. But immaterial substance can be made only by creation, since it has no matter from which to be made. Therefore a creature can create.

2. Further, the greater the resistance on the part of the thing made, the greater power required in the maker. But a *contrary* resists more than *nothing*. Therefore it requires more power to make something from its contrary (which nevertheless a creature can do) than to make a thing from nothing. All the more therefore can a creature make something out of nothing.

3. Further, the power of the maker is considered according to the measure of what is made. But created being is finite, as we proved above when treating of the infinity of God.¹¹ Therefore only a finite power is needed to produce a creature by creation. But to have a finite power is not contrary to the nature of a creature. Therefore it is not impossible for a creature to create.

7. Q. 44, a. 2.

8. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.3, 202b20.

9. Q. 13, a. 1.

10. *Meteorologica*. 4.3, 380a14; *De an.* 2.4 415a26.

11. Q. 7, a. 2, 3 and 4.

On the contrary. Augustine says that neither good nor bad angels can create anything.¹² Much less therefore can any other creatures.

Reply. It is sufficiently apparent at first glance, according to what has preceded, that to create can be the proper action of God alone.¹³ For the more universal effects must be reduced to the more universal and prior causes. Now among all effects the most universal is being itself; and hence it must be the proper effect of the first and most universal cause, God. Hence we find it said that “neither intelligence nor the soul gives being, except inasmuch as it works by divine operation.”¹⁴ Now to produce being absolutely, and not merely as this or that being, belongs to the nature of creation. Hence it is manifest that creation is the proper act of God alone.

It is possible, however, for something to participate in the proper action of another, not by its own power, but instrumentally, inasmuch as it acts by the power of another, as air can heat and ignite by the power of fire. And so some have supposed that although creation is the proper act of the universal cause, still some lesser cause, acting by the power of the first cause, can create. And thus Avicenna asserted that the first separate substance created by God created another separate substance after itself, then the substance of the heavens and its soul; and that the substance of the heavens creates the matter of the inferior bodies.¹⁵ And in the same manner the Master of the *Sentences* says that God can communicate to a creature the power of creating, so that the creature can create as God’s minister, and not by its own power.¹⁶

But such a thing cannot be, because the secondary instrumental cause does not share in the action of the superior cause, except inasmuch as by something proper to itself it acts dispositively in relation to the ef-

fect of the principal agent. If therefore it produced nothing by means of what is proper to itself, it would be set to work in vain; nor would there be any need for us to use special instruments for special actions. Thus we see that a saw, in cutting wood, which it does by the property of its own form, produces the form of a bench, which is the proper effect of the principal agent. But the proper effect of God creating is what is presupposed to all other effects, and that is being taken absolutely. Hence nothing else can act dispositively and instrumentally towards this effect, since creation does not depend on anything presupposed, which can be disposed by the action of the instrumental agent. So it is impossible for any creature to create, either by its own power, or instrumentally—that is, ministerially.

And above all it is absurd to suppose that a body can create, for no body acts except by touching or moving; and thus it requires in its action some pre-existing thing which can be touched or moved, which is contrary to the very idea of creation.

Response to 1. A perfect thing participating in any nature makes a likeness to itself, not by absolutely producing that nature, but by applying it to something else. For an individual man cannot be the cause of human nature absolutely, because he would then be the cause of himself; but he is the cause that human nature exists in the man begotten. And thus he presupposes in his action the determinate matter whereby he is an individual man. But just as an individual man participates in human nature, so every created being participates, so to speak, in the nature of being; for God alone is His own being, as we have said above.¹⁷ Therefore no created being can produce a being absolutely, except inasmuch as it causes *being* in some particular subject; and so it is necessary to presuppose that whereby a thing is this particular thing as prior to the action whereby it produces its own like. But in an immaterial substance it is not possible to presuppose anything whereby it is this thing, because it is a *this* by its form, through which it has being. For an immaterial substance is a subsisting form. Therefore an immaterial substance cannot produce another like

12. *De Trinitate* 3.8.

13. a. 1; Q. 44, a. 1 and 2.

14. *De causis* 3.

15. *Metaphysics* 9.4. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Metaphysics* 5; Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* III; *De causis* 3. Cf. also Albertus Magnus, *Summa de creaturis* 2, q. 61, a. 2.

16. Peter Lombard, *Sentences* 5.3.

17. Q. 7, a. 1, Response to 3; a. 2.

immaterial substance as regards its being, but only as regards some added perfection; as we may say that a superior angel illumines an inferior, as Dionysius says.¹⁸ In this sense we also speak of paternity in heaven, as the Apostle says (Ephes. 3:15): "From whom all paternity in heaven and on earth is named." From which it clearly appears that no created being can cause anything, unless something is presupposed; which is against the nature of creation.

Response to 2. A thing is made from its contrary accidentally; but properly it is made from the subject which is in potentiality.¹⁹ And so the contrary resists the agent, inasmuch as it keeps the potentiality from the act to which the agent intends to reduce the matter; just as fire intends to reduce the matter of water to an act like to itself, but is impeded by the form and contrary dispositions, by which the potentiality of the water is as it were restrained from being reduced to act. But the more the potentiality is restrained, the more power is required in the agent to reduce the matter to act. Hence a much greater power is required in the agent when no potentiality pre-exists. Thus it appears that it is an act of much greater power to make a thing from nothing than from its contrary.

Response to 3. The power of the maker is reckoned not only from the substance of the thing made, but also from the mode of its being made; for a greater heat heats not only more, but also more quickly. Therefore, although to create a finite effect does not reveal an infinite power, yet to create it from nothing does reveal an infinite power. This appears from what has been said. For if a greater power is required in the agent in proportion to the distance of the potentiality from act, it follows that the power of that which produces something from no presupposed potentiality (which is how a creating agent produces) is infinite, because there is no proportion between *no potentiality* and the potentiality presupposed by the power of a natural agent, as there is no proportion between *non-being* and *being*. And because no creature has an absolutely infinite

power, any more than it has an infinite being, as was proved above,²⁰ it follows that no creature can create.

Question 46 On the Beginning of the Duration of Creatures

*Article 1. Has the universe
of creatures always existed?*

It would seem that the universe of creatures, which is now called the world, had no beginning, but existed from eternity:

1. For everything which begins to be had, before being, the possibility of being: otherwise its coming to be would have been impossible. If therefore the world began to be, before it began to be it was possible for it to be. But *that which can be* is matter, which is in potentiality to being, which results from a form, and to non-being, which results from privation of form. If therefore the world began to be, matter must have existed before the world. But matter cannot be without form: and if the matter of the world is joined to form, *that is* the world. Therefore the world existed before it began to be: which is impossible.¹

2. Further, nothing which has power to be always, sometimes is and sometimes is not; because as far as the power of a thing lasts, so long does it exist. But every incorruptible thing has the power to be always, for its power does not extend to any determinate time. Therefore no incorruptible thing sometimes is, and sometimes is not. But everything, which has a beginning, at some time is, and at some time is not. Therefore no incorruptible thing begins to be. But there are many incorruptible things in the world, as the celestial bodies and all intellectual substances. Therefore the world did not begin to be.²

20. Q. 7, a. 2.

1. Argument of the Peripatetics, according to Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 14. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I; *In Physics* 8, comm. 4.

2. Aristotle, *De caelo* 1.12, 281b18. Ibn Rushd, *In de caelo*, 1, comm. 119.

18. *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 8.2.

19. Aristotle, *Physics* 1.7, 190b 27.

3. Further, what is ungenerated has no beginning. But the Philosopher proves that matter is ungenerated,³ and also that the heavens are ungenerated.⁴ Therefore the universe did not begin to be.⁵

4. Further, there is a vacuum where there is not a body, but there could be. But if the world began to be, there was first no body where the body of the world now is; and yet it could be there, otherwise it would not be there now. Therefore before the world there was a vacuum; which is impossible.⁶

5. Further, nothing begins anew to be moved except for the fact that either the mover or the thing moved is now otherwise than it was before. But what is now otherwise than it was before is moved. Therefore before every new motion there was a previous motion. Therefore motion always was; and therefore so also was the thing moved, because motion is only in a movable thing.⁷

6. Further, every mover is either natural or voluntary. But neither begins to move except by some pre-existing motion. For nature always operates in the same manner: hence unless some change precede either in the nature of the mover, or in the movable thing, there cannot arise from the natural mover a motion which was not there before. As for the will, without itself being changed, it puts off doing what it proposes to do; but this can be only by some imagined change, even if it involves only the passage of time. Thus he who wills to make a house tomorrow, and not today, awaits something which will be tomorrow, but is not today. At the very least he awaits for today to pass, and for tomorrow to come; and this cannot be without change, because time is the number of motion. Therefore it remains that before every new motion, there was a previous motion; and so the same conclusion follows as before.⁸

3. *Physics* 1.9, 192a28.

4. *De caelo*, 1.3, 270a13.

5. An argument of Aristotle, found in Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 13 (p. 371).

6. Ibn Rushd, *In De caelo* III, comm. 29.

7. An argument of Aristotle, found in Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 14. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *In Physics* 8, comm. 7.

8. Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics* IX.1. Ibn Rushd, *In Physics* 8, comm. 8; comm. 15; *Destruct. destruct.* I.

7. Further, whatever is always in its beginning, and always in its end, cannot cease and cannot begin; because what begins is not in its end, and what ceases is not in its beginning. But time is always in its beginning and end, because no part of time exists except *now*, which is the end of the past and the beginning of the future. Therefore time cannot begin or end, and consequently neither can motion, of which time is the number.⁹

8. Further, God is before the world either in the order of nature only, or also in duration. If in the order of nature only, therefore, since God is eternal, the world also is eternal. But if God is prior in duration, since what is prior and posterior in duration constitutes time, it follows that time existed before the world; which is impossible.¹⁰

9. Further, if there is a sufficient cause, there is an effect; for a cause from which there is no effect is an imperfect cause, requiring something else to make the effect follow. But God is the sufficient cause of the world: He is the final cause by reason of His goodness, the exemplary cause by reason of His wisdom, and the efficient cause by reason of His power, as appears from the above.¹¹ Since therefore God is eternal, the world also is eternal.¹²

10. Further, He who has an eternal action also has an eternal effect. But the action of God is His substance, which is eternal. Therefore the world is eternal.¹³

On the contrary. It is said (John 17:5), “Glorify Me, O Father, with Thyself with the glory which I had before the world was”; and (Prov. 8:22), “The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning.”

9. Aristotle, *Physics* 8.1, 251b19. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *In Physics* 8 comm. 11.

10. Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics* IX.1. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I.

11. Q. 44, a. 1, 3, and 4.

12. Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics* IX.1. Cf. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 1, no. 64; Bonaventure, *In II Sentences*, d. 1, pt. 1, a. 1, q. 2.

13. Ibn Sīnā, *Metaphysics* IX.1. Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 18.

Reply. Nothing except God can be eternal. This statement is far from impossible. For it has been shown above that the will of God is the cause of things.¹⁴ Therefore, things are necessary according as it is necessary for God to will them, since the necessity of the effect depends on the necessity of the cause.¹⁵ Now it was shown above that, absolutely speaking, it is not necessary that God should will anything except Himself.¹⁶ It is not therefore necessary for God to will that the world should always exist; but supposing an eternal world to exist, it exists to the extent that God wills it to exist, since the being of the world depends on the will of God as on its cause. It is not therefore necessary for the world to be always; hence neither can it be proved demonstratively.

Nor are Aristotle's arguments absolutely demonstrative, but only relatively—viz., as against the arguments of some of the ancients who asserted that the world began to be in some actually impossible ways. This appears in three ways.¹⁷ First, because both in *Physics* 8¹⁸ and in *De caelo* 1¹⁹ he premises some opinions, such as those of Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Plato, and brings forward arguments to refute them. Secondly, because wherever he speaks of this subject, he quotes the testimony of the ancients, which is not the way of a demonstrator, but of one persuading of what is probable. Thirdly, because he expressly says that there are dialectical problems which we cannot solve demonstratively, as, "whether the world is eternal."²⁰

Response to 1. Before the world existed, it was possible for the world to be, not, indeed, according to the passive power which is matter, but according to the active power of God. The world was possible also, according as a thing is called absolutely possible, not in relation to any power, but from the sole relation of the terms which are not repugnant to each other; in which

sense possible is opposed to impossible, as appears from the Philosopher.²¹

Response to 2. Whatever has the power always to be, from the fact of having that power cannot sometimes be and sometimes not-be. However, before it received that power, it did not exist. Hence this argument, which is given by Aristotle,²² does not prove absolutely that incorruptible beings never began to be; it proves that they did not begin according to the natural process by which generable and corruptible beings begin to be.

Response to 3. Aristotle proves that matter is ungenerated from the fact that it has not a subject from which to derive its existence;²³ and he proves that the heavens are ungenerated, because they have no contrary from which to be generated.²⁴ Hence it appears that no conclusion follows in either case, except that matter and the heavens did not begin by generation; as some said especially about the heavens.²⁵ But what we say is that matter and the heavens were produced into being by creation, as appears above.²⁶

Response to 4. The notion of a vacuum is not only that *in which is nothing*, but also implies a space capable of holding a body and in which there is not a body, as appears from Aristotle.²⁷ But we hold that there was no place or space before the world was.

Response to 5. The first mover was always in the same state, but the first movable thing was not always so, because it began to be whereas hitherto it was not. This, however, was not through change, but by creation, which is not change, as was said above.²⁸ Hence it is evident that this argument, which Aristotle gives,²⁹ is

14. Q. 19, a. 4.

15. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.5, 1015b9.

16. Q. 19, a. 3.

17. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* II, ch. 15.

18. *Phys.* 8.1, 250b24; 251b17.

19. *De caelo* 2.10, 279b4; 280a30.

20. *Top.* 1.9, 104b16.

21. *Metaphysics* 4.12, 1019b19.

22. *De caelo* 1.12, 281b18.

23. *Physics* 1.9, 192a28.

24. *De caelo* 1.3, 270a13.

25. Cf. *op. cit.* 1.10, 279a13.

26. Q. 45, a. 2.

27. *Phys.* 4.1, 208b26.

28. Q. 45, a. 2, Response to 2.

29. *Phys.* 8.1, 251a25.

valid against those who admitted the existence of eternal movable things, but not eternal motion, as appears from the opinions of Anaxagoras and Empedocles.³⁰ But we hold that motion always existed from the moment that movable things began to exist.

Response to 6. The first agent is a voluntary agent. And although He had the eternal will to produce some effect, yet He did not produce an eternal effect. Nor is it necessary for some change to be presupposed, not even because of imaginary time. For we must take into consideration the difference between a particular agent, that presupposes something and produces something else, and the universal agent, who produces the whole. The particular agent produces the form, and presupposes the matter; and hence it is necessary that it introduce the form in due proportion into a suitable matter. Hence it is logical to say that the particular agent introduces the form into such matter, and not into another, because of the different kinds of matter. But it is not logical to say so of God Who produces form and matter together; whereas it is logical to say of Him that He produces matter fitting to the form and to the end. Now a particular agent presupposes time just as it presupposes matter. Hence it is logically described as acting in a time *after* and not in a time *before*, according to an imaginary succession of time after time. But the universal agent, who produces both the thing and time, is not correctly described as acting now, and not before, according to an imaginary succession of time succeeding time, as if time were presupposed to His action; but He must be considered as giving time to His effect as much as and when He willed, and according to what was fitting to demonstrate His power. For the world leads more evidently to the knowledge of the divine creating power if it was not always, than if it had always been; since everything which was not always manifestly has a cause; whereas this is not so manifest of what always was.

Response to 7. As is stated in *Physics* 4, “before and after belong to time,” according as “they are found in motion.”³¹ Hence beginning and end in time must be

taken in the same way as in motion. Now, granted the eternity of motion, it is necessary that any given moment in motion be a beginning and an end of motion; which need not be if motion has a beginning. The same applies to the *now* of time. Thus it appears that the view of the instant *now*, as being always the beginning and end of time, presupposes the eternity of time and motion. Hence Aristotle brings forward this argument against those who asserted the eternity of time, but denied the eternity of motion.³²

Response to 8. God is prior to the world by priority of duration. But the word *prior* signifies priority, not of time, but of eternity. — Or we may say that it signifies the eternity of imaginary time, and not of time really existing; much as, when we say that above the heavens there is nothing, the word *above* signifies only an imaginary place, according as it is possible to imagine other dimensions beyond those of the body of the heavens.

Response to 9. Just as the effect of a cause that acts by nature follows from it according to the mode of its form, so likewise it follows from the voluntary agent according to the form preconceived and determined by the agent, as appears from what was said above.³³ Therefore, although God was from eternity the sufficient cause of the world, we may not hold that the world was produced by Him, except as preordained by His will—that is, that it should have being after non-being, in order more manifestly to declare its author.

Response to 10. Given the action, the effect follows according to the requirement of the form which is the principle of action. But in agents acting by will, what is conceived and preordained is considered as the form which is the principle of action. Therefore, from the eternal action of God an eternal effect does not follow; there follows only such an effect as God has willed, an effect, namely, which has being after non-being.

30. Cf. *ibid.* 250b24.

31. Aristotle, *op. cit.* 4.11, 219a17.

32. *Op. cit.* 8.1, 251b29.

33. Q. 19, a. 4; Q. 41, a. 2.

*Article 2. Is it an article of faith
that the world began?*

It would seem that it is not an article of faith but a demonstrable conclusion that the world began:

1. For everything that is made has a beginning of its duration. But it can be proved demonstratively that God is the producing cause of the world; indeed this is asserted by the more approved philosophers.³⁴ Therefore it can be demonstratively proved that the world began.³⁵

2. Further, if it is necessary to say that the world was made by God, it must have been made from nothing, or from something. But it was not made from something, or otherwise the matter of the world would have preceded the world; and against this are the arguments of Aristotle who held that the heavens are ungenerated. Therefore it must be said that the world was made from nothing; and thus it has being after non-being. Therefore it must have begun to be.³⁶

3. Further, "everything which works by intellect works from some principle,"³⁷ as is revealed in all works of human art. But God acts by intellect, and therefore His work has a principle, from which to begin. The world, therefore, which is His effect, did not always exist.

4. Further, it appears manifestly that certain arts have developed, and certain parts of the world have begun to be inhabited at some fixed time. But this would not be the case if the world had always been in existence. Therefore it is manifest that the world did not always exist.

5. Further, it is certain that nothing can be equal to God. But if the world had always been, it would be equal to God in duration. Therefore it is certain that the world did not always exist.³⁸

6. Further, if the world always was, the consequence is that an infinite number of days preceded this

present day. But it is impossible to traverse what is infinite. Therefore we should never have arrived at this present day; which is manifestly false.³⁹

7. Further, if the world was eternal, generation also was eternal. Therefore one man was begotten of another in an infinite series. But the father is the efficient cause of the son.⁴⁰ Therefore in efficient causes there could be an infinite series; which however is disproved in *Metaphysics* 2.⁴¹

8. Further, if the world and generation always were, there have been an infinite number of men. But man's soul is immortal. Therefore an infinite number of human souls would now actually exist, which is impossible. Therefore it can be known with certainty that the world began: it is not held by faith alone.⁴²

On the contrary. The articles of faith cannot be proved demonstratively, because faith is of things "that appear not." But that God is the Creator of the world in such a way that the world began to be is an article of faith; for we say, "I believe in one God," etc.⁴³ And again, Gregory says that Moses prophesied of the past, saying, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth": in which words the newness of the world is stated.⁴⁴ Therefore the newness of the world is known only by revelation, and hence it cannot be proved demonstratively.

Reply. That the world did not always exist we hold by faith alone: it cannot be proved demonstratively; which is what was said above of the mystery of the

34. Cf. Q. 44, a. 2.

35. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 1, no. 64; Bonaventure, *In II Sentences*, d. 1, pt. 1, a. 1, q. 3.

36. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 1, no. 64.

37. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.4, 203a31.

38. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 1, no. 64.

39. Argument of al-Ghazālī in Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I; and of the Mutakallimūn, found in Maimonides, *Guide* I, ch. 74.

40. Aristotle, *Physics* 2.3, 194b30.

41. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Ia. 2, 994a5. For the use of this argument, cf. the Mutakallimūn in Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I.

42. Argument of al-Ghazālī, found in Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I; and of the Mutakallimūn in Maimonides, *Guide* I, ch. 73.

43. *Symb. Nicaenum* (Denzinger, no. 54).

44. *In Ezech. hom.* 1, bk. 1.

Trinity.⁴⁵ The reason for this is that the newness of the world cannot be demonstrated from the world itself. For the principle of demonstration is the essence of a thing. Now everything, considered in its species, abstracts from *here* and *now*; which is why it is said that “universals are everywhere and always.”⁴⁶ Hence it cannot be demonstrated that man, or the heavens, or a stone did not always exist.

Likewise, neither can the newness of the world be demonstrated from the efficient cause, which acts by will. For the will of God cannot be investigated by reason, except as regards those things which God must will of necessity; and what He wills about creatures is not among these, as was said above.⁴⁷ But the divine will can be manifested by revelation, on which faith rests. Hence that the world began to exist is an object of faith, but not of demonstration or science. And it is useful to consider this, lest anyone, presuming to demonstrate what is of faith, should bring forward arguments that are not cogent; for this would give unbelievers the occasion to ridicule, thinking that on such grounds we believe the things that are of faith.

Response to 1. As Augustine says, the opinion of philosophers who asserted the eternity of the world was twofold.⁴⁸ For some said that the substance of the world was not from God, which is an intolerable error; and therefore it is refuted by proofs that are cogent. Some, however, said that the world was eternal, although made by God. “For they hold that the world has a beginning, not of time, but of creation; which means that, in a scarcely intelligible way, it was always made. And they try to explain their meaning thus: for just as, if a foot were always in the dust from eternity, there would always be a footprint which without doubt was caused by him who trod on it, so also the world always was, because its Maker always existed.”⁴⁹ To understand this we must consider that an efficient cause

which acts by motion of necessity precedes its effect in time; for the effect exists only in the end of the action, and every agent must be the beginning of action. But if the action is instantaneous and not successive, it is not necessary for the maker to be prior in duration to the thing made, as appears in the case of illumination. Hence it is held that it does not follow necessarily that if God is the active cause of the world, He must be prior to the world in duration;⁵⁰ because creation, by which He produced the world, is not a successive change, as was said above.⁵¹

Response to 2. Those who would hold that the world was eternal, would say that the world was made by God from nothing; not that it was made after nothing, according to what we understand by the term ‘creation,’ but that it was not made from anything. And so some of them even do not reject the term ‘creation,’ as appears from Avicenna.⁵²

Response to 3. This is the argument of Anaxagoras as reported in *Physics* 3.⁵³ But it does not lead to a necessary conclusion, except as to that intellect which deliberates in order to find out what should be done; which procedure is like movement. Such is the human intellect, but not the divine intellect.⁵⁴

Response to 4. Those who hold the eternity of the world hold that some region was changed an infinite number of times from being uninhabitable to being inhabitable and *vice versa*.⁵⁵ They also hold that the arts, by reason of various corruptions and accidents, were subject to an infinite succession of discovery and decay.⁵⁶ Hence Aristotle says that it is absurd to base

45. Q. 32, a. 1

46. Aristotle, *Posterior analytics* 1.31, 87b33.

47. Q. 19, a. 3.

48. *City of God* 11.4.

49. *Op. cit.* 10.31.

50. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I.

51. Q. 45, a. 2, Response to 3.

52. *Metaphysics* 9.4.

53. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.4, 203a31; 8.1, 250b24.

54. Q. 14, a. 7.

55. Cf. Augustine, *City of God* 12.10; Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 1.14, 351a19.

56. Cf. Augustine, *City of God* 12.10; Ibn Rushd, *In Metaphysics* 12, comm. 50.

our opinion of the newness of the whole world on such particular changes.⁵⁷

Response to 5. Even supposing that the world always was, it would not be equal to God in eternity, as Boethius says;⁵⁸ for the divine Being is all being simultaneously without succession, but with the world it is otherwise.

Response to 6. Passage is always understood as being from term to term. Whatever bygone day we choose, from it to the present day there is a finite number of days which can be traversed. The objection is founded on the idea that, given two extremes, there is an infinite number of mean terms.

Response to 7. In efficient causes it is impossible to proceed to infinity per se. Thus, there cannot be an infinite number of causes that are per se required for a certain effect; for instance, that a stone be moved by a stick, the stick by the hand, and so on to infinity. But it is not impossible to proceed to infinity *accidentally* as regards efficient causes; for instance, if all the causes thus infinitely multiplied should have the order of only one cause, while their multiplication is accidental: e.g., as an artificer acts by means of many hammers accidentally, because one after the other is broken. It is accidental, therefore, that one particular hammer should act after the action of another, and it is likewise accidental to this particular man as generator to be generated by another man; for he generates as a man, and not as the son of another man. For all men gen-

erating hold one grade in the order of efficient causes—viz., the grade of a particular generator. Hence it is not impossible for a man to be generated by man to infinity; but such a thing would be impossible if the generation of this man depended upon this man, and on an elementary body, and on the sun, and so on to infinity.

Response to 8. Those who hold the eternity of the world evade this argument in many ways. For some do not think it impossible for there to be an actual infinity of souls, as appears from the *Metaphysics* of Al-gazel, who says that such a thing is an accidental infinity.⁵⁹ But this was disproved above.⁶⁰ Some say that the soul is corrupted with the body.⁶¹ And some say that of all souls only one remains.⁶² But others, as Augustine says, asserted on this account a circulation of souls—viz., that souls separated from their bodies again return thither after a course of time.⁶³ A fuller consideration of this matter will be given later.⁶⁴ But be it noted that this argument considers only a particular case. Hence one might say that the world was eternal, or at least some creature, as an angel, but not man. But we are considering the question in general, namely, whether any creature can exist from eternity.

57. *Meteorologica* 1.14, 352a26; 351b8.

58. *Consolation of Philosophy* 5, prose 6 (page 135).

59. *Metaphysics* 1, tr. 1, div. 6. Cf. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I.

60. Q. 7, a. 4.

61. Cf. Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 2.

62. Ibn Rushd, *Destruct. destruct.* I.

63. *Serm.* 241, 4; *City of God* 12.13. Cf. Plato *Timaeus* 39a.

64. Q. 75, a. 6; Q. 76, a. 2; Q. 118, a. 3.