

THE NATURE OF GOD

Question Four: The Perfection of God

First Article: Whether God is perfect?

Obj. 1: God is not made so he cannot be thought to be perfect or completely made.

Obj. 2: God is the first and this implies that he is on his way to perfection, but not perfect since the beginning can always be improved.

Obj. 3: Q.3.A.4 states God's essence is His existence. Existence seems most imperfect, since it is the most universal and receptive to all modifications. Therefore, no way God is perfect, but imperfect.

On the contrary: Matt. 5:45 says that we are to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

I answer that: The ancient philosophers only figured a material comparison of God. A material principle is not who God is. A material view of God's existence is incomplete. God is the first cause by conventional means of understanding and is not bound by any confinements that may appear within the material principle. Something is perfect in proportion to its actuality. "Now God is the first principle, not material, but in the order of efficient cause, which must be most perfect for just as matter, as such, is merely potential, an agent, as such, is in the state of actuality." Since the first active principle must be the most actual, therefore most perfect. The perfect is that which lacks nothing for a thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality. PM

Reply to obj. 1: Created things are called perfect when from potentiality they are brought to actuality. This word, "perfect" signifies whatever is not brought to be actuality—whatever is not wanting in actuality.

Reply to obj. 2: "The material principle which with us is found to be imperfect, cannot be absolutely primal, but must be preceded by something perfect." A potential being can only be reduced into act by some being already being actual. A seed is before the object in which the seed becomes and therefore is incomplete until the potential is realized as actual.

Reply to obj. 3: "Existence is the most perfect of all things, for it is compared to all things as that by which they are made actual; for nothing has actuality except so far as it exists."

Second Article: Whether the perfection of all things are in God?

I answer that: All created perfections are in God. God lacks not and he is unequivocally perfect. What perfection exists in an effect and not be found in the effective cause? Secondly: since God, himself is existence, he contains within himself the whole perfection of being

Third Article: Whether any creature can be like God?

Obj. 2: There can be no comparison between things in a different genus. Therefore, no likeness can be possible.

Obj. 4: If any creature is like God, God would be like some creature. But God cannot be likened to any creature. Isaiah 40:18

On the contrary: God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness." (PM) Genesis 1:26

I answer that: "The effect must in the same way resemble the form of the agent. They are like in analogy. If the agent is not contained in any genus, its effects will still more distantly reproduce the form of the agent, not, that is, so as to participate in the likeness of the agent's form according to the same specific or generic formality, but only according to some sort of analogy, as existence is common to all. In this way all created things, so far as they are beings, are like God as the first and universal principle of all beings."

.Reply to Obj. 2: God does not belong to a genus, but transcends all genus as the principle of all genus.

Reply to obj. 4: God is not necessarily like his creatures even though his creatures are in some ways like God.

Questions:

1. What is the first problem Thomas wants to solve in question #4 Or the perfection of God? Since perfection is considered something of the completion of what is made, the first of everything and existence implies need for perfection. Therefore, God cannot be perfect.
2. What is the second problem Thomas answers in question #4? Does perfection of all things find its origin in God? All created perfections are in God once for he is the first cause. Since God is existence, he must contain in himself the whole perfection of beings.
3. What is the third issue Thomas addresses? How can the creature be like God. The effect must in some way reflect or resemble the form of the first agent. Therefore, the effect shows the important image or perfections of the first agent or cause.

