

St. Thomas Aquinas
Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard

Book II, Distinction 14, Question 1

Article 3: Whether the motion of the heavens is due to an intelligence*

Regarding the third issue, we proceed as follows. 1) It appears that the motion of the heavens is not from a soul or from an intelligence. For the motion of the heavens is a natural motion, as the Philosopher states in *On the Heavens*, Book I. But a natural motion is that whose principle is a form of a natural body. Therefore it appears that the motion of the heavens is from its natural form, and not from anything which moves by understanding.

2) Further, every motion [caused] by a soul is accompanied by labor and suffering, as is stated in *On the Heavens*, Book II. But the motion of the heavens is not of this sort, because it would not be able to be continuous and uniform. Therefore it is not moved by a soul.


3) Further, an intellectual soul is not connected to a body except by the sensitive and vegetative soul, as is clear from the comparison of the parts of the soul with the species of figures in *On the Soul*, Book II. But the heavenly bodies cannot have a sensitive or vegetative soul, because they do not have a composite body, which would be required in order that it be an instrument for a vegetative and sensitive soul. Therefore it appears that [the heavens] cannot be moved by an intellectual soul.

4) Further, every body moved by a soul has a left and a right, as well as other differences of position. But the heavenly body, being completely uniform, does not have this kind of diversity of parts. Therefore it appears that it cannot be moved by a soul.

But on the contrary, 1) it is proven in *Physics*, Book VII, that [the heavenly body] is moved by itself. But something moved by itself cannot exist, as is shown in the same place, unless it is that sort of thing of which one part is a mover, and another part the moved. But every such motion is the motion of an apprehensive power. Therefore it is necessary that the motion of the heaven be from some apprehensive power.

2) Every natural motion is from a body existing outside of its own location. But this is impossible to posit in the heavens. Therefore, the motion of the heavens is from some kind of apprehension.

I respond by saying that concerning this issue there are multiple opinions. For some say that, just as the motion of other simple bodies is from their corporal natures, so also will be the motion of the celestial body. But this appears not to be true. For every motion is from some motor. But in the motion of simple bodies, even though the natural form is the principle of motion, it is nevertheless not the motor. The essential motor, however, is the generator which gives form, and the accidental [motor] is that which removes that which blocks motion, as is proven in *Physics*, Book VIII, but this is totally inappropriate for the celestial body. And further, a natural motion is to one place only, and is perfected by natural rest, and is of a body which exists outside of its natural place, all of which is also foreign to the heavenly body. And thus others say that it must be the case that the motion of the heavenly body is from another intelligent being endowed with will, but not immediately from God Himself: for this does not correspond to the order of divine wisdom, the effect of which comes to

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the last things through middle things, as Dionysius states. And thus Gregory [the Great] states that corporeal creatures are governed by spiritual creatures; and thus it is probable that some created intellect is the proximate motor of the heavens.

Nevertheless it should be known that the philosophers posited diverse motors in diverse moved and mobile things, and thus they demonstrated the number of intelligent movers on the basis of the number of these [moved and mobile things]. However, they assigned to every sphere two motors: one conjoined, which they called the soul of the sphere, and another separated, which they called an Intelligence. The reason for this position was that an Intelligence, according to these thinkers, possesses universal forms, and is therefore not appropriate for immediately directing the renewals of the diverse motions of the heavens, or those things which are educed by the motor of the heavens. Hence it is necessary that there be a motor in which there are the particular forms which direct [the lesser things] in motion, and this they called the soul of the sphere.

But this position is partly heretical, and partly can be held in a Catholic manner. For these same [thinkers] hold that things proceed in an ordered fashion from God, i.e. the Intelligences are created immediately by the First Cause, which is God, and from [the Intelligences] the soul of the sphere proceeds; and from this there is produced the substance of the sphere itself. Therefore it can be said that the proximate motor is its form or soul, because it gives itself existence, like a cause proportioned to itself. But this our faith does not suffer, since it posits that only God is the creator of things, as was stated above. And thus we can say that the Angels, which move the spheres in a proximate fashion, are motors, but not forms or souls, because the spheres receive only motion from them, but not existence. But we can sustain [their position] in this respect, as we said, in that the higher Angels, which have more universal forms, are separated and remote motors; whereas the inferior Angels, which have more particular forms, as was stated before, are proximate motors. Thus also Avicenna says that [those beings] called Intelligences by the philosophers are what, according to the Law, are called higher Angels, such as Cherubim and Seraphim; whereas the Souls of the spheres are said to be lesser, and these are called ministering Angels.

1) In response to the first argument, it should be stated that, just as the Commentator says in the first book of his commentary on *On the Heavens*, the motion of the heavens is said to be natural, not because its active principle is some natural form, but because the celestial body itself is of such a nature that it naturally is susceptible to such a motion [imparted] by some intellect, not having a natural repugnance to this voluntary motion, as there is in us. For nature is not said only in regards to the form, but also in regards to matter.

2) Regarding the second argument: the Philosopher is speaking against those who posited the heavens to be of the [same] nature as the inferior bodies, for then that motion would be caused by a soul against the nature of the moved body, and thus labor and suffering would be necessary present in causing motion. But if we posit that that motion is from an intellect according to the condition of the body moved, there will not then be violence nor labor.

3) Regarding the third argument: as the Commentator states in his book *On the Substance of the Spheres*, the heavenly body is neither generable nor corruptible, as are our bodies; and thus it does not need any vegetative form. Similarly, also, its motor does not acquire cognition from things, but has a kind of active knowledge; and thus it does not need a sensitive soul; and thus according to the philosophers the soul of the heavens and that of man are not said univocally.

4) Regarding the fourth argument: according to the Philosopher, the celestial body can be assigned differences of position; and thus its 'right' is said to be the East, from whence the motion originates;

and its 'left' is the West, and 'above' is the southern pole, and 'below' is the Northern pole, and 'ahead' is the upper hemisphere, and 'behind' is the lower hemisphere. Nevertheless, these parts, as the Commentator himself states, are assigned differently to the heavenly body and to our bodies, in two regards. First, in us these parts are diversified by figure and power, but this is not the case in the heavenly body, since it is spherical everywhere. Secondly, in us that determinate part which is right never becomes left, but in the heavenly body that part of the sphere which is now right, later becomes left, because the part which is now in the East will later be in the West. This occurs because the power which brings out motion in us is the act of the body to whom organs are affixed, i.e. muscles and nerves, but this is not the case in the heavenly body.