

Question 6: It is asked whether it is required for knowledge strictly so-called to be a cognition of every cause.

6.1 IT SEEMS THAT IT IS, since the Philosopher in *Physics* I has it, “then we think we know each thing when we cognize its first causes back to the elements, therefore in order for something to be known strictly speaking a cognition of all causes back to the first causes is required.”

6.2 Moreover, there are the same principles for being and cognizing, as is clear from *Metaphysics* II, but a reality does not have being from one cause alone, but from all. Therefore a reality is not known perfectly through one cause, but in order that it should be known perfectly a cognition of all the causes is required.

6.3 Moreover, if something is cognized perfectly, it is necessary that some cause of it be cognized, and, that cause being cognized, it is necessary for its cause to be cognized, and thus it is necessary to cognize the cause of its cause, and so on until the first cause is arrived at. Therefore, for some reality to be cognized, it is necessary for the first cause to be cognized, and so it seems that all the causes must be cognized.

6.4 ON THE OTHER HAND, if a cognition of all the causes is required for a perfect cognition of a reality, since the first cause is the cause of everything caused, it would be necessary to cognize the first cause to cognize anything. It is replied that for something to be perfectly cognized, it is necessary to cognize all of its causes in any genus, but it is not necessary to cognize a cause outside of every genus, and the first cause is like this.

6.5 Against this, I take a reality the cognition of which is possessed through a cause: whoever cognizes that reality must cognize the efficient cause in the genus of that reality, since he cognizes all its causes in that genus. I take that efficient cause: it is cognized, therefore its efficient cause is cognized; and so either there is an indefinite procession in this way, or there is a stand at the first cause. If there is to be a stand at the first cause, we have what was proposed. If there is an indefinite procession, then nothing agrees with cognizing through a cause, since cognition of it through a cause depends on the cognition of an infinite number of causes. Then it is impossible that something be cognized through causes, since it is impossible to cognize an infinite number of causes.

6.6 It is held that there is a stand at the first cause in the genus. And for this to be cognized, it is not necessary to cognize its cause, since it does not have a cause except outside the genus. And for this reality to be cognized, it is not necessary to cognize its cause outside the genus, except imperfectly.

6.7 On the other hand: I prove that if a reality be cognized, that every more perfect cause of it is cognized, since nothing has a cognition of the reality except through its causes. But whatever is the reason why is even more, therefore it is necessary to cognize the causes more.

6.8 TO THE QUESTION IT MUST BE REPLIED that a reality having causes is suited of itself, in so far as it is, to be cognized through all its causes, whether it has several causes or only one. This is clear since a reality is suited to be cognized through the same thing through which it is suited to be. Since, then, a reality not only has being through one cause but through all, it is clear that the reality is suited to be cognized through all its causes. But the reality is not suited to be cognized by our intellect through all of its causes, and the explanation of this that if a reality were suited to be cognized by a human being through all its causes, then the human being would be suited to cognize the reality through all its causes, since every active natural capacity corresponds to a passive natural capacity. But from the cognition of all the causes a man is not suited to arrive at the cognition of the effect, since he is not suited to arrive at it from the cognition of the first cause. But even more to the contrary, from the cognition of all the effects he is suited to cognize the first cause. In the same way, neither is a reality suited to be grasped by our intellect through all its causes.

6.9 This is also clear in another way, because our intellect is suited in a different way to cognize a reality than the first intellect. But the first intellect is suited to cognize a reality from all its causes, and through that cause which is first without qualification. Therefore our intellect is not thus suited to cognize a reality, but rather from the cognition of the effect it arrives at cognition of the first cause. But our intellect is suited to arrive at the cognition of a reality from something primary which is like a principle. And if this has a cause, our intellect is not suited to grasp it. The formulae of being and of unity are this way. This is the first that falls under our intellect and is best known, according to what Avicenna says in his *Metaphysics* I, and it is not suited to be known from another. Indeed, as God is first in being, so being and one are first in cognizing.

6.10 it must be said therefore that in order that a reality be cognized by our intellect most strictly, it is necessary to cognize every cause according to a formula from which the reality is suited to be cognized by our intellect. For example, the conclusion in a demonstration is necessarily known from principles, and principles from the formulae of their terms, and those must then lead back to the formulae of being and one. And then, if the conclusion is known from the principles and those have middle terms, it is necessary that they lead back to what is immediate and indemonstrable, and those are known through their terms, and the terms lead back then to the formulae of being and one, which are primary and best known. And

therefore it is necessary to know all these, if someone is to know something knowing it without qualification.

<To the Arguments>

6.11 In response to the first argument, since it is argued that we would judge ourselves to cognize each when we cognize its first causes, and so on, it must be replied that we would know something perfectly when we knew all the causes from which the reality is suited to be known by us, but it is not necessary to cognize all the causes.

6.12 To the second argument, that, because there are the same principles for being and cognizing, therefore a reality is suited to be cognized through all the causes upon which it depends in being—it is not suited to be cognized by our intellect through all causes, nor does the argument conclude this.

6.13 As to the other, that there is a stand before we reach the first cause. Hence, when he has arrived at the being that is most known, he cognizes that, and not through any cause.

6.14 SOME REPLY DIFFERENTLY TO THE QUESTION, and well, that cognition of a reality is two-fold, namely in the genus and outside the genus. For the perfect cognition of a reality in the genus it is not necessary to cognize all the its causes both near and remote, and this by a perfect cognition. For a perfect maker has a perfect cognition in the genus of material cause, for instance, of iron. Nor is it necessary because of this for him to cognize all the causes of iron, for instance, whether it is composed of four elements or not, but it suffices for him to cognize iron as it has hardness, which pertains to his art. But for the perfect cognition of a reality outside the genus it is necessary to cognize all of its causes, although such a cognition is not possible to a human being in this world.