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**CYRILOMETODĚJSKÁ TEOLOGICKÁ FAKULTA**

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**THE COMPATIBILIST STRUCTURE OF THE  
PROVIDENTIAL RULE OVER EVIL IN  
AQUINAS**

Dizertační práce

*školitel a vedoucí práce:* doc. Petr Dvořák, Ph.D.

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I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Olomouc, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021

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### **A note concerning quotations**

To avoid a useless overload of footnotes of references longer than two or three lines, I have chosen the following way of quotation:

I refer to Aquinas's works without repeating his name, using the usual abbreviated forms of the titles of his works (see the list below) and the traditional units of his texts (e. g., *STh.*, I, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1).

I usually use a similar model for the ancient, medieval and early modern authors (whose works may exist in multiple different editions and the page reference to a specific edition is of limited use to the reader, compared to the references to traditional units of these texts), except that in these cases, I am obviously stating the names of these authors (if they are known), using the standard pagination if it exists and if I find it useful in that particular case (e. g., ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, I, 1, 980a). For biblical references, I use the standard model and abbreviations (e.g., J 1, 1), as well as in the case of the *Quran*.

In the case of other (especially contemporary or nearly contemporary) authors, I am usually stating the last name of the author, the year of publication and, if necessary, the page (e.g., FURLONG (2019), p. 111); as far as websites are concerned, I am usually limiting myself to their names: the complete reference being always available in the *Bibliography*.

If not otherwise noted, I quote Christian Scripture according to *New American Bible*. Aquinas's exegesis is based on (sometimes more than one) Latin translation of the original text: its specificities are to be mentioned if they are of importance to the book. The Latin texts of Aquinas were copied from Alarcón's electronic collection *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia* and modified according to their *Editio Leonina*, if available and Alarcón has not used it (this does not include the questions of interpunction or orthographic conventions with no relevant impact for the signification of the text); analogically, in the case of *Scriptum super Sententiis*, the text is usually modified according to the edition of Mandonnet/Moos. The partition of texts used for their quotation follows the one used in Alarcón's collection, in the cases where it does not correspond to that of the more critical edition, I am providing both of them.

### **List of abbreviations and abbreviated titles of Aquinas's works**

*Ad Bernardum* - *Epistola ad Bernardum abbatem Casinensem*  
*Catena in Io.* - *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia Expositio in Ioannem*  
*Catena in Lc.* - *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia Expositio in Lucam*  
*Catena in Mt.* - *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia Expositio in Matthaum*  
*Compendium theologiae* - *Compendium theologiae ad fratrem Raynaldum*  
*Contra Gentiles* - *Summa contra Gentiles*

*Contra impugnantes - Liber contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*  
*Contra retrahentes - Contra doctrinam retrahentium a religione*  
*De 30 articulis - Responsio de 30 articulis*  
*De 36 articulis - Responsio de 36 articulis ad lectorem Venetum*  
*De 43 articulis - Responsio de 43 articulis ad magistrum Ioannem de Vercellis*  
*De 108 articulis - Responsio de 108 articulis ad magistrum Ioannem de Vercellis*  
*De malo - Quaestiones disputatae de malo*  
*De operationibus occultis - De operationibus occultis naturae ad quendam militem ultramontanum*  
*De perfectione - Liber de perfectione spiritualis vitae*  
*De potentia - Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*  
*De sortibus - Liber de sortibus ad dominum Iacobum de Tonengo*  
*De unione Verbi - Quaestio disputata de unione Verbi incarnati*  
*De unitate intellectus - De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*  
*De veritate - Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*  
*De virtutibus - Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus*  
*Expositio Peryermeneias - Expositio libri Peryermeneias*  
*Expositio Posteriorum Analyticorum - Expositio libri Posteriorum Analyticorum*  
*In De caelo - In libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo expositio*  
*In De divinis nominibus - In librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*  
*In Jeremiam - In Jeremiam prophetam expositio*  
*In Physic. - Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum*  
*Puer Jesus - Sermo Puer Jesus*  
*Q. d. de anima - Quaestio disputata de anima*  
*Quodlibet - Quaestiones de quolibet*  
*Sententia De anima - Sententia libri De anima*  
*Sententia De sensu - Sententia libri De sensu et sensato*  
*Sententia Ethic. - Sententia libri Ethicorum*  
*Sententia Metaphysicae - Sententia libri Metaphysicae*  
*STh. - Summa Theologiae*  
*Super I Cor. - Super I Epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura*  
*Super II Cor. - Super II Epistolam B. Pauli ad Corinthios lectura*  
*Super De causis - Super librum De causis expositio*  
*Super De Trinitate - Super Boetium De Trinitate*  
*Super Eph. - Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Ephesios lectura*  
*Super Heb. - Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Hebraeos lectura*  
*Super Io. - Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*  
*Super Iob - Expositio super Iob ad litteram*  
*Super Is. - Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram*  
*Super Mt. - Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura*  
*Super Philip. - Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Philipenses lectura*  
*Super Psalmo - In psalmos Davidis expositio*  
*Super Rom. - Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos lectura*  
*Super Sent. - Scriptum super Sententiis*  
*Tabula Ethic. - Tabula libri Ethicorum*

# Introduction

## I. Free will debate and the troubles with God

If you want to participate in the contemporary free will debate, the assertion of God's existence will complicate your life, no matter the side you choose to defend. Are you a libertarian, professing that we are in possession of some freedom which excludes any form or kind of comprehensive determinism? You need to address the problems of the traditional divine attributes like the foreknowledge or predestination that seems difficult to reconcile with the existence of such kind of freedom in creatures. Do you side with compatibilists or even soft determinists, asserting that the comprehensive determinism makes no harm to any freedom that we need to assert? Your argument will be about useless, unless you show that the determinist causation of the world, which contains morally bad activities, does no harm to the perfect goodness of the First Cause<sup>1</sup> that has determined the occurrence of them all.<sup>2</sup> Do you situate yourself as an uncompromising hard determinist? You should better prepare the justification of the punishment that God is traditionally said to inflict on human individuals which you say to be unable of any moral merit or demerit due to the determinism that excludes the existence of the freedom necessary for moral meriting. Do you manage the burden that the existence of God adds to whichever position you have chosen in the debate concerning *human* freedom? You can still experience a troublemaking temptation to use the weaponry of your adversaries when it comes to the question of the freedom of God: the most hardened compatibilist can find himself in need of some libertarian freedom here – or vice versa.

## II. What is the goal of this book

As its subtitle suggests, the modest contribution this book provides to the reflexion over the issues insinuated above is intended to be in favour of the compatibilist camp. Its goal has two

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<sup>1</sup> Another complication consists in the personal character of this Cause: according to some, the determinist influence by a personal entity poses the problems that do not occur (or do not occur in such an obvious way) in the case of an equivalent influence by impersonal factors, cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 73 – 76.

<sup>2</sup> The compatibilist as such states only that the freedom is theoretically compatible with comprehensive determinism. He can still claim (contrary to the soft determinist) that our universe is actually indeterminist and (some of) human decisions are free in libertarian sense of the term. Strictly speaking, the compatibilism is therefore compatible with the addressing of the problem of the divine goodness based on the libertarian free choice of creatures and with the claim that this is the only way to address it. But while the compatibilist character of such position is undoubtable, it lacks the main appealing feature of the stronger compatibilist viewpoint: the proposal of the working account of reality that does not give up any of our intuitive notions without *any* need for libertarian freedom (cf. Fischer's "lure of compatibilism" in FISCHER (2007), p. 45 – 48. This is what I mean by "about useless" in this case. In the remainder of the book, the "compatibilism" usually refers to this stronger compatibilist viewpoint.

aspects: I intend to show 1) that contrary to the interpretation of many contemporary scholars,<sup>3</sup> Aquinas's account of divine providence is consistently compatibilist and 2) that his compatibilist account works. Both these assertions merit a brief clarification:

1) Aquinas is not a participant in the contemporary free will debate. He has never formulated the question of whether "the determinism" is compatible with "the freedom of will": as for the former term, he has not known it at all, as for the latter, the relation between its contemporary understanding and the significations of Aquinas's terms like "*libertas voluntatis*" or "*libertas arbitrii*" can be less straightforward than it seems. The attribution of the label "compatibilist", which has been coined to describe a position in the discussion that has taken place several centuries after Aquinas's death, could be therefore reasonably considered as questionable. Being aware of this, I find this attribution justifiable. Aquinas has participated in the debates considering the questions that had much in common with those appearing in the contemporary debate. His takings of positions in these debates, and the theoretical background that makes him adopt these positions, can be fittingly described as compatibilist, inasmuch as anybody who would hold them today would be considered as compatibilist: most notably, I am going to show that Aquinas considers both God and humans free in a way that allows the moral qualification and (at least in the case of humans) the meriting, without the slightest need (or place) for the libertarian freedom in either of these agents.

2) I distinguish between compatibilism and soft determinism: contrary to the latter, the former does not imply the assertion that the determinist view is true – it only states that if the determinist view is (or was) true, it represents (or would represent) no obstacle for the morally relevant freedom. Like many compatibilists, Aquinas is also a soft determinist (i.e., his views concerning the causation of creaturely choices would be considered as soft deterministic today). But while my intention is to show that he holds this position and the reasons for it, I do not intend to fight for it. I do not think that Aquinas does much to prove the determinism that he works with, and I am not going to construe my own proof on his behalf: I do not think that I have ever seen anybody to make such a demonstration successfully. My work focuses on the compatibilist aspect of Aquinas's thought with the intention to show that holding his

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<sup>3</sup> Among contemporary authors, I am challenging most notably the original views of Eleonor Stump, Robert Matava, and W. Matthews Grant. As for more traditional approaches, I am obviously discussing the still influential accounts of Bernard Lonergan and Jacques Maritain (although, strictly speaking, the latter might be considered as compatibilist, a significant part of his account requires the indeterminism of "shatterable motions"). It has been argued (cf. the evaluation in LOUGHRAN (1999), p. 4) that even the most classical vein of Thomism (represented by Garrigou-Lagrangé & co.) should not be considered as compatibilist, reconciling human freedom and divine determinism only by the invocation of the unique character of transcendent divine causality. I am not completely certain about the measure in which this is a proper comprehension of the whole of classical Thomism (and even less whether it should mean that it is to be considered rather incompatibilist than compatibilist), but my proposal surely parts from any interpretation that would read Aquinas this way.



determinist suppositions, Aquinas offers a plausible account of both the intuitive assumptions concerning “the freedom of will” and the data that the Revelation he believed in provides about God.<sup>4</sup> To do so, I am going to emphasize the positive description of this account, as it can be found in Aquinas’s texts: I believe that the best way to show that an account works (and the necessary condition to do anything else in this direction) is to show how it works. Aquinas’s compatibilism can be compared to a giant squid: if you can only see its isolated parts (and if you are living in some inland highlands where the largest body of water you have ever seen is a one-foot deep brook), you can reasonably doubt what it is (maybe a giant bird, based on its beak) and whether it is not a fake impossible to exist (such giant bird could hardly fly and a bird needs to fly, does it not?); much of these doubts simply vanish if somebody shows you the whole squid in its natural environment – which is what I am trying to achieve. This is not to say that you are bound to automatically convert to Aquinas’s viewpoint by reading this. There are many theoretical prerequisites for Aquinas’s account in the domains like epistemology, theory of causation, or ethics that are neither self-evident nor commonly shared; also, there are multiple objections against the divine determinist viewpoint in both historical and contemporary discussions and many of them could be raised against what Aquinas says. Given the fact that the presentation of even the summarised version of the latter arguments would require a decent book<sup>5</sup>, it is obviously beyond the scope of this book (and maybe any book) to discuss them all in detail so that it would do justice to the elaborate way they can get in their proponents’ works (just think about all the existing discussions concerning the so-called Consequence Argument), not to speak about the justification of the prerequisites described above.<sup>6</sup> I confess that I do not even attempt to satisfy the conditions that Aquinas apparently tried to meet while composing the articles of his “disputed questions” (namely the presentation of all the possible arguments for and against a position) – my book is much closer to the “speller” format<sup>7</sup> of his *Summa Theologiae* from this viewpoint. I am choosing the approach which combines the summarised presentation of *some* of the main

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<sup>4</sup> Obviously, I do not state that this evaluation concerns every detail of Aquinas’s worldview that is treated in this book: I do not intend to defend the plausibility of Aquinas’s astrology, nor his view on the relation between the sperm and the animal soul of an embryo – I am going to discuss them only because they manifest (from the compatibilist viewpoint) more important features of his thought.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. FURLONG (2019) for the overview of main objections against divine determinism and possible (or at least proposed) ways to answer it: the author makes a conscious decision to limit himself to the problems specific to the divine determinism (in a sense defined by him), abstaining from the discussion of the objections and defences concerning determinism as such.

<sup>6</sup> Consider the two-volume opus of GREDT (1937) as an example of how such a justification would need to look like – provided that you consider Gredt’s attempt sufficient, at least having in mind that it was composed nearly a century ago, which, fear-I, would make you quite an exception.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, pr.

objections pertaining to the issue at hand, and a more detailed discussion of some particular objections, where I find of importance from my own viewpoint. I suppose that any moderately literate reader will be able to add a plethora of other arguments, depending on her particular philosophical or theological allegiance; as for those presented by me, it is most likely she finds their much more convincing (or even reasoned) version in some of their original proponents. Even if this was not the case, to check these proponents is an intellectual *conditio sine qua non* for competently judging their views. It was my experience that if you truly want to understand Molina’s argumentation against Báñez, you need to read Molina: it is foolish to rely only on Báñez’s presentation of this argumentation – almost as foolish as trying to know Báñez only via Molina (or, for what it matters, via any other of his multiple critics). Thus, if she has not already done it, I invite the reader to read contemporary incompatibilist authors (and especially contemporary incompatibilist Thomists): it is the only way to competently compare their strengths and weaknesses with the strength and weaknesses of the account presented in this book.

### III. The relation to alternative views

I am far from stating that Aquinas’s account is the only one that works. In particular, I do not state that libertarian freedom is conceptually impossible (as I do not state that it is possible).<sup>8</sup> I do not think that the human libertarian freedom is incompatible with the traditional divine attributes either: I positively think that there is more than one theological account that manages to make them work together (obviously, on the condition that the freedom in question is not impossible in itself). Most notably, if God revealed to me that he was actually causing my life on the basis of Molina’s “middle knowledge” and I was therefore free even from the viewpoint of some less demanding libertarians, I would not be shocked at all (at least not by the information itself).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, since such a revelation has not occurred to me yet, I am not aware of whether my decisions, that I spontaneously consider free (or, if you want, the truth values of the counterfactuals of my freedom), are determined by God’s causation or not. Therefore, I take it, I have no awareness of being free in the libertarian sense

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<sup>8</sup> From this viewpoint, my position is kind of mirror image of Furlong’s position concerning compatibilism (cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 219 – 220). I can do nothing else but wholeheartedly agree with his warnings against quick judgments putting some “particular intuitions, or the lack thereof” down “to religiously induced madness” (ibid., p. 219) – I would only add that putting it down to religious impotence has a similar (lack of) intellectual value.

<sup>9</sup> I should specify that I am speaking about Molina’s Molina, not necessarily about any version of Molina that may haunt Thomist literature. Also, while the reader shall verify that my sympathy for Maritain’s account is rather limited, I have never considered it having the catastrophic implications that some more traditional Thomist approach advocates attribute to it (cf. LONG (2006) and LONG (2010)).

of the word – and as far as I can say, it does not bother me at all.<sup>10</sup> It seems to me that those who believe to be provided by such awareness need to elaborate an account of reality that is less simple, less unified and less explanatorily strong than my own, with little, if any, advantages to compensate it: in particular, I am not sure whether the consideration of libertarian freedom as a more robust freedom than the compatibilist freedom is adequate at all (cf. chap. 4. II. 4. 1. and III. 1.). In the theological context, a major disadvantage of the compatibilist conception could be seen in completely disabling the so-called “Free Will Defense” (FWD) – a popular attempt to justify the unpopular attitudes of God by his respect for human freedom.<sup>11</sup> But given the fact that most theists (and maybe most people in the world) believe that the only existing God is revealed either in the Bible, or in the Quran,<sup>12</sup> and will eventually attempt their theodicy only for the sake of the God described in one of these holy books, I do not think that the incapacitating the FWD means much of a theoretical loss. As much as I can say, the FWD has much to do to show that it is actually defending the Lord of *Exodus*, *Isaiah* or *Letter to Romans* and not some relevantly different divinity (cf. chap. 1. III. 4 – 5.).<sup>13</sup> Compared to it, Aquinas’s compatibilist account has struck me once I have understood it, by the fact that it allows quite intuitive and organic reading of the scriptural passages that are often considered to be in mutual tension, without resorting to notions like “due to the primitive stage of theology”, “poetic overstatement”, “turns of Semitic languages” or “respect for mystery”. My limited knowledge of Muslim tradition leads me to believe that its members could find their sacred texts rather compatibilist-friendly in the same fashion.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> I remember that as a teenager, I have held something like a very primitive version of libertarianism for a time. This opinion has left me in the moment of my very first encounter with a pro-compatibilist distinction of necessities, and ever since, I cannot help myself but consider my former view as based on the fallacy of equivocation.

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of interesting attempts to incorporate Free Will Defense into a compatibilist worldview, cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 134 – 159: I concur with this author concerning the limited value of these attempts, but contrary to him, I do not find this fact so costing for the determinist theology.

<sup>12</sup> The numbers being here just for an illustration, I dare to quote *Wikipedia’s List of religious populations* (2021) which states that there are about 2.4 billion Christians and about 1.9 billion Muslims in the world, which would mean that the sum of these two religious groups represents more than the half of actual world population (counting about 7.8 billion). I concede that an indefinite number of these people are in reality Christians or Muslims only in some rather very broad sense of the terms (as much as I believe that the official numbers of irreligious people in the countries like China or Northern Korea might not be completely accurate, too) – my point is just to illustrate the importance of the mentioned sacred texts for the contemporary theism.

<sup>13</sup> This is not to say that a religious group adherent cannot actually prefer the God of FWD to what can be found as the most intuitive understanding of God of her sacred texts, either because she does not read them, or because she thinks that some less intuitive reading of them could be preferred, or because she thinks that she knows better than them: but it seems to me that in any of these scenarios the FWD implies important costs that would be best avoided. Independently of these concerns, it seems to me that the actual value of the FWD as the solution of the “problem of evil” is somewhat limited, cf. TRACY (1999), GRANT (2019), p. 119 – 144, and (partially) FURLONG (2019), p. 155 – 159, for similar views.

<sup>14</sup> “And it is God who has created you and what you do.” *The Noble Quran*, Surah 37:96; “Behold! This is a reminder. Then, whosoever will, let him choose a way unto his Lord. But you will not (so will) unless wills

#### IV. The focus on evil

My work focuses on the problem of evil in general and of morally bad activities in particular. The latter seems to be more challenging than the good deeds for the compatibilist. Some authors even explicitly state the asymmetry concerning the compatibility of the determinist causation with the moral responsibility here.<sup>15</sup> The reasons why the existence of evils needs a bit more clarification from the theistic viewpoint, than the existence of goods do not need to be fleshed out. Nevertheless, one misunderstanding is to be avoided from the very beginning: Aquinas's account that I am going to present cannot be suitably considered as a "theodicy".

I concur with Eleonor Stump in her observation of the fundamental difference between Aquinas's approach to the God-evil problem and how it tends to be spelled out today<sup>16</sup> (even though I do not share a good part of her views on this point). Allow me a parallel. I can ponder how exactly the snow blindness is related to the extremely hot and extremely shining object known as the Sun. However, pondering about the blinding ability of the shiny cold snow does not signify my doubts about the existence of the Sun, or about the key role of sunlight in our ability to see on the surface of my planet. If I elaborate on an account explaining how the warmth of the Sun creates the cold matter of the snow and why the light can be more detrimental for seeing than darkness, this explanation is not to be taken for the justification of the claims mentioned above, since, in my cultural context, I have no need for any "heliodicy" to justify them. In particular, if there actually is a blind one who denies the existence of Sun as I know it, my explanation has not been created to answer his arguments – its *raison d'être* and therefore also its content differs from what I could have written about this subject had I lived in Wells's *Country of the Blind*.

The parallelism between my aforesaid approach to the origin of snow blindness and Aquinas's approach to the God-evil problem is not perfect: obviously, Aquinas knows some people who historically objected against the existence, unicity, or goodness of God based on the existence of evil, and he answers their objections. But contrary to many modern thinkers, he considers these objections neither intellectually nor existentially challenging: in his view, the existence of evil is rather an argument *for the existence* of the supremely good God than the argument

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God." Ibid., surah 76:29-30, cf. surahs 5:41; 6:25; 6:39, 6:107; 6:111; 7:177-179; 8:53; 10:44; 17:4; 17:16; 18:28; 19:83. Both the list of quotations and their translation is taken from SHAFAT (2000).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. WOLF (1993), p. 79 – 81.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. STUMP (1999). "In contrast to our post-Enlightenment concerns, the problem of evil does not centrally occupy Thomas Aquinas." JACKSON (1999), p. 217.

for his non-existence.<sup>17</sup> His Christian faith (and Christian culture) gives him the initial certitude concerning God. This certitude that might be less naturally spontaneous than the certitude of my abovementioned convictions concerning the Sun, but not necessarily less strong: “as for the firmness of adhesion, the faith has greater certitude than the certitude of scientific knowing (*scientia*) or of [immediate] intellectual comprehension (*intellectus*), even though the scientific knowing and the intellectual comprehension includes a greater obviousness of the object of the assent.”<sup>18</sup> The same is supposed to be true about the immediate target group of his medieval readers. Aquinas’s primary goal is therefore not to convince someone that, despite all the evils, there is a God worthy of worship: what he principally wants is to show the true attributes of God whom his readers are already worshipping. Consequently, he is in no need of trying to convince the unbelieving or hesitantly believing public that, despite the first appearance, there is a God who behaves quite in conformity to ITS values. He is even less trying to show that his God is a God whom such people would wish to exist. He just describes the ways of God whose existence is sure for him both thanks to his cosmological reflexion and the Revelation, the God who is the ultimate criterion of justness of any value or wish – pretty much as I could describe the actual features of the Sun that, whether they are liked or not, are the criterion of the form of the just attitude to the Sun. In this sense, Aquinas does not write any theodicy (“justification of God”): his God has no need of justification, he is supposed to be the ultimate justification of anything else. This approach has an unappealing consequence: presumably, many people will not like some important features of Aquinas’s God too much. That could be surely considered as a liability of his position. Consider though the relation of this liability to the credibility of his account: after all, God, whose ways were described as “a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles”,<sup>19</sup> is in any case supposed to be the ruler of the world whose many important features are not much liked, too.

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<sup>17</sup> “Boetius, in *I de Cons.*, *introducitur quendam philosophum quaerentem: si Deus est, unde malum? Esset autem e contrario arguendum: si malum est, Deus est.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 71, n. 10, cf. BOETHIUS, *De consolatione philosophiae*, I, prose 4. “*Quidam philosophus*” could be Epicure, cf. fragment 374 in LACTANTIUS, *De ira Dei*, cap. 13 (according to *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, vol. 67, Vindobonae/Lipsiae, F. Tempsky/G. Freitag, 1934, p. 11).

<sup>18</sup> “...*fides habet majorem certitudinem quantum ad firmitatem adhaesionis, quam sit certitudo scientiae vel intellectus: quamvis in scientia et intellectu sit major evidentia eorum quibus assentitur.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 23, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 3, co., cf. *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, pr.: “*Sic ergo nullus debet dubitare de fide, sed credere ea quae fidei sunt magis quam ea quae videt: quia visus hominis potest decipi, sed Dei scientia nunquam fallitur.*” For Aquinas’s conception of any believing (*credere*) as a cognitive state which excludes the simultaneous occurrence of any doubts properly speaking concerning its direct object, cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 2, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 1, co.; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 6; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 23, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, co.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 1, 23.

## V. Methodological considerations

My interpretation of Aquinas (the first aspect of the aim of this book) is based on the use of the working hypothesis that, unless the contrary is proved, this author does not hold mutually contradictory statements simultaneously. I consider this plausible, given Aquinas's notoriously known (and, inasmuch as I know, undisputed) aversion to such logical contradiction<sup>20</sup> (unlike some modern thinkers, it seems unlikely that he would realise it intentionally) and the fact that without such a hypothesis, it would be quite difficult to find any criterion to evaluate the credibility of any interpretation of ambiguous statements: Aquinas's explicit and unambiguous assertion of A could not be used as an argument against the interpretation that Aquinas's simultaneous assertion of ambiguous B is to be read as the assertion of non-A.

Nevertheless, I do not work with the divinising hypothesis that Aquinas was at any time able to understand all the logical implications of all his assertions – in any case, I have no ambition of being able to do this myself. Consequently, I intentionally try to avoid (or at least clearly demarcate) the extrapolations concerning Aquinas's unspoken ideas (or reasons for them) that would be based on the presumption that they are logical consequences of some Aquinas's explicit statements, but not warranted by any text where Aquinas would (or at least plausibly could) assert them. Obviously, this does not concern the non-problematic applications of these ideas to the subjects that I use for illustration although they have not existed yet in thirteenth century (as in the case of one particularly lazy ginger cat).

In the absence of any argument for the contrary, I consider probable that the author does not silently change his view over short periods of time – but I count a “shouting silence” as a possible argument here. I obviously do not deny the evolution (and even some abrupt changes) in Aquinas's thought – we shall see quite a few examples of it throughout the book. But believe it or not, there are quite many views of him that do not appear to have endured any substantial change during all his career. Therefore, unless there are relevant differences between different works or periods of Aquinas's life concerning some issue (or some other important reason), I do not present Aquinas's thought according to the order of these works or periods: most of the time, I prefer the thematic rather than the historic order, as it permits more clarity and avoids repetitions.

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<sup>20</sup> For Aquinas's reception of Aristotle's attitude in this question, cf. his *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 4, l. 6 – 15. In his view, any questioning of the first logical principle must originate either in the inability to resolve some objections that are actually easy to resolve or in the moral depravation of the sophist who performs it, cf., *ibid.*, l. 10, n. 1 – 2.

Considering Aquinas's actual synchronic (in)coherence, the reader can verify that there are some passages (that, fortunately for me, concern the matters of secondary importance for my topic) where I am at least very unsure about the way of their possible integration into a coherent whole. In these cases, I usually avoid categoric judgements because of the experience of seemingly incoherent texts becoming crystal clear after a better analysis of the semantic aspects of Aquinas's terms. This is also one of two reasons why I spend quite a time with the differentiation and enumeration of different meanings of terms used by Aquinas: the other is that beside it permits the comprehension of the author in question, I find the plurality of these possible meanings potentially enriching and sometimes allowing an escape from a unilateral comprehension of things. Concerning my judgements in the matter of what is still a (more) reasonable reading and what is not in the cases where Aquinas's momentaneous position is very unclear, I do not claim a total intersubjective certitude: but at the very least, my work should make the reader able to make her own competent judgement concerning the possible meaning of these texts. I believe that these cases of relative incertitude have no fundamental impact on the interpretation of the whole, though.

My approach to the functionality of Aquinas's compatibilism (the second aspect of the goal of this book) can be considered as philosophical. It is true that the majority of Aquinas's texts I am using are works of Christian (more precisely, Catholic) theology, and in some parts of the book, I quote abundantly the Scripture, dwell on Aquinas's interpretation of some of its passages and even pronounce myself about the value of this interpretation. Nevertheless, my contribution neither counts with any form of Christian faith of the reader nor is *per se* ordained to the defence of whichever of these forms (I am not denying that the latter can be its welcomed side-effect). My quoting of Christian authoritative texts has other reasons.

Firstly, Aquinas's reading of the Bible is as much (more precisely, much more) the source and the explanatory context of his thought as, say, his reading of Aristotle: the relating of Aquinas's statements to the Biblical ones is therefore often useful (and sometimes quasi-necessary) to a proper understanding of his position, no matter that you want to evaluate the latter just from the philosophical viewpoint.

Secondly and most importantly, it seems to me that the philosophical discussion concerning God, including Aquinas's God, sometimes falls into a fallacy of equivocation that I would like to avoid. It would be ultimately misleading to understand Aquinas's views concerning God as primarily defined by the content of some "classical Western monotheism", constituted, say, by the conviction about the existence of one entity characterised by the conjunction of omnipotence, omniscience, and perfect goodness; it is as if you thought that

while speaking about Sun, he primarily meant an object corresponding to some set of Aristotle's and Ptolemy's assertions (and not simply the very shining object that he regularly saw on the sky). What Aquinas primarily believes in is the existence of the entity described as God or LORD in his Church's sacred texts which he considers a privileged way of knowing this being, both from the viewpoint of certitude and that of speculative deepness.<sup>21</sup> If both Aquinas and his Church state that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good then, it is not because God needs to be such, if he is to be God according to some a priori philosophical standard: it is because they find these terms appropriate (though not perfectly fitting, see chap. 1. I. 3.) descriptions (or "names", to use Aquinas's vocabulary) of the divinity worshipped by Abraham, Moses or Paul of Tarsus, the divinity they were chanting several hours per day through Psalms and other similar texts long before deciding to make any attempts on the field of philosophical theology. Now, it is initially plausible (though obviously not certain) that these guys somewhat knew what they wanted to say when they called the object of their worship "supremely good" (i.e., the attribution of goodness, as they understood it, to God, as they understood him, was not logically incoherent) – but this says nothing about the plausibility (or even mere possibility) of the compatibility of this "supreme goodness" with a random philosopher's notion of goodness. I consider highly plausible that Aquinas's God<sup>22</sup> is not "good" at all, if you adopt Immanuel Kant's view about goodness, or that of Peter Singer, or that of Jean-Paul Sartre. Consequently, if you happen to adopt one of these guys' views about goodness, you will likely not consider Aquinas's God perfectly good and therefore not fulfilling the criteria of God of "classical Western monotheism". It might even be that given your criteria of goodness, "the God of classical western monotheism" would be something necessarily incompatible with our daily experience or even with the laws of logic. What I want to emphasize is that in itself, such impossibility means little for the existence of the *referent* of the term "God" as Aquinas – and many others, suspect-I – use it: the divinity that could behave as biblical (or koranic, for what it matters) God behaves and has

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 1, a. 5 – 6 and 8. Compared to the "sacred doctrine", the philosophy is supposed to reach much poorer insight into the divine, only in few individuals and in connection with many errors due to the fallibility of human reasoning, cf. *ibid.*, a. 1, co. Obviously, Aquinas believes that there are correct notions of God that do not depend on supernatural revelation, but these notions are much broader (or simply different) than that of "classical western monotheism" (if defined in the abovementioned way): if you are an immobile mover of cosmical movement or an intrinsically necessary being providing the ontological basis for all the other beings, it is enough for you to be considered God by everybody in Aquinas's view (cf. *ibid.*, q. 2, a. 3, co.), long before the other traditional attributes (like supreme goodness) come into consideration.

<sup>22</sup> Obviously, I am not stating that Aquinas's notion of God is to be identified with the Catholic notion of God taken as such: the latter is much less specified and also allows the views that Aquinas (would) have considered impossible or unlikely.



all the attributes (including supreme goodness, justice, misericord, paternal attitude, etc.) that were assigned to him *in the sense in which they were assigned to him*.

Do not misunderstand me: I am the last person who would claim that there is some Pascalian conflict between the God of philosophers and the God of Abraham & co. I consider the God of Abraham (be it a Judaist, a Christian or a Muslim Abraham) a philosophical option that is indeed in conflict with the God of some philosophers (as the God of any philosopher is most likely in conflict with the God of some other philosopher), but which is in harmonious and even explanatory relation to the general (including unpleasant) features of the world as I know it. It seems to me that since certain time this option is somewhat neglected due to it being mistakenly taken for being just a more particular version of “classical Western monotheism”, although it would be so only if the latter notion would make abstraction of what is the “right” conception of goodness (and of the other relevant notions) – which is very often clearly not the case. Thus, contrary to what many could suppose,<sup>23</sup> the God of Abraham is not automatically concerned by the implications that some particular account of the “right” conception of goodness has for the mutation of “classical Western monotheism” that counts with it. Obviously, it may be that the disconformity to some “right” conceptions of goodness has some undesirable consequences even for the God of Abraham and it might raise the claim that there is no logical space for such a being: but a further reasoning would need to be done to prove that, and the possibility that the previously “right” conception of good could be proven to be in need of some revision instead by adding Abraham’s divinity into equation is to be taken into consideration.<sup>24</sup>

One final disclaimer. While I am expressing myself concerning the value of Aquinas’s interpretation of his sacred texts, I am not taking the standpoint of the scientific exegete. The vast, mutual disagreement of different members of this profession concerning the precise historical or literal sense of these texts is nearly as notorious as is the disunity of the contemporary philosophical community. If you add the question of the relation of this “literal

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<sup>23</sup> Obviously, there are many who would not suppose it at all, like the adherents of Process theology or Hans Jonas’s progeny: but while the members of these groups mostly claim that their views are revealing the actual long forgotten God of some sacred texts (e.g. the so-called God of Gethsemane), it is unlikely that they would claim the same about Abraham’s God as Aquinas (or the tradition of his Church in general) has known him: be it anyway, as much as I can say, I have not seen any of the aforesaid intellectual streams to provide any real contribution to the presentation of the intellectual option that I am about to present here.

<sup>24</sup> Despite the plurality of views concerning goodness and moral values in general, I do not exclude at all that some careful and detailed analysis could succeed to provide some conclusive results in this area – I am encouraging anybody who feels up to follow this path. I do not have the same attitude to dismissing of some of the views that are or were widely held both by learned and unlearned people just by saying that they are intuitively wrong. It was my repeated experience that the impression of completely non-sensical character of some position was just due to my intellectual limitations.

sense” (whatever it is supposed to mean) to the particular hermeneutics defining the “canonical” reading of these texts in the different religious communities that use them, things get even more complicated, notably if a sacred text happens to be (non-scientifically) interpreted by one or more other sacred texts (or even the texts whose sacrality is disputed); the notions like Catholic “apostolic tradition” or Islamic “hadith” are another vast level of the problem. As a theologian belonging to one of these communities, I would need to take into consideration all the data. As a philosopher, I am holding a much more modest epistemic position. I take it that, at least by most of the Christian communities, the contemporary type of scientific exegesis is considered as a useful, yet not indispensable tool for the use of their Scriptures – for most of their existence, these communities got by without this type of exegesis while establishing their defining teachings and their religious experiences on these texts. Simply speaking, you do not need to be a scientific exegete to understand the narration about David and Goliath<sup>25</sup> as implying that it was David who killed Goliath, and to consider any interpretation that would deny it as more or less bizarre. In general, my evaluation of Aquinas’s reading of his Bible has no ambition to go much beyond the epistemic limits of this type of understanding: I am just stating that the level of its intuitive plausibility is high in a similar way as is the aforesaid reading of the description of Goliath’s death, avoiding comparatively much of the lack of intuitiveness that can be connected to alternative readings. I deny neither the possibility that there might be some scientifically exegetic arguments that can question or even refute this understanding nor the possibility that these arguments are of relevance to the canonical reading of the text in question in whichever community of believers. It might be that the biblical text aims to say that David has never harmed anybody (because he was a nice guy and nice guys do no harm, do they?) and Goliath (and all the other alleged David’s victims) decided to commit suicide due to a prick of conscience awakened by David’s pure morality. I would be pretty surprised if this possibility turned out to be true, but I cannot exclude it scientifically – surely not within the scope of this book. In a similar way, I cannot exclude that the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart by the LORD<sup>26</sup> is supposed to mean nothing more than the LORD’s respect to Pharaoh’s libertarian free decision to harden his heart – but until I see an uncontroversially necessitating exegetical argument for this reading, I consider Aquinas’s own understanding of this text much more natural.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 17.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ex 10, 1 – 2.

## VI. Why you should (not) read this book: the target groups of the text and the prerequisites for its successful reading

This book can be of interest for you, if you are working in, or simply studying, one of the following areas.

### 1) History of human thought

The book is focused on one of the most influential thinkers of medieval Europe, reflecting on the issues that were of crucial importance for its evolution particularly in the beginning of the modern era (the Reformation, the Jansenism) and concern many philosophers and theologians (and, in a way, many other people) up to now. Aquinas's ideas concerning these topics was (in a different measure) an official source of both main positions in the most important intra-catholic theological discussion concerning these matters (the controversy *De auxiliis* and its progeny),<sup>27</sup> providing the theological background and many conceptual tools that are virtually indispensable for the understanding of the further evolution of catholic thought in the matters like grace, predestination, freedom of will, etc. Despite this historical importance, Aquinas's precise position(s) delimitation is still a matter of significant disagreement between scholars. In its presentation of Aquinas's thought, this book provides an analysis whose extension and whose level of detail in the case of many Aquinas's important notions (e.g., *possibile*, *motio*, *voluntas antecedens* etc.) is, inasmuch as its author knows, without parallel. It takes into account Aquinas's often neglected texts (for example his biblical commentaries) and comes with several entirely new observations (e.g., Aquinas's opinion about the conditioning of *any* causal contingency by chance, the role of divine *potentia ordinata* in modal evaluation, the importance of Aquinas's aristocratic meta-ethical viewpoint etc.).

### 2) Theology

In Catholic church, the ecclesial authority sets Aquinas as a shining example of philosophical and theological work.<sup>28</sup> While there is no obligation to follow his opinions, there is an official obligation for the candidates of priesthood to be guided by him in their intellectual formation

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<sup>27</sup> For the historical introduction to this controversy, cf. for example MATAVA (2016), p. 16 – 36. Luis Molina (cf. MOLINA, 1953), whose name was given to the side opposing the “Thomists”, wrote his *Concordia* as a (sometimes very) lengthy comment on some articles from Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* (q. 14, a. 8; q. 14, a. 13; q. 19, a. 6; q. 22; q. 23).

<sup>28</sup> For some of most recent examples, cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et ratio*, n. 43 – 44, 57 – 58 and 78; BENEDICT XVI, *General audience* of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010. For earlier texts, cf. most notably LEO XIII, *Aeterni Patris* and the list of texts in the footnote 36 of the Vatican II decree on priestly training *Optatam totius* (n. 16).

(indeed, in the measure that is no further specified) and the ecclesial academical institutions must enable this guidance.<sup>29</sup> Aquinas is the third most frequently quoted non-biblical individual author in the *Catechism of Catholic Church* (outmatched only by John Paul II and Augustin)<sup>30</sup> and his ideas are regularly used and developed by both institutional and intellectual authorities of the Church: to mention only those that are worked with in this book, both *Veritatis Splendor* and *Amoris Laetitia* use (true, in different measure) Aquinas's notion of natural law;<sup>31</sup> *Communion and Stewardship* invokes Aquinas's conception of contingency to show the principal coherence of Christianity and Darwinism;<sup>32</sup> the *Catechism* quotes Aquinas in its (anti-Leibnizian) answer to why God permits the existence of evil in the world, etc.<sup>33</sup> As is clear from the preceding paragraph, the understanding of the extension of the legitimate theological pluralism in the matters like grace, freedom, and suchlike in the Catholic church is heavily conditioned by the understanding of different readings of Aquinas by his early modern interpreters.<sup>34</sup> There seems to be quite an important (and neglected)

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Code of canon law*, can. 252, § 3; *Optatam totius* (decree on priestly training), n. 16 (most notably the footnote 36); *Gravissimum educationis* (declaration on Christian education), n. 10.

<sup>30</sup> The index of citations to the printed edition that I use (*Katechismus katolické církve*, Kostelní Vydří, Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2001, p. 698 – 759) identifies about sixty passages, cf. *Catechism of Catholic Church*, nos. 34, 38, 43, 112, 116, 155, 157, 163, 170, 184, 271, 293, 310, 311, 350, 404, 412, 460, 511, 555, 556, 627, 795, 904, 947, 1118, 1128, 1130, 1210, 1211, 1305, 1308, 1374, 1381, 1545, 1548, 1718, 1759, 1766, 1767, 1806, 1849, 1856, 1902, 1951, 1955, 1964, 1973, 1976, 2137, 2176, 2263, 2264, 2302, 2469, 2763, 2774.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 12, 40 – 45, 51, 53, 78 – 81; FRANCIS, *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 304 – 305.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, n. 69.

<sup>33</sup> “But why did God not create a world so perfect that no evil could exist in it? *With infinite power God could always create something better.* [reference to *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 6] But with infinite wisdom and goodness God freely willed to create a world “in a state of journeying” towards its ultimate perfection. In God’s plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive and destructive forces of nature. With physical good there exists also physical evil as long as creation has not reached perfection. [reference to *Contra gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 71]” *Catechism of Catholic Church*, n. 310 – the emphasis is mine.

<sup>34</sup> Concerning the mutually antagonistic views engaged in the controversy *De auxiliis*, the ecclesial authority decreed tolerance until another decision is made (cf. DS 1997) – which has never happened. There were some attempts to deduce such decision from the later censures of Jansenism (cf. notably the bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius* from 8<sup>th</sup> September 1713 (DS 2400ff)). To the best of my knowledge, the last time the Holy See addressed this issue was in the letter *Dum praeterito*, dated 31<sup>st</sup> July 1748, written by Benedict XIV to the Supreme Inquisitor of Spain (DS 2564f), refusing all such attempts and confirming the freedom of opinion for both traditional parties of the controversy (and for the mainstream Augustinians): “Even if as private teachers in the theological matters we support one of these opinions, as Supreme Pontiffs we neither reprobate the opposite, nor permit to be reprobated by others.” (my translation). To avoid an undue entanglement in this issue, the catholic reader should consider the distinction of two dimensions of ecclesial documents: that of the theological source and that of the juridical authority. As for the latter, the intention of the legislator clearly was not to condemn Báñez, otherwise he would (and would be obliged to) make this intention uncontroversially clear, e.g., by naming him. From this viewpoint, no authoritative ecclesial statement revoking the tolerance decreed on the beginning of the seventeenth century has been ever promulgated. As a matter of fact, it is controversial whether the censure of some aspects of Jansenist teaching contradicts some aspects of Báñez’s teaching: until all the Báñezians confess that it does or until the Church explicitly says so, there is no way to draw any juridic consequences (concerning Báñez) from this document then and the legal freedom of opinion perdures. This point being clear, from the theological viewpoint the question of the conflict between Báñez and a pontifical bule is of a rather secondary importance, given the fact that he was already accused by his opponents of being in conflict with the canons of the council of Trident or with the Holy Scripture itself. Also, I am not really sure, whether any of the

ecumenical potential in Aquinas's thought, too, regarding the finding of a common language in these issues between the Catholic church and at least a part of the contemporary Protestant world: it seems to me that many moderate Calvinists could find it acceptable, much more than the more common militant libertarianism. More importantly, an important part of the intellectual liberty for Catholics themselves is to be rediscovered here: it is good to know that in the Catholic church, the libertarianism is a matter of theological opinion, not a dogma, especially if you are venturing into the domain of neurosciences and suchlike. As for the usefulness of a functional theology of providence on any level of the ecclesial life (be it in the spiritual self-reflection of the contemplative theologian, or in the pastoral care for teenagers), there is no need to clarify it. Finally, even if it is not accepted as a whole, Aquinas's thought still provides much of inspiration and conceptual tools that can be eventually used even by radically different theologies, as it was the case in the Jesuit Molinist tradition, or, more recently, in some Evangelical authors.<sup>35</sup>

### 3) Philosophy

I have commenced this introduction by reference to the contemporary Free-will-debate and later mentioned some unobvious specifics of its account concerning God and evil – I believe that there is no need to say more now about the potential interestingness of this book for anybody who is philosophically interested in these topics. Even outside of this context, the respective constituents of Aquinas's compatibilist position are worthy of attention for anybody who is interested in the topic that they belong to, be it the modal notions, the theory of morality, the conception of time and timelessness etc. As in the case of theology, Aquinas is still quoted by the philosophers who work on these issues: his understanding is therefore important for the understanding of these interlocutors (and eventually for the uncovering of their wrongs). In itself, the rediscovery of Aquinas's elaborated medieval thought, free from some later commonplaces, can provide the reader with new ideas to work with or to be challenged by.

One of the aspects of the goal of my study is to take a reasoned position in the debate concerning the right interpretation of Aquinas's texts. For the full exploitation of the content of this book then, both the ability to fluently read Aquinas's Latin and the continual access to

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contemporary wielders of *Unigenitus* would actually like to hold all the censures that this "merely authentic" (i.e., not infallible) document contains, cf. for example the censures of the propositions concerning the reading of the Holy Scripture in DS 2479 – 2485.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. HELM (2001), p. 184; GEISLER (1986), p. 67 and 72.

his *Opera omnia* is necessary – and you must read the footnotes. I have done everything in my power so that none of these conditions is required to understand of the main text, though, which does not mean that this understanding has no prerequisites. I am trying to explain many Aquinas’s basic notions in a rather dumbed down way (I sincerely apologise to all those who find all those Garfield’s movements from the TV to the fridge annoying) but I do not do it in all the cases: it is unlikely then that the reader without any previous knowledge of Aquinas would not encounter any terms (or even topics) whose very meaning she would find unknown. I believe that (notably in the time before the complete shut-down of the Internet) the book contains no such obstacle which any reader with a minimal suitability for its topic could not quite easily surmount though. What might be not easy is the topic itself: if you find difficult to read tens of pages speaking about different meanings of “possibility”, you should probably choose different literature.

## VII. Basic structure of the book

The book can be roughly divided into three parts.

- 1) I argue that some cases of important miscomprehension of Aquinas’s views on providence seem to be motivated by its undue reading through the prism of the interpreter’s own conception of moral goodness in general and divine goodness in particular, the conception that happens to have little to do with Aquinas’s one. In the first chapter of this book then, I try to establish the necessary understanding of Aquinas’s view on these topics, most importantly on the relation between God and morality. I focus on Aquinas’s interpretation of morally troubling Biblical texts and on the description of his account of moral evaluation, showing the ground of some problems Aquinas is discussing in his texts about providence and also the ultimate theological motivation for the solutions that he adopts.
- 2) In the chapters 2 – 5, I am going to progressively introduce the reader into Aquinas’s view on four conceptual areas that determine a major part of his understanding of the topic of this book: the modal notions, the causation of the movement, the freedom and the divine cognitive attributes. Concerning all these areas, I have witnessed important misinterpretations of Aquinas’s understanding of some basic notions that belong to them – I shall therefore carefully and sometimes lengthily discuss Aquinas’s way of using these notions and the implications they have for our topic.
- 3) In the final chapter, I shall make use of the contributions of the previous chapters to help the reader understand Aquinas’s account of the relation between the divine causation and the

sin, providing its further explanation on the background of Aquinas's understanding of the divine will that will be further explained.

# 1. The goodness of the scandalising God

God said: “Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you.”

*Genesis 22, 2*

The LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have made him and his servants obdurate in order that I may perform these signs of mine among them and that you may recount to your son and grandson how ruthlessly I dealt with the Egyptians and what signs I wrought among them, so that you may know that I am the LORD.” ... At midnight the LORD slew every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh on the throne to the first-born of the prisoner in the dungeon, as well as all the first-born of the animals. Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians; and there was loud wailing throughout Egypt, for there was not a house without its dead.

*Exodus 10, 1 – 2; 12, 29 – 30*

The LORD asked, “Who will deceive Ahab, so that he will go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?” And one said this, another that, until one of the spirits came forth and presented himself to the LORD, saying, “I will deceive him.” The LORD asked, “How?” He answered, “I will go forth and become a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.” The LORD agreed: “You shall succeed in deceiving him. Go forth and do this.”

*First Book of Kings 22, 20 – 22*

JON SNOW: “What kind of God would do something like that?”

MELISANDRE: “The one we’ve got.”

*Game of Thrones S06E09*



## Introduction

“Even if something is represented as commanded by God in a direct appearance of him, if it flatly contradicts morality it can’t come from God (e.g. a father is to kill his son who is, so far as he knows, perfectly innocent).”<sup>36</sup>

The order to sacrifice Isaac is undoubtedly one of the most important occasions for God of Abraham to show himself decisively unwilling to follow Kant on the Procrustean bed of religion reduced to the auxiliary tool of morality. One has no need to accept the entirety of the *Limits of Bare Reason* to share some of its author’s problems with *Genesis 22*, though. From the Christian point of view at least, the Father of Jesus Christ is generally considered to be a promoter of moral goodness, cherishing human life, love, and solidarity and expressing explicit distaste not only for the actions contrary to these values but already for the internal attitudes disposing to these actions. Human sacrifice is said to be a profanation of His name<sup>37</sup> – and though, regardless of his intervention to stop the killing in the last moment, this very God demands the willingness to sacrifice the most beloved child and praises his believer for it. Any thinking reader can hardly stay questionless in front of such a contrast... Yes, but why am I bothering you with this question in the book which is supposed to discuss Aquinas’s compatibilist theory of Providence? Well, I am doing it to avoid one fundamental error that could undermine the right comprehension of virtually everything that follows – namely the oblivion in the matter of WHO is the Divinity that is supposed to be the performer of the Providence in question.

Let me explain. Imagine a guy who would deny the existence of lions because of some pictures of savaged warthogs. You might say that it would be perfectly nonsensical: given all that we know about the biology of lions, an occasional appearance of savaged warthogs seems to be a natural consequence of the presence of these felines in savannahs. You are right. Yet imagine that the notion of a lion that this guy is equipped with is entirely based on two or three particularly beautiful and harmonious scenes from Disney’s *Lion King*, selected carefully by his mum when he was a child in order to be played over and over again and make him sleep well. Knowing this, you can understand this guy’s error: his peacefully ruling “lions” truly do not exist (in fact, they do not even correspond with the lions who actually populate *The Lion King*) – but this non-existence has little to do with the lions that zoology

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<sup>36</sup> KANT, IMMANUEL, *Religion within the Limits of Bare Reason*, II, 2, (p. 48).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Lev 18, 21; 20, 2ff; Dt 12, 31; 18, 10.

speaks about. Now, in the discussions concerning God you can occasionally observe situations quite similar to the situation of that would-be knower of lions. *Exempli gratia*, you could wonder at the usage frequency of the occurrence of wars, diseases, and famines as arguments against the actual existence of Christian God – provided that you have read even a fraction of Christian sacred texts that repeatedly describe this very divinity as sending or promising to send these very same phenomena to the world.<sup>38</sup> I do not intend to dwell on the popular mistaking of the LORD of Hosts for a boosted Santa Claus that is likely behind most of these misconceptions. What I want to avoid is one of the much more subtle variants of such intellectual phenomenon, subtle enough to contaminate even the reflexion of more than one expert on Aquinas's thought.

God is said to be good, and it is mostly assumed that this goodness includes also moral perfection.<sup>39</sup> But what does it mean for God to be morally perfect? And what does it mean to be morally perfect at all? One of the perks of our western postmodernity is the sharpened awareness of the plurality of views that exist on this matter. Depending on the decisions concerning the rightness of this or that (meta)ethical view, important limits are set that any plausible theory of divine providence must fit in. Thanks to my little quotation of Kant, you have already seen that some of these views are incompatible with the Biblical (or Koranic) description of divine behaviour:<sup>40</sup> assuming them as granted would imply that the beliefs based on this description are to be taken as contradictory (at least in their traditional form). It should also be clear that the very absence of a similar frontal conflict in the case of some particular (meta)ethical view does not mean that this view is to be automatically considered as authoritative: in itself, such absence does not prove that the obligations that this view could prescribe to the divinity could not be at least opened to a reasonable doubt. Now, it has been my repeated experience to see an Aquinas's interpreter setting the moral standards of the divine will in a way that I was not able to verify in Aquinas himself (not even in anything that

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. among many others Lev 26, 16 – 39; Dt 28, 15 – 68; 2Sam 24, 12 – 15; Ps 105, 16 (concerning the seven hungry years from Gen 41); Sir 39, 29 – 31; Jer 12, 22; 14, 12 – 16; 16, 4; 24, 8 – 10; 29, 17 – 18; Ez 5, 17 – 6, 7; 14, 21; Ap 6; 18, 8... The measure of oblivion concerning the nature of the most common Christian symbol (the tool used for the torture and the judicial murder of the Innocent One) in the context of objections based on the suffering of the innocent could be even more surprising. Obviously, there could be *prima facie* a serious objection against the logical coherence of this Christian view concerning good God's relation to evil: but in such a case, there would be no more point in arguing by the actual occurrence of evils in the world than by the occurrence of goods.

<sup>39</sup> For exceptions concerning this view, cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 128 – 130.

<sup>40</sup> See also Heb 11, 17 – 19 and Jac 2, 21 – 23 for New Testament's views on the topic; for the rendering of Abraham's sacrifice and its divine evaluation in *The Noble Quran*, see surah 37 (*As Saffat*), 102 – 111. I am not talking about the relation of the quoted passage to the whole of Kant's moral philosophy and my statement therefore does not concern the latter taken as such – I neither exclude nor defend the possibility that Kant has misapplied his own more fundamental principles here.

Aquinas needed to be conformed with) – with more than questionable implications for her interpretation and/or evaluation of Aquinas’s views on Providence. To avoid similar lapsus, I am introducing my study about Aquinas’s conception of providence in this chapter concerning Aquinas’s view on morality and its relation to God. Apart from the more or less abstract notions, I will discuss Aquinas’s explanations of the traditionally most scandalising features of divine activity described in his Scripture. With an idea about how far Aquinas’s supremely good God is able to go and why, and thus hopefully cleaning the table from some unjustified preconceptions, the reader should be able to see some of the reasons that Aquinas has for his more abstract statements, and some of the important implications of the latter that he actually holds. But before doing this, let us look at a very influential case of the situation that I want to avoid.

## **I. Maritain’s divine innocence, Aquinas’s aristocratic values and the homonymy of good**

### Introduction

In his *God and the permission of evil*, Jacques Maritain states that there are two sacred truths ruling any sane reflection about God: “the aseity or absolute independence of God on the one hand and the divine absolute innocence on the other...”<sup>41</sup> For the matter of human free acts, the first of these truths implies that God is the ultimate cause of anything, including human free decisions, inasmuch as it is good (or being), and He knows these decisions and all the other goods thanks to this causal relationship. The second truth implies that God is in no way the cause of evil (or of non-being) that appears in these acts and he therefore knows this evil without causing it.<sup>42</sup> The “second” does not mean secondary here: Maritain’s opening of his treatment begins just by the assertion that the absolute innocence of God is “(t)he fundamental certitude, the rock to which we must cling in this question of moral evil...”<sup>43</sup> He believes that this truth is well established in Aquinas too, taking the form of two axioms: 1) God is in no way cause of moral evil and 2) the first cause of moral evil is in us.<sup>44</sup> Now, while both divine aseity and divine innocence are said to be most clear in themselves, their reconciliation is considered perennial problem of the theological reflexion. In Maritain’s view, the classical Thomism (represented by Domingo Báñez, John of St. Thomas or the Carmelites of

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<sup>41</sup> MARITAIN (1966), p. 8 – 9.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> MARITAIN (1966), p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 6, quoting *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1 for the first axiom and *STh.*, I-II, q. 112, a. 3, ad 2 and *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 4, a. 2 for the second axiom.

Salamanca and also by their more or less moderate twentieth century's followers like Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange or Jean-Hervé Nicolas) has not succeeded in this task: emphasizing the implications of divine aseity unilaterally and neglecting some of the other hints that Aquinas could have provided, the classical Thomists ended by denaturing the conception of divine providence over the sinners, making God ultimately responsible for all moral evil and committing blasphemy against divine innocence.<sup>45</sup>

### I. 1. Two views on "good"

I will discuss different aspects of Maritain's position in the chapters that follow. Here I want to point only to some important features of its probable meta-ethical motivation. To do so, I dare to make use of an aspect of Nietzsche's famous distinction between aristocratic morality and slave morality.<sup>46</sup> Sure, I do not intend to adopt the whole of the conceptual structure elaborated by this author, and even less to sign the historical correctness of his ideas (I strongly doubt that Nietzsche would be happy with my application of his notions either). My utilisation of the distinction is limited strictly to the differentiation of conceptual pairs "good/bad" and "evil/good" from the viewpoint of the priority/posteriority of the members of these pairs that Nietzsche made at this occasion.

The aristocratic morality is characterised by the conceptual priority of the "good", characterising the individual as the bearer of the spontaneously attractive features like strength, health, beauty, happiness, etc. The notion opposed to the "good" is "bad". It is defined by the lack of the features that are characterised as "good": the weakness, the sickness, the unsightliness, the unhappiness...<sup>47</sup> On the contrary, slave morality is characterised by the conceptual priority of "evil", characterising the object of resentment which is resented because it is perceived as harmful, oppressive or similarly: note that this "evil" is in no way in contradiction with the aristocratic notion of "good". The "good" of slave morality has another sense and status: it signifies a secondary notion, defined by the negation of "evil". You can be ugly, stupid and weak, yet you are still "good" by the very fact

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 13 – 31: "Let me speak frankly. ... The antecedent permissive decrees, be they presented by the most saintly of theologians – I cannot see in them, taken in themselves, anything but an insult to the absolute innocence of God." (p. 30 – 31). The "antecedent permissive decrees" are a crucial notion of the Thomist theory: roughly said, it means that independently of any foreseen action of particular men God freely decides to permit the fall of some of them, knowing that this fall will inevitably follow his permission.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. NIETZSCHE (1913), p. 15 – 58.

<sup>47</sup> "when we come to the aristocrat's system of values: it acts and grows spontaneously, it merely seeks its antithesis in order to pronounce a more grateful and exultant "yes" to its own self;—its negative conception, "low," "vulgar," "bad," is merely a pale late-born foil in comparison with its positive and fundamental conception (saturated as it is with life and passion), of "we aristocrats, we good ones, we beautiful ones, we happy ones." NIETZSCHE (1913), p. 35.

that you do no harm, that you are innocuous – *innocens* in Latin. A little sleeping baby can be considered as an impersonation of this ideal of innocence: the more you approach to this state, the “better” you are.<sup>48</sup>

Nietzsche is very clear concerning his ideas about the history and typical content of these two types of moralities. In his view, the Spartan warrior king Leonidas from the movie *300* could be an illustrative example of what it means to be a good man from the point of view of *the* aristocratic morality, while the handicapped individual that later betrayed Spartans to Persians could be an exemplary case of a bad man (independently of his decision to betray). The inhuman conditions induced by Spartan oppression to militarily less efficient populations would further make the same Leonidas an impersonation of “evil” in the eyes of these weaker people: the slave morality would originate from the resentment that these bad ones feel vis-à-vis the good ones (with a little help from priests who are Nietzsche’s own impersonation of “evil”). The very distinction between “good/bad” and “evil/good” (more precisely, the aspect of this distinction that I am about to use) does not depend on these historical opinions of Nietzsche though nor on his personal value preferences (and resentment). This allows employing it without any reference to these opinions and preferences then: I will make use of this possibility in the remainder of this book. In the same way, I will keep the designations “aristocratic” and “slave”, which I find very appropriate, even if you completely forget Nietzsche’s mythology: as for the former of these terms, the value system ruled by *a* notion of good is “aristocratic” in the etymological sense of the term; as for the latter of them, Aquinas’s reflexion on slavery (see chap. 4. I. 1 – 3.) will allow us to understand why the conceptual priority of evil makes all the derived attitudes slavish. With all this in mind, let us see what happens if you look at Maritain’s views in the light of the distinction between aristocratic and slave type of value systems.

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<sup>48</sup> “...imagine the “enemy” as the resentful man conceives him—and it is here exactly that we see his work, his creativeness; he has conceived “the evil enemy,” the “evil one,” and indeed that is the root idea from which he now evolves as a contrasting and corresponding figure a “good one,” himself—his very self! The method of this man is quite contrary to that of the aristocratic man, who conceives the root idea “good” spontaneously and straight away, that is to say, out of himself, and from that material then creates for himself a concept of “bad”! This “bad” of aristocratic origin and that “evil” out of the cauldron of unsatisfied hatred—the former an imitation, an “extra,” an additional nuance; the latter, on the other hand, the original, the beginning, the essential act in the conception of a slave-morality—these two words “bad” and “evil,” how great a difference do they mark, in spite of the fact that they have an identical contrary in the idea “good.” But the idea “good” is not the same.” NIETZSCHE (1913), p. 38 – 39. ““Let us be otherwise than the evil, namely, good! and good is every one who does not oppress, who hurts no one, who does not attack, who does not pay back...”” *ibid.*, p. 46.

## I. 2. Is Aquinas's "Good" innocent?

Clearly, the real-life moral theories and especially personal attitudes behind them can be far too complex (or not coherent enough) to be easily classified as either aristocratic or slavish: by the following, I do not intend to state that Maritain's conception of morality is unequivocally slavish then. Yet, it is difficult to deny that his professing the fundamental position of divine innocence corresponds rather with this latter view: it is not God's goodness or justice, but the negation of him being responsible for moral evil that is supposed to rule the reflexion. This fact gets particularly striking if you compare this perspective with Aquinas's texts. God is good, God is just, God is perfect, God is wise, God is loving – all these attributions of positive characteristics appear at multiple reprises in Aquinas.<sup>49</sup> Yet, throughout all the immense corpus of his writings there is just one sole article where he says that God is *innocens*: more precisely, one of the objections mentioned in this article is based on this assertion and Aquinas takes the term over in his reply.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, "innocence" is neither the first nor the second (and most likely nor the thirty second) word that occurs to Aquinas when he thinks about God.

If we let go of the terminology, the closest thing to the systematic assertion of divine innocence in Aquinas are probably actually some of the texts that Maritain considers so: Aquinas's repeated claims that God causes no sin, neither by sinning himself nor by causing a sin of another person.<sup>51</sup> Yet, the content of these claims is not in the position of an axiom as stated by Maritain: it is a conclusion, an answer to the question that is justified by more fundamental statements and defended against the arguments in favour of an opposite opinion – these arguments also include seemingly contradicting assertions from sacred texts.<sup>52</sup> Also,

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<sup>49</sup> For God's goodness, cf. for example *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1 and q. 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 37 – 41; *STh.*, I, q. 6; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1 cap. 101 – 103 and 109 – 110; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4 l. 2; for God's perfection, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 28 and 31; *STh.*, I, q. 4; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 20 – 22; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 13, l. 1; for God's justice, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 46, q. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 93; *STh.*, I, q. 21; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 8, l. 4; for God's wisdom, cf. *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 5, l. 1 and cap. 7, l. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 5 – 6; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 94; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 140; for God's love, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 32, q. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 91; *STh.*, I, q. 20; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 9.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 4 and ad 4 – the fact can be verified by looking at all the occurrences of the term found by *Index Thomisticus*.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 2; I-II, q. 79, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3; d. 37, q. 2, a. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Is 45, 7 quoted by *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 5; *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 2, arg. 1 and I-II, q. 79, a. 1, arg. 4 (in *Summa* together with Am 3, 6); Wis 14, 11 Vlg quoted by *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, arg. 2; Rom 1, 28 quoted by *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, arg. 1 and *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, arg. 1; 1King 22, 22 and Hos 1 quoted by *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, arg. 17; Sir 31, 10 quoted as a support for *De malo* q. 3, a. 1, arg. 10. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1 begins by eighteen arguments in favour of God's causation of sin.

these Aquinas's nuanced denials<sup>53</sup> of God's causal relation to moral evil appear only in his discussion of creation, badness or sin as such: his treatises about divine attributes do not discuss this question – contrary to the questions of divine goodness or perfection.

What is the point? At the very least, it must be said that the notion of divine innocence plays a much more fundamental role for Maritain than for Aquinas. But once you make the comparison of their respective discourses, it is difficult to avoid the question (that I am not going to answer) whether Maritain's notion of innocence does not come from some perception of morality that is completely alien to Aquinas's. The relation of this "innocence" to the notions that Aquinas normally works with is at least problematic. It seems that it cannot be reduced to the aforesaid denial of God's (be it indirect) causal relation to sin: while Maritain is not entirely clear concerning the impossibility of Báñezian view to account for this denial,<sup>54</sup> he is categoric in his assertion that Báñezian view is a blasphemy against divine innocence.<sup>55</sup> Again, I am not asserting that Maritain is a slavish moralist (after all, this study is supposed to provide a thorough interpretation of Aquinas's thought, not of Maritain's). I am going to assert that Aquinas is an aristocratic moralist and unlike Maritain, he works with no axioms of innocence that could cast any doubt on it: this will become clearer when we have a closer look at Aquinas's evaluative notions.

I am not noting this difference to say that Aquinas's meta-ethical viewpoint is right, while Maritain's viewpoint is wrong (even if I tend to think something like that): I am noting it to say that these viewpoints ARE different and that the French Thomist does not show any signs of being aware of it. He apparently thinks that the question of the divine permission of evil is asked in about the same terms by him, Aquinas and all the Thomist tradition in between them: apparently, he does not doubt for a moment that Báñez was bound to fit into these terms and simply tragically failed. The possibility that Báñez might have been able to acknowledge the denial of the divine innocence *as Maritain had conceived it* was (as far as I know) never discussed by the latter; consequently, he has not proposed any arguments against the

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<sup>53</sup> While Aquinas denies that God is the cause of sin, he states that God is the cause of act (or action) of sin, cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 2; *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 2. The meaning of this distinction is discussed below, cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 12. 1 and chap. 6. I. 2.

<sup>54</sup> "In the theory of antecedent permissive decrees, God, under the relation of efficiency, is not the cause, not even (that which I do not at all concede) the indirect cause of moral evil." MARITAIN (1966), p. 30. If I understand him correctly, Maritain's parenthesis just marks his strong doubts concerning the assertion in question, it does not mean its categoric denial, see my following footnote.

<sup>55</sup> "God manages to be in nowise the cause of evil, while seeing to it that evil occurs infallibly. The antecedent permissive decrees, be they presented by the most saintly of theologians – I cannot see in them, taken in themselves, anything but an insult to the absolute innocence of God." MARITAIN (1966), p. 31.

possibility that such an acknowledgement could be rightful.<sup>56</sup> As for me, I am in partial agreement with Maritain inasmuch as I would concede that Báñez's God can be called "innocent" only if the term is used in some technical sense (e.g., as a synonym for "sinless", "perfectly just" or something like that): spontaneously, I would never call him so. Nevertheless, I would not call "innocent" Judith's victory over Holofernes or Gandalf's sneaking the magical staff into Théoden's hall either.<sup>57</sup> I do not question in the least the moral goodness or blamelessness of these actions, but the clever introduction of a very noxious blow against the enemy is something that simply does not correspond with my spontaneous understanding of "innocence" – it should be clear by now, why it is so. But the ways the biblical God acts are in many cases even less "innocent" – just recall the trap of Ramoth-Gilead.<sup>58</sup> While I surely do not assert that Maritain's axiomatisation of divine innocence would necessarily lead him to the (Kant-like) conflict with some of his own theological sources, it should be clear that the exact meaning and implications of said innocence would need to be carefully nuanced to avoid such a fate – relying on the spontaneous impressions could prove to be fatal here.

### I. 3. Supergood Super-god

You may find my distinction of aristocratic and slavish good rough; you may even say that there are other (maybe more nuanced and attractive) options beyond these two. You might be right – my goal is not to provide a comprehensive study about different understandings of the notion of good here. Nor it is my intention to propose any cogent argument that one of these understandings (like Aquinas's) is right, while others are wrong. My intention is much more

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<sup>56</sup> Maritain's antagonists seem to have not made any important pressure on him concerning this point: among all the objections against him that the other Thomists have produced during the decades, I have never encountered one that would challenge his delimitation of the problem in the terms of divine innocence. Inasmuch it is possible to be judged from his later (partially retracting) statements, one of most important Maritain's pro-Báñezian interlocutors shared Maritain's perspective here: "As I am, as I have always been certain as anybody of the innocence of God, I am obliged to admit, and I do it willingly, that the conception of the antecedent permissive decree that I have proposed is not worthy." NICHOLAS (1992), p. 186 (I have slightly corrected the translation of T. P. O' Neill presented in O'NEILL (2019), p. 247).

<sup>57</sup> Judith saves Israel, making use of Holofernes's lust and inebriety to decapitate him while he let her be alone with him to have sex with her (cf. Jdt 10 – 13): in Catholic church she is considered as one of biblical prefigurations of Virgin Mary, see CILLETI (2010) (compare the salutation of Judith by Uzziah in Jdt 13, 18 with *Hail Mary* and most notably with Lk 1, 42). Powerful Gandalf acts as a feeble old man to be peacefully allowed to enter the halls of the possessed king without handing over his magical equipment which makes him able to strike the evil hidden within (cf. the movie *Lord of the Rings: Two towers*, 2002).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. 1 Kings 22, 20 – 22, quoted in the beginning of this chapter. Maritain is obviously aware of similar texts, but he believes that they could be very easily explained as mere "turns of speech peculiar to Semitic languages" (MARITAIN (1966), p. 7) that do not cast any doubt on the obviousness of the starting point of his reflexion: interestingly enough, he states it while recounting the conversation with "a renowned professor and a man greatly versed in the Bible" who was apparently not so entirely impressed by this type of explication.



modest: it is to prevent the misunderstanding coming from the unconscious substitution of Aquinas's notion for something else. The disastrous consequences that the interpolation of the slavish notion into the discourse of an aristocratic thinker would have for the right comprehension of the latter should be obvious: if somebody stitches a chicken's head on a lion's body, the resulting creature will not seem very viable, provided that you believe that such a mishmash ever existed; in any case, the evaluation of such a creature would have little to do with an actual lion. Now, it might be that your preferred animal is a chicken (or a horse or a dolphin, if you want), but after seeing the lion, you will change your mind. Or, alternatively, you will not, consolidating your original opinion by its successful confrontation with another alternative. Or, on the contrary, you have already preferred lion, and your preference is strengthened by the support it finds in Aquinas's view. Whatever the case may be, you will do it for your own reasons that I do not know and cannot discuss. What I want is to prevent spoiling of any outcome that follows by basing it on a fallacy of equivocation, due to the non-univocal character of the notion of good across different value systems.

While I am at it, let me briefly address another problem of a similar type that may arise. Mistaking Aquinas's notion of good for the notion of good of a different value system can be compared to mistaking the lion for another animal; forgetting the specificities of the application of this notion (and of any other notion) in the case of Aquinas's God can be, with little exaggeration, compared to an unrestricted projection of the terrestrial lion properties to the entity known as the constellation of Leo. Following Dionysius, Aquinas believes that there is no entity without any similarity to God (be it just a "trace"), but, as his Church authoritatively teaches him, he believes that any such similarity is connected with even greater dissimilitude.<sup>59</sup> This concerns even the most general properties, including "being": if you use the term "exist" in the same manner as in the case of creatures (more precisely, in any of the manners that are employed in the case of creatures), the assertion that God exists is wrong – from this particular viewpoint, the atheists are correct. If God is to be truthfully called existing, the "existing" must be understood as an analogy of what we know as existence in the case of creatures, and this assertion is compatible (and even is to be

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<sup>59</sup> *"omnis similitudo creaturae ad Deum deficiens est et hoc ipsum quod Deus est omne id quod in creaturis invenitur excedit, quicquid in creaturis a nobis cognoscitur a Deo removetur, secundum quod in creaturis est... Non solum enim Deus non est lapis aut sol, qualia sensu apprehenduntur, sed nec est talis vita aut essentia qualis ab intellectu nostro concipi potest..."* In *De divinis nominibus*, pr., cf. *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 9, l. 3 and for the notion of "trace" for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 45, a. 7 or *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 3, q. 2. According to Fourth council of Lateran (November 1215) *"inter creatorem et creaturam non potest similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda."* (DS 806).

completed) by the assertion that God is the Non-existing (where “existing” stands for any mode of existence univocally attributable to any created reality).<sup>60</sup>

This is not to say that the negative characteristic is not analogic (the existence is not denied in God in the same way as about, say, privation or pure potentiality), or that both ways of speaking are equal. Aquinas is clear that the truthfulness of the attribution of positive features to God is based on the fact that he possesses any perfection in a way that is beyond and above any of its realisations that we encounter in the creation, not sharing the limitations that co-define their existence as we know it: God is super-good, super-wise, super-existing, even super-god, the prefix “super-” signifying the transcendence vis-à-vis any genus of these perfections (yes, he is also super-perfect).<sup>61</sup> The denials are true inasmuch they stress this generic difference between God’s perfection and the primary meaning of the term that we use to talk about it.<sup>62</sup> Also, the type of analogy is not identical if we say that God is good and that God is a lion (although both these analogies are warranted by sacred texts).<sup>63</sup>

I do not intend to dissect the details of Aquinas’s theory of analogy here: I just want to point out to its consequences that need to be taken into account if the God we are speaking about is really to be the God as Aquinas understands him. Aquinas believes that our knowledge and language are originally based on the experience with corporeal objects and their properties:<sup>64</sup> the primary analogate of any term or notion is a created reality then. Given the radical difference between God and creatures, that means that there is no question of any discourse

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<sup>60</sup> “*quia secundum nihil existentium est existens, idest non existit secundum modum alicuius rei existentis; et ipse quidem est causa existendi omnibus, transfundens in omnia aequaliter suam similitudinem, ut sic ex nominibus creatorum nominari possit; ipsum autem est non-existens, non quasi deficiens ab essendo, sed sicut supra omnem substantiam existens*” In *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 1.

<sup>61</sup> “*Excessus autem est duplex: unus in genere, qui significatur per comparativum vel superlativum; alius extra genus, qui significatur per additionem huius praepositionis: super; puta, si dicamus quod ignis excedit in calore excessu in genere, unde dicitur calidissimus; sol autem excedit excessu extra genus, unde non dicitur calidissimus sed supercalidus...*” In *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 5; “*primo quidem, ea quae dicuntur de Deo, remote per excellentiam quamdam, ut superbonum, supersubstantiale, supervivum, supersapiens et quaecumque alia dicuntur de Deo per remotionem, propter sui excessum*” *ibid.*, cap. 2, l. 1; “*sicut essentia supersubstantialis, divinitas superdea, idest super modum deitatis communicatae rebus, et bonitas superbona*” *ibid.*, l. 2; “*et cum superdeus esset, factus est vir, idest homo.*” *Ibid.*, l. 5; “*non solum secundum praedictos modos attribuitur Deo esse perfectum, sed etiam dicitur perfectus sicut superperfectus, inquantum excedit perfectionem omnium rerum.*” *ibid.*, cap. 13, l. 1; “*unitas aut trinitas neque universaliter quicumque numerus aut quaecumque unitas ... manifestat et perfecte exprimit illud occultum superexcellentis deitatis, quae supersubstantialiter superexistit omnibus.*” *Ibid.*, l. 3.

<sup>62</sup> “*Et omnia ista quae de Deo affirmamus, possunt etiam ab eo negari, quia non ita conveniunt ei sicut inveniuntur in rebus creatis et sicut intelliguntur a nobis et significantur.*” In *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 5, l. 3.

<sup>63</sup> “*Quae vero dicuntur de Deo in Scripturis, quarum aliqua similitudo in creaturis invenitur, dupliciter se habent. Nam huiusmodi similitudo in quibusdam quidem attenditur secundum aliquid quod a Deo in creaturas derivatur. Sicut a primo bono sunt omnia bona et a primo vivo sunt omnia viventia ... In quibusdam vero similitudo attenditur secundum aliquid a creaturis in Deum translatum. Sicut Deus dicitur leo, petra, sol vel aliquid huiusmodi; sic enim Deus symbolice vel metaphorice nominatur.*” In *De divinis nominibus*, pr.

<sup>64</sup> “*Intellectus autem humani, qui est coniunctus corpori, proprium obiectum est quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens; et per huiusmodi naturas visibilibus rerum etiam in invisibilibus rerum aliqualem cognitionem ascendit.*” *STh.*, I, q. 84, a. 7, co., cf. chap 4. II. 4. 1.

about God that would provide more than a suitable analogy of him.<sup>65</sup> Taking very seriously the alterity of LORD asserted by his Scriptures,<sup>66</sup> Aquinas does not expect that there could be any completely non-enigmatic terrestrial expression of Him then.<sup>67</sup> This is not to say that there is no truthful (or wrongful) discourse about God: it is just that there is no way to speak about God with the same measure of adequacy as when we speak about terrestrial phenomena. If you argue as if such way existed (and maybe was even realised in your preferred description of God), you are already out of the pitch. Secondly, the fact that you can attribute to any other entity both the similitude to God and the dissimilitude to God implies that in theory, God can be truthfully described by opposite terms:<sup>68</sup> he can be considered both great and subtle, immobile and mobile,<sup>69</sup> wise and mad,<sup>70</sup> good and... super-surpassing what the name of “good” means.<sup>71</sup> No, to my knowledge, Aquinas never says that God can be called “bad”. But the scripturally suggested attribution of weakness and madness or stupidity,<sup>72</sup> as well as general assertion that there is a similarity between God and the negations of limited perfections (there is a specific similitude between God and prime matter)<sup>73</sup> suggests that his

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 12 and q. 13, a. 5; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 1.

<sup>66</sup> “To whom can you liken God? With what equal can you confront him? ... To whom can you liken me as an equal? says the Holy One.” Is 40, 18.25, cf. Ps 71, 19; 86, 8 quoted in this context in *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 9, l. 3. See also Is 44, 7; 46, 5; Ps 89, 7 – 9; Ex 15, 11.

<sup>67</sup> “*obscuritas quae importatur in nomine aenigmatis, dupliciter potest accipi. Uno modo, secundum quod quaelibet creatura est quoddam obscurum, si comparetur ad immensitatem divinae claritatis, et sic Adam videbat Deum in aenigmate, quia videbat Deum per effectum creatum.*” *STh.*, I, q. 94, a. 1, ad 3, cf. 1 Cor 13, 12.

<sup>68</sup> “*Et quia in ipso, quodammodo, sunt omnia, quasi in se omnia comprehendente, simul de ipso omnia praedicantur et simul ab ipso omnia remouentur, quia nihil est omnium, sed super omnia; sicut dicitur quod ipse est omnis figurae, inquantum omnes in ipso praeexistunt et tamen est sine figura, quia non habet esse ad modum rerum figuratarum; et eadem ratione est omnis pulchritudinis et tamen sine pulchritudine.*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 5, l. 2; “*Ad hanc etiam excellentiam est et quod a nobis ignoratur propter excellentiam sui luminis et quod a nullo intellectu creato est perfecte intelligibilis, idest comprehensibilis et quod de eo omnia possunt affirmari et omnia negari, secundum modum in praecedenti capitulo expositum, cum tamen ipse sit super omnem affirmationem et negationem; est enim super omnem intellectum nostrum, qui affirmationes et negationes componit.*” *Ibid.*, cap. 2, l. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 9, l. 1 – 2.

<sup>70</sup> “*Recolligit ergo primo excessum divinae sapientiae dicens quod divina sapientia laudatur excellenter sicut irrationabilis, inquantum excedit rationem; et sicut amens, inquantum excedit mentem sive intellectum; et sicut stulta, inquantum excedit habitum mentis, scilicet sapientiam.*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 7, l. 2, cf. *ibid.*, l. 1.

<sup>71</sup> “*Est autem considerandum quod Platonici posuerunt Deum summum esse quidem super ens et super vitam et super intellectum, non tamen super ipsum bonum quod ponebant primum principium. Sed ad hoc excludendum, Dionysius subdit quod neque ipsum nomen bonitatis afferimus ad divinam praedicationem, sicut concordantes ipsi, quasi hoc nomen per quamdam aequiparantiam ei respondeat. Sed quia desiderabile est nobis ut de illa ineffabili Dei natura aliquid quantumcumque modicum intelligamus et dicamus, consecramus Deo, primo et principaliter, dignissimum nomen, quod est bonum. Et in hoc quidem concordamus cum theologis, idest apostolis et prophetis, qui sacras Scripturas ediderunt, qui et hoc nomen Deo attribuunt, sed multum deficiamus a rerum veritate: manifestum est enim quod hoc nomen bonum, cum sit a nobis impositum, non signat nisi quod nos mente capimus; unde, cum Deus sit supra mentem nostram, superexcedit hoc nomen.*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 13, l. 3.

<sup>72</sup> “For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” 1Cor 1, 25, cf. *Super I Cor.*, cap. 1, l. 3 *in fine*.

<sup>73</sup> “*considerandum est quod sicut materia prima dicitur informis per defectum formae, sic informitas attribuitur ipsi primo bono, non per defectum, sed per excessum; et sic, secundum quamdam remotam assimilationem,*

avoiding to attribute the name of “badness” to God is more due to the completely unhabitual (and potentially too scandalising) character of such a way of speaking than to any theoretical principle that would exclude it. After all, Aquinas believes that God made Christ “to be sin”.<sup>74</sup> Again, while permitting the attribution of opposite terms, Aquinas is far from saying that we must just bow to an insoluble paradox: he is hyped up (Dionysius already was) to show more precise senses in which these terms can only be used and their mutual compatibility. But notwithstanding this possibility, the similitude of God to opposite states of creatures stands. There is a specific way in which the super-goodness of God is similar to things or persons that are not good: we do not need to go far for an example – to let somebody like Jesus be tortured to death is pretty much a scandalising madness.<sup>75</sup> It is essential to keep in mind that this is a natural feature of what the super-goodness is supposed to be. In the following, we will see that Aquinas is ambiguous a bit concerning God’s causal relation to some bad states (cf. III. 3.) and in other cases, he states that God is like a cause of it while denying that he is the cause of it (cf. chap. 6. I. 1.). In the context of what was just said, you should be prepared to understand this situation: by definition, the universal cause is not a cause in the same sense as the particular cause; in particular, the causal features that are connected to the limitation of causal powers are to be denied in its case, while its similitude to the deficient causes is granted by the very limitlessness of its perfection as differing from the limited perfection of non-deficient yet non-limitless causes.

## II. An immoral God?

### Introduction

In Aquinas’s cultural milieu, LORD’s precept to sacrifice Isaac in *Genesis 22* is not the only biblical text posing the problem to the image of the indisputable moral standard of God and his orders: the same kind of questions has been awakened by the divinely commanded sexual

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*similitudo causae primae invenitur in materia prima.” In De divinis nominibus, cap. 4, l. 2; “audacter hoc dicere poterimus quod non-existens, idest materia prima participat pulchro et bono, cum ens primum non-existens habeat quamdam similitudinem cum pulchro et bono divino: quoniam pulchrum et bonum laudatur in Deo per omnium ablationem; sed in materia prima, consideratur ablatio per defectum, in Deo autem per excessum, in quantum supersubstantialiter existit.” ibid., l. 5; “negationes omnium rerum conveniunt Deo per suum excessum” ibid., l. 8.*

<sup>74</sup> 2 Cor 5, 21, cf. *Super II Cor.*, cap. 5, l. 5.

<sup>75</sup> “...we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” 1 Cor 1, 23; “*Iudaeis scandalum, quia scilicet desiderabant virtutem miracula facientem et videbant infirmitatem crucem patientem; nam, ut dicitur II Cor. ultimo: crucifixus est ex infirmitate. Gentibus autem stultitiam, quia contra rationem humanae sapientiae videtur quod Deus moriatur et quod homo iustus et sapiens se voluntarie turpissimae morti exponat.*” *Super I Cor.*, cap. 1, l. 3.

intercourse of Hosea with the “woman of fornication” and by the “spoliation of Egypt” committed by Hebrews during Exodus,<sup>76</sup> these cases being a part of a wider issue of behaviours endorsed by the Old Testament (and thus supposedly by its Author) despite them being considered as morally inadmissible in a Christian society.<sup>77</sup> The general statements of LORD’s involvement in evil<sup>78</sup> (and also some particular examples of such an activity<sup>79</sup>) provide another occasion to doubt the inambiguous goodness of actions of the alleged Only Good. Given the fact that all the attempts to except at least the moral evil from the general scope of divine authorship have to cope with the descriptions of the Big Potter hardening the hearts, blinding the eyes and giving entire nations over in their degrading desires in order to make his wrath shine<sup>80</sup>, no wonder that some authorities seem to just give up on this: “God acts in the hearts of men, inclining their wills to whatever he wants, whether to the good or to the evil.”<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, in Aquinas’s view there is both scriptural and speculative evidence that God neither is, neither can be called the cause of any moral badness at all, even though he is intimately involved in each and every evil happening in the world and he is indeed the cause of some of its instances. This account is based essentially on two distinctions, namely distinguishing some apparent evils from the true ones, and distinguishing the object of the causality from its correlates. Let us start with the first of these distinctions.

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Hosea 1 and 3; Ex 11, 2 – 3 and 12, 35 – 36 and the reflexions on these texts (and Gen 22) in PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quatuor sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 37, cap. 5; ALEXANDER OF HALES, *Glossa in quatuor libros Sententiarum*, lib. 1, d. 45 and 47; *Summa fratris Alexandri*, p. 1, inq. 1, tract. 6, q. 3, tit. 2, cap. 1; ALBERT THE GREAT, *Scripta super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 37, a. 16; BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4; JOHN DUNS SCOT, *Ordinatio*, lib. 3, dis. 37. Interestingly enough, the genocides of anathematised populations (cf. Nu 21, 2 – 3; Dt 20, 16 – 18; Jos 6, 21; 8, 24 – 26; 10, 28 – 40; 11, 11; 1Sam 15, 2 – 3) do not seem to have the same measure of attention.

<sup>77</sup> Especially some generalised types of marital or quasi-marital conducts have awakened questions, namely the polygyny, the concubinage, the divorce and the remarriage of the divorced ones (cf. Ex 21, 7 – 10; Dt 21, 10 – 17; 24, 1 – 2), see PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quatuor sententiarum*, lib. 4, d. 33.

<sup>78</sup> “I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” Is 45, 6 – 7 (King James Translation) “...shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” Am 3, 6 (KJT). The Hebrew term *ra'* can mean any (including moral) evil. Modern English translations tend to restrict its meaning here, interpreting it as *disaster*, *calamity* etc. Contrary to them, the Vulgate (and the LXX) preserves its original generality, as KJT does.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. 1 King 22, 20ss; 2 Sam 24 (1 Chron 21 attributes the same act to Satan).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ex 4, 21; 9, 12; 10, 1 – 2 and 27; 11, 10; Dt 2, 30; Jos 11, 20; Is 6, 10; Rom 1, 24 – 32; 9, 10 – 24. Paul’s image of potter comes from Isaiah, cf. principally Is 29, 16 and 45, 9.

<sup>81</sup> “*Deus operatur in cordibus hominum, inclinando voluntates eorum in quodcumque voluerit, sive in bonum sive in malum.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, arg. 1 (cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 1; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 8, arg. 2; q. 24, a. 14, co.; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 6, arg. 6; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, arg. 1; *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 3.), quoting PETER LOMBARD, *Glossa on Rom 1, 24* (PL 191, 1332 A) who quotes AUGUSTIN, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, cap. 21 (PL 44, 909) according to editors of Leonina edition (see *Opera omnia...*, t. 23: *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* (1982), p. 65).

## II. 1. Abraham's sacrifice in Aquinas's *Sentences*

Aquinas treats the problem of Abraham's sacrifice for the first time in his late twenties, commenting the final passage of the 47<sup>th</sup> distinction of the first book of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.<sup>82</sup> I will stick to this early text that seems to be the longest discussion of this issue in Aquinas's corpus, while the differences of the later texts will be mentioned in due time.<sup>83</sup>

Throughout the 47<sup>th</sup> *distinctio*, Lombard argues in favour of Augustin's conviction that nothing can ever happen against God's will,<sup>84</sup> except for "God's will" taken in the sense of an exterior sign like a commandment or prohibition.<sup>85</sup> Apparently awaiting an obvious objection that the commandment shows the content of commander's will and the opposition against the former means the opposition against the latter, the Master briefly mentions some biblical events which supposedly prove that God can command something that he does not actually want to be carried out. Abraham's sacrifice serves as one of these witnesses:<sup>86</sup> as for the morality of this precept, Lombard seems to feel no need to discuss it.

In Aquinas's comment on this *distinctio*, the situation significantly changes. In the final article, Abraham's case is quoted together with Hosea's, and both are in the position of the argument in favour of the opinion *that the sin can be commanded by God*. The question is no more about God's commanding something for which he actually has no intention to carry it out, it is about God's (successful) commanding something that he wants to be done although he should not want it in any case.<sup>87</sup> This shifting of perspective is characteristic for the entire Aquinas's article. Its initial doubt corresponds roughly with the problem discussed by Lombard: it is concerned with the relation between God's precepts and that what is *beyond God's will* (as Aquinas puts it, X is "beyond" (*praeter*) someone's will if this subject wants neither X, nor its opposite, while it is "against" (*contra*) his will if he wants its opposite). Aquinas's answer is based on the distinction between antecedent and consequent will, a

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4. The text comes from 1252/53. For all the dating of Aquinas's texts, I follow TORRELL (2017).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 5, ad 2; q. 100, a. 8, ad 3 (the parallel text in *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 37, q. 1, a. 4, ad 3 speaks only about Hosea and the spoliation of Egypt).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quattuor sententiarum*, lib. 1, dist. 47.

<sup>85</sup> "*Ubi enim dicit 'non fieri praeter eius voluntatem etiam quod fit contra eius voluntatem', dissimiliter accepit voluntatem; et non ipsam voluntatem quae Deus est et sempiterna est, sed eius signa prae dictis verbis inteliigi voluit, id est prohibitionem sive praeceptionem et permissionem.*" PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quattuor sententiarum*, lib. 1, dist. 47, cap. 1 *in fine*. For the notion of will of sign, see below chap. 6. II. 1. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quattuor sententiarum*, lib. 1, dist. 47, cap. 3 *in fine*. The text quotes also the case of people forbidden by Jesus to speak about being healed by him, cf. Mt 12, 16.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, s. c. 1. The order to Hosea has not been called off and the prophet has accomplished it more than once. As for Abraham, in the answer to the first objection (the precept is a sign of the will and thus by commanding something that he does not really want, God would act as a cheater), Aquinas says that although God had not wanted Abraham to sacrifice, he had wanted him to want to sacrifice – which actually happened.

distinction whose different meanings will be discussed extensively in the final chapter of this book (cf. chap. 6. II. 2.): it is enough to say now that in Aquinas's *Sentences* my consequent will is what I actually want in the strongest sense of the term "want", all the subjectively relevant things to be considered being considered, while my antecedent will is what I want (or what I would like) considering only some of these things (or even only the abstract nature of the thing that I am deliberating about).<sup>88</sup> I can "antecedently" want to eat a cake, considering its taste, and *at the same time* ("antecedent" is not to be taken chronologically) decide (i.e. "consequently" want) to refuse it, considering my obesity. In *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4 Aquinas states that God's commandments are signs of God's antecedent will and not of his consequent will. Their fulfilment can therefore be beyond the latter (this is why they can be transgressed) but never beyond the former (this is why they truly manifest God's will). But all this is said rather swiftly, and Aquinas focuses on the problem of God's willing an act which is *per se* sinful and against the law of nature.

His explication goes as follows. Something (*aliquid*) that is beyond God's (antecedent) will if considered in itself (*secundum se*), can nevertheless become the object of this will by dint of adding or subtracting of a condition. Such thing can happen even in the case of something that is *per se* bad. In the considered cases this added condition is 'being commanded by God'. Through this feature even the acts like human sacrifice or sex with a prostitute receive some character of goodness; inasmuch they are good, God can want them and if he can want them, he can command them. Despite the first impression, Aquinas does not commit a vicious circle here: the addition of "ordered by God" is situated on the conceptual level and the resulting notion "human sacrifice that is ordered by God" means something good independently on whether God ever actually ordered any human sacrifice or not. Now, Aquinas means that not all the *per se* evils are able to be "made good" this way. In his view, the goodness of things comes from their double *ordering*<sup>89</sup>: the mutual ordering between them and their ordering towards the final purpose of the universe (namely God), the latter ordering being the base and the only reason of the former. Thus, the acts that consist directly in a violation of the ordering to God (e.g., the hate of God) cannot be rendered good by any means. By contrast, an act violating the mutual ordering between creatures (e.g., the killing of an innocent) is still good IF the ordering to God is maintained. According to Aquinas, such a case cannot happen under

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<sup>88</sup> That means that in the first book of the *Commentary* Aquinas's reading of the distinction seems to differ considerably both from its source text (JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 29) and from Aquinas's later use of it in *De veritate*. For extensive discussion of this problematic, see chap. 6. II. 2.

<sup>89</sup> In this context, Latin term "*ordo*" joins two principal ideas: 1) the finality, orientation or aiming to something and 2) the organisation or order descending from this finality.

normal circumstances because the mutual ordering between creatures serves as a naturally necessary mediation for their ordering towards God. Nevertheless, the absence of this mediation can be theoretically preternaturally bridged by the Primal cause in a similar way as the absence of other secondary causes in the case of some miracles (e.g., in the case of the water transformed into wine without the mediation of the vine and the yeast). God's precept to cross the requirements of the intra-cosmic order realizes such a bridge.

As for the details of this alternative ordering, there is an interesting discordance between the different editions of the quoted article. The text contained in the edition of Parma, the latest complete edition of the *Commentary* (sic!),<sup>90</sup> speaks about some possible finalities of killing Isaac on the created level: Abraham's sacrifice could serve as a manifestation of his faith or love, an example for posterity or the prefiguration of the mystery of the Cross.<sup>91</sup> Mandonnet, whose edition of the first book of the *Commentary* is considered to be the best available, heavily criticises this variant of the text, though.<sup>92</sup> His own version is much shorter and makes the impression to be much more immediately theocentric: Abraham's sacrifice is (immediately?) ordered to God – nothing more to say.<sup>93</sup> But no matter the edition, Aquinas's evaluative notions presupposed by his explication are far from being a simple matter. Let us have a closer look at them.

## II. 2. Bad or evil?

Aquinas discusses the immolation of an innocent as a special case of "*per se malum*".<sup>94</sup> Above, I have translated the term both as "*per se bad*" and "*per se evil*". The "*malum*" can mean both and I believe that on this occasion it really means both (since the sin is both bad and evil, see below II. 6.). Nevertheless, which of these two notions is fundamental? "Bad" as in "bad warrior" (incompetent, stupid, weak) or "evil" as in "evil warrior" (pernicious,

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<sup>90</sup> Concerning the existing editions of Aquinas's works and the level of their quality, I am using Alarcón's on-line catalogue of the best editions of Aquinas's works *Optimae Editiones Operum Thomae de Aquino* accessible from <https://www.corpusthomicum.org/reoptedi.html>.

<sup>91</sup> "*ut esset ad manifestationem fidei et amoris Abrahae, ut esset posteris in exemplum, et in significationem mortis Christi*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, co. (Parma, 1856).

<sup>92</sup> S. THOMAE AQUINATIS, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis*, t. 1, Ed. P. Mandonnet, Paris, P. Lethielleux, 1929, p. 1073 – 1074.

<sup>93</sup> Mandonnet's edition of the text does not explicitly deny the possibility that killing an innocent could be sufficiently ordered by God by relating it to some created finality, nevertheless, it speaks about removing the mutual ordering, not about replacing its natural state by a preternatural one. The parallelism with the eucharist (the goodness of a disordered act like the killing of an innocent is possible in a similar way as is the existence of accidents without subject) also suggests that God can use no other entity than himself to fill the gap.

<sup>94</sup> "*illa quae secundum se considerata, mala sunt ... inquantum stant sub praecepto divino, recipiunt quamdam rationem bonitatis, ut sic in ipsa voluntas tendere debeat: quod quidem in quibusdam per se malis contingit, et in quibusdam non.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, co.



aggressive, demonic). Well, if we look at Aquinas's conception of *malum* in general, his aristocratic option is impossible to miss: firstly, *malum* is "defined"<sup>95</sup> by good and not vice-versa, secondly, the attribution of *malum* to destructive agents is conceptually secondary and compatible with them being good *simpliciter*.

1) Aquinas famously considers the *malum* as a privation of a due good or perfection.<sup>96</sup> As for the "good" (*bonum*), it is one of the so-called "transcending names" for him,<sup>97</sup> moreover, this term (and the corresponding notion) is applicable on any being at all.<sup>98</sup> In his thought, the notion of "good" is connected to the notion of "appetite" which includes all the willing, loves, desires and other analogical inclinations (and the abilities to perform them) on all the levels of reality, beginning with God and ending with so-called prime matter.<sup>99</sup> "To be good" means "to be suitable to an appetite" (*appetibile*):<sup>100</sup> as said by Aristotle, "the good is what all the

<sup>95</sup> *Sensu stricto*, "definitio est ex genere et differentia" (*STh.*, I, q. 3, a. 5, co.): in this sense, there is no definition of *malum* because this notion is applicable in all of the Aristotelian categories (cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 11) and it therefore does not belong to any higher genus. Nevertheless, Aquinas does not resist to speak about the defining here, clearly in a broader sense of the term, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 10, ad 4 or, in the case of the sin, *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1 ("aliquis modus definitionis incompletissimus").

<sup>96</sup> "malum privatio est boni, et non negatio pura, ut dictum est supra; non omnis defectus boni est malum, sed defectus boni quod natum est et debet haberi." *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 5, ad 1, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4; lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 71, n. 5; lib. 3, cap. 5, n. 5; cap. 13, n. 3; *STh.*, I-II, q. 75, a. 1, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 117; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 18, n. 7. As is clear in the first of the quoted texts, Aquinas tends to understand the term "privation" in its narrow sense which implies without saying that the deprived good was due (for different levels of the notion of privation, cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 14 – 15), hence he most often uses the contracted quasi-definition "privation of good", cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, co.; d. 37, q. 3, a. 1, co.; d. 40, q. 1, a. 5, co.; lib. 4, d. 16, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 8, n. 9; cap. 20, n. 4; cap. 141, n. 1; lib. 4, cap. 52, n. 6; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 10; q. 49, a. 3, ad 2; I-II, q. 18, a. 8, ad 1; q. 25, a. 2, co.; q. 78, a. 1, co.; q. 87, a. 7, co.; II-II, q. 118, a. 5, co.; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 15, co.; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 2, s. c. 2; q. 10, a. 1, ad 5; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 14 in fine; *Super Rom.*, cap. 11, l. 5.

<sup>97</sup> Aquinas usually uses just the term "transcendentia", cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 2, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2; d. 34, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1; *STh.*, I, q. 30, a. 3; q. 39, a. 3, ad 3; q. 50, a. 3, ad 1; q. 93, a. 9, co.; *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 8, ad 15; *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 8; *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 8, n. 4; l. 12, n. 5, the only occurrence of the term "nomina transcendentia" appears in *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 3, co. The *transcendentia* are applicable across all the categories of being.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 5, a. 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 1, a. 3; *Contra gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 41; lib. 3, cap. 20; *Expositio De ebdomadibus*, l. 3. For the deduction and the most extensive list of all the most general terms/notions (*ens, res, unum, aliquid, verum, bonum*) in Aquinas, cf. probably *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1. It seems that this group is narrower than Aquinas's "transcendentia": the latter also include at least "multitudo" and "malum" (cf. explicitly in *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1; *STh.*, I, q. 30, a. 3; q. 50, a. 3, ad 1; *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 8, ad 15; *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 8, n. 4; l. 12, n. 5).

<sup>99</sup> "appetitus nihil aliud est quam inclinatio appetentis in aliquid." *STh.*, I-II, q. 8, a. 1, co.; "appetitus est nomen potentiae et nomen actus: unde non est inconveniens quod ex appetitu potentiae procedat appetitus actus." *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 2, a. 1, ad 5. For the basic distinction of the voluntary, sensible and natural appetites, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2 ("in Deo est voluntarius appetitus tantum" *ibid.*, ad 1), for the natural appetite of prime matter, cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 1, l. 15, n. 8 – 10, for the list of different appetitive acts, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 25, a. 2, co.

<sup>100</sup> "bonum proprie est aliquid in quantum est appetibile..." *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, co.; "Convenientiam ergo entis ad appetitum exprimit hoc nomen bonum..." *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1, co.; "Ratio enim boni in hoc consistit, quod aliquid sit appetibile..." *STh.*, I, q. 5, a. 1, co., "eadem enim ratio boni et finis est." *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 2, l. 4, n. 2; "boni autem ratio consistat in hoc quod est appetibile" *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 40, n. 4.

things desire (*appetunt*)”.<sup>101</sup> This allows to relate the good with another notion: that what is desired or wanted – the goal (*finis*).<sup>102</sup> Aquinas states that it is precisely the *ratio finis* (“character of the goal”) that distinguishes the notion of “good” from the notion of “being”.<sup>103</sup> I skip the discussion whether this *ratio finis* is supposed to delimit the good on the ontological level or the good inasmuch as it is apprehended only. As far as I understand Aquinas, the very notion of “good” directly describes only the level of apprehension in any case: the “good” is just a partial apprehension of the same reality that is apprehended also by the notions of “being”, “one”, “reality”, “something” or “true”<sup>104</sup> – but I do not insist.<sup>105</sup> I also skip the different ways that Aquinas uses to prove that the “being” and the “good” are actually coextensive.<sup>106</sup> The aristocratic – attractivity-based – conception of the notion should be clear by now: Aquinas’s good does not depend conceptually on *malum*. On the contrary, in his view “*malum* cannot be defined nor known, if not by good...”<sup>107</sup>

2) Something is called *malum* inasmuch it is opposed to some good: as such, it is something that is in opposition to the desired goal and is therefore disliked or detested.<sup>108</sup> Aquinas believes that this repulsion concerns primarily the privation of due good which is therefore the primary analogate of *malum*.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, he *does not think* that the privation-based “definition” of *malum* corresponds with all the entities that are commonly considered as *malum*. What he thinks is that any *malum* with which this definition does not correspond is called *malum* only because of some other connection with another *malum* with which this

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 1 (1094 a). For the occurrence of this “definition” in Aquinas, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 37, n. 4; cap. 41, n. 5 a n. 8; cap. 47, n. 2; cap. 82, n. 4; lib. 3, cap. 3, n. 3 a n. 11; cap. 7, n. 3; cap. 16, n. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 5, a. 1, co.; a. 4, co., ad 1; q. 6, a. 1, arg. 2 and ad 2; a. 3, arg. 2; q. 80, a. 1, arg. 1; I-II, q. 8, a. 1, co.; q. 23, a. 2, arg. 3; q. 27, a. 1, ad 3; q. 29, a. 5, co.; q. 34, a. 2, arg. 3; q. 94, a. 2, co.; *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1, co.; q. 21, a. 1, co.; q. 22, a. 1; *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 7, ad 6; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1; a. 2, arg. 15; q. 10, a. 1; *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 7, co.; *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 20; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 115; lib. 2, cap. 9; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1, l. 4, n. 3; l. 11, n. 9; lib. 2, l. 4, n. 2; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 1, l. 1, n. 9 – 11; lib. 3, l. 11, n. 5; lib. 10, l. 2, n. 11; *Tabula Ethic.*, cap. 2, vox 5, expos. 1; vox 15, expos. 1; *Expositio De ebdomadibus*, l. 2 – 3; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 3; cap. 4, l. 1 and l. 22.

<sup>102</sup> “*cum bonum sit quod omnia appetunt, hoc autem habet rationem finis; manifestum est quod bonum rationem finis importat.*” *STh.*, I, q. 5, a. 4, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 3, q. 4, a. 1, ad 6; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 38, n. 4; cap. 95, n. 5; lib. 3 cap. 17 n. 5...

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 1, a. 3, co.; d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1 and q. 21, a. 1.

<sup>105</sup> For an alternative view, cf. AERTSEN (1996), p. 300, admitting nevertheless, that this reading renders some of Aquinas’s arguments doubtful (cf. *ibid.*, p. 304).

<sup>106</sup> Cf. notably the texts quoted in my footnote 98.

<sup>107</sup> “*malum ... neque definiri, neque cognosci potest, nisi per bonum*” *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 10, ad 4.

<sup>108</sup> “*malum autem dicitur id quod opponitur bono. Unde oportet malum esse id quod opponitur appetibili in quantum huiusmodi.*” *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, co. “*Bonum autem habet rationem attractivi, cum bonum sit quod omnia appetunt, ut dicitur in I Ethic. et e contrario malum habet rationem repulsivi...*” *ibid.*, q. 10, a. 1, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 1.

<sup>109</sup> “*tam in mentibus Daemonum, quam in animabus, quam etiam in corporibus, malum non est aliquid existens; sed infirme et debiliter habere propria bona quae eis conveniunt vel totaliter cadere ab habendo, hoc dicitur malum in singulis*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 21, cf. the texts in my footnote 96.

definition corresponds. In his *Sentences*, adopting Avicenna's "very useful" distinction of different meanings of the term, he distinguishes three basic levels of the notion:<sup>110</sup> 1) "*malum per se*" (the privation) and two levels of "*malum per accidens*", 2) the subject of the privation and 3) the cause of the privation, 2) depending conceptually on 1) and 3) on 2).<sup>111</sup> Otherwise said, a predator mutilating its victim is a *malum* in a less proper sense than the mutilated victim. To my knowledge, neither the explicit quotation of Avicenna, nor the elaborated structure of this distinction reappears in Aquinas's later writings; nevertheless, I am not aware of any part of its content that would be, be it implicitly, later denied: the conceptual primacy of privation is asserted up to making (false) impression that it is the only meaning of *malum* Aquinas uses; the efficiently harming factors, taken as such, are still considered as *malum* only in somewhat improper sense.<sup>112</sup> But what might be even more important, Aquinas's understanding of notions allows their following instantiation: the absence of the necessary spice in the broth is a *malum* in the first Avicennian sense of the term; the spoiled broth itself is a *malum* in the second sense; the cook that has spoiled it is a *malum* in the third sense. Now, what do you think – is the spoiled broth bad, or evil?

Here, I do not intend to question the reasons that led the English translators of Aquinas to render his *De malo* as *On evil* instead of *On bad(ness)*.<sup>113</sup> I am just pointing to the fact that this decision is connected with the danger of the denaturing of the whole of Aquinas's perspective concerning the topic that he treats in similar texts. Our spontaneous understanding of "evil" does not correspond with his general understanding of *malum*. Even in many cases where the privation and its cause are quite unproblematically called "evil" (e.g., the mutilation of some part of the body and the torturer that has caused it), the subject of the privation – its

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2 – all these types are further distinguished into subcategories and related to notions like sin, punishment etc.

<sup>111</sup> "*In malis ergo hoc modo dictis est talis ordo, quod id quod est per se malum, primo dicitur, et omnia alia per relationem ad id: et secundum gradum tenet malum per accidens, quod est subjectum mali quod dicitur malum ex hoc quod privationem quae per se malum est, in se habet: et in tertio gradu est id quod dicitur malum per accidens sicut causa inducens malum: hoc enim non habet in se de necessitate privationem; sed facit aliquid esse privationem habens. Unde primum dicitur absolute malum, et secundum in ordine ad primum, et tertium in ordine ad secundum.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>112</sup> For example, *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, another lengthier treatment of the same problem from the end of the 60ies, considers in its corpus briefly only the distinction between *subiectum mali* and *ipsum malum* (corresponding to 2) and 1)) and speaks almost entirely only about *ipsum malum*. The *malum* in the sense of a harming factor is mentioned only in the answers to objections (cf. ad 1, ad 8, ad 10 and ad 18) under the name of *malum alicui(us)* (distinguished from *malum simpliciter*), the text being clear about the weakness of this analogate: "*poena, in quantum est poena, est malum alicuius; in quantum est iusta, est bonum simpliciter. Nihil autem prohibet id quod est bonum simpliciter, esse malum alicuius; sicut forma ignis est bonum simpliciter, sed est malum aquae.*" (ad 18).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. for example DOUGHERTY (2016).

“victim” – is not called so.<sup>114</sup> Speaking about evil in the cases such as my culinary example would be rather hilarious (just imagine the evil cook introducing the evil of insufficient spiciness into the broth that consequently becomes itself evil). Yet, in Aquinas’s view, “*malum*” is unproblematically applicable in all these cases.

### II. 3. Due good

I think I provided enough explanation for showing that Aquinas’s “*malum*” means rather “bad” than “evil”. But even if it makes it far broader notion than “evil”, it does not make it a notion which would be applicable on all the non-beings in the same way as is the “good” applicable on all the beings. As we have seen, not every absence of good is *malum*, the good in question must be a due (*debitum*) good. But which good is due and what does it mean that it is due?

The term “*debitum*” can express two different ideas: 1) something is *debitum* for X, if it is necessary for X, X needs it, is obliged to perform it etc.<sup>115</sup>; 2) something is *debitum* for X, if X has the right to it, it is X’s possession, somebody owes it to X etc.<sup>116</sup> It is the former that is immediately included in the definition of *malum*. The intuition behind this use is rather straightforward: the ability to fly is something good, yet its absence in the case of man is generally not considered bad – surely not as in the case of an eagle.<sup>117</sup> The situation is different in the case of the ability of speaking. Why? Well, there is an idea of what a man or an eagle should be (and should be capable of) – and even if there can be a disagreement concerning the precise delimitation of its content, most people would agree in the matter of the respective placements of the ability to fly and speaking into or outside this content. In Aquinas’s view, the content of this idea is (at least partially) given by the partial grasp of what he calls the *nature* (*natura*) of these species – an inner principle that gives to its subject both its specific identity and the basic orientation of its appetite(s).<sup>118</sup> The naturally determined

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<sup>114</sup> We would not say that a tortured person is a bad person (see II. 6.): but we could say that due to the damage from the torturer, she feels bad and she has bad legs or eyes (i.e. she hardly walks or sees), while we could not say that she has evil legs. Thus, even if the possibility of applying “bad” may be also narrower than that of Aquinas’s *malum*, it is still closer to it than the possibility of applying “evil”.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. for example *STh.*, II-II, q. 44, a. 1, co.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. for example *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>117</sup> I am slightly modifying the example of wings and hands from *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 5, n. 5: “*si enim homo non habet alas, non est ei malum, quia non est natus eas habere; ... est tamen malum si non habeat manus, quas natus est et debet habere, si sit perfectus, quod tamen non est malum avi. Omnis autem privatio, si proprie et stricte accipitur, est eius quod quis natus est habere et debet habere.*”

<sup>118</sup> “*natura dicitur omne illud quod intellectu quoquo modo capi potest. Non enim res est intelligibilis nisi per diffinitionem et essentiam suam. ... Tamen nomen naturae hoc sumptae videtur significare essentiam rei, secundum quod habet ordinem ad propriam operationem rei, cum nulla res propria operatione destituatur.*” *De ente et essentia*, cap. 1. For different meanings of the notion, cf. *STh.*, III, q. 2, a. 1, co., for the partiality of its

object of this appetite and all the prerequisites for its achievement are the due good for its bearer, i.e., it is necessary for her to be inclined to them (be it only on some level of her inclination), missing them implies subjectively an inevitable frustration of an irremovable appetite and objectively the fact the bearer is in some respect not proportionate to the purpose of her existence, given by her very identity: in this respect, she is in a bad state from the viewpoint of the natural requirements of her species.

Let me make some remarks on this point. Firstly, to prevent a misunderstanding, not all the due goods are necessarily due to be possessed during all the time of existence of the entities that they are due for: in many cases, the nature orients its subject to achieve them only sometimes, or in a determined time, as in the case of the eagle's ability to fly: the lack of this ability gets bad only with time, there is nothing wrong with it right after they hatch.<sup>119</sup>

Secondly, note that the due good is not necessarily the best possible good. It seems that Aquinas prefers blond hair colour<sup>120</sup>; nevertheless, the absence of this good is not bad.<sup>121</sup> More importantly, while there is a theoretical possibility to achieve the power and the wealth of the king, no wise individual would grieve the lack of it (provided that he was not a legal heir of a kingdom). The latter observation plays an important role in Aquinas's early argument concerning the destiny of children who died without being purified from the original sin: in his view their souls are damned (i.e., deprived of the beatific vision of God) yet the damnation does not impede their natural happiness because such vision of God is not naturally due to a man and these souls know it.<sup>122</sup>

Thirdly, its finality-based conception connects the due good closely with the problem of "perfection". The latter term is understood by Aquinas according to the meaning that it has in the case of fabrication: the completion.<sup>123</sup> The idea behind that is of a process of fabrication of some predetermined object, like a shoe or a chair: the thing is perfect when it is complete, i.e., according to its project there is nothing left to do. The use of this notion for the entities that

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grasp, cf. *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, pr. in medio (Aquinas states that no philosopher has ever perfectly investigated the nature of a single fly), for the comment on Aristotelian conception of nature as "*principium motus et quietis in eo in quo est primo et per se et non secundum accidens*", cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 1, for the natural determination of appetites based on cognition, cf. for example *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 1.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. the notion of absence that becomes narrowly taken privation only with time in *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 14 – 15

<sup>120</sup> Cf. the reflection about the beauty of Christ in *Super Psalmo 44*, n. 2. Cf. the reflection about the beauty of Christ in *Super Psalmo 44*, n. 2. This opinion is probably connected with what Aquinas thinks about the relation between the notions of beauty and light, cf. chap. 6. III.

<sup>121</sup> "*si etiam homo capillos flavos non habet, non est malum, quia etsi natus sit habere, non tamen est debitum ut habeat*" *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 5, n. 5.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2.

<sup>123</sup> "*in his quae fiunt, tunc dicitur esse aliquid perfectum, cum de potentia educitur in actum; transmittitur hoc nomen perfectum ad significandum omne illud cui non deest esse in actu, sive hoc habeat per modum factionis, sive non.*" *STh.*, I, q. 4, a. 1, ad 1.

develop themselves according to the orientation given by their nature is very natural. Nevertheless, the notion of due good is not limited to these naturally oriented entities: this notion can be used wherever anything happens to have finality, whichever its origin.

## II. 4. The notion of sin

After having seen Aquinas's conception of "bad" in general, it could seem natural to simply look for its specific application in the case of moral badness. I prefer a different way. It is true that Aquinas knows the term of *malum morale* and its derivatives<sup>124</sup>, but his use of it is rather limited: in the quoted comment on Abraham's sacrifice, it does not occur at all. To say that there is something wrong with killing an innocent etc., Aquinas principally uses the term *peccatum* which appears to be his most frequent expression for saying that something is bad, even more frequent than "*malum*" itself.<sup>125</sup> "*Peccatum*" is usually translated as "sin" and most of the time, I will not part from this custom. Nevertheless, its meaning in Aquinas is far wider than some "transgression of moral or religious rules" that "sin" tends to mean today, and one needs to attend to this broader meaning to understand what the "transgression of moral or religious rules" means for Aquinas.

The thing is that, as Peter Lombard himself observed, the precise signification of this so much used term is far from being simple: to begin, there is quite a plethora of very different definitions or quasi-definitions provided by the Tradition of the Church.<sup>126</sup> The list of Church Fathers citations that Aquinas quotes in this matter on different occasions is not short: "something which is done or said or desired against the eternal law",<sup>127</sup> "the transgression of the divine law and the disobedience of the heavenly precepts",<sup>128</sup> "the will to retain or to

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 40, q. 1, a. 4, co. (*moraliter bonus vel malus*); *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 5, n. 11; *STh.*, I-II, q. 24, a. 1; II-II, q. 19, a. 2, ad 2; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, co.; q. 2, a. 3, co.; *De virtutibus*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 5.

<sup>125</sup> *Index thomisticus* identifies more than thirty-six thousand occurrences of root "pecc-" in Aquinas's works (including the verbal forms and the term *peccator*), compared to less than seventeen thousand occurrences of the root "mal-".

<sup>126</sup> "*Diversitatis huius verborum occasione, de peccato plurimi diversa senserunt.*" PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quattuor sententiarum*, lib. 2, dist. 35, cap. 2.

<sup>127</sup> "*Ergo peccatum est, factum vel dictum vel concupitum aliquid contra aeternam legem. Lex vero aeterna est, ratio divina vel voluntas Dei, ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans.*" AUGUSTIN, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, lib. 22, cap. 27 (PL 42, 418). Thomas quotes it quite frequently, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, co.; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 2, s. c; *STh.*, I-II, q. 19, a. 4, s. c; q. 21, a. 1, s. c; q. 72, a. 1, s. c, even if most of the time as an objection, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 22, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 2; d. 39, q. 3, a. 3, arg. 1; *De veritate*, q. 15, a. 4, arg. 9; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 7, arg. 1; *STh.*, I-II, q. 71, a. 2, arg. 4; q. 76, a. 2, arg. 1; q. 88, a. 1, arg. 1 etc.

<sup>128</sup> "*Quid est enim peccatum, nisi praevaricatio legis divinae, et coelestium inobedientia praeceptorum?*" AMBROSE, *De paradiso*, cap. 8, § 39 (PL 14, 309). Cf. its more or less accurate quotations in *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, co.; d. 44, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 2; *De veritate*, q. 17, a. 4, arg. 3; *De malo*, q. 9, a. 3, arg. 2; *STh.*, I-II, q. 73, a. 1, arg. 1; q. 100, a. 2, s. c.; II-II, q. 162, a. 2, arg. 2 etc.

pursue what the justice forbids”,<sup>129</sup> “to pursue the temporal things, neglecting the eternal ones”, “to use what should be enjoyed and to enjoy what should be used”,<sup>130</sup> “nothing”,<sup>131</sup> spiritual darkness, something against the nature<sup>132</sup> etc. “In such a variety, what should one hold then? What should one say?”<sup>133</sup> Well, as for Aquinas, he generally tries to show that all the authorities are basically right, just emphasizing different aspects of the *peccatum* (or different meanings of the analogical term “*peccatum*”).<sup>134</sup> But what is more interesting than his attempts in this direction, is the main authority that he uses to justify his own comprehension of *peccatum* for most of his career: it is none of these holy teachers. In fact, this text is not Christian, it is not even religious and, even more surprisingly, it is not even concerned with morality at all: it is the second book of Aristotle’s *Physics*. “Now mistakes come to pass even in the operations of art: the grammarian makes a mistake in writing and the doctor pours out the wrong dose. Hence clearly mistakes are possible in the operations of nature also. If then in art there are cases in which what is rightly produced serves a purpose, and if where mistakes occur there was a purpose in what was attempted, only it was not attained, so must it be also in natural products, and monstrosities will be failures in the purposive effort.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> “*Nonne ista cantant et in montibus pastores, et in theatris poetae, et indocti in circulis, ... et in orbe terrarum genus humanum? Quod si nemo vituperatione vel damnatione dignus est, aut non contra vetitum iustitiae faciens, aut quod non potest non faciens, ... quis dubitet tunc esse peccatum, cum et velle iniustum est, et liberum nolle; et ideo definitionem illam ...ad intellegendum esse facillimam, ...a me potuisse dici: Peccatum est voluntas retinendi vel consequendi quod iustitia vetat, et unde liberum est abstinere?*” AUGUSTIN, *De duabus animabus contra Manichaeos*, 11.15 (PL 42, 195). Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, co.; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 2, arg. 2; *STh.*, I-II, q. 71, a. 6, arg. 2.

<sup>130</sup> “*licet ... considerare, utrum sit aliud male facere, quam neglectis rebus aeternis, quibus per seipsam mens fruitur, ... temporalia ..., quasi magna et miranda sectari.*” AUGUSTIN, *De libero arbitrio*, I, cap. 16 (PL 32, 1240); “*omnis itaque humana perversio est... fruendis uti velle atque utendis frui.*” *De diversis questionibus LXXXIII*, q. 30 (PL 40, 19), cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 71, a. 6, arg. 3.

<sup>131</sup> “*peccatum nihil est, et nihil fiunt homines cum peccant.*” AUGUSTIN, *In Evangelium Ioannis*, I, 13 (PL 35, 1385), cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 1.

<sup>132</sup> “For goodness is the spiritual light, and, similarly, evil is the spiritual darkness.” JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 4 (I have changed “light/darkness of the mind” in the quoted edition for “spiritual light/darkness” of Aquinas’s Latin); “While then we abide in the natural state we abide in virtue, but when we deviate from the natural state, that is from virtue, we come into an unnatural state and dwell in wickedness.” *ibid.*, cap. 30, quoted by Aquinas as a description of sin respectively in *De malo*, q. 2, a. 12, arg. 4 and q. 4, a. 2, arg. 4.

<sup>133</sup> “*Quid igitur in hac tanta varietate tenendum, quid dicendum?*” PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quattuor sententiarum*, lib. 2, dist. 35, cap. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2 (for Aquinas’s attempt of reconciliation of the first three mentioned definitions); lib. 3, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2; *STh.*, I, q. 63, a. 2, co.; I-II, q. 71, a. 6.

<sup>135</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Physics*, II, 8 (trans. by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye) used in the context of the definition of sin in *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 48, q. 1, a. 3, co.; lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 7, co.; q. 25, a. 5, co.; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 1, co. and (without being explicitly mentioned) q. 3, a. 1, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 1 (mentioned explicitly only in objections). The only quotation of the text in *Prima Secundae*’s Treatise on sin (q. 71 – 89, written shortly after *De malo* and shortly before Aquinas’s death) seems to be q. 71, a. 4, arg. 3: the passage about the definition of sin (q. 71, a. 6) is focused directly on the problem of the badness of human acts, coming from the lack of the due commensuration to its directing principles (the reason and God). While this shift of

The quoted passage is a part of Aristotle's argumentation for the existence of the finality in the nature. The premise of this argumentation is the parallelism (considered as obvious) between the art<sup>136</sup> and the nature concerning the occurrence of the "hamartiai" (mistakes). The begetting of a deformed offspring is very much like a fabrication of a wobbling chair: in both cases, the very process of considering them as failures shows that we are comparing them to some pre-existing goal with which they are not (fully) conformed. What has this text to do with the problem of sin? Well, the Greek term that Aristotle uses here is also the dominant term to speak about bad deeds in the New Testament<sup>137</sup> and in both cases, the Latin translation has rendered it as "peccatum". As we shall see below, Aquinas is well aware that the sins Jesus redeemed him from are not quite the mistakes Aristotle speaks about in *Physics*; nevertheless, he still considers them different types of the same reality whose generic features were grasped by the Philosopher in *Physics*: a *malum* in the activity, given by the non-conformity of the latter to its finality.<sup>138</sup> Imagine a trembling absent-minded bowman, shooting at the target without aiming – you have the personification of Aquinas's general idea of *peccatum*:<sup>139</sup> before being anything else, the *peccator* is a bad (as distinguished from evil) shooter.<sup>140</sup>

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emphasis is interesting, I have not noticed any real withdrawal from Aquinas's understanding of sin typical for all the earlier texts: in the immediately following Treatise on law (q. 90 – 108) the conformity to one's finality is still a principal criterion of goodness (see below II. 8.). Aquinas might have skipped this more general consideration of *peccatum* because he has already presented it earlier in *Prima Secundae*, in the end of Treatise on human acts (q. 21, a. 1).

<sup>136</sup> In the Aristotelian and Thomist context, the "art" (*techné, ars*) means principally the (ultimately intellectual) ability of *artificial* objects production, and eventually the ability of any activity done according to a preestablished intellectual project; it has little to do with the contemporary ideas about artistic creation, cf. for ex. *STh.*, I-II, q. 57, a. 3, co. ("*ars nihil aliud est, quam ratio recta aliquorum operum faciendorum*").

<sup>137</sup> Cf. *Concordance de la Bible* (1970), p. 406 – 407.

<sup>138</sup> "*peccatum est in his quae nata sunt finem consequi, cum non consequuntur. Quaelibet autem res per suam operationem finem suum nata est consequi; unde oportet quod peccatum in operatione consistat, secundum quod non est directa ut finis exigit; secundum quod grammaticus non recte scribit, nec parat recte medicus potionem.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>139</sup> For the correspondence of this understanding to the etymological meaning on biblical terms for sin, cf. *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de la Bible* (1987), p. 994 – 997; DAVIDSON (1970), p. 254. The Latin term *peccatum* seems to be itself connected to the idea of stumbling, cf. ERNOUT & MEILLET (1959), p. 745.

<sup>140</sup> Not even the devil is exception from this rule, cf. the conditioning of demonic sin by the natural limitation of (future) demon's intellectual apprehension of supernatural goods in *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2 – 4. Even the demonic badness consists in an infirmity then: "*Daemones dicuntur mali ... in quantum non sunt, prout scilicet sunt infirmi servare principatum sui ipsorum, ut dicunt eloquia sacrae Scripturae. ... non enim dicimus Daemones fieri malos nisi in hoc quod carent habitu et operatione per quam ordinari deberent in bona divina. ... Modus autem quo Angeli nati sunt consequi ultimum finem suae voluntatis est per voluntatem moderatam secundum divinam regulam. Si igitur excedant istum modum, non consequentur finem; .... Omne autem quod non consequitur suam perfectionem remanet imperfectum, ... Omne autem imperfectum in quantum huiusmodi est impotens, ... Et quia virtus est perfectio potentiae sequitur circa virtutem, quae salvare perfectionem ipsorum poterat, infirmitas et fuga et casus. ... si enim aliquis sit infirmus ad resistendum alicui vel ad consequendum aliquid, fugit ab illo et fugiens propter infirmitatem cadit. Et similiter Daemones infirmati circa consecutionem divini finis, fugiunt ab eo et cadunt, praecipitati in peccatum.*" *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 19.



Let me make some specifications. First, the achievement of the goal normally presupposes that there is some directing principle (*regula*) assuring the conformity of the activity to this goal: it can be a natural inclination in the case of biological processes, the intellectually known rules of grammar in the case of use of language or some divine revelation in the case of seeking supernatural salvation. The defining feature of *peccatum* is the lack of the conformity to this directing principle, not the simple fact that the finality was not achieved.<sup>141</sup> In Aquinas's universe, most of the agents can find themselves in the situation of doing their best and still failing because of an impediment coming from a stronger, unpredictable or simply uncontrollable factor. If the bowman does all what must be done for the arrow to hit the target under normal circumstances, yet archangel Michael decides to change its trajectory and the arrow misses, the bowman's shooting is not a *peccatum*. On the other hand, if the incompetent would-be bowman hits the target either by some supernatural intervention, or simply just by chance, his miserable shooting is a *peccatum* despite this success.

Second, Aquinas is not completely consistent about the decision whether the "*peccatum*" should mean the very privation of the aforesaid conformity (being a *malum* in the first Avicennian sense of the term), or rather the non-conform activity (being a *malum* in the second sense of the term). Most of the time he opts for the latter, but an occasional exception can be found.<sup>142</sup> Let me add that as usually, Aquinas does not insist on the univocal use of his terms here: "*peccatum*" can mean also the result of a failed activity;<sup>143</sup> *peccatum originale* (original sin) is a habitual state that directly concerns neither the activity nor the active powers but the very substance of the soul;<sup>144</sup> in the Scriptural assertion that God has made Christ "to be sin"<sup>145</sup>, the term can mean a sacrifice for the sin, the similitude of the sin or somebody who is (falsely) supposed to be a sinner.<sup>146</sup> As we have already seen, Aquinas's assertions that God does not cause *peccatum* mean that God does not cause the privation that makes the activity sinful; Aquinas positively states that God causes all the (ontologically) positive aspects of the sinful act.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> "*magis est de ratione peccati praeterire regulam actionis quam etiam deficere ab actionis fine.*" *De malo*, q. 2, a. 1, co.; "*illud quod est formale in peccato, ex quo rationem mali habet, scilicet privatio dirigentis in finem, ..., et deordinatio ab ipso fine...*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. for example *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 25, a. 5, co.; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 2, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 1, co.; q. 71, a. 6, co. for *peccatum* as bad act, *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 7, co. for *peccatum* as badness of act ("*Nihil enim est aliud peccatum, sive in rebus naturalibus sive artificialibus sive voluntariis dicatur, quam defectus vel inordinatio propriae actionis...*").

<sup>143</sup> Cf. for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 63, a. 2, co.; I-II, q. 21, a. 1, ad 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. for ex. *De malo*, q. 4, a. 1 – 4.

<sup>145</sup> 2 Cor 5, 21.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. *Super II Cor.*, cap. 5, l. 5.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1 – 2; *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1 – 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1 – 2.

Third, an undue omission of an activity is also a case of *peccatum*:<sup>148</sup> the complete absence of the activity necessary for achieving the goal is just a more extreme version of the absence of the necessary ordering to the goal that can be found disabling some positively existing activity.

## II. 5. The sin in moral matters

Aquinas distinguishes three kinds of *peccatum*: a *peccatum* in the natural matters (bad digestion, the generation of a deformed offspring etc.), a *peccatum* in the matters of art (the fabrication of bad item, bad shooting etc.) and a *peccatum* in the moral or voluntary matters – the matter of our interest.<sup>149</sup> The one-word term for the *peccatum in moralibus* is “*culpa*”:<sup>150</sup> Aquinas occasionally states that the theologians use “*peccatum*” habitually only in this narrower sense.<sup>151</sup> What does it mean for the *peccatum* to be moral?

Beginning with *Sentences*, Aquinas (rightly) notices the connection of the notion of “moral” to the meaning of Latin term “*mos*”.<sup>152</sup> “*Mos*” can mean different things: in Aquinas’s view, the meaning in question is “an act of appetite” in this case (recall that “appetite” can mean any inner inclination). More precisely, the term is supposed to originally mean “a habitual way of acting”, but the stability of this habitual way comes from the state of inner inclinations of the agent and, as it often happens, the name of the effect was transferred to the cause.<sup>153</sup> To be moral (in the neutral sense of the term) means therefore to have something to do with inner inclinations. Nevertheless, Aquinas habitually tends to narrow this meaning down by connecting the “moral” with the inner feature which distinguishes man from other animals: something is moral (still in the neutral sense of the term) only if it has its origin in the reason.<sup>154</sup> To avoid a misunderstanding, to be originated in reason means neither to be an act

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 71, a. 5; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>149</sup> “...*peccatum dicitur et in natura et in arte et in voluntate, quando actus non pertingit ad debitum finem: sicut cum natura producit partum monstruosum et cum scriptor non facit bonam scripturam et cum voluntas non facit actum virtuosum.*” In *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 22; “*peccare nihil est aliud quam declinare a rectitudine actus quam debet habere; sive accipiatur peccatum in naturalibus, sive in artificialibus, sive in moralibus.*” *STh.*, I, q. 63, a. 1, co., cf. I-II, q. 21, a. 1; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 1, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>150</sup> “*Peccatum vero, secundum quod proprie in moralibus dicitur et habet rationem culpae...*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, co., cf. q. 2, a. 2, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>151</sup> “*secundum communem usum loquendi apud theologos pro eodem sumantur peccatum et culpa.*” *De malo*, q. 2, a. 2, co.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2, co.

<sup>153</sup> “*mos dupliciter dicitur. Uno modo est idem quod consuetudo. Consuetudo autem importat frequentiam quamdam circa ea quae facere vel non facere in nobis est. ... per voluntatem contingit aliquid esse in nobis facere vel non facere, inde tractum est nomen moris ad significandum actus voluntarios, vel appetitivae partis...*” *ibid.*, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 84, pr.

<sup>154</sup> “*Dicuntur autem aliqui actus humani, vel morales, secundum quod sunt a ratione.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 18, a. 5, co.; cf. *ibid.*, a. 9, co.; q. 24, a. 1, co.; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 5, ad 6; a. 6, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 3, a. 2, co.

of reason nor to be conformed to right reason here: it means only that the thing is under the causal influence of reason. For Aquinas, this condition roughly equals the condition of voluntariness,<sup>155</sup> the will (*voluntas*) being the ability of inclination which follows rationally/intellectually apprehended (which does not necessarily mean rational or intellectual) motives.<sup>156</sup> In the anticipation of the fourth chapter, let it be stated that the ability of free decision (*liberum arbitrium*) is for Aquinas a joined ability of reason and will.<sup>157</sup> According to this meaning of “moral”, the acts of affectivity are moral (and therefore morally good or bad) only inasmuch they are under a (possible) control of reason:<sup>158</sup> the same can be said about any other act of any other agent’s active power.<sup>159</sup> This causal role of reason is connected to the next condition of morality which is mentioned by Aquinas: depending on its quality, moral acts make its subject worthy of praise or blame because she dominates them.<sup>160</sup> There is a little vacillation in Aquinas’s works concerning the question whether this dominion necessarily implies causal contingency of the dominated act or not: mostly he seems to think that it does, although an exception can be found.<sup>161</sup> There is also a very important discussion concerning the nature of the contingency in question. We shall return to this subject

<sup>155</sup> “rationabiliter etiam ex hoc actus moralis dicatur, quia voluntarius est. In actu igitur voluntatis quaerenda est radix et origo peccati moralis.” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 10, n. 13; “bonum et malum morale consistit in actu in quantum est voluntarius” *STh.*, I-II, q. 19, a. 6, co.; “actus exteriores participant bonitatem et malitiam moralem, ... in quantum tales actus sunt imperati a voluntate” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 40, q. 1, a. 4, co.

<sup>156</sup> “Actus autem susceptibilis est bonitatis moralis, secundum quod humanus est: humanus autem est, secundum quod aliquatenus ratione deducitur: quod contingit in illis actibus tantum qui imperantur a voluntate, quae consequitur deliberationem rationis.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 40, q. 1, a. 5, co.; “sicut in rebus naturalibus invenitur forma, quae est principium actionis, et inclinatio consequens formam, quae dicitur appetitus naturalis, ex quibus sequitur actio; ita in homine invenitur forma intellectiva, et inclinatio voluntatis consequens formam apprehensam, ex quibus sequitur exterior actio” *De malo*, q. 6, co., cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 4; *STh.*, I, q. 80, a. 2; *Sententia De anima*, lib. 3, l. 14, n. 8 – 10; l. 15, n. 7, l. 16, n. 5 – 11 (*Leonina* lib. 3, cap. 8 – 10); *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2.

<sup>157</sup> “Est autem homo dominus suorum actuum per rationem et voluntatem, unde et liberum arbitrium esse dicitur facultas voluntatis et rationis.” *STh.*, I-II, q. 1, a. 1, co., cf. q. 13, a. 1; q. 17, a. 1; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 15, co.; q. 24, a. 4 – 6.

<sup>158</sup> If an activity is not controlled by an entity, while the entity was both able and supposed to control it, (or if there is no activity at all due to an unnecessary inactivity of this entity), this state still counts as originated in the entity as in its cause, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 3 and chap. 6. I. 3. for a further discussion of the problematic.

<sup>159</sup> “actus exteriores participant bonitatem et malitiam moralem, ... in quantum tales actus sunt imperati a voluntate” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 40, q. 1, a. 4, co.

<sup>160</sup> “Est autem aliquis actus moralis per hoc quod aliquo modo est in nobis: sic enim ei debetur laus vel vituperium; et ideo actus ille qui perfecte est in nostra potestate, perfecte est moralis...” *De veritate*, q. 25, a. 5, co.; “illae solae actiones vocantur proprie humanae, quarum homo est dominus. ... idem sunt actus morales et actus humani.” *STh.*, I-II, q. 1, a. 1, co. and a. 3, co. “Si enim non sit aliquid in nobis, sed ex necessitate movemur ad volendum, tollitur deliberatio, exhortatio, praeceptum et punitio, et laus et vituperium, circa quae moralis philosophia consistit.” *De malo*, q. 6, co., cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 76, n. 20; *De unitate intellectus*, cap. 3, co.

<sup>161</sup> “si etiam [Christ’s liberum arbitrium] esset determinatum ad unum numero, ... tamen ex hoc non amittit libertatem, aut rationem laudis sive meriti: quia in illud non coacte, sed sponte tendit; et ita est actus sui dominus.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5. For the otherwise stably held opposite view, cf. for ex. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 28, q. 1, a. 5, expos; d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 10, co.; q. 29, a. 6, co.; *De malo*, q. 6, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 5; q. 82, a. 1, ad 3; I-II, q. 6, a. 2, ad 2.

extensively later (cf. chap. 4. II. 3 – 5.): for now, let it be said that according to Aquinas, I must be in some relevant sense in control of what I am doing if my act is to be moral.

## II. 6. The gravity and the cosmological dimension of moral sin

Moral sin is therefore an act or an absence of an act that is originated in affective powers under the control of reason and (at least partially) lacks the sufficient directing to its own finality. So far, it does not seem so bad. Yet, for Aquinas, nothing worse can happen to a human (or any other intellectual creature): neither pain nor death or even eternal damnation (all of them being included under the common category of *malum poenae* – evil of punishment, see later III. 3.) is bad in as strong a sense as *culpa*.<sup>162</sup> Why? Aquinas offers up to four different reasons: 1) somebody is called bad because of his *culpa*, not because of his *poena* because the *culpa* concerns the very act of will which is supposed to ordain the human to the good, while all the rest is just a potentiality for this ordaining; 2) *culpa* is in a greater opposition to the supreme Good (God) because the latter cannot cause it, while he causes all kinds of punishments; 3) the *poena* is divinely, and therefore, wisely imposed to prevent the *culpa*, which means the latter must be worse than the former; 4) the *culpa* consists in its subject's activity while the *poena* in its influencing (*pati*): they are in the relation of a bad act and the movement towards a bad act – the latter is therefore clearly bad in a weaker sense.<sup>163</sup>

Let us look at this position from a broader perspective.

The main problem of moral sin is given by the finality which it concerns. While the *peccatum* in natural matters is defined by the specific finality of the particular nature and the *peccatum* in the matters of art by the finality of the particular art, the *peccatum* in moral matters is defined by the finality of the subject of the will and the (practical) reason taken as such: the universal good.<sup>164</sup> The qualification “universal” can refer to several different yet connected

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<sup>162</sup> “*poenas ... corporales, vel quae afflictionem sensui ingerunt, ...absque dubio minus habent de ratione mali quam culpa, quae opponitur gratiae et gloriae. Sed quia etiam privatio gratiae et gloriae poenae quaedam sunt, videntur ex aequo causam mali habere, si consideretur bonum cui utrumque opponitur; quia etiam privatio ipsius finis ultimi, quod est optimum, poenae rationem habet. Sed evidentibus rationibus ostendi potest quod culpa simpliciter habeat plus de ratione mali.*” *De malo*, q. 1, a. 5, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 6, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 3, a. 2.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 1, a. 5, co. *Summa* mentions first two reasons, *Sentences* speak more generally about more direct relation of the (bad) operation to the finality which is the source of goodness or badness.

<sup>164</sup> “*in habentibus voluntatem, per actum voluntatis quaelibet potentia et habitus in bonum actum reducitur; quia voluntas habet pro obiecto universale bonum, sub quo continentur omnia particularia bona, propter quae operantur potentiae et habitus quaecumque. ... Non enim ex hoc ipso quod aliquis habet habitum grammaticae, loquitur aut bene loquitur ... sed tunc recte operatur secundum artem, quando vult. Et ideo homo qui habet bonam voluntatem dicitur simpliciter bonus homo, quasi per actum bonae voluntatis omnibus quae habet bene utatur. Ex hoc vero quod habet habitum grammaticae, non dicitur bonus homo, sed bonus grammaticus; et similiter est de malo. Quia igitur malum culpa est malum in actu voluntatis, ... inde est quod malum culpa*

characteristics in this context: the most immediate one means that the good the will is seeking as its natural goal is the good that concerns all the life of the willing subject, not only some of its particular aspects. Now, in Aquinas's account all my other intentions are primarily motivated by this natural inclination ("love") of the will to the good (understood in the aristocratic sense as "attractive"),<sup>165</sup> resulting in the tendency to achieve the good in a particular way. He states that my moral sin is a moral sin because my actual choice is incompatible with, or at least incongruent to, this ultimate goal – even if it perfectly succeeds in achieving its immediate goal.

Imagine that I want to appeal to a rather decent girl by making vulgar jokes and by doing so, I obviously disgust her instead. There is no other way than to call my action a mistake (*peccatum*): despite my successful achieving my proximate finality (I have actually made some impertinent jokes without spoiling them by stuttering or anything else), my action was stupidly disproportionate to its more fundamental goals. Now, imagine that I opted for a more calculated approach, thanks to which I have somehow succeeded to convince the girl to go to bed with me on our first date. Aquinas would argue that my action is a mistake (*peccatum*), too, and for analogical reasons as in the first case: given his views on human sexual partnership,<sup>166</sup> he would consider my behaviour stupidly disproportionate to the happiness (both mine and my partner's) and, more generally, to the good of us both – in his view, any sexual achievements successfully gained at this occasion would be somewhere on the level of the successfully yet uselessly pronounced vulgar jokes. Nothing would change if I intentionally sought the negative effects of this activity, sleeping with the girl only because of some disturbed wish to spread chaos and harm in human lives, including my own: in Aquinas's view, such wish would be still ultimately founded in my will for good which is

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*facit hominem malum simpliciter*" *De malo*, q. 1, a. 5, co.; "ratio aliter se habet in artificialibus et aliter in moralibus. In artificialibus enim ratio ordinatur ad finem particularem, quod est aliquid per rationem excogitatum. In moralibus autem ordinatur ad finem communem totius humanae vitae." *STh.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 2, ad 2. Do not forget that human life is human inasmuch as it is rational and voluntary (cf. *ibid.*, q. 1, a. 1, co.)

<sup>165</sup> "est cuiuslibet naturae creatae, ut a Deo sit ordinata in bonum, naturaliter appetens illud. Unde et voluntati ipsi inest naturalis quidam appetitus boni sibi convenientis. Et praeter hoc habet appetere aliquid secundum propriam determinationem, non ex necessitate; quod ei competit in quantum voluntas est. Sicut autem est ordo naturae ad voluntatem, ita se habet ordo eorum quae naturaliter vult voluntas, ad ea respectu quorum a seipsa determinatur, non ex natura. Et ideo, sicut natura est voluntatis fundamentum, ita appetibile quod naturaliter appetitur, est aliorum appetibilium principium et fundamentum. In appetibilibus autem finis est fundamentum et principium eorum quae sunt ad finem; cum quae sunt propter finem, non appetantur nisi ratione finis. Et ideo, id quod voluntas de necessitate vult quasi naturali inclinatione in ipsum determinata, est finis ultimus, ut beatitudo, et ea quae in ipso includuntur" *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, co. For the consideration of the universal teleology of human activities, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 1, for more general perspective concerning all the beings, cf. for ex. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 1 – 2 or *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 2 – 3 and 16 – 22.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. for ex. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 122.

only probably blinded by my stupidity, emotional lability, or both.<sup>167</sup> Not even the most decided, deliberate and ideologic worshipper of evil could escape from being just a poorly-aiming seeker of good (in the aristocratic sense of the term), most likely fundamentally unaware of the nature of his true motivations. “All the bad ones are in a way ignorant ... because they are deceived in their choices.”<sup>168</sup>

I will say more about Aquinas’s view on how the sinning will functions later (cf. chap. 4. II. 2.). What is important now, is that according to him the orientation of the will to the good, as well as all the other natural inclinations, results from the creature’s being an effect of the Creator.<sup>169</sup> God, as all the other (non-failing) agents, ordains his doings – and therefore his effects – according to his own finality. But contrary to the most agents that we have experience with, it is not the finality sought, but the finality (eternally) possessed: the very divine (Trinitarian) existence.<sup>170</sup> The creation expresses this possession in a similar way as pictures taken during the honeymoon express the reality lived during this time: the very joyful love for what God lives in himself is the motive to create something that bears a resemblance of what he lives – for example its image.<sup>171</sup> All the natural inclinations of all the creatures therefore tend to the (more or less imperfect) expression of God and thus, to God himself.

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<sup>167</sup> “*Nec est instantia de quibusdam, qui appetunt malum. Quia non appetunt malum nisi sub ratione boni, in quantum scilicet aestimant illud esse bonum, et sic intentio eorum per se fertur ad bonum, sed per accidens cadit supra malum.*” *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 1, l. 1, n. 10; “*nihil est adeo malum quod non possit habere aliquam speciem boni; et ratione illius bonitatis habet quod movere possit appetitum.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, ad 6; “*homo, sicut et quaelibet alia res, naturaliter habet appetitum boni. Unde quod ad malum eius appetitus declinet, contingit ex aliqua corruptione seu inordinatione in aliquo principiorum hominis, ... sicut ex defectu intellectus, puta cum aliquis per ignorantiam peccat; et ex defectu appetitus sensitivi, sicut cum aliquis ex passione peccat; ita etiam ex defectu voluntatis, qui est inordinatio ipsius.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 78, a. 1, co.

<sup>168</sup> “*omnis malus quodammodo est ignorans ... in quantum decipitur in eligendo.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2. I will say more about the nature of this (not necessarily theoretical) “ignorance” in chap. 4. II. 2.

<sup>169</sup> “*cum omnia naturalia naturali quadam inclinatione sint inclinata in fines suos a primo motore, qui est Deus, oportet quod id in quod unumquodque naturaliter inclinatur, sit id quod est volitum vel intentum a Deo.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 1, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 44, a. 4; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 17, n. 7 – 8; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 2, a. 1 – 2. See the reflexion concerning the relation between goodness, causation and the goal of effects in *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 3.

<sup>170</sup> “*desiderium enim est rei non habitae; sed amor est rei quae habetur, ... et ideo omni creaturae convenit agere propter desiderium finis, quia unicuique creaturae acquiritur bonum ab alio quod ex se non habet; sed Deo competit agere propter amorem finis, cujus bonitati nihil addi potest.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 2, a. 1, co.; “*Contingit autem apud nos, quod id quod est propter finem est causa activa finis et prius eo in generatione, sicut se habet medicatio ad sanitatem; et ne sic Deus esse finis credatur, subiungit: et ipse est ante omnia. Sunt etiam aliqua propter finem quae licet non praecedant id propter quod sunt, tamen aliquid ad ipsum conferunt, sicut vestimenta sunt propter hominem; et ad hoc excludendum a Deo, subdit: et omnia in ipso consistunt, unde ex nullo aliquid accipere potest, sed omnia acquirunt quidquid habent, ab ipso.*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 3.

<sup>171</sup> “*Ipse enim bonitatem suam perfecte amat, et ex hoc vult quod bonitas sua multiplicetur per modum qui possibilis est, ex sui scilicet similitudine, ex quo provenit utilitas creaturae, in quantum similitudinem divinae bonitatis recipit.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 2, a. 1, co.; “*Ex amore enim bonitatis suae processit quod bonitatem suam voluit diffundere et communicare aliis, secundum quod fuit possibile, scilicet per modum similitudinis et quod eius bonitas non tantum in ipso maneret, sed ad alia efflueret.*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 9.

Let me make one brief parenthesis here, important for the global impression of Aquinas's conception. Aquinas means that the most fundamental level of any inner inclination can be called "love" (*amor*) inasmuch it consists in some harmony (*coaptatio*) between the appetite and its object.<sup>172</sup> Depending on whether the object is loved as good for another entity ("quo alicui bene sit" or "bonum accidentale", i.e., either a good state of another object, or something providing a good state of another object), or as good in itself ("aliquid in bonitate subsistens" or "bonum substantiale", i.e. independently of whether it provides anything to something else), there are two general categories of loves, called by Aquinas "the love of concupiscence" (*amor concupiscentiae*) and "the love of benevolence or friendship" (*amor amicitiae*).<sup>173</sup> Both qualifying terms are to be stripped from some of their habitual connotations here: in itself, "the love of concupiscence" does not imply any sinful or sexual content and not even belonging to the part of sensorial affectivity that Aquinas calls "concupiscibile" (the relation of the consecrated person to her religious state is characterised by this love); "the love of friendship" does not necessarily mean that there is something that either you or Aquinas himself would normally call a friendship between a lover and a loved one<sup>174</sup> (the judge who, considering the basic human dignity of a war criminal, decides that the latter is not to be tortured to death but only life-sentenced, acts under the influence of the "love of friendship"). Both loves can coexist (I can love my wife both in herself and as the source of rather pleasant states of me, which is shown if my love does not cease when she ceases to be pleasant), "the love of concupiscence" can be fully altruistic (e.g., if I desire the food for the starving children in Yemen), "the love of friendship" can be oriented to the lover

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<sup>172</sup> "In unoquoque autem horum appetituum, amor dicitur illud quod est principium motus tendentis in finem amatum. In appetitu autem naturali, principium huiusmodi motus est connaturalitas appetentis ad id in quod tendit, quae dici potest amor naturalis, sicut ipsa connaturalitas corporis gravis ad locum medium est per gravitatem, et potest dici amor naturalis. Et similiter coaptatio appetitus sensitivi, vel voluntatis, ad aliquod bonum, idest ipsa complacentia boni, dicitur amor sensitivus, vel intellectivus seu rationalis." *STh.*, I-II, q. 26, a. 1, co., cf. *ibid.*, q. 25, a. 2, co.; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 9 – 10; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>173</sup> "bonum dupliciter dicitur: uno modo, quasi aliquid in bonitate subsistens; alio modo, quasi bonitas alterius, quo scilicet alicui bene sit. Sic igitur dupliciter aliquid amatur: uno modo, sub ratione subsistentis boni et hoc vere et proprie amatur, cum scilicet volumus bonum esse ei; et hic amor, a multis vocatur amor benevolentiae vel amicitiae; alio modo, per modum bonitatis inhaerentis, secundum quod aliquid dicitur amari, non inquantum volumus quod ei bonum sit, sed inquantum volumus quod eo alicui bonum sit, sicut dicimus amare scientiam vel sanitatem. Nec est inconveniens si hoc etiam modo amemus aliqua quae per se subsistunt, non quidem ratione substantiae eorum, sed ratione alicuius perfectionis quam ex eis consequimur; sicut dicimus amare vinum, non propter substantiam vini ut bene sit ei, sed ut per vinum bene sit nobis..." *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 9, cf. *ibid.*, l. 10; *STh.*, I-II, q. 26, a. 4; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 29, q. 1, a. 3; *De virtutibus*, q. 4, a. 3.

<sup>174</sup> In the case of the friendship *sensu stricto* "nec benevolentia sufficit ad rationem amicitiae, sed requiritur quaedam mutua amatio, quia amicus est amicus amicus; talis autem mutua benevolentia fundatur super aliqua communicatione" *STh.*, II-II, q. 23, a. 1, co.; "Amatio enim addit super amorem intensionem quamdam amoris, quasi fervorem quemdam; amicitia vero addit duo: quorum unum est societas quaedam amantis et amati in amore, ut scilicet mutuo se diligant et mutuo se diligere scient, aliud est, ut ex electione operentur, non tantum ex passione..." *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 2, a. 1, co., cf. *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 8 – 9.

herself, without being necessarily selfish (only the exclusion of the others makes it such). Now, the aforesaid origin of all natural inclinations in God's efficient causality (and therefore his finality) implies<sup>175</sup> that the most fundamental orientation of them is that of "love of friendship" vis-à-vis God:<sup>176</sup> they are not oriented to God, (only) because he satisfies them; he satisfies them because they are oriented to him. But what can be more surprising, the relation of God to the creation as such is that of the love of friendship, too. The "everything for God" dimension of all God's doings bears a resemblance to the most uncompromising love of concupiscence, yet, as stated above, the creation provides nothing for God and as such his relation to it cannot be conceived as the latter love because it is not the relation to the *bonum accidentale* of himself.<sup>177</sup> Here, my analogy of taking a selfie of a happy couple seems clearly insufficient: imagine rather a happy/unhappy person who makes others happy/unhappy not *to become* herself happy/unhappy (or at least even happier/unhappier), but *because* she is happy/unhappy. The goodness of Aquinas's God is like this psychological state that tends to its expression/reproduction, except that the distinction of this state from its subject is real, while in the case of God it is only conceptual: God makes things godly because he is God.

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<sup>175</sup> "omnis effectus convertitur ad causam a qua procedit, ... quia unaquaeque res convertitur ad suum bonum, appetendo illud; bonum autem effectus est ex sua causa, unde omnis effectus convertitur ad suam causam, appetendo ipsam. Et ideo postquam dixerat quod a deitate deducuntur omnia, subiungit quod omnia convertuntur ad ipsam per desiderium..." In *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 3.

<sup>176</sup> "Omne autem quod est per accidens reducitur ad id quod est per se. Sic igitur hoc ipsum quod aliquid amamus, ut eo alicui bene sit, includitur in amore illius quod amamus, ut ei bene sit. Non est enim alicui aliquid diligendum per id quod est per accidens, sed per id quod est per se" In *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 9; "potest enim illud substantiale bonum, in quod affectus fertur, tripliciter se habere: uno modo sic, quod illud bonum sit perfectius quam ipse amans et per hoc amans comparetur ad ipsum ut pars ad totum, quia quae totaliter sunt in perfectis partialiter sunt in imperfectis; unde secundum hoc, amans est aliquid amati." *Ibid.*, l. 10.; "Quia igitur bonum universale est ipse Deus, et sub hoc bono continetur etiam Angelus et homo et omnis creatura, quia omnis creatura naturaliter, secundum id quod est, Dei est; sequitur quod naturali dilectione etiam Angelus et homo plus et principaliter diligat Deum quam seipsum. Alioquin, si naturaliter plus seipsum diligeret quam Deum, sequeretur quod naturalis dilectio esset perversa..." *STh.*, I, q. 60, a. 5, co., cf. *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 3, co. stating more lengthily and more explicitly that the "dilectio" in question must be (also) "love of friendship" and that this love must be stronger than the "love of friendship" that the creature has for herself.

<sup>177</sup> "quidquid Deus facit creaturis ... totum ex bonitate divina procedit et totum ad bonitatem pertinet creaturae." In *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 3, cf. *ibid.*, cap. 4, l. 10 (stating that the *extasis* (proper to the love of friendship) is realised in the case of God's love for creatures too) or *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 32, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2: "quamvis nos non diligamus creaturas inanimatas amore benevolentiae, quia eorum bonum non est a nobis; Deus tamen eas diligit amore benevolentiae: quia per hoc quod eis bonum vult, sunt, et bonae sunt." The latter article uses "amor amicitiae" in the narrower sense than "amor benevolentiae" though: in this (abovementioned) narrower sense, God has *amor amicitiae* only for his chosen rational creatures. God can obviously relate to a creature as to a *bonum accidentale* of another creature: from this viewpoint and from the viewpoint of him being the Goal of all he is doing, his love for the creature can be considered as something *like* the love of concupiscence too, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 20, a. 2, ad 3: "Deus, proprie loquendo, non amat creaturas irracionales amore amicitiae [in the narrow sense of the term], sed amore quasi concupiscentiae; inquantum ordinat eas ad rationales creaturas, et etiam ad seipsum; non quasi eis indigeat, sed propter suam bonitatem et nostram utilitatem."



So, the love for God is the basis of any appetite: therefore, “nothing is or appears good, if not inasmuch as it participates some likeness of supreme good which is God.”<sup>178</sup> Knowingly or not, by seeking or enjoying the good we seek or enjoy the expression of likeness of God. The creatures equipped with an intellect are special because they can be aware of these facts<sup>179</sup> (of course, on rather very different levels of measure of awareness). Their cognitive ability allows the realisation of the specific<sup>180</sup> and most perfect way of creaturely expression of God, that is therefore both the ultimate specific goal and the fulfilment of the life of the intellectual creature:<sup>181</sup> the imitation of the two immanent activities that God’s own life consists in, namely the cognition of God and the love for God that is derived from it.<sup>182</sup> Even if for Aquinas the beatitude itself (i.e., the possession of the ultimate goal) consists formally in a special cognition of God,<sup>183</sup> the love for God (most notably its supernatural form named *caritas*) is the most perfect state available for the creature on the way to achieve beatitude and, notwithstanding all the other cognitive perfections possessed by the creature, it is obviously necessary for this achievement:<sup>184</sup> “if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing.”<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> “*nihil autem est vel apparet bonum, nisi secundum quod participat aliquam similitudinem summi boni, quod est Deus*” *STh.*, I, q. 105, a. 5, co., cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 24, n. 6: “*Bonum autem hoc vel illud particulare habet quod sit appetibile in quantum est similitudo primae bonitatis. Propter hoc igitur tendit in proprium bonum, quia tendit in divinam similitudinem, et non e converso. Unde patet quod omnia appetunt divinam similitudinem quasi ultimum finem.*”; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 3: “*omnia enim huiusmodi licet non cognoscant Deum, tamen dicuntur ipsum desiderare, in quantum tendunt ad quoddam bonum particulare. In omni autem bono particulari refulget primum bonum, ex quo habet quodlibet bonum quod sit appetibile.*”

<sup>179</sup> “*Deus ... propter hoc quod est ultimus finis, appetitur in omni fine. Sed hoc est appetere ipsum Deum implicite. ... solum rationalis natura potest secundarios fines in ipsum Deum per quamdam viam resolutionis deducere, ut sic ipsum Deum explicite appetat. Et sicut in demonstrativis scientiis non recte scitur conclusio nisi per resolutionem in prima principia, ita appetitus creaturae rationalis non est rectus nisi per appetitum explicitum ipsius Dei, actu vel habitu.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 2, co. Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 93 for Aquinas’s reflexion on the “image of God” as a special case of creaturely imitation of God propre to the intellectual creatures.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 93, a. 2 and 6 – 8.

<sup>181</sup> “*homo et aliae rationales creaturae consequuntur ultimum finem cognoscendo et amando Deum, quod non competit aliis creaturis...*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 1, a. 8, co., for the relation of these two aspects of beatitude, cf. *ibid.*, q. 3, a. 4. While speaking about ultimate goal, Aquinas distinguishes the very thing which has the character of the ultimate good (*finis cuius*) and the reaching of this good (*finis quo*): only the latter is specific for the intellectual creature, ultimate *finis cuius* is the same for all things, God, cf. also *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1 – 2.

<sup>182</sup> “*imago divinae Trinitatis attendatur in anima secundum aliquid quod repraesentat divinas personas repraesentatione speciei, sicut est possibile creaturae. ... Verbum autem Dei nascitur de Deo secundum notitiam sui ipsius, et amor procedit a Deo secundum quod seipsum amat. Manifestum est autem quod diversitas obiectorum diversificat speciem verbi et amoris, non enim idem est specie in corde hominis verbum conceptum de lapide et de equo, nec idem specie amor. Attenditur igitur divina imago in homine secundum verbum conceptum de Dei notitia, et amorem exinde derivatum.*” *STh.*, I, q. 93, a. 8, co.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 3, a. 4 – 8; q. 4, a. 2 – 3.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 4, a. 4; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 116. For the superior position of the *caritas* in the earthly life, cf. *STh.* II-II, q. 23, a. 6 – 8, for more general reflexion concerning the comparison of the respective perfections of cognition and love, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 4.

<sup>185</sup> 1 Cor 13, 2.

As it was said, the expression of God is the goal of any creature. It is also the goal of the universe as a whole.<sup>186</sup> In the latter case, there is an analogy between this common finality and the common goals human community members, named common good. Aquinas does not hesitate to adopt this analogy.<sup>187</sup> Considered from this perspective, the sin does not mean just a loss of the proper good of the sinner: it also hurts the common good of the universe and therefore of any of its members. If you want a comparison, the regular devouring of junk food does not destroy only the gluttons themselves, it also harms the human community to which they belong: their neighbours must live with their progressively more and more repulsive appearance, their premature death deprives them of the possibility to enjoy their otherwise good qualities, the need of healthcare that they bring on themselves burdens the health service, but most importantly, in their own persons their dietary attitudes partially destroy that for which the health care exists – the health of the population.<sup>188</sup> It is thanks to this external-harm-causing aspect that Aquinas’s moral sin satisfies the intuitive understanding of “evil”. But as it was already emphasized, this aspect of the notion is secondary, dependent on the more fundamental aspect of aristocratically considered badness.

To put it succinctly, the moral sin is an action (or its absence) that is not conformed to the actual act of loving God,<sup>189</sup> while such love for God (inasmuch as it belongs to God’s own attributes) is the good that is at least implicitly sought in any other thing that is sought by any agent at all. Now, a poor aim at a target makes me a bad shooter, yet, as such it does not deprive me of any due good (provided that I am right in my belief that being a good shooter is hardly much more important for the natural finality of human than blond hair). The realisation of a morally bad act does – its very badness consists in disordering of its subject in her relation to her ultimate finality. The situation is far worse than in the case of the inability to speak mentioned above. Given human nature, the ability of speech is a due good for an adult human, its absence is therefore bad for him, and it also means that some part of this complex being is in bad state. But since this part is neither the directing part of the human nor the part

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<sup>186</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 103, a. 2: “*Contingit autem aliquid extrinsecum esse finem non solum sicut operatum, sed etiam sicut ... repraesentatum, sicut si dicamus quod Hercules est finis imaginis, quae fit ad eum repraesentandum. Sic igitur potest dici quod bonum extrinsecum a toto universo est finis gubernationis rerum sicut habitum et repraesentatum, quia ad hoc unaquaeque res tendit, ut participet ipsum, et assimiletur ei, quantum potest.*” (ad 2).

<sup>187</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 3 – 4; q. 114, a. 1.

<sup>188</sup> “*Cum vero aliquis agit quod in bonum proprium vel malum vergit, etiam debetur ei retributio, in quantum etiam hoc vergit in commune secundum quod ipse est pars collegii...*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 3, co.

<sup>189</sup> By “actual loving” I mean here the love that extends up to the free choices of the loving individual, making them conform to its goal. Aquinas’s doctrine about ultimate goal implies that no matter the corruption of creature, the latter cannot rid itself from the natural love for God (which is why the eventual damnation would be bothering for it) and this latter love (as well as other loves in some weaker sense of the term) can coexist with sin: in fact, the activity can be considered *peccatum* precisely because it is in conflict with this still existing love.

by which the human is supposed to reach his ultimate finality, its bad state does not in itself prevent the human from being good from the viewpoint of this finality – which is what it means to be a good human. In contrast, the reason and the will are the directing parts of a human, and according to Aquinas, they are also the part of a human that is immediately concerned by his eventual final divinisation by the beatific vision (an act of intellect) and the following love and joy (an act of will). The *peccatum* on this level means that a human is a bad human for very similar reasons that makes a blunted knife a bad knife: both the sinning human and the blunted knife cannot fulfil the very purpose for which they exist. In addition, he is also bad in the third Avicennian sense of *malum*, being, inasmuch it depends on him, the antagonist to the common good of universal community – as such, he is bad for all his neighbours. Given all this, no wonder that among all the bad states, the moral sin tends to awake the comparatively strongest negative evaluation: its proper name in Aquinas (“*culpa*”) is connected with one of the names for performing this evaluation (“*culpare*”), emphasizing the possibility to transfer the evaluation of act to its agent.<sup>190</sup> You can understand why for Aquinas not even the eternal damnation is a *malum* in as strong a sense as the moral sin: inasmuch the latter is considered by him as kind of just punishment, it is, contrary to the sin, something intrinsically ordered to the good of the universe – namely to upholding its justice.<sup>191</sup>

## II. 7. The sin as an impotent state

I have compared a sinning person to a blunted knife. Of course, there are important differences between these entities: to begin, the knife generally does not dominate its own blunting. Nevertheless, the parallelism of the disabilities of both is far from being far-fetched and its different levels in Aquinas are worthy of a quick overview here.

First, the dullness of the blade can be of two kinds: there are blunted knives that are more or less difficult to cut with; there are others that cannot be used for this purpose at all. The distinction of these two meanings of “the privation of conformity to the finality” can be applied also in the case of *peccatum*: it corresponds with the distinction of so-called venial (literally “pardonable”) sins and mortal sins. While the venial sins diminish yet preserve the

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<sup>190</sup> “*nihil enim est aliud laudari vel culpari, quam imputari alicui malitiam vel bonitatem sui actus.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 21, a. 2, co.

<sup>191</sup> “*Potest autem Deus velle quod ipsum bonum divinum, vel quodcumque aliud bonum sub eo, subtrahatur alicui, qui ad hoc opportunitatem non habet; hoc enim bonum ordinis exigit ut nihil habeat id quo dignum non est. Ipsa autem subtractio boni increati, vel cuiuscumque alterius boni, ab eo qui indignus est rationem poenae habet.*” *De malo*, q. 1, a. 5, co.

actual heading of the man to his finality, the mortal sins make him miss it.<sup>192</sup> On Aquinas's view, only the latter are sins properly speaking, the former are called so only in a broader, analogical sense.<sup>193</sup> His general statements concerning *culpa*e can be therefore applied to the venial sins only with discretion.

Second, in Aquinas's view the actual finality of men (and of any other creatures equipped with intellect) is supernatural for them in the actual world: by his free choice, God calls them to cognitive and affective activities that are naturally possible only for Himself.<sup>194</sup> This requires that He supernaturally equips them with some qualities that are above any creaturely nature and make them able either of realizing these supernatural activities or at least of heading towards them. Among these qualities, there is the virtue of the so-called theological love (*caritas*) which upgrades creaturely will, and the sanctifying grace which divinises its subject as such:<sup>195</sup> both these qualities are eliminated by a single act of any (mortal) sin.<sup>196</sup> Once lost, it is not in the powers of their former subject to restore them, no more than it is in the powers of a suicider to restore her life:<sup>197</sup> they can be renewed only by a new supernatural intervention of God.<sup>198</sup> Until then, it is therefore impossible for a man to act according to his finality.

Third, even on the natural level, the sins have consequences for the habitual state of both cognitive and affective powers of their subject, making it difficult and eventually practically impossible to want, find attractive or even know the things to be done.<sup>199</sup> Such an impossibility is generally not the result of a single act, its generation being more like a

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<sup>192</sup> “*Manifestum est autem quod in quibusdam peccatis est quidem aliqua inordinatio, non tamen per contrarietatem ad ultimum finem, sed solum circa ea quae sunt ad finem, inquantum plus vel minus debite eis intenditur, salvato tamen ordine ad ultimum finem...*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 87, a. 5, co., cf. *De malo*, q. 7, a. 1; *STh.*, I-II, q. 72, a. 5, q. 88, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 42, q. 1, a. 3 – 4.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2; d. 42, q. 1, a. 3, co.; *De malo*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 4; q. 62, a. 2, co.; I-II, q. 110, a. 2, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3 cap. 147, n. 1 – 3, for the biblical bases of this conviction, cf. 1Cor 13, 12; J 15, 12; 17, 3, 1 J 3, 2.

<sup>195</sup> For extensive discussion of *caritas*, cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 23 – 27 and *De virtutibus*, q. 2; for the sanctifying grace, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 150 – 153; *STh.*, I-II, q. 110 – 111, a. 1.

<sup>196</sup> “*omne peccatum mortale gratiae opponitur: quia per peccatum mortale quaeritur aliquid quod simul cum gratia esse non potest.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2 d. 43 q. 1 a. 2 ad 4; “*peccatum mortale tollit gratiam gratum facientem*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 10, a. 4, co.; “*peccatum mortale excludit totaliter habitum gratiae, sine quo nullum peccatum mortale vel veniale remittitur.*” III, q. 87, a. 4, ad 3. For the loss of *caritas*, cf. *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 13 and *STh.*, II-II, q. 24, a. 12.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 87, a. 3.

<sup>198</sup> “*homo in peccato mortali a Deo avertitur, sibi alium finem constituens: et ideo lumen gratiae amittit, sicut et lumen solis qui visum a sole avertit; et propter hoc non potest peccatum mortale remitti nisi per gratiae infusionem.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 16, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, co., “*Non ergo potest praedicta aversio removeri, nisi fiat coniunctio ad bonum incommutabile, a quo per peccatum discessit. Haec autem coniunctio non est nisi per gratiam, per quam Deus mentes inhabitat, et mens ipsi Deo per amorem caritatis inhaeret. Unde ad sanandam praedictam aversionem requiritur gratiae et caritatis infusio; sicut ad sanationem caecitatis requiritur restitutio potentiae visivae.*” *De veritate*, q. 28, a. 2, co. Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 157.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 58, a. 4 – 5; q. 85, a. 1 – 3.

progressive blunting of the knife; according to Aquinas, the corruption of natural powers for moral decisions is never absolute, too.<sup>200</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that in the majority of adults this corruption occurs in a measure that is sufficient for the devastation of their life seems to be a common evidence for him.<sup>201</sup>

Finally, putting aside the obstacles on the level of the more or less stabilised qualities of mind, there is an issue which is directly connected with Aquinas's determinist viewpoint: the very replacement of the bad volition by the right one requires the occurrence of an appropriate stimulus. "In fact, the *liberum arbitrium* changes in us because of both the interior and exterior cause. Because of an interior cause: either because of reason, as if somebody did not know before what he gets to know later, either because of appetite which sometimes is inclined to something because of passion or habitus so that it tends to it as to something that is convenient for it, but the thing is no more convenient for it when the passion or habitus cease to exist. Because of an exterior cause, as if God changes the will of man by grace from bad to good..."<sup>202</sup> In the quoted text, the predictable non-occurrence of any such stimulus in the case of demons is the reason why they will never change their mind concerning the supernatural aspects of their divine vocation – which is the reason why they (and apparently also the souls of the damned humans<sup>203</sup>) will stay in Hell forever.<sup>204</sup> While it is true that, contrary to the blunted knife, the sinner just needs to decide to convert and then, he becomes "sharp" again (at least in some necessary basic measure), this "just to decide" has necessary yet not granted prerequisites in the rest of the reality: if these are absent, the sinner is doomed.

## II. 8. The sin and the law

Until now, I have nearly completely omitted a topic that is generally considered as being of primordial importance for the morals: the moral law. It was intentional. There may be

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<sup>200</sup> I have already spoken above the natural determination of the will concerning good, as for the intellectual aspect of the things, cf. *De veritate*, q. 16, a. 3 concerning the indestructibility of synderesis.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 7, ad 3.

<sup>202</sup> "*Mutatur enim in nobis liberum arbitrium ex causa intrinseca, et ex causa extrinseca. Ex causa quidem intrinseca, vel propter rationem, puta cum quis aliquid prius nesciebat quod postea cognoscit; vel propter ipsum appetitum qui quandoque sic est dispositus per passionem vel habitum, ut tendat in aliquid sicut in sibi conveniens, quod cessante passione vel habitu sibi conveniens non est. Ex causa vero extrinseca, puta cum Deus immutat voluntatem hominis per gratiam de malo in bonum*" *De malo*, q. 16, a. 5, co.

<sup>203</sup> "*post statum viae anima separata non intelliget accipiendo a sensibus, nec erit in actu potentialium appetitivarum sensibilium. Et sic anima separata Angelo conformatur et quantum ad modum intelligendi, et quantum ad indivisibilitatem appetitus, quae erant causa perfectae obstinationis in Angelo peccante; unde per eandem rationem in anima separata obstinatio erit. In resurrectione autem corpus sequetur animae conditionem ... Et ita tunc eadem obstinationis ratio manebit.*" *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 11, co.

<sup>204</sup> For other instances of the same idea, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 64, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 24 a. 10; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 7, q. 1, a. 2.

moralists for whom “the respect for the law” is the defining notion of moral goodness, there may be others for whom the very notion of law is an abomination of desolation.<sup>205</sup> Well, while Aquinas is surely not one of the latter, he is quite far from the former as well. The structure of his *Prima-Secundae* which can be considered as his ultimate masterwork on fundamental ethics, is illustrative: the ultimate goal (q. 1), the happiness (q. 2 – 5), the human (i.e., voluntary) acts (q. 6 – 21), the passions (q. 22 – 48), the habitus in general, the virtues, gifts, beatitudes and the fruits of Holy Spirit (q. 49 – 70), the sins and vices (q. 71 – 89), the law (q. 90 – 108), the grace (q. 109 – 114). It might be that the order of the subjects is roughly inspired by a glimpse back at the history of salvation: the bulk of positive topics (representing the state of original justice?) is followed by the sin (the Fall) and its two remedies, the law (Moses and the time under the Law) and the grace (Jesus and the time of grace), the Law of Gospel (consisting principally in the grace of Holy Spirit) being the mediating notion.<sup>206</sup> But even if this is so, it rather emphasizes than changes the fact that moral goodness and badness is (or at least it can be) defined without any reference to the notion of law for Aquinas. It is enough that there is an intellectual being that is equipped by a natural inclination: if it acts in conformity with this inclination, it is morally good; if not, it is morally bad.

## II. 8. 1. The law in the service of the Good

In Aquinas’s view, the law is typically an intellectual tool in the service of the aforementioned inclination. Let me be more precise. On Aquinas’s account, in its primary sense the law is a rational rule promulgated by the ruler of the community for the purpose of the common good.<sup>207</sup> Note the essential subordination of the law to the finality. According to Aquinas, a rule that does not serve to the finality of the ruled is not a bad law – it is not law at all, at least not strictly speaking.<sup>208</sup> In his view, the very Latin term for law (*lex*) is derived from the verb *ligare* (to bind)<sup>209</sup> which is the origin of the English term “obligation”, too. The binding

<sup>205</sup> Consider the spectrum between Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals* and Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of morality*.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 106 and 108, a. 1 – 2.

<sup>207</sup> “*definitio legis ... nihil est aliud quam quaedam rationis ordinatio ad bonum commune, ab eo qui curam communitatis habet, promulgata.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 90, a. 4 – the whole of the *questio* justifying the components of this definition.

<sup>208</sup> “*lex tyrannica, cum non sit secundum rationem, non est simpliciter lex, sed magis est quaedam perversitas legis.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 92, a. 1, ad 4; “*omnis lex humanitus posita intantum habet de ratione legis, inquantum a lege naturae derivatur. Si vero in aliquo, a lege naturali discordet, iam non erit lex sed legis corruptio.*”; *ibid.*, q. 95, a. 2, co.; “*...cum aliquis praesidens leges imponit onerosas subditis non pertinentes ad utilitatem communem, ... huiusmodi magis sunt violentiae quam leges.*” *ibid.*, q. 96, a. 4, co.

<sup>209</sup> “*Dicitur enim lex a ligando, quia obligat ad agendum*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 90, a. 1, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 3, a. 4, arg. 3; *Lux orta*, p. 3 *in fine*. Aquinas prefers this interpretation to “*lex a legendo vocata est*” of Isidor, cf. nevertheless, *STh.*, I-II, q. 90, a. 4, ad 3.

(*ligatio* or *obligatio*) means a necessity imposed from exterior: in the case of the will, the only binding we can speak about is the rationally apprehended conditioned necessity originated by the willing of some goal – if you want to cross the sea, you must get the means for it, for example the ship.<sup>210</sup> Without the relation to the willed good, the rule cannot bind the will – and the rule which do not bind is, etymologically, no law. That being said, in the quoted example you can easily eliminate the binding of your will by changing your mind and deciding to go for a walk instead: not surprisingly, Aquinas would not agree that the aforesaid necessity to procure a ship is a law for you. In his definition of the law, he works with the binding given by the objective requirements of the naturally necessarily willed goals, more particularly with the common good, to which all the individual goals are subordinated.<sup>211</sup> If a rule is to be a law, there must be a stable relation between the common good and the form of a behaviour that the rule orders or forbids then. Consequently, the activities are typically ordered or forbidden by the law because they are considered good or bad (from the viewpoint of the common good), and not vice versa. An inverse relation is possible in the case of the so-called positive law, as in the question of driving on the left or right: yet even in this case the conventional rule can be a law only because the common good requires that the behaviour in question is conventionally unified – driving on a random side would be bad even if it was not forbidden.<sup>212</sup> Thus, the law is a light showing what is good or bad in general: it is not generally a source of the goodness or badness of an activity, this goodness or badness is its presupposition.

## II. 8. 2. The moral law, the eternal law, the natural law and the divine law

It could be said that Aquinas's notion of moral law is determined by this conception, but, for some reasons, Aquinas hardly uses the term "moral law": in all his corpus I have been able to find only two isolated occurrences of the term.<sup>213</sup> While he uses the expression "moral

<sup>210</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 17, a. 3, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 39, q. 3, a. 3, co.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 90, a. 2; q. 92, a. 1, ad 3 (quoting freely "*turpis enim omnis pars est universo suo non congruens*" from AUGUSTIN, *Confessiones*, lib. 3, cap. 8, 15 (PL 32, 689)). For more general discussion of the principle, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 65, a. 2, co.

<sup>212</sup> While "*lumen rationis naturalis, quo discernimus quid sit bonum et malum ... pertinet ad naturalem legem*" (*STh.*, q. 91, a. 2, co.), "*a lege naturali dupliciter potest aliquid derivari, uno modo, sicut conclusiones ex principiis; alio modo, sicut determinationes quaedam aliquorum communium. ... ea quae sunt primi modi, continentur lege humana non tanquam sint solum lege posita, sed habent etiam aliquid vigoris ex lege naturali. Sed ea quae sunt secundi modi, ex sola lege humana vigorem habent.*" (ibid., q. 95, a. 2, co.). For Aquinas's notion of the natural law, see below.

<sup>213</sup> "*taxatio diei vel temporis, quae ad legem moralem non pertinebat, veniente statu gratiae cessavit, sicut et alia legalia.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 37, q. 1, a. 5, qc. 3, co. (concerning the observance of Sabbat); "*Quia ergo communis lex moralis est quod homo non commendet seipsum, ... potest fieri in aliquo casu praeter hanc*

precept” quite often,<sup>214</sup> when it comes to the law, the rules existing independently of human legislation are usually called the eternal law, the natural law (or the law of nature), or the divine law. These terms are not to be taken automatically as synonymous, though.<sup>215</sup> The eternal law exists in the mind of God inasmuch as he is considered the universal Ruler: it is the rule directing any single activity of any creature in the universe and the source of any other law, inasmuch the latter is conformed to the right reason.<sup>216</sup> Given Aquinas’s opinion concerning divine simplicity, it is just another name for God himself.<sup>217</sup> As such, it is epistemically accessible only for those who enjoy the Beatific vision which consists in an immediate cognition of the divine essence.<sup>218</sup> that means that if taken as such, beside Jesus and maybe two other exceptions,<sup>219</sup> no one has ever known it during their earthly lives. Instead, the humans who have never seen God (yet) are provided by two partial promulgations of its content: the divine law and the natural law.

The divine law, in a narrow sense, is a sum of general rules that are communicated by way of supernatural revelation, known essentially by means of the Holy Scripture.<sup>220</sup> The natural law is the partial promulgation of the eternal law via the intellectual power of the creature which is able to conceive the relation between such and such behaviour and his or her ultimate purpose.<sup>221</sup> Otherwise said, the natural law contains all the rules commanding what is in general necessary for moral goodness.<sup>222</sup> The promulgation means that these rules are made

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*communem regulam ut homo commendet se, et laudabiliter hoc facit, et tamen indiscreti hoc reputant insipientiam.*” *Super II Cor.*, cap. 11, l. 1.

<sup>214</sup> *Index Thomisticus* identifies about 180 occurrences of the term, cf. most notably *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 37, q. 1 and *STh.*, I-II, q. 99 – 104.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 91, a. 1, 2 and 4 for basic distinction, and q. 93, 94 and 98 – 108 for more detailed discussion,

<sup>216</sup> “*ipsa ratio gubernationis rerum in Deo sicut in principe universitatis existens, legis habet rationem. Et quia divina ratio nihil concipit ex tempore, sed habet aeternum conceptum ... inde est quod huiusmodi legem oportet dicere aeternam.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 91, a. 1, co.; “*lex aeterna nihil aliud est quam ratio divinae sapientiae, secundum quod est directiva omnium actuum et motionum.*” *Ibid.*, q. 93, a. 1, co.; “*omnes leges, in quantum participant de ratione recta, intantum derivantur a lege aeterna.*” *Ibid.*, a. 3, co.

<sup>217</sup> “*legi aeternae subduntur omnia quae sunt in rebus a Deo creatis, sive sint contingentia sive sint necessaria, ea vero quae pertinent ad naturam vel essentiam divinam, legi aeternae non subduntur, sed sunt realiter ipsa lex aeterna.*” *Ibid.*, a. 4, co.

<sup>218</sup> “*legem aeternam nullus potest cognoscere secundum quod in se ipsa est, nisi solum beati, qui Deum per essentiam vident.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 93, a. 2, co.; cf. q. 19, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. *STh.*, III, q. 9, a. 2 and *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 216 for the beatific vision of Jesus during his earthly life, as for much more temporary “*raptus*” of Paul and Moses, cf. *STh.*, 175, q. 3 and *De veritate*, q. 13, a. 2.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 91, a. 4 – 5. Obviously, the term “divine law” can be used in a broader sense, cf. for ex. a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2 and q. 94, a. 2.

<sup>222</sup> “*moralia praecepta sint de his quae pertinent ad bonos mores; haec autem sunt quae rationi congruunt; omne autem rationis humanae iudicium aequaliter a naturali ratione derivatur, necesse est quod omnia praecepta moralia pertineant ad legem naturae...*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 1. Note that Aquinas’s notion of natural law is much broader than the conception of Duns Scotus, cf. JOHN DUNS SCOT, *Ordinatio*, lib. 3, dis. 37 (at least for Scotus’s natural law in the strict sense of the term) or, as it seems to me, of the *Catechism of Catholic church*,



theoretically knowable, not that all of them are always knowable here and now, or even actually known:<sup>223</sup> while a very short consideration is all that is needed for the discovery of some of them, the finding of the others presupposes an elevated wisdom or even some supernaturally revealed data.<sup>224</sup> Aquinas is very clear about the (actually realised) possibility of entire populations lacking the knowledge of some very basic rules of this law.<sup>225</sup>

Even if all the rules of the natural law are by definition moral, it does not mean that the “natural law” is a synonym of the “moral law”. The natural law is defined by way of promulgation of the rules, while morality is defined by their content and finality. In fact, the abovementioned term “moral precept” is most often used by Aquinas about some of the precepts of the divine law: the term serves to distinguish “You shall not kill!”, “You shall love the Lord” and similar biblical imperatives from two other types of rules commanded by the biblical Law: the ceremonial and the juridic ones.<sup>226</sup> The human law uses (i.e., is supposed to use, if it is to be a law in Aquinas’s use of the term) some of the moral precepts commanded by the natural law as its most fundamental part.<sup>227</sup> Adding the fact that man is morally obliged to obey any law in force (be it a human convention),<sup>228</sup> for Aquinas the sphere of morality includes all the creaturely manifestations of the eternal law in the sphere of legality.

### II. 8. 3. The law and the particular situations

The inverse is not true though: Aquinas does not believe that the conditions of moral goodness can be entirely grasped by general rules. More precisely, Aquinas believes that the manner of a particular application of the general rules matters for the actual moral value of the

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cf. n. 1959: “The natural law, the Creator’s very good work, provides the solid foundation on which man can build the structure of moral rules to guide his choices.” In Aquinas’s understanding, the natural law would be not just the foundation of the structure in question, it would be all that structure.

<sup>223</sup> “illi coram quibus lex non promulgatur, obligantur ad legem servandam, in quantum in eorum notitiam devenit per alios, vel devenire potest, promulgatione facta.” *STh.*, I-II, q. 90, a. 4., ad 2; “promulgatio legis naturae est ex hoc ipso quod Deus eam mentibus hominum inseruit naturaliter cognoscendam.” *Ibid.*, ad 1 (note the difference between *cognoscendam* and *cognitam*).

<sup>224</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 1, co., “Natural” does not mean “purely naturally knowable” in the case of the natural law then.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 6, co. “*lex naturae ... quantum ad quaedam propria, quae sunt quasi conclusiones principiorum communium ... ut in paucioribus potest deficere ... quantum ad notitiam; et hoc propter hoc quod aliqui habent depravatam rationem ex passione, seu ex mala consuetudine, seu ex mala habitudine naturae; sicut apud germanos olim latrocinium non reputabatur iniquum, cum tamen sit expresse contra legem naturae...*” *ibid.*, a. 4, co.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 99, a. 2 – 5 for the distinction, q. 100 for the moral precepts, 101 – 103 for ceremonial precepts, 104 – 105 for juridic precepts.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 95, a. 2, co.: “*omnis lex humanitas posita intantum habet de ratione legis, in quantum a lege naturae derivatur. Si vero in aliquo, a lege naturali discordet, iam non erit lex sed legis corruptio.*”

<sup>228</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 96, a. 4, co.

action, and this manner cannot be determined just by the application of other general rules.<sup>229</sup> A licentious offer must be refused, yet there is an indefinite number of ways to do it (violently, impassively, gently, derisively...) and, depending on the situation, some of them are more conformed to the goal motivating the refusal than the others – and some of them can go directly against it. To recognise the right way in the particular situation, there is a need of a special intellectual habitus, called *prudentia*, consisting in the ability to sense what is conformed to the goal here and now.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, this problem is not limited to the question of how should the rules be applied. In the case of most of the rules, the question of whether they should be applied at all can be asked as well.

This possibility is connected with the notion of law as Aquinas understands it. To start with the human law, a rule can become its part only if its keeping is profitable for the common good. That does not mean that acting according to it must be profitable in all the particular situations though: the number of such never-failing rules is relatively small, and Aquinas is convinced that no human legislation could get along only with them and must contain a comparatively much larger number of rules which can be useless or even noxious in some minority cases.<sup>231</sup> E.g., the obligation to retribute what has been borrowed is an important part of the social order: but to apply it to the case of the person from whom you had borrowed a weapon and which has been struck by madness since that, would be an utterly pernicious stupidity.<sup>232</sup> In similar cases, the obligatory character of the particular rule is to be abolished for this particular situation by the dispensation made by the authority that has promulgated the

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<sup>229</sup> “*Oportet autem rationem circa particularia procedere non solum ex principiis universalibus, sed etiam ex principiis particularibus. Circa principia quidem universalis agibilia, homo recte se habet per naturalem intellectum principiorum, ... vel etiam per aliquam scientiam practicam. Sed hoc non sufficit ad recte ratiocinandum circa particularia.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 58, a. 5, co.

<sup>230</sup> “*Ad hoc autem quod electio sit bona, duo requiruntur. ... Secundo, ut homo recte accipiat ea quae sunt ad finem, et hoc non potest esse nisi per rationem recte consiliantem, iudicantem et praecipientem; quod pertinet ad prudentiam et ad virtutes sibi annexas, ... Unde virtus moralis sine prudentia esse non potest.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 58, a. 4, co.; “*...ad prudentiam pertinet non solum consideratio rationis, sed etiam applicatio ad opus, quae est finis practicae rationis. Nullus autem potest convenienter aliquid alteri applicare nisi utrumque cognoscat, ... Operationes autem sunt in singularibus. Et ideo necesse est quod prudens et cognoscat universalis principia rationis, et cognoscat singularia, circa quae sunt operationes.*” *ibid.*, II-II, q. 47, a. 3, co.; “*...ipsa recta aestimatio de fine particulari et intellectus dicitur, in quantum est alicuius principii; et sensus, in quantum est particularis. Et hoc est quod philosophus dicit, in VI Ethic., horum, scilicet singularium, oportet habere sensum, hic autem est intellectus.*” *Ibid.*, q. 49, a. 2, ad 3. Aquinas discusses the question of *prudentia* extensively in *STh.*, II-II, q. 47 – 56.

<sup>231</sup> “*...lex ponitur respiciendo ad id quod est ut in pluribus bonum...*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 88, a. 10, co.; “*...quia humani actus, de quibus leges dantur, in singularibus contingentibus consistunt, quae infinitis modis variari possunt, non fuit possibile aliquam regulam legis institui quae in nullo casu deficeret*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 120, a. 1, co. Given the fact that in Aquinas’s view even human law contains some rules which admit no exception (cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 95, a. 2, co.), I believe that “*regula legis*” refers only to the whole of laws needed by a community and not to the particular components of this whole.

<sup>232</sup> “*Sicut lex instituit quod deposita reddantur, quia hoc ut in pluribus iustum est, contingit tamen aliquando esse nocivum, puta si furiosus deposuit gladium et eum reposcat dum est in furia, vel si aliquis reposcat depositum ad patriae impugnationem.*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 120, a. 1, co.

rule or by its delegate in this matter; in the cases where the authority cannot be consulted because of an obvious and imminent danger of a great harm to common good, even the subordinate member of the community can and must allow himself to temporarily abolish the law to follow the intentions of the legislator.<sup>233</sup> Note that in both these cases, the reason d'être of law and the reason d'être of its dispensation is still the same: the common good. I skip an interesting topic concerning the relation between these two cases in Aquinas's thought. What matters for us is that for him, the law is not essentially exceptionless: in fact, in most of the cases, the law is to be applied only in most of the cases. The reason is that its exceptionless application would be against some of the rare laws that never fail and therefore admit no exception, like "the good is to be sought, the bad is to be avoided", "the reason is to be followed", etc. – the most basic rules of the natural law.<sup>234</sup>

#### II. 8. 4. Aquinas's dispensation of the natural law – basic distinction

Now, in Aquinas's mind this usual dispensability does not leave the law even in the case of the natural law: the validity of the most of its rules is contingent.<sup>235</sup> Let us avoid two misunderstandings. First, Aquinas does not say that the very belonging of a rule to the natural law is contingent. On the contrary, it is a matter of necessity coming from the nature of things for him:<sup>236</sup> not even God can change the fact that the natural law forbids man to kill an innocent or break a promise. The contingency concerns only the validity of the rule in particular cases, i.e., whether this particular rule (which belongs to the natural law) has the obliging force of the law always or not. Second, as we shall see later in detail, Aquinas knows three types of contingency: the contingency of the majority states, the contingency of the minority states and the contingency of states without any relevant prevalence of being or non-being.<sup>237</sup> The natural law can be concerned only by the first of these types: its contingency

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<sup>233</sup> "*si observatio legis secundum verba non habeat subitum periculum, cui oportet statim occurri, non pertinet ad quemlibet ut interpretetur quid sit utile civitati et quid inutile, sed hoc solum pertinet ad principes, qui propter huiusmodi casus habent auctoritatem in legibus dispensandi. Si vero sit subitum periculum, non patiens tantam moram ut ad superiorem recurri possit, ipsa necessitas dispensationem habet annexam.*" *STh.*, I-II, q. 96, a. 6, co.; "*Periculosum autem esset ut hoc iudicio cuiuslibet committeretur, nisi forte propter evidens et subitum periculum, ... Et ideo ille qui habet regere multitudinem, habet potestatem dispensandi in lege humana quae suae auctoritati innititur*" *ibid.*, q. 97, a. 4, co., cf. *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 5, l. 16; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 37, q. 1, a. 4, co. and *STh.*, II-II, q. 120 for the discussion of the virtue of *epikeia*, allowing the right disobeying of the letter of the law in necessary cases.

<sup>234</sup> "*Hoc est ergo primum praeceptum legis, quod bonum est faciendum et prosequendum, et malum vitandum.*" *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, co.; "*Apud omnes enim hoc rectum est et verum, ut secundum rationem agatur.*" *Ibid.*, a. 4, co.; "*omnis enim homo debet secundum rationem agere.*" *De veritate*, q. 17, a. 5, ad 4.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 4 – 5.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, co.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. chap. 2. III.

means the possibility of exception, it does not mean that the possibility of the invalidity of its rules is not *considerably* lesser than the possibility of its validity.

Aquinas offers no systematic taxonomy of the precepts of the natural law from the viewpoint of their applicability measure. In the passage that has recently become notorious thanks to its quotation in a much-controverted pontifical document,<sup>238</sup> he distinguishes the first general principles of the natural law and its secondary precepts: while the former admit no exception, as for the latter, the more they are particular, the more they are subjected to contingency. This distinction is quite rough and does not do justice to Aquinas's own much more complicated way of treating the moral matter – yet, we can start with it.

The first principles of the natural law are on the level of the so-called *dignitates* – the basic auto-evident truths, agreed by anybody who knows the meaning of the terms which are used to speak about them.<sup>239</sup> They are known thanks to the natural habitus of the practical reason called “synderesis”,<sup>240</sup> the parallel of the so-called “understanding of principles” (*intellectus principiorum*) which makes us understand the basic logical truths: *exempli gratia*, “the good is to be sought, the bad is to be avoided” is implied by the very notion of good in the same way, as is the principle of non-contradiction implied by the very notion of being.<sup>241</sup> Not even God can change the fact that the man who knowingly does not follow these rules morally sins<sup>242</sup> because the lack of the attitudes prescribed by them is precisely what the term moral sin means.

On the other hand, let us have the rule “borrowed things are to be given back”. Aquinas uses this example both while he speaks about the virtue of *epikeia* concerning the occasionally necessary trespassing of some precepts of human law and while he is giving an example of

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<sup>238</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 4, co. quoted extensively by pope Francis in his *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 304.

<sup>239</sup> For the notion of *dignitates*, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 1, a. 3, co.; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 3, l. 5, n. 4 – 5; *Expositio Posteriorum Analyticorum*, lib. 1, l. 15, n. 3 – 4 and (without the term) *Expositio De ebdomadibus*, l. 1, for the parallelism of the precepts of the natural law with them, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, co. In fact, Aquinas compares *all* the rules of the natural law to *dignitates* because, as mentioned before, their belonging to this law is a matter of conceptual necessity. Nevertheless, contrary to *dignitates* whose universal validity is the same in the most basic principles and the most derived conclusions, in the case of the natural law only the former are truly exceptionless; the conclusions differ from *dignitates* by the contingency of their applicability.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 16; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 2, a. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 79, a. 12; I-II, q. 94, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>241</sup> “*primum principium indemonstrabile est quod non est simul affirmare et negare, quod fundatur supra rationem entis et non entis*” ... *Sicut autem ens est primum quod cadit in apprehensione simpliciter, ita bonum est primum quod cadit in apprehensione practicae rationis, quae ordinatur ad opus, omne enim agens agit propter finem, qui habet rationem boni. Et ideo primum principium in ratione practica est quod fundatur supra rationem boni, quae est, bonum est quod omnia appetunt. Hoc est ergo primum praeceptum legis, quod bonum est faciendum et prosequendum, et malum vitandum.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, co.

<sup>242</sup> “*quantum ad prima principia legis naturae, lex naturae est omnino immutabilis.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 5, co., cf. *ibid.*, a. 4, co.; q. 97, a. 4, ad 3.

the secondary precept of the natural law that can be dispensed by man.<sup>243</sup> The “can be dispensed by man” probably cannot be replaced by “a man can dispense” here: if I do not get Aquinas wrong here, the actual author of the dispensation is supposed to be God who promulgates it via intellectual powers of men in the same way as he has promulgated the natural law itself<sup>244</sup> – as I have mentioned, the right to dispense normally belongs only to the subject who has the right to legislate in Aquinas’s view.<sup>245</sup> Anyway, if we are to understand why this precept can be dispensed, firstly we must understand why is the restitution of borrowed things commanded by the natural law at all. If you remember Aquinas’s assertion concerning the double ordering of creatures that he used as the explanation of the liceity of Abraham’s will to sacrifice Isaac,<sup>246</sup> the answer lies in it.

## II. 8. 5. The mutual ordering of creatures

Imagine a following reasoning. If I am not to sin, I need to behave in conformity to my finality in God: this concerns all the intellectual creatures independently of their features. Yet how could I do it – practically? Here, the mediating role of the creatures (including myself and my different parts) is of importance. First of all, I need to exist, which means that I need to protect my individual human life. Plenty of rules coming from the interdiction of suicide to the obligation of healthy lifestyle<sup>247</sup> originated in this simple fact: I am ordered to consume some kind of corporeal beings, to avoid some others, to keep some necessary measure of some activities etc. Then, I need to know what is good for my goals: therefore, I must seek the truth about myself and my relation to the rest of the world. For both of these reasons (my self-conservation and my information), I need other people and their community. Now, the peaceful existence of the community requires the adequate distribution of material needs objects, which requires some form of private property (otherwise no one cares to work)<sup>248</sup> which requires to be respected, if it is to work – and therefore I need to give back what I

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<sup>243</sup> “*lex naturalis in quantum continet praecepta communia, quae nunquam fallunt, dispensationem recipere non potest. In aliis vero praeceptis, quae sunt quasi conclusiones praeceptorum communium, quandoque per hominem dispensatur, puta quod mutuum non reddatur proditori patriae, vel aliquid huiusmodi.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 97, a. 4, ad 3, cf. *ibid.*, q. 94, a. 4, co.; II-II, q. 120, a. 1, co.

<sup>244</sup> “*qualis est lex, talis debet esse dispensatio legis; et quia lex naturae non est litteris scripta, sed cordibus impressa; propter hoc non oportuit dispensationem eorum quae ad legem naturae pertinent, lege scripta dari, sed per internam inspirationem fieri.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. my footnote 233. In the case of Aquinas’s God, there is no reason to transfer the dispensation of the law to another subject than the legislator: the latter is omnipresent and immediately accessible.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, co.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Aquinas’s reflection on gluttony in *STh.*, II-II, q. 148.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. the lovely justification of the private property in *STh.*, II-II, q. 66, a. 2 (maybe Aquinas’s personal experience of life in a religious community rejecting this institution?).

borrowed, if I am not to sin (i.e., act in a way which is stupidly disproportionate to my own goals). The possibility of the occurrence of exceptional sinless detention of borrowed things is clear if we see it this way.

Aquinas is in reality far more complex than that. To begin, adopting the divine viewpoint that is the final criterion of his moral reasoning forbids the exclusive seeking of one's own interests: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself"<sup>249</sup> is a basic requirement for practical rationality from this point of view.<sup>250</sup> As for the proper interests themselves, Aquinas believes that there are several mutually irreducible natural inclinations in men: to self-preservation, to the preservation of the species and to the goods which are proper to the reasonable nature, namely the knowledge of truth and the life in society (apparently distinguished from the life in a herd or a pack).<sup>251</sup> Contrary to the previous (a bit Hobbesian) reasoning then, he considers the seeking of an interpersonal relationship with other humans as irreducible to mere profitability for self-preservation. Also, elaborated anthropology would be required on this account if one was to competently judge the possibility to reduce (and therefore occasionally sacrifice) this or that intermediary natural goal to something else. Nevertheless, much more complex, or not, Aquinas's moral reasoning works in the same way as the previous paragraph. The following of the mutually irreducible natural inclinations is still reducible to seeking God – in fact, the knowledge and the love of God includes the knowledge about the order of creatures (and of different aspects of creatures) among themselves and the will to act accordingly. While seeking and cultivating the true human friendship according to my natural inclination, I am unifying my will with His love then, the same being true about the preservation of the social order in the service of human good, about the moderation in eating or about simple conscious preservation of my body. On the contrary, the contentions, the perturbation of the peace of society, overeating or bodily mutilation imply the deviation from my both human and divine finality. They are therefore interdicted by natural law – except the cases when such an act would be motivated by some of higher goals which normally forbid it.

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<sup>249</sup> Cf. Lev 19, 18; Mt 22, 39; Mc 12, 31; L 10, 27.

<sup>250</sup> "*praecepta moralia ex ipso dictamine naturalis rationis efficaciam habent, etiam si nunquam in lege statuuntur. Horum autem triplex est gradus. Nam quaedam sunt certissima, et adeo manifesta quod editione non indigent; sicut mandata de dilectione Dei et proximi, ... , quae sunt quasi fines praeceptorum*" *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 11, co., cf. *ibid.*, a. 3, arg. 1 and ad 1. For the foundation of the love for neighbour in the love for God, cf. *ibid.*, II-II, q. 25, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 1; *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 4.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, co. *in fine*.

## II. 8. 6. The dispensation and the change of circumstances

It is not difficult to understand that the general notion of the secondary precepts of the natural law encompasses the rules of a very different level of contingency: quite intuitively, keeping a borrowed thing is acceptable more often than killing its owner. In his *Sentences*, Aquinas provides a distinction which somewhat takes it into account.<sup>252</sup> The terminology is very similar to that of *Prima-Secundae*: the first and the second precepts of natural law.<sup>253</sup> The content is different though. While in *Prima-Secundae*, the first principles are defined by the conceptual necessity, in *Sentences* the first precepts (sometimes also called principles) are defined by the necessity from the viewpoint of the main finality of an agent or of some of his parts;<sup>254</sup> the secondary precepts from *Sentences* are precepts concerning the secondary goals or the well-being of the main goal – their keeping is not necessary for the achievement of the latter.<sup>255</sup> *Exempli gratia*, in the natural order of things, the main finality of human sexual behaviour is the good of an offspring (*bonum prolis*), while the secondary goals consist in a certain mutual relationship between man and woman (*fides*) and in the signification of the relationship between God and man that is realised by it (*sacramentum*).<sup>256</sup> In Aquinas's view, the polygyny is compatible with (and eventually profitable for) the primary finality (the good of an offspring), yet it is very nocuous for *fides* and incompatible with *sacramentum* – this is why it is interdicted by a secondary precept of the natural law.<sup>257</sup> Yet, Aquinas believes that

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<sup>252</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4., d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, co. The most up-to-date edition of this part of Aquinas's *Sentences* comes from 1858 and I would not be surprised if the future textual critic of the distinction 33 resulted in similarly important corrections as in the case of Mandonnet's correction of *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4 (cf. my footnote 92): different passages of this text are quite in tension in their way of expressing at least (cf. the (im)possibility of dispensing in the matter of concubinage (q. 1, a. 3, qc. 3, co. compared to q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, co.) or the (in)compatibility of polygyny with *sacramentum* (q. 1, a. 1, co. compared to q. 1, a. 2, ad 5). Nevertheless, in the absence of some better edition of the text, interpreters must work with what they have.

<sup>253</sup> I am not taking the position concerning the measure of Aquinas's evolution in this matter and a possible genetic relation of similar yet nonidentical notions from different periods of his life.

<sup>254</sup> “*Omne autem illud quod actionem inconvenientem reddit fini quem natura ex opere aliquo intendit, contra legem naturae esse dicitur. Potest autem actio non esse conveniens fini vel principali, vel secundario; et sive sic, sive sic, hoc contingit dupliciter. Uno modo ex aliquo quod omnino impedit finem; ... Alio modo ex aliquo quod facit difficilem aut minus decentem perventionem ad finem principalem vel secundarium, ... Si ergo actio sit inconveniens fini quasi omnino prohibens finem principalem, directe per legem naturae prohibetur primis praeceptis legis naturae, quae sunt in operabilibus, sicut sunt communes conceptiones in speculativis.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>255</sup> “*Si autem sit incompetens fini secundario quocumque modo, aut etiam principali, ut faciens difficilem vel minus congruam perventionem ad ipsum; prohibetur non quidem primis praeceptis legis naturae, sed secundis, quae ex primis derivantur; sicut conclusiones in speculativis ex principiis per se notis fidem habent*” *ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> “*Matrimonium ergo habet pro fine principali proles procreationem et educationem; ... et sic bonum matrimonii assignatur proles. Sed pro fine secundario .. habet in hominibus solum communicationem operum quae sunt necessaria in vita, ... et secundum hoc fidem sibi invicem debent, quae est unum de bonis matrimonii. Habet ulterius alium finem, in quantum in fidelibus est, scilicet significationem Christi et Ecclesiae; et sic bonum matrimonii dicitur sacramentum*” *ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> “*Pluralitas ergo uxorum neque totaliter tollit neque aliquo modo impedit primum finem, ... sed secundum finem etsi non totaliter tollat, tamen multum impedit, ... Tertium autem finem totaliter tollit, ... et ideo patet ex dictis*

some special individual or even collective historical circumstances can heighten the importance of the primary finality up to the drowning of the incompatible secondary goals: the biblical patriarchs and the Israelites under the Mosaic Law were not necessarily to blame, if they had more than one wife (or a concubine who, in Aquinas's view, can be considered as a secondary wife under certain circumstances).<sup>258</sup> Similarly, the grave danger of uxoricide justified the permission of divorce during this time of general moral degeneracy: contrary to most of his ecclesial sources, Aquinas considers probable that a divorce was therefore not only legal, but also morally licit, despite it being immoral under more normal circumstances.<sup>259</sup>

## II. 8. 7. The dispensation and the change of finality

What is interesting for our problem is the reason why Aquinas thinks that this possibility of divorce cannot exist in the case of sacramental matrimony. Compared to the natural state, the order of goals of a sexual relationship is changed here in his view, the *sacramentum* becoming the ultimate finality: the sacramental matrimony exists primarily to signify the exclusive and unbreakable relationship between Christ and his Church, and the divorce is incompatible with this.<sup>260</sup> To my knowledge, Aquinas does not specify the ways of such change in this case. Yet, as we have seen, God is both the efficient cause and the final cause of natural inclinations in his account. To the stone, he has given the natural inclination to fall, yet he can change it into a different inclination to fly.<sup>261</sup> Such a new inclination would not be natural for the stone, yet it would not be against its nature either (as throwing it violently would be) because it would accomplish the ultimate finality of the stone in a more perfect way than its natural behaviour does: the miraculously flying stone would manifest God more obviously than its falling

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*quod pluralitas uxorum quodammodo est contra legem naturae, et quodammodo non.*" Ibid. The categorical statement concerning sacramentum is relativised in *ibid.*, a. 2, ad 5 though.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 1, a. 2 and a. 3, qc. 3. The alleged reason is the need of progeny for the transmission of faith.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 2, co. Aquinas seems to be unsure concerning the question, whether the dispensation of the moral precept interdicting the divorce actually happened; he seems much more certain concerning the *possibility* of such dispensation *ex causis inferioribus* though, cf. *ibid.*, qc. 1, co.: "*non videtur contra primam intentionem naturae dimissio uxoris esse, et per consequens nec contra prima praecepta, sed contra secunda legis naturae; unde etiam primo modo sub dispensatione posse cadere videtur.*"

<sup>260</sup> "*inseparabilitas quamvis sit de secunda intentione matrimonii prout est in officium naturae, tamen est de prima intentione ipsius prout est sacramentum Ecclesiae; et ideo ex quo institutum est ut sit Ecclesiae sacramentum, manente tali institutione non potest sub dispensatione cadere, nisi forte secundo modo dispensationis [i.e., ex causis superioribus, see below].*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 3. The same type of argument seems to be applicable to the polygyny, cf. d. 27, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 1.

<sup>261</sup> "*Si autem Deus auferat a lapide inclinationem gravitatis, et det ei inclinationem levitatis, tunc ferri sursum non erit ei violentum; et ita immutatio motus potest esse sine violentia.*" *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 8, co.



colleagues.<sup>262</sup> Now, while the knowledge and the love of God are a natural finality for human, inasmuch as he is an intellectual creature, the mode of this finality in actual world is supernatural for him (or, for what it matters, for any other creature):<sup>263</sup> if his behaviour is to be proportionate to this mode (as the plenitude of revelation and salvific means procured by Christ is supposed to make fully possible) no wonder, that both the way to this goal and the relative significance of different aspects of human life will be somewhat different from their state in the hypothetical purely natural order.<sup>264</sup> The key to Aquinas’s comprehension of the most scandalising aspects of biblical divinely commanded behaviour is to be found in this view on the relation between the moral precepts, human finalities and God.

The mere change of historical circumstances has no impact on the *first precepts* of the natural law, whether they concern the behaviour in the natural or supernatural state: these are determined by the natural necessity of certain behaviour for the ultimate finality which is naturally or supernaturally fixed.<sup>265</sup> An extramarital sex being directly against the good of an offspring (which requires not only their conception, but also an environment suitable for their successful education), Aquinas believes that such behaviour is impossible to be morally good – naturally. Apparently, if the finality that the interdiction is concerned with was not the offspring but directly God, the moral goodness of this behaviour would be impossible at all: for this reason, the hate of God or the blasphemy cannot be made morally good by any means.<sup>266</sup> But given the fact that the finality in question is something subordinate to God (namely the offspring), the situation is different. The relation between Hosea and the prostitute could have been ordered by God – in both senses of the term “ordered”. God commanded the behaviour that was beyond the norms of normal human morality, giving it a

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<sup>262</sup> For the natural openness of creatures for this kind of divine intervention, see below chap. 3. III. 1. 3. 4 and III. 1. 4.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. my footnote 194.

<sup>264</sup> “*Ad gubernationem autem vitae propriae et aliorum, non solum requiritur cognitio eorum quae naturaliter sciri possunt, sed etiam cognitio eorum quae naturalem cognitionem excedunt; eo quod vita hominis ordinatur ad quendam finem supernaturalem*” *STh.*, I, q. 94, a. 3, co.; “*quia huiusmodi beatitudo proportionem humanae naturae excedit, principia naturalia hominis, ex quibus procedit ad bene agendum secundum suam proportionem, non sufficiunt ad ordinandum hominem in beatitudinem praedictam. Unde oportet quod superaddantur homini divinitus aliqua principia, per quae ita ordinetur ad beatitudinem supernaturalem, sicut per principia naturalia ordinatur ad finem connaturalem*” I-II, q. 62, a. 1, co. (cf. a. 3); “*sicut prima perfectio hominis, quae est anima rationalis, excedit facultatem materiae corporalis; ita ultima perfectio ad quam homo potest pervenire, quae est beatitudo vitae aeternae, excedat facultatem totius humanae naturae. Et quia unumquodque ordinatur ad finem per operationem aliquam; et ea quae sunt ad finem, oportet esse aliquantulum finis proportionata; necessarium est esse aliquas hominis perfectiones quibus ordinetur ad finem supernaturalem, quae excedat facultatem principiorum naturalium hominis.*” *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10, co.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, co. (Mandonnet’s edition): “*Quaedam vero peccata sunt quae dicunt deordinationem a fine ultimo immediate, ut desperare de Deo et odire eum, et illa nullo modo bonitatem habere possunt, nec etiam per virtutem divinam, sicut etiam virtute divina fieri non potest ut res esse habeat, cessante influentia primi agentis.*”

purpose to reveal in an exceptional way some aspects of his own mystery (apparently, his relationship to his people) that are not so clearly visible otherwise.<sup>267</sup> Aquinas compares the situation to the biblical divine interventions into solar movement or activity.<sup>268</sup> Paradoxically, the predominance of the *sacramentum* is even more radical than in the case of Christian matrimony here.

In the quoted text (provided that it is not corrupted) it is this very principle that Aquinas is explicitly applying in the case of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.<sup>269</sup> The primacy of the manifestation of God in the life of man can hardly be more emphasized. In later texts, he contents himself with a less romantic explication, asserting that God is the lord of life and death and inflicts the punishment of death (merited by original sin) to all the mortals anyway: there is supposedly no additional problem with the divinely commanded execution of anybody by anybody then.<sup>270</sup> As already mentioned, the original text of the first book of Aquinas's *Sentences* suggests yet another viewpoint, relating the sacrifice directly to God.<sup>271</sup> These differences may mean an evolution of opinion in Aquinas; or they may just reflect different aspects of the same view he could want or need to emphasize.<sup>272</sup> What they have in common in any case is that they explain the thing by the relativity of normally intangible rules of interhuman behaviour coming from the radical subordination of human existence to God: "for if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> "*tantum ex causis superioribus ... potest dispensatio esse divinitus etiam contra prima praecepta legis naturae, ratione alicujus mysterii divini significandi vel ostendendi*" (ibid., co.); "*habere concubinam est contra bonum prolis quantum ad id quod natura in eo de prima intentione intendit, ... Tamen quantum ad secundam dispensationem etiam habere concubinam sub dispensatione cadere potest, ut patet Oseeae 1.*" (ad 2).

<sup>268</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1., co., referring to Jos 10, 12 – 14; 2King 20, 8 – 11par and Mt 27, 45par.

<sup>269</sup> "*dispensatio esse divinitus etiam contra prima praecepta legis naturae, ratione alicujus mysterii divini significandi vel ostendendi, sicut patet de dispensatione in praecepto Abrahae facto de occisione filii innocentis.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, co.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 5, ad 2; q. 100, a. 8, ad 3; II-II, q. 64, a. 6, ad 1. In a similar manner, the spoliation of Egypt was not a theft because the property was transferred according to the will of its ultimate master (God); in Hosea's case, God's precept has made the prostitute prophet's legitimate sexual partner in a similar way as his law does it in the case of the wives (without making the former one of the latter though), cf. also *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 37, q. 1, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>271</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, co. (Mandonnet's edition).

<sup>272</sup> As stated before, the immediately theocentric view is suggested, not unequivocally asserted in the concerned text. Also, it would not forbid the secondary created finality and its content could be an implicit condition sine qua non for the possibility of an authoritative decree concerning the punishment of original sin. The execution of just punishment (notably if made in a special way) can manifest God's mystery.

<sup>273</sup> Rom 14, 8.

## II. 8. 8. Excursus: the negative precepts of divine law and the indispensability of the Decalogue in Aquinas

The matter of this excursus has hardly any direct importance for the topic of this book. The reason why I am going to approach it anyway is the following: for the reasons that I am going to specify immediately, the learned members of the contemporary Catholic church are disposed to get Aquinas wrong in this matter and this error can cast serious doubts on the interpretation of Aquinas's conception of morality I have described above. To be more specific: Aquinas's creative user of the highest intellectual rank, John Paul II has used Aquinas's distinction of the positive and negative precepts (most notably the distinction between the validity "always and not for always" connected to the former and the validity "always and for always" (*semper et pro semper*) connected to the latter) to explain his own conception of the universal validity of the negative precepts of (what he means by) natural law.<sup>274</sup> In this view, the rightness of the most recent pontifical interpretation of Aquinas's teaching about primary and secondary precepts (and of his asserting the contingency of the applicability of the latter)<sup>275</sup> has been questioned as misleading or unilateral.<sup>276</sup> I believe that this view is mistaken.<sup>277</sup>

In Aquinas, the distinction of positive and negative precepts does not concern the natural law but the divine law: it is the distinction between the biblical general statements saying that a type of action is to be done and those saying that a type of action is to be not done.<sup>278</sup> The former precepts are said to hold always but not for always, while the latter hold always and for always. What does it mean? The thing is particularly clear in Aquinas's discussing of fraternal correction.<sup>279</sup> "If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone",<sup>280</sup> Jesus has said. Does it mean that a Christian is obliged to run after all the Christian sinners that he knows at the moment when he gets to know their sins (at least before their excommunication according to the following verses of the same gospel), despite the fact that in many cases such approach seems to be counterproductive or even purposelessly dangerous? Aquinas states that the answer is a no. Given the fact that a virtuous action by its very nature

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<sup>274</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 52.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 304.

<sup>276</sup> For an extraordinarily tactful and otherwise nuanced example of this phenomenon, cf. the remarks on this issue in BONINO (2016), p. 515 – 518.

<sup>277</sup> Obviously, by doing so I have no intention to enter into a more general discussion concerning the dogmatic, theological or pastoral qualities of the teachings of the quoted pontiffs or (the measure of) their (dis)continuity: such an endeavour would be clearly beyond the scope of this book and completely misplaced here.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 33, a. 2, co.; *Super Rom.*, cap. 13, l. 2; *Super Gal.*, cap. 6, l. 1; *De malo*, q. 7, a. 1, ad 8 quoted by Bonino in extenso in the footnote 14 of his aforesaid text.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 33, a. 2, co.

<sup>280</sup> Mt 18, 15.

requires to be done only in due time, due place and under due circumstances, it is in the very nature of the positive precept that it cannot require the commanded action to be performed all the time, but only when it is reasonable. Thus, the precept binds always, but not for always. In contrast, nothing impedes that the absence of a morally relevant (bad) activity perdures during the whole life: the negative precepts therefore bind always and for always. As you can see, the distinction concerns the question whether the state of the activity which is immediately required by the rule is permanent or not; it does not concern the question whether the validity of the rule itself admits exceptions or not, as is the case of the distinction between the first principles and the secondary precepts of the natural law. Just consider that the commandment of love for God is a positive precept, while the interdiction of labour on the Sabbath is a negative one.<sup>281</sup> Consider also, that the same finality can beget both the positive and the negative rule: “On request, give back what you have borrowed!” and “Do not deny the request of giving back what you have borrowed!” cover exactly the same thing.

In Aquinas, the issue concerned by the distinction of the first principles and the second precepts is settled for both the positive and the negative precepts equally in the case of the divine law: he says that they hold always – well, at least in the case of the moral ones, the ceremonial and the juridic precepts being bound to the special task that was given to Israel before the advent of Messiah.<sup>282</sup> But notwithstanding this, the possibility of the dispensation by man is denied in this category as a whole, except for the case of the special delegation from God.<sup>283</sup> Moreover, Aquinas happens to state that not even God can dispense the Ten Commandments, which seems quite odd<sup>284</sup> – what about the sacrifice of Isaac then?

In the first book of *Sentences* (about 1252/53), Aquinas actually considers Abraham’s case as a dispensation of the “You shall not kill” and he repeats something similar about Hosea’s case in *De malo* (the end of the sixties).<sup>285</sup> Nevertheless, while speaking about the Decalogue *ex*

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<sup>281</sup> Cf. Dt 6, 5 and Ex 20, 10. While I am deeply asleep, I have no use of reason and therefore I perform no morally relevant activity, the love for God included (the *caritas* perduring only on the level of *habitus*, as is my ability to speak French). For similar reasons, John Duns Scotus famously doubted that the first precept of love belongs to the natural law, as he understood it, cf. JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio*, lib. 3, d. 37.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 98, a. 5; q. 103, a. 3 – 4; q. 104, a. 3; q. 107, a. 2, ad 1 and ad 4; q. 108, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>283</sup> “*Ad legem autem divinam ita se habet quilibet homo, sicut persona privata ad legem publicam cui subiicitur. Unde sicut in lege humana publica non potest dispensare nisi ille a quo lex auctoritatem habet, vel is cui ipse commiserit; ita in praeceptis iuris divini, quae sunt a Deo, nullus potest dispensare nisi Deus, vel si cui ipse specialiter committeret.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 97, a. 4, ad 3. The same text admitting the dispensation of the natural law by man, the contrast between natural law and divine law in the matter of dispensation can be hardly more explicit.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 37, q. 1, a. 4, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 8, co.

<sup>285</sup> “*propter hoc dicitur, quod contra praecepta primae tabulae, quae ordinant immediate in Deum, Deus dispensare non potest; sed contra praecepta secundae tabulae, quae ordinant immediate ad proximum, Deus potest dispensare; non autem homines in his dispensare possunt.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, co.; “*Potest enim Deus, ut Bernardus dicit, dispensare in praeceptis secundae tabulae, per quae homo immediate ordinatur*

*professo*, both in the third book of *Sentences* (1254/55?) and *Prima-Secundae* (1271) he says the contrary.<sup>286</sup> How is it possible? I believe that the thing is actually quite simple. There is hardly any medieval Catholic thinker who would think that “You shall not kill” forbids any killing (of man) at all: the biblical context clearly shows that this is not so.<sup>287</sup> Apparently, the precept actually categorically excludes only what we would call a murder: killing with no just cause.<sup>288</sup> Now, in Aquinas’s mature view, all the moral requirements of the Commandments are to be read in a similar way. “You shall not kill” forbids the injustice in the matters of the preservation of life, “You shall not commit adultery” the injustice in sexual matters etc. – at least this is his view in his texts focused on the Decalogue.<sup>289</sup> Otherwise said, the immediate sense of the Decalogue does not go beyond the order to apply the first principles of the natural law in the domains concerned by respective Commandments: and this is something that not even God can dispense from. This reading corresponds well with the epistemological accessibility attributed to the Decalogue (as for Aquinas, the content of the Commandments can be either discovered by man applying the first principles after the modicum of reflection, or is immediately known by Faith),<sup>290</sup> the extensive scope that is traditionally attached to its precepts (“You shall not kill” does not forbid only the murder, but also the anger and insults)<sup>291</sup> connected with a certain flexibility of its meaning in particular situations (the behaviour that would be adulterous in the case of a Christian is not necessarily adulterous in

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*ad proximum: bonum enim proximi est quoddam bonum particulare. Non autem potest dispensare in praeceptis primae tabulae, per quae homo ordinatur in Deum, qui a se ipso alios non potest avertere...*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 17 quoting BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, *De praecepto et dispensatione.*, cap. III (PL 182, 864 – 865).

<sup>286</sup> “*Si ergo sint aliqua praecepta quae continent ipsam intentionem legislatoris, impossibile est quod in aliquo casu salva iustitia possit aliquis ab eis deflectere; sicut si esset hoc praeceptum, nulli faciendam esse injuriam; et ideo cum omnia praecepta Decalogi sint huiusmodi, impossibile est quod dispensationem recipiant.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 37, q. 1, a. 4, co.; “*praecepta Decalogi sunt omnino indispensabilia.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 8, co.

<sup>287</sup> Both Mosaic law and Moses himself clearly consider the killing of man licit in some cases, cf. self-defence (cf. the killing of the burglar during the night Ex 22, 1), death penalty (for the crimes that are to be punished this way cf. for ex. Ex 21, 12 – 31, cf. also 32, 26 – 29) and war (cf. for ex. Nu 31, 2 – 7), cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 64.

<sup>288</sup> “*ergo intelligendum: non occides, auctoritate propria.*” *Super Mt.*, cap. 5, v. 21.

<sup>289</sup> “*praecepta primae tabulae, quae ordinant ad Deum, continent ipsum ordinem ad bonum commune et finale, quod Deus est; praecepta autem secundae tabulae continent ipsum ordinem iustitiae inter homines observandae, ut scilicet nulli fiat indebitum, et cuilibet reddatur debitum; secundum hanc enim rationem sunt intelligenda praecepta Decalogi.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 8, co. In *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 37, q. 1, a. 4, co. Aquinas is not so explicit, nevertheless, he asserts that all the Commandments are on the level of the precept “*nulli faciendam esse injuriam*” (see my footnote 285) and his harmonisation of a just killing, spoliation of Egypt and Hosea’s affair with the alleged indispensability of the Commandments (cf. *ibid.*, ad 3 – 4) goes in exactly the same way as in the *Summa*: it seems to me justified to think that he holds at least very similar opinions in both cases then, be it on different levels of elaboration.

<sup>290</sup> “*Illa ergo praecepta ad Decalogum pertinent, quorum notitiam homo habet per seipsum a Deo. Huiusmodi vero sunt illa quae statim ex principiis communibus primis cognosci possunt modica consideratione, et iterum illa quae statim ex fide divinitus infusa innotescunt...*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 3, co.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Mt 5, 21 – 22 and Aquinas’s commentary in *Super Mt.*, cap. 5, v. 22 (“*qui irascitur pronus ad homicidium est, sed quando irascitur non committit homicidium. Ista quodammodo in isto praecepto continetur quia lex ista a Deo data est, et est differentia inter legem hominis et Dei, quia homo est iudex exteriorum actuum, Deus autem interiorum, ... unde in hoc non occides includitur etiam motus ad occidendum.*”).

the case of a Hebrew fleeing from Egypt):<sup>292</sup> it is clear why Aquinas does not consider the most scandalous behaviour commanded by God as a dispensation of the Decalogue interpreted this way.<sup>293</sup> But it is also clear that on the beginning of his career, he interpreted the Commandments differently, more materially. His notion of the dispensable commandments of the second table (concerning the relation to the neighbour) is parallel to the notion of the (supernaturally) dispensable first precepts of the natural law.<sup>294</sup> It seems likely to me, that it was the first precepts (as distinguished from the “first principles” from *Prima-Secundae*) that Aquinas took for the immediate sense of the Commandments at the time. It is not clear, whether the much later approving quotation of Bernard of Clairvaux in *De malo* implies that he temporarily recycled this earlier view:<sup>295</sup> maybe it could be read as the dispensation in the matter concerned by the Commandment, not as the dispensation of the Commandment itself.<sup>296</sup> Be it anyway, the purpose of this Aquinas’s answer is fulfilled: by ordering a human sacrifice, God has not ordered a sinful act and this case cannot be taken as an instance of divine causation of sin, as the objector has pretended.<sup>297</sup>

Aquinas’s texts do not provide enough data to determine exactly what his exact view concerning the immediate sense of biblical moral precepts contained outside of the Decalogue was: the assertion of their universal validity would suggest that it was similar to his interpretation of the latter. Nevertheless, even if this was not the case, the following can give a taste of some less intuitive aspects of his conception of “holding always” concerning these precepts. In the early phase of the uprising of Maccabees, the Jews (whose fight was motivated by the fidelity to the Law) have learned that the abstaining of the labour of the fight on the Sabbath has deadly consequences: they have decided to fight notwithstanding the

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<sup>292</sup> See above II. 8. 6 – 7. Gospels treat the remarriage of a divorcee as is the case of adultery (cf. Mc 10, 11 – 12), while the Mosaic law, punishing adultery by death (cf. Lev 20, 10; Dt 22, 22), tolerates such a union (cf. Dt 24, 1 – 3).

<sup>293</sup> “*occisio hominis prohibetur in Decalogo secundum quod habet rationem indebiti, sic enim praeceptum continet ipsam rationem iustitiae ... si alicui auferatur quod suum erat, si debitum est quod ipsum amittat, hoc non est furtum vel rapina, quae praecepto Decalogi prohibentur. ... Osee, accedens ad uxorem fornicariam, vel ad mulierem adulteram, non est moechatus nec fornicatus, quia accessit ad eam quae sua erat secundum mandatum divinum, qui est auctor institutionis matrimonii. Sic igitur praecepta ipsa Decalogi, quantum ad rationem iustitiae quam continent, immutabilia sunt.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 8, ad 3.

<sup>294</sup> Compare *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, co. and lib. 4, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1.

<sup>295</sup> *De malo* predates very shortly *Prima-Secundae* where Aquinas holds the same different view as in much earlier *Super Sent.*, lib. 3.

<sup>296</sup> *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 8, ad 3 itself speaks about the mutability of the Commandments “*quantum ad aliquam determinationem per applicationem ad singulares actus, ut scilicet hoc vel illud sit homicidium, furtum vel adulterium*”: in this way, even a human legislator can sometimes make changes in the matter. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 17 could be understood as speaking about this type of change, concerning the first precepts that are under normal circumstances implied by the requirements of justice which are the formal content of the Commandments according to *Summa*. I would not put much money on this reading, though.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, arg. 17.

Sabbath, then.<sup>298</sup> The ceremonial part of the precepts of the Mosaic law was not revoked at the time yet – some of the acclaimed martyrs of this time preferred rather to die than to eat pork (or even to pretend it).<sup>299</sup> Nevertheless, Aquinas shares the view that the decision to fight was right. He does not think that in this case there was any dispensation concerning the ceremonial obligations that are included in the Third Commandment, neither by fighters, nor by God himself. The fighters just rightly interpreted the letter of the norm, recognising that the obligations do not concern them.<sup>300</sup> To understand this seemingly far-fetched statement of his, Aquinas’s more general statements concerning written law must be taken into account: after all, the scripturally revealed divine law is par definition a written law and as such, it shares some of the constitutive limitations of this genre. In Aquinas’s view, even if the legal rules are meant to have exceptions, the legislator cannot write down all of these, even if he knows them all (as is the case of God): if he did so, the resulting text would be too long to be retained or even read<sup>301</sup> – and therefore useless. The (written) law must be succinct. Thus, even a person with no right to dispense the norm has the right and duty to read the norm intelligently: notably in the case of the all-wise legislator, the norm must be understood as implicitly excepting all the cases when keeping the generally prescribed attitude would be against reason.<sup>302</sup> This way, the written divine law interdicting labour during the seventh day holds always and for always, it just does not interdict some necessary labour during some exceptional seventh days. Note the difference between the interpretation and the dispensation: in the latter case, the rule is flawed (which does not mean bad) and must be therefore abolished now and then; in the former case, the rule is flawless yet not completely explicit (as in the case of much of normal communication), its validity is universal, but its right interpretation requires at times the same intelligence (even if not the same authority) as the dispensation of the imperfect rule. You may doubt whether the measure of the difference between those two situations actually justifies the fundamental difference concerning the authority needed for the performance of the respective acts, as Aquinas believes. I shall not enter into this discussion here. What counts for my purpose is that Aquinas’s different assertion concerning the relation between moral rules and particular situations are consistent

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<sup>298</sup> Cf. 1 Mac 2, 29 – 42.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. 2 Mac 6, 18 – 7, 42.

<sup>300</sup> “*illa excogitatio magis fuit interpretatio praecepti quam dispensatio. Non enim intelligitur violare sabbatum qui facit opus quod est necessarium ad salutem humanam*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 100, a. 8, ad 4.

<sup>301</sup> “*...si posset legislator omnes casus considerare, non oporteret ut omnes exprimeret, propter confusionem vitandam, sed legem ferre deberet secundum ea quae in pluribus accidunt.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 96, a. 6, ad 3.

<sup>302</sup> For illustrative cases of such a reading of the divine law rules, see Aquinas’s comments on Mt 5, 22 or 7, 1 in *Super Mt.* (reportatio of Peter of Andria), cap. 5, v. 22 and *Super Mt.* (reportatio of Leodegarius Bissuntinus), cap. 7, l. 1.

both with my earlier exposing them and mutually: namely, for him there is no possibility that the obligation to dispense a precept of the natural law could enter into conflict with the obligation to hold the corresponding precept of the divine law.

### III. Good God and the bad states of the creatures

#### Introduction

For both of the most important western monotheisms, Abraham's decision to obey God's order to sacrifice his son is considered as a model of the perfect relationship to the divinity,<sup>303</sup> something that the believer should admire and implement in her own life. I have dwelled on Aquinas's reading of this text essentially to emphasize two aspects of his view that are strongly suggested by its message: 1) the theocentrism and 2) the subordination of the moral values to God.

1) The ultimate finality of all that God does is God – not the welfare of the creatures. If you are scandalised by the formulation that God does everything ultimately for himself, note that the Christianity allows to avoid it: The Father does everything for The Son and The Son does everything for The Father; The Holy Ghost is turned to the both of them – or something like that. Let me add immediately that, to my knowledge, Aquinas has never felt the slightest need to make such a move in his discussion of divine goodness. It is understandable: while the human egocentrism is to be considered pride and something bad precisely because it does not correspond to the real place of a particular man in the universe, no such objection could be possibly raised against Aquinas's God, independently on considering the Trinity.<sup>304</sup> Also, as we have seen (II. 6.) and contrarily to what we know as egoism, God does not use creatures for his own benefit (he does not love them because they would ameliorate his own state – they do not do it in the least). It should already be clear that this “for God” feature is not something that is arbitrarily stuck to a previously autonomous creature by God, as in the case of a slaver violently instrumentalising their slave, or a mad scientist experimenting on lab rats. It is not even something that God could possibly avoid, if he wanted: this feature belongs to the

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<sup>303</sup> Cf. Heb 11, 17 – 19 and Jac 2, 21 – 23 for Christianity, *The Noble Quran*, surah 37 (*As Saffat*), 102 – 111 for Islam.

<sup>304</sup> “*superbia nominatur ex hoc, quod aliquis per voluntatem tendit super id, quod est, unde dicit Isidorus superbus dictus est, quia super vult videri, quam est; qui enim vult supergredi, quod est, superbus est. Habet autem hoc ratio recta, ut voluntas uniuscuiusque feratur in id, quod est proportionatum sibi, et ideo manifestum est, quod superbia importat, quod adversatur rationi rectae...*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 162, a. 1, co.



deepest identity of creature taken as such – both the consideration of freedom and the consideration of providence needs to take it into account.<sup>305</sup>

2) God is not subordinated to any law – he is the basis of all the laws, or, if you wish, he is the ultimate Law itself. The only way to consider the rectitude of his deeds is by referring them to his own goals, inasmuch they are manifested through the universe or the revelation<sup>306</sup> – not necessarily through the conformity to the most popular desires or any other invented ideal of supreme goodness at hand. In particular, God’s ways can be quite different from the paths that can be determined by the whole of the laws of human natural or even supernatural morality – as is shown by the fact that he leads even some of human individuals beyond these paths, without them letting morally fail, though. We shall see this second point in more detail in the immediately following section, preparing the presentation of Aquinas’s view which is the focus of this study – God’s allowing of moral badness.

### III. 1. *Culpa* and the cause of the bad state

“But it does not hurt anyone!” During the discussions concerning morally controversial matters, this argument can be often heard as a would-be proof that the behaviour in question is not morally bad. It should be clear by now, that the weight of such argumentation depends strongly on the acceptance of a slavish type of moral theory: in the aristocratic view such as Aquinas’s, it either begs the question or is gravely insufficient. But what is more interesting for our issue, the inverse argument would work neither: hurting somebody is not automatically morally bad. Let us discuss that in more detail.

We have seen that in Aquinas’s view, the sin is defined by the insufficiency in fulfilling one’s purpose, not by causing something bad to another being. It is true that the sin is always harming somebody, and that are the sinners themselves. By sinning, the will becomes *malum* in both the second and the third Avicennian sense of the term (see above, chap. 1. II. 2.): it is both the bearer (“victim”) of the bad state and the agent causing this bad state. The sin is a voluntary self-mutilation of the will: yet from this viewpoint, it can be considered a harm only because of its conceptually anterior nonconformity to sinner’s finality and not vice versa. In the case of harming somebody or something else, the harming subject obviously becomes

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<sup>305</sup> Note that this “all for God” in no way contradicts the fact that God, in a subordinate sense, does everything for man, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 7; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 111 – 113: thanks to God’s goodness, any God’s doing (and obviously God himself) is suitable to furnish good to humans, provided that the humans themselves are not impeding it, cf. Rom 8, 28 and Aquinas’s comment in *Super Rom.*, cap. 8, l. 6.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. *STh.*, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3.

*malum* in the third Avicennian sense of the word from the viewpoint of the harmed entity: but notwithstanding this, her activity can be still completely conform to her natural purpose and in such a case, the activity is (in etymological sense) impeccable and (provided that the agent is a rational being) morally good.<sup>307</sup>

That does not mean that harming an entity cannot be *peccatum* as such, but that this sinfulness is always due to the relation of this harming to the finality of the harming subject.<sup>308</sup> The killing of a warthog by a lioness means that the lioness is something very bad for this individual warthog, but it does not mean that the lioness is not a good lioness, nor that, absolutely speaking, it is bad to be a lioness. On the contrary, if the lioness adopted the same behaviour vis-à-vis her own young, there would be something morbid, even pervert, in that activity: it would be a kind of behaviour that would go directly against the conservation of the lion species to whom all the individual lions and lioness seem to be naturally inclined.<sup>309</sup>

In the case of the hurting of a human by another human, the thing is even more complicated: beside the value of the harmed individual for the preservation of human species (and potentially also for the individual good of the harming individual himself), the inclination to the life in the communion of reasonable beings and the need to adopt the divine perspective caring for the anyone's good (resulting in the requirement of the love for neighbour) must be taken into the consideration.<sup>310</sup> All things being considered, under normal circumstances, the violence is bad (in the aristocratic sense of the term) because under normal circumstances it does more harm than good to the goods the human is naturally inclined to. Yet under exceptional circumstances, it depends. Killing a criminal in necessary defence can be blameless, if the violence is used in proportion to the needs of one's own protection.<sup>311</sup> On the contrary, the voluntary use of unnecessary violence in the same case (motivated for example by anger) is sinful, notwithstanding the fact that the "defence" results only in a few scratches on the aggressor's body:<sup>312</sup> the fact that the criminal would most likely prefer this smaller harm to his death in the former, morally licit case, is of no consequence in Aquinas's optic.

Aquinas thinks that in a typical case of self-defence, it is licit for the defending person to allow the death of the aggressor if necessary, yet it is not licit for her to seek it intentionally:

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<sup>307</sup> "*poena, in quantum est poena, est malum alicuius; in quantum est iusta, est bonum simpliciter. Nihil autem prohibet id quod est bonum simpliciter, esse malum alicuius; sicut forma ignis est bonum simpliciter, sed est malum aquae.*" *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 18.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 64, a. 6 concerning the killing of innocent person (under natural circumstances, cf. ad 1).

<sup>309</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, co. *in fine*.

<sup>310</sup> See above chap. 1. II. 8. 5.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 64, a. 7.

<sup>312</sup> "*si aliquis ad defendendum propriam vitam utatur maiori violentia quam oporteat, erit illicitum.*" *STh.*, II-II, q. 64, a. 7, co.

death can be a predictable side-effect of defence, not its means (even if the deadly violence is). The reason is that this person is typically not competent to judge, whether the common good really requires the death of this criminal. While in such a case it is still rational to protect her own life more than the life of this apparently bad individual, it would be irrational to seek the irreversible destruction of such a value as the human life (be it the life of criminal) without an adequate justification. Only the person who has the competence to judge the non-evident requirements of common good – a public authority – can competently make the judgement concerning the pros and cons in this case and eventually decide about the necessity to kill the criminal in question: only her or an individual following her orders can kill both intentionally and reasonably, as in the case of death penalty or (just) war.<sup>313</sup> The lesser authorities, such as parents or masters, may nevertheless use a less radical violent means to protect the good of the wholes they are supposed to care for, e. g. the pain inflicted by beating (*verberatio*).<sup>314</sup>

The limits of the right behaviour depend both on the finality of subject and on her ability to judge about the implications of her acts for this finality: I presume that this is why the children are not allowed to choose whether to drink beer or not. Intuitive as it is, this view can get quite terrific implications, if applied to the topic of harming humans by superhuman entities. Firstly, if there was a creature which was the natural enemy of *Homo sapiens* in the same way a lion is the natural enemy of a warthog, this creature killing a man would be a *peccatum* only if the predator did it without following the requirements of its own finality, e.g., by killing needlessly, clumsily or by attacking the strong and healthy individuals rather than sick or otherwise weak ones. The moral character of the victim and the consequences of his or her death for human community would enter into account, only if they were somehow connected to those requirements, otherwise the killer would be as good as any other part of the nature with comparable abilities. It seems to me that similar intuition must be behind the most surprising impersonation in Saint Francis's *Canticle of the Sun*: "Be Praised, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whose embrace no living person can escape."<sup>315</sup>

Now, Aquinas does not believe in any Grim Reapers, nor in any other natural predators of man. As for the lower species (notably the reasonless beasts), they are supposed to serve to the higher ones,<sup>316</sup> and all the intellectual creatures are called to the communion of

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<sup>313</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 64, a. 2, 3 and 7.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, q. 65, a. 2.

<sup>315</sup> FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Canticle of the Sun* (trans. by Bill Barret).

<sup>316</sup> "*omnia corporalia propter hominem facta esse creduntur; unde et omnia dicuntur ei esse subjecta.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 48, q. 2, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 6, ad 1; *STh.*, I-II, q. 2, a. 1, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 148...

supernatural friendship and need to act accordingly.<sup>317</sup> Nevertheless, you may imagine that in the case of an angel, the ways of expressing the charity towards humans could be much independent of the limitations that this expression normally has in the human case. The possibilities of proportionateness of angelic behaviour are co-determined by angel's much broader cognitive and operative scope as well as by its natural existential independence vis-à-vis the mankind: some surgical interventions (or non-interventions) that would be unacceptable (and precisely inhuman) if performed by man can be perfectly conformed to the nature of this superior creature – the natural law is not identical for both. *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi.*

To my knowledge, Aquinas does not spend much time reflecting on the specific moral obligations of angels toward human race. But the importance of the aforesaid issue is impossible to be overestimated in the case of his evaluation of God's involvement in destructive actions. The divine finality, inasmuch as this notion can be used, depends in nothing on creatures: it consists in God's own eternal Trinitarian life. If he decided to get by without creating anything at all, it would mean no harm to his goodness.<sup>318</sup> That means that even without being good to anything else, God would be still a perfectly good God: more than Aquinas's opinion about the conceptual impossibility of the best possible world (in the most intuitive sense of the term),<sup>319</sup> it is this independence of God's own finality, connected with aforementioned conception of the criterions of (moral) goodness, which is Aquinas's most fundamental justification of God's freedom of choice face to the arguments of moral determinism.<sup>320</sup> Does it mean that by this very fact, no divine behaviour vis-à-vis his creatures could conceivably question his goodness? The matter is a bit more complicated here.

Divine actions *ad extra* are not necessary for his own ultimate finality, but they are nonetheless supposed to be conform to it. Otherwise said, even if they are not necessary, they would be still bad, if they were not conformed to God's self-expression as such or if they

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<sup>317</sup> For tending to the beatific vision of God, common to all the intellectual creatures, cf. most notably *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 25 – 62. For the consequences concerning the *caritas* among all these creatures (except for those who definitively failed), cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 25, a. 3 and 10; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 28, q. 1, a. 3, for an example of the *caritas* of all the angels toward man, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 10, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5.

<sup>318</sup> “*Voluntas igitur divina habet pro principali voluto id quod naturaliter vult, et quod est quasi finis voluntatis suae; scilicet ipsa bonitas sua, propter quam vult quidquid aliud a se vult: facit enim creaturas propter suam bonitatem ... nec etiam inest ei aliqua necessitas respectu totius creaturae, eo quod divina bonitas in se perfecta est, etiamsi nulla creatura existeret, quia bonorum nostrorum non eget...*” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, co.; “*creaturae non procedunt a Deo ex debito vel necessitate bonitatis, cum divina bonitas creaturis non egeat, nec per eas ei aliquid accrescat, sed ex simplici voluntate.*” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 17, ad 14.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. most notably *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 1 – 2 and *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 6. Aquinas holds that in some senses of the phrase, God could not have created a better world than ours, e. g. if the criterion of evaluation is the finality (God), or the measure of subordination to it (100%). Yet, he could have always created more numerous and better creatures with a better order among them. I will return to this topic more thoroughly in chap. 4. III. 2.

<sup>320</sup> For an interesting contemporary presentation of this conception, cf. SPIERING (2019).

were not proportionate to the exact way God wants to express himself: as any other agent, God would make a mistake (*peccatum*), if he acted against his own goals. Thus, provided that God decides to create, there are things he cannot do or omit: the necessity implied by this fact received the name “*debitum naturae*” (what is due to the nature). In Aquinas’s epoch, the term still awaited its time of glory, nevertheless, Aquinas uses it now and then, even though its signification in his works can fluctuate;<sup>321</sup> the corresponding notion is firmly established in his thought.<sup>322</sup> The most obvious example of the *debitum naturae* are conceptual (or supposedly conceptual) necessities: if God wants a triangle, he needs to provide it with three angles; if he wants a human, he must provide him with the faculty of reason (although unused).<sup>323</sup> But that is not all. If God wants humans, he must also create animals, plants, celestial bodies, human accidental properties and any other entity needed by man either for his very existence, or for some perfection of his existence that God want him to have.<sup>324</sup> Most importantly, it seems that *debitum naturae* requires for any creature the possibility to achieve its ultimate goal: as we have seen, the natural inclinations are for Aquinas just the most fundamental imprints of this ordering coming from the first Agent and therefore revealing what he wants them to be.<sup>325</sup> If God gave them this goal without giving them the possibility to achieve it, this would seem to be about as big a blunder as an effort to create the triangle without three sides.<sup>326</sup> Aquinas actually occasionally makes a similar inference just in the

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<sup>321</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 10, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 2, co.; lib. 4, d. 45, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 3, ad s. c. 1; d. 46, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 7, a. 6, ad 3; q. 9, a. 3, ad 2; q. 12, a. 3, ad 17; q. 23, a. 6, ad 3; *Super De Trinitate*, p. 2, q. 3, a. 1. Aquinas sometimes speaks simply about “*debitum*” in relation to God’s activity or about *debitum iustitiae*, cf. *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 28-29; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 16 – 17; *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3; a. 4, co. In contrast, in *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3 and lib. 4, d. 44, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 2, ad 3 “*debitum naturae*” means the requirement of the nature vis-à-vis the activity or growth of individual bearers of this nature, in *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, co. and d. 21, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 2 it means the debt of the fallen human nature (to be paid by death). In *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 18, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 1 the signification seems to fluctuate: Aquinas passes from what is owed (by anybody) to the human nature as such to what is owed by God to the individual human nature of Christ thanks to the latter’s merits.

<sup>322</sup> Cf. FEINGOLD (2010), p. 223 – 235.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 28-29, n. 14 – 16; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 16, co.

<sup>324</sup> “*si animalia et plantas Deus esse voluit, debitum fuit ut caelestia corpora faceret, ex quibus conservantur; et si hominem esse voluit, oportuit facere plantas et animalia, et alia huiusmodi quibus homo indiget ad esse perfectum ... in unaquaque creatura sumatur conditionale debitum ex suis partibus et proprietatibus et accidentibus, ex quibus dependet creatura quantum ad esse vel quantum ad aliquam sui perfectionem: sicut, supposito quod Deus hominem facere vellet, debitum ex hac suppositione fuit ut animam et corpus in eo coniungeret, et sensus, et alia huiusmodi adiumenta, tam intrinseca quam extrinseca, ei praeberet.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 28-29, n. 15; “*debitum enim est unicuique rei naturali ut habeat ea quae exigit sua natura, tam in essentialibus quam in accidentalibus.*” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 6, ad 3.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. my footnote 169.

<sup>326</sup> “*ea vero quae voluntate fiunt, necessitatem habere non possunt nisi ex sola finis suppositione, secundum quam debitum est fini ut ea sint per quae pervenitur ad finem.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 28-29, n. 16.

context of the liberation from sin.<sup>327</sup> You may figure out that this kind of necessity is troubling a bit for the idea of God creating an individual whom he knows to finish in Hell, notably if the determinist viewpoint is taken. I will discuss this question in the last chapter of this book (chap. 6. II. 1. 3. 2.): it employs the notions like “possible” and “necessary” and, as we shall see in chapter two, the comprehension of these notions in Aquinas is far from being a simple matter.

Aquinas does not forget to specify that whatever God owes to do on the supposition of the creation of a creature, he does not owe it to the creature in question, but rather to his own goodness.<sup>328</sup> Properly speaking, there are no rights of the creature vis-à-vis God, nor the justice that would consist in acting in the conformity to these rights or, to put it alternatively, in giving to the creatures their own:<sup>329</sup> in Aquinas’s view, “ownership” means that the finality of the owned is in the owner, and God’s finality is not in the creatures but vice-versa.<sup>330</sup> Nevertheless, on the basis of God’s relation to the *debitum* some moral values can be attributed to God and his activities in an analogical (i.e., more or less improper) way: God’s doing is just or reasonable inasmuch he does everything what the *debitum naturae* requires; he is liberal or merciful, inasmuch he does more.<sup>331</sup> But as I have said, enabling something like moral evaluation of divine activity does not mean that the conditions of its goodness correspond to the conditions of human moral goodness. Aquinas’s discussion of biblical cases of God’s killing children for the sins of their parents (for example in the case of mass

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<sup>327</sup> “*In operibus Dei non est aliquid frustra, sicut nec in operibus naturae: hoc enim et natura habet a Deo. Frustra autem aliquid moveretur, nisi posset pervenire ad finem motus. Necessarium est ergo quod id quod natum est moveri ad aliquem finem, sit possibile venire in finem illum.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 156, n. 6.

<sup>328</sup> “*Sicut igitur creaturarum productio non potest dici fuisse ex debito iustitiae quo Deus creaturae sit debitor, ita nec ex tali iustitiae debito quo suae bonitati sit debitor, si iustitia proprie accipiatur. Large tamen iustitia accepta, potest dici in creatione rerum iustitia, inquantum divinam condecet bonitatem.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 28-29, n. 11; “*Deus creaturae debitor non dicitur, sed suae dispositioni implendae.*” (ibid., n. 15), cf. *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>329</sup> “*iustitiae actus sit reddere unicuique quod suum est*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 28-29, n. 3; “*iustitia est habitus, secundum quem aliquis constanti et perpetua voluntate ius suum unicuique tribuit*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 58, a. 1, co., for the measure of interchangeability of *ius* and *suum* in the definition of the justice, cf. ibid., a. 11, co.; q. 57, a. 4, ad 1.

<sup>330</sup> “*unicuique debetur quod suum est. Dicitur autem esse suum alicuius, quod ad ipsum ordinatur; sicut servus est domini, et non e converso; nam liberum est quod sui causa est. ... Debitum enim est Deo, ut impleatur in rebus id quod eius sapientia et voluntas habet, et quod suam bonitatem manifestat, et secundum hoc iustitia Dei respicit decentiam ipsius, secundum quam reddit sibi quod sibi debetur. ... sic etiam Deus operatur iustitiam, quando dat unicuique quod ei debetur secundum rationem suae naturae et conditionis. ... Et licet Deus hoc modo debitum alicui det, non tamen ipse est debitor, quia ipse ad alia non ordinatur, sed potius alia in ipsum. Et ideo iustitia quandoque dicitur in Deo condecens suae bonitatis*” *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>331</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 28-29, n. 16 in fine, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 1, 3 and 4 (the misericord and the liberality are coextensive inasmuch any God’s liberal action vis-à-vis creature liberates it from some part of its deficiency).

destruction of Sodom<sup>332</sup> etc.) can serve as an illustrative example.<sup>333</sup> Aquinas does not consider this killing inconvenient in the least. He notes that the children were afflicted with their parents only on the corporeal level and their death was the part of the just punishment of the parents inasmuch the children were something that belonged to them. The spiritual (i.e., properly human and the most important) good of the latter was untouched by their death (as in the case of any other innocent):<sup>334</sup> in fact, their premature passing was a way to save them from the probable moral degeneration due to the perverse education which would otherwise await them.<sup>335</sup> Now, as Aquinas points out in the same text, if a human decided to kill a child (or any other non-criminal person) on the basis of a similar reasoning, he would be without doubt irrational and immoral:<sup>336</sup> the possibility to competently judge the profitability of killing in such a case is beyond the possibilities of human comprehension.<sup>337</sup> But God is God: the application of the principle which helps to distinguish the rights of a private person and those of public authority concerning the killing of criminals cannot be clearer.

Let it be just one example showing that despite their relation of the imaged one and the image, good God does not always act in the same way as a good man would:<sup>338</sup> Aquinas's discussion

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<sup>332</sup> Note that in his intercession for Sodom, Abraham is speaking about the just, not about the innocent (Gen 18, 23 – 32): while the text strongly suggests that no just individual died in Sodom because there were none (cf. Gen 19, 22 in the context of 18, 25), the author does not seem to be concerned with the individuals who have not achieved the ability of morally relevant behaviour yet. That being said, Aquinas's conception of properly human good allows to also endorse the death of the just with, instead of, or even for the unjust, as Wis 3 – 5 or the gospel reading of the crucifixion does, cf. below footnote 334.

<sup>333</sup> Cf., *STh.*, II-II, q. 108, a. 4, ad 3 (applying the general principles discussed in ad 1), discussing Gen 19, 23 – 25 and Nu 16, 27 – 33. Other examples could be mentioned, cf. the son of David in 2 Sam 12, 14 – 18 and obviously some of the firstborns of Egypt in Ex 12, 29 – 30.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5: “*Habet enim bonum opus semper sibi adjunctum bonitatis praemium in perfectione virtutis, quae est bonum humanum, et in consecutione beatitudinis, ad quam opera humana ordinantur... Sed ista permixtio videtur accidere in his bonis quae extra hominem sunt, vel quae non sunt bona ejus in quantum est homo, sicut in bonis corporalibus et in bonis naturae; cum tamen ista permixtio semper ordinetur ad id quod est per se hominis bonum, scilicet gratiae, vel gloriae...*” Aquinas believes that all the children who were not baptised or otherwise cleaned from the original sin will live the eternity in the state of natural beatitude, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2 and *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3.

<sup>335</sup> Aquinas is apparently inspired by the explication of the early death of the just from Wis 4, 11: “He who pleased God was loved; he who lived among sinners was transported, snatched away, lest wickedness pervert his mind or deceit beguile his soul.” Cf. the quotations in Aquinas, in *Super Is.*, cap. 57; *In Jeremiam*, cap. 22, l. 4; *Super II Cor.*, cap. 12, l. 1; *Super Eph.*, cap. 6, l. 1; *Super I Tim.*, cap. 4, l. 2: “*longitudo vitae est unum de temporalibus, in quantum bonum, in quantum coadiuvat ad virtutem. Aliquando autem est occasio ad peccandum, et ideo Deus aliquando subtrahit eam homini, non quia deficiat a promissione, sed quia dat quod melius est. Sap. IV, 11: raptus est, ne malitia immutaret intellectum eius.*”

<sup>336</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 108, a. 4, ad 2 and more broadly in q. 64, a. 6, see also *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 46, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 3.

<sup>337</sup> “*iudicium humanum debet imitari divinum iudicium in manifestis Dei iudiciis, quibus homines spiritualiter damnat pro proprio peccato. Occulta vero Dei iudicia, quibus temporaliter aliquos punit absque culpa, non potest humanum iudicium imitari, quia homo non potest comprehendere horum iudiciorum rationes, ut sciat quid expediat unicuique. Et ideo nunquam secundum humanum iudicium aliquis debet puniri sine culpa poena flagelli, ut occidatur, vel mutiletur, vel verberetur.*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 108, a. 4, ad 2.

<sup>338</sup> Furlong means that the popular use of “the phrase ‘What would Jesus do?’” is a sign of its user's conviction that divine action is a model for human conduct (cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 130, n. 21). Provided that his claim

of Abraham's sacrifice provides another instance of his emphasising God's specific place in the hierarchy of finalities. The authorship of evils that would be generally considered as a sign of the depravation of their author, if they were caused by man, serves to highlight God's divinity instead: "The LORD puts to death and gives life; he casts down to the nether world; he raises up again."<sup>339</sup> "I form the light, and create the darkness, I make well-being and create woe; I, the LORD, do all these things."<sup>340</sup> But while even the mass destruction of hundreds of innocent lives can be OK from the divine viewpoint then, Aquinas is convinced that God's characteristics make impossible that God would be the cause of any moral sin.<sup>341</sup> Why?

### III. 2. God cannot cause the moral sin

In Aquinas's view, there are two ways of being the cause of a sin: either I sin myself, or I make somebody else sin.<sup>342</sup> Aquinas's aristocratic understanding of sin makes it comprehensible, why he considers the first way impossible in the case of God: God, as Aquinas understands him, is in eternal possession of his ultimate finality, and his supreme perfection (including illimited power and cognition) makes impossible that he could fail in the evaluation or execution of its requirements.<sup>343</sup> As for the relation of God's omnipotence to the possibility to sin, I will discuss it more in detail later (see chap. 2. II. 5.): for now, let just be said that Aquinas considers such possibility to be the sign of an impotence rather than the corollary of the power.<sup>344</sup>

But why cannot God be the cause of sin in the second way? If you recall Maritain's sacred truths and the difficulty of their reconciliation that he speaks about,<sup>345</sup> you can be surprised: it is that Aquinas's main premise belongs to the truth that the French Thomist considered to be

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concerns particular ways of acting (and not just general abstract features like "being always just" etc.), I think he is wrong. Most of those who believe in Jesus's divinity believe that he is God incarnated as a perfect man and it is this human aspect of him which is a model for human conduct (if not, we would simply ask "What would God do?"). I have strong doubts that anybody would consider reasonable imitating some of Jesus's deeds and attitudes that are more directly related to his divinity, like "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (J 14, 15).

<sup>339</sup> 1 Sam 2, 6.

<sup>340</sup> Is 45, 7.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 1, a. 5; q. 3, a. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 6; q. 49, a. 2; I-II, q. 79, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3; d. 37, q. 2, a. 1; q. 3, a. 2.

<sup>342</sup> "*causa peccati est aliquis dupliciter: uno modo quia ipse peccat; alio modo quia facit alterum peccare*" *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, co.

<sup>343</sup> "*In Deo autem neque activum principium potest esse deficiens, eo quod eius potentia est infinita; nec eius voluntas potest deficere a debito fine, quia ipsa eius voluntas, quae etiam est eius natura, est bonitas summa, quae est ultimus finis et prima regula omnium voluntatum*" *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, co.

<sup>344</sup> "*peccare est deficere a perfecta actione, unde posse peccare est posse deficere in agendo, quod repugnat omnipotentiae. Et propter hoc, Deus peccare non potest, qui est omnipotens.*" *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 3, ad 2, cf. *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 6, co.

<sup>345</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 8 – 9, see above chap. 1. I.



just the source of problems for an unequivocal assertion of divine innocence – God is the first and universal agent of universe. Even independently of Maritain, one would think that this premise will be used rather as an argument for the divine causation of all the sins that happen in this universe. In fact, it was really used so.<sup>346</sup> Yet while such conclusion has an intuitive appeal, Aquinas’s comprehension of the causality forbids it – at least Aquinas thinks so. Any agent acts for the sake of his finality,<sup>347</sup> and his effects are therefore conformed to the latter, if he is not failing – and God does not fail. Now, as we have seen, the moral sin is the activity (or the absence of activity) that goes against the ultimate goal of the universe – the very goal that God seeks while creating the universe. If God caused my sin then, he would act in disproportion to his own goals, sinning (or at the very least making mistake) himself – which is impossible.<sup>348</sup>

As you see, this argument alone cannot be used as a counterargument against the argumentation which uses the same premise for the contrary conclusion. The full understanding of Aquinas’s reaction to this argumentation (and the discarding of some influential false interpretations of this reaction) is one of main issues of this book and will be progressively provided by following chapters. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will only roughly sketch the main outlines of Aquinas’s view while presenting his exposition of biblical authorities that seem to make God author of some undisputed moral evil.

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<sup>346</sup> See the arguments based on divine universal causality: *De malo*, q. 3 a. 1 arg. 4, 5, 7, 16; *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, arg. 2 – 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 2 and 4.

<sup>347</sup> “...*finis est causa causalitatis efficientis, quia facit efficiens esse efficiens...*” *De principiis naturae*, cap. 4, cf. the extensive discussion in *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 2.

<sup>348</sup> “*Impossibile est autem quod Deus faciat voluntatem alicuius ab ultimo fine averti, cum ipsemet sit ultimus finis. Quod enim communiter invenitur in omnibus agentibus creatis, oportet quod hoc habeat ex imitatione primi agentis, quod dat omnibus suam similitudinem, secundum quod capere possunt, ... Unumquodque autem agens creatum invenitur per suam actionem, alia quodammodo ad se ipsum attrahere, assimilando ea sibi; vel per similitudinem formae, ... vel convertendo alia ad finem suum... Est igitur hoc Deo conveniens quod omnia ad se ipsum convertat, et per consequens quod nihil avertat a se ipso. Ipse autem est summum bonum. Unde non potest esse causa aversionis voluntatis a summo bono, in quo ratio culpae consistit prout nunc loquimur de culpa.*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, co.; “*omne peccatum est per recessum ab ordine qui est in ipsum sicut in finem. Deus autem omnia inclinatur et convertit in seipsum sicut in ultimum finem... Unde impossibile est quod sit sibi vel aliis causa discedendi ab ordine qui est in ipsum.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, co. “*Quod enim agit propter finem, non deficit a fine nisi propter defectum alicujus, vel sui ipsius, vel alterius; et illud in quo invenitur defectus, erit causa obligationis a fine, ... et ideo illud in quo nullo modo defectus cadere potest, non potest esse causa recessus a fine in his quae ad finem ordinata sunt. Cum igitur peccatum dicatur propter inordinationem a fine ad quem natura rationalis ordinata est, non potest esse causa peccati Deus, in quo nullus defectus cadere potest*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, co.

### III. 3. The creator of evil

“I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.”<sup>349</sup> If there was a biblical book which sacrificed the idea of divine unequivocal goodness to stress the universal power of God, *Isaiah* would be at the very least one of the hottest candidates. Coincidentally, Aquinas’s *Commentary on Isaiah* is one of the hottest candidates to be the very first (surviving) text that Aquinas has ever written: it seems to even predate the first book of *Commentary on Sentences* by one year.<sup>350</sup> As such, it provides a good occasion to see the earliest stage of Aquinas’s thought concerning the topics of our interest. The comparison with Aquinas’s later reactions to the quotation of Isaiah’s authority in the matter of divine involvement in evil permits to evaluate the stability of his views concerning this topic.

Aquinas’s explanation of my introductory quotation is extremely succinct:<sup>351</sup> the text is considered as an argument in favour of LORD’s divinity, manifested by the power to both liberate and afflict. The term “*malum*” is commented by adding one Latin word: “*poenae*” – “of punishment”. The final redaction of the text adds the quotation of *Amos* (“...shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?”) and of *Siracide* (attributing to God the authorship of contrarities in the world).<sup>352</sup> The passage from *Amos* will continue to be quoted together with *Isaiah* in Aquinas as an argument for the existence of the divine ability to cause evil: also, Aquinas’s reaction will be bound to the specification that he does in this *Commentary*.<sup>353</sup>

In Aquinas’s view, any *malum* that concerns intellectual creatures is either the fault (*culpa*) or the punishment of the fault (*poena*).<sup>354</sup> Aquinas believes that the preternatural perfections given by God to the first man (who was supposed to be kind of a weaker version of Christ in his role of the mediator of grace) would protect both him and all the mankind from death, suffering, ignorance etc., if this very man has not sinned.<sup>355</sup> Any evil afflicting his descendants (be it the “natural” death of a completely innocent person) can be considered at

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<sup>349</sup> Is 45, 6 – 7 (King James Translation), cf. my footnote 78.

<sup>350</sup> As in all the other cases, I follow the dating of TORRELL (2017), cf. p. 29 – 32, 232 and 242.

<sup>351</sup> “*Secundo proponit suae divinitatis argumentum, quo cognosci potest in hoc quod potest affligere et liberare, ego dominus et cetera. Lucem, diem vel consolationem: malum, poenae. Amos 3: si est malum in civitate etc., Eccli. 42: omnia fecit Deus duplicia, et cetera.*” *Super Is.*, cap. 45.

<sup>352</sup> Cf. Am 3, 6 (Vulg.) and Sir 42, 25 (Vulg.).

<sup>353</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 41, n. 12; lib. 3, cap. 71, n. 9; *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 2, arg. 1 and ad 1; I-II, q. 79, a. 1, arg. 4 and ad 4; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 10; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 6, arg. 11 and ad 11 and without quotation of *Amos Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 3, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 2 and ad 2; d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 5 and ad 5.

<sup>354</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 5; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 4.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 17, q. 3, a. 2 and d. 19, q. 1, a. 2 – d. 20, q. 2, a. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 94 – 102 for the condition of human species in the state of the original justice, for the punitive character of its contemporary state, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 30, q. 1, a. 1; *STh.*, I-II, q. 85, a. 3 and 5; II-II, q. 164; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 11 and q. 5, a. 4.

least as the punishment of this first father then. Now, while Aquinas is adamant that God cannot cause any moral fault, he positively believes that God is the cause of any punishment that ever happened.<sup>356</sup> The thing is that the punishment (provided that it is just) is a kind of “good evil”: it is one of the realisations of justice.<sup>357</sup> Recall that the reason d’être of the creatures is the manifestation of the Good. The sin is a sin ultimately because it makes these creatures disproportionate to this finality, creating a debt on their side – they should have glorified the Good and they have not done it. The punishment is the most basic way to pay this debt because through it, the Good (namely the Justice and the Mercy) that was not manifested by the creature’s activity is manifested by the creature’s being deprived of (some glimpse of) the very Good that it renounced (which is the justice), this deprivation not being the most severe possible, though (which is the mercy – Aquinas states that not even in Hell the punishment has all the severity allowed by justice).<sup>358</sup> Obviously, Aquinas does not believe that the measure of the punishment received by the person is necessarily proportionate to the measure of her personal antecedent fault. He believes that the best human individual ever has voluntarily accepted to pay the debt for all the human race<sup>359</sup> and all the other good humans will follow him according to their possibilities, using their suffering etc. as the cure for their more or less pronounced moral nanism.<sup>360</sup> As for the others, the measure of unmerited mercy that God decides to grant them (manifesting the Goodness by forgiveness instead of the adequate measure of just punishment) can considerably vary.<sup>361</sup> But in all these different cases, the bad aspect of the punishment (the deprivation of some good) is just the reverse-side of the good of justice – the good that is destructive only because it happens to be received by the subject that is either already bad or at the very least has bad acquaintances. An analogical argument can be used also in any other case of the destruction required for the

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<sup>356</sup> “*Omne autem quod bonum est, a Deo est: unde quae ab ipso non sunt, nec quaerenda sunt, nec eis utendum est: et ideo nullo peccato utendum est, quia peccatum non est a Deo. Poena autem a Deo est; et ideo poena utendum est, et ordinanda ad finem, secundum quod promovet meritum hominis, ducens eum in considerationem suae infirmitatis, et secundum quod purgat peccata.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 1, q. 3, a. 1, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 2, co., *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 3, a. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 41, n. 12; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>357</sup> “*ordo iustitiae habet adiunctam privationem particularis boni alicuius peccantis, in quantum ordo iustitiae hoc requirit ut aliquis peccans privetur bono quod appetit. Sic ergo ipsa poena est bona simpliciter, sed est mala huic; et hoc malum dicitur Deus creare.*” *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1, cf. also ad 18 and a. 3, ad 1.

<sup>358</sup> “*in damnatione reproborum apparet misericordia, non quidem totaliter relaxans, sed aliquantulum allevians, dum punit citra condignum.*” *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 4, ad 1, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 46, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 1.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 20, q. 1, a. 1 – 4; *STh.*, III, q. 46 and 48.

<sup>360</sup> “*in hoc etiam quod iusti puniuntur in hoc mundo, apparet iustitia et misericordia; in quantum per huiusmodi afflictiones aliqua levata in eis purgantur, et ab affectu terrenorum in Deum magis eriguntur.*” *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 4, ad 3, cf. Aquinas’s commentary on the necessity to suffer with Christ in *Super Rom.*, cap. 8, l. 3 – 4.

<sup>361</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 43, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4. See especially Aquinas’s obstinate denial that the reason for the predestination to the final salvation consists in the foreseen merits of the predestined, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 5; *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 41, q. 1, a. 3; *Contra gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 163; *Super Io.*, cap. 15, l. 3; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 3; cap. 8, l. 6; cap. 9, l. 3; *Super Eph.*, cap. 1, l. 4.

good of the universe.<sup>362</sup> This is why God can be considered as its author and this is supposed to be the evil whose creation shows his supreme divinity according to *Isaiah*. This Aquinas's restrictive interpretation of the text is in agreement with the opinion of many modern translators:<sup>363</sup> after all, the LORD does not say that he is the author of ALL the evil and the opposite of evil in question is the peace, not the good as such.

In the context of this topic, Aquinas feels occasionally the need to confront himself with the passage from the *Wisdom of Solomon*, stating that "God did not make death"<sup>364</sup> which seems to contradict his opinions. Aquinas explains the text variously, either as referring to the origin of human death in moral fault (which is not God's doing) or more generally as meaning the non-belonging of the death to the original condition of human nature (which is God's doing that is supposed to be meant by the text), or simply as something that is not intended by God *per se*.<sup>365</sup> One of the texts even succeeds in reading this quote as an argument for Aquinas's own position: God did not make death which means that the death does not belong to the original condition of man which means that it is a punishment for sin.<sup>366</sup> As for me, it is actually quite intuitive reading of this biblical text in its both immediate and more distant context – despite it highlights God's philanthropy, *Wisdom* is far from denying the idea of God's deadly punishments.<sup>367</sup> Be it anyway, Aquinas's reactions reflect his view that even while punishing or destroying, God's primary effect is always good: the bad state results only from the fact that the creature in question is for some reason unable to bear this good unharmed. In this sense, one text where Aquinas seems to say the contrary of what he says about it anywhere else could be maybe harmonised with the rest.

In *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3, co. Aquinas seems to deny that supreme and complete good (apparently God) could be the cause of *malum* in any way. Contrary to the particular goods whose determinate forms allow the incompatibility of their presence with another particular good (e.g. the incompatibility of fire and water), the relation of the universal good

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<sup>362</sup> "malum quod in corruptione rerum aliquarum consistit, reducitur in Deum sicut in causam. ... Dictum est enim quod aliquod agens, in quantum sua virtute producit aliquam formam ad quam sequitur corruptio et defectus, causat sua virtute illam corruptionem et defectum. Manifestum est autem quod forma quam principaliter Deus intendit in rebus creatis, est bonum ordinis universi. Ordo autem universi requirit, ut supra dictum est, quod quaedam sint quae deficere possint, et interdum deficient. Et sic Deus, in rebus causando bonum ordinis universi, ex consequenti, et quasi per accidens, causat corruptiones rerum...." *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 2, co.

<sup>363</sup> See the list of translations that is accessible on <https://biblehub.com/paralle/isaiah/45-7.htm>.

<sup>364</sup> *Wis* 1, 13.

<sup>365</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 2, co.; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 6, ad 11; *Super Rom.*, cap. 5, l. 2; *STh.*, II-II, q. 19, a. 1, ad 3; q. 164, a. 1, ad 5.

<sup>366</sup> "Deus, cui subiacet omnis natura, in ipsa institutione hominis supplevit defectum naturae, et dono iustitiae originalis dedit corpori incorruptibilitatem quandam, ... Et secundum hoc dicitur quod Deus mortem non fecit, et quod mors est poena peccati." *STh.*, I-II, q. 85, a. 6, co.

<sup>367</sup> Cf. the extensive reflexion concerning the extermination of the firstborn in *Wis* 18, 5 – 19.

to all the other goods is that of source: the only way in which it could cause their privation is by its own absence – but, as for itself, the supreme good is always present.<sup>368</sup> The stark contrast of this formulation to Aquinas’s generalised view is hard to deny. It cannot be simply explained by an evolution of opinions: beside his taking the position in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, from the very beginning of the *Commentary on Sentences* Aquinas states that the punishment is from God;<sup>369</sup> on the beginning of the second book, he explains the quotation of *Isaiah* in terms of *malum* of punishment and refers the reader to a further discussion of this matter, which seems to take place shortly after the problematic text without any sign of any fundamental divergence vis-à-vis his general position.<sup>370</sup> But while the assertion of the frontal contradiction in Aquinas’s nearly neighbouring texts could seem a compelling conclusion here, I believe that more interesting reading can be proposed.

The *distinctio* 37 begins its discussion of the origin of the punishment in God by an objection that seems to be inspired directly by the statements from *distinctio* 34: God is supreme good and as such he is supposed to cause peace, not conflict, connected with punishment. In his answer, Aquinas recycles the previous assertion that the supreme good is the source of all goods, using it as an argument for a seemingly opposite view: the punishment is contrary to some good, yet it also has a good aspect, and inasmuch it is good, God is both its source and the source of the contrary good, similarly as he is the source of both hot and cold elements, the conflict of contrary factors on a lower level being ordained by him to the unity or harmony on a higher level.<sup>371</sup> All that being said, the punishment has also a character of the *malum* beside its good side, but it has it only inasmuch it is received in the punished, not inasmuch it is done by God.<sup>372</sup> The bad implications of the establishing of the order are due to the

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<sup>368</sup> “*illud quod est bonum particulare, causando aliquod bonum determinatum, excludit bonum alterum, quod non se cum illo compatitur; bonum autem completum, quod universaliter omnis boni causa est, non est causa defectus alicujus boni, neque etiam per suam absentiam: quia ipsum, quantum in se est, semper praesens est, vicissitudinem non patiens absentiae et praesentiae.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3, co. *in fine*.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. my footnote 356.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 3, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2 and d. 37, q. 3, a. 1.

<sup>371</sup> “*unum bonum particulare contrariatur alii bono particulari, sicut calidum frigido; et utrumque a Deo est: nec tamen sequitur quod Deus pacis auctor non sit, quia ipsa etiam contrariorum pugna ad aliquam unionem ordinatur quia scilicet ad formam mixti conveniunt, et etiam secundum quod in universo per modum cujusdam consonantiae ordinantur: ita etiam non est inconveniens, quamvis bonum naturae a Deo sit, quod etiam poena, quae sibi contrariatur, in quantum bona est, a Deo sit.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 3, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>372</sup> “*Poena autem non habet rationem mali vel defectus secundum quod ab agente procedit, quia per ordinatam actionem agentis poenae infliguntur; sed habet rationem defectus et mali in ipso recipiente actionem tantum, quod per justam actionem aliquo bono privatur...*” *ibid.*, co. Cf. later *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 141: “*quidquid in rebus malum accidit, quantum ad id quod esse vel speciem vel naturam aliquam habet, reducit in Deum sicut in causam... Quantum vero ad id quod habet de defectu, reducit in causam inferiorem defectibilem. Et sic licet Deus sit universalis omnium causa, non tamen est causa malorum in quantum sunt mala, sed quidquid boni eis adiungitur, causatur a Deo.*” No more than *Sentences*, *Compendium* permits no doubt about God’s ability to punish, cf., *ibid.*, cap. 183: “*non est iniustum, si pro momentaneo peccato et temporali Deus aeternam poenam infert.*”

character of the deficient creature – as we shall see later (cf. chap. 5. III. 3.), Aquinas’s assertion of the unfailing presence of the supreme good to the creatures is connected in his mind with the assertion that the creatures happen to be absent to this good because of themselves. It can be said then that God immediately causes only the good side of the punishment and that its ultimate result is also good. There is an important difference vis-à-vis the situation of the fire destroying the wood. While the fire also intends immediately the good, this good (the propagation of fire), taken as such, is contrary to the good of the wood. In contrast, the order of the universe, as intended by God, is the common good of the universe and therefore, in a way, also the good of the entities which are harmed or destroyed by its establishment: think about the entities who can fulfil their purpose only when it is connected with their own destruction, like the squibs, the candles or the grain whose “death” was apparently considered by Jesus as better fate for it than its preservation.<sup>373</sup> Now, Aquinas mostly does not consider the aforesaid difference relevant for the question whether God is to be considered as a cause of the bad states implied by the punishment (the only exception being the case of the moral fault that is the punishment of another moral fault, see the following subsection): he thinks that he is to be considered so. But it could be thought that in *distinctio* 34, wishing to emphasize the alterity of the supreme good, he decides to use a narrower way of speaking, similar to the one that he is himself recommending it in the case of “God did not make death”. Alternatively, in the context of Aquinas’s strong emphasis of the goodness of the punishment, he could consider that the bad states that are implied by it, are (inasmuch they are englobed by it) bad only in some irrelevant sense of the term at most: while manicuring ourselves, we normally do not consider the whole process a cause of a bad state, despite the partial destruction of fingernails that is usually connected to the wanted result.<sup>374</sup> Aquinas’s formulation would be quite misleading on both these readings and I would not bet my money on any of them: yet, given the context, any of them seems more plausible to me that the negation of the origin of punishments in God, which would be the most intuitive reading of the text if read isolated from the rest.

Whichever is the right reading of the text, Aquinas’s discourse about God’s causal relationship to the punishment contains a warning that is to be of highest importance for the following reflection concerning the causation of moral badness. The answer to the question whether God is or is not the cause of something can be about completely irrelevant if the

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<sup>373</sup> Cf. J 12, 24.

<sup>374</sup> “The works of God are all of them good; every need when it comes he fills. No cause then to say: “This is not as good as that” (in Vulg. *non est dicere hoc illo nequius*); for each shows its worth at the proper time.” Sir 39, 33 – 34 (39, 39 – 40 Vulg.).

content of the “causality” is not clarified. We shall see throughout the book that in Aquinas himself the term can be used in multiple ways and more or less properly; as for its attribution to God, it can be never completely the same as in the case of the creatures.<sup>375</sup> Given this broadness of the notion, I suggest to focus on the specific group of ideas that are behind Aquinas’s assertions or denials of God’s causation of something, without wasting the time questioning whether they imply that God “actually” is or is not its “cause”: depending on the conception of the latter, both can be true.

### III. 4. Blinding prophet

The punishing is good – you can hardly find an assertion whose opposition to the slavish type of morality is more manifest, yet, in Aquinas’s aristocratic account it works quite well. Nevertheless, a much more challenging message than the aforesaid “creation of evil” is contained in *Isaiah*’s sixth chapter. Here, after signing for an utterly unspecified mission, the prophet hears the following: “Go and say to this people: Listen carefully, but you shall not understand! Look intently, but you shall know nothing! You are to make the heart of this people sluggish, to dull their ears and close their eyes; Else their eyes will see, their ears hear, their heart understand, and they will turn and be healed. "How long, O Lord?" I asked. And he replied: Until the cities are desolate, without inhabitants, houses, without a man, and the earth is a desolate waste. Until the LORD removes men far away, and the land is abandoned more and more. If there be still a tenth part in it, then this in turn shall be laid waste...”<sup>376</sup>

Aquinas identifies two ambiguities of the text: it is not clear whether Isaiah’s reaction is limited to one short question (as in my transcription) or begins already by “You are to make...”, restating the content of LORD’s intention; also, the text may either mean that the deterioration of cognitive abilities of people is made to avoid their conversion and healing (until the cities are desolate etc.), or that this deterioration will be ultimately followed by their conversion and healing (but obviously not before the cities are desolate etc.). In both cases, the context of *Isaiah* permits both readings.<sup>377</sup> But notwithstanding these ambiguities, one thing is clear: it is the LORD himself who intends to disable the ability of a human heart to recognize him. This is not the first biblical text asserting something similar: notably the

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<sup>375</sup> There is no notion that could be applied univocally to God and to creatures, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 5.

<sup>376</sup> Is 6, 9 – 13.

<sup>377</sup> Cf. *Super Is.*, cap. 6, l. 2. During some forty years of the following *Isaiah*’s service was both Northern Israel and a good part of Judea erased by Assyrians, until their army arrived at Jerusalem. Then, the Jewish king, finally realising that his Egyptian allies will not save him, implores the LORD via *Isaiah* and the war is abruptly ended by an angel exterminating 161 000 Assyrians overnight, the Assyrian monarch being consequently murdered by his own sons during the worshipping of his god, cf. Is 36 – 37 and 2 Kg 18 – 19.

hardening of the heart of Pharaoh in *Exodus* is notorious.<sup>378</sup> But it is *Isaiah* who is quoted by all four gospels to explain some features of Jesus's mission. In synoptics, Jesus himself quotes the text when asked why he is speaking in parables that not even his apostles understand without their further private explanation by the Master.<sup>379</sup> The answer is that the goal is precisely that: not to be understood by anyone, "because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away."<sup>380</sup> The target group of the incomprehensible parables is the latter case – the content of *Isaiah's* text is said to be fulfilled in it. The *Gospel of John* quotes the same passage during its description of paschal events: using it, the narrator explains the fact that most of the Jews has not believed in Jesus despite the signs he had made. "For this reason they could not believe because again *Isaiah* said [follows the quotation]. *Isaiah* said this because he saw his glory and spoke about him."<sup>381</sup>

Pauline letters are not so explicit, yet they also contain some passages that strongly recall *Isaiah* 6, this time speaking about the refusers of Christ in general or even about the pre-Christian pagan world as a whole: "God is sending them a deceiving power so that they may believe the lie, that all who have not believed the truth but have approved wrongdoing may be condemned."<sup>382</sup> "While claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image of mortal man or of birds or of four-legged animals or of snakes. Therefore, God handed them over to impurity through the lusts of their hearts for the mutual degradation of their bodies. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Therefore, God handed them over to degrading passions."<sup>383</sup> "...god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they may not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."<sup>384</sup> In the last of these texts, it is not clear to Aquinas at all what the term "god of this age" is supposed to mean: the true God, the Satan, or just anything that people of this age take for God by making it the ultimate goal of their life, be it pleasure, honour or any other trifle?<sup>385</sup> Yet, this is the only case of such ambiguity – and the very fact

<sup>378</sup> Cf. Ex 4, 21; 9, 12; 10, 1 – 2 and 27; 11, 10; 14, 4 and 17. For other similar cases, cf. Dt 2, 30 or Jos 11, 20.

<sup>379</sup> Cf. Mt 13, 10 – 17; Mc 4, 10 – 12; L 8, 9 – 10.

<sup>380</sup> Mt 13, 11 – 12.

<sup>381</sup> J 12, 39 – 41.

<sup>382</sup> 2 The 2, 11 – 12.

<sup>383</sup> Rom 1, 22 – 26.

<sup>384</sup> 2 Cor 4, 4.

<sup>385</sup> "*Deus huius saeculi ... potest exponi tribus modis. Primo modo ... Deus qui est dominus huius saeculi et omnium rerum creatione et natura, ... Secundo modo ... Diabolus, qui dicitur Deus huius saeculi, id est*



that it is not clear whether the sacred text speaks about God or Satan can seem to be quite disturbing. What does Aquinas make of it?

The main element of his stable explanation of this topic appears already in the comment on *Isaiah* 6: “he [God] does not harden by sending the malice, but by not sharing the grace, and this is because they do not want to turn themselves to the grace.”<sup>386</sup> First, God does not directly cause the problem: the problem already exists, and God just does not make it disappear. The assertion that he hardens or blinds somebody is to be understood in the same way as the assertion that the physician who does not administer the vitally necessary medicaments kills the patient: the physician has not caused the deadly disease, God has not caused the malice. Second, God’s decision to not provide the grace is based on the preceding unwillingness of the subject to accept the saving means. It could be put into question whether the previous analogy with the killing physician can be held at this condition: if the patient refused the cure, we would probably hesitate with the assertion that the physician killed him by not administering it. The hesitation would probably be considerably smaller, if the patient were a little child – but this is not the point here for Aquinas. In his later texts, he makes the distinction of two senses of the “hardening of heart”,<sup>387</sup> applicable *mutatis mutandis* to the other similar terms: a) a human morally deteriorating activity that belongs to the category of the *malum culpae* and as such is not caused by God; b) the disappearing of grace (and possibly of other prerequisites for morally good decisions) following some (at least logically) earlier sinful activities. The latter meaning of the term “hardening” belongs to the *malum poenae*, being the just punishment of the previous sins. As we have seen, all the punishments are caused by God according to Aquinas: if we stick to the analogy, it is as if the physician in question had not just accepted the inevitable death of the uncomplying patient, but renounced to any further attempts of healing, deciding that it was good to let the disease take this patient’s life because the arrogance of the latter had merited it. Now, Aquinas does not believe that the hardening of heart has necessarily such a fatal finality: in his view, it can be only a temporary means to humble the sinner, allowing his consecutive growth in humility,

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*saeculariter viventium, ...Tertio modo sic: Deus habet rationem ultimi finis, et complementum desideriorum totius creaturae. Unde quidquid aliquis sibi pro fine ultimo constituit in quo eius desiderium quiescit, potest dici Deus illius. Unde cum habes pro fine delicias, tunc deliciae dicuntur Deus tuus...*” *Super II Cor.*, cap. 4, l. 2, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, q. 1, pr. When speaking for himself, Aquinas seems to prefer the second interpretation: “*Dicitur autem Diabolus esse Deus huius saeculi, non creatione, sed quia saeculariter viventes ei serviunt; eo modo loquendi quo apostolus loquitur, ad Philipp. III, quorum Deus venter est.*” *STh.*, I, q. 65, a. 1, co. quoting Philip 3, 19, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 3, arg. 3 and ad 3; *Super Io.*, cap. 12, l. 5 and 7.

<sup>386</sup> “*Non obdurat autem immittendo malitiam, sed non impartiendo gratiam; et hoc quia non se volunt ad gratiam convertere.*” *Super Is.*, cap. 6, l. 2, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 40 q. 4 a. 2 co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 3, co. and ad 3; *Super Mt.*, cap. 13, l. 1; *Super Io.*, cap. 12, l. 7; *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 3 *in fine*; *Super II Cor.*, cap. 4, l. 2.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 40 q. 4 a. 2 co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 3, co.

gratefulness and prudence.<sup>388</sup> But this altogether positive outcome is not necessary: depending on the person, either of contradictory readings of Isaiah's passage about turning and healing can be fulfilled, as is proved in the case of Jewish listeners to Jesus.<sup>389</sup>

The use of human unwillingness as an explanation of God's refusal of the providing of grace can seem like a typical example of free-will-based theodicy: "God does not intervene because he is respecting human freedom!" Since you are reading a compatibilist interpretation of Aquinas, it is probably not what you would await – and you are right. I leave it to your judgement whether the free-will-based theodicy is functional or not in this case: after all, we would probably deride and blame the paediatrician which gave up the vital treatment only to "respecting freedom" of his six years old patient – and the biblical God has much more of both intellectual superiority and possibilities to act. In any case, it is particularly clear in Aquinas's later writings that he does not try to excuse God this way. In his comment on "To anyone who has, more will be given", proclaimed by Jesus just before quoting *Isaiah* 6,<sup>390</sup> he states that the previously needed possession consists in desire, effort, theological love (*caritas*) and faith, and *all of these features are themselves gifts from God.*<sup>391</sup> It could be thought that at least their destruction is due to an autonomous function of the human will, yet Aquinas judges otherwise: the fact that somebody understands and somebody else does not is not due to the person in question, but to the ordaining God.<sup>392</sup> Otherwise said, while the hardening of heart presupposes the lack of some voluntary properties, this very lack seems to be ultimately implied by the fact that God has not provided these properties. Aquinas's assertion that God's refusal of grace is always connected with human unwillingness just intends to state the inner coherence of the divine saving activity: God damns nobody who wants to receive the grace – which is only logical because the very human wanting of grace is

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<sup>388</sup> "quantum ad quosdam, excaecatio ordinatur ad sanationem, quantum autem ad alios, ad damnationem" *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 4, co. "Aliqui enim non reducuntur ad humilitatem nisi in grave peccatum cadant: sic dominus istis fecit." *Super Mt.*, cap. 13, l. 1.

<sup>389</sup> "et convertantur et sanem eos ... potest intelligi dupliciter... Uno modo, ... et non convertantur, et non sanem eos. ... Alio modo potest intelligi, ..., ut sit sensus: ideo excaecati sunt et indurati ut ad tempus nec viderent nec intelligerent; et sic non videntes et non intelligentes, idest non credentes in Christum, eum occiderent, et postmodum compuncti converterentur et sanarentur. Permittit enim aliquos quandoque cadere in peccatum, ut humiliati ad iustitiam firmiter resurgant. Et utraque expositio locum habet in diversis Iudaeis. Prima quidem in illis qui in sua incredulitate finaliter permanserunt: secunda vero in illis qui post Christi passionem sunt ad Christum conversi, qui scilicet compuncti corde ex verbis Petri..." *Super Io.*, cap. 12, l. 7

<sup>390</sup> Cf. *Mt* 13, 12.

<sup>391</sup> "quatuor sunt praeparatoria ad hoc quod detur aliquid. Primum est desiderium. ... Secundum quod requiritur est stadium ... Tertium quod requiritur est caritas ... Quartum quod requiritur, est fides ... Sed Paulus dicit: quid habes quod non accepisti? Unde et desiderium, et studium, et caritas, et fides, omnia haec sunt a Deo." *Super Mt.*, cap. 13, l. 1.

<sup>392</sup> "Dicit, ideo dico quod in parabolis loquor, quia vobis datum est nosse mysterium regni caelorum, illis autem non est datum: in quibus verbis tria ponuntur. Primo quod quidam sunt intelligentes, quidam non. Et non est attribuendum alicui, sed Deo ordinanti; ideo datum est vobis, aliis non. Et ideo est divina ordinatio." *Ibid.*

in God's hands and caused by him. As I have said, this position is clear in Aquinas's latest writings: whether he held it from the very beginning (and whether it is defensible) is the matter of discussion in the following chapters (I shall argue that the right answer is yes).

### III. 5. God the Potter

The hardening/blinding activity of the LORD is always connected with the preceding fault on the side of the afflicted individuals. In itself, this fact does not solve the question whether the hardening does not make God the cause of the subsequent morally evil acts of the hardened people, but at least it provides an understandable motive of God's doing on the side of men: clearly, these are not innocent victims of the incomprehensible divine wrath. Nevertheless, in the previous paragraph we have already met the problem of the conditioning of the faults that preceded the hardening; allowing them cannot be ultimately considered as a punishment for some even more preceding faults of the subject. Aquinas's Holy Scripture meets this question in a rather brutal way while comparing God to a potter.

I am not speaking about probably the most famous instance of this comparison, occurring in *Jeremiah*.<sup>393</sup> Here, the potter tries to provide the jar with a determined shape and if he fails, he destroys it and begins anew. The picture emphasizes God's sovereign power (and also the right to use it) vis-à-vis his people, nevertheless, it allows for some limitations in this matter: the destructive action of the potter is conditioned by something that he has not intended – the bad shape of the resulting vessel. In *Isaiah*'s variant of the same idea, such a limitation is not thematized: the image is used to state the ultimate dominion of God over the clay and anything that he makes from it. “Woe to him who contends with his Maker; a potsherd among potsherds of the earth! Dare the clay say to its modeler, ‘What are you doing?’ or, ‘What you are making has no hands’? Woe to him who asks a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ or a woman, ‘What are you giving birth to?’ Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, his maker: You question me about my children, or prescribe the work of my hands for me!”<sup>394</sup> The text of *Isaiah* is concerned with LORD's vocation of Cyrus the Great and in his comment, Aquinas is focused on its meaning in this context.<sup>395</sup> Nevertheless, *Isaiah*'s image is the base for the famous passage about vessels of wrath from the ninth chapter of Paul's *Letter to Romans* which has much more importance for our issue. It is worthy to be quoted in its

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<sup>393</sup> Cf. Jr 18, 1 – 12.

<sup>394</sup> Is 45, 9 – 11, cf. 29, 16. Note that, given the biblical cultural milieu, the analogy of “father” can include much more authority and much less obligations than a contemporary western user of the term could tend to assume.

<sup>395</sup> Cf. *Super Is.*, cap. 45.

broader context here (the footnotes referring to the texts that are quoted by it are obviously added by me):

“...when Rebecca had conceived children by one husband, our father Isaac - before they had yet been born or had done anything, good or bad, in order that God’s elective plan might continue, not by works but by his call - she was told, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’<sup>396</sup> As it is written: ‘I loved Jacob but hated Esau.’<sup>397</sup> What then are we to say? Is there injustice on the part of God? Of course not! For he says to Moses: ‘I will show mercy to whom I will, I will take pity on whom I will.’<sup>398</sup> So it depends not upon a person’s will or exertion, but upon God, who shows mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, “This is why I have raised you up, to show my power through you that my name may be proclaimed throughout the earth.”<sup>399</sup> Consequently, he has mercy upon whom he wills, and he hardens whom he wills. You will say to me then, ‘Why (then) does he still find fault? For who can oppose his will?’ But who indeed are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Will what is made say to its maker, ‘Why have you created me so?’<sup>400</sup> Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for a noble purpose and another for an ignoble one? What if God, wishing to show his wrath and make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction? This was to make known the riches of his glory to the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared previously for glory, namely, us whom he has called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles.”<sup>401</sup>

Paul deals with the fact that more than twenty years after the Crucifixion, most of Israel still refuses its Saviour. The goal of the text is to show that it does not mean the failure of the promise given to Israel by divine word.<sup>402</sup> On the contrary, it is the precise fulfilment of what was promised. Paul begins by relativising the importance of the biological origin “for not all who are of Israel are Israel, nor are they all children of Abraham because they are his descendants”:<sup>403</sup> beside the son that he miraculously conceived with Sarah, Abraham has an older son with Hagar and several other sons with Keturah; yet it is only Isaac who is the subject of LORD’s promise.<sup>404</sup> The thing is even more visible in the next generation, in the case of Esau and Jacob, the twins whose different destiny cannot be explained by any

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<sup>396</sup> Cf. Gen 25, 23.

<sup>397</sup> Cf. Mal 1, 2 – 3.

<sup>398</sup> Cf. Ex 33, 19.

<sup>399</sup> Cf. Ex 9, 16.

<sup>400</sup> Cf. Is 29, 16 and 45, 9.

<sup>401</sup> Rom 9, 10 – 24.

<sup>402</sup> Cf. Rom 9, 1 – 6.

<sup>403</sup> Rom 9, 6 – 7.

<sup>404</sup> Cf. Rom 9, 7, quoting Gen 21, 12. For the son of Hagar, cf. Gen 16 and 21, 1 – 21, for progeny of Keturah, cf. Gen 25, 1 – 4.

difference concerning any of their parents: only Jacob was destined to become Israel.<sup>405</sup> Paul is convinced that this kind of divine selection has not finished by the constitution of Israel: the faithful minority in the time of Elijah<sup>406</sup> and the Rest that is spoken about in Isaiah<sup>407</sup> are the instances of the same process, which allows the conclusion that the minority reception of the Messiah is actually exactly the thing that should be expected, the promises to Israel concerning only a minority – again.<sup>408</sup> But before arriving to this conclusion, Paul feels the need to address an obvious objection concerning the divine justice vis-à-vis the twins who receive a completely different treatment before being able to do anything good or bad. His answer is categorical: the divine intervention in favour of someone is the question of mercy, not the question of justice. Both Esau and Jacob had exactly the same right to receive God’s favour – the non-existing right of the piece of clay to be made into a noble vessel rather than into a disposable jar. Given the fact that both types of ceramic can be handy, i.e., both help for the manifestation of divine glory, there is no wonder that God has made both. Let me add that Paul believes that the finality of this selection is to be profitable to all the mankind, including the majority of Israel that will be brought back to the Lord in the end of the process: “For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor?’<sup>409</sup> ‘Or who has given him anything that he may be repaid?’<sup>410</sup> For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”<sup>411</sup> That the “mercy upon all” does not necessarily mean the salvation of all the individuals is clear from Paul’s warnings even to those who are momentarily on the right path.<sup>412</sup>

Contrary to the previous passages concerning the hardening, the text makes the impression that the Lord realises his plan of salvation while intentionally sacrificing also some previously completely innocent victims: the question of whether one has done anything wrong or not seem to be completely irrelevant for him. It could be argued that the text does not speak about

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<sup>405</sup> “*Ut igitur omne subterfugium excludatur, inducit exempla, ubi unus eligitur et alius reprobatur eorum, qui non solum ab uno patre sed etiam ab una matre sunt geniti et eodem tempore, imo ex uno concubitu.*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 2.

<sup>406</sup> Cf. Rom 11, 2 – 5 referring to 1King 19, 18.

<sup>407</sup> Cf. Rom 9, 27 – 29, referring to Is 10, 20 – 23 and 1, 9.

<sup>408</sup> Cf. Rom 11, 7 – 12.

<sup>409</sup> Cf. Is 40, 13 – 14.

<sup>410</sup> Cf. Job 41, 3 (or 41, 11 depending on edition). Some of translations, including NAB, understand text differently than Paul.

<sup>411</sup> Rom 11, 32 – 36.

<sup>412</sup> “So do not become haughty, but stand in awe. For if God did not spare the natural branches, (perhaps) he will not spare you either. See, then, the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who fell, but God’s kindness to you, provided you remain in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off.” Rom 11, 20 – 22.

the damnation of Esau or Pharaoh, but only about their suboptimal position in the history of salvation: but given the fact that these figures are mentioned to explain the state of those who refuse Christ, whose refusal Paul considers to be a road to perdition,<sup>413</sup> such an argument is hardly of any importance. The things could be somewhat alleviated by the invocation of the original sin: even if unborn Esau could not have done anything bad yet, there was still something bad in him that could justify the hate of the Lord. But provided that Paul had some articulated conviction about this topic, I do not see it implemented in any way in the argumentation of the text: what Paul does there is that he does his possible to show that the divine action is in no way conditioned by man. As for Aquinas, he believes that this picture of historical mankind without any right to God's guiding or care and therefore in need of the divine unmerited mercy is actually codetermined by the contamination of humans by original sin.<sup>414</sup> But while for Aquinas this is the most important reason why there is no injustice in God's attitude to the vessels of wrath, it is not the most fundamental one: in his view, the very material nature of human makes him a common clay in God's hand, without any right to be raised from his baseness.<sup>415</sup> As for the rest, Aquinas's reading follows the same lines as in the (other) cases of the hardening: the constitution of the vessels of wrath does not consist in God's intervention, but in his non-intervention against their own inclinations disoriented by the original sin.<sup>416</sup> The text says nothing more about God's permission of the original sin itself: while it suggests that not even an immaculate human would surpass the status of the clay and therefore has still no right to be in the Potter's favour, it does not specify in which relation is the Potter's non-intervention to the first sin of an uncorrupted individual. The right comprehension of Aquinas's view on this deepest level of the analogy of the potter – whose understanding is, believe I, about equal to the right comprehension of his compatibilism – will

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<sup>413</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 1, 18. Given the generalised moral degeneracy of mankind, described in Rom 1, 18 – 3, 21, Paul believes that “no human being will be justified in His sight by observing the law” (Rom 3, 20), the only way of justification being the faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 1, 17; 3, 21 – 30).

<sup>414</sup> “*Cum enim omnes homines propter peccatum primi parentis damnationi nascantur obnoxii, quos Deus per suam gratiam liberat, sola misericordia liberat: et sic quibusdam est misericors, quos liberat, quibusdam autem iustus, quos non liberat, neutris autem iniquus.*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 3.

<sup>415</sup> “*Humana autem natura vilitatem habet ex sua materia, quia, ut dicitur Gen. II, 7: fecit Deus hominem de limo terrae, sed maiorem vilitatem habet ex corruptione peccati, quae per unum hominem in hunc mundum intravit. Et ideo homo luto merito comparatur ... Unde quicquid boni habet homo debet bonitati divinae quasi principali agenti adscribere. Is. LXIV, v. 8: nunc, domine, pater es tu, nos vero lutum, et fictor noster tu, et opus manuum tuarum omnes nos. Si vero Deus hominem ad meliora non promoveat, sed in sua infirmitate eum dimittens, deputat eum ad infimum usum, nullam ei facit iniuriam: ut possit iuste de Deo conqueri.*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 4.

<sup>416</sup> “*Actus vero quem Deus erga eos exercet, non est quod disponat eos ad malum, quia ipsi de se habent dispositionem ad malum ex corruptione primi peccati. Unde dicit vasa apta in interitum, id est, in se habentia aptitudinem ad aeternam damnationem. ... Non enim sic quos vult indurat, ut eos peccare compellat, sed sustinet eos ut secundum suam inclinationem tendant in malum.*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 4.

be progressively enabled throughout this book: you can imagine that Aquinas's application of notions like *debitum naturae* or freedom of choice will be of importance here.

One final remark before leaving Aquinas's *Commentary on Isaiah*. One of *Isaiah*'s potter-texts states that the sinner's conviction that he is not watched is "(a)s though what is made should say of its maker, 'He made me not!' Or the vessel should say of the potter, 'He does not understand.'"<sup>417</sup> In Aquinas's view the connection between the denial of the divine knowledge and the denial of the divine authorship has the following reason: "*God knows inasmuch he is the cause of the thing.*"<sup>418</sup> This statement might be the earliest occurrence of the so-called theory of causal knowledge in Aquinas: this theory states that the divine knowledge of the actual world is like the knowledge that an artisan has about his artefact thanks to the artefact's project that had existed in his mind before the artefact came to existence. The impact of this conviction for our issue is difficult to underestimate and will be discussed extensively later (chap. 5. I.).

### III. 6. Permissive imperatives

In the beginning of this chapter, we have seen that Peter Lombard tried to explain the existence of unobeyed divine commandments by the assertion that God actually does not want them to be obeyed.<sup>419</sup> We have already briefly seen that Aquinas's distinction of the antecedent and consequent will permits a more nuanced vision of these things.<sup>420</sup> Nevertheless, it does not mean for Aquinas that any of the imperative sentences that are pronounced by God in the Scripture *eo ipso* mean that God wants (or desires) the thing to be done.

The imperative can be the expression of a divine permission, or, more precisely, of God's decision not to impede the thing. Imagine a person that spends several hours by trying to talk another person out of a foolish project. At the end of this waste of the time, she says: "Fine, do it then!" Grammatically, the phrase is an imperative: yet anybody understands that it is not an order, not even the expression of the consent – it is the expression of the will to cease to express opposition. Aquinas explains this way some imperatives appearing in his version of *Isaiah* 6: the resemblance of "you shall not understand" and "you shall not kill" in Latin

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<sup>417</sup> Is 29, 15 – 16.

<sup>418</sup> "*Deus cognoscit in quantum est causa rei.*" *Super Is.*, cap. 29.

<sup>419</sup> Cf. PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quattuor sententiarum*, lib. 1, dist. 47 *in fine*.

<sup>420</sup> See chap. 1. I, and below, chap. 6. II. 2.

requires such a distinction.<sup>421</sup> More importantly, he reads this way LORD's sending of the spirit of false prophecy that is quoted in the beginning of this chapter, comparing it to Jesus's "What you are going to do, do quickly" as said to Judas.<sup>422</sup> Aquinas's understanding of the text seems to be the following. The LORD wants the king to die a certain way, which is why he opens this possibility to some superhuman creatures. One of these creatures decides for its own reasons that it will achieve this end by stimulating the false prophecy. The LORD does not want the lie, since it is in opposition to his manifestation in the universe, yet he does not want to stop this particular lie, since he decides to do some particular good on its occasion (the punishment of the king that is also supposed to reveal, beside others, the very falsity of the permitted lie).<sup>423</sup> Then, the LORD (whose distaste for liars is known to anybody) informs the creature that it will be able to succeed and that he will not impede this action: "Go and do it".

I think that you agree that while Aquinas's interpretation reads the biblical description of the LORD's engagement in this deceiving in a rather weak sense, the admitted engagement itself is still quite important: the LORD creates the occasion for the spirit's moral failure and counts with it in his own punitive plan. Aquinas's view is the same as in the case of his theory of the hardening of heart which was mentioned earlier: in fact, it is just a coherent application of this theory to the demons and their immoral activities vis-à-vis humans, the application that elsewhere is useful in the article about the usefulness of demons in the universe.<sup>424</sup> As far as I am concerned, it is this precise case that shows more explicitly than any other how counterintuitive is the notion of Maritain's innocence in the case of the God that Aquinas believes in. These things being clarified, we can continue to the issues whose consideration is more habitual in the works about Aquinas's conception of providence.

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<sup>421</sup> "dicit audite, auribus exterioribus, audientes, Christum, vel alium praedicantem, et nolite intelligere; quasi: quia non vultis, non intelligitis. Permissivum est. Et quantum ad visum, qui servit inventioni: et videte visionem, Christum corporaliter, vel magnalia Dei; et nolite cognoscere. Permissivum est, et non imperativum." *Super Is.*, cap. 6, l. 2.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. 1 King 22, 20 – 22 and Aquinas's interpretation in *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 17: "id quod dicitur, egredere et fac, non est intelligendum per modum praecepti, sed per modum permissionis sicut et quod dicitur ad Iudam: quod facis, fac citius; eo modo loquendi quo permissio Dei dicitur eius voluntas." (quoting J 13, 27), cf. *Super Io.*, cap. 13, l. 5 in principio.

<sup>423</sup> "mali Angeli ... (a)liquando autem impugnant homines puniendo. Et sic mittuntur a Deo; sicut missus est spiritus mendax ad puniendum Achab regem Israel, ... Poena enim refertur in Deum, sicut in primum auctorem. Et tamen Daemones ad puniendum missi, alia intentione puniunt, quam mittantur, nam ipsi puniunt ex odio vel invidia; mittuntur autem a Deo propter eius iustitiam." *STh.*, I, q. 114, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>424</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 64, a. 4, co.



## 2. Modal notions

“Why (then) does he still find fault? For who can oppose his will?”

*Epistle to the Romans 9, 19*

“According to Aristotle, a dynamic possibility can be actualized only when the active and passive potency are in contact; the possibility is then necessarily realized, if there is no external hindrance. If partial possibilities cannot be realized without having first become full possibilities, only immediately realized possibilities seem to be genuine possibilities.”

*Simo Knuuttila, Modalities in medieval Philosophy, p. 37*

“...nothing is so contingent that it would not have anything necessary in itself.”

*Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 86, a. 3, co.*

“Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

*Gospel of Luke 24, 26*

### Introduction

Why this section? Let us recall the objection quoted in Romans: “Why (then) does he still find fault? For who *can* oppose his will?”<sup>425</sup> Paul treated it rather harshly, but many posterior thinkers showed much more comprehension for its premise: if I cannot do otherwise than I actually do (e.g. because of God’s irresistible will), I cannot be blamed for my doing. This seems to be a very common intuition (*pace* Harry Frankfurt), at least in the western cultural milieu of the last two millennia. The problem is that its defenders have been, for centuries, in severe disagreements about the precise content of the notion of “can do otherwise” that it implied here. The contemporary discussions regarding the possible fallacy of equivocation in so-called Consequence argument show that even now the matter is far from being settled.<sup>426</sup> How does this concern Aquinas? About four centuries ago, in the famous controversy *De auxiliis*, different readers of this author (holding different conceptions of predestination, grace and God’s providential care over free creatures as such) interpreted the meaning of the

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<sup>425</sup> Rom 9, 19.

<sup>426</sup> Cf. for ex. VIHVELIN (2018).

required “can do otherwise” rather differently.<sup>427</sup> Given the fact that both sides of the conflict claimed themselves St. Thomas’s followers<sup>428</sup>, one can only infer that the proper meaning of so-called modal notions in Aquinas (e.g. notions such as “possible”, “contingent”, “necessary” and “impossible”) might have not been a priori clear. This is further suggested by the fact that in contemporary literature, Aquinas is presented as the compatibilist,<sup>429</sup> the libertarian<sup>430</sup> and also transcending these positions<sup>431</sup> or having no coherent position in this matter at all.<sup>432</sup> Thus, the analysis of Aquinas’s modal notions appears to be a necessary prerequisite for the comprehension of Aquinas’s position concerning God’s ruling over creatures who freely sin. Any attempt to interpret the latter without the former would be hopelessly uncertain at best.

It seems to me that Aquinas’s conception of modalities contains two interpretative problems that are relevant to the issue of this book. Firstly, according to Aquinas modal terms are not univocal. For example, the same thing can be called both possible and impossible depending on the precise meaning of the word “possible”. It is not that one of these meanings is right and the others are wrong (although some of them can be more basic, more important or more intuitive than others), they are just different. The notion of “possible” can include an implicit reference to a cause for which it is possible: the possible from the point of view of God can be impossible from the point of view of a human and vice-versa. The bone of contention between interpreters (at least between those who are aware of this problem) consists of this: which kind(s) of causes are to be taken into account in the case of the ‘can do otherwise’ needed for actions of meritorious character? Let us call this problem the Relativity Problem. In order to

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<sup>427</sup> For the rather compatibilist side (commonly called “Thomist”), cf. BÁÑEZ, DOMINGO, *Comentarios inéditos a la Prima Secundae de santo Tomás*, t. 1–3, Salamanca, C.S.I.C., 1942, 1944, 1948; *Scholastica commentaria in Primam partem Summae Theologicae s. Thomae Aquinatis*, t. 1, Madrid-Valencia, F.E.D.A., 1934; ALVAREZ, DIEGO, *De auxiliis et humani arbitrii viribus, et libertate, ac legitima eius cum efficacia eorumdem auxiliorum concordia*, Lugduni, Sumptibus Jacobi Cardon et Petri Cailleat, 1620. For the moderately incompatibilist side, cf. MOLINA, LUDOVICUS, *Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione concordia*, Oniae/Matriti, Collegium Maximum S. I.-Soc. Edit. “Sapientia”, 1953; SUAREZ, FRANCISCO, *Tractatus theologicus, de vera intelligentia auxilii efficacis, ejusque Concordia cum libero arbitrio*, Lugduni, Sumpt. Philip. Borde, Laur. Arnaud, et Cl. Rigaud, 1655. For the historical introduction to this controversy, cf. for example MATAVA (2016), p. 16 – 36.

<sup>428</sup> Luis Molina, probably the most famous opponent of the “Thomist” side, wrote his *Concordia* as a (sometimes very) lengthy comment on some articles from Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*: q. 14, a. 8 (p. 3f); q. 14, a. 13 (p. 5–405!); q. 19, a. 6 (p. 407–430); q. 22 (p. 431–452); q. 23 (p. 453 – 611). In his opinion, Aquinas’s position contains some inconsistent statements (cf. *Concordia*, II, disp. 26 (p. 165)), nevertheless, he confesses his desire to have Aquinas more as a patron than an opponent (*Concordia*, IV, disp. 49 (p. 309), cf. VII, art. 4 – 5, disp. 1, memb. 13 (p. 581)).

<sup>429</sup> Cf. for ex. ZOLLER (2004) and LOUGHRAN (1999).

<sup>430</sup> Cf. for ex. STUMP (2003) (for example p. 304 – 306) and WRIGHT (1999).

<sup>431</sup> Cf. SHANLEY (2007).

<sup>432</sup> Cf. PALUCH (2004), p. 308, or DAGUET (2003), p. 323: according to the latter author, Thomas “goes ... up to put himself in contradiction with himself, both in his principles and in his explicit statements.” p. 343 (my translation).

fully solve this, one needs to deal with Aquinas's notions of causality, will and freedom. Nevertheless, an inquiry concerning his conception of modalities serves as a baseline for the comprehension of his statements about modal characteristics of these entities.

Secondly, Aquinas occasionally seems to imply that even God cannot completely protect some of the fallible entities from their failures and if he wants to at least assure their final success (e.g. in the case of predestination), his only choice is to bet on some kind of statistical certitude: he "prepares so many other aids that (the predestined one) either does not fall or, if he falls, he rises again..."<sup>433</sup> Moreover, there are some texts which seem to state that the possibility to never fail simply does not exist for the nature which is able of failure (*natura defectibilis*): "if God gave to this nature that it never failed, it would be no more that nature but a different one..."<sup>434</sup> But at the same time, Aquinas believes that there are people like Jesus or Virgin Mary who never sinned, and they have not ceased to be human because of this; another example of such flawlessness would be the holy Angels.<sup>435</sup> Let us call it the Discrepancy Problem. In order to understand Aquinas's account of the providence of moral evil, the above problem must be solved or at least understood: its reasons (be it some metaphysical necessity of evil, limits of God's control over free will or just Aquinas's confused and incoherent view of the topic) may have a decisive impact on this topic.

Aquinas states that the acts depending on human ability of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) are contingent<sup>436</sup> and that this contingency is defined by several possibilities: the possibility to both act and not to act, the possibility of performing different acts and, at least in the present

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<sup>433</sup> "in eo quem Deus praedestinat, tot alia adminicula praeparat, quod vel non cadat, vel si cadit, quod resurgat" *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, co.

<sup>434</sup> "Alius autem gradus naturae est quae impediri potest et deficere ... **Si autem Deus contulisset huic naturae quod nunquam deficeret, jam non esset haec natura, sed alia...**" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, co. Cf. *ibid.*, ad 1 and ad 3; d. 46, q. 1, a. 3 – 4; lib. 2, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 2, co. and ad 3.

<sup>435</sup> Jesus "has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin." He 4, 15. As for Mary, unlike the dogmatic definition of Catholic church from 1854 (DS 2803 – 2804), Aquinas held the view that Mary was contaminated by original sin. Nevertheless, he was convinced that she was purified from it before her birth and that she never committed any sinful act herself, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, co. and *STh.*, III, q. 27, a. 3f. As for the holy Angels, cf. for example *STh.*, I, q. 62, a. 5 and 8. Aquinas finds likely (although not certain) that the Angels were created in the state of grace, and provided this premise, he considers only two possibilities for their first decision: either to be meritorious (immediately followed by the acquisition of the beatitude making the angel henceforward morally infallible) or to be sinful (immediately followed by the damnation, changing the angel irreversibly into demon), cf. *ibid.*, q. 63, a. 6.

<sup>436</sup> "in praedestinatione autem invenitur certitudo respectu singularis finis; et tamen causa proxima, scilicet liberum arbitrium, non producit effectum illum nisi contingenter." *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, co. "superior ratio ad actus humanos ex libero arbitrio dependentes, et per hoc contingentes, quodammodo convertitur" *De veritate*, q. 15, a. 2, ad 3. "contingens futurum, ut motus liberi arbitrii, quamvis non sit determinatum in causa sua, est tamen determinatum in esse suo secundum quod est actu" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 3, a. 1, ad 4. Cf. also *Quodlibet*, XI, q. 3, co. and the unopposed *Sed contras* like *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, s. c. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13, s. c.; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12, s. c. 1.

state of humanity, the possibility to act both rightly and wrongly.<sup>437</sup> To provide the base for the interpretation of this contingency and possibilities, I will try to map Aquinas's use of the term *possibile*, disambiguating its different meanings and focusing on what Aquinas considers to be its basic meaning. Then I will use this study as a background for my solution of the Discrepancy Problem. Finally, I will complete these findings by the preliminary exposition of the different kinds of contingency.

## I. *Possibile* – a sketched map of the jungle

### I. 1. Some basic distinctions

In terms of the relationships to other modal terms, *possibile* in Aquinas is used in three ways:

- 1) *Possibile* as a negation of “impossible”. It covers both “necessary” and “contingent”.
- 2) *Possibile* as a negation of both “necessary” and “impossible”. It is roughly synonymous with “contingent”.
- 3) *Possibile* as having no relation to other modal terms. It is used in the context of the mathematical notion of power (e. g.  $2^2$ ) and Aquinas considers such use metaphorical.<sup>438</sup> As this third use is rather marginal and without any connection to the issue discussed in this book, my focus is on the first two uses.

Let us begin with the more general notion 1). There are three other distinctions which need to be properly distinguished from one another.

a) *(im)possibile simpliciter* vs. *(im)possibile secundum quid* – “(im)possible” in its basic, fundamental meaning as distinguished from “(im)possible from some point of view” (i.e.

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<sup>437</sup> “*libertas voluntatis in tribus considerabitur: scilicet quantum ad actum, in quantum potest velle vel non velle; et quantum ad obiectum, in quantum potest velle hoc vel illud, etiam eius oppositum; et quantum ad ordinem finis, in quantum potest velle bonum vel malum.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, co., cf. *De malo*, q. 6, co.

<sup>438</sup> Cf. *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3, co. : “*possibile secundum potentiam mathematicam quae est in geometricis, prout dicitur linea potentia commensurabilis, quia quadratum eius est commensurabile.*” While in this text, this *possibile* is a separate category besides the *possibile* “*secundum aliquam potentiam activam vel passivam*” and “*possibile non secundum aliquam potentiam, sed secundum se ipsum*”, in q. 3, a. 14, co. it is considered as a subcategory of *possibile* “*non secundum aliquam potentiam*” which is consequently divided into this *possibile metaphorice* and (the logical) *possibile absolute*. In his comment on the source text of this taxonomy (ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, V, 14) Aquinas seems to oscillate between these two conceptions. *Possibile* in the field of geometry is *secundum metaphoram* and is firstly discussed as another alternative to *possibile secundum aliquam (activam vel passivam) potentiam* apart from the logical possibility. But at the end, the text associates them: “*Sicut autem impossibile secundo modo acceptum [i.e. the logical one] non dicitur secundum aliquam impotentiam, ita et modi possibilis ultimo positi, non dicuntur secundum aliquam potentiam, sed secundum similitudinem, vel secundum modum veri et falsi.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 21. Similarly, in *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 9, l. 1, n. 7f both the geometrical and logical *possibilia* are assigned to the category where “*potentia dicitur aequivoce*”. *Potentia mathematica* in this sense needs to be not confused with the mathematical possibility distinguished from the natural possibility: the latter distinction concerns the difference between the possibility from the point of view of mathematical abstraction (e.g. the possibility to divide any quantity in infinitum) and the possibility *in rerum natura*, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 30, q. 2, a. 1, co.

from the point of view which is not commonly used and which founds some less proper meaning of the term).<sup>439</sup>

b) *(im)possibile per se* vs. *(im)possibile per accidens* – (im)possible because of itself as distinguished from (im)possible because of something else.<sup>440</sup>

c) *(im)possibile ex se* (or *in se* or *absolute*) vs. *(im)possibile secundum aliquid* (or *secundum potentiam*) – (im)possible absolutely (i.e., logically) speaking as distinguished from (im)possible from the point of view of some potency.<sup>441</sup>

The terminological distinction of these distinctions is not followed at all times (which is a usual phenomenon in Aquinas). The terms *(im)possibile simpliciter*, *(im)possibile per se* and *(im)possibile absolute* can be strictly of the same meaning and arguably, there are some texts where they really mean the same thing.<sup>442</sup> Nevertheless, there is a good deal of texts where this is not the case, and the difference of notions Aquinas is working with can be easily understood.

The distinction b) can be applied on both members of the distinction c) and vice-versa.<sup>443</sup> It could have been absolutely (i.e., logically) possible for Socrates to flee his execution, if we are speaking about the possibility *per se* – there is no contradiction in the notion of Socrates's escape itself. But this escape is logically impossible *per accidens* because it is in contradiction with the actual past of the existing world. Moreover, if Socrates's escape is considered inasmuch it would be a change of the actual past, it is logically impossible *per se* because for Aquinas, any change of the past is a logical contradiction (we shall see more about his reasons for this conviction later, cf. chap. 5. I. 3. 1 – 3).

Similarly, from the point of view of Socrates's active potencies it could have been possible for him to escape, if we are speaking about the possibility *per se* – he had an ability to walk

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<sup>439</sup> “*possibile dicitur aliquid vel simpliciter vel secundum quid.*” In *De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 24, n. 4, cf. also *Super De Trinitate*, pars 3, q. 5, a. 1, co. 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 3.

<sup>440</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 4, ad 1.

<sup>441</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 3, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 3, ad 4; In *De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 25, n. 3: “*possibile et impossibile uno modo dicitur absolute, quia scilicet secundum se est tale quod possit esse verum vel non possit esse verum, propter habitudinem terminorum ad invicem; alio modo dicitur possibile et impossibile alicui, quod scilicet potest vel secundum potentiam activam vel passivam.*”

<sup>442</sup> “*aliquid potest dici possibile vel impossibile dupliciter, uno modo, simpliciter et absolute; alio modo, ex suppositione.*” *STh.*, III, q. 46, a. 2, co. In here, *impossibile simpliciter et absolute* does not mean neither the logical impossibility, nor the basic meaning of the term impossible, but the impossibility because of itself, as opposite to the impossibility depending on some supposition. Cf. also In *De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 26, n. 4 and probably *Super Io.*, cap. 12, l. 7.

<sup>443</sup> “*licet praeterita non fuisse sit impossibile per accidens, si consideretur id quod est praeteritum, idest cursus Socratis; tamen, si consideretur praeteritum sub ratione praeteriti, ipsum non fuisse est impossibile non solum per se, sed absolute, contradictionem implicans. Et sic est magis impossibile quam mortuum resurgere, quod non implicat contradictionem, quod dicitur impossibile secundum aliquam potentiam, scilicet naturalem.*” *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 4, ad 1. As stated in the objection (arg. 1), the impossibility of resurrection is the impossibility *per se*. Aquinas does not deny it, but notices that it is not the logical impossibility.

and consequently he could have walked away and left Athens. On the contrary, it wouldn't be *per se* possible for him to fly away – he had no ability to fly. But such an impossibility is not an absolute impossibility. If we admit that some divinity could have provided Socrates with the ability to fly, we admit that some spectacular take-off from the execution site was possible *per accidens*. Nevertheless, the fact that none of this happened and Socrates died, it makes every scenario of his escape impossible *per accidens* (of course, per different *accidens* then in the previous sentence) because for Aquinas, no power (including God's omnipotence) is able to change the past. If we consider Socrates's escape as the case of the change of the past, it is impossible *per se* from the point of view of whichever potency at all – for the very same reason.

If you are under the impression that there is a bit too much variety of (im)possible, rest assured we are far from being done. But before we continue the presentation of their happy propagation in Aquinas's thought, an answer-needing question emerges quite spontaneously: which (im)possible is the fundamental one? This leads us to the distinction a).

### I. 2. *(Im)possibile simpliciter*

The following observation will be crucial for most of the remainder of this book: *(im)possibile simpliciter* DOES NOT EQUAL *(im)possibile absolute*. For Aquinas, the basic notion of the “(im)possible” is not the notion of the logical (im)possibility. According to him, an effect is *possibilis simpliciter*, if it is possible from the point of view of the active or passive potency of the entity which is its proper proximate efficient or material cause.<sup>444</sup> Let me explain.

As we shall see later in detail, Aquinas's universe is essentially a hierarchical order of more or less universal causes. Thus, the cause of the generation of a kitten is simultaneously an adult cat, a heavenly body which has stimulated the cat to the mating, an angel who moves the heavenly body, and God who is the Creator and the First Mover of all. To simplify the matter, let us say for now that heavenly bodies, angels and God are the remote causes of this generation, while the cat is its proximate (i.e. immediate) cause: more precisely, according to ancient biology the male cat is the proximate efficient cause while the female cat is the

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<sup>444</sup> “*dicitur aliquid possibile et impossibile simpliciter per comparationem ad suam causam proximam activam vel materialem, cujus conditiones effectus sequitur*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 3, co. Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 3, ad 4; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 4. I am translating the pronoun ‘*sua*’ as ‘its proper’ because of the following statements where Aquinas says that the causes in consideration are the causes from which the effects “*nati sunt esse*” or “*fieri*”.

proximate material cause.<sup>445</sup> Moreover, the cats are kittens' 'proper' cause. This means that given their nature and place in the universe, under natural circumstances the kittens are supposed to be engendered just by the cats. If God decided to make a miracle and transformed a piece of soil into a (living) kitten, He would become its proximate efficient cause, while the piece of soil would be its proximate material cause, but neither of them would become the *proper* proximate cause of the kitten. Such a scenario of generating a kitten could not be described in any other way but as being extraordinary. For Aquinas, any possibility attributable to such a case has little to do with our basic notion of possibility.

It also applies in the case of the possibility from the point of view of these causes (i.e., God and soil) considered as remote. In the case of fabrication, nobody says that the golden goblet can be made from the soil, even if there is a physical process that allows to turn the soil into gold, from which the goblet can be made. In agreement with the Philosopher, we tend to speak about the possibility to become X only in the case of the matter which can become X by one action of one mover<sup>446</sup> – or is quite close to this state at least. Aquinas specifies that this 'one mover' is to not be a thaumaturge. The generation of the kitten is *possibile simpliciter*, only if it is possible from the point of view of the natural potencies of cats.

Aquinas deals with this topic in his answer to the question whether things should be considered (im)possible according to the higher causes (namely God) or according to the lower causes. For him, neither alternative is completely true. His above-mentioned answer implies that the criterion of possibility should be mostly a lower cause. However, there are some kinds of effects whose only possible cause is God and thus, the criterion of their possibility should be God's power. The results of applying this conception could seem a bit paradoxical. Developing the capacity of sight or the life as such has natural nondivine causes, whereas the creation of the world or the divinisation of the soul does not. Thus, while the latter two should be considered possible just because God can do them<sup>447</sup>, the healing of the

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<sup>445</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *On generation of animals*, I, 20. The female is to provide the matter to be transformed into the kitten (the material cause), while the male provides (via sperm) the active power transforming this matter, acting as the efficient cause.

<sup>446</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, IX, 7: "It is just as it is with being healed; not everything can be healed by the medical art or by luck, but there is a certain kind of thing which is capable of it, and only this is potentially healthy. And (1) the delimiting mark of that which as a result of thought comes to exist in complete reality from having existed potentially is that if the agent has willed it it comes to pass if nothing external hinders, while the condition on the other side – viz. in that which is healed – is that nothing in it hinders the result." (trans. by W. D. Ross). Cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 9, l. 6, n. 3: "*Illud autem possibile, quod unica actione natura vel ars potest in actum sanitatis reducere, est sanum in potentia.*"

<sup>447</sup> "*ea quae immediate nata sunt fieri a Deo solo, ut creare, iustificare, et huiusmodi, dicuntur possible secundum causam superiorem...*" *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 3, ad 4.

born blind man with mud or the resurrection of the dead should not.<sup>448</sup> Generally speaking, the events that are commonly called miracles should be considered *simpliciter* impossible. The dead cannot rise – they can do it only if by “can” one means a very special kind of “can”.<sup>449</sup>

Note that for Aquinas, the application of this very special kind of “can” was a foundation to all the spiritual life he had consecrated himself to. As we shall see, it makes also a part of the perspective proper to the theology, which he considers the supreme science normally available for man in this life.<sup>450</sup> Nevertheless, “the names should be used in accordance with the way of speaking of the more numerous [speakers]”<sup>451</sup> and Aquinas is apparently convinced that the more numerous speakers do not use the term “can” in the way the theologians do. Knuuttila’s work on the use of modalities in 13<sup>th</sup> century would corroborate such a view<sup>452</sup>; more importantly, it seems to reflect something important concerning the modal language we use until now. Let us imagine a rather deranged person stating that she *can* jump over the Empire State Building. After your reply that it is not possible, she answers: “Of course it is! God could miraculously make me do it.” or “There is a possible world where I do the jump because of a coincidence of particle movements.” or something alike. Even if you concede that she is right, you will probably try to draw her attention to the fact that the logical possibility of the extremely improbable coincidence of the particle movements permitting the

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<sup>448</sup> “*illi effectus qui nati sunt ex causis esse inferioribus proximis activis et passivis, judicandi sunt possibles vel impossibles secundum causas inferiores: sicut in visione caeci et in resurrectione mortui, et hujusmodi: vita enim et visio sunt effectus immediati causarum inferiorum...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 3, co., for the kinds of miracles in question, cf. J 9, 6 – 7 and 11, 43 – 44.

<sup>449</sup> Interestingly enough, Aquinas seems not to hold this position in *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 144 (a text posterior to *Sentences* and immediately preceding *De potentia* and *Summa theologiae*): “*In his quae supra naturam aguntur, possibile et impossibile attenditur secundum potentiam divinam, non secundum potentiam naturalem: quod enim caecus illuminari possit vel mortuus resurgere, non est naturalis potentiae, sed divinae.*” Maybe it is just a misleading illustration: the text speaks about the remission of sins that actually belongs to the effects without natural non-divine cause. Aquinas wants to say that to deny the possibility of this remission means to limit God’s power. Maybe the resurrection is taken here as such (a miracle without any natural non-divine cause) and not as a special case of appearance of life (which has its natural non-divine cause). Finally, it may be that Aquinas speaks here in conformity with the rules he is going to establish for the assessment of the (im)possibility *within the bounds of the theology*: whatever the criterion of the possibility in its basic meaning is, the theologian taken as such always judges the possibility according to the compatibility with God’s attributes (cf. *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 4, co.).

<sup>450</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 1, a. 5.

<sup>451</sup> “*nominiibus utendum est secundum quod plures loquuntur.*” Aquinas invokes this dictum in many different contexts, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 4, a. 2, co.; q. 17, a. 1, co.; *Quodlibet V*, q. 4, co.; *De 36 articulis*, a. 9, ad arg.; *Expositio Posteriorum Analyticorum*, lib. 1, l. 4, n. 6; *In De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 5, n. 3; l. 20, n. 2; lib. 2, l. 12, n. 5; lib. 3, l. 8, n. 6. My quote comes from *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 4, s. c. 5 where it serves as a base for an argument (refuted later by Thomas without denying this premise) in favour of considering the lower causes as the only criterion of the possibility. The source text is ARISTOTLE, *Topics*, II, 2 (110a 16)).

<sup>452</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 100ff. According to this author, the masters of this epoch mostly tended “to consider the doctrine of divine possibilities ... as a theological matter which did not affect the use of traditional modal paradigms in other disciplines.” The text of Alan of Lille (*Regulae caelestis iuris* 165) he quotes identifies the *possibile simpliciter* with the possible according to lower causes.



jump is not what people ordinarily understand by “I can jump”. Mostly, what we mean by this is that we can do the jumping by our proper forces and under normal conditions. This seems to be quite close to Aquinas’s notion of *possibile simpliciter*.

This natural-language argument can be further supported by Aquinas’s gnoseology – or by any other gnoseology that states that our most fundamental notions come from our daily experience. Aquinas is aware of the notion of naturally innate ideas. In his view, most of the intellectual creatures (i.e., angels and demons) is equipped with them.<sup>453</sup> But he does not believe that that is the case of humans. Human mind begins as *tabula rasa*. The natural source of all our notions is the sensorial experience of material objects (more precisely the abstraction permitted by this experience).<sup>454</sup> That means that any possible use of these notions beyond the confines of this experience is at least secondary, if not only analogical. The latter is always the case, if they are applied to God.<sup>455</sup> We have arrived to the notion of God’s power not by applying our more general notion of power to the special case of God, but by making the right analogy between the power as we know it on one hand and the divine reality on the other hand.<sup>456</sup> Otherwise we either do not speak about God’s power at all, or we make an untruthful statement about God: “God is powerful” is not true, if the meaning of “powerful” is the same as in the statement “Joe Biden is powerful.”

Thus, even if I know that *there is one God*, it is far from being evident to understand properly what the term “is” and the term “one” mean in the case of God.<sup>457</sup> Aquinas is convinced that all true believers have the right (at least implicit) understanding of the divine reality thanks to their participation on God’s truth, called Faith.<sup>458</sup> But it neither is, neither substitutes itself for the natural gnoseological structure of man. It is only its supernatural enhancement.<sup>459</sup> Thus

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<sup>453</sup> Cf. for example *STh.*, I, q. 55, a. 2.

<sup>454</sup> Cf. for example *STh.*, I, q. 79, a. 2 and q. 84. “*Intellectus autem humani, qui est coniunctus corpori, proprium obiectum est quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens; et per huiusmodi naturas visibilium rerum etiam in invisibilium rerum aliqualem cognitionem ascendit.*” *STh.*, I, q. 84, a. 7, co.

<sup>455</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 12 and q. 13; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 1 – cf. chap. 1. I. 3.

<sup>456</sup> “*omnes rerum perfectiones, quae sunt in rebus creatis divisim et multipliciter, in Deo praeexistunt unite. ...puta cum hoc nomen sapiens de homine dicitur, significamus aliquam perfectionem distinctam ab essentia hominis, et a potentia et ab esse ipsius... Sed cum hoc nomen de Deo dicimus, non intendimus significare aliquid distinctum ab essentia vel potentia vel esse ipsius. Et sic, cum hoc nomen sapiens de homine dicitur, quodammodo circumscribit et comprehendit rem significatam, non autem cum dicitur de Deo, sed relinquit rem significatam ut incomprehensam, et excedentem nominis significationem...*” *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 5, co.

<sup>457</sup> “*quia secundum nihil existentium est existens, idest non existit secundum modum alicuius rei existentis*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 1; “*et sic non est unum eo modo quo alia, neque habet unum quasi participans ipso; sed tamen unum est, elongatum ab istis quae hoc sunt unum, in quantum est super unum quod invenitur in existentibus creatis*” *ibid.*, cap. 2, l. 6.

<sup>458</sup> “*divinum verbum in nobis habitet, ... per fidem, quae est quaedam participatio in nobis divinae veritatis*” *De potentia*, q. 6, a. 9, co. The topic is elaborated most notably in *STh.*, II-IIae q. 1 – 16.

<sup>459</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 13, co.: “*Cognitio ... quam per naturalem rationem habemus, duo requirit, scilicet, phantasmata ex sensibilibus accepta, et lumen naturale intelligibile, cuius virtute intelligibiles conceptiones ab eis abstrahimus. Et quantum ad utrumque, iuvatur humana cognitio per revelationem gratiae. Nam et lumen*

even for believers, the notions depending on Faith are not the most fundamental notions.<sup>460</sup> As for the natural knowledge of God, according to Aquinas it is theoretically possible, but it can be achieved only after an exacting philosophical enquiry. In the world as we know it, the utmost majority of people will never achieve it, not even the natural knowledge of (true) God's existence.<sup>461</sup> All of this makes the option that some commonly used notion is defined by the reference to God extremely unlikely. A smarter follower of Aristotle might be able to conceive God's power and, thanks to it, the possibility from the point of view of this power as well. But most people would not even understand its meaning – not even in the limited way possible for humans in this life.

Unless one accepts the existence of some sort of a priori idea of God in human mind (like Descartes did<sup>462</sup>), it seems rather absurd that our basic notion of possibility is co-defined by God's power then. But it would seem that the possibility from the logical point of view should be immune against the latter argument. Aquinas does not define the logical possibility in terms of God's power.<sup>463</sup> Rather he defines God's power (more precisely his omnipotence) in terms of logical possibility: God is called omnipotent because he can realise any logical possibility.<sup>464</sup> The latter means for him the coherence of terms<sup>465</sup> and is founded on the notion

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*naturale intellectus confortatur per infusionem luminis gratuiti. Et interdum etiam phantasmata in imaginatione hominis formantur divinitus, magis exprimentia res divinas, quam ea quae naturaliter a sensibilibus accipimus; sicut apparet in visionibus prophetalibus. Et interdum etiam aliquae res sensibiles formantur divinitus, aut etiam voces...*"

<sup>460</sup> "fides praesupponit cognitionem naturalem, sicut gratia naturam, et ut perfectio perfectibile." *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1. Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 24, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 9, ad 8; *STh.*, I-II, q. 99, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>461</sup> "veritas de Deo, per rationem investigata, a paucis, et per longum tempus, et cum admixtione multorum errorum, homini proveniret" *STh.*, I, q. 1, a. 1, co., cf. *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 10, co. Aquinas's famous Five ways to prove the existence of God need to be read in this context: Thomas is far from being convinced that some two pages of text could be used by random reader as a complete demonstration (not to say as five complete demonstrations) of God's existence.

<sup>462</sup> Cf. DESCARTES, RENÉ, *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, med. III (AT VII, 51).

<sup>463</sup> LLANO ((1994), p. 146 – 147) is gravely mistaken here: for Aquinas the *possibile absolute* is not possible because it is feasible, see below.

<sup>464</sup> Cf. *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3 and 7; *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 2. As for the logically impossible things, Aquinas states more or less decisively, that instead of saying that God cannot do them, it is better to say that they cannot be realized: the absence of possibility is in them, not in God.

<sup>465</sup> Cf. *Quodlibet IX*, q. 1, ad s. c.; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3 and ad s. c. 2; a. 4, ad 5; a. 7, co. *in fine*. "Dicitur autem et quandoque aliquid possibile, non secundum aliquam potentiam, sed ... absolute, quando scilicet termini enuntiationis nullam ad invicem repugnantiam habent. E contrario vero impossibile, quando sibi invicem repugnant; ut simul esse affirmationem et negationem impossibile dicitur, non quia sit impossibile alicui agenti vel patienti, sed quia est secundum se impossibile, utpote sibi ipsi repugnans." *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 14, co. According to *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 3, co. "(d)icitur autem aliquid possibile vel impossibile absolute, ex habitudine terminorum, possibile quidem, quia praedicatum non repugnat subiecto, ut Socratem sedere; impossibile vero absolute, quia praedicatum repugnat subiecto, ut hominem esse asinum." (cf. ad 4: "possibile absolutum non dicitur neque secundum causas superiores, neque secundum causas inferiores sed secundum seipsum..."); "...in logicis dicimus aliqua esse possible et impossibilia, non propter aliquam potentiam, sed eo quod aliquo modo sunt aut non sunt. Possibilia enim dicuntur, quorum opposita contingit esse vera. Impossibilia vero, quorum opposita non contingit esse vera. Et haec diversitas est propter habitudinem praedicati ad subiectum, quod

of being (*ens*) which is the first and the most fundamental notion at all:<sup>466</sup> the principle of non-contradiction is the first truth of the intellect and without its (at least implicit) use, any discourse would be impossible.<sup>467</sup> All of this is true. It just seems to be a less proper use of the term for Aquinas to call the conformity to this principle a “possibility”. “Possibility” comes from “*posse*” (can) which presupposes some power or potency – but no such thing exists in logics, unless it is a power or potency in an equivocal sense.<sup>468</sup> From this point of view, the use of the term “possible” for some *possibile secundum potentiam* is without a doubt more primordial. This secondary status of the logical possibility is particularly emphasized in the texts where Aquinas puts it in the same category as the abovementioned “possible” connected with powers in mathematics, calling them both *possibile secundum nullam potentiam*.<sup>469</sup>

The preceding requires some clarification. The logical possibility is secondary only from the viewpoint of the imposition of the name “possibility”. The reality that it describes is likely ontologically more primordial than the reality described by any possibility from the viewpoint of potency. By saying this, I make an extrapolation because to my knowledge, Aquinas have not really developed the question of the ultimate foundation of logical possibility. It goes without saying that for him, the coherence of terms is neither just a brute fact of language nor is it reducible to the human capacity of thinking. Neither is it derived from God’s omnipotence, as I have already stated. A seductive option would be to define it by the most general (and analogical) notion of potency: something would be logically possible, if there existed any potency for which it was possible; if it was not possible for any potency at all, it would be logically impossible. There could be a discussion, if Aquinas does not hold this

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*quandoque est repugnans subiecto, sicut in impossibilibus; quandoque vero non, sicut in possibilibus.” Sententia Metaphysicae, lib. 9, l. 1, n. 8, cf. n. 17.*

<sup>466</sup> “*Illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum, et in quod conceptiones omnes resolvit, est ens, ut Avicenna dicit in principio suae metaphysicae. Unde oportet quod omnes aliae conceptiones intellectus accipiantur ex additione ad ens.” De veritate, q. 1, a. 1.*

<sup>467</sup> Cf. Aquinas’s reception of Aristotle’s argumentation in *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 4, l. 6ff: “*duplex sit operatio intellectus: una, qua cognoscit quod quid est ... alia, qua componit et dividit: in utroque est aliquod primum: in prima quidem operatione est aliquod primum, quod cadit in conceptione intellectus, scilicet hoc quod dico ens; nec aliquid hac operatione potest mente concipi, nisi intelligatur ens. Et quia hoc principium, impossibile est esse et non esse simul, dependet ex intellectu entis, ... ideo hoc etiam principium est naturaliter primum in secunda operatione intellectus, scilicet componentis et dividentis. Nec aliquis potest secundum hanc operationem intellectus aliquid intelligere, nisi hoc principio intellecto.*” (ibid., l. 6, n. 10).

<sup>468</sup> “*multipliciter dicitur potentia et posse. Sed ista multiplicitas quantum ad quosdam modos est multiplicitas aequivocationis, sed quantum ad quosdam analogiae. Quaedam enim dicuntur possibilis vel impossibilis, eo quod habent aliquod principium in seipsis; et hoc secundum quosdam modos, secundum quos omnes dicuntur potentiae non aequivoce, sed analogice. Aliqua vero dicuntur possibilis vel potentia, non propter aliquod principium quod in seipsis habeant; et in illis dicitur potentia aequivoce. ... in logicis dicimus aliqua esse possibilis et impossibilis, non propter aliquam potentiam, sed eo quod aliquo modo sunt aut non sunt. Possibilis enim dicuntur, quorum opposita contingit esse vera. Impossibilis vero, quorum opposita non contingit esse vera. Et haec diversitas est propter habitudinem praedicati ad subiectum, quod quandoque est repugnans subiecto, sicut in impossibilibus; quandoque vero non, sicut in possibilibus.” Sententia Metaphysicae, lib. 9, l. 1, n. 8.*

<sup>469</sup> Cf. my footnote 438.

view in his *Sentences*: he argues here that “every potency concerns either being or non-being, as a potency to destroy. Consequently, if anything can have neither the character of being nor the character of non-being, it cannot be possible. And this is why it is impossible in itself to be and not to be the same thing simultaneously because if something is being and non-being, it is neither being nor non-being.”<sup>470</sup> A similar argumentation can also be occasionally found in some posterior writings,<sup>471</sup> nevertheless, at least since *Summa contra gentiles* Aquinas describes the logical possibility by designations like “*non secundum aliquam potentiam*”<sup>472</sup> or “*secundum nullam potentiam*”.<sup>473</sup> While the former might have the meaning “not according to some definite potency”, the latter – “according to no potency” – is unambiguous. At least for this later period of Aquinas’s thought, I tend to agree with Stolarski<sup>474</sup> that the ultimate foundation of the logical possibility is to be found in the act of God’s self-knowledge inasmuch it includes the knowledge of all that would be in any way *similar* to him (the so-called *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*).<sup>475</sup> The object of this act defines the extension of God’s power: God can do anything which is similar to him. For Aquinas, there is in fact no being without any similarity to THE BEING.<sup>476</sup> This similarity is the minimal reason why there is no being without any similarity to any other being and it is also the reality grasped by the notion of the logical possibility. Of course, I do not reject square circles just because I do not find them similar to God. The immediate signification of the logical possibility is not theological, even if its foundation and implications are. I consider something logically impossible because the contradiction of terms destroys any similarity with my notion of being

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<sup>470</sup> “*omnis potentia vel est ad esse vel ad non esse, sicut potentia quae est ad corrumpendum. Unde quidquid non potest habere rationem entis vel non entis, illud non potest esse possibile: et ideo hoc quod est idem simul esse et non esse, est in se impossibile: quia quod est ens et non ens, neque est ens neque non ens.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 2, co. We shall see later that according to Aquinas, any being (*ens*) has some quasi-active potency for its own being (*esse*). If this potency is taken into account, the foundation of the logical possibility on the notion of potency in general would not remove the possibility of God (a being without any efficient or material cause) from its scope.

<sup>471</sup> “*in omni autem oppositione includitur affirmatio et negatio, ut probatur X Metaph.; unde in omni tali impossibili implicatur affirmationem et negationem esse simul. Hoc autem nulli activae potentiae attribui potest...*” *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3, co., cf. *ibid.*, ad s. c. 3.

<sup>472</sup> *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 82, n. 9; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3, co.; a. 4, co.; q. 3, a. 14, co.

<sup>473</sup> “*potest dici, quod fuit possibile non per aliquam potentiam, sed quia termini non sunt invicem discohaerentes, huiusmodi scilicet propositionis: mundus est. Sic enim dicitur esse aliquid possibile secundum nullam potentiam*” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 17, ad 10. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 37, n. 4; *STh.*, I, q. 46, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>474</sup> STOLARSKI (2001), p. 196: “in the Thomas’s modal thought the noncontradiction is founded on the character of being (*raison d’être*). ... The consideration of the nature of the contrafactual beings permits the conclusion that they are constituted by the knowledge God has about his own essence. In fact, this knowledge constitutes the possible ways of imitation of God’s essence in the creation.” (my translation).

<sup>475</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 4; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 9 and (without the use of the term) *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 8.

<sup>476</sup> Even the negations taken as such are similar to God by their dissimilitude to the things whose negations they are (see chap. 1. I. 3.), cf. *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 8: “*negationes omnium rerum conveniunt Deo per suum excessum.*”

(more precisely with the thing in me I would call “the notion of being”, if I was a well-formed scholastic philosopher). And I consider it logically possible, if I do not see such a problem. If this is correct, Aquinas’s account is a non-modal actualism, providing the foundation of logical modal notions in the further irreducible notion of *similarity*. Given the relationship between the possible from the viewpoint of God’s power and this similarity, and the fact that all the other powers/potencies are the effects of God’s power, all the modal notions could be reduced in this way.

As I have said, this is an extrapolation of Aquinas’s view, not Aquinas’s view itself – it is dubious, whether Thomas has ever continued his analysis up to this conclusion. In any case the order of the abovementioned dependence has little to do with the order of the notions appearing in human mind according to him. The basic notion of possibility comes from the daily experience with powers. I insist heavily on this point because it is crucial not only for a proper understanding of Aquinas’s view but also for its just evaluation. It also happens that it touches upon one of the most important topics for our contemporary debate concerning (in)compatibilism.

From the perspective of the daily experience, it makes little difference (I do not say that it makes none) whether the spectre menacing human freedom is a predestining almighty God or, say, the synergy of the entirety of initial conditions of cosmos and the entirety of physical laws directing this cosmos. Both God and such synergy are unimaginable and largely are beyond the ken of most people. It seems pretty unlikely that the possibility from the point of view of such entities is *as such* present at the core of some common intuition concerning the relation between the possibility to do otherwise and the possibility to be blamed. I do not say that this settles the question of the conditions of the latter possibility. An incompatibilist could still argue that all (im)possibilities are born equal, and the (im)possibility from the point of view of ultimate causes is equally important to the (im)possibilities we operate with in our daily life. She could simply deny that there is any difference between these possibilities. Or she could argue that our daily notions imply some commitments concerning even the relations to the ultimate causes (or to such and such kind of ultimate cause). She could also argue for the existence of innate ideas or of some other gnoseological mechanism explaining why our common notions encompass some information about the relationship to such transcendent entities. However, none of this can be done just by appealing to some common intuition *taken as common*. At least, the incompatibilist would have to argue that, compared to other (both non-philosophizing and compatibilist) mortals, she has some much deeper understanding of this intuition, maybe in the way Descartes was defending his *Meditations* against those who

had found them invalid.<sup>477</sup> An intersubjectively applicable argumentation would be even more desirable in such a situation.

As I have suggested, identifying Aquinas's basic notion of possibility does not solve the Relativity Problem yet. We shall see that Thomas works with many other types of possibility and that notably, one type of possibility from the viewpoint of God plays relatively important role in his texts. Nevertheless, some troublemaking places in his writings should be becoming clearer by now: "if God moves the will to something, it is impossible with this position that the will would not move to this. But it is not impossible *simpliciter*. Consequently, it does not follow that the will would be moved by God with necessity."<sup>478</sup>

### I. 3. Some other distinctions

As I have said, the abovementioned distinctions are far from being an exhaustive presentation of the modal notions' jungle Aquinas lives in. The distinction of the (im)possibility *per se/per accidens* is almost synonymous with the distinction of absolute/conditioned (im)possibility or necessity, or alternatively with the distinction of the necessity or (im)possibility *absolute/ex suppositione*.<sup>479</sup> It is also close to two other distinctions. 1) The (im)possibility in divided sense/composed sense concerns primarily propositions. The proposition "This dead man could be alive." is true in a divided sense, i.e., if we take apart "dead" and "man", stating that for the man, there was a possibility to be alive – and thus, it is a shame that instead, he is dead. It is false in a composed sense, i.e., if we take "dead man" as a whole and state that there could be a living corpse (*pace* the authors of *Walking dead* etc.).<sup>480</sup> 2) Similarly, it can be distinguished between the (im)possibility *de dicto* and the (im)possibility *de re*. The proposition "It is impossible that some bachelor is married." is true, if the impossibility is taken *de dicto*, i.e., if it concerns the proposition "Some bachelor is married": by definition, to be bachelor means to be unmarried. It is false if the impossibility is taken *de re*, i.e., if it concerns the real subject that is described by the term "bachelor": the existence of marriages seems to prove that at

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<sup>477</sup> Cf. DESCARTES, RENE, *Méditations métaphysiques*, Réponse au cinquième objections, (AT IX, 210f).

<sup>478</sup> "si Deus movet voluntatem ad aliquid, impossibile est huic positioni quod voluntas ad illud non moveatur. Non tamen est impossibile simpliciter. Unde non sequitur quod voluntas a Deo ex necessitate moveatur." *STh*, I-IIae, q. 10, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>479</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 83, n. 4; lib. 2, cap. 30; *STh.*, III, q. 46, a. 2, co.; *Super Io.*, cap. 12, l. 7; *In De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 26, n. 4. In this context, the term *absolute* therefore does not imply the logical character of the modality. Cf. also the absolute necessity in *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13, ad 3 and in *Epistola ad Bernardum*.

<sup>480</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 1, a. 1f; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 13, ad 5; q. 6, a. 4, ad 8; *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 6, ad 3.

least in some men-bachelors, there had not been an impossibility to marry (and thus, to cease to be bachelors).<sup>481</sup> This distinction can be combined with the previous one.<sup>482</sup>

As for the possible from the point of view of some potency, Aquinas gives his most systematic presentation of the matter in his comments on Aristotle.<sup>483</sup> There is the “possible” from the point of view of some active potency. It means that a subject is able to do something. There is also the “possible” from the point of view of some passive potency. It means that something can be done to a subject, and that the subject has the capacity to be changed in some way. But Aquinas admits that the *possibile* can also mean the very opposite of the latter: it can denote the resistance to exterior influences (in the sense of the term “powerful” in “a powerful wall”).<sup>484</sup> The possibility can also imply the possibility in some former sense connected with the easiness or another good state of the thing called possible: by saying that I **cannot** fight a lion with my bare hands or that the steak is **impossible** to chew, I state that both fighting and chewing would be quite difficult and – most likely – without satisfactory results for me. I do not say that these actions are impossible at all.<sup>485</sup> Among all these possibilities Aquinas considers the possibility from the point of view of the active potency to be primordial, all the others are defined by it.<sup>486</sup> Most notably, the possibility from the point of view of the passive potency cannot exist without the possibility from the point of view of some active potency, but the inverse is not true: the creation of the world is possible from the viewpoint of God’s power with no passive potency making it possible from such potency’s point of view.<sup>487</sup>

The possibility from the point of view of active potency (and accordingly, all the possibilities depending on it) can be further differentiated as follows: what is possible to be done by the

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<sup>481</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, arg. 5f and ad 5f; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 4.

<sup>482</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 67, n. 10; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13, ad 3. *De fallaciis*, cap. 8 provides a further reflexion concerning different types of composition/division that can come into account; nevertheless, Aquinas’s authorship of this opusculum is doubtful.

<sup>483</sup> Cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 8–17; lib. 9, l. 1, n. 6–17.

<sup>484</sup> „*alio modo dicitur possibile vel potens, inquantum non habet potestatem vel principium aliquod ad hoc quod corrumpatur. ... quia secundum hoc aliquid dicitur potens et vigorosum, quod ab exteriori vinci non potest, ut corrumpatur.*“ *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 12, cf. *ibid.* n. 7 and lib. 9, l. 1, n. 11. This meaning of the word is unnatural in Latin in the same measure as in English; I have never noticed Aquinas to use it. It is most likely due to the different semantic of the Greek term Aristotle is dealing with in the source text.

<sup>485</sup> “*quartum modum ponit, qui respondet tertio modo potentiae, secundum quem dicebatur potentia ad bene agendum vel patiendum. ... Dicitur enim quod aliqua lyra potest sonare, quia bene sonat; alia non potest sonare, quia non bene sonat.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 13; “*sive possibile determinetur per verum, ut scilicet dicatur possibile quod potest esse, sive determinetur per facile, ut scilicet dicatur possibile fieri quod de facili potest.*” *In De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 24, n. 5.

<sup>486</sup> Cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 22f. The active potency is the first analogue of the notion of potency.

<sup>487</sup> “*si dicatur, quod possibile erat [ante factionem mundi mundum futurum esse ubi nunc est] dicendum ad hoc, quod non erat nisi in potestate agentis*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad 4, cf. *ibid.*, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1; *STh.*, I, q. 9, a. 2, co.

agent immediately (i.e., the agent is able to do it depending only on her own power) should be distinguished from what is possible, if the agent uses some instrument.<sup>488</sup> Or, alternatively, what is possible for the agent depending only on her own natural power should be distinguished from what is possible for the agent with some help of another independent agent, notably a superior one. Aquinas uses the latter distinction in his justification of the theological virtue of Hope which makes the believer hope to achieve something that his natural forces are unable to achieve (which seems to be against reason); nevertheless, “if something is possible thanks to friends, we say that it is, in a way, possible.”<sup>489</sup> In this case, this distinction coincides with the distinction of the possibility according to lower causes from the possibility according to higher causes I have already mentioned. This latter distinction is at the origin of the distinction of the possibilities from the point of view of different sciences.<sup>490</sup> What is possible from the point of view of theology can be impossible from the point of view of medicine. The reason is the difference of their objects: while theology considers the highest cause and judges the possibility according to its universal power, medicine knows only some lower causes and judges according to their limited capacities. Note once again that for Aquinas, the physician’s statement about the impossibility of, say, healing of a terminal stage of cancer and the theologian’s statement of its possibility can be both true. They are not in contradiction; they are just speaking about different things using the same terminology.

Speaking about the impossibility from the point of view of some potency, it is also useful to distinguish between the impossibility intrinsic to this potency and the impossibility coming from some external impediment.<sup>491</sup> Finally, it is noteworthy that the impossibility can depend on impotency in the same way as the possibility depends on potency. But the impotency does not mean just the absence of potency (at least not in general), but its privation which means

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<sup>488</sup> “*Primo autem modo potestatis respondent duo modi possibilis. Secundum potestatem enim activam aliquid dicitur potens agere dupliciter. Uno modo, quia ipse per seipsum agit immediate. Alio modo, quia agit mediante altero, cui potentiam suam communicat, sicut rex agit per ballivum. Dicit ergo, quod, cum potentia tot modis dicatur, possibile etiam et potens pluribus modis dicitur.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 8.

<sup>489</sup> *De virtutibus*, q. 4, a. 1, co. Cf. *STh.*, I-IIae, q. 40 a. 2 ad 1 and a. 3, ad 2; II-IIae, q. 17, a. 1, co.; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 3, l. 8, n. 5. The source text is ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 8 (1112 b 26 – 28).

<sup>490</sup> Cf. *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 4, co. Aquinas speaks about the possibility *ex parte iudicantium*, as distinguished from the possibility *ex parte eius de quo iudicatur*. In the latter sense, the healing is *simpliciter* impossible in the case of terminal cancer; in the former sense, the answer depends on the science the judging person speaks for: “according to the consideration of the theologian, everything which is not impossible in itself, is said possible”. *Ibid.*, ad s. c. 4.

<sup>491</sup> Cf. *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3, co.



the absence of potency when and where it should be present.<sup>492</sup> *Sensu stricto*, the privation is the negation of a determination that should be possessed by the subject in the time when it should be possessed. Thus, the *impotentia ad generandum* is most properly predicated about an adult eunuch (both subject and time should be fit to beget), less properly about a child (the subject is fit, not the time) and even less properly about a mule (the subject is by its nature unfit to beget). In addition, Aquinas also takes into account that the privation is sometimes taken to imply its violent origin.<sup>493</sup> Thus, depending on which understanding of the privation is just used to define the impotency, the “impossible” that is defined by this impotency has more or less narrower meaning than a mere negation of possibility.

#### I. 4. The great division of beings

We can pass now to the other general meaning of the term “possible”: a middle between “impossible” and “necessary”, signifying an entity which is able of both being and not-being,<sup>494</sup> another name for contingency<sup>495</sup> (or, more precisely, for one type of contingency). You can imagine what would happen if we applied to it all the above-mentioned distinctions. Such an extensive presentation will be left out as I limit myself to the following. According to Aquinas, all beings can be divided into two super-categories: the *possibilia* and the *necessaria*.<sup>496</sup> The former is characterised by some dependency on another entity. Which kind of dependency? Well, it depends.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 14, n. 14 – 17. “...*impotentia est privatio potentiae .... privatio proprie dicta sit circa determinatum subiectum et determinatum tempus. Improprie autem sumitur absque determinatione subiecti et temporis.*” (n. 14) and lib. 9, l. 1, n. 17 – 18.

<sup>493</sup> “*Quandoque vero in ratione privationis includitur violentia. Unde quaedam dicimus privari, quando per violentiam amiserunt ea quae nata sunt habere.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 9, l. 1, n. 18.

<sup>494</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 3, q. 4, a. 1, co.; d. 5, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2; d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 1; d. 8, q. 3, a. 1, co.; q. 5, a. 2, co.; d. 26, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 6; d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; d. 40, q. 3, a. 1, co.; lib. 2, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, co. and a. 3, co.; d. 5, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 4; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 3, cf. l. 14, n. 6–8 and 22; *Expositio Posteriorum Analyticorum*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 9; *De potentia*, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 9 and ad 9; q. 3, a. 17, arg. 3; q. 10, a. 2, arg. 5 and ad 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 16, n. 4 and the objection in cap. 82, n. 2; lib. 2, cap. 84, n. 2; lib. 3, cap. 86, n. 6; *De malo*, q. 5, a. 5, arg. 10 and ad 10; *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 16, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 99; *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 2, n. 8; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 9, l. 6, n. 3; l. 9 n. 2n; lib. 11, l. 9, n. 17; *Super De Trinitate*, pars 3, q. 5, a. 4, ad 4.

<sup>495</sup> “*Necessarium enim et possibile dividunt ens. Si igitur pater non genuit filium necessitate, genuit ipsum contingenter vel possibiliter: quod est impossibile.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 1 (in his answer, Aquinas agrees that the Father begets the Son with necessity, specifying that this necessity is absolute and does not come from anything exterior). “*Si vero medio modo se habeat praedicatum ad subiectum, ut scilicet <nec> per se insit, nec per se repugnet, dicitur enunciatio esse in materia possibili sive contingente.*” *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 3, cf. l. 14, n. 6 – 8 and 22. “*Posito autem contingenti, illud quod accidit non est impossibile, sed possibile et contingens.*” *Expositio Posteriorum Analyticorum*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 9. Cf. also *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 86, n. 8 and probably *De potentia*, q. 2, a. 1, ad 9 and *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2 (considering arg. 2).

<sup>496</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 15, n. 5.

<sup>497</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 2, co.

In a way, there is just one necessary being – God. All the others are only possible from at least two points of view. Firstly, contrary to God, their very existence is not implied by their essence and it depends on another being (ultimately on God). Logically speaking, they could be inexistent. Secondly, they are not infinitely perfect; and consequently, they can always receive some new perfection of being (at least supernaturally). They can always commence to be in a new manner – whether they do, depends on the entities that are able to improve them.<sup>498</sup> Both these understandings of the division illustrate the difference between God and creatures well. Nevertheless, all the differences between creatures stay hidden under their horizon. If we recall what was said about the basic meaning of “possible”, a more worldly (and probably more basic) version of this distinction should exist. In fact, it exists: in Aquinas, the necessary and the possible (or contingent) signifies also two different types of creatures. The *possibilia* are the entities whose existence is bound with some passive subject (either their bearer or the matter they are composed of) which is able to be without them.<sup>499</sup> E.g., Garfield the cat is composed from matter which is able to be without the form of a cat (receiving the form of dust instead); so Garfield is a *possibile*. In contrast, the Sun or Michael the archangel is a *necessarium* because they exist without a subject with such an ability.<sup>500</sup> According to the ancient physics, the only change permitted by the matter of celestial bodies is the change of place and thus, the Sun cannot be destroyed (i.e., changed into something else), for its matter can be never without its form.<sup>501</sup> As for Michael, Aquinas says that there is no matter at all in angels and demons; they are pure forms existing without any bearer in a way somewhat similar to platonic Ideas.<sup>502</sup> Therefore, we can say that there is a type of natural potency for not-being in Garfield that cannot be found in Michael or the medieval Sun

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<sup>498</sup> “*omne enim quod esse suum ab alio habet, non est per se necesse esse, ...; unde, quantum est in se, est possibile, et ista possibilitas dicit dependentiam ad id a quo est. ... Secunda possibilitas consequitur creaturam secundum quod non est perfecta simpliciter; secundum hoc enim semper possibilis est ad receptionem.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 2, co., cf. d. 44, q. 1, a. 1: according to Aquinas, even the humanity of Jesus could have been, in certain ways, more perfect than it was.

<sup>499</sup> “*Est etiam quaedam dependentia sive possibilitas rei secundum partem sui esse, scilicet formam, praesupposita materia, vel eo quod est loco materiae...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 2, co. Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 15, n. 5.

<sup>500</sup> This necessity “*contingit vel quia res illae sunt formae non in materia: et sic non inest ei potentia ad non esse, sed per suam formam semper sunt in virtute essendi; sicut est in substantiis separatis. Vel quia formae earum sua perfectione adaequant totam potentiam materiae, ut sic non remaneat potentia ad aliam formam, nec per consequens ad non esse: sicut est in corporibus caelestibus.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 30, n. 11.

<sup>501</sup> “*materia caeli ex eo quod substat formae quae omnem privationem ab ea excludit, non est in potentia ad corruptionem.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 3, co.; “*in corporibus incorruptibilibus, scilicet caelestibus, est solus motus localis, qui non est secundum aliquid intrinsecum.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 44, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 5, co.

<sup>502</sup> Cf. for example *STh.*, I, q. 50, a. 1 – 2; q. 51, a. 1. There might be some evolution concerning the possible corporeity of some angels in Aquinas’s later writings like *Questio disputata de anima* (a. 8, ad 3) or *De substantiis separatis* (cap. 1 – 4 and 20), but the topic does not have to be discussed here.

and that makes the non-existence of the cat possible in a way (namely, according to the lower causes) which does not concern the angel or the star.<sup>503</sup>

Now, in some more Aristotelian universe there would be one more reason to call Michael and the Sun “necessary”. Their impossibility to be destroyed is coupled with the impossibility of their (properly spoken) generation (i.e., the kind of change resulting in the beginning of their existence). If my matter does not permit a different form but mine, it cannot have been in any other being but me. Consequently, no being could be changed into me – our common matter would have to permit both our forms.<sup>504</sup> *A fortiori*, I cannot be the result of any change, if I do not contain any matter (principle of change) at all. Thus, the only way for Michael to exist in such a universe is to be without beginning – perpetual. So, no time in this universe could be without him, and in this sense, he would be necessary for it.

But such a universe is not Aquinas’s one. It is true that Thomas considers likely that the world never was and never will be without any angel or celestial body. As for the biblical ascription of the celestial bodies’ creation to the Fourth day, he tends to follow Augustin, thinking that the six days of creation should not be understood chronologically.<sup>505</sup> But he admits that it could have been otherwise. The emanation of reality from its first principle (the so-called creation from nothing, cf. chap. 3. I. 2.) is not a change – it cannot change anything because anything capable of a change is its effect.<sup>506</sup> Thus, it provides the possibility of temporal beginning even for the ingenerable entities,<sup>507</sup> and this beginning do not need to coincide with the beginning of the world. This possibility is far from being purely theoretical for Aquinas. In his view, human souls begin to exist as a part of material wholes (human individuals) that belong to *possibilia*, but they survive the destruction of these wholes and in themselves they

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<sup>503</sup> “*Illae igitur res in quibus vel non est materia, vel, si est, non est possibilis ad aliam formam, non habent potentiam ad non esse. Eas igitur absolute et simpliciter necesse est esse. Si autem dicatur quod ea quae sunt ex nihilo, quantum est de se in nihilum tendunt; et sic omnibus creaturis inest potentia ad non esse... Dicuntur enim res creatae eo modo in nihilum tendere quo sunt ex nihilo. Quod quidem non est nisi secundum potentiam agentis. Sic igitur et rebus creatis non inest potentia ad non esse: sed creatori inest potentia ut eis det esse vel eis desinat esse influere...*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 30, n. 2f, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 104, a. 3; *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 3.

<sup>504</sup> “*impossibile est aut quod id quod quandoque factum est, sit incorruptibile, aut quod est ingenitum et semper prius existens, corrumpatur. ... In eo enim quod est generatum, remanet materia potens non esse ... Et eadem ratio est ex parte ingeniti.*” *In De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 29, n. 9 (all of the *In De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 22 – 29 considering the arguments for the necessary connection between destructibility and possibility to be generated).

<sup>505</sup> “*Augustinus enim vult, ... in ipso creationis principio quasdam res per species suas distinctas fuisse in natura propria, ut elementa, corpora caelestia, et substantias spirituales ... nec in distinctione rerum attendendum esse ordinem temporis, sed naturae et doctrinae. Naturae, sicut sonus praecedat cantum naturae, sed non tempore; et ita quae naturaliter priora sunt, prius facta memorantur, sicut terra prius quam animalia... haec opinio plus mihi placet; tamen utramque sustinendo, ad omnia argumenta respondendum est.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 12, q. 1, a. 2, co. As for the creation of angels, cf. for example *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 18.

<sup>506</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 5; lib. 8, l. 2, n. 3 – 5.

<sup>507</sup> Including the universe itself, cf. for example *In De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 29, n. 12.

are immaterial.<sup>508</sup> Because of this, they belong to necessary beings in the same right as angels<sup>509</sup> and like them, they cannot be result of any change (even if unlike them, for their coming to existence they presuppose some changes of matter as a necessary disposition). Thus, every new human is constituted by a brand new necessary being that has been just created from nothing.<sup>510</sup> This case permits to disambiguate particularly well the particular meaning of the necessary/possible in Aquinas's use of this distinction. My soul is a necessary being, never mind the long time that has passed since the beginning of the universe at the moment of its creation, and the possibility that my non-existing brother could have existed instead of me without any particular harm for the universe. The necessity signifies here just the ontological structure of its possessor; it neither means that this possessor is necessarily present in the universe, nor that he is necessary for the universe (or for the goodness or perfection of the universe or something similar).

## II. The Discrepancy problem – the incorruptibility of corruptible ones

### Introduction

The above-mentioned summary of distinctions that are to find in Aquinas's texts could make an impression that Thomas distinguishes carefully which of many meanings of the term in question he is about to use. In fact, most of the time the contrary is the case. For example, from the very beginning of his career, Aquinas uses the term *possibile* both for the negation of impossible and for the middle between impossible and necessary; nevertheless, in all his corpus I have found only two explicit differentiations of these meanings.<sup>511</sup> Some of the other distinctions are mentioned considerably more often but it must not make us forget the following: all these distinctions concern **the undistinguished use** of the term (*im*)*possibile*. For Aquinas, any of the above-mentioned meanings of the term *possibile* can be signified by this term (and, *mutatis mutandis*, by all the “-ibilia”, “-abilia” etc.) *even if it is used without any further specification*. We must keep this in mind if we are to solve the Discrepancy problem.

Let us have a text like the following. “It pertains to the divine providence that anything is left to its own nature because (as Dionysius says) the providence does not tend to destroy the

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<sup>508</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 75, a. 5–6; q. 90, a. 4.

<sup>509</sup> Cf. the criterion of absolute necessity in *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 30, n. 2 and 11.

<sup>510</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 90, a. 2.

<sup>511</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 86, n. 7f; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 9, l. 3, n. 17f.

nature but to save it. The reason for it is the following. The good of the universe exceeds the good of any particular created nature, in a similar way as the good of a nation exceeds the good of a man, as is said in the first book of *Ethics*. But if a nature was changed by providence, being transferred from its grade to a higher one, then even if some good was augmented for this nature, the goodness of the universe would be deprived of something because not all the grades of goodness would be filled; the grade from which that nature have been transferred remaining empty. Thus, I say that if the sin was completely impeded, many grades of goodness would be removed by this since the nature which can sin and not sin (which [i.e., the nature] is good) would be removed; and also the possibility to rise from the sin would be removed and many similar things by whose removal the goodness of the universe would be deprived of much. And so, it pertains to the divine providence to permit that the man is tempted and sins, if he wants.”<sup>512</sup>

This passage contains more than one controversial statement. I am quoting it here because of its assertion that the complete impediment of sin would imply that the nature able both to sin and not to sin would be completely removed from the universe and not only deprived of one of its possibilities. At first reading, it would appear, as if Aquinas stated that the only way to prevent mankind from sinning is the removal of mankind from its existence, probably by its transformation in another, higher, species. But this sounds particularly weird. Firstly, in Aquinas’s universe, there are no higher species unable of (moral) sin, only the lower ones (the animals, plants etc.) – angels can sin as well, and much more terribly.<sup>513</sup> The only higher being completely unable of sin is God. But even if the hypostatic union of humanity and divinity that is realised in Jesus was generalised to all of mankind (Aquinas considers it possible for God’s power, although inconvenient for his wisdom<sup>514</sup>), no removal of mankind would happen: Jesus’s divinity does not remove his humanity, if anything, it makes him more

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<sup>512</sup> “(A)d providentiam divinam pertinet, ut unumquodque in sua natura relinquatur; quia, ut Dionysius dicit, providentia non est corruptiva naturae, sed salvativa. Cujus ratio est, quia bonum universi excedit bonum particulare cujusque naturae creatae, sicut etiam bonum gentis excedit bonum hominis, ut in 1 Ethic. dicitur. Si autem aliqua natura a suo gradu translata in altiore per providentiam mutetur, quamvis aliquod bonum illi naturae excresceret, tamen bonitati universi aliquid detraheretur, dum non omnes gradus bonitatis impleti essent, illo gradu ex quo natura illa translata erat, vacuo remanente. Dico ergo, quod si peccatum omnino impediretur, per hoc multi gradus bonitatis tollerentur: tolleretur enim natura illa quae potest peccare et non peccare; quae quidem bona est; tolleretur etiam hoc quod est de peccato posse resurgere, et multa hujusmodi, quibus ablati, bonitati universi multum detraheretur; et ideo ad providentiam divinam pertinet et hominem tentari permittere, et peccare si vellet.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>513</sup> The quoted article itself states not only the possibility of angelic sin, but the necessity for divine permission of such a sin: “sapiētis est remove hoc modo impedimentum quod natura rei non tollatur: quod non fieret, si hominem vel Angelum in peccatum cadere non permitteret, quamdiu est in statu viae.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3. As for the possibility of sin in all the intellectual creatures, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 63, a. 1, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23, q. 1, a. 1; d. 5, q. 1, a. 1, s. c. 2; *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 109, n. 5 – 8; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 7.

<sup>514</sup> Cf. *STh.*, III, q. 3, a. 7; q. 4, a. 5.

human than any other man. Secondly, Aquinas's statement suggests that for the hypothetically elevated nature, it would be better to be elevated than not. That means that this nature should keep its identity in some way; otherwise the goodness of the elevated state would not concern it: even though a caterpillar is ontologically better than a cabbage, the change of cabbage into a caterpillar(s) does no good to the cabbage and the reason is that the caterpillar is not an improved cabbage. Moreover, even if it happened somehow that it would be, the previous problem would be back: the ontological grade of the cabbage would not be emptied in this case, contrarily to Aquinas's statement. Last but not least, it is not clear why the co-existence of complete innocence and the ability to sin should be impossible at all, no matter how it seems unlikely in the eyes of our daily experience.

## II. 1. A common subterfuge

There is one seductive way to escape at least the last of these problems. The goal of the problematic texts is not to describe the realm of abstract possibilities, but to explain, why God's promotion of good and hindrance of evil is not more efficacious than it is. The reason of these limits is that God has not an absolute control over the decisions of the creatures that he has gifted with freedom. Then, despite all its logical possibility, it is statistically impossible that no creature ever sins. The only way *to assure* the inexistence of sin would be the universe without free creatures. But such a cost is too high to pay for God – as we are said in the Free will defence type of theodicies at least.

You may notice that the divinity that these theodicies want to defend seems somewhat weaker than the One Aquinas believes in. You may remember that his God is omnipotent because he has the power to realise any logical possibility. And you may object that if there is a logical compossibility of the complete innocence and the capacity to sin, he should be able to assure its coexistence, notwithstanding the freedom. And you are right. I actually believe that there is a way to bolster the conception of the freedom as a trouble for God in a way that permits to include Aquinas's conception of divine omnipotence – some Molinist or Suarezian theory of so-called futuribles should do the job. But these theories neither deprive God of (the kind of) control over the least detail of actual human decisions, neither, in themselves, forbid the possibility of the complete collective innocence of free creatures.<sup>515</sup> The abovementioned interpretation of Aquinas would need much stronger independence of creatures than the one the molinist system counts with. Moreover, this independency would have to concern not only

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<sup>515</sup> For the differences between Molina's and Suarez's (and mainstream "Molinist") conception, see DVOŘÁK (2014).

the mysterious root of some libertarian freedom but also the physical roots of, say, dandelion. The reason is that in Aquinas the abovementioned connection between the possibility of sin and the actual sin is just a special case of the connection between the possibility of defect and the actual defect taken as such, including its realisation in the corporeal realm.<sup>516</sup> Some interpreters were led by this to the assertion of great lacunas at least in the earlier thought of Aquinas. According to them, he was unable to explain not only the reliability of the divine predestination of free creatures but also God's providence over the individual physical events in the terrestrial part of universe<sup>517</sup>, e.g. the deaths of the particular sparrows and the falling out of the particular hairs Jesus has spoken about.<sup>518</sup> One of the problems of this interpretation is that early Aquinas himself was clearly convinced that he GAVE such an explanation – and, as we shall see (cf. chap. 5.), the only reason to deny that he was right is the unjustified insistence on the indeterminist interpretation of his texts.

## II. 2. Statistical conception

Simo Knuuttila has gathered some important observations concerning the history of logical paradigms that allow us to see the problem in a different light.<sup>519</sup> Aquinas could have been under an influence of the so-called statistical conception of modal notions. What is the statistical conception of modal notions? Contrary to its meaning in the common language, the word “statistical” does not refer here to any type of probabilist understanding of these notions. While this term was not used uniformly, basically it can be said that the “statistical conception” connects modal characteristics with the (in)occurrence of their bearers in the actual world.<sup>520</sup> In the strongest form of this conception, held by Diodorus Cronus, modal terms *mean* such an (in)occurrence: something is impossible if it never occurs; if it occurs always, it is necessary; if it occurs sometimes, but not always, it is possible (i.e., contingent).<sup>521</sup> A weaker form of this conception would not insist on such an identification, but it would withhold the implication: if there is a true possibility, there is at least one time and place in the universe when and where it is realised. In other words, all the true

<sup>516</sup> “*quod potest deficere, quandoque deficit.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 71, n. 3f, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2; d. 44, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; d. 46, q. 1, a. 3–4; *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 2.

<sup>517</sup> Cf. PALUCH (2004), p. 309.

<sup>518</sup> Cf. Mt 10, 29–31; L 12, 6–7.

<sup>519</sup> In the following sketch, I draw from the fundamental work of KNUUTTILA (1993).

<sup>520</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. vii and 1–18.

<sup>521</sup> “...*circa possibile et necessarium diversimode aliqui sunt opinati. Quidam enim distinxerunt ea secundum eventum, sicut Diodorus, qui dixit illud esse impossibile quod nunquam erit; necessarium vero quod semper erit; possibile vero quod quandoque erit, quandoque non erit.*” *Expositio libri Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 8, cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 14–16 and 37.

possibilities are realised at some time in the history of universe: this is called the Principle of plenitude.<sup>522</sup> Now, you may argue that both this principle and the conception of modalities behind it is not right. Even if something never exists, it does not mean that it is impossible. Maybe there is no pink fluffy unicorn in all the space-time, but there is still a big difference between pink unicorn and, say, square circle: the pink unicorn is thinkable (even imaginable) and somebody (be it God or a genetic engineer who plays him) could even have the power to make it exist. Well, such an argument proves only that you do not have the statistical conception of modal notions. If you had, the argument would sound nonsensical to you. And if we are to believe Simo Knuuttila, there were many people who held this conception, Aristotle being one of them, followed by most of the scholars of Antiquity and Middle Ages.<sup>523</sup>

If you think about it, it is not as strange as it seems at first sight. On the level of the general types of phenomena, statistical conception can work quite well, at least if you either deny or do not think about alternative realities, beginnings of the world and suchlike. Note the following: even today (after all the experiences with discoveries of black swans etc.), if a phenomenon is regularly observed to happen in some particular way and there is no exception to this observation, we tend to think that this particular way of happening is some “law of nature” or suchlike. Some of us even think that any claim of exception from such law (be it in the name of an omnipotent miracle-making God) proves its author to be irrational. Thus, even today for many people “always” often equals “necessary”, “never” means “impossible” and if something is to be considered possible, it must be at some point realised (read “observed”). Welcome in the limited reality of the statistical conception of modalities.

Now, there are some general topics where the statistical conception does not work so well. The reflexion about inexistent siblings and other individual entities is one of them: my father had not and will never have any brothers, but it does not feel right to say that it is impossible for him to have any brothers, not even in the sense the sunrise on the west is impossible. The possibility of free choices and the non-necessary future events like the notorious “tomorrow sea-fight” is another such topic.<sup>524</sup> These problems make most of the users of statistical conception simultaneously employ other modal intuitions, often without any warranty of

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<sup>522</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 4 – 10 and 36. The term “Principle of plenitude” was reportedly first used in LOVEJOY, A., *The great chain of being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1936, see also LLANO (1994), p. 131 – 134.

<sup>523</sup> This is not to say that it is the only conception these people worked with. In Knuuttila’s presentation, there is no scholar (maybe except for Diodorus) with such an exclusive attachment to it.

<sup>524</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *On interpretation*, I, 9, followed by the long line of commentaries focused on this topic.



conceptual coherence between them.<sup>525</sup> But according to Knuuttila, the change of global perspective in the modal area was finally forced by evolution in theology – namely by the advent of Christian conception of immutable God who timelessly freely choses to create a world he could either create differently or not create at all.<sup>526</sup> To think such a God, you need to work with a conception of modalities defined without any reference to the occurrence in time, moreover, a possibility of alternatives that does not need any further change for the realisation of one of them and that remains unchanged by such a realisation. Knuuttila speaks about “synchronic alternative possibilities”<sup>527</sup>: our contemporary notions of logical possibility, the multiplicity of possible worlds or the libertarian freedom arguably imply it. Nevertheless, to arrive from Augustin’s “He could, but He did not want to.”<sup>528</sup> to fourteenth century’s final emancipation from the pre-Christian conceptions via the work of John Duns Scot<sup>529</sup>, nearly one millennium was needed. Aquinas appertains to the immediately previous period when the ancient modal paradigms still coexisted with the new one. The latter is mostly applied in theology to speak specifically about Christian matters; by contrast, statistical conception is still in force in the description of more worldly realities.<sup>530</sup>

So much for an utmost sketch of Knuuttila’s vision of things. I will not enter the debate concerning the accuracy of this vision as a whole, neither question the rightness of its interpretation of the respective authors with some (potential) influence on Aquinas.<sup>531</sup> Even if Knuuttila’s reading of Aristotle or Boethius was wrong, it would prove that their texts could have been read this way, although wrongly. Thus, the possibility of the presence of some statistical conception of modalities in Aquinas has to be taken into account. At least late Aquinas explicitly rejects its strongest (diodorean) version: in his *Exposition of Perihermeneias*, he states that it confounds the nature of modal characteristics with its effects.<sup>532</sup> But this statement itself seems to reveal Aquinas as a supporter of a weaker variant of this conception, accepting at first sight the connection of modal characteristics with the respective (in)occurrences of their bearers in the actual world. As he says in the same text a

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<sup>525</sup> As for pre-augustinian antiquity, Knuuttila mentions the model of partial possibilities and the prospective diachronic alternatives, cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. vii and p. 19 – 38.

<sup>526</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. vii and p. 67 – 70.

<sup>527</sup> Cf. par. ex. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. vii and p. 9.

<sup>528</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 69 quoting AUGUSTIN, *Contra Faustum*, 29, 4 and *De natura et gratia*, 7.

<sup>529</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 138 – 149.

<sup>530</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 100ff.

<sup>531</sup> For the denials of this rightness, see for ex EVANS (2004), LLANO (1994) or GORIS (1996), p. 257 – 275.

<sup>532</sup> “*Utraque autem distinctio videtur esse incompetens. Nam prima distinctio est a posteriori: non enim ideo aliquid est necessarium, quia semper erit; sed potius ideo semper erit, quia est necessarium: et idem patet in aliis.*” *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 8.

lesson before: “in the contingent [matter], the universal [propositions] are false, while the particular are true.”<sup>533</sup>

Let us imagine for a moment that Aquinas’s conception of modalities is actually statistical. Then, the real possibility of (moral or any other) failure would imply that such a failure happens sometimes. Provided that human nature is able of sin, a completely sinless mankind would be equally impossible as a corner-less rectangle. Aquinas’s omnipotent God, with all his perfect control over each particular act of each particular man, could not change anything about it, he could only decide the exact location of the sins/corners. This implication of defect by the defectibility, sometimes stated as such by Aquinas,<sup>534</sup> would only be a special case of a more general rule: “if something is able not to be, sometimes it is not”. This claim is explicitly held by Aquinas, too: you can read it in his most famous text about five ways to prove the existence of God as one of the premises of the Third way.<sup>535</sup> Finally, Thomas repeatedly seems to argue that it is necessary for the universe (and its Creator) to satisfy the Principle of plenitude: the above-quoted justification of the permission of sin is based on something similar (all the grades of perfection are to be fulfilled).<sup>536</sup>

Note that the reading of Aquinas along these lines could serve as a quite strong corroboration for the determinist interpretation of his theology of providence. The indeterminism as we understand it requires that all the necessary conditions for X being accomplished, X can still both happen and not happen. The indeterminist needs to work with the possibility of synchronic alternatives then. In the statistical conception, there is no such possibility: my present sin would be called non-necessary just because the members of my species do not succumb to the temptation whenever it appears.<sup>537</sup> It would mean that my human nature permits both; it would not mean that both were permitted by the whole of causal chains that were active at the moment when I have actually sinned: such a possibility could not be even conceptualised.

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<sup>533</sup> “*In [materia] contingenti vero universales sunt falsae et particulares sunt verae, ita in futuris sicut in praesentibus vel praeteritis.*” *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 5.

<sup>534</sup> “*quod potest deficere, quandoque deficit.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 71, n. 3f.

<sup>535</sup> “*Invenimus enim in rebus quaedam quae suntabilia esse et non esse, cum quaedam inveniuntur generari et corrumpi, et per consequensabilia esse et non esse. Impossibile est autem omnia quae sunt, talia esse, quia quod possibile est non esse, quandoque non est. Si igitur omnia suntabilia non esse, aliquando nihil fuit in rebus.*” *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co.

<sup>536</sup> Cf. the text in the footnote 512 and the texts like *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 91, n. 6 (“*Possunt igitur esse quaedam in genere substantiae omnino absque corpore. Omnes autem naturae possibiles in rerum ordine inveniuntur: aliter enim esset universum imperfectum. In sempiternis etiam non differt esse et posse. Sunt igitur aliquae substantiae absque corporibus subsistentes...*”); *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 5, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 3; lib. 2, d. 1, q. 2, a. 4, s. c. 1; d. 34, q. 1, a. 1, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 85, n. 3; lib. 2, cap. 45; lib. 3, cap. 71, n. 3; cap. 72, n. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 4; q. 47, a. 1f; q. 48, a. 2, co.

<sup>537</sup> Cf. White’s interpretation of the non-necessity of the tomorrow sea-fight quoted in KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 14.

### II. 3. The discrepancy

We have seen that Aquinas's texts forbidding the complete impediment of sin could serve as an argument both for the determinist and the indeterminist reading of his views: it depends on whether we explain them by incompatibility of freedom and complete control, or by statistical conception of modalities. But there is a serious problem that is faced by both of these interpretations equally: the immaculate creatures of Christian faith. Aquinas is clearly convinced that at least one purely human individuum (Virgin Mary) has never sinned, and that this fact is not due to some good luck God would have in the case of this woman but to his extraordinary assistance to her – she is “full of grace”.<sup>538</sup> Moreover, a good part of purely spiritual creatures (i.e. all the holy angels) has never sinned too and for Aquinas it means that there is quite a large number of species which are both able of sin and completely sinless: according to him there is just one individuum per species in the immaterial world.<sup>539</sup> Now, unlike for most present-day readers, these topics are not of marginal importance for Aquinas. In his view, angels are not just some additional decorations on the periphery of the universe. Most of the universe are angels. Each celestial body has its immaterial mover, each human individual has a guardian angel, but this is still just a ridiculously small part of the Nine angelic choirs, most of which never enters into direct contact with the material world. The total sum of all the corporeal species is meaningless compared to the number of angels in the same way as the Earth is quantitatively meaningless compared to the rest of the corporeal universe; it is quite likely that something similar can be said about the total sum of human souls.<sup>540</sup> As for Mary, Aquinas as a medieval Dominican friar passed each day quite a lot of time singing prayers to the Queen of Angels his Order was consecrated to. It seems rather unlikely that speaking about God's possibilities to impede sin, he would completely forget her existence.

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<sup>538</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2f; *STh.*, III, q. 27, a. 3f.

<sup>539</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 62, a. 5 and q. 63, a. 5f for the moral division of angels and *STh.*, I, q. 50, a. 4; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 3, q. 1, a. 4; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 93 for the rule “one angel per species”.

<sup>540</sup> “*sicut corpora superiora digniora sunt inferioribus, ita substantiae incorporeae corporibus sunt etiam digniores; corpora autem superiora in tantum inferiora excedunt, quod terra habet comparationem ad caelum sicut punctum ad sphaeram, ut astrologi probant. Unde et substantiae incorporeae sicut Dionysius dicit, omnem multitudinem materialium specierum transcendent.*” *De potentia*, q. 6, a. 6, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 50, a. 3, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 92; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 3, q. 1, a. 3; “*quantum ad numerum invenitur malum ut in paucioribus in natura angelica: quia multo plures fuerunt remanentes quam cadentes; et forte etiam plures quam omnes damnandi, Daemones et homines.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 63, a. 9. According to Aquinas most of the adult humans will be damned, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3 and a. 7, ad 3.

While both of abovementioned interpretations,<sup>541</sup> if taken as such, end in this impasse (or in the statement of Aquinas's incoherency), I believe that a more nuanced view can be built on the observations included in the second one. To grasp it, the reader must take into account the jungle-like multiplicity of meanings connected with modal notions I have spoken above. I believe that in this jungle, there are two branches which are responsible for our problem, without being in contradiction with the rest though. While one of them really stems from Aquinas's salvage of some Aristotle's opinions via his own philosophy of being, the other seems to be due to proper Christian vision of things.

#### II. 4. The appetite of being

Let us see the first branch. In the final chapters of the first book *On the Heavens*,<sup>542</sup> Aristotle tries to corroborate his own theory of the two-way infinity of time by refuting the alternative possibilities of its one-way infinity: either the universe with a limited past but an endless future, or the inverse, the world doomed to end despite it being without beginning. One part of his argumentation is the following:

“(I)f a thing has for infinite time more than one capacity, another time is impossible, and the times must coincide. Thus, if anything which exists for infinite time is destructible, it will have the capacity of not being. Now, if it exists for infinite time let this capacity be actualized; and it will be in actuality at once existent and non-existent. Thus, a false conclusion would follow because a false assumption was made, but if what was assumed had not been impossible its consequence would not have been impossible. Anything then which always exists is absolutely imperishable. It is also ingenerated, since if it was generated it will have the power for some time of not being. ... But in the case of that which always is, there is no time for such a capacity of not being, whether the supposed time is finite or infinite; for its capacity of being must include the finite time since it covers infinite time. It is therefore impossible that one and the same thing should be capable of always existing and of always not-existing. And 'not always existing', the contradictory, is also excluded.”<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> This is not to say that no other options were proposed: LLANO (1994) challenges Knuuttila's (and Hintikka's) reading of Aquinas's statistical-like passages, combining the viewpoint that I am offering in II. 4. with the assertion, that Aquinas sometimes speaks only about a modality *de dicto* (one cannot simultaneously hold that X never exist and that it is possible that the assertion “X exists.” is true). But neither his exposition of the problem nor his proposed solution counts with the whole of what Aquinas actually says (like Aquinas's assertion that Adam was immortal by the very fact of providential suppression of deadly factors, see below).

<sup>542</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *On the Heavens*, I, 10 – 12.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 (translation of J. L. Stocks).

The reader can see that the soundness of the argument presupposes statistical conception of modalities. From the point of view that is accustomed to the idea of synchronic alternatives it builds on equivocation, confusing the simultaneity of possibility of opposites with one of these opposites on one hand and the absurd possibility of simultaneity of opposites on the other hand. The fact that I have not left my house all day does not mean that I was without the possibility to do it during that time, “the possibility” referring to the power to leave (and not to the power to simultaneously leave and stay). In his commentary to the book *On the Heavens*, Aquinas quotes such an objection, proving his perception of a possible critic of the statistical conception from the synchronic point of view.<sup>544</sup> But quite interestingly, he defends the Philosopher against it despite the fact that for the Christian thinker it should be welcome: Aristotle’s argument could be used to refute the Christian doctrine of the world that is both created a limited amount of time ago and destined to continue forever.<sup>545</sup>

In the very beginning of his comment on this passage, Thomas has quoted the distinction between logical possibility and the possibility from the viewpoint of a power, stating that the Philosopher is speaking about the latter.<sup>546</sup> With this in mind, he neutralises the objection by assertion that there is one fundamental difference between staying at home all day and existing for the infinity of time. Both require a power to do it, but contrary to the power to stay home for one day, the power to exist indefinitely is necessarily “used”, if it exists. Why? According to Aquinas, all the beings (*entia*) contain a natural appetite for being (*esse*).<sup>547</sup> As long as they are able to be, they are. Consequently, if they can exist indefinitely, they exist indefinitely. And for this reason, Aristotle is right: it is impossible that the entity existing for an infinite amount of time is able of not being. Either the entity has the power to exist forever, and so it cannot not exist. Or it has not such a power, and due to the lack of this power it

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<sup>544</sup> “*videtur quod iste processus Aristotelis necessitatem non habeat. Quamvis enim nullius potentia sit ad hoc quod duo opposita sint in eodem tempore in actu, tamen nihil prohibet quod potentia alicuius sit ad duo opposita respectu eiusdem temporis sub disiunctione, aequaliter et eodem modo: sicut potentia mea est ad hoc quod cras in ortu solis vel sedeam vel stem; non tamen ut utrumque sit simul, sed aequaliter possum vel stare non sedendo, vel sedere non stando. ... Eadem enim ratio videtur in toto infinito tempore, et in aliquo toto tempore finito. Etsi enim ponamus quod aliquis sit in domo semper per totam diem, tamen non est impossibile eum in domo non esse in quacumque parte diei: quia non ex necessitate est in domo per totam diem, sed contingenter.*” In *De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 26, n. 6, cf. l. 29, n. 5.

<sup>545</sup> As any reader of *Apocalypse of John* knows, in the Christian context “the end of the world” does not mean the annihilation of the world but its transfiguration into its final, eternal, form (sure, accompanied by a massive destruction of the obsolete structures).

<sup>546</sup> „*sicut dicit philosophus in V Metaphys., possibile et impossibile uno modo dicitur absolute, quia scilicet secundum se est tale quod possit esse verum vel non possit esse verum, propter habitudinem terminorum ad invicem; alio modo dicitur possibile et impossibile alicui, quod scilicet potest vel secundum potentiam activam vel passivam. Et sic accipitur hic possibile et impossibile, scilicet quod aliquod agens aut patiens potest aut non potest...*” In *De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 25, n. 3.

<sup>547</sup> Cf. for ex. *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 2, co.

cannot not cease to exist sooner or later.<sup>548</sup> All the inhabitants of Aquinas's universe can be therefore divided into these two groups. By doing this, we get back to the division between *necessaria* and *possibilia* I have mentioned before, except that now we know that each of the latter is doomed to perish one day, whatever it does – and why it is so.

As I said the impossibilities the text speaks here about are not the logical impossibilities but the impossibilities from the point of view of the powers to exist. If the bearers of these powers themselves do not exist, nor do these impossibilities. Consequently, logically speaking it is not contradictory to say that the entity that is able of infinite existence does not exist, e.g. before the world was created. Thus, Aquinas arrives at both having his cake and eating it: the Philosopher's assertions are right, but as for the beginning of the world, they are supposed to prove (and to want to prove) only the fact that the world is impossible to begin by generation. Its creation from nothing is not touched.<sup>549</sup>

If you return to the assertions of the Third way now, you will find that much of its difficulties disappears, if you read it in the context of what was said above.<sup>550</sup> The *possibility of not being* it speaks about is not logical, it is the characteristic of the entities without the power to exist forever. If all the beings were of this kind, "then at one time there would have been nothing in existence".<sup>551</sup> Later (chap. 3. III. 1. 1. 2.) we will see that Aquinas considers the infinite sequence of perishable beings possible: but according to him it would require the existence of a power that would be able to prolong this sequence indefinitely and thus, a necessary being. Now, could we apply the same interpretative key at Aquinas's statements asserting that it is

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<sup>548</sup> „... *dicendum est quod non est eadem ratio utrobique. Nam illud quod semper est, scilicet per infinitum tempus, habet potentiam ut sit in infinito tempore: potentia autem existendi non est ad utrumque respectu temporis in quo quis potest esse; omnia enim appetunt esse, et unumquodque tantum est quantum potest esse. Et hoc praecipue patet in his quae sunt a natura, quia natura est determinata ad unum. Et sic quidquid semper est, non contingenter semper est, sed ex necessitate.*“ In *De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 26, n. 6 „*Id autem quod naturaliter est per tempus infinitum, necesse est esse: quia necesse est quod unumquodque tantum sit quantum natura rerum habet; non enim aliquid deficit esse nisi quando iam non potest esse, eo quod omnia appetunt esse. Si igitur aliquid ponitur possibile esse, ex hoc ipso necesse est quod ponatur compossibile ei quod necesse est esse. Et ideo si ponamus illud quod semper fuit, fuisse possibile non esse pro illo tempore, sequitur quod possit simul esse et non esse.*“ *ibid.*, l. 29, n. 5. Cf. also *STh.*, I, q. 46, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>549</sup> „...*praedictae rationes Aristotelis procedunt contra positionem ponentem mundum esse factum per generationem, et etiam esse incorruptibilem vel per se vel per voluntatem Dei. Nos autem secundum fidem Catholicam ponimus quod incoepit esse, non quidem per generationem quasi a natura, sed effluens a primo principio, cuius potentia non erat alligata ad dandum ei esse infinito tempore, sed secundum quod voluit, postquam prius non fuerat, ut manifestetur excellentia virtutis eius supra totum ens... Ea vero quae ab eo sic producta sunt ut in sempiternum sint, habent potentiam et virtutem ad semper essendum, et nullo modo ad hoc quod aliquando non sint. Quando enim non erant, talem potentiam non habebant: quando autem iam sunt, non habent potentiam respectu non esse quod prius fuit, sed respectu esse quod nunc est vel erit...*“ In *De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 29, n. 12, cf. also *ibid.*, l. 6, n. 7 – 9.

<sup>550</sup> „*Invenimus enim in rebus quaedam quae sunt possibilia esse et non esse, cum quaedam inveniantur generari et corrumpi, et per consequens possibilia esse et non esse. Impossibile est autem omnia quae sunt, talia esse, quia quod possibile est non esse, quandoque non est. Si igitur omnia sunt possibilia non esse, aliquando nihil fuit in rebus.*“ *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co. Concerning this point, I agree with LLANO (1994), p. 147 – 148.

<sup>551</sup> *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co. (translation of Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920)).

impossible for fallible entities to never fail? The argument from the comment on the book *On the Heavens* is founded on the natural appetite for being. As we have seen (chap. 1. II. 4.), the failures are defined by their non-conformity to the finality of the failing entity and thus, they are by definition against some appetite of this entity. It would seem then that the transposition is possible: if the entity has the power to never fail, it is infallible; if it is not infallible, it has to fail at some time due to the lack of this power.

Maybe there are some very general statements where Aquinas has such an idea in mind,<sup>552</sup> but I do not think it can be generalised. First, if applied on some more specific kinds of failure (e.g. moral ones), the argument would not be generally valid. I could stay sinless even without the power to never sin, if my sin was prevented for example by my premature death. In some cases, it could be argued that Aquinas speaks about (the lack of) the proportion of the normal human capacity to avoid these failures to the length and measure of temptation in normal human life.<sup>553</sup> But it can be hardly the case during his justification of God's actual providential attitude. Most importantly, the kind of impossibilities that are described above is bound with the creaturely *natural* powers. As we have seen, such impossibilities have little to do with God's possibilities and as such, they could not be invoked as an explanation of God's allowing these failures in the same manner as we have seen it. I believe that on the contrary, the true understanding of these texts is to be found in Aquinas's theology of some cases where the creaturely impossibilities are actually overcome by God's power.

## II. 5. *Potentia ordinata*

It was said that in the discourse about God's possibilities the statistical conception of modalities was rather replaced by the newer modal paradigm by the time of Aquinas.<sup>554</sup> This statement can be verified in Aquinas himself: according to him there is an infinity of unrealized possibilities God could have realised, if he wanted, the possibilities transcending the grasp of human intellect.<sup>555</sup> Nevertheless, as a good speculative theologian of his time,

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<sup>552</sup> Cf. the statements like "*quod potest deficere, quandoque deficit.*" in *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 71, n. 3f or "*Si autem non provenirent aliqua ut in minori parte, omnia ex necessitate acciderent: nam ea quae sunt contingentia ut in pluribus, in hoc solo a necessariis differunt, quod possunt in minori parte deficere.*" *ibid.*, cap. 74, n. 2.

<sup>553</sup> Cf. maybe the impossibility of preserving complete innocence for any human infected by the inclination to sin (*fomes*) in *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 38, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 1, or the impossibility of the uninterrupted actual thinking on God during this life cf. *STh.*, II-IIae, q. 24, a. 8, co.; *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 10, ad 3 and ad 5; a. 11, ad 2; *De perfectione*, cap. 4 – 6.

<sup>554</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 100ff.

<sup>555</sup> "*Sed quod non intelligibile est homini, Deo possibile est. Cum enim divina natura et virtus, quae infinita est, nostrum intellectum excedat, nihil quod intelligere possimus, est quod Deus facere non possit; sed multa quae*

Thomas dare to venture to explore some of the eventual limits (or limitlessness) of this unworldly area. God could have created a world with an earlier temporal beginning or with no temporal beginning at all, the inexistence of heavens or the existence of multiple suns are possible for him.<sup>556</sup> None of his actual creations is indispensable for him: he could always create another equally perfect creature or simply get by without any creature at all.<sup>557</sup> He could have created an infinity of species better than any species in this world (though, not all at once) and thus, he could create a better world, more precisely a world that would be better than ours in many important respects and as good as ours in the others. On the other hand, he could not create a world (and even less an individual creature) without the possibility to be ameliorated at least in some respects.<sup>558</sup> We will look at the question of this freedom of Aquinas's God more thoroughly later (cf. chap. 4. III.), but we can already see that he is rarely in the situation of the impossibility to do otherwise. The thing is that if we approach the particular events of the history of salvation, the negation of such an impossibility can become somewhat uncomfortable. It is that some witnesses of the Christian revelation tend to consider at least one of these events as the only existing possibility: "Was it not *necessary* that the Messiah should suffer these things...?"<sup>559</sup>

Thomas's attitude to this issue can be probably best seen in his early answer to the question whether the Father or the Holy Ghost could incarnate.<sup>560</sup> Thomas distinguishes four types of objects here.

1) First, the logical *impossibilia* and the entities/states that imply some limitation of the power of the entity for which they are possible (e.g. to die). There is no way God (taken as such) could be said able of them. As for the latter, to be able of them is not a power but a weakness and therefore their possibility for God would deny the limitlessness of his power.<sup>561</sup> As for the

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*intelligere non possumus, facere potest, et in ipso esse possunt et sunt.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 3, a. 2, expos., cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 5, n. 3.

<sup>556</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 3, a. 2, expos.; d. 42, q. 2, a. 2, co.; lib. 3, d. 2, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 3, expos.; *De aeternitate mundi*; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 10; a. 17, co.

<sup>557</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, co.; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 17, ad 7 and ad 14.

<sup>558</sup> Cf. the most detailed elaboration of this topic in *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 1 – 3: "*potest intelligi universum fieri melius, vel per additionem plurium partium, ut scilicet crearentur multae aliae species, et implerentur multi gradus bonitatis qui possunt esse, cum etiam inter summam creaturam et Deum infinita distantia sit...*" (a. 2, co.). For later texts, cf. *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 5, ad 14f; q. 3, a. 14, ad 6; *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 6.

<sup>559</sup> L 24, 26 (the emphasis is mine), cf. Mt 16, 21; Mc 8, 31; L 9, 22; J 3, 14; Act 17, 3.

<sup>560</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3, co. As for another important texts, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 5, ad 1; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>561</sup> "*non dicimus Deum in natura divinitatis posse pati vel mori, vel aliquid hujusmodi; sicut non dicimus eum posse esse impotentem.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3, co. The specification "*in natura divinitatis*" sets aside the weakness assumed by the divine person during the Incarnation. By confessing that his God died on the cross, Aquinas means that the divine person of Son that was unified with the human nature as the hypostasis of Jesus, died from the point of view of this nature; from the point of view of his divine nature Jesus stayed very much alive even during his death (in a way, the death was swallowed by the Life).



former, the omnipotent God can do anything he wants; the problem is that the logical contradiction does not mean anything. In some texts Thomas states that saying “these *impossibilia* cannot be realised” is more appropriate than “God cannot realise them”.<sup>562</sup> It seems that this preference is due to the effort to evade the false impression that God’s possibilities are said to be limited (e.g. by the laws of logic), while the contrary is true: everything is possible for God, it is just that the *impossibilia* do not belong to the everything.

2) Second, the things that are incompatible with God’s infinite perfection, e.g. the sin. Their occurrence in the case of God is absolutely impossible, nevertheless, Aquinas states that contrarily to the previous ones there is a way to truthfully say that God could do them: *God could do them, if he wanted to do them*. The antecedent of this conditional sentence is impossible, and so is the consequent, but the whole of the sentence is true: Aquinas shares the conviction that the (material) implication is false, only if the consequent is false despite the antecedent being true. If the antecedent is false, the falsity (and even less the truth) of consequent does not destroy the truth of the whole statement.<sup>563</sup>

3) Third, all the other logically possible objects are possible from the point of view of God’s *potentia absoluta*, i.e. from the point of view of his power considered without the consideration of his other attributes. The unrealised possibilities that are mentioned in the beginning of this subsection are the possibilities from the point of view of God’s power, if it is considered this way (according to Aquinas, the possibility of the Father’s incarnation also belongs to this category). But all of them are impossible from the point of view of God’s *potentia ordinata*, i.e. from the point of view of his power considered inasmuch it is directed by God’s wisdom and will (or love).<sup>564</sup> Let me prevent a misunderstanding. By wisdom and love Aquinas does not mean here these perfections considered in general. In such a sense, any act that would be done against them or even only without them would be contrary to God’s perfection and belong to the second category. By love and wisdom Aquinas means here the

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<sup>562</sup> “*Ea vero quae contradictionem implicant, sub divina omnipotentia non continentur, quia non possunt habere possibilitatem rationem. Unde convenientius dicitur quod non possunt fieri, quam quod Deus non potest ea facere.*” *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 3, co.

<sup>563</sup> “*...non enim inconueniens est ut in conditionali vera antecedens sit impossibile.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3, co. cf. *ibid.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2; lib. 3, d. 12, q. 2, a. 1, co.; lib. 4, d. 18, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 1, ad 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 7; cap. 20, n. 16; *STh.*, I<sup>a</sup>, q. 25, a. 3, ad 2; q. 44, a. 1, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 10, ad 15; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 12; q. 16, a. 5, ad 7; *Quodlibet V*, q. 2, a. 2, ad arg.; *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 1, n. 6; lib. 8, l. 21, n. 3.

<sup>564</sup> “*Huic autem potentiae absolute consideratae quando attribuitur aliquid quod vult facere et sapientia sua habet ut faciat, tunc dicitur posse illud secundum potentiam ordinatam; quando autem potentia se extendit quantum in se est ad illud quod sibi attribuitur, quamvis non habeat ejus sapientia et voluntas ut ita fiat, tunc dicitur posse illud de potentia absoluta tantum.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3, co.

definite decision of God's loving will, and the definite intellectual project chosen by this decision.<sup>565</sup>

4) Fourth, from the viewpoint of God's power directed by this project and the decision only the things that correspond to this project are possible, which makes the scope of this possibility limited to the content of the actual world. Why? Well, remember that Aquinas's God is a completely simple being.<sup>566</sup> The real difference between the activity, the power to this activity, the subject of this power and the other qualities of this subject is absent in him. "God's power", "God's wisdom" and "God's will" does not refer to three different things, no more than "Venus", "Morning star" and "Evening star". They are just three different analogies meant to give an idea of one infinite and incomprehensible reality (called also "God") from three different points of view.<sup>567</sup> Any disharmony between "God's power" and "God's will" or "wisdom" is therefore strictly impossible.<sup>568</sup> Using the analogy based on a man who never strikes more than he could reasonably want, we can say that God's power strictly follows his will and his wisdom. Consequently, the things that God does in the actual world are the only things he can do from the point of view of *potentia ordinata*. Aquinas states that these things are possible for God *simpliciter*.<sup>569</sup>

Now, there are some features of the actual world which are not possible from the point of view of *potentia ordinata*, if by "possible from the point of view" we mean "possible for". According to Aquinas moral evils (more precisely, the privations constituting the moral badness of morally evil acts) occurring in this world are not God's doing; to cause them is just

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<sup>565</sup> "sunt quaedam quae habent aliquid in se divinae sapientiae et bonitati repugnans inseparabiliter conjunctum, ut peccare, mentiri, et hujusmodi; et etiam ista dicimus Deum non posse: quaedam vero sunt quae de se non habent inconvenientiam ad divinam sapientiam, sed solum ex ordine aliquo suae praescientiae, quem Deus in rebus statuit vel praevidit, secundum suam voluntatem, ut quod caput hominis sit inferius et pedes superius; et huiusmodi Deus potest facere, quia potest statuere alium ordinem in rebus secundum quem sit conveniens quod nunc secundum istum ordinem qui rebus inest, inconveniens videtur." *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3, co.

<sup>566</sup> Cf. par ex. *STh.*, I, q. 3; q. 13, a. 1 – 4.

<sup>567</sup> It has been argued that the activities of Aquinas's God (including his volitions and cognitive states) that have for object the content of the actual world are either not identical with God (being just his external denominations) or not "object specific" (i.e., it is not true that the numerically same act is not compossible with different objects). I will deal with these ideas progressively in the following chapters (cf. chap. 3. II. 8. 3 – 4. and chap. 4. III. 1.). A further specification would be needed to say, whether these opinions are of any concern regarding the reasons for Aquinas's statements concerning the possible from the viewpoint of *potentia ordinata*, or even contradict these statements themselves: if they did, it would be only one more reason to reject their claim to be a plausible interpretation of Aquinas.

<sup>568</sup> "in nobis, in quibus est aliud potentia et essentia a voluntate et intellectu, et iterum intellectus aliud a sapientia, et voluntas aliud a iustitia, potest esse aliquid in potentia, quod non potest esse in voluntate iusta, vel in intellectu sapiente. Sed in Deo est idem potentia et essentia et voluntas et intellectus et sapientia et iustitia. Unde nihil potest esse in potentia divina, quod non possit esse in voluntate iusta ipsius, et in intellectu sapiente eius." *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 5, ad 1.

<sup>569</sup> "Quaedam vero de se repugnantiam non habent, sed solum ab exteriori; et talia absolute concedendum est Deum posse de potentia absoluta... Qaedam vero sunt quae attribuuntur potentiae, ita quod voluntati et sapientiae ejus congruunt; et haec simpliciter dicendum est Deum posse, et nullo modo ea non posse." *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3, co.

as (im)possible for God as to sin himself.<sup>570</sup> As such they are not within the scope of *potentia ordinata*. Nevertheless, if by “possible from the point of view” we mean “compossible with”, all the entities of the actual world, and the actual world as a whole, get the same status: they are the only possibility and as such, they are necessary. Aquinas’s God is omniscient and infallible.<sup>571</sup> Later in this book I will gather the evidence for the controversial statement that in the case of the knowledge of the actual world, this infallible omniscience is connected with God’s causality. But whatever the reason for this universal knowledge, one thing can be assumed as uncontroversial: in Aquinas’s view there is no detail of the actual world God’s project would not count with.<sup>572</sup> Consequently, even if Judas’s treason is not God’s doing in the same way as Paul’s vocation<sup>573</sup>, it is necessary from the point of view of *potentia ordinata* because from this point of view, God cannot prevent it. Thus, while from the point of view of *potentia absoluta* Aquinas can sing that just one drop of Jesus’s blood could free the entire world from all its sins<sup>574</sup> (God having the infinity of other possibilities to do the same), from the point of view of *potentia ordinata* the Messiah had to die on the cross and rise the third day, as it was foretold.<sup>575</sup> But what is more interesting for our issue, if some general possibility was completely unrealised in the actual world, it would mean that from the latter point of view this possibility would be impossible.

## II. 6. The impossible possibilities

We can actually find some Aquinas’s texts where he undoubtedly uses a similar notion of (im)possibility of general determinations.

1) One of the reasons for the immutability of indestructible beings that are stated in Aquinas’s *Sentences* is God’s decision to never annihilate them: the end of their existence is said to be opposite to something necessary (the divine act of the particular choice not to annihilate them), and therefore impossible.<sup>576</sup>

<sup>570</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1 – 2; *STh.*, I-IIae, q. 79, a. 1 – 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1 – 2.

<sup>571</sup> “*Deus dicitur omnisciens quia scit omnia scibilia...*” *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 7, ad 1; “*...praescientia Dei infallibilis est etiam contingentium futurorum, inquantum Deus intuetur in suo aeterno futura...*” *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 140, co.

<sup>572</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 5 and 12; *STh.*, q. 14, a. 11 and 13; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 35, q. 1, a. 5; d. 36, q. 1, a. 1; d. 38, q. 1, a. 5.

<sup>573</sup> Cf. DS 1556.

<sup>574</sup> Cf. *Adoro te devote*, str. 6.

<sup>575</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 20, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 3 and a. 4, qc. 1; *STh.*, III, q. 46, a. 1 – 2.

<sup>576</sup> “*nihil dicitur possibile cujus contrarium est necessarium, vel quod non potest esse, nisi impossibili posito. Esse autem creaturae omnino deficere non potest, nisi retrahatur inde fluxus divinae bonitatis in creaturis, et hoc est impossibile ex immutabilitate divinae voluntatis, et contrarium necessarium.*” (the other reason is that, properly speaking, the annihilation would not be the change any way) *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 2, co. You may find strange that the act of divine free choice is considered necessary. I discuss this topic in chap. 4. III.

2) The immortality (i.e., the impossibility of death) of man before the Fall is considered similarly.<sup>577</sup> According to Aquinas, the inherent preternatural gifts given to the mankind at the time of the Original justice (including the bolstering of the soul's power to make the body exist) resulted in the state that was similar to the condition of Tolkien's elves: a superhumanly perfect and absolutely healthy unaging creatures that could be however destroyed by the hostility of external factors. However, the providential care assured that the sinless man never encountered such a destructive situation. Despite its exteriority to Adam's constitution, this simple fact means for Aquinas not only that Adam could not be destroyed before the Fall, but also that he was indestructible.<sup>578</sup> That means that he belonged, for a time, to the group of necessary beings. Against the Aristotelian objection arguing that the corruptible cannot become incorruptible, Thomas argues that "something that is possible because of its nature never becomes necessary according to its nature because of another entity, i.e., not in such a way that it would have the nature of necessity. Nevertheless, something that is possible because of itself, becomes necessary because of another entity, although not naturally, as it happens in all the violent [effects] that are said [to be] necessary because of another entity..."<sup>579</sup>

3) Aquinas applies explicitly the same model to the case of the moral perfection of Virgin Mary.<sup>580</sup> After her first consecration in utero, Mary was extraordinarily bolstered against moral failures both by the removal of internal disharmonies and the strengthening of her tendencies to the good; nevertheless, only the providential care assuring that she never fails made her completely immune to sin in the stage of her life preceding the conception of Jesus.<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 19, q. 1; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 9, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 97, a. 1 – 2.

<sup>578</sup> "*Communiter dicitur pati quidquid recipit aliquid quocumque modo... proprie dicitur pati secundum quod passio sequitur alterationem qua aliquid transmutatur ab eo quod est sibi secundum naturam ... Primo ergo modo accepta passione, corpus Adae passibile erat; secundo modo accepta, tunc dicendum est, corpus ejus fuisse passibile secundum quid, scilicet si peccaret; et impassibile simpliciter...*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 19, q. 1, a. 3, co. "*quamvis caro Adae mollis esset et divisibilis, tamen per providentiam suam continebatur a tali passione, ... per divinam providentiam ab omni violentia conservabatur illaesus.*" *Ibid.*, ad 5, cf. a. 4, co. As for the criterion according to which Adam was impassible *simpliciter*, cf. p. 7, n. 446: he could not be subjected to any destructive factor without being first disposed to it by his own sin.

<sup>579</sup> "*id quod de sui natura est possibile, nunquam per aliud fit necessarium secundum suam naturam, ita scilicet quod naturam necessitatis habeat. Tamen quod est possibile ex seipso, fit necessarium per aliud, licet non naturaliter; sicut accidit in omnibus violentis quae dicuntur necessaria per aliud...*" *De malo*, q. 5, a. 5, ad 10.

<sup>580</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2; *STh.*, III, q. 27, a. 3f.

<sup>581</sup> "*immunitas a tribus causabatur; scilicet ex ligatione fomitis, qui ad malum non incitabat; ex inclinatione gratiae, quae in bonum ordinabat, ... et iterum ex conservatione divinae providentiae, quae eam intactam custodivit ab omni peccato, sicut et in primo statu hominem ab omni nocivo protexisset.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, co. In contrast, the confirmation in the moral goodness after the conception of Jesus comes from the grace that was hereafter inherent to Mary and as such it is compared by Aquinas to the indestructibility of celestial bodies, cf. *ibid.*, qc. 3.

4) Finally, most striking is probably the case of Aquinas's early conception of the immortality of the damned. Thomas thinks that the resurrected body of the damned will be the body she had (or would have) in her prime (i.e. in her thirties), except for the removal of all the unnatural (both congenital and acquired) defects.<sup>582</sup> Contrarily to the bodies of the blessed ones, no preternatural qualities will be added to it. Why will it not burn down in the infernal fire then? Well, the celestial movements will be already stopped at the time of the general Resurrection and in Aquinas's view, these movements are a natural *conditio sine qua non* for all the other physical changes.<sup>583</sup> I will return to this strange conviction later (chap. 3. III. 1. 4. 2 – 3.). For now, we can see that in Aquinas's view not only can a creature be changed from possible to necessary, but it can be changed so without any changes of its internal features; he considers the removal of the factors that are able to destroy it sufficient.

## II. 7. The proposed solution of the Discrepancy problem

If we apply the above-mentioned model of indefectibility on the texts that condition the universal elimination of sin by the elimination of the nature that can sin, we can see that it works. “The nature that can sin” and “the nature that cannot sin” does not need to mean two specifically different (groups of) natures (e.g. humanity or Michaelity) but the kind of determination similar to the “established nature”, “the fallen nature” or “the glorified nature”.<sup>584</sup> Thus, the change of the nature that can sin into a higher one does not need to mean the change of one species (or of a group of species) that can sin into another species that cannot sin, but the passage of one and the same species from one state to another. During such an elevation that species would keep its specific identity and it could therefore profit from the higher state it achieved. From the point of view of its specific nature, it would be still able of

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<sup>582</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 44, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 1, co. and q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1, co.

<sup>583</sup> “...*dupliciter potest contingere ut corpus quod ex conditione suorum principiorum corruptibilitatem habet, incorruptibile reddatur. Uno modo ex hoc quod principium ad corruptionem movens totaliter tollitur; et hoc modo corpora damnatorum incorruptibilia erunt. Cum enim caelum sit primum alterans per motum suum localem, et omnia alia agentia secunda in virtute ipsius agant, et quasi ab ipso mota; oportet quod cessante motu caeli, nihil sit agens quod possit corpus per alterationem aliquam transmutare a sua naturali proprietate; ... Corruptio autem est terminus alterationis... Alio modo contingit ex hoc quod principium corruptionis impeditur; et hoc modo corpus Adae incorruptibile fuit; quia contrariae qualitates in corpore hominis existentes, continebantur per gratiam innocentiae ne ad dissolutionem corporis agere possent; et multo plus continebantur in corporibus gloriosis, ... et sic in corporibus beatorum post resurrectionem communem conjungentur duo praedicti modi incorruptibilitatis.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 44, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 2, co., cf. *Quodlibet VII*, q. 5, a. 1. In his later writings, Aquinas's conception evolves and becomes in general more complex, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 89; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 177; *De 43 articulis*, a. 19–26; *De 36 articulis*, a. 10, 11, 14, 19, 20.

<sup>584</sup> Cf. “*perfectio hominis multipliciter assignatur; est enim perfectio naturae conditae, et naturae glorificatae...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 48, q. 2, a. 5, ad 3; “*perfectio naturae conditae maior est quam perfectio naturae lapsae.*” *De veritate*, q. 18, a. 4, s. c. 3.

sin: Aquinas's conviction about the existence of a possibility of sin in all intellectual creatures would not be challenged by this. Nevertheless, this nature would become unable of sin from the very same point of view from which the first man was indestructible before the Fall: in Aquinas's universe this kind of impossibility of X is really implied by the fact that X had never happened, is never happening, nor will happen. And thus, in a way, if no human nor angel sinned, the universe would be deprived of the nature that is able of sin and consequently it would be imperfect, one grade of the perfection scale staying empty.<sup>585</sup> The natural condition of the will would be destroyed and "the character of the will existing in such a nature" (i.e., the nature that is able of failure) would be removed from the reality.<sup>586</sup> *Voilà*, the reason for God to let the morally changeable creatures to change sometimes in wrong direction,<sup>587</sup> permitting the failure of some aides he sends to them for their moral improvement.<sup>588</sup> *Mutatis mutandis*, the same key can be used to understand not only the texts that consider the physical failures being implied by the nature that is able of failure<sup>589</sup>, but also some texts speaking on the contrary about the impossibility of universal occurrence of some defect.<sup>590</sup> But what about the Principle of plenitude? Aquinas clearly does not believe in a full-blown version of it: we have seen that the disproportion between the infinity of God's power and the finitude of any possible world implies that the universe inhabited by all possible species is strictly impossible for him. What he seems to believe in is a weaker statement: "the perfection of universe consists in the fact that all perfections (*bonitates*) that are communicable to creatures are *generically* communicated."<sup>591</sup> If he is speaking about the non-emptiness of all the grades of perfection, he probably has in mind only the general determinations like necessary/contingent, corporeal/spiritual, living/non-living etc. At least, I have never seen any of his texts that would require something more than that. Obviously, you can still wonder whether it should be actually necessary for God to act even according to this weaker principle: but to question this Aquinas's assumption does not question his inner coherence. We shall touch Aquinas's reasons for this view later (see chap. 5. II – III. 1.).

If the abovementioned interpretation is correct, neither determinism nor indeterminism of God's causality is implied. The possibility of synchronic alternatives is not excluded and thus,

<sup>585</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2.

<sup>586</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2.

<sup>587</sup> Cf. *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 144.

<sup>588</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, co.

<sup>589</sup> Cf. also *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 3-4; *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 2.

<sup>590</sup> Cf. *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 10, l. 2, n. 12 (failure of natural judgement); *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 20, co. (universally disproportionate matter).

<sup>591</sup> "...perfectio universi in hoc consistit quod omnes bonitates creaturarum communicabiles in genere communicatae sunt..." *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23, q. 1, a. 1, s. c. 1 (the emphasis is mine) – Aquinas lets this argument be without any correction for his part.

the indeterminism does not lose this *conditio sine qua non* of its conceivability. On the other side, there is no assertion of some entity escaping God's control. On the contrary, the type of modal evaluation we have seen counts with the fact that the actual world is the only world compossible with God's *potentia ordinata*. Something like this would fit more smoothly to a determinist account. The only question is whether in Aquinas's view, the absolute reliability of God's knowledge of this world, implied in *potentia ordinate*, depends on something other than his causality: if it depends, the indeterminism is not automatically excluded. I will talk this matter later (chap. 5. I.).

## II. 8. The consideration of possible textual objections

The value of the interpretation I have proposed consists in its ability to explain quite a lot of problematic textual data. This is why I think it is right. I concede that there are some texts that cannot be explained in this way. But I do not think that it proves its wrongness in the cases that it can explain; it proves only that the other texts need some other explanation. And I believe that such an explanation can be provided without invoking either the statistical conception of modalities or God's lack of control over the universe.

1) "The universe without any badness would not be as good as this universe, because, in that universe, there would not be as many good natures as in this one, in which there are some good natures to which badness is not attached, and some others to which it is attached. And the existence of both kinds of natures is better than the existence of the former without the latter."<sup>592</sup>

It seems clear that in this text the term "natures" does not mean the general form of "the nature to which badness is attached", but some more particular determinations, maybe even specific ones. Note that Aquinas does not argue here by the need to complete the scale of perfections but simply by the greater number of natures. Also, the question concerns badness in general, not only the moral badness. Thus, the natures connected with badness could be the natures of the material beings whose coming to existence is connected with the destruction of others, e.g. the form of mixed body that is connected with the destruction of the elements this

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<sup>592</sup> "*universum in quo nihil mali esset, non esset tantae bonitatis quantae hoc universum: quia non essent tot bonae naturae in illo sicut in isto, in quo sunt quaedam naturae bonae quibus non adjungitur malum, et quaedam quibus adjungitur: et est melius utrasque naturas esse, quam alteras tantum...*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5.

body is composed from.<sup>593</sup> Alternatively, he could mean the entities God could not reasonably protect against all the destruction, because this destruction can generate some more perfect beings.<sup>594</sup> Finally, there is no evidence in this text that Aquinas speaks only about substances: he could speak about different species of movements that imply destruction, or also about moral virtues that presuppose some evil, e. g. the notorious patience of martyrs.<sup>595</sup>

2) "...speaking about all the bad things in general, it is true that if their existence were not permitted, the universe would be more imperfect; because there would not be the natures whose condition implies that they can fail, and if they were removed, the universe would be more imperfect because not all the grades of goodness would be filled. ... But some bad things are such that without their existence, the universe would be more perfect: [I mean] those that remove some greater perfections than those [the perfections] that are acquired in something different [thanks to them], as is the case primarily in the badness of moral failure (*culpae*) ... Thus, if no human sinned, the whole mankind would be better..."<sup>596</sup>

On one hand, Aquinas holds the familiar statement that the total impediment of badness implies the removal of natures that are able of failure and thus, it would make the universe worse than it is. But on the other hand, he states that in the case of moral badness, its non-existence would make the universe better. The reason for this second statement – no perfection that can be achieved only on the occurrence of moral evil is bigger than the perfection that is destroyed by it – seems to be proper to this earliest stage of Aquinas's thought; to my knowledge he never repeats it, later parallel texts implying in general the contrary.<sup>597</sup> That makes particularly difficult to understand his position here. The most

<sup>593</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 3, ad 6: In Aquinas's view, the mixed body (e.g. the plant) keeps some determinations of the elements it has originated from (e.g. the water, the earth), but the elements themselves are destroyed by its generation.

<sup>594</sup> Cf. *ibid.* According to Aquinas, the destruction of an element is an evil followed by the good that is greater than the good that has been destroyed.

<sup>595</sup> "*aliquod bonum est quod non posset elici nisi ex aliquo malo, sicut bonum patientiae non nisi ex malo persecutionis elicitur, et bonum poenitentiae ex malo culpae*" *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 4, ad 5, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 9, ad 1; q. 22, a. 2, ad 2; *Super Psalmo 9*, n. 24; *Super Psalmo 43*, n. 10; *Super I Cor.*, cap. 11, vs. 19.

<sup>596</sup> "*...de omnibus malis universaliter verum est quod si non permetterentur esse, universum imperfectius esset; quia non essent naturae illae ex quorum conditione est ut deficere possint; quibus subtractis universum imperfectius esset, non impletis omnibus gradibus bonitatis. Sed aliqua mala sunt quae si non essent, universum esset imperfectius; illa scilicet ad quae consequitur major perfectio quam illud quod privatur; sicut est corruptio elementorum, ad quam sequitur mixtio, et formae mixtorum nobiliores formis elementorum. Quaedam vero mala sunt quae si non essent, universum perfectius esset; illa scilicet quibus majores perfectiones privantur quam in alio acquirantur, sicut praecipue est in malis culpae, quae ab uno privant gratiam et gloriam, et alteri conferunt bonum comparationis, vel aliquam rationem perfectionis, qua etiam non habita, posset perfectio ultima haberi; sicut sine patientiae actu in persecutionibus illatis potest aliquis ad vitam aeternam pervenire. Unde si nullus homo peccasset, universum genus humanum melius foret.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 3, ad 6.

<sup>597</sup> "*Ipsam autem totum quod est universitas creaturarum, melius et perfectius est, si in eo sint quaedam quae a bono deficere possunt, quae interdum deficiunt, Deo hoc non impediante. ... multa bona tollerentur, si Deus*



intuitive reading would probably be the following: the best option for the universe (from the point of view of this topic) would be the presence of a physical badness without any occurrence of moral badness. Thus, the grade of fallible natures would be filled (by material beings subjected to destruction, suffering etc.) and the existence of goods that are conditioned by the destruction of some lesser goods (e.g. the generation of animals allowed by the destruction of plants) would be permitted, all the moral values staying intact. There would be no need to explain why God has not chosen this option though; two *distinctiones* before Aquinas explained, that his God cannot create the world that would be the best possible world from all the points of view.<sup>598</sup>

If this was Aquinas's position here, it would have had to be already abandoned by the time of writing of *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23 (i.e., sometimes during the next academic year) where he stated that the perfection of the universe required not only the occurrence of fallible nature in general, but also the occurrence of morally fallible nature in particular. Such a shift in opinion is not impossible – as I said, Aquinas's position in this Ad 6 must be taken as provisory. But if this is the case, his slightly earlier statements explaining the permission of moral evil by God's will to conserve the condition of nature of free creatures<sup>599</sup> must be taken in a particularly weak sense: this conservation would be a limited good God has decided to pursue without any intrinsic impossibility to prefer the contrary.

Because, personally, I find nothing absolutely inconvenient in the universe inhabited only by immaculate creatures (without denying the specific bright sides of the existence of dark-siders) I think that Aquinas could have had this possibility in mind; the first book of his *Sentences* stresses particularly the range of God's alternative possibilities. If not, another alternative reading of the text in question is available: the crucial statement can be understood as a conditional statement with the impossible antecedent. We have already seen that Aquinas regularly allows the usage of such a linguistic structure; he interprets himself some problematic statements of authorities this way.<sup>600</sup> Thus, "if there were no sins, the universe

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*nullum malum permetteret esse. Non enim generaretur ignis, nisi corrumperetur aer ... neque etiam laudaretur iustitia vindicans, et patientia sufferens, si non esset iniquitas.*" *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 2, ad 3, cf. *ibid.*, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2; q. 23, a. 5, ad 3; q. 48, a. 2, co.; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 4, ad 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 71; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 142 and the already quoted *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>598</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 2.

<sup>599</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2.

<sup>600</sup> "...non enim inconveniens est ut in conditionali vera antecedens sit impossibile." *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3, co., cf. *ibid.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2; lib. 3, d. 12, q. 2, a. 1, co.; lib. 4, d. 18, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 1, ad 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 7; cap. 20, n. 16; *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 3, ad 2; q. 44, a. 1, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 10, ad 15; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 11 – 12; q. 16, a. 5, ad 7; *Quodlibet V*, q. 2, a. 2, ad arg.; *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 1, n. 6; lib. 8, l. 21, n. 3. Probably the hottest of these topics is the alleged divine possibility to perform morally wrong actions Aquinas reads in his Aristotle, cf. *Topics*, IV, 5 (according to editors of Leonina edition, see *Opera omnia...*, t. 23: *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* (1982), p. 66).

would be better” could have a similar meaning to “if the donkey had reason, it would be more perfect than it is”: it would stress the importance of the reality spoken of in the antecedent (the sins) without stating that the antecedent is possible. The function of such a statement would be clear: for once there is no possibility to mistake Aquinas’s God for somebody who uses sins as tools for a greater good according to the maxim “the end justifies the means”.

3) “in the contingent [matter], the universal [propositions] are false, while the particular [propositions] are true, whether they are in future, present or past tense...”<sup>601</sup>

Few lines above, the contingent matter Aquinas is speaking about was defined by him as follows: the predicate neither per se appertains to the subject, nor it is per se repugnant to it.<sup>602</sup>

This would seem to denote that it is the logical contingency Aquinas is speaking about, while the consideration of tensed proposition seems to imply that their truth or falsity concerns the actual world. If both was true, all the logical possibilities should be realised sometimes during history; Knuuttila’s statement of Aquinas’s commitment to the statistical conception of modalities in this text would be difficult to deny.<sup>603</sup> This would be further confirmed by Aquinas’s critic of Diodor one lesson later. As I have already mentioned, Aquinas considers Diodor’s distinction of modalities incompetent because of it being *a posteriori*: “something is not necessary, because it will always be, but rather it will always be, because it is necessary. And the same is evident in the case of others.”<sup>604</sup> If this is so, then even if the (in)occurrence in time is not the meaning of modal notions, it is still implied by them. In the case of Diodor’s notion of possibility (something which sometimes is and sometimes is not), the strong version of the principle of plenitude would be inevitable.

In my view, Knuuttila makes these texts say much more than they are actually saying. As for the latter, Aquinas’s goal here is not to mark the elements of truth in Diodor’s position but to show the reasons of its incompetence: the distinction of modalities by something which is posterior to them and which therefore already presupposes their difference. As an example, he says that “to be always” is the effect and not the reason of necessity: in this text he does not

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<sup>601</sup> “In [materia] contingenti vero universales sunt falsae et particulares sunt verae, ita in futuris sicut in praesentibus vel praeteritis.” *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 5.

<sup>602</sup> “si praedicatum per se insit subiecto, dicitur esse enunciatio in materia necessaria vel naturali; ut cum dicitur, homo est animal, vel, homo est risibile. Si vero praedicatum per se repugnet subiecto quasi excludens rationem ipsius, dicitur enunciatio esse in materia impossibili sive remota; ut cum dicitur, homo est asinus. Si vero medio modo se habeat praedicatum ad subiectum, ut scilicet <nec> per se insit, nec per se repugnet, dicitur enunciatio esse in materia possibili sive contingente.” *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 3.

<sup>603</sup> Cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 130.

<sup>604</sup> “circa possibile et necessarium diversimode aliqui sunt opinati. Quidam enim distinxerunt ea secundum eventum, sicut Diodorus, qui dixit illud esse impossibile quod nunquam erit; necessarium vero quod semper erit; possibile vero quod quandoque erit, quandoque non erit... **Utraque autem distinctio videtur esse incompetens. Nam prima distinctio est a posteriori: non enim ideo aliquid est necessarium, quia semper erit; sed potius ideo semper erit, quia est necessarium: et idem patet in aliis.**” *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 8.

even say that the necessity is the only possible cause of “to be always”. He also says that the same problem (*idem*) – i.e. the fact that the definiens is posterior than the definiendum – is evident in the case of other Diodorean modal notions. He does not say that “to be sometimes” is implied by the possibility in the same way as is “to be always” by the necessity.

As for the former text, Knuuttila’s interpretation seems much more justified here. Its problem is that were it completely true, the strong version of the principle of plenitude would have to be fulfilled not only by the history of the universe as a whole, but also by each moment of this history: the particular contingent propositions are said to be all true *independently on their tense*. Aquinas would have to concede the implications that are unacceptable for any Christian thinker: e.g., the particular logically contingent proposition “Some man will die.” should be true even after the general resurrection. I believe that on the background of Aquinas’s distinctions of modalities that we have seen above, a more nuanced interpretation that does not imply such inconveniences can be proposed. I think that the modalities the text speaks about are not the logical ones but the modalities from the point of view of the natural potencies (beginning with the quasi-potency to being). As I have shown, this meaning of modal terms is for Aquinas the basic one<sup>605</sup> and the qualification “*per se*” does not exclude it at all.<sup>606</sup> This meaning seems to be corroborated by the fact that the text calls the necessary matter (i.e. the matter where the predicate is said to be *per se* in the subject) “natural”. Were the modalities the text speaks about the logical ones, the statements of natural sciences like “Animals are mortal.” or “Fire burns.” would not belong to this natural matter because of the logical possibility of their contraries (realisable miraculously by God). Such an exclusion seems particularly counterintuitive. If I am right about the kind of modalities, then the text concerns only the entities existing in the actual world: the natural potencies according to which something can be said to be possible or impossible in the above-mentioned sense exist, only if their subjects exist.<sup>607</sup> Furthermore, the text is a philosophical one: it can rightfully speak about the possible and impossible from the viewpoint of this “worldly wisdom” without taking into consideration the factors that are investigated by theology (namely God’s free decisions concerning the beginning and the end of cosmic time).<sup>608</sup> Thus, the problematic

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<sup>605</sup> Cf. I. 2.

<sup>606</sup> Cf. par example *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 4, arg. 1 and ad 1.

<sup>607</sup> Cf. “*Ea vero quae ab eo sic producta sunt ut in sempiternum sint, habent potentiam et virtutem ad semper essendum, et nullo modo ad hoc quod aliquando non sint. Quando enim non erant, talem potentiam non habebant...*” In *De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 29, n. 12.

<sup>608</sup> “*si sunt duae scientiae, quarum una considerat causas altiores, et alia minus altas; iudicium in utraque non eodem modo sumetur, sed secundum causas quas utraque considerat ... Eodem modo est in proposito. Est enim duplex sapientia: scilicet mundana, quae dicitur philosophia, quae considerat causas inferiores, scilicet causas causatas, et secundum eas iudicat; et divina, quae dicitur theologia, quae considerat causas superiores, id est*

statement can be integrated into Aquinas's discourse as well as the affirmation that the dead man cannot rise.<sup>609</sup> From the point of view of cosmology like Aristotle's, the conviction that at no time the unnecessary state of any natural potency becomes exceptionless seems quite plausible, the contrary implying the existence of some agent causing this exceptionlessness and therefore questioning the unnecessary status of this state.<sup>610</sup>

### III. Contingency and necessity

#### III. 1. Contingency – limitation and limitlessness

The Latin verb *contingere* can mean “to be in contact” or simply “to happen”<sup>611</sup> and sometimes it is not easy to decide, whether its active participle *contingens* refers to one of these meanings or to some modal characteristic.<sup>612</sup> If the latter is the case, the term denotes some kind of unnecessary possibility, but as for its exact signification, there is still some disambiguation to be made. The term can characterise both (potentially) real entities and propositions, meaning that those entities (or the things those propositions are speaking about) are possible, maybe even actual, but not necessary: in these cases, it is more or less synonymous with the second general meaning of the term *possibile* we have seen (cf. I. 4.).<sup>613</sup> As such, it describes one of the poles of the great division of beings I have already spoken about (its second pole being the “necessary”). This division is applied also at the truths.<sup>614</sup> Its two poles are not equal though. If compared to the necessary, the *contingens* is true or being (*ens*) only imperfectly:<sup>615</sup> its relationship to these determinations is clearly weaker.

There are at least two different ways this division can be performed. The first is based on the logical (im)possibility, the second on the (im)possibility from the point of view of natural powers of creatures. Thus, from the first point of view, the proposition is contingent if both it

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*divinas, secundum quas iudicat. Dicuntur autem superiores causae, divina attributa, ut sapientia, bonitas, et voluntas divina, et huiusmodi.” De potentia, q. 1, a. 4, co.*

<sup>609</sup> See above I. 2.

<sup>610</sup> *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 15, n. 4 can be understood in similar way.

<sup>611</sup> Cf. for example *In Physic.*, lib. 5, l. 3, n. 12; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 94, n. 1.

<sup>612</sup> “*hoc enim significat necessarium, scilicet non possibile non esse, vel non contingens non esse, vel impossibile non esse...*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 4, l. 7, n. 10, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 40, n. 2. Aquinas experienced the same problem during his reading of Aristotle, cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 1, l. 10, n. 4.

<sup>613</sup> To my knowledge, the term is not used for the possibility of improvement though.

<sup>614</sup> “*Ens autem dividitur per contingens et necessarium: et est per se divisio entis.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 72, n. 3; “*necessarium et contingens proprie consequuntur ens, in quantum huiusmodi.*” *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 4, ad 3. As for the truth, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 5, a. 3, co. and lib. 3, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 3, ad 3: the latter text denies that the division can be applied also at the good taken as such.

<sup>615</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 79, a. 9, ad 3.

and its negation are compatible with logical principles.<sup>616</sup> If in addition neither of them denies any natural necessity, it is contingent also from the second point of view.<sup>617</sup> As for the (potentially) real entities, they should be considered contingent from the first point of view, if their essence does not imply their existence. Consequently, while there are quite a lot of propositions that are not logically contingent, there is just one real entity that is necessary from this point of view: God.<sup>618</sup> All the creatures are contingent this way, just because their existence depends on the Creator; notice that this kind of contingency does not even depend on the question whether God has any choice concerning their creation. It is quite difficult to find Aquinas using the term “*contingens*” this way in the case of real beings though:<sup>619</sup> it seems that in this context he prefers the term *possibilis* or *mutabilis*.<sup>620</sup> In general he uses the division to distinguish two different types of created beings and considers God as its source that transcends it. A creature is contingent, if the bearer of its constitutive form (e.g. the matter having the form of Garfield) can be without it; if not (like angels or celestial bodies), it is necessary.<sup>621</sup>

There is no doubt that from the point of view of the contingencies I have just spoken about, all the choices we make in this life are contingent. And there is no doubt that this fact has little to do with the “can do otherwise” one needs for the possibility of moral blame. But Aquinas knows yet another family of meanings of this term (and of the division it belongs to): the contingency as a qualification of the causal relationship. If I am to be a contingent cause, it does not suffice that I am a contingent (i.e. logically non-necessary, perishable or transitory) causally engaged being. Likewise, not all the caused contingent beings are contingent effects. An entity is a contingent cause, if it can both cause and not cause some specific effect.<sup>622</sup> An

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<sup>616</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 2, co.

<sup>617</sup> *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 3 can be considered as an example of such type of contingency.

<sup>618</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3 (third way); q. 3, a. 4.

<sup>619</sup> To my knowledge, he came most closely to such a use of term in *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2, answering the objection that was based on the statement that “God is the cause of all the things, both necessary and contingent ones” (*Deus autem est causa omnium, tam necessariorum quam contingentium*. arg. 2), by the affirmation that “no created thing is necessary, if it is considered in itself, but it is possible in itself and necessary because of something other” (*nulla res creata sit necessaria secundum se considerata, sed in se possibilis*). Aquinas firmly rejects the attempts to deny the occurrence of created absolute necessities in the name of its dependence on God’s free choice, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 30.

<sup>620</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 9, a. 2.

<sup>621</sup> “*Esse autem aliarum rerum quarundam dicitur mutabile mutatione variabilitatis, sicut est in contingentibus: et horum etiam veritas mutabilis est et contingens. Quorundam vero esse est mutabile solum secundum vertibilitatem in nihil, si sibi relinqueretur...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 5, a. 3, co.; “*Inter partes autem totius universi prima distinctio apparet secundum contingens et necessarium...*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 94, n. 10, cf. *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 3, co.

<sup>622</sup> Cf. for example *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 73, n. 2.

effect is contingent, if its proximate cause is a contingent cause.<sup>623</sup> This contingency in causal relation can occur in three different ways.<sup>624</sup>

A) *Contingens ut in pluribus*: the cause has internal determination to cause some specific effect and it causes it in most of the cases, but not in all of them. The typical examples are the effects pursued by the nature of material beings that are sometimes hindered by an external factor or internal defect of such beings: e.g., cherry trees mostly produce blossom in April, but it can happen that it is not the case because of night freeze or a disease of the tree.

B) *Contingens ut in paucioribus*: the cause has the internal determination to cause some specific effect, but in the minority of cases it causes something else or nothing at all. This type of contingency is the reverse side of the previous one; it distinguishes the latter from necessity. The sterility of plants or the malformations of offsprings might serve as examples.

C) *Contingens ad utrumque* or *ad utrumlibet*: in this case, the cause is determined neither to the production of the effect, nor to its non-production. The typical (if not the only) example is the capacity of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) of spiritual creatures. Aquinas states (at least once) that the root of this type of contingency is radically different from the source of the previous two types.<sup>625</sup> The latter two come from the limitation of the power of the contingent cause, more precisely from its possibility to be hindered. In contrast, C comes from the relative absence of limits of the power, more precisely from the fact that the power of the cause is not limited to one kind of use. Aquinas sometimes reserves the term *contingens* only

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<sup>623</sup> Cf. *In Jeremiam*, pr. (“*Effectus enim recipiunt contingentiam a causis proximis, non necessitatem a causis primis.*”); *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.; d. 40, q. 3, a. 1, co.; cap. 85, n. 4; lib. 3, cap. 72, n. 2 (“*Ex causis autem proximis aliqui effectus dicuntur necessarii vel contingentes, non autem ex causis remotis...*”); cap. 86, n. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13, ad 1; q. 22, a. 4, co.; q. 23, a. 6, co.; q. 103, a. 7, ad 3 (“*dicuntur aliqui effectus contingentes, per comparationem ad proximas causas, quae in suis effectibus deficere possunt, non propter hoc quod aliquid fieri possit extra totum ordinem gubernationis divinae. Quia hoc ipsum quod aliquid contingit praeter ordinem causae proximae, est ex aliqua causa subiecta gubernationi divinae.*”); *Quodlibet XI*, q. 3, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 139, co.; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 31; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 22.

<sup>624</sup> “*Ex hoc ergo concludit ulterius quod omnia sint ex necessitate. Per quod triplex genus contingentium excluditur. Quaedam enim contingunt in paucioribus, quae accidunt a casu vel fortuna. Quaedam vero se habent ad utrumlibet, quia scilicet non magis se habent ad unam partem, quam ad aliam (ista procedunt ex electione). Quaedam vero eveniunt ut in pluribus; sicut hominem in senectute canescere, quae causantur ex natura. Si autem omnia ex necessitate evenirent, nihil horum contingentium esset.*” *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 13, n. 8/9, cf. *De veritate*, q. 8, a. 12, co.

<sup>625</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 73, n. 2: “*In rebus autem inanimatis causarum contingentia ex imperfectione et defectu est: secundum enim suam naturam sunt determinata ad unum effectum, quem semper consequuntur nisi sit impedimentum vel ex debilitate virtutis, vel ex aliquo exteriori agente, vel ex materiae indispositione; et propter hoc causae naturales agentes non sunt ad utrumque, sed ut frequentius eodem modo suum effectum producant, deficiunt autem raro. Quod autem voluntas sit causa contingens, ex ipsius perfectione provenit: quia non habet virtutem limitatam ad unum, sed habet in potestate producere hunc effectum vel illum; propter quod est contingens ad utrumlibet.*”

for this latter type of causal contingency,<sup>626</sup> but there is also one passage where the term seems to be appropriated only to the B.<sup>627</sup> as often, his terminology is not stable here.

Now, according to what criterion should we judge the cause contingent in any of the above-mentioned meanings? From the very beginning of his career of writer (or at least from the time very close to it), Aquinas is clear about one thing: if the proximate cause is contingent, the effect is to be considered contingent, its more remote causes do not matter.<sup>628</sup> That could mean that he thinks that the question of the causal determinations of the proximate cause by those other causes is irrelevant, whatever they are. If this was so, Garfield the cat would be the contingent cause of his today's eating of lasagne, just because his (d)inner determination to this action could have been hindered for example by some serious sickness – notwithstanding the fact that his actual eating was deterministically caused by the actual synergy of all the physical factors. But on the contrary, Aquinas could think that should the proximate cause be contingent, the determinations of previous causes cannot be determinist, and this is why these causes are not so important for the contingency of effect, provided that the contingency of the proximate cause is assumed. From this perspective, Garfield's causality vis-à-vis the lasagne would need to be considered necessary, (unless there is some quantum phenomenon in his brain that could provide the allegedly determinist causality of the universe with at least infinitesimally small probability of failure).

In any case, Aquinas's reader has the impression that by relating the evaluation of the contingency/necessity of effect exclusively to the proximate cause, Aquinas is speaking only about some contingency *simpliciter*. He also says that the contingency of effect can be considered relatively to different causes and then, the effect that is contingent in relation to one cause, can be necessary in relation to the concurrence of several causes.<sup>629</sup> This is congruent with his statements that the contingency of effects is always a conditional necessity<sup>630</sup> and his more general view that “nothing is so contingent that it would not have anything necessary in itself.”<sup>631</sup> Such distinctions would speak more for a compatibilist model that would simultaneously concede both the contingency *simpliciter* of Garfield's actions and their necessity from the point of view of the universal net of causal chains. But at the same time,

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<sup>626</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 3, q. 3, a. 3, ad 4.

<sup>627</sup> Cf. “contingenter” in *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 11, l. 8, n. 9.

<sup>628</sup> “*Effectus enim recipiunt contingentiam a causis proximis, non necessitatem a causis primis.*” In *Jeremiam*, pr. Aquinas wrote this commentary most likely during the academic year 1251/52 or 1252/53. As for the later texts, cf. my note 623.

<sup>629</sup> “*aliquid est contingens respectu unius causae quod respectu concursus plurium causarum est necessarium.*” *De veritate*, q. 8, a. 12, co.

<sup>630</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 8, co. and ad 3.

<sup>631</sup> *STh.*, I, q. 86, a. 3, co.

Aquinas states that God, the transcendent source of all the contingency and necessity, is the only cause that can cause the effects of contingent causes with the same infallibility as in the case of the necessary effects; as for the other causes, either the effects they produce are necessary, or they are not produced infallibly.<sup>632</sup> This statement seems to require both some more radical kind of contingency on the level of Garfield's neural system (contradicting the Laplacian vision of universe that was hinted above) and some mysterious divine ability to infallibly rule Garfield's appetite anyway. The problem is that, as for the source of the divine infallibility, Thomas seems to vacillate between the nearly Laplacian affirmation that the perfect knowledge of the complete cause (or, alternatively, of the complete whole of all the contingent causes) implies the knowledge of the effect, and the denial of such a statement.<sup>633</sup> This is not the only problem bound with Aquinas's statements about contingency. There is at least one place where he seems to adopt Avicenna's opinion about the possibility to get along only with the contingency *ut in pluribus/paucioribus* because, as Avicenna says, in the real world there is no *ad utrumque*.<sup>634</sup> That seems to contradict Aquinas's statement about the existence of two fundamentally different types of causal contingency. Finally, he states that God's choice to create this particular world is free and could have been different: but contrarily to what could be considered auto-evident given these premises, he denies vigorously the statement that God is a contingent cause.<sup>635</sup> If we are to elucidate these problems, and with them the Relativity problem we have seen above, some further investigation on Aquinas's notion of causality is needed. It is going to be one of the major topics of the next chapter.

### III. 2. The necessity and the violence

As I have mentioned before, Aquinas knows the notion of impossible defined by the notion of impotency, which is itself defined by the notion of privation, one of whose understandings includes the violent origin. I have not observed any Aquinas's text where the notion of "impossible", that would imply a violently caused deprivation of the power, would have any

<sup>632</sup> Cf. *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 22; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 32.

<sup>633</sup> *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 67, n. 4: "Sicut ex causa necessaria certitudinaliter sequitur effectus, ita ex causa contingenti completa si non impediatur. Sed, cum Deus cognoscat omnia, ut ex supra dictis patet, scit non solum causas contingentium, sed etiam ea quibus possunt impediri. Scit igitur per certitudinem an contingentia sint vel non sint" (cf. *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 36, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2). *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.: "quaedam causae sunt quae se habent ad utrumque: et in istis causis effectus de futuro nullam habent certitudinem vel determinationem; et ideo contingentia ad utrumlibet in causis suis nullo modo cognosci possunt."

<sup>634</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 8, n. 3.

<sup>635</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 43, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4; d. 45, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3; *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 3, ad 5.



importance. The contrary is true about the intrusion of “violence” into the notion of necessary. Contrary to the aforesaid notion of impossible, it is not a question of the violent origin of the necessity in this case: the “violent” is one of the very meanings of the term “necessary” that Aristotle enumerates in his catalogue in the fifth book of *Metaphysics* and Aquinas takes it into account.<sup>636</sup> The explanation of the precise meaning of this text requires some notions belonging to Aquinas’s conception of a mover and moved: I will return to it in the following chapter (chap. 3. III. 1. 3.), where the importance of the acquaintance with this notion for the correct understanding of some Aquinas’s statement becomes evident.

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<sup>636</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, V, 5; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 6, n. 9.

### 3. Change, motion, and causality

“Like a stream is the king’s heart in the hand of the LORD; wherever it pleases him, he directs it.”

*Proverbs 21, 1*

“A clean heart create for me, God; renew in me a steadfast spirit.”

*Psalms 51, 12*

“We can find no reason that eliminates the radical contingency of freedom, but rather we can only acknowledge its character as a mystery.”

*David M. Gallagher, Free choice and free judgment in Thomas Aquinas, p. 277*

#### Introduction

The aforesaid biblical quotations are not the only scriptural texts supposing that God has the power to change human heart: in the first chapter, we have seen the Scripture counting with this power in the cases of the obduration of Pharaoh etc.:<sup>637</sup> the Isaian image of the potter who models the clay into jars of his choice, recycled later by Paul’s theory of election, speaks for itself.<sup>638</sup> Nevertheless, it could be disputed, whether such divine influence is generalised on all mankind (or even creation) according to Bible and whether the efficacy of the biblical God’s effort is always assured: Jeremiah seems to imply that the jar of Jerusalem suffered its fate due to the fact that the Potter failed to achieve the desired form.<sup>639</sup> Both human freedom and God’s goodness would seem to be easier to defend if such a possibility of failure of God’s intention actually existed. I shall argue that this option is not available for Aquinas which forces him to look for an independent solution of the problem.

Regarding God’s interventions in the creature, Thomas uses the terms connected with “movement” more often than the terms connected with “change” (after all, his God is called First Mover, not the First Changer), sometimes (including some of the most controversial passages of his works) he speaks about the divine motion of the creature.<sup>640</sup> Thus, in this

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<sup>637</sup> Cf. notably Ex 10, 1 – 2; Is 6, 10 and Rom 1, 24 – 32.

<sup>638</sup> Cf. Is 29, 16 and 45, 9; Rom 9, 21 – 23.

<sup>639</sup> Cf. Jr 18.

<sup>640</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 95, n. 4; *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 4; q. 68, a. 8, co.; q. 109, a. 9, co.; q. 112, a. 3, ad 1; q. 113, a. 6, co.; q. 114, a. 6 – 10; q. 104, a. 4, co.; *Quodlibet 1*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2; *De rationibus Fidei*, cap. 10, co.; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 17; *Germinet terra*, p. 2.

chapter I will speak about his view on movements, motions and movers, trying to elucidate this part of his thinking. Yes, there is hardly another Aquinas's statement as notorious as the one about God being the first mover of all the movements. But what is far from being notorious is Aquinas's conception of movement that has led him to this assertion, and consequently its correct (if not precise) meaning and connotations. No topic makes this absence of common comprehension as obvious as the question of the divine motion of sinning will.

In the second chapter, I have mentioned one major point of discord in this topic: the question of contingency of the voluntary movements. Given Aquinas's obstinate refusal of necessitarianism, the question is not whether he takes them for contingent or not, but whether he takes their alleged contingency in the incompatibilist or compatibilist sense. But the discussion is much more complicated here. Aquinas's God is not only the first mover. He is also the creator or, more generally speaking, the cause of beingness (*causa essendi*) of all which exists beside him. This type of causality is more fundamental than his moving causality and concerns the entities the latter causality does not.<sup>641</sup> Then, it could be argued that while the latter is indeterminist, the former is not.<sup>642</sup> Furthermore, the moving causality itself can be of different types (e.g. the efficient one or the final one) and it can be either immediate or realised via some intermediary entity. Most notably, in the classical Thomism it has been spoken about "physical premotion" – an entity caused by the primary agent (e.g. God) in the secondary agent (e.g. creature) that moves the secondary agent to the action.<sup>643</sup> It has been argued that the existence of this entity is required by creature's inherent imperfection that makes it unable to act without being previously moved to some particular act. According to these Thomists, if I am moved by the physical premotion to decide to eat a cake that I am seeing right now, it is possible for me not to decide so only in the divided sense of the possibility.<sup>644</sup> In its composed sense, I cannot decide otherwise – and without any physical premotion, I cannot make any decision at all. The last century's criticism of this position has argued that beside being wrong, it is not a faithful expression of Saint Thomas's thought: the divine motion he occasionally speaks about is to be something else than the physical premotion of his post-tridentine disciples. What is the true meaning of the Thomas's notion then? Well, concerning this question, there is no unity among the critics of classical

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<sup>641</sup> Cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 25: "*et ipsa materia, et eius dispositiones non exeunt ab ordine illius agentis, quod est agens per modum dantis esse, et non solum per modum moventis et alterantis.*"

<sup>642</sup> Cf. the *résumé* of similar positions in DVOŘÁK (2013), p. 630, note 14.

<sup>643</sup> Cf. MATAVA (2016), p. 37–101; GRETT (1937), n. 839–848 (t. 2, p. 250–271).

<sup>644</sup> For the meaning of the distinction of the possibility in divided/composed sense, cf. chap. 2. I. 3.

Thomism: it could be questioned, whether the respective positions of Maritain, Lonergan and Matava differ more importantly from the doctrine of physical premotion, or from each other.<sup>645</sup> That being said, there are some important ambiguities concerning the exact nature of the physical premotion in classical Thomism too, especially if one counts some of its more recent defenders.<sup>646</sup>

To sum it up, you can either wholly deny the determinism of God's causality vis-à-vis the contingent events, or you can restrict it to only a very transcendent kind of God's causality (e.g., the causality of beingness) denying the determinism of his moving, or you can accept the determinism of both, but restrict it to God's immediate causality, saying that no non-divine entity can deterministically cause a contingent event, or you can also accept the determinism of a created intermediary entity (or of the synergy of entities). It seems that all these options can find their corroborations in Aquinas's texts. I am personally convinced that the determinism of the causality of beingness is the only determinism required both by the strong theist position and the reasons one could have for holding it (be it philosophical or theological ones). Nevertheless, I shall argue that Aquinas holds some form of the last of the above-mentioned options. Especially in his oldest writings (*Sentences* and *De veritate*) he gets particularly close to the position of some of today's physical compatibilists – he is not one of them, as I will show, only because he does not think that the physical causes are the only ones that exist. While I think that Aquinas rather presupposes than proves the determinism he works with in these texts, I grant him that he succeeds in defending the very robust form of compatibilism that he needs for reconciling of this presupposition with his Christian faith in human freedom. This chapter is the first step to prove this arguably very controversial statement of mine, the next step being the following chapter about freedom. The whole process will be closed by the chapter about God's practical knowledge that will provide both complementary argumentation and the perspective needed for evaluating Aquinas's view concerning the principal topic of this book. Thus, in this chapter I skip the objections concerning the incompatibility between the freedom and the theory of motion that is presented here: I show the compatibility of both in the next chapter. As for the objection concerning the goodness and the salvific will of the Big Potter, I will discuss them in the last chapter of this book.

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<sup>645</sup> I will specify the respective positions of these authors in the section III. 2.

<sup>646</sup> The disharmony concerns the question whether the physical premotion is to be considered an entity that is really (and not only conceptually) different from the resulting movement: the argumentation of SCHMITZ (2016) or OSBORNE (2006) seems to imply that it is not. I will return to this question in the section III. 2.

The goal of the first subchapter of this chapter is to clarify the general outlines of Aquinas's conception of movement and most notably the different meanings covered by this notion. I have considered this somewhat lengthy introduction necessary because it provides the premises for further argumentation and it permits to avoid some misunderstandings that happens to float around. Most notably, it has been occasionally argued that the classical interpretation commits an undue transposition of, say, Aquinas's statements concerning the physical movement to the free activities of the will (it speaks about *physical* premotion, does it not?). The presentation of Aquinas's own taxonomy of movement and its reasons should permit to evaluate the legitimacy of such allegations. In the second subchapter, I will show which kind of contingency Aquinas's vision of things allows. Finally, in the third subchapter, I will consider the kinds of intermediary entities it works with.

## I. General conception of movement

Aquinas uses two different nouns to describe the fact of something being moved – *motus* and (much more rarely) *motio*.<sup>647</sup> The latter can also mean the action of moving or alternatively an impulse that is meant to put something in movement: I will consider this meaning in the third subchapter of this chapter. From now on, if not stated otherwise, I will translate *motus* consistently as “movement” and *motio* as “motion”.

### I. 1. Analogical identity of movement

#### I. 1. 1. Three genera of movements *sensu stricto*

“Movement” is an analogical term according to Aquinas. Following Aristotle's *Physics*, he states that its most basic meaning is the one that refers to the change of place (called “local movement”).<sup>648</sup> If it is taken more broadly, it also concerns the change of quantity (the growth or the decrease) or the change of so-called “patible” qualities (e.g. of the temperature or the colour).<sup>649</sup> What exactly is the movement in all these three cases? Aquinas admits that this

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<sup>647</sup> *Index Thomisticus* identifies about fifteen thousand occurrences of *motus* in Aquinas, compared to only about 250 occurrences of *motio*. The latter means “state of movement” in only about 60 – 80 cases, cf. my note 959 and 960.

<sup>648</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 20, n. 4 *in fine*.

<sup>649</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 3, n. 2; lib. 5, l. 4, n. 1 – 4; *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 6, n. 8.

entity is difficult to grasp,<sup>650</sup> but he follows Aristotle in telling that it is “an act of the being in potency inasmuch as it is in potency”.<sup>651</sup> Descartes once mocked the incomprehensibility of this definition,<sup>652</sup> so let me explain it shortly.<sup>653</sup> Imagine Garfield moving from his favourite spot in front of the TV to a different spot, like in front of the fridge. This movement is delimited by two states:<sup>654</sup> the state in the beginning of the movement (Garfield in front of the TV) is called *terminus a quo*, the state in the end of the movement (Garfield in front of the fridge) is called *terminus ad quem*. The movement is some intermediary reality between these states: in the *terminus a quo* Garfield does not move yet, in the *terminus ad quem* he moves no more.<sup>655</sup> Now, Aristotle is convinced that Garfield’s arrival to the fridge proves that he had some capacity to be there even while he was watching TV: at that time, he was ACTUALLY in front of the TV, but POTENTIALLY he was also in front of the fridge (he was potentially also in many other places). The potentiality of being in front of the fridge gets fully actual only in *terminus ad quem* but during Garfield’s movement, there is already an act that is oriented to its realisation. For example, Garfield is at the kitchen door, but it is not the being at the kitchen door pure and simple. This being at the kitchen door is a step in the acquisition of the place in front of the fridge and this “being a step” makes from the being at the kitchen door kind of partial acquisition of the place in front of the fridge. Roughly speaking, this is what the act (the acquisition of the fridge) of the being in potency (Garfield who is able of this acquisition) inasmuch as it is in potency (Garfield’s potential of being near the fridge still waits for its full fulfilment) could mean.

But for Aristotle this “partial being somewhere” has a deeper meaning yet. During movement, the moving object is always partially in one place (or, more generally, state) and partially in

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<sup>650</sup> “*Talem autem actum considerare difficile est propter permixtionem actus et potentiae...*” In *Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 3, n. 6.

<sup>651</sup> “*actus existentis in potentia secundum quod huiusmodi*” In *Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 2, n. 3. or “*actus possibilis in quantum est possibile*” In *Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 2, n. 8.

<sup>652</sup> “*nonne videntur illi verba magica proferre, quae vim habent occultam et supra captum humanii ingenii, qui dicunt motum, rem unicuique notissimam, esse actum entis in potentia, prout est in potentia? quis enim intelligit haec verba?*” DESCARTES, RENÉ, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, Reg. XII (AT X, 426).

<sup>653</sup> As for the Aquinas’s own explanation: “*Potentia autem et actus, cum sint de primis differentiis entis, naturaliter priora sunt motu... Quod ... est in potentia tantum, nondum movetur: quod autem iam est in actu perfecto, non movetur, sed iam motum est: illud igitur movetur, quod medio modo se habet inter puram potentiam et actum, quod quidem partim est in potentia et partim in actu... non quidem secundum id quod actu tantum est, sed secundum quod iam in actu existens habet ordinem in ulteriorem actum; quia si tolleretur ordo ad ulteriorem actum, ipse actus quantumcumque imperfectus, esset terminus motus et non motus, sicut accidit cum aliquid semiplene calefit. Ordo autem ad ulteriorem actum competit existenti in potentia ad ipsum. ... Sic igitur actus imperfectus habet rationem motus, et secundum quod comparatur ad ulteriorem actum ut potentia, et secundum quod comparatur ad aliquid imperfectius ut actus.*” In *Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 2, n. 3.

<sup>654</sup> “*omne quod movetur, movetur ex quodam in quiddam.*” In *Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 17, n. 6, cf. lib. 5, l. 1, n. 4ff.

<sup>655</sup> “*quando aliquid est in termino ad quem mutatur, ulterius non mutatur, sed iam mutatum est; non enim simul aliquid movetur et mutatum est, ut supra dictum est. Quando vero est aliquid in termino ex quo mutatur, secundum se totum et secundum omnes partes suas, tunc non mutatur...*” In *Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 5, n. 10.

another one.<sup>656</sup> That is true for any part of the movement, no matter how small it is, the movement being potentially divisible *ad infinitum*.<sup>657</sup> Let me explain. The movement could be considered as a sequence of irreducibly short immobile states differentiated by some irreducibly small differences in place. Imagine the frames in film stock: in each frame Garfield is completely still, nevertheless, he occupies a slightly different place than in the preceding frame. If the skipping of frames is fast enough, it makes the illusion of continuity, as if Garfield were not only in the states depicted by the frames, but also somewhere in between them – while in reality, in the film stock there are no states between those depicted by the frames. If I am understanding contemporary physics correctly, this conception of movement is still quite relevant, and it is not completely forsaken by Aristotle and even less by Aquinas, as we shall see.<sup>658</sup> Nevertheless, both agree that the essence of movement taken as such consists in that very state that is being considered illusory by the film stock theory – the state of being between two frames. Why? Well, in the first and last frame of the film stock, Garfield is arguably motionless; therefore the movement needs to consist in some state *between the states* that are depicted by them. Can we reduce this intermediary state to the rest of the frames? According to our authors we cannot; there is a reality they do not cover, no matter how numerous they are.

The reason is to be found in the nature of the magnitude the movement is supposed to pass through – the spatial magnitude in the case of place change.<sup>659</sup> Both Aquinas and Aristotle are convinced that the continuity of this magnitude cannot be reduced to something else. First, dimensions (like length, height etc.) cannot be composed from something adimensional.<sup>660</sup> Take the relation between a point and a line segment. Irrespective of the number of points, you can never compose a line out of them: the infinity of points will not get you any closer to it than two of them, two times zero and infinity times zero still equals zero. Of course, the points can be marked on the line, and they can be said existing in the line (at least in some

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<sup>656</sup> “*omne quod mutatur, dum mutatur, secundum aliquid sui est in uno, et secundum aliquid sui est in altero; sicut cum aliquid mutatur de ab in bc, in ipso moveri pars egrediens de loco ab, ingreditur locum bc; et quod movetur de albo in nigrum, pars quae desinit esse alba, fit fusca vel pallida.*” Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 1 – 2 and 7 – 8.

<sup>658</sup> “*nihil enim prohibet per longinquum tempus aliquam tam magnam quantitatem removeri a lapide per guttas, quod aliqua pars remota est prius per partem guttarum: est tamen devenire ad aliquod quantum remotum, quod totum simul removetur, et non pars post partem.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 5, n. 5, denying the total continuity of the real quantitative movements and alterations (in n. 6). Cf. also *STh.*, I, q. 53, a. 1 – 2; *Quodlibet I*, q. 3, a. 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 4, a. 1 – 3 for the discontinuity in the local movement of angels (the latter topic is discussed more thoroughly in chap. 5. I. 3. 1.).

<sup>659</sup> “*infinitum [concerning the divisibility] non est secundum eandem rationem in motu et in magnitudine et tempore, ac si esset una natura univoce praedicata de eis: sed dicitur de posteriori eorum secundum prius, sicut de motu propter magnitudinem, in qua est motus, ... de tempore autem propter motum...*” *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 12, n. 8.

<sup>660</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 1.

way). But the line itself is something else than these points: a kind of a whole that can be always divided into parts that can be also always divided again and so on, *ad infinitum*. The point of the Aristotelian answer to the issues some Eleatics could have with such an entity lies in the following: the possibility to be divided into parts does not mean that the parts actually exist before this division is realised, or that the whole was composed from them. Thus, second, not only that the line (or any other continuum) is not composed of the infinity of points, it is not even composed from the infinity of some smallest parts of it (some tiny little mini-lines): such a thing as the smallest part of the line does not exist at all. Thus, in the case of the continuum taken as such, the existence of the whole precedes the existence of its potential parts.<sup>661</sup>

Aquinas and Aristotle believe that the movement through this continuum is to be likewise continual. According to them, a body moving along the line cannot skip any part of it. Concerning the film stock, they would say that it does not picture the movement as such but only some of its moments (*momenta*) as Aquinas calls them; the relation of these moments to the movement being the same as the relation of the points to the line<sup>662</sup> (to prevent one misunderstanding, the “moment” here does not mean an instant or a point in time, but the state measured by the point in time, i.e. Garfield’s state in one frame of the film stock).<sup>663</sup> In other words, no matter how small is the difference between two frames, provided that there is any difference at all, there is always some continuum between them and this continuum potentially contains the infinity of frameable states, without being reducible to this infinity. In yet other words, by focusing on the frames (even the infinity of them), you miss the nature of the movement in the same way, as you would miss the nature of the line by focusing on the points. But beside them, what is left? To be between frames, or in other words, to be partially in two states corresponding to two different frames.

As I said, Aquinas defends Aristotle’s opinion that the above-mentioned conception of movement – an intermediary state characterised by partial possession of two different determinations – can also be analogically applied to the quantitative change and to the change

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<sup>661</sup> If you are an atomist habituated to the opinion that the wholes must be composed from their parts (and thus, reducible to them), such an idea can be difficult to swallow. Nevertheless, in both Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s view the existence of such irreducible wholes is essential for the comprehension of corporeal reality taken as such.

<sup>662</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 2: “*hoc est impossibile, quod motus componatur ex momentis, sicut impossibile est quod linea componatur ex punctis*” (n. 6).

<sup>663</sup> Cf. the comparison of all these entities in *In Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 12, n. 5: “neither the time is composed from the instants (lit. “now(s) themselves”), nor the line from the points or the movement from the moments, if by moment we mean the state of having been changed” (*neque tempus componitur ex ipsis nunc, neque linea ex ipsis punctis, neque motus componitur ex momentis ut per momentum intelligamus hoc quod est mutatum esse*). Cf. also *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 4, a. 3, ad 5: “...in mutationibus autem instantaneis est prius ipsum tempus mensurans motum praecedentem, ..., et posterius ipsum nunc, quod mensurat terminum motus...”



of patible qualities. The latter should be universally guaranteed by the fact that in Aristotle's cosmology the quantitative and qualitative change always depends on some preceding change of place.<sup>664</sup> In fact, even in Aristotle himself the strict application of the same criteria of movement across the three categories is not problem-free<sup>665</sup> – but it is not our problem to discuss this. In theory, there are three analogical meanings of the term “movement”. They are irreducible both mutually and to some higher genus in the same way as the determinations they concern (quantity, quality, location). But in a sense, each of them can be reduced to the respective determination it concerns, as its incomplete realisation: the blackening is an incomplete realisation of the black.<sup>666</sup>

You can already note some implications that follow from this comprehension of movement. First, its definition by the *termini* implies that there is no aimless movement. The existence of movement proves that the moving object has the tendency to acquire some *terminus ad quem*. The so-called “final cause” is already hidden here. Second, by definition, the movement is an imperfect state in the etymologic sense of the term “imperfect” – uncompleted: if not, it would collapse into *terminus ad quem*. Third, the *terminus ad quem* ultimately cannot consist in movement – it would presuppose another *terminus ad quem*. All this is true even in the case of the perpetual circular movement of celestial bodies Aristotle believed in:<sup>667</sup> these bodies tend to occupy the places they are not occupying now, and the movement is perpetual because by acquiring one place, they lose another. This is the example of the fourth: in the movement the acquisition is always coupled by a loss – by reaching the fridge Garfield loses his spot in front of the TV. Aquinas believes that there are many cases where the *terminus ad quem* is more perfect than the *terminus a quo*:<sup>668</sup> the brighter colour is more perfect than the darker one, the higher quantity is more perfect than the smaller one. Nevertheless, even if the smaller quantity is somehow included in the higher one, by growing one loses the exact species of quantity one had before.

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<sup>664</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 1, n. 3; lib. 4, l. 1, n. 3 and l. 23, n. 10; lib. 6, l. 5, n. 15ff; lib. 7, l. 2, n. 1; *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 6, n. 9.

<sup>665</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 5, n. 5 – 6 for the discontinuity in the qualitative and quantitative changes; for other problems, cf. the problematic of being between contrary states in *In Physic.*, lib. 5, l. 3, compared to the later assertion, that the circular movement is not between contrary states, repeated from lib. 8, l. 4, n. 4 on.

<sup>666</sup> “*motus non est praeter genera rerum in quibus contingit esse motum ... cum ... sit actus imperfectus; omne autem quod est imperfectum, sub eodem genere cadit cum perfecto, non quidem sicut species, sed per reductionem... His autem generibus non est accipere aliquod commune univocum, quod non contineatur sub aliquo praedicamento, sed sit genus eorum: sed ens est commune ad ea secundum analogiam...*” *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 1, n. 7; cf. l. 5, n. 17; lib. 5, l. 3, n. 2.

<sup>667</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 19 – 20.

<sup>668</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 1, l. 10f. In the typical cases, “there is always a lack mixed into one of the contrary states because the origin of the contrariety is the opposition of the lacking and the having...” (*semper alterum contrariorum habet privationem admixtam: principium enim contrarietatis est oppositio privationis et habitus...*) *In Physic.*, lib. 1, l. 10, n. 7.

Note, if you have not already done so, that contrarily to its today's reputation, the movement taken as such has rather negative connotations in the Aristotelian thought. The mobility always implies some imperfection-incompleteness of the mobile entity (*pace* Garfield's self-esteem). More important is the determination it concerns, more important is the imperfection of this entity: the change of place being "the least evil",<sup>669</sup> the other kinds of movement that concern the inner determinations of the subject (like temperature or size) are the way leading to its death or destruction sooner or later.<sup>670</sup> You could argue that the birth of new life and the life itself consist in the movement, too. Aquinas would agree with the latter (provided some little distinctions, of course),<sup>671</sup> arguing nevertheless that what makes the vital movements vital is some immobility at their source (I will say more about that in the chapter about freedom). But he would be most likely very reserved vis-a-vis the former: "the change is *per se* destructive and damaging. In contrast, it is the cause of the generation and of being itself only *per accidens*. This is because of the following: by the fact itself that it moves, anything loses the disposition it had before. But the arrival at some disposition is not included in the notion of movement inasmuch as it is a movement, but inasmuch as it is finished and completed; and the movement has this perfection because of the orientation of the agent which moves to some determined end. And this is why the destruction can be attributed more to the change and time, while the generation and the being to the agent and generator."<sup>672</sup> Also, strictly speaking, neither the birth (i.e., the generation), nor the death (or the destruction) is a movement. Why?

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<sup>669</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 14, n. 9 – 10: "*Quanto aliquis motus minus removet a mobili, tanto subiectum eius est perfectius, et sic ipse motus etiam quodammodo est perfectior. Secundum autem motum localem solum nihil removetur quod insit subiecto mobili: secundum enim alterationem fit transmutatio secundum qualitatem, in augmento vero et decremento secundum quantitatem, quae insunt subiecto ... motus autem localis est solum secundum locum, qui exterius continet. Relinquitur ergo quod motus localis sit maxime perfectus.*"

<sup>670</sup> Cf. the connection of the decay through aging with the nature of movement: "...*omne quod est in tempore, aliquid patitur sub tempore, secundum quod passio pertinet ad defectum. ... Consuevimus enim dicere quod longitudo temporis tabefacit, idest putrefacit et corrumpit; et iterum quod propter tempus omnia senescunt quae sunt in tempore... Est enim tempus numerus motus: de ratione autem motus est quod faciat distare id quod est, a dispositione in qua prius erat. Unde cum tempus sit numerus primi motus, ex quo in omnibus causatur mutabilitas, sequitur quod propter diuturnitatem temporis, omnia quae sunt in tempore removeantur a sua dispositione. Et ideo corruptio magis potest attribui mutationi et tempori: sed generatio et esse agentis et generanti.*" *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 20, n. 5, cf. also l. 22, n. 2.

<sup>671</sup> Cf. the conception of life in *STh.*, I, q. 18, a. 1 – 3.

<sup>672</sup> "*mutatio autem per se est destructiva et corruptiva. Sed causa generationis et ipsius esse non est nisi per accidens. Ex hoc enim ipso quod aliquid movetur, recedit a dispositione quam prius habebat. Sed quod perveniat ad aliquam dispositionem, hoc non importatur in ratione motus inquantum est motus, sed inquantum est finitus et perfectus: quam quidem perfectionem habet motus ex intentione agentis, quod movet ad determinatum finem.*" *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 22, n. 2.

## I. 1. 2. Generation and destruction

Theoretically both the term “generation” and the term “destruction” can be used in the case of the change of entity of any type: the blackening can be called “the generation of black colour” or “the destruction of non-black colour”. In this sense, any physical movement contains the generation of something and the destruction of something else. Nevertheless, it is probably more habitual to use the terms more narrowly only for the so-called substantial change.<sup>673</sup> The substance (*substantia*) means here an individual entity like a stone, a tree, or a cat: it is the subject of qualities, quantities and other determinations that need to inhere in something. The transformation of a part of the matter of the female cat into a kitten is a substantial change, the transformation of a mouse into a corpse in the cat’s mouth is a different one (according to Aristotle the dead mouse is no mouse, if not by analogy, it is something like a picture or an imprint of the original mouse). There is more than one reason why such a change is not to be considered a movement.<sup>674</sup> The most important is probably the following: there is no intermediary state between the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem*.<sup>675</sup> Aristotle is convinced that the relationship between different substances is like the relationship between natural numbers: any addition or subtraction on their level changes them in something else. You can be either the mouse, or the corpse, maybe you can be even a vegetative lifeform arisen from the mouse before its becoming a corpse – but you cannot be partially a mouse and partially a corpse: if your tail gets necrotic due to an injury suffered during your emergency escape from the cat’s mouth, it is no more a part of you.

Concerning the preceding statement, there is one misunderstanding to avoid. The impossibility of the intermediary states between species of substances was sometimes mistakenly taken for the impossibility of the change of species by the gradual process (e.g. the evolution). Nothing is more erroneous.<sup>676</sup> Aristotle is positively convinced that any substantial change is always preceded by movement consisting in the progressive change of the

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<sup>673</sup> Cf. *De principiis naturae*, cap. 1; *In Physic.*, lib. 5, l. 2: “*quaedam enim est simplex generatio, qua aliquid simpliciter generatur; alia vero est generatio quaedam, qua aliquid secundum quid generatur. ...cum aliquid mutatur de non albo in album, est generatio huius et non simpliciter. ... illa generatio, quae est ex non esse simpliciter in ens quod est substantia, est generatio simpliciter, secundum quam simpliciter dicimus aliquid fieri et non fieri.*” (n. 6).

<sup>674</sup> The movement presupposes an actual subject that moves and there is no such subject perduring in the substantial change, the prime matter being the pure potentiality, cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 2, n. 2; the movement is always between two contrary forms and the substantial forms do not have this relationship, cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 5, l. 3, n. 3 – 5.

<sup>675</sup> “*Propter hoc enim in substantia non est motus, quia ratio cuiuslibet speciei substantiae consistit in indivisibili, eo quod species substantiae non dicuntur secundum magis et minus: et propter hoc, cum motus habeat successionem, non producit in esse forma substantialis per motum, sed per generationem, quae est terminus motus.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 7, n. 4.

<sup>676</sup> I am not saying that Aristotle’s view allows the biological evolution as we know it, only that his reasons for the denial of some of its premises are to be found elsewhere.

properties of the original substance into the properties that are proportionate to the new one.<sup>677</sup> Aquinas would be less categorical because he believes in the possibility of miraculous interventions of God, but he still considers Aristotle's conception to be the right model of the natural way of happening. Before its death, the properties of the mouse get less and less mousy and more and more cadaveric: true, the length of this process depends greatly on the cause of death but even in the case of a mouse trap it is only *nearly* instantaneous. Because of this natural connection between the substantial change and the movement that prepares it, the movement receives sometimes the name of the substantial change it causes: thus "dying" can mean both a change of the subject that happens literally in no time and a shorter or longer process that leads to it.<sup>678</sup> But the inverse can be also true: despite all his extensive explications of the reasons why substantial change should not be considered to be a movement, sometimes Aquinas himself allows it to be called so.<sup>679</sup> It is not clear to me, whether the reason for it is this change's origin in the movement, its common features with it, or just some concession to someone's way of speaking. In any case, the movement is to be taken here in a broader sense than in the case of the preceding three types.

### I. 1. 3. Incorporeal movements

According to Aristotle, the movement in any of the above-mentioned meanings presupposes some corporeal subject:<sup>680</sup> according to him, the partial possession of two different states requires a subject that is divisible into two different parts subjected to these respective states – otherwise said, a body.<sup>681</sup> Aquinas tends to agree with him and thus, you can find him saying that no incorporeal being (including human soul) can move.<sup>682</sup> Do not panic: your rightful desire to understand Aquinas's opinion about the motion of sinning soul is not doomed to an impasse. It is just that for Aquinas, the similarity of spiritual activities to the bodily change of place (the basic meaning of the term "movement") is very weak. They do not count as a case of movement then, except if the "movement" is taken even more broadly than in the case of

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<sup>677</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 8, n. 14 and l. 5, n. 14: "*In illis vero [mutationibus] inter quarum terminos non est aliquod medium, id quod mutatur non est secundum diversas partes suas in diversis extremis secundum ipsa extrema, sed secundum aliquid eis adiunctum. Sicut cum materia mutatur de privatione ad formam ignis, dum est in ipso mutari, est quidem sub privatione secundum seipsam; sed partim est sub forma ignis non secundum seipsam, sed secundum aliquid ei adiunctum, scilicet secundum dispositionem propriam ignis, quam partim recipit antequam formam ignis habeat. Unde infra probabit Aristoteles quod etiam generatio et corruptio sunt divisibiles...*"

<sup>678</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 8, n. 9 and 14.

<sup>679</sup> Cf. e.g. *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 2, n. 4; lib. 4, l. 16, n. 5; lib. 5, l. 2, n. 1.

<sup>680</sup> "*omne autem quod movetur quocumque modo, est corpus.*" *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 13, n. 1; cf. lib. 1, l. 1, n. 4.

<sup>681</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 12. and lib. 6, l. 5, n. 14 concerning the substantial change.

<sup>682</sup> Cf. e.g. *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 6, n. 15 and 19; *STh.*, I, q. 75, a. 1, ad 1.

the substantial change with which they can share the instantaneity:<sup>683</sup> they are movements only in a sense that can be considered metaphorical or even equivocal.<sup>684</sup> The reason is not only the radical difference of their subject which is an adimensional indestructible being. It is mainly 1) their signification for this subject and 2) the type of determination they concern.

1) First, recall what has been said about the movement *sensu stricto*: given what it is, it needs to be an act of some imperfect being. In contrast, the acts like intellection or volition are by their nature the acts of perfect being:<sup>685</sup> that means that their definition does not imply any partiality or incompleteness. Of course, (at least nearly) every Garfield's volition and intellection is imperfect from more than one point of view (provided that Garfield has an intellect and will at all); but they are not imperfect inasmuch as they belong to these types of act, while his movement is imperfect firstly because it is a movement. As for the substantial change, beside its presupposing some movement of the subject that enters it, it includes the destruction of the original subject and implies the destructibility of a new one.<sup>686</sup> On the contrary, neither the volition nor the intellection implies the loss of anything at all for their subject: they are just the accomplishments of the potential of will/intellect that was idle before their arrival.<sup>687</sup> Again, it can happen that these acts replace other acts of same type: Garfield's volition to watch TV can be replaced by his volition to plunder the fridge. But this is not implied by the nature of intellection or volition taken as such.

2) Second, compared to the act of intellection both the movement *sensu stricto* and the substantial change concerns the determinations whose way of being is fundamentally inferior, precisely because by themselves they are only potentially intelligible and not actually

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<sup>683</sup> “*Subito enim et in instanti perficitur operatio intellectus et voluntatis, multo magis quam visio corporalis, eo quod intelligere, velle et sentire non est motus qui sit actus imperfecti, quod successive perficitur; sed est actus iam perfecti*” *STh.*, III, q. 34, a. 2, co.; “*Cum igitur virtus divina sit infinita, potest quamcumque materiam creatam subito disponere ad formam, et multo magis liberum arbitrium hominis, cuius motus potest esse instantaneus secundum naturam.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 113, a. 7, co.; “*motus liberi arbitrii ... non habet successionem, sed est simplex et instantaneus.*” *De veritate*, q. 29, a. 8, co.; “*motus intellectus et voluntatis habeat totam suam speciem in uno instanti*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 3, ad 3.

<sup>684</sup> “*Minimum autem de proprietate motus, et nihil nisi metaphorice, invenitur in intellectu.*” *Sententia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 10, n. 15; “*...quae indivisibiliter fiunt absque motu continuo, sicut intelligere et sentire: quae etiam non dicuntur motus nisi aequivoce...*” *In Physic.*, lib. 6, l. 8, n. 14.

<sup>685</sup> “*est ibi ipsa operatio, quae quodammodo dicitur motus, inquantum de intelligente in potentia fit intelligens actu. Differt tamen a motu, quia operatio est actus perfecti, motus vero est actus imperfecti.*” *Sententia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 10, n. 15; “*Et quia omne, quod est in potentia, inquantum huiusmodi, est imperfectum, ideo ille motus [de quo determinatum est in libro Physicorum] est actus imperfecti. ... Non enim sentire convenit sensui nisi actu existenti; et ideo est motus simpliciter alter a motu physico. Et huiusmodi motus dicitur proprie operatio, ut sentire, intelligere et velle.*” *Ibid.*, lib. 3, l. 12, n. 2 (according to Leonina lib. 3, cap. 6, l. 26 – 34).

<sup>686</sup> “*impossibile est aut quod id quod quandoque factum est, sit incorruptibile, aut quod est ingenitum et semper prius existens, corruptatur. ... In eo enim quod est generatum, remanet materia potens non esse.*” *In De caelo*, lib. 1, l. 29, n. 9.

<sup>687</sup> Cf. *Sententia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 11, n. 10 – 12: “*Cum autem habitualiter sciens, fit speculans actu, non mutatur de contrario in contrarium, sed perficitur in eo quod iam habet. ... Additur enim ei perfectio secundum quod proficit in actum.*” (n. 10).

intelligible.<sup>688</sup> According to Aquinas, to know the stone intellectually means for me that the stone exists in me in an intelligible way.<sup>689</sup> This way of being in me is surely different from its way of being on the pavement of my pathway; nevertheless, it still concerns the same stone – otherwise the object of my knowledge would not exist and what exists would not be known by me. The stone’s way of existence in me apparently does not include the way of existence it has in itself (otherwise the real stone would be located somewhere in me).<sup>690</sup> But the inverse is also true: inasmuch as we know, to exist in the intelligible way is not included in the way of being that the stone has in itself, otherwise the stone would know itself.<sup>691</sup> Now, on Aquinas’s account the being is not intelligible by something added to it, but by its own beingness.<sup>692</sup> He compares it to the light: the more perfect it is, the more visible (i.e. intelligible) it is.<sup>693</sup> For God, to be and to understand himself means strictly the same thing because he fully IS,<sup>694</sup> while the stone is unintelligible for itself because it IS in a very inferior way of being. But when it is apprehended by some intellect, the stone gets a new form of being that is closer to the original simplicity and perfection of the being of God because then, it IS (at least partially) in the intelligible way. To my knowledge, Aquinas is not explicit about the place of volitional acts in this scheme but given the fact that they proceed from the intellective ones,<sup>695</sup> they should have the same status.

Notwithstanding these fundamental differences, the spiritual activities, and the movement *sensu stricto* also share common features. The spiritual activity can be considered as a

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<sup>688</sup> Cf. *Sententia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 10, n. 12 – 17. “...earum vero quae sunt infra animam, inest animae intellectus superior ipsis rebus, cum in ea res ipsae nobilius esse habeant quam in seipsis.” *De veritate*, q. 15, a. 2, co. “Res enim materiales ... non sunt intelligibiles, nisi quia nos facimus eas intelligibiles: sunt enim intelligibiles in potentia tantum; sed actu intelligibiles efficiuntur per lumen intellectus agentis, sicut et colores actu visibiles per lumen solis. Sed res immateriales sunt intelligibiles per seipsas...” *ibid.*, q. 2, a. 2, co.

<sup>689</sup> “Cognitio enim contingit secundum quod cognitum est in cognoscente. Cognitum autem est in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis.” *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 4, co.

<sup>690</sup> “Perfectio autem unius rei in altero esse non potest secundum determinatum esse quod habebat in re illa; et ideo ad hoc quod nata sit esse in re altera, oportet eam considerari absque his quae nata sunt eam determinare. Et quia formae et perfectiones rerum per materiam determinantur, inde est quod secundum hoc aliqua res est cognoscibilis secundum quod a materia separatur.” *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 2, co.

<sup>691</sup> “sensibile in actu est sensus in actu, et intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu. Ex hoc enim aliquid in actu sentimus vel intelligimus, quod intellectus noster vel sensus informatur in actu per speciem sensibilis vel intelligibilis. Et secundum hoc tantum sensus vel intellectus aliud est a sensibili vel intelligibili, quia utrumque est in potentia.” *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 2, co.

<sup>692</sup> “Unumquodque autem in quantum habet de esse, in quantum est cognoscibile.” *STh.*, I, q. 16, a. 3, co.

<sup>693</sup> “Unumquodque autem cognoscitur per suam formam, et secundum quod est actu. Unde quantum habet de forma et actu, tantum habet de luce. Res ergo, quae sunt actus quidam, sed non purus, lucentia sunt, sed non lux. Sed divina essentia, quae est actus purus, est ipsa lux.” *Super I Tim.*, cap. 6, l. 3; “...unumquodque cognoscitur per id quod est in actu; et ideo ipsa actualitas rei est quoddam lumen ipsius... Causa autem prima est actus purus, nihil habens potentialitatis adiunctum; et ideo ipsa est lumen purum a quo omnia alia illuminantur et cognoscibilia redduntur.” *Super De causis*, l. 6.

<sup>694</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 2 – 4.

<sup>695</sup> “appetitus naturalis consequitur formam in natura existentem, appetitus autem sensitivus, vel etiam intellectivus seu rationalis, qui dicitur voluntas, sequitur formam apprehensam.” *STh.*, I-II, q. 8, a. 1, co., cf. also e.g. *De malo*, q. 6, co. I will say more about this relationship in the next chapter.

*terminus ad quem* preceded by a *terminus a quo* – its absence. These two states share a common subject that had a potentiality for the *terminus ad quem* already during its being in the *terminus a quo*.<sup>696</sup> Thus, be it a metaphor or not, Aquinas does not resist to use the term “movement” for these activities or their sequences, speaking about some movement of body or soul,<sup>697</sup> or about angelic movements (including the topic of spatial movements of angels).<sup>698</sup> Thus, while it is completely legitimate to point out the radical differences between physical changes and, say, movements of the free will (and between the conditions of both) in Aquinas’s view, it is illegitimate to ignore the common features that found Aquinas’s more than occasional common discussion of both. E.g., if it is clear that one of Aquinas’s arguments for the principle “everything which moves is moved by something else” concerns only the corporeal movements,<sup>699</sup> it should be also clear that the others concern also any other newly appearing acts.<sup>700</sup>

#### I. 1. 4. Movement and activity

In the preceding section, some incorporeal activities were called movement. Should not the same be also said about the corporeal activities? It should, but only in a certain way. The list of Aristotelian most general genera of being includes two correlative categories *actio* and *passio*. The *actio* is for example to heat, to cut or to throw, the *passio* is to be heated, to be cut, or to be thrown. According to *Physics*, the *actio* and the *passio* is the same act taken from different points of view; in addition, if taken as such, this act belongs to a third category.<sup>701</sup> Imagine Garfield being warmed by the radiator after getting cold during his plundering of fridge. All this event is about one kind of *quality* – the warmth. If I say that Garfield is warm, I am just attributing this quality to him as to its bearer. If I say that Garfield is warmed, I am speaking about the same warmth, but now inasmuch as it is a *passio*: I am attributing the

<sup>696</sup> “*in operatione intellectus non est immutatio secundum esse naturale, sicut est in vegetabili, nec subiectum naturale quod immutetur, sicut est in sensibili. Sed est ibi ipsa operatio, quae quodammodo dicitur motus, in quantum de intelligente in potentia fit intelligens actu.*” *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 10, n. 15.

<sup>697</sup> “*Applicantur enim virtutes operativae ad proprias operationes per aliquem motum vel corporis, vel animae. Primum autem principium utriusque motus est Deus.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3 cap. 67 n. 4

<sup>698</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 53, a. 1, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 4, a. 1; *Quodlibet I*, q. 3, a. 2; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 7.

<sup>699</sup> It is the argument from the alleged dependence of the movement of the whole on the movement of the parts, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 5 – 7 and *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 1, n. 1 – 6.

<sup>700</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 8 – 9; *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 7, n. 4 – 1. 8, n. 8 and l. 10. See below II. 1.

<sup>701</sup> “*Quantum igitur ad id quod in rerum natura est de motu, motus ponitur per reductionem in illo genere quod terminat motum, sicut imperfectum reducit ad perfectum... Sed quantum ad id quod ratio apprehendit circa motum, scilicet esse medium quoddam inter duos terminos, sic iam implicatur ratio causae et effectus: nam reduci aliquid de potentia in actum, non est nisi ab aliqua causa agente. Et secundum hoc motus pertinet ad praedicamentum actionis et passionis: haec enim duo praedicamenta accipiuntur secundum rationem causae agentis et effectus...*” *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 5, n. 17.

warmth to Garfield inasmuch as he receives it from some agent. What is much less intuitive, if I say that the radiator warms Garfield, the verb “to warm” should mean still the same warmth, but now inasmuch as it is an *actio*: I am attributing it to the radiator inasmuch as the radiator is its source.<sup>702</sup> Maybe you have thought that the activity of warming should consist in something more. That there should be some third entity between the radiator and the warmth in Garfield, maybe some internal act of the radiator by which the radiator creates the warmth in Garfield. Well, an Aristotelian never saw such an intermediary quasi-agent. There is the radiator, there is the warmth in Garfield, and the warmth depends on the radiator: why would you want anything more?

It does not matter for the above-mentioned view whether the act that is caused/received is completed or not. If you were reading the quotations in my footnotes, you have already noticed that they do not speak about the (final state of) warmth but about the movement taken as such: according to *Physics*, the latter is always both *actio* and *passio*.<sup>703</sup> It is the *passio* in the moveable object and the *actio* of the mover.<sup>704</sup> But even if the movement is the *actio* and this *actio* is the *actio* of the mover, this movement is not the movement of the mover, except if the “of” means only “coming from” and not “existing in”. Here is another important difference between the activities like heating, cutting, or throwing on one hand, and the incorporeal acts of the soul on the other hand. The latter are so-called immanent activities: that means that contrarily to the preceding case, the reality caused by their agent inheres in the agent herself and not in something else. A newly realised decision to get warmed is the action of Garfield’s will but it is also the change of this will, it is a “movement” that both comes from and is realised in the will. Nothing like this in the radiator’s warming of Garfield: “also in the case of *actio* it is clear that there is no movement as regards *actio*, if not metaphorically and improperly...”<sup>705</sup>

This topic is of utmost importance for the issue of this book. For Aquinas, the movement is always an *actio* – its existence without some mover is unconceivable. Nevertheless, the mover itself is not changed only by the fact that she moves something. All the newness concerns the

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<sup>702</sup> “...actus motivi non est alius ab actu mobilis.” In *Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 4, n. 8. “Movens enim dicitur in quantum aliquid agit, motum autem in quantum patitur; sed idem est quod movens agendo causat, et quod motum patiendo recipit.” *ibid.*, n. 10.

<sup>703</sup> Cf. In *Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 5, n. 9 and 13: “...motus secundum unam rationem est actio, et secundum aliam rationem est passio. Alterum enim est secundum rationem esse actum huius ut in hoc, et esse actum huius ut ab hoc. ... cum motus abstrahat a ratione actionis et passionis, non continetur in praedicamento actionis neque in praedicamento passionis, ut quidam dixerunt.”

<sup>704</sup> “...motus secundum quod procedit a movente in mobile, est actus moventis; secundum autem quod est in mobili a movente, est actus mobilis.” *ibid.*, n. 11.

<sup>705</sup> “...etiam de actione patet, quod non est motus secundum actionem nisi metaphorice et improprie...” De *potentia*, q. 7, a. 8, co.



moved object.<sup>706</sup> This is one of the most important observations that are the foundation of one of the most influential reinterpretations of Aquinas's conception of motion, provided by Bernard Lonergan. It could be argued that such a conception frees Aquinas from the clutches of (at least theological) determinism. If the agent is not changed by her activity, it seems that whether she acts or not, she is in completely identical state, which seems to mean in turn that this completely identical state permits both acting and non-acting. Thus, it can be held that "God ... is entitatively identical whether he creates or does not create."<sup>707</sup> But even in the case of inferior agents whose possibility of acting depends on others, the indeterminism of the final acting seems to be in no principal way endangered by this dependence: e.g., the possibility of volition being granted to the human will by the divine moving via the pattern of created stimuli, the will can still act or not act without any further change in it. The synergy of these causal factors "attains its effect infallibly only because it is an instrument in the hands of the transcendent *artifex*"<sup>708</sup> whose infallibility is not founded in causal determinism.

The plausibility of a similarly construed solution depends on the plausibility of its premise stating that whether you are active or not, nothing changes in you. If you are like me and find this statement rather strange, you may be interested in the already mentioned fact that most of traditional Thomists would probably agree with you. According to them, in typical cases there must be some third entity besides the agent and her effect, an entity that appears *in* the agent and makes the difference between her active and inactive state: their "physical premotion" was just this. According to Lonergan, this was a nasty betrayal of both Aquinas and Aristotle: their notorious idea of Unmoved mover should prove that the causing of new movements cannot require some corresponding change in the mover.<sup>709</sup> As for me, he is right about the latter, even if he makes an undue inference concerning God's identity across possible worlds.<sup>710</sup> Nevertheless, his account does not do justice to the exceptionality that is proper to the Unmoved mover in the cosmology of both these thinkers: with the exception of one divine entity, any other mover requires some preceding movement for his activity.<sup>711</sup> It may be that the activity taken as such does not change her at all, but it does not mean that she can be

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<sup>706</sup> "The fundamental point in the theory of operation is that operation involves no change in cause as cause." LONERGAN (2000), p. 90. Cf. all the "St Thomas's theory of operation" *ibid.*, p. 66 – 93.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>709</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 67 – 73 and 261 – 67.

<sup>710</sup> See above, chap. 2. II. 5, and below chap. 3. II. 8. 3 – 4. and chap. 4. III.

<sup>711</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 2, n. 6; l. 4, n. 2 – 6 for the corporeal movers. As for the secondary incorporeal movers Aquinas works with, cf. e.g. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 67. See section III. 1.

simultaneously without change and newly active.<sup>712</sup> Now, it could be argued that the change could be limited to something that is external to the mover. The change of place undergone by Garfield is a necessary prerequisite for the radiator’s warming of him, but it is not the change in the radiator, or else “the change in the radiator” has to be taken in some very weak sense that includes also the change of relative position (the thing is even more clear if you replace the radiator by the Sun and Garfield by a snowflake).<sup>713</sup> I agree with Lonergan that it is arguably much less than the physical pre-motion of the Báñezian tradition and that the origin of the latter has to be sought outside the Aristotelian conception of mover. But the belonging of something remarkably similar to this pre-motion to Aquinas’s conception of creaturely agency is another question, as I shall show below (III. 2.).

The preceding paragraphs allow to complete the picture of the ambiguous evaluation of movement in Aquinas. On one hand, my movement is my *passio* – it means that I am passive, i.e. I am under the influence of some agent. On the other hand, in many cases my movement makes me active – it is a necessary prerequisite for me to influence something else (or even myself): this connection is a probable reason of the common confusion of movement and activity. Finally, my movement can at least partially be the effect of my influence over myself, being the manifestation of my freedom: this topic belongs to the next chapter.

### I. 1. 5. Movements of God

Given the fact that the perfect immobility of the First mover is without doubt one of the most notorious Aquinas’s notions, it could be surprising how often Aquinas in fact justifies the analogical attribution of “movement” to this entity in the philosophical discourse.<sup>714</sup> The reason is the following: when it is used to signify the incorporeal activities like volition or intellection, the term “movement” means “the act of perfect being”.<sup>715</sup> Even if these acts are normally contaminated by some imperfection, they can be without it and as such, they can be analogically predicated about God in a similar way as goodness or beingness. Now, alongside Aristotle’s conception of the first immobile mover Aquinas also knows the platonic

<sup>712</sup> “It is a tautology that the agent qua agent is in act – that, as Lonergan puts it, ‘operation involves no change in the cause as cause’ [LONERGAN (2000), p. 71] – but this does not mean that everything that is an agent is pure act and thus in no need of being moved from potency to act with respect to its agency as condition of acting.” LONG (2016), p. 69. (I have replaced the number of the marginal note by the reference to the quoted Lonergan’s text).

<sup>713</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 276 – 280.

<sup>714</sup> “*non intendens excludere motum, idest operationem, quae est in operante, prout intelligere dicitur motus, et prout appetitus movetur ab appetibili. Huiusmodi enim motus non excluditur a primo movente de quo intendit.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 12, n. 3. Cf. lib. 6, l. 8, n. 14; lib. 8, l. 2, n. 16; l. 9, n. 13; lib. 7, l. 1, n. 7; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 1, ad 2; d. 45, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 7; q. 24, a. 1, ad 14; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 17, ad 14; q. 10, a. 1, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 9, a. 1, ad 1; q. 19, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>715</sup> Cf. my footnote 685.

conception of the first self-moving mover.<sup>716</sup> His attitude to it depends immensely on the kind of text where he discusses it,<sup>717</sup> nevertheless, in most of the cases he tries to defend the idea that Plato's and Aristotle's opinion on this topic were not in contradiction. Aristotle's self-thinking thinking and Plato's self-moving mover should refer to the very same act that is not in contradiction with the immobility required by Aristotle's argumentation concerning the First mover. I am not really sure whether Plato would agree with such an ecumenic interpretation of his doctrine, but it shows one of the utmost extremities of Aquinas's use of the term "movement": it is an analogical application of its sense that was already considered metaphorical.

But there is more than that. Plato is not the most important authority who speaks about the divine reality as about moving: the Bible is<sup>718</sup> – and Dionysius's discussion of divine names used by the Scripture did not dismissed this fact.<sup>719</sup> There is obviously his general doctrine according to which both opposite predicates can be used for the analogical speaking about God (see chap. 1. I. 3): God does not move in any way the creatures move – in this sense he is immobile; but he is not immobile in the same sense any creature could be – in this sense he is mobile.<sup>720</sup> But Dionysius offers more of the positive content to this general idea. Firstly, divine "mobility" is a way to express divine omnipresence since the movement is the only way for the creature to reach multiple distant places. Secondly, it can refer to God's causal relation to creatures, which tends to be conceived in terms of God passing down something of his perfection to creatures, as if God's perfections flowed down from him.<sup>721</sup>

I believe that there is much in Aquinas's consideration of divine mobility that can be used to fight some cliches concerning the opposition between the "static" God of (scholastic)

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<sup>716</sup> Cf. PLATO, *Laws*, X, 894 – 895.

<sup>717</sup> In general, Aquinas recurs to the harmonising interpretation while discussing the topic of the First mover (cf. the texts in note 714), but he does not keep it in more anti-platonic context, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 44, q. 3, a. 3, qc. 2, co.; *Contra gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 82, n. 15 (concerning Platonic conception of soul). In *Super De causis*, l. 2 he takes Plato's mover to be on the level of Aristotle's soul of the first heaven.

<sup>718</sup> Cf. for ex. Gen 3, 8 ("they heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day") or Wis 7, 24 ("For Wisdom is mobile beyond all motion, and she penetrates and pervades all things by reason of her purity."). This is not to say that there is no trace of divine immobility in Scriptures, cf. Mal 3, 6 ("Surely I, the LORD, do not change") or Jam 1, 17 ("all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change").

<sup>719</sup> Cf. *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 9, l. 4.

<sup>720</sup> Note that the grammatical structure of the predicates does not correspond to the ontology of their referents: from the latter view it is the (strict sense of the) "mobile" that implies negation, not the "immobile" (cf. I. 1. 1.).

<sup>721</sup> "*dicitur Deus moveri, duplici ratione: prima quidem quia ipse, providendo omnibus, adest omnibus quodam circuitu qui mensurari non potest, omnia concludendo... Sic, dum circa diversa suam praesentiam exhibet, quaedam similitudo motus in eo apparet: nos enim diversis adesse non possumus, nisi moveamur. Alia ratione, propter praedictos effectus dicitur moveri, in quantum operationes et processiones donorum, quae ex sua providentia rebus confert, ad omnia existentia perveniunt. Et sic quaedam similitudine motus in Deo apparet, dum primo consideratur essentia aut sapientia aut aliquid huiusmodi in Deo sicut in summo rerum vertice et deinde derivatur, quasi per quemdam defluxum, ad alias res.*" *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 9, l. 4.

philosophers and the “dynamic” God of the Bible – but since it is not my task here, I leave it aside. I mentioned these meanings of “movement” just for the sake of completing the presentation of Aquinas’s view on this notion. When I speak about the general conditions of movement in the following subchapter, these meanings of the term are not included.

## I. 2. Nothing does not move, nothing moves to nothing

If any movement is to exist, there must be something that moves, i.e. something that is subjected to this movement: this is considered to be a common intuition concerning the movement both by Aristotle and Aquinas.<sup>722</sup> It was one of the reasons why the substantial change should not be considered a movement because in Aristotelian view, there is no actual subject perduring this change, the prime matter being a pure potentiality.<sup>723</sup> The same is a fortiori true about the creation from nothing. Aquinas considers three different meanings of this notion.<sup>724</sup> “From nothing” can mean “not from anything”, i.e., the negation of the matter that would be used by the Creator to realise the creation. Or it could describe the state of the created entities, should the Creator not intervene – the non-being. Or it could mean that the created reality is, in a way, chronologically preceded by nothingness.<sup>725</sup> While the first and the second meaning permit the creation of the universe without temporal beginning, all three meanings imply the non-existence of any *terminus a quo*. Nothingness does not exist and consequently, it can neither move nor even change: we can say that the creation changes nothing, only if we mean that it does not change anything. As for God, the creation does not change him in any way (see below, chap. II. 6. and II. 8. 3. – 4.): as for him, there is no state “before” creation that would be different from the state “after” creation – God is atemporal (see later, chap. 5. I. 3 – 4.).

Beside creation from nothing, there are two other divine acts whose immediate effect is not a movement: conservation and annihilation.<sup>726</sup> As for the first, Aquinas distinguishes between the cause of the commencement (*causa fiendi*) and the cause of being (*causa essendi*).<sup>727</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 2, n. 2: “*ex definitione motus apparet quod necesse est esse subiectum mobile, ad hoc quod sit motus. Sed etiam absque definitione motus per se manifestum est hoc, ut patet ex communi sententia omnium...*”

<sup>723</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 5, l. 2, n. 8ff.

<sup>724</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>725</sup> While there is no real time preceding the first instant of creation (in this sense, “before creation” is a nonsense), it can be preceded by the imaginary time (i.e., it is imaginable that the time goes back much further than it actually does, even endlessly) and in this imaginary time preceding the creation, there is nothing, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad 7.

<sup>726</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 104, *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7 and q. 5, a. 1 – 4.

<sup>727</sup> “...*dicitur causa fiendi quod educit formam de potentia materiae per motum, sicut faber est causa efficiens cultelli; causa vero essendi rem est illud a quo per se esse rei dependet, sicut esse luminis in aere dependet a*

Once the effect is produced, it can exist without the former: e. g., the TV needs Garfield only to be switched on, after that it can go on even if Garfield is gone. Narrowly speaking, the *causa fiendi* (Garfield) causes only the beginning of being (the fact of being switched on), not its further continuation. In contrast, the effect needs a permanent causal support from its *causa essendi*: should it cease, the effect would instantaneously cease to exist. Aquinas considers the disappearance of light from the air immediately after the removal of its source to be the case of the latter: you may have heard that the light actually perdure there a tiny fragment of time longer (even a very long time, if there is enough space without obstacles), but even so, I believe that you understand his idea. Now, Aquinas's God is not only the *causa fiendi* but also the *causa essendi* of all his effects: the infusion of beingness that is provided by him is not limited to a beginning of time (as you know, such a beginning could have not existed according to Aquinas), it is needed now and all the time. Aquinas calls the continuation of this infusion the "conservation" and distinguishes it conceptually from both creation and motion.<sup>728</sup> Despite this, it has been recently argued that the divine motion can be reduced to this act.<sup>729</sup> It is true that the conservation concerns also the entities in movement, nevertheless its effect does not consist in movement for the very same reason as the effect of creation:<sup>730</sup> the imaginary *terminus a quo* would be the non-existence pure and simple and thus, non-existing. I consider the irreducibility of the divine motion to his creative/conservative causality more thoroughly section III. 2.

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Aquinas also considers the logical possibility of the cessation of God's conservative causality and the resulting return into nothingness – the annihilation. He is convinced that it never happens in the universe which is actually chosen by God;<sup>731</sup> nevertheless, if it had happened, it would not have been by movement, this time because of the non-existence of the *terminus ad quem*.

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*sole. Ablato ergo fabro, cessat fieri cultelli, non autem esse eius; absente vero sole, cessat esse luminis in aere...*" *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 8, ad 8, cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 3, n. 18; *STh.*, I, q. 104, a. 1, co., *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 20.

<sup>728</sup> "Deus movet non solum res ad operandum, quasi applicando formas et virtutes rerum ad operationem, sicut etiam artifex applicat securim ad scindendum, qui tamen interdum formam securi non tribuit; sed etiam dat formam creaturis agentibus, et eas tenet in esse. Unde non solum est causa actionum in quantum dat formam quae est principium actionis, sicut generans dicitur esse causa motus gravium et levium; sed etiam sicut conservans formas et virtutes rerum ..." *STh.*, I, q. 105, a. 5, co.

<sup>729</sup> Cf. MATAVA (2016), p. 242 – 276 for this interpretation of Aquinas and p. 277 – 321 for further discussion of the speculative value of this divine motion conception.

<sup>730</sup> "conservatio rerum a Deo non est per aliquam novam actionem; sed per continuationem actionis qua dat esse, quae quidem actio est sine motu et tempore. Sicut etiam conservatio luminis in aere est per continuatum influxum a sole." *STh.*, I, q. 104, a. 1, ad 4. While the conservation can be considered as the continuation of the same action whose beginning was the creation (the causing of being), the motion is distinguished from it by its different object (some determination of being – the movement).

<sup>731</sup> Cf. *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 4; *STh.*, I, q. 104, a. 4.

### I. 3. Attribution of movement

In the preceding chapter, we have seen that the possibility can be attributed in different ways. The same is true about movement or change. There are three basic types of its attribution: *per accidens*, *secundum partes*, and *primo et per se*.<sup>732</sup> Imagine Garfield eating lasagne while sitting on his couch. Does Garfield move during this process? Yes, without doubt, look at his jaws. But does all of Garfield move? This is a more complicated question. Garfield is a complex being and despite saying that he moves, you would normally agree that some of his parts are motionless; in this case, for example his bottom. After all, Garfield himself does not change place during his food consumption. Aquinas would say that Garfield moves *secundum partes* – he is said to be moving because some of his parts are moving. This attribution of movement is apparently different from the attribution of movement vis-a-vis these moving parts themselves, e.g. the jaws: to these parts, the movement is attributed in some stronger (even the strongest) way – *primo et per se*. As often, Aquinas is not terminologically consequent here, using sometimes only the term *per se* or *secundum se* to say the same thing.<sup>733</sup> Now, there are some aspects of Garfield’s being that change neither *primo et per se*, nor *secundum partes* during the movement of his jaws, e.g. his being a TV maniac. These can still be said in movement *per accidens* (“because of something else”): these aspects are connected to something that moves and can be said in movement because of this connection. If Garfield has an immaterial soul, it can be (spatially) moved only in this way. A sailor sitting in the boat is according to Aquinas also moving only in this way<sup>734</sup>: in a way, he keeps his place, it’s just that his place does not keep its place.

These divisions can be *mutatis mutandis* applied also on movers:<sup>735</sup> thus, both football player and his foot are movers of the ball, but the foot is the mover *primo et per se* (or at least it is closer to it) while the football player only *secundum partes*. Moreover, the football player, taken as such, can also be the mover *per accidens* of a political movement, inasmuch as the person who possesses the art of football, is also the subject of some political engagement. In this relationship, Aquinas distinguishes two possible kinds of *per accidens*. If the political and sports activity of the person are mutually independent, it is *per accidens* (only) on the side of

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<sup>732</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 5, l. 1, n. 2.

<sup>733</sup> “*Per se autem dicuntur moveri aut movere ... quia scilicet nec dicuntur movere aut moveri ex eo quod sint in aliis quae movent aut moveantur; neque ex eo quod aliqua pars ipsorum moveat aut moveatur.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 7, n. 2, cf. lib. 7, l. 1, n. 4; *Sententia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 6, n. 8.

<sup>734</sup> “*nauta in navi movetur, non quia ipse moveatur, sed quia navis movetur. Unde haec, scilicet navis, movetur secundum se, nauta vero secundum accidens.*” *Sententia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 6, n. 6.

<sup>735</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 5, l. 1, n. 3.

the cause. On the contrary, if there is some dependency between these effects, e.g. if the political career is an unusual result of the football success, it is *per accidens* on the side of the effect. The latter notion is crucial for Aquinas's conception of chance which is of particular importance for the topic of the next subchapter.

## II. Cause and contingency

### Introduction

In this subchapter, I will argue for two controversial statements: 1) Aquinas's conception of efficient causality is determinist and 2) in his account, the causal contingency requires the subjection of the cause to the chance. To avoid a misunderstanding: I DO NOT INTEND to argue that Aquinas provides some successful demonstration of the efficient determinism, neither I am going to construe such a demonstration on his behalf. As I have already said in the beginning of this book, I do not think that any particularly good arguments for determinism are to be found in Aquinas's writings, if you are not already convinced about something like the Principle of sufficient reason. But if you are convinced about it, or if you think for whatever reason at all that it is reasonable to count with determinism in your account, Aquinas's causal theory can provide you with conceptual tools allowing the compatibilist comprehension of reality that might be more organic and satisfying than some of more recent attempts. Regrettably, some of the most inventive solutions of God's rule/human freedom problem will be discarded by this theory.

Some terminological notices first: I am going to use the terms "potency" and "act" in their most famous Aristotelian meaning here. "Garfield exists in act" or "Garfield is fed in act" means that some being of Garfield (e.g. his very existence or his being fed) is realised, he exists in the basic sense of the verb "to exist", he is fed in the basic sense the verb has in this context. "Garfield exists in potency" or "Garfield is fed in potency" means that the respective beings of Garfield are not realised (in the basic sense of the term) but they could be realised because there is a potentiality of this realisation – there is something that could become Garfield (e.g. the matter inside his parents) or there is something in Garfield that could be fed (his stomach). In this context, the "actualisation" means the passage from the state of potency to the state of act.

For the brevity's sake, I will use the Latin qualifications of causal contingency: *ut in pluribus* (the cause produces the effect in most of the cases), *ut in paucioribus* (the cause produces the

effect in the minority of cases) and *ad utrumque/utrumlibet* (both the production of effect and its non-production is equally possible).<sup>736</sup>

There are three important principles that are going to be discussed in this subchapter: “*Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur*” (everything that moves is moved by something else), “*Causa posita, sequitur effectus*” (the cause being provided, the effect follows) and “The potency cannot pass to act without a mover different from it”. I will abbreviate them respectively as “*O*”, “*C*” and “*P*”. Let us start with the first one.

## II. 1. *O: Omne quod movetur ab alio movetur*

“Everything that moves is moved by something else.” Thanks to its employment in the First way to prove the existence of God,<sup>737</sup> Aquinas’s dedication to this principle is notorious. It implies two restrictions concerning the conception of movement: 1) the movement that is caused exclusively by the entity that is subjected to it and 2) the movement without any mover at all are both ruled out. Nevertheless, in contrast with the possible first impression, it excludes neither the self-movement (provided its dependence on an exterior mover), nor the fact that the movement happens in a way that is not determined by its mover: in fact, Aquinas believes that both of these situations are a normal part of reality. Why does he believe in the restrictions that are posed by *O* then? I have identified three kinds of reasons in his writings, all of them coming from Aristotle’s *Physics*.

### II. 1. 1. Inductive argument

First of all, the principle is said to be proved inductively – by experience.<sup>738</sup> Aristotle distinguishes three groups of movements on this occasion: the violent movements, the natural movements and the movements of living beings taken as such. The proof is supposed to consist in finding that all these types of movement require an external mover, although of vastly different kinds.

Let us start with the violent one. In this context the “violent” means anything “whose source is exterior and to which the power of its recipient contributes nothing.”<sup>739</sup> Memorize this

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<sup>736</sup> Cf. p. 157 – 159.

<sup>737</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co.

<sup>738</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 8 and *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 7, n. 4 – l. 8, n. 8.

<sup>739</sup> “*Est enim violentum, ut dicitur in III Ethicorum, cuius principium est extra, nil conferente vim passo.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 7, n. 4, cf. lib. 5, l. 10, n. 4; *Contra gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 22, n. 5; *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 6, ad 1; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, co. etc. The source text of the definition is ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1110 b.



definition, it is going to be of much importance. According to it, the “violence” has nothing to do with the brutality or the lack of tenderness. The movement of a feather lifted from the ground by a little girl is a violent movement, no matter how tender the girl is. In contrast, the movement of a stone falling from the rooftop on your head is not violent (although the following transformation of your head is) because the inner properties of the stone contribute positively to the movement (while the inner properties of the feather do not). The conformity of the violent movement with *O* is self-evident: if there was no exterior mover, the movement would not be called violent.

This conformity is more difficult to perceive in the case of typical movements of living beings. Especially animals seem to be moved by themselves. The Philosopher agrees. But he remarks that the self-movement of animal depends on the movement of its constituents: Garfield moves through the kitchen just because his limbs move. Moreover, during this movement one constituent of an animal is moved by another. Garfield’s limbs are moved by his muscles that are moved by his appetite (or by his neural system if you want) and so on. This is why he can be said to be moved by himself: his movement (*secundum partes*) is caused by some of his constituents that move other constituents that are in movement *primo et per se* (cf. I. 3.). As for the “and so on”, it does not continue infinitely. We arrive at some final constituent (e.g. a sensorial organ) that is always moved by some factor that is exterior to Garfield (e.g. the smell of lasagne). Thus, *O* is valid both for each of Garfield’s constituents taken separately and for Garfield taken as a whole. Garfield moves to the kitchen because he is moved by both his limbs and the lasagne that is in the kitchen. Aristotle is aware that the things can be way more complicated (e.g. Garfield awakened by his dreaming about his own warm fur), but he is convinced that despite these complications, all the inner states of the animal can be tracked down to some exterior stimulus (e.g. a change of temperature in the bedroom). Note *en passant*, that the voluntary movements of men are not considered as an exception from this rule.

Thus, the most promising disproof of *O* is Aristotelian “natural movement”. What exactly is meant by it? Imagine the falling stone or the rising flame. You might have been told that their movements are just the resultants of external factors like gravity or air-pressure: therefore you might think that from the viewpoint of their cause, these movements do not fundamentally differ from the movement of the stone launched up by catapult or the flame fired down by a flamethrower. The Philosopher does not share this opinion. He considers evident that some

things move in certain way just because of their nature.<sup>740</sup> The “just because of their nature” is used narrowly here: it means that the source of the movement is in the nature of the moving object, and that there is no other inner source it would depend on. In this sense, Garfield’s quest for lasagne is not a natural movement: although it is somehow rooted in his nature, it also depends on the acts of many of his inner abilities. Although some of these abilities are implied by Garfield’s nature and both them and the activities they perform can therefore be said natural, there is a clear difference between these acts and Garfield’s nature itself. While their occurrence depends ultimately on Garfield’s environment, and therefore sometimes they do not occur, Garfield’s nature is still there: it is implied by Garfield’s very existence. The same is true about the tendency to natural movement in the narrow sense of the term. Aristotle thinks that the falling of the stone and the rising of the flame are the cases of the latter: these entities always tend to move these ways because their nature pushes them to occupy the place in the universe that is proportionate to them thanks to the nature of the body that delimits it.<sup>741</sup> This movement can be blocked by an obstacle and for a time, some stronger agent (e.g. the catapult or the flamethrower) can violently replace it by another one; it can also naturally stop, if its goal is achieved.<sup>742</sup> But while it exists, it seems that it should not require any external mover.

The Aristotelian account permits three possible defences of *O* here. First, if the stone is moving, it must have been previously separated from its natural place by some obstacle (otherwise it would be at rest)<sup>743</sup> that has been later removed by something (otherwise the stone would be still hindered): thus, its natural movement depends at least indirectly on the remover of this obstacle (the famous *removens prohibens*).<sup>744</sup> There could be some cases, when the obstacle was removed by the stone itself though, as in the case of it finally breaking the table it was put on thanks to its perduring tendency to move down (its “heaviness”). Second, at least in Aquinas’s interpretation of Aristotelian cosmological causal hierarchy, the natural movements of elements directly depend on the actualisations of these elements by their higher natural movers like celestial bodies: we shall speak more about this topic later (III. 1. 4.). Third, and this is the principal reason why Aristotle thinks that *O* should also hold

<sup>740</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 1. In Aquinas’s words, “*ridiculum est quod aliquis tentet demonstrare quod natura sit, cum manifestum sit secundum sensum quod multa sunt a natura, quae habent principium sui motus in se. ... Naturam autem esse, est per se notum, in quantum naturalia sunt manifesta sensui.*” (n. 8).

<sup>741</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 8, n. 6.

<sup>742</sup> “*corporibus gravibus et levibus non competit moveri, nisi secundum quod sunt extra dispositionem suae naturae, utpote cum sunt extra locum proprium, cum enim sunt in loco proprio et naturali, quiescunt.*” *STh.*, I, q. 18, a. 1, ad 2, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 15, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4; *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 8, n. 7.

<sup>743</sup> “*omne corpus quod naturaliter quiescit et naturaliter movetur, habet locum in quo naturaliter quiescit, ad quem naturaliter movetur, et a quo non recedit nisi per violentiam.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 48, q. 2, a. 2, co.

<sup>744</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 8, n. 7.

in the cases of the natural movement, the moving object depends on its generator. At some moment in the past both the flame and the stone came to existence thanks to something else and they owe their nature to this originating entity: and because this nature is the source of the natural movement, the source of the instantiation of this nature in this particular flame or stone is the exterior source of their natural movement.<sup>745</sup>

So far for the inductive argument. You may say that it looks more like the harmonisation of the data with *O* than the proof of *O*. I myself believe that such an evaluation is not completely unjust. Even in Aristotle's universe (not to speak about Aquinas's) there are some entities whose movements seem to be disregarded by this argumentation (just recall his allegedly perpetual celestial bodies). As for the cases of the animal movements without any apparent external mover, the Philosopher basically contents himself with the assertion that this mover indeed exists, although inapparent. Nevertheless, beside highlighting the number of cases where the dependence of the movement on the external mover is intuitively convincing, this argument merits attention because of its introducing some aspects of the Aristotelian/Thomist conception of motion that happen to be neglected: 1) the inner orientation to receive some external causal influence as a criterion of the non-violent character of the resulting movement, 2) the environment as the mover of the self-movement of animals, including rational ones, and 3) the complexity of the notion of the mover. We can see their relevance in the third subchapter.

## II. 1. 2. Speculative reasoning

Aquinas identifies and adopts two speculative reasons that were proposed by Aristotle as demonstrations of *O*. The first is based on the divisibility of a moving object,<sup>746</sup> the second on the relation of the potency and act.<sup>747</sup> I will skip the first. Aquinas observes that it became the target of multiple objections in the Aristotle-commenting tradition and unlike him, I believe that it is for good reasons.<sup>748</sup> But more importantly, its foundation in the divisibility means that it concerns only the movements *sensu stricto* – the bodily ones (cf. I. 1. 1.). In other words, the self-motion of free will that we are principally interested in is not touched at all by

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<sup>745</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 1, n. 4; lib. 8, l. 8, n. 1.

<sup>746</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 5 – 7; *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 1, n. 1 – 6.

<sup>747</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 9; *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 10; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 1, ad 3; *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co.

<sup>748</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 1, n. 4 – 5 for Aquinas's report of the critic coming from Galen and Avicenna, the answers of Averroes and Aquinas himself constituting n. 6: the point is that the movement of the whole depends always on the movement of its parts. Given the fact that in Aquinas's view, not all the parts are ontologically prior to the whole (cf. p. 167 – 168) and the divisibility does not mean their actual existence, I do not understand the tenability of this argument.

this argument: from the point of view of the movement it speaks about, the will is not in movement at all, if not *per accidens* (cf. I. 3.).

Contrary to it, the second argument is based on the common feature shared by all the movements in all the meanings of the term (except for the “movements” of the Immobile Mover, cf. I. 1. 5.). “Nothing moves [i.e., “makes something move”], if not inasmuch as it is in act, and nothing is moved, if not inasmuch as it is in potency, and these two features cannot inhere in the same thing vis-a-vis the same [determination].”<sup>749</sup> In the *terminus a quo* of any movement, there must be some unrealised potentiality – the “potency”. In contrast, the mover (more precisely its determination that makes it a mover) must be realised – to “be in act”: quite plausibly, should it be non-existent, it would not have any influence at all.<sup>750</sup> The same determination cannot simultaneously be both realised and unrealised in the same subject. The point of the argument is that the potency cannot transfer itself in act. Again, Aquinas does not intend to exclude all the kinds of self-movement here. But according to the argument, an entity can be moved by itself only in the following sense: its movement concerning one of its features is caused by some of its others features. E.g., Garfield’s actually existing willing of lasagne moves him (more precisely his will) concerning his potential decision to enter the kitchen. Nevertheless, as in the case of inductive argument, Aquinas is convinced that it can be shown that we cannot get by with this movement of one aspect of the entity by another, and we must anchor the causal chain somewhere outside of the moved. The number of species of movement is finite and should not the repetition of the same species in this chain cause the contradiction, it must either do not happen in the same entity, or do not happen at all thanks to the conclusion of the chain in the Immobile Mover.<sup>751</sup> The latter is anyway a necessary condition of any movement<sup>752</sup> and according to Aquinas, the requirements that it must fulfil make impossible that it would be a part of some another entity, e.g. as a soul of the world.<sup>753</sup> Welcome on the doglegs of the First way. I will not enter the vast cosmological and epistemological discussion concerning its (in)validity here: as I said, it is not my intention to prove that this part of Aquinas’s cosmological system must be true. As you may have noticed,

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<sup>749</sup> “*nihil movetur nisi secundum quod est in actu, nec movetur nisi secundum quod est in potentia, et haec duo non possunt simul eidem inesse respectu ejusdem.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>750</sup> It could be argued that the influence of the Loch Ness Monster on the Scottish tourism is undeniable, regardless of whether the monster exists or not. *Distinguendum est*. Even if the monster does not exist, the myth of the monster exists: it is a very much real feature of many human minds and their products. If Loch Ness is monster-free, all the alleged influence of the monster is due to this myth. As for the simultaneity of the existence of the mover and the movement, I am not asserting its necessity here.

<sup>751</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 19 and *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 9, n. 10 – 12.

<sup>752</sup> Cf. the whole of the argumentation in *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 2 – 32; *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co.; *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 2; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 3; *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 12 *usque ad finem*.

<sup>753</sup> Cf. the argumentation for the God’s simplicity in *STh.*, I, q. 3, especially a. 8.

the above-mentioned argumentation is supposed to exclude that the potency is the mover of its own actualisation; it has nothing to say against the option that the actualisation of this potency just happens without any mover at all. Aquinas's statements clearly deny such a possibility, but I do not remember him refuting it (or dealing with it at all) anywhere in his works. It is true that on the following pages I am going to quote some of his pro-determinist assertions that could be read as a profession of validity of some version of the Principle of the sufficient reason (PSR) vis-a-vis the contingent entities. It might be argued that such a principle effectively refutes the possibility of the actualisation of potency without any efficient cause. The inverse could be also said though: the impossibility of the efficiently uncaused actualisation of potency implies the validity of some version of the PSR vis-a-vis the contingent entities. That being said, I am not sure at all whether Aquinas ever distinctly conceived any version of PSR: if so, the relationship of this principle to Aquinas's assertion of the impossibility of the causeless actualisation of potency is not clear to me – and in the absence of explicit statements from his side, I would not put my money on the fact that it was clear for Aquinas himself.

What is important for the issue of this book is the following: on Aquinas's account, the potency always requires something else for its actualisation – the mover (or, alternatively, the Creator/Conservator). Let us call this principle “P”. The mover can belong to one of two most general genera of cause: the agent (or the efficient cause) and the goal (or the final cause).<sup>754</sup> If any actualisation is to happen, both of them are required because neither the causality of the goal can be realised without the agent, nor the causality of the agent without the goal. As for the goal, it is quite clear why it is so: the goal is a cause only inasmuch as it is a goal of an agent.<sup>755</sup> As for the agent, we have already seen during the discussion of the Inductive argument that, depending on the case of movement, it can be of many different kinds. Nevertheless, according to Aquinas there are several arguments justifying that regardless of the kind, the efficient mover can never move without a goal.<sup>756</sup> The following reason merits our attention: “If an agent did not tend to some determinate effect, all the effects would be

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<sup>754</sup> “*aliquid dicitur movere dupliciter. Uno modo sicut finis movet agentem; et tale movens aliquando distans est ab agente quem movet: alio modo sicut movet id quod est principium motus...*” In *Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 3, n. 1.

<sup>755</sup> “*Causa autem finalis non causat seorsum aliquid ab agente: intantum enim finis habet rationem causae, inquantum movet agentem.*” In *Physic.*, lib. 3, l. 5, n. 15; “*propter ultimum finem, qui est universalis, alii fines appetuntur, quorum appetitus advenit post appetitum ultimi finis et ante ipsum cessat; sed et huius ordinis ratio ad genus causae efficientis reducitur, nam finis in tantum est causa in quantum movet efficientem ad agendum, et sic, prout habet rationem moventis, pertinet quodammodo ad causae efficientis genus.*” *Super De causis*, l. 1 in fine.

<sup>756</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 2. From the very beginning of his career Aquinas states that “the goal is the cause of the causality of efficient because it makes efficient be efficient” (...*finis est causa causalitatis efficientis, quia facit efficiens esse efficiens...*) *De principiis naturae*, cap. 4.

indifferent for it. But something that has an indifferent relationship to many [things] does not do one of them rather than any other of them; and this is why no effect follows from the contingent *ad utrumque*, if it [i.e., the contingent] is not determined by something to one [effect]. Thus, it would be impossible that it [i.e. the agent that did not tend to some determinate effect] acts. Every agent therefore tends to some determinate effect that is called its goal.”<sup>757</sup>

This argument could be easily based on the application of *P* on an agent. Recall that the movement is always the movement towards some *terminus ad quem*. Now, let us have an agent that is supposed to grant the realisation of this movement. If it is not determined to do this, we have two potencies here: the potency of a moveable object to arrive at the *terminus ad quem* and the potency of an agent to cause this movement. In the same way as the former, the latter potency needs something else for its actualisation and without this something, the agent is useless for the causing of this particular movement. If we are to avoid this impasse, we need to deny potency of the latter and grant it the determination of an agent to cause the movement towards this particular *terminus ad quem*.<sup>758</sup> Or, alternatively, *P* could be considered the implication of the premise that is the foundation of this argument: “something that has an indifferent relationship to many [things] does not do one of them rather than any other”. Or it might be that both of these Aquinas’s convictions are mutually independent. What matters now is the following: the final part of the doctrine about four causes of movement – arguably one of most basic features of Aquinas’s (and Aristotle’s) cosmology – happens to be justified by a determinist premise.<sup>759</sup> In Aquinas’s view, the *terminus ad quem*

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<sup>757</sup> “*Si agens non tenderet ad aliquem effectum determinatum, omnes effectus essent ei indifferentes. Quod autem indifferenter se habet ad multa, non magis unum eorum operatur quam aliud: unde a contingente ad utrumque non sequitur aliquis effectus nisi per aliquid determinetur ad unum. Impossibile igitur esset quod ageret. Omne igitur agens tendit ad aliquem determinatum effectum, quod dicitur finis eius.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 2, n. 8. During one informal discussion, I have met the conviction that Aquinas speaks only about the natural agents here. I find it difficult to understand this opinion: first, the text is supposed to prove that “*omne agens in agendo intendit aliquem finem*” (n. 1) and not only the natural one; second, to my knowledge, it would be the only text in Aquinas attributing the contingency *ad utrumque* to some natural agent.

<sup>758</sup> To appease at least partially Lonergan’s disciples: it is clear that the potency preventing the agent from being determined could be limited to some external feature of the agent, e.g. its distance from the moveable object (as in Lonergan’s famous example of fire and hay). In such a case it could be questioned, whether it should be considered the potency in agent, or rather another potency of a moveable object, or something in-between. But it does not matter here: it suffices that any such potency, whichever entity it is assigned to, needs to be removed, if the agent is to act, and thus, the agent needs to be determined to the action if he is to produce this action. You might find some clever distinction between such potency in agent and the potency in the moveable (purely passive) object to justify that only the latter requires an external mover, while the former (sometimes) does not. As I have said, I do not intend to refute the indeterminism here and so I do not exclude the possibility of such a distinction. But I have never seen it and, what is more important, apparently neither has Aquinas, as we shall see in the following.

<sup>759</sup> “*Necesse est autem quatuor esse causas. Quia cum causa sit ad quam sequitur esse alterius, esse eius quod habet causam, potest considerari dupliciter: uno modo absolute, et sic causa essendi est forma per quam aliquid est in actu; alio modo secundum quod de potentia ente fit actu ens. Et quia omne quod est in potentia, reducitur*

of the action needs to be in a certain way present in the agent, predetermining (“moving”) the agent to move the moveable object in certain way. According to him we are experiencing this happening while perceiving the relationship between our interior states and our doing:<sup>760</sup> the notion of goal (*finis*) or intention (*intentio*) that we have acquired thanks to these occasions can be analogically applied on all such determinations across all the scale of being.<sup>761</sup> There are no exceptions from this rule: Aquinas’s does not forget to explicitly include the activities that seem to happen without any reason at all (the famous unconsciously stroking one’s beard). According to him they are caused either by a sensorial perception that has not passed the threshold of consciousness, or even by some purely physical event.<sup>762</sup>

Maybe it’s just my impression but it seems to me that this connection between Aquinas’s notion of final cause and the causal determinism is something that has been more or less overlooked in the discussion concerning the latter. The reasons could be the following. Obviously, Aquinas does not think that the finality of the agent is always realised and, of course, on his account the intellectual agent is not determined to any particular goal: it seems then that there is no danger of determinism in this branch of his causal thought. Well, we shall see. For now, let us look at Aquinas further working with the principle of the necessity of determination of an agent in the context of his doctrine about causal contingency. Reader’s possible boredom while reading the chapter on modal notions should be settled now.

## II. 2. C: *Causa posita, sequitur effectus*

“The cause being provided, the effect follows.” You can find more than forty occurrences of this principle in Aquinas’s works, including some of the earliest (the first book of his *Sentences*) and latest ones (the unfinished third part of *Summa*),<sup>763</sup> and although in most of

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*ad actum per id quod est actu ens; ex hoc necesse est esse duas alias causas, scilicet materiam, et agentem qui reducit materiam de potentia in actum. Actio autem agentis ad aliquid determinatum tendit, sicut ab aliquo determinato principio procedit: nam omne agens agit quod est sibi conveniens; id autem ad quod tendit actio agentis, dicitur causa finalis. Sic igitur necesse est esse causas quatuor.”* In *Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 10, n. 15.

<sup>760</sup> “*Sicut autem in intellectu praeconciante existit tota similitudo effectus ad quem per actiones intelligentis pervenitur, ita in agente naturali praeexistit similitudo naturalis effectus, ex qua actio ad hunc effectum determinatur...*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 2, n. 6.

<sup>761</sup> Aquinas thinks so, despite him being well aware that on the inferior levels of the scale these determinations are partially or completely unconscious (e.g. in the case of natural determinations of elements) and of violent origin in many cases (e.g. the momentum of the shot arrow). See below section III. 2. and chap. 4. I. 4.

<sup>762</sup> “*Actiones autem quae fiunt sine attentione, non sunt ab intellectu, sed ab aliqua subita imaginatione vel naturali principio: sicut inordinatio humoris pruritus excitantis est causa confricationis barbae, quae fit sine attentione intellectus. Et haec ad aliquem finem tendunt, licet praeter ordinem intellectus.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 2, n. 9.

<sup>763</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 6; d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, s. c. 2; lib. 2, d. 42, q. 1, a. 5, expos.; lib. 4, d. 28, q. 1, a. 3, s. c. 1; d. 43, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, arg. 1; d. 49, q. 2, a. 7, s. c. 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 32, n. 5 and cap. 35, n. 4; lib. 3, cap. 86, n. 9 – 12; cap. 94, n. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 8, arg. 2; q. 46, a. 1, arg. 9; q. 63, a. 2,

them Aquinas does not mention it as his own opinion, in some of them he does.<sup>764</sup> It means that the existence of the effect is always not only enabled but also implied by the occurrence of its cause. Avicenna, to whom Aquinas attributes the authorship of the formulation of this principle from the final third of *De veritate* onwards,<sup>765</sup> is said to provide the following explanation of its validity:

“The thing is that if the effect is not necessarily provided despite the provided cause, the effect has consequently the possibility of both [states] (*se habet ad utrumque*); i.e., of being and of non-being, even after the providing of the cause. But the thing that has the potentiality of two [states] is not determined to one of them, unless there is something determining. Therefore, after providing the cause it is still necessary to provide something that makes the effect exist. And thus, that [firstly mentioned] cause was not sufficient. Therefore, if the cause is sufficient, it is necessary (*oportet*) that if it is provided, it is necessary (*necessarium sit*) that the effect is provided.”<sup>766</sup>

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arg. 3; q. 115, a. 6; q. 116, a. 3, co.; II-II, q. 22, a. 2, arg. 2; III, q. 49, a. 1, arg. 4; q. 56, a. 1, arg. 1; q. 61, a. 1, arg. 3; q. 79, a. 2, arg. 2; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 14, arg. 2; q. 5, a. 9, arg. 12; q. 23, a. 4, arg. 16 and a. 5, arg. 1; q. 24, a. 2, arg. 4; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, arg. 8 and 16; q. 6, a. 9, arg. 19; a. 17, arg. 4; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 8; q. 4, a. 1, arg. 3; q. 6, arg. 15; q. 16, a. 7, ad 14; *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 10, arg. 16; *Quodlibet V*, q. 8, a. 1, co.; *Quodlibet XII*, q. 4, co.; *De aeternitate mundi (in medio)*; *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 13, co.; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1, l. 15, n. 13; lib. 6, l. 3, n. 2f; lib. 11, l. 8, n. 14; *Expositio Posteriorum Analyticorum*, lib. 2, l. 9, n. 2; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 10; *Super I Cor.*, cap. 15, l. 2; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 21; *Super De Trinitate*, pars 2, pr. 5; *Super Iob*, cap. 10.

<sup>764</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 42, q. 1, a. 5, expos. (*Posita autem causa non potest effectus non esse; et ideo impossibile est ut simul dum actus peccati manet, reatus transeat.*) and *Quodlibet V*, q. 8, a. 1, co. (speaking about the cause of matrimony). In *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, s. c. 2; lib. 4, d. 28, q. 1, a. 3, s. c. 1 and d. 49, q. 2, a. 7, s. c. 5 the principle is mentioned among arguments for the position defended by Aquinas, without being corrected in Aquinas’s answers. The same thing happens in *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1, l. 15, n. 13 (*Plato dixerit ... quod species sunt causae rebus sensibilibus essendi et fiendi. Sed hoc improbat duabus rationibus: quarum prima talis est. Posita causa ponitur effectus: sed existentibus speciebus non propter hoc fiunt entia particularia sive individua participantia species, nisi sit aliquid motivum quod moveat ad speciem.*) and in *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 21 (*Posset autem aliquis dicere quod ... materia corporalis attrahit animas ad malitiam, alliciendo eas. Sed ipse dicit hoc non esse verum. Si enim materia esset causa attrahens animas ad malitiam, sequeretur quod hoc ex necessitate faceret: posita enim causa, ex necessitate sequitur effectus, nisi aliquis impediatur. Sed hoc videmus esse falsum: multae enim animarum respiciunt ad bonum, quod non posset esse si materia totaliter attraheret eas ad malum. Unde manifestum est quod malum in animabus non est ex materia...): both Aristotle and Dionysius are said to use the principle to refute the positions Aquinas finds himself false.*

<sup>765</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 5, arg. 1; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 17, arg. 4; *De malo*, q. 6, arg. 15; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 2. Aquinas has completed *De veritate* by the end of 1250s, while *Sententia Metaphysicae* dates the beginning of 1270s (some two years before Aquinas’s death). It is not clear to me, whether Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* is Aquinas’s source text of *C* itself, or only of the argumentation in favour of *C*. In his *Sentences*, Aquinas quotes Avicenna about 150 times but he never connects *C* with his name.

<sup>766</sup> “*Si enim posita causa, non necessario effectus ponitur, ergo adhuc post positionem causae effectus se habet ad utrumque, scilicet ad esse et non esse. Sed quod est in potentia ad duo, non determinatur ad unum eorum, nisi sit aliquid determinans. Ergo post positionem causae, adhuc oportet ponere aliquid quod faciat effectum esse; et ita causa illa non erat sufficiens; si ergo causa sit sufficiens, oportet quod ea posita necessarium sit effectum poni.*” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 5, arg. 1, cf. *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 17, arg. 4; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 2; *De malo*, q. 6, arg. 15.



As is clear from the context, the term “sufficient” is not used here in the sense of a logical sufficient condition (otherwise Avicenna’s statement would be mere truism) but in its weaker, more habitual sense that means just that all the necessary conditions are satisfied. While saying that a gun is sufficient to kill a man, we usually do not imply that the man will surely die. At least, it is possible that the deadly power of the gun will not be used. In Avicenna’s view however, we are mistaken if we speak about sufficiency in such a case. In fact, the gun is not enough to kill the man: without the finger to push the trigger, the decision to move the finger, the well-aiming eye and the Sun to assure some general physical conditions of the shooting, the gun will be perfectly harmless for its supposed victim. On the contrary, if all the necessary conditions of the killing were accomplished, it would be impossible for the man to survive: the weaker meaning of “sufficient” implies the stronger one. The argument depends on *P* and, apparently, for Avicenna it does not matter whether the potency concerns an agent or not.

But should it be true, what about the contingency *ad utrumque* that the Aristotelian tradition grants in the case of rational faculties? Recall Aquinas’s report of Avicenna’s opinion that I have already mentioned in the chapter about modal notions.<sup>767</sup> Abstractly speaking, we can say that there is a contingency *ad utrumque* in the rational potency because contrary to the natural potency of, say, fire, the way to its finality is not preestablished by its nature. Nevertheless, if we are speaking about this faculty inasmuch as it is a feature of some real agent, it is always under the influence of the other (e.g. sensorial) determinations of this agent, inclining it in one direction or another – and most of the time, the decision of an agent follows this inclination.<sup>768</sup> The reason why it does not always follow it is principally the same as in the case of the contingency of plant’s fulfilling its natural tendency: the occasional occurrence of some impeding factor.

### II. 3. Aquinas’s reception of Arab determinism

The attitude that Aquinas adopts vis-a-vis Avicenna’s position concerning this topic is differentiated. As for its latter part, he quotes it as an explanation for Aristotle’s skipping of the contingency *ad utrumque* at one page of the *Physics* and leaves it without any personal

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<sup>767</sup> Cf. my mention of *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 8, n. 3 in chap. 2. III. 1. (p. 160).

<sup>768</sup> “*Non autem resistunt nisi sapientes corporalibus inclinationibus, qui sunt pauci respectu stultorum: quia stultorum infinitus est numerus, Eccle. I, 15 [Vlg.]*.” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, ad 2. Consequently, while Aquinas states that the individual choices of particular individuals cannot be foretold by man with certitude (if not thanks to God’s supernatural activity in a prophet), he thinks that the behaviour of the majority of these individuals (taken collectively) is in principle very predictable because the determinants of their corporeal inclinations can be naturally known, cf. also *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 85, n. 19 – 20.

comment. Undoubtedly, it would be too audacious to consider it to be his own view just on the basis of this unique text. Nevertheless, I argue that it must be considered so because from the very first book of his *Sentences*, Aquinas adheres to a more general statement of Averroes that happens to imply it.

“...a determined work proceeds only from a determined agent. And this is why the thing that is only in potency does not act because it has an undetermined relation vis-à-vis many things...”<sup>769</sup> Aquinas takes this statement for his own and uses it as a premise for the justification of his proper position, e.g. as an argument to demonstrate that it is necessary to assert the existence of will in God – so much for the potential unjustified efforts to limit his acceptance of its validity only to natural agents or suchlike. In the later and more developed form of its quotation, Thomas specifies that the determination that is issued from the determining factor needs to be efficacious either always, or at least often.<sup>770</sup> Apply it on the case of the voluntary agents and you get the same restriction of its causal contingency as the one described by Avicenna: both Arab philosophers apparently share the reasons for the incompatibility of the non-determination with the (efficient) causality – or at least Aquinas reads them this way.

What about his account concerning Avicenna’s argumentation regarding the sufficient cause? There was a necessitarian attempt to use this argumentation to deny the existence of the contingent effects at all (and of the contingency as such): either the cause is fully determined to the production of the effect and then it produces it necessarily, or it is not fully determined and then it produces nothing at all, also necessarily. Aquinas thinks that this is a false alternative: even for the sufficient cause it is possible to not produce its effect. He never denies Avicenna’s premise concerning the necessity of the cause to be determined to the production of its effect though. According to him, the source of contingency is the possibility of the presence of an impediment.<sup>771</sup> Imagine a dandelion: it is internally fully determined to produce its seed and it has everything it needs for it. Will it produce it necessarily then? No, because a cow can devour its upper side before it happens. You could argue on behalf of the necessitarian that in this case, the dandelion was not the sufficient cause of the seed. After all,

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<sup>769</sup> “*opus determinatum non progreditur nisi a determinato agente; et inde est quod illud quod est tantum in potentia, non agit, quia se habet indeterminate ad multa...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, a. 3, co., cf. *ibid.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 15, n. 6; lib. 3, cap. 2, n. 8; (and more generally cap. 13, n. 3); *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 3, ad 5.

<sup>770</sup> “*ex eo quod est ad utrumlibet nihil sequitur, nisi per aliquid aliud quod determinat ad unum, vel sicut semper vel sicut frequenter.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 8, n. 3, cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 2, n. 13, or already *De veritate*, q. 8, a. 12, co.: “*ex causa ad utrumlibet, cum sit quasi in potentia, non progreditur aliquis effectus, nisi per aliquam aliam causam determinetur magis ad unum quam ad aliud, ut probat Commentator in II Phys.*”

<sup>771</sup> Cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 3; *De malo*, q. 6, ad 15.

all its effort to produce the seed was not sufficient because there is one condition that was left unfulfilled – not to be mutilated by the cow. The non-consideration of this condition means the non-consideration of an undetermined potentiality in the dandelion and if it is considered, well, we see that the production of the seed was actually impossible. As we have already seen (chap. 2. II. 5 – 6.) and can see it again a few pages below, Aquinas is not completely hostile vis-à-vis such a point of view: without doubt there is a meaning of the “impossible” in which the production of the seed is impossible for this particular dandelion. But apparently, he does not think that this kind of impossibility impede the status of the sufficient cause or the fact that this impossible effect is contingent in some more relevant sense of the term. Recall what was said about the basic meaning of the (im)possibility: it is to be judged according to the power of the natural proximate cause. The production of the seed is contingent in this sense of the term, i.e. *simpliciter*, if the dandelion is a cause that, depending on its actual causal context, can both produce and not produce it: the fact that this production is impossible from the point of view of the synergy of all the other causes is irrelevant here.

What is more important, the source of the contingency is said to consist in the possibility of impediment of the cause: there is no claim that some agent can *ceteris paribus* both act and not act. On the contrary, Aquinas states that in the absence of an impediment Avicenna is right “because it is necessary that the effect follows the providing of the cause, if there is not an impediment, that sometimes happens to exist *per accidens*.”<sup>772</sup> In this sense, it is true that “every effect has a necessary relationship to its efficient cause, be it the natural cause or the voluntary cause.”<sup>773</sup>

*Prima facie*, Aquinas’s answer from *De veritate* could be considered to be in opposition to this position: Avicenna’s argumentation is said to be invalid in the case of voluntary causes because in this case the contingency or necessity of the effect follows the disposition made by the will and not its being, as in the case of natural agents.<sup>774</sup> In fact, the opposite is true. What Aquinas says is that the will decides not only about the species of effect but also about the mode of its realisation (quickly or slowly, necessarily or contingently) and chooses the (secondary) causes of the effect accordingly. In other words, if it decides that the effect should

<sup>772</sup> “Necesse est enim causa posita sequi effectum, nisi sit impedimentum, quod quandoque contingit esse per accidens.” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 3; cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 75, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>773</sup> “omnis effectus habet necessariam habitudinem ad suam causam efficientem, sive sit causa naturalis, sive voluntaria.” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 17, ad 4.

<sup>774</sup> “...ratio illa sequitur in causis agentibus de necessitate naturae, et quantum ad effectus immediatos; sed in causis voluntariis non sequitur; quia ex voluntate sequitur aliquid eo modo quo voluntas disponit, et non eo modo quo voluntas habet esse, sicut accidit in causis naturalibus in quibus attenditur assimilatio quantum ad eandem conditionem causae et causati; cum tamen in causis voluntariis attendatur assimilatio secundum quod in effectu impletur voluntas agentis, ut dictum est. Nec etiam in causis naturalibus sequitur quantum ad effectus mediatos.” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 5, ad 1.

be realised slowly and without any certitude of success, its slow and uncertain realisation is a proof of the superior causal sufficiency of the will in question. When it comes to answer objector's defence consisting in claim that the contingency of the secondary causes requires their deficiency or another impediment and the omnipotent will can easily remove all these impediments,<sup>775</sup> Aquinas does not oppose this statement by an assertion of some other source of contingency in the freedom of a voluntary agent. He says that "despite the fact that God could remove any impediment of the second cause, if he wanted, he does not want it always. And thus, the contingency remains in the second cause and consequently also in the effect."<sup>776</sup>

#### II. 4. Aquinas's emphasis on the contingency *ad utrumque* in the context of his reception of C – a preliminary look

What about all the cases of Aquinas arguing for the contingency *ad utrumque* in the human capacity of free choice? We shall see this problematic in detail in chap. 4. II. For now, let it be said that they concern another level of free agent. The root of its causal contingency consists in the universal scope of its intellect, its notions and its goal. From this viewpoint, there is really much more in this contingency than in the causal contingency of the dandelion, much vaster potential of action of free agent being based on its superior perfection.<sup>777</sup> Nevertheless, when it comes to the realisation of some part of this vast potential, it falls under the same necessity of the determination of agent as the flower. "The contingent *ad utrumlibet* taken as such cannot be the cause of anything because inasmuch as it is *ad utrumlibet*, it has the disposition of the matter that has the potentiality of two opposite states. But nothing acts inasmuch as it is in the potency. Thus, if the cause that is *ad utrumlibet* (e.g., the will) is to act, it is necessary that it is inclined more to one [of these states], by being moved by the appetible, and therefore it is the cause *ut in pluribus*."<sup>778</sup> The contingency of its actions, if it is to be defended, must be defended in similar way as in the case of the plant: "the cause that makes the will want something does not necessarily do it with necessity because the will itself

<sup>775</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 5, arg. 2.

<sup>776</sup> "quamvis Deus possit remove omne impedimentum causae secundae cum voluerit, non tamen semper remove vult; et sic remanet contingentia in causa secunda, et per consequens in effectum." *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 5, ad 2.

<sup>777</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 73, n. 2: "Quod autem voluntas sit causa contingens, ex ipsius perfectione provenit: quia non habet virtutem limitatam ad unum, sed habet in potestate producere hunc effectum vel illum; propter quod est contingens ad utrumlibet."

<sup>778</sup> "Contingens autem ad utrumlibet, non potest esse causa alicuius in quantum huiusmodi. Secundum enim quod est ad utrumlibet, habet dispositionem materiae, quae est in potentia ad duo opposita: nihil enim agit secundum quod est in potentia. Unde oportet quod causa, quae est ad utrumlibet, ut voluntas, ad hoc quod agat, inclinatur magis ad unam partem, per hoc quod movetur ab appetibili, et sic sit causa ut in pluribus." *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 2, n. 13.

can provide an impediment either by removing the consideration that induce [the man] to want [the thing], either by the consideration of the opposite; i.e., the fact that the thing that is proposed as good is not good from some point of view.”<sup>779</sup> The voluntary acts are not always necessary because their cause – the consideration of some attractive object – can be impeded by another voluntary act. Notice that Aquinas does not say all the voluntary acts are unnecessary, nor that the impediment is always due to the voluntary act: at least one of these statements would need to be denied, if he was not to finish in the infinite regress. Where lies the ultimate reason for the will’s (non)providing of the impediment? Gallagher speaks about the irreducible mystery of contingency in Aquinas on this occasion.<sup>780</sup> As for me, I have never seen Aquinas speaking about something like that: without any ambiguity, he locates the ultimate source of the chain of internal acts leading to the final contingent decision in the motion of the divine mover, like the one Aristotle speaks about in his *Eudemian Ethics*.<sup>781</sup> More about him later (III. 2. 7 – 9.).

## II. 5. The chance as a necessary condition of contingency

The above-mentioned conception can explain some Aquinas’s texts that would otherwise need to be considered an unacceptable simplification or even a false argument: I mean his statements saying that the chance (*casus*) is a necessary condition of the contingency. Let me explain. By qualifying something as “casual” Aquinas means neither that it is completely causeless, nor that it was one of more equally probable possibilities that came to happen without any predetermining cause. Something is “casual” or “fortuitous” for him, if it happens as a result of the activity of some moving cause<sup>782</sup> even though the cause was not oriented to

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<sup>779</sup> “Sic igitur illa causa quae facit voluntatem aliquid velle, non oportet quod ex necessitate hoc faciat: quia potest per ipsam voluntatem impedimentum praestari, vel removendo talem considerationem quae inducit eum ad volendum, vel considerando oppositum, scilicet quod hoc quod proponitur ut bonum secundum aliquid non est bonum.” *De malo*, q. 6, ad 15.

<sup>780</sup> “We cannot give a reason other than the will itself, why the will acts according to this particular reason. Hence, when we ask why some person acted according to this reason instead of that, we can only point to that person’s freedom. We can find no reason that eliminates the radical contingency of freedom, but rather we can only acknowledge its character as a mystery.” GALLAGHER (1994a), p. 277.

<sup>781</sup> “...cum voluntas non semper voluerit consiliari, necesse est quod ab aliquo moveatur ad hoc quod velit consiliari; et si quidem a seipsa, necesse est iterum quod motum voluntatis praecedat consilium, et consilium praecedat actus voluntatis; et cum hoc in infinitum procedere non possit, necesse est ponere, quod quantum ad primum motum voluntatis moveatur voluntas cuiuscumque non semper actu volentis ab aliquo exteriori, cuius instinctu voluntas velle incipiat. ... Relinquitur ergo, sicut concludit Aristoteles in cap. de bona fortuna, quod id quod primo movet voluntatem et intellectum, sit aliquid supra voluntatem et intellectum, scilicet Deus” *De malo*, q. 6, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3; I-II, q. 9, a. 4, co.

<sup>782</sup> “tam casus quam fortuna reducuntur ad genus causae moventis: quia casus et fortuna vel est causa eorum quae sunt a natura, vel eorum quae sunt ab intelligentia, ut ex dictis patet; unde cum natura et intelligentia sint causa ut unde est principium motus, etiam fortuna et casus ad idem genus reducuntur...” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 10, n. 11; cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 12.

it<sup>783</sup> and the thing the cause is oriented to is neither necessarily, nor habitually connected with the thing that actually happens.<sup>784</sup> Imagine Garfield eating as many lasagne as he can. This activity has three results: he gets the lasagne into his stomach, he gets even fatter than he was before, and he finds a jewel that was hidden into a packet of lasagne by a crazy thief. According to Aquinas a third of the results is casual: it is neither directly intended by Garfield (as is the first one), nor it is habitually connected with what he intends (as the second one). Thomas makes quite often terminological distinctions using the terms *casus*, *fortuna* and *vanum* to distinguish different variants of this kind of phenomena: the cases when the cause has not produced its intended effect happen to be distinguished from the cases when the cause has produced an unhabitual effect;<sup>785</sup> the cases when the cause is some reasonable being are distinguished from the cases when it is not or it is not considered inasmuch it is such.<sup>786</sup> This distinctions are particularly unstable though (i.e., even more unstable than usual in Aquinas)<sup>787</sup> and therefore I will not reflect on them, using the term “chance” in the most general meaning that Aquinas uses: “everything that happens in the minority of cases happens by chance. Therefore, if nothing happens by chance, there will be nothing that arrives in the minority of cases. But if there is nothing like that, everything happens necessarily: because

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<sup>783</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 8, n. 8; l. 10, n. 9; *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 6, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, s. c. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 39, n. 6; lib. 3, cap. 3, n. 9. To be exact, the casual effect is something that happens “beyond intention” (*praeter intentionem* – as for the intentionality of inferior beings like stones etc., cf. chap. 4. I. 4.). Aquinas’s opinion on the meaning of the preposition *praeter* is not completely stable. Most of the time he states that in the universe without any *intentio* (e.g. the Democritus’s universe ruled by mere material necessity) everything would be casual, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, co.; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 16, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 47, a. 1, co.; *Super Iob*, pr. On the contrary, at least in one text he states that there would be no chance at all in such a universe, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 103, a. 5, ad 1. Apparently, in the former texts *praeter intentionem* is taken to mean just the negation of the intentionality, while in the latter it is considered to denote the exteriority vis-à-vis some existing intention. Aquinas’s lack of attention to this discrepancy can be due to the fact that in his universe, negation and exteriority are necessarily connected.

<sup>784</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 8, n. 2; l. 13, n. 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 44, n. 7; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1, l. 5, n. 7.

<sup>785</sup> “*vanum est quod est ordinatum ad finem quem non consequitur*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 2, q. 1, a. 4, ad 3, cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 10, n. 9; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 7, l. 6, n. 2; “*vanum dicitur ex hoc quod non consequitur illud quod intendebatur; casus autem dicitur ex hoc quod consequitur aliquid aliud quod non intendebatur.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 10, n. 9.

<sup>786</sup> “*casus non solum est in hominibus, qui voluntarie agunt, sed etiam in aliis animalibus, et etiam in rebus inanimatis.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 10, n. 7, on the contrary, “*fortuna*” is said to describe only the cases of this phenomenon happening to the thinking agents, cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 8, n. 10; l. 10, n. 2 (“*casus est in plus quam fortuna, quia omne quod est a fortuna est a casu, sed non convertitur.*”).

<sup>787</sup> *Casus* sometimes signifies a special case of *fortuna* (cf. probably *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 3, l. 7, n. 9), sometimes these terms signify two different species of more general reality (“*fortuna est intellectus agens praeter intentionem, et casus natura agens praeter intentionem.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 12, l. 3, n. 5, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2) and sometimes they are used interchangeably, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 3, n. 9; cap. 143, n. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 2, arg. 1. Also, any of the three terms can denote the meaning that includes the meaning of two others, cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 7, l. 6, n. 2 (both *fortuna* and *casus* are included in *vanum*); “*esse a fortuna et esse ut in paucioribus convertantur.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 8, n. 2; “*omne quod fit ut in minori parte, fit casu.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 5, expos.; “*nihil eorum quae fiunt a fortuna vel per se vano, idest a casu, fit semper vel ut frequenter.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 13, n. 2.

the things that are frequently differ from the necessary ones only because they can fail in the minority of cases...”<sup>788</sup>

Should Aquinas think that there is some free agent that can contingently cause or not cause an effect without being determined at all, such an emphasis on the possibility of a minority failure would be difficult to understand. On the contrary, given his conviction that the agent *ad utrumque* needs to be determined, the importance of the chance for the contingency of his decisions gets clear because the only alternative is the determination that causes its effect necessarily. More precisely, should there be no unhabitual effects, all the effects of the higher cause that causes this determination would need to arrive in all the cases: they would need to concern the agent *ad utrumque* either always, or never, and in the former case they would need to succeed always in the same way.

Aquinas does not assert that all the contingent effects are, properly speaking, casual: in fact, in the case of voluntary actions he says the opposite.<sup>789</sup> The thing is that, as in the case of the contingency, the evaluation of the casualness of effect can differ depending on the cause that is considered. It is the relation to the proximate cause that decides whether the effect is to be considered casual *simpliciter* or not.<sup>790</sup> Thus, an effect that is casual *simpliciter* can be non-casual from the point of view of the higher cause: Garfield’s finding of the jewel in the lasagne is unintended both by Garfield and the thief who have hidden it there, but it can be intended by some demon who manipulates them both.<sup>791</sup> Aquinas is convinced that from the point of view of God, nothing is casual.<sup>792</sup> But (unlike in the case of the contingency) in the case of the creaturely higher causes, the effect that is casual from their point of view can be non-casual from the point of view of the proximate cause. Aquinas gives an example of a leper who decides to eat some snake to commit suicide and is healed instead by the natural effects of this meal that were unknown to him: while the healing was non-intended from the point of view of its higher cause (the decision to kill himself), it was included in the natural

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<sup>788</sup> “omne quod fit ut in minori parte, fit casu. Si igitur nihil fiat casu, nihil erit proveniens ut in minori parte. Sed si nihil sit hujusmodi, omnia ex necessitate contingunt: quia ea quae sunt frequenter, non deficiunt a necessariis nisi secundum quod possunt in minori parte deficere...” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 5, expos.

<sup>789</sup> “ea quae casualia sunt, simpliciter loquendo, non sunt intenta neque voluntaria.” *STh.*, II-II, q. 64, a. 8, co.

<sup>790</sup> “effectus consequitur conditionem causae suae proximae; et ideo quamvis sit aliquid a Deo provisum, dicitur casu fieri, si accidat praeter intentionem naturae operantis; vel fortuna, si accidit praeter intentionem agentis a proposito.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>791</sup> Cf. the proverbial meeting of servants arranged by their master without their awareness (*Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 92, n. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 116, a. 1, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 137; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 15) or Aquinas’s opinion concerning the casual generation of inferior animals from the decomposing matter (*Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 76, n. 15; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 12, l. 3, n. 5).

<sup>792</sup> Cf. also *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 10, n. 13; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 13 – 26; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 92, n. 6.

orientation of its proximate cause (the snake's tissue).<sup>793</sup> In a similar way, both the decision to succumb to temptation and to resist it is by definition intended by the will of its subject and as such it is non-casual *simpliciter*. Nevertheless, depending on the dispositions of this subject, one of these decisions would be casual from the viewpoint of some preceding cause, either from the point of view of the tempting factor that is surprisingly resisted, or from the viewpoint of the moral conscience that is not obeyed as usual. This application of the general theory of chance on voluntary acts is mine: to my knowledge, it never appears as such in Aquinas's writings. Nevertheless, it represents a coherent explication of his seemingly discrepant statements by his own principles and it should be considered as such.

## II. 6. Same state of cause, same state of effects

If you have read Maritain, you know that strictly speaking, all that was asserted above does not constitute an immediate affirmation of causal determinism. While the absence of impediment is said to imply the production of effect, to my knowledge Aquinas never says explicitly that the presence of the impediment implies its non-production. It could be thought that while the determination is a necessary condition of the activity and this activity proceeds necessarily from its cause in the absence of the impediment, there could be an impediment (e.g. the natural nothingness of the free creature) that implies only the possibility of the indeterministic suppression of this activity. Such a possibility could preserve some possibility of libertarianism and could serve as a relatively powerful tool for the libertarian theodicy. Nevertheless, the impediment is also a (kind of the) cause and the reason that was proposed in favour of "*Causa posita...*" seems to apply to it as well: one would therefore tend to assume that such an indeterminism should also be excluded, the only possibility of failure of the impeding influence of the impediment being that it is itself impeded by some another impediment. Maritain would probably reply that if you think so, you just need more reflexion about the nothingness to understand better the difference between the cause of being and the cause of non-being.<sup>794</sup> But could such a reflection really justify the conclusion that was proposed by this influential Thomist? As in the case of the possibility of the uncaused movement, I do not think that Aquinas's works contain some over-convincing refutation of such an eventuality. As for me, Maritain might be right (even if I do not think he is).

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<sup>793</sup> Cf. *Expositio Posteriorum Analyticorum*, lib. 2, l. 9, n. 13; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 9, l. 6, n. 2. The example supposes that the suicidal decision concerned the eating of any (venomous) snake at hand, while the healing effect was connected only with the eating of some particular (species of) snake, otherwise the healing would be non-casual from the point of view of both causes.

<sup>794</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 11.



Nevertheless, there is an overwhelming textual argument that Aquinas himself never arrived at similar conclusion, that he believed in the determinism concerning both the cause of being and of non-being and that due to this fact, there is no exception from causal determinism in his universe. To start off, he has written the following:

“The entities that act through intellect seem to have the possibility of opposites without any change of them: therefore, it seems that they could both move and not move without any change. Thus, to avoid impeding his argument by this, he [i.e. Aristotle] adds that his argument is similarly valid also in the case of those who act through intellect. ... The thing is that even if one and the same knowledge concerns contrary things, it does not concern both of them equally, but one of them principally: as in the case of the medicine that is *per se* oriented to provide health. Thus, if it happens that the physician uses his knowledge for the contrary thing, to induce the illness, it does not proceed from the knowledge *per se* but *per accidens* because of something else. And if this “something else” is to come despite its previous non-being there, there must be some change. ... concerning both those acting according to their nature and those acting according to their intellect, we can say the following, speaking universally about all of them: **whatever they are able (*sunt possibilia*) to do, or to undergo, or to move, or to be moved to, it is not entirely (*penitus*) possible, i.e., they cannot move or be moved in whichever disposition they are but inasmuch as they are mutually in some determined relation and propinquity. ... concerning those acting according to nature as well as those acting according to will, nothing is cause of different things, if it is not in some different state (*habitus*).** And thus it is necessary that when the mover and the moved object approach each other up to the convenient propinquity, and similarly when they are in any disposition that is required for the moving of one of them and the being moved of another, it is necessary that the latter is moved and the former moves.”<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>795</sup> “Agentia enim per intellectum, videntur se ad opposita habere absque aliqua sui mutatione: unde videtur quod possint movere et non movere, absque aliqua mutatione. Ne ergo per hoc sua ratio impediatur, subiungit quod ratio sua similiter tenet in iis quae agunt per intellectum ... Scientia enim, licet sit una contrariorum, tamen non aequaliter utrorumque, sed unius principaliter; sicut medicina ad hoc est per se ordinata, quod faciat sanitatem. Si ergo contingat quod medicus utatur sua scientia in contrarium ad inducendum aegritudinem, hoc non erit ex scientia per se, sed per accidens, propter aliquid aliud. Et ad hoc quod illud aliud adveniat cum prius non esset, necesse est esse aliquam mutationem. ... in iis quae agunt secundum naturam et secundum intellectum, possumus universaliter de omnibus loquentes dicere, quod quaecumque sunt possibilia facere aut pati aut movere vel moveri, non penitus possibilia sunt, idest non possunt movere aut moveri in quacumque dispositione se habeant; sed prout se habent in aliqua determinata habitudine et propinquitate ad invicem. ... tam in agentibus secundum naturam, quam in agentibus secundum voluntatem, non est aliquid causa diversorum, nisi in aliqua alia habitudine se habens. Et sic oportet quod quando appropinquant ad invicem movens et motum convenienti propinquitate, et similiter cum sunt in quacumque dispositione quae requiritur ad hoc quod unum moveat et aliud moveatur, necesse sit hoc moveri, et aliud movere.” In *Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 2, n. 6–8. I am quoting only the most important passages; the emphasis is mine.

Let me put the quote in context: The argument that is mentioned in its beginning is one of Aristotle's attempts to demonstrate the perpetuity of movement.<sup>796</sup> To put it simply, if any movement is to start, there must be some preceding movement concerning the mover or the moveable: the movement that makes the previously idle mover move the moveable. If this preceding movement is to start, there must be yet another preceding movement and so on. Thus, either you have an infinite sequence of movements, or you finish with some movement without beginning. Either way, you get the perpetual duration of movement in general (provided that you either do not know that the sum of the infinite number of finite lengths can be itself finite, or you do not believe in the infinite divisibility of movement). One of the premises of this argument is the impossibility of the mover that suddenly begins to move the moveable without any reason at all. Why should it be so? I am not completely certain whether Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle's reasons is wholly right here but there are two things that can be taken for sure. First, he thinks that the possible movements are never possible up to their inmost level (*penitus*) for Aristotle: either the mover and the moveable are in the convenient conditions and the movement happens (in a sense) necessarily, or they are not in such a condition and the movement is (in a sense) impossible to happen without the change of the conditions. Second, concerning this question, there is no relevant difference between natural and intellectual (or voluntary, which apparently means the same) agents.

Now, despite Aquinas's habitual reverence vis-à-vis the Philosopher, it could be justifiably questioned whether he agrees with what he takes to be Aristotle's positions here. After all, his faith makes him deny the conclusion of the argument that is based on them: in the moment of creation some movement began without being preceded by any other movement. Yes. But if you look at his way of answering Aristotle's argument, you will strongly doubt the reasonable possibility of any further doubt on this topic.

Aquinas begins by his habitual notice that the creation is neither movement nor change (cf. I. 2.). This frees Christian conception from the immediate scope of the argument: nevertheless, "it remains to answer his [i.e. Aristotle's] following deduction through which he concludes that, if ... the movement newly begins to exist, it is necessary that the movers or the moveable objects were not before in the disposition, in which they are while the movement exist."<sup>797</sup> Aquinas notes that even though the commencement of the first movement can be easily explained by the creation of moveable things, it only postpones the

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<sup>796</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 2, n. 2ff.

<sup>797</sup> "*respondendum restat sequenti eius deductioni, qua concludit quod si, praeexistentibus moventibus et mobilibus, incipiat de novo esse motus, oportet quod moventia vel mobilia prius non essent in hac dispositione, in qua sunt dum est motus*" *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 2, n. 18.

problem: it seems that “if the first principle, that is God, is not now in another state than before, it does not produce things now rather than before.”<sup>798</sup> If Aquinas believed in the voluntary agent that can *ceteris paribus* both cause and not cause the same effect, I can imagine no better moment to summon him. The thing is that he proceeds in quite opposite way. He states that the argument can be answered only because the principle of God’s action is his intellect and will: should this action proceed from his nature alone, the deduction would be irrefutable. But the source of the answer is that, unlike natural determination, the determinations of the intellect or will can also include the determination of time. While the fire creates warm as long as it exists, Garfield can determine himself not only to warm the legs of his master but to warm them for the precise amount of time needed to serve his intentions. Now, Garfield himself is immersed in the time and therefore the realisation of his decision is conditioned by some changes in him (e.g., to finish warming up, he must acquire some new perception informing him that the time of warming up has passed). But Aquinas’s God is an entity that exists out of the time, the time itself being his effect. Thus, his eternal changeless decision to cause limited duration of the time does not need to “wait” for anything to start its realisation: he just decides (in his endless existence without any “before” or “after”) that some world with the temporal beginning exists, and this world with the temporal beginning exists. In chap. 5. I. 3., I will say more about the conception of time used in this argument. As for now, it is important that Aquinas’s counterargument is not based on the alleged needlessness of the determination of an agent, but on the contrary – on the affirmation of his (in a way) more exhaustive determination.

*Commentary on Physics* is not the only book where Aquinas confronts himself with the above-mentioned Aristotelian argument for the perpetuity of the universe: he discusses it in several other works from *Sentences* onwards.<sup>799</sup> There are also several texts where the principle “*Causa posita...*” itself is mentioned as a would-be premise for the same conclusion (allegedly, the cause being provided eternally, the effect should follow eternally).<sup>800</sup> Aquinas’s reply consists always in showing that the principle does not imply this conclusion,

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<sup>798</sup> “*si quidem de ipso motu loquamur, facilis est responsio: non enim mobilia prius erant in hac dispositione in qua nunc sunt, quia prius non erant; unde moveri non poterant. ... Sed ulterius remanet quaestio de prima rerum productione. Si enim primum principium, quod est Deus, non aliter se habet nunc quam prius, non magis nunc res producit quam prius: si vero aliter se habet, saltem mutatio quae est ex parte eius, erit prior mutatione quae ponitur prima.*” *ibid.*

<sup>799</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 46, a. 1, arg. 5/6 and ad 5/6; the arguments in *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 32, n. 5f; cap. 33, n. 4 and Aquinas’s answers in cap. 35, n. 4; cap. 36, n. 4; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5, arg. 8, 13, 14 and ad 8, 13, 14.

<sup>800</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 32, n. 5 and Aquinas’s answer in cap. 35, n. 4; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 8, arg. 2 and ad 2; q. 46, a. 1, arg. 9 and ad 9; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 17, arg. 4 and ad 4; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 14, arg. 2 and ad 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 6 and ad 6.

and even if he is not always so explicit as in the *Commentary on Physics*, he never denies the trump card his opponent uses there – the determinist premise itself.<sup>801</sup> What more to say? Maybe that Aquinas himself counts with this premise in the following explication of God’s infallible knowledge of future contingent events: “If it is not impeded, the effect follows from the complete contingent cause with certainty in the same way as from the necessary cause. But God knows not only the causes of contingent [effects], but also the things that can impede them, because he knows everything, as is clear from what was said above. Thus, he knows with certainty whether the contingent [effects] exist or not.”<sup>802</sup>

## II. 7. Aquinas’s determinist contingency – a closure

For better or worse, I believe that the textual evidence of Aquinas’s determinist conviction is sufficiently established. If this is correct, the dilemma concerning his notion of contingency that we have seen in the end of the previous chapter seems to be resolved in favour of the first alternative.<sup>803</sup> The “possibility” that is included in the “possibility to be otherwise” is likely the possibility in its basic meaning, i.e. the possibility from the viewpoint of the natural potency of the natural proximate cause. If so, the existence of contingency is a matter of sensorial evidence – and Aquinas really says that the failure of necessitarianism leaps to the eye.<sup>804</sup> Does it mean that all Aquinas’s anti-necessitarian argumentation basically only intends to show the fundamental difference of this contingency from the natural necessity (i.e., the

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<sup>801</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad 8 refutes the following argument for the impossibility of the commencement of new movement without any preceding change in the mover or the moveable: the change of relation requires the change of at least one of the members of the relation; to be a mover/moved is a relation, therefore it requires a preceding change in at least one of the related entities. Aquinas answers that new acquiring of this relation does not require any other change than the new movement of the moveable by mover itself. None of the later quoted texts discusses this argument directly, nevertheless, its refutation is an implicit condition of the validity of all the others Aquinas’s answers to the Aristotelian argumentation: should the newness of the relation Creator/creature presuppose something more than the creature itself, the infinite regress would be difficult to avoid. It can be therefore concluded that Aquinas has never agreed with this particular justification of the thesis “equally disposed causes cannot have different effects”. But that does not mean that he does not agree with the thesis itself.

<sup>802</sup> “*Sicut ex causa necessaria certitudinaliter sequitur effectus, ita ex causa contingenti completa si non impediatur. Sed, cum Deus cognoscat omnia, ut ex supra dictis patet, scit non solum causas contingentium, sed etiam ea quibus possunt impedi. Scit igitur per certitudinem an contingentia sint vel non sint.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 67, n. 4. Cf. also the presence of the same assumption apparently conditioning *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 1 (“*Non enim subducitur aliquid ab ordine causae particularis, nisi per aliquam aliam causam particularem impediendam,...* Unde, cum omnes causae particulares concludantur sub universali causa, impossibile est aliquem effectum ordinem causae universalis effugere.”) and q. 103, a. 7 (“*dicuntur aliqui effectus contingentes, per comparationem ad proximas causas, quae in suis effectibus deficere possunt, non propter hoc quod aliquid fieri possit extra totum ordinem gubernationis divinae. Quia hoc ipsum quod aliquid contingit praeter ordinem causae proximae, est ex aliqua causa subiecta gubernationi divinae.*” ad 3).

<sup>803</sup> Cf. p. 159.

<sup>804</sup> “*Alii aestimantes, quod similiter sit providentia contingentium et necessariorum, coacti sunt liberum arbitrium et contingentiam negare, asserentes cuncta quae providentiae subjacent, ex necessitate evenire, quod ad sensum patet esse falsum.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, co.

impossibility to be otherwise from the point of view of the natural potency)? This could seem to be a disappointingly little goal: one would expect something that concerns the relationship to the ultimate cause or at least to the synergy of all the creation. In my view, the “little goal” alone would not be so little, nevertheless, we shall see that the natural necessity is not the only kind of necessity that can be confused with the necessity coextensive with any causal contingency in the determinist universe – with some form of incompatibilism as a result of this confusion.

## II. 8. Some textual objections

I am not the first one to arrive at the determinist interpretation of Aquinas and the history of Thomism provides a lot of textual arguments that were used to relativize or reverse such interpretation. Some of them concern Aquinas’s statements regarding freedom, others his conception of providence or God’s goodness: I will discuss them in the corresponding chapters. But there are some of them that merit to be looked at right now.

### II. 8. 1. The ambiguousness concerning the knowledge of future contingent

Aquinas states at some occasions that the knowledge of the future contingent effects cannot be acquired from the knowledge of their causes.<sup>805</sup> The tension between this statement and the apparently contrary statement from the *Contra gentiles* that I have quoted on the preceding page needs no commentary: it could be considered the symptom of the tension between the alleged (quasi-Semipelagian) indeterminism of Aquinas’s earliest writings and the Augustinian (or Aristotelian?) determinism he has adopted later. In chap. 5. I. 2. 5. I will discuss thoroughly *Super Sent.*, I, q. 38, a. 5 which is without doubt the most convincing argument in favour of this reading. For now, let it be said that the latter is based on the seductive, yet doubtful, supposition that by “their causes” Aquinas means the whole of all the causal chains leading to the effect (including the divine cause on the beginning of these chains), while he could very likely mean only “their proper causes” (as distinguished from the universal causes), i.e. most likely the proximate causes of these effects. After all, he speaks about “their causes”, not about “all their causes”. The superior plausibility of this determinist-friendly reading appears in the moment of the contextualisation of the article in question. Thomas asserted earlier in his treatise about God’s knowledge in *Sentences* that by knowing

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<sup>805</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co. and ad 5; lib. 2, d. 3, q. 3, a. 3, ad 4; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 67, n. 3.

himself, God knows everything about the actual world because, contrary to other universal causes, he is the complete cause of any being that exists, i.e. he is the cause of anything in any existing being.<sup>806</sup> Therefore, if this Cause was to be counted among “their causes” in q. 38, a. 5, Aquinas would have to suddenly forgot his argumentation from the pages directly preceding. Should this interpretation of *suae causae* be strictly applied on all Aquinas’s corpus, it would generate yet another problem: Thomas states just a little bit later that the contingent reality exists in “its causes” only as a future possible (“*secundum quod est in causis suis, in quibus est ut possibile futurum tantum*”)<sup>807</sup>, while he is adamant in his reception of Boethius’s conviction that there is no entity that is future vis-a-vis God, the adjective “future” describing only the relationship between temporal entities.<sup>808</sup> Compared to these discrepancies implied by the interpretation of *suae causae* as “the concursus of all the causes”, there is nothing so bullet-biting in the limitation of meaning of *suae causae* on proximate causes.

II. 8. 2. The transcendence as the condition of the infallible causing of the contingent effects  
 From *De veritate* onwards Aquinas holds what I call the theory of transcended contingency.<sup>809</sup> Basically, he says that God is the transcendent source of both the contingency and necessity,

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<sup>806</sup> “*in causis universalibus quae non sunt tota causa rei non potest particulare perfecte sciri. Sed Deus est causa omnium universalis, ita quod est perfecta causa uniuscujusque; et ideo se cognoscens, omnia perfecte cognoscit.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 36, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; “*idea quae est in mente divina, est causa omnis ejus quod in re est; unde per ideam non tantum cognoscit naturam rei, sed etiam hanc rem esse in tali tempore, et omnes conditiones quae consequuntur rem vel ex parte materiae vel ex parte formae.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1.

<sup>807</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 3, a. 1, co. and even more explicit distinction between God and “their causes” in the end of *STh.*, I, q. 14 a. 13 co.: the contingent things are present for God, but future vis-a-vis their causes (“*manifestum est quod contingentia et infallibiliter a Deo cognoscuntur, inquantum subduntur divino conspectui secundum suam praesentialitatem, et tamen sunt futura contingentia, suis causis comparata.*”)

<sup>808</sup> “*Cum igitur Deus sit aeternus, oportet quod cognitio ejus modum aeternitatis habeat, qui est esse totum simul sine successione. Unde sicut quamvis tempus sit successivum, tamen aeternitas ejus est praesens omnibus temporibus una et eadem et indivisibilis ut nunc instans; ita et cognitio sua intuetur omnia temporalia, quamvis sibi succedentia, ut praesentia sibi, nec aliquid eorum est futurum respectu ipsius, sed unum respectu alterius. Unde secundum Boetium melius dicitur providentia quam praeventia... Sed tamen potest dici praescientia, inquantum cognoscit id quod futurum est nobis, non sibi.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>809</sup> This theory might be anticipated in *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3, but its first clear appearance in Aquinas is probably *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, ad 3 (“*quamvis nihil divinae voluntati resistat, tamen voluntas, et quaelibet alia res, exequitur divinam voluntatem secundum modum suum, quia et ipsum modum divina voluntas rebus dedit, ut sic eius voluntas impleretur.*”) with its extensive discussion in *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 5, co. As for its further uses, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 85; lib. 3, cap. 94, n. 11ff; *Quodlibet XI*, q. 3, co.; *Quodlibet XII*, q. 3, ad 1; *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 16; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 140; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 8 (stating, after identifying the contingency with the conditional necessity, that “*posteriora habent necessitatem a prioribus, secundum modum priorum. Unde et ea quae fiunt a voluntate divina, talem necessitatem habent, qualem Deus vult ea habere, scilicet, vel absolutam, vel conditionalem tantum. Et sic, non omnia sunt necessaria absolute.*” ad 3); q. 22, a. 4; q. 23, a. 6, co.; q. 103, a. 7, ad 2f (“*dicuntur aliqui effectus contingentes, per comparationem ad proximas causas, quae in suis effectibus deficere possunt, non propter hoc quod aliquid fieri possit extra totum ordinem gubernationis divinae ... hoc ipsum quod aliquid contingit praeter ordinem causae*

causing the contingent effects of the secondary causes with the same infallibility as the necessary ones. So far so good. The thing is that he asserts that God is the only cause that can do this: for all the other causes, either the effect is contingent and then it does not follow infallibly, or it follows infallibly and that means that it is necessary.<sup>810</sup> But should my interpretation be right and Aquinas's contingency is nothing more than I am saying, such a conclusion seems very unnecessary.<sup>811</sup> Any being should be able to infallibly cause the contingent effect, provided that it masters the determining concourse of its causes. If Aquinas denies it, it seems that his contingency of effect requires a special divine type of causality that is either both determinist and (despite it) non-necessitating, or indeterminist and (despite it) infallible. And that means that the contingency must be something more than the possibility to be otherwise from the point of view of the natural potency taken as such.

Nothing against the specialness of God's causality in Aquinas – it is more than clearly asserted by him.<sup>812</sup> But it has nothing to do with the problem in question: more precisely, there is just one of its features that has something to do with it – its universal scope. God masters infallibly the contingent effects because he masters their causes and ALL the potential impediments of them (including those that proceed immediately from him). No other agent can do this and consequently, no other agent can assure infallibly that the contingent effect arrives as she intends because some unmastered impediment can always ruin her efforts – just recall *Jurassic Park*. For the created agent, the only way to be sure is the (natural) necessity of effect – the fire will not fail to burn (under natural circumstances). Notice that in his “either the cause can fail, or the effect is not contingent” statements, Aquinas makes no exception of the proximate causes. If you take him seriously, neither I nor my will can produce infallibly my contingent decisions – only God can do so. If the contingency and the infallibility mean what I am saying they mean, this implication is quite clear: obviously, I do not master the concursus of all the causal factors that are necessary for me to decide in a particular way. In

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*proximae, est ex aliqua causa subiecta gubernationi divinae.”*); I-II, q. 10, a. 4; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 22; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 32.

<sup>810</sup> “*non sequitur secundum rationem Aristotelis hic inductam, quod ex quo divina providentia est posita, quod omnes effectus sint necessarii; sed necessarium est effectus esse contingenter, vel de necessitate. Quod quidem est singulare in hac causa, scilicet in divina providentia. Reliquae enim causae non constituunt legem necessitatis vel contingentiae, sed constituta a superiori causa utuntur. Unde causalitati cuiuslibet alterius causae subditur solum quod eius effectus sit. Quod autem sit necessario vel contingenter, dependet ex causa altiori, quae est causa entis in quantum est ens; a qua ordo necessitatis et contingentiae in rebus provenit.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 32, cf. *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 22.

<sup>811</sup> Cf. Lonergan's use of these texts against Báñezians in LONERGAN (2000), p. 337.

<sup>812</sup> Cf. for ex. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 25: “*Sed si ulterius ista contingentia reducantur in causam altissimam divinam, nihil inveniri poterit, quod ab ordine eius exeat, cum eius causalitas extendat se ad omnia in quantum sunt entia. Non potest igitur sua causalitas impediri per indispositionem materiae; quia et ipsa materia, et eius dispositiones non exeunt ab ordine illius agentis, quod est agens per modum dantis esse, et non solum per modum moventis et alterantis.*” For more general consideration of God's specialness, see chap. 1. I. 3.

contrast, if Aquinas thought that the possibility of failure of the cause is connected to the contingency of effect because of the impossibility to determine the proximate contingent cause, there seems to be no reason why the possibility to fail should be attributed also to the most proximate cause itself: it would be probably necessary to say that by not excluding them, Aquinas was simply not exact in his statements.

### II. 8. 3. The allegedly contingent decisions of God

The necessity of determination of an agent should exclude the contingency in the decisions of the First Agent: obviously, there is no other agent that could make such a determination fail. Very well – the first agent is therefore no contingent cause. I repeat it, as Aquinas does it himself – God is not a contingent cause.<sup>813</sup> Let there be no misunderstanding concerning this assertion: Aquinas does not deny only the contingency of God’s being, he denies the contingency in his causal relationship vis-à-vis the creation. In his earlier writings, he argues with the immutability of God’s free decision,<sup>814</sup> in *Summa theologiae* with the fact that the contingent cause needs to be determined by another agent, while God does not.<sup>815</sup> Maybe more than anywhere, Aquinas’s fundamental understanding of the causal contingency is clear here. It is not an alleged capacity of agent to sovereignly act or not act *ceteris paribus*. It is the possibility to fail to act according to its proper determination due to an impediment.

But is Aquinas’s God not freely deciding his actions? Can he not do otherwise than he does? Yes, he is, and he can. And several recent interpreters have undertaken quite inventive efforts to make these assertions work in the context of Aquinas’s statements about God’s absolute necessity and simplicity.<sup>816</sup> In today’s terms: how can the creator of the actual world be completely the same in (all) the other possible worlds (where he is not creating our actual world)? Some of the authors bit the bullet, denying the possibility that God decides otherwise than he actually decides, asserting the incoherence of Thomist position and wanting to make the Christians read their authoritative statements concerning God’s freedom of decision in

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<sup>813</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 43, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4; d. 45, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3; *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 3, ad 5.

<sup>814</sup> “*non est dicendum voluntatem Dei esse contingentem, aut operationem ipsius, quia contingentia mutabilitatem importat, quae in Deo proprie nulla est*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 43, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4; “*voluntas Dei non est causa contingens, eo quod illud quod vult, immutabiliter vult...*” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>815</sup> “*causa quae est ex se contingens, oportet quod determinetur ab aliquo exteriori ad effectum. Sed voluntas divina, quae ex se necessitatem habet, determinat seipsam ad volitum, ad quod habet habitudinem non necessariam.*” *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 3, ad 5.

<sup>816</sup> Cf. for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co. (*tertia via*) and q. 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 4; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 18 – 25; *De potentia*, q. 7; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 9 – 13 and 23 – 24.



some metaphorical sense.<sup>817</sup> On the other side of the spectrum there is Stump's proposal to take Aquinas's claims about God's necessity in some weaker sense (God is altogether necessary from the point of view of the actual world only), backed up by the assertion that Aquinas's absolutely simple God surely is not absolutely simple (otherwise he could have nothing in common with the God in another possible world).<sup>818</sup>

These extreme opinions being put aside, Grant and Spencer have distinguished five different types of positions in the interpretative tradition of Aquinas, differentiated by the following points of discord: the identity of God's activities with God, the so-called object-essentialism and the status of God's (quasi)immanent and (quasi)transitive activities regarding the actual world.<sup>819</sup> It seems to me that Grant's own speculative work can be considered as a good summarisation of the challenges that the aforesaid tradition provides in relation to my own position.<sup>820</sup> His proposal promises to eliminate both the problem for the complete divine identity across possible worlds and the problem of God's infallible causality of contingent events by one ingenious shot. In all the possible worlds, God is strictly the same, his attributes that change depending on the world being just his external denominations (his Cambridge properties if you want). What does it mean? Well, if Garfield watched some movie about Alexander the Great, he would likely get to know Alexander's horse Bucephalus and, *ipso facto*, Bucephalus would get known by Garfield. But attention: while the knowledge of Bucephalus is some real feature of Garfield and its acquisition changes him, "to get known by Garfield" changes nothing in Bucephalus (to start, the horse has been decomposed long before Garfield's arrival and therefore there is nothing to change inside him anymore) because the reality described by this expression is still the same knowledge of Bucephalus in Garfield: Bucephalus is only newly denominated according to this reality that is exterior to it. *Mutatis mutandis*, the attributes of God that are not universally present in all the possible worlds have the same status as "being known by Garfield". If this is so, God's causality vis-à-vis the world is strictly indeterministic because his exactly same state is compossible with different effects (worlds) – Lonergan (and all the theological libertarians with him) can rejoice.<sup>821</sup>

Now, the cost. Together with God's activities ad extra, the divine cognitive and volitive acts concerning the actual world also need to be considered in one of the following ways: either

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<sup>817</sup> Cf. FUCHS (2004), p. 138 – 145.

<sup>818</sup> Cf. STUMP (2003), p. 92 – 130.

<sup>819</sup> Cf. GRANT & SPENCER (2015).

<sup>820</sup> Cf. especially GRANT (2001), (2010) and (2019). Grant's account has been recently at least partially adopted by Matava in his reinterpretation of Aquinas's notion of motion, cf. MATAVA (2016), p. 242 – 306.

<sup>821</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 105 and 347: "Since God is not determined but exactly the same whether he creates or does not create, the only possible prior determination is that in the finite series of events." (p. 347).

you simply say that they are something extrinsic to God, or you deny (at least in their case) the “object essentialism” (the opinion that the identity of act is (co)defined by its object), stating that the knowledge of Judas’s betrayal in one possible world and the knowledge of Judas’s non-existence in some other possible world is the exactly same cognitive act. The latter strategy seems quite counterintuitive; as for the former, while it is quite a classical move in the case of the divine activities *ad extra* included without doubt in Aquinas’s thought,<sup>822</sup> it seems particularly difficult in the case of cognition and volition that are regularly considered by Aquinas as something that happens *in* the knowing and willing subject.<sup>823</sup> Nevertheless, Grant adopts the latter strategy.<sup>824</sup> I see to it in more detail in the following chapter (chap. 4. III. 1.). For now, the incompatibility of this theory with the theory of causality we have seen above is sufficiently clear.

All the above-mentioned efforts have one thing in common: the neglect of the true meaning of God’s possibility to do otherwise in Aquinas. As we have seen before, there are several meanings of the possibility to do something that can be attributed to God (cf. chap. 2. II. 5.). The strongest of these meanings, i.e. the one that is based on the *potentia ordinata*, concerns only the actual world. The other possible worlds are possible only in a weaker sense: their intern coherence makes them possible for God, **should he want them**, and (contrarily to committing of an immoral act) there is nothing in them that excludes such a will – they are excluded just by the will itself. But still, they are excluded. Consequently, the problem of the compossibility of all the other possible worlds with God do not exist in Aquinas simply because in Aquinas’s view they are not compossible with God. At most, they are compossible with what we know about God thanks to our metaphysics, the part of our knowledge of God that comes from the particular features of the actual world being abstracted away. It seems to

<sup>822</sup> Cf. for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 7.

<sup>823</sup> “*Sicut intelligere est perfectio intelligentis, ita et velle volentis: utrumque enim est actio in agente manens, non autem transiens in aliquid passum, sicut calefactio. Sed intelligere Dei est eius esse, ut supra probatum est: eo quod, cum esse divinum secundum se sit perfectissimum, nullam supervenientem perfectionem admittit, ut supra ostensum est. Est igitur et divinum velle esse ipsius.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 73, n. 3; “*actus divinae cognitionis non est aliquid diversum ab eius essentia, cum in eo sit idem intellectus et intelligere, quia sua actio est sua essentia: unde per hoc quod cognoscit aliquid extra se, eius cognitio non potest dici desiliens vel defluens. Et praeterea, nulla actio cognitivae virtutis potest dici desiliens sicut sunt actus virtutum naturalium, qui procedunt ab agente in patiens; quia cognitio non dicit effluxum a cognoscente in cognitum, sicut est in actionibus naturalibus, sed magis dicit existentiam cogniti in cognoscente. omnis enim cognitio fit secundum similitudinem cogniti in cognoscente.*” *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 5, ad 15, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 79, n. 9; lib. 2, cap. 6, n. 7; cap. 23, n. 5; cap. 30, n. 14; cap. 73, n. 18; cap. 77, n. 2; cap. 98, n. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 4, co.; q. 16, a. 1, co.; q. 23, a. 2, ad 1; q. 27, a. 1, co.; a. 3, co.; q. 27, a. 5, co.; q. 37, a. 1, ad 2; q. 54, a. 1, ad 3; q. 56, a. 1, co.; q. 60, a. 3, ad 3; q. 85, a. 2, co.; q. 108, a. 6, ad 3; I-II, q. 3, a. 2, ad 3; q. 66, a. 6, ad 1; *De potentia*, q. 8, a. 1, co.; *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 4, ad 6; *De malo*, q. 6, ad 13; *Quodlibet XII*, q. 8, co.; *De unitate intellectus*, cap. 5, co.; *Sententia Politic.*, pr. 6; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 17, n. 27; lib. 9, l. 2, n. 3; l. 8, n. 7 – 10; *Sententia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 4, n. 1; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 2, l. 4, n. 3; lib. 6, l. 3, n. 10; *Super De causis*, l. 18; *Super I Cor.*, cap. 13, vs. 3.

<sup>824</sup> Cf. most notably GRANT (2019), p. 56 – 97 and 143 – 150.

me that the major part of the misunderstanding here is due to the conceiving of God's freedom of choice through the analogy of a man *who is able to freely decide* one of more possible courses of action, while Aquinas's Pure Act is more like a man *who is actually freely deciding* one of these possibilities.<sup>825</sup> *In sensu composito*, neither the latter man, nor God can do otherwise. To say more about this topic, Aquinas's conception of the freedom of decision needs to be talked about first. I will return to it in the next chapter.

#### II. 8. 4. Activity and relativity

In his latest writings, Matthew Grant does not assert that his extrinsicist speculative view is the most plausible interpretation of Aquinas: he is aware that it would be very difficult to be harmonised with "a great many passages in which Aquinas identifies all or some of God's acts intending creatures with God."<sup>826</sup> Nevertheless, he states that this conception is implied by Aquinas's denial of the real relation of God to the world, and explicitly asserted in one isolated text in *Summa contra gentiles*.<sup>827</sup> In the eleventh chapter of the second book of this work, Aquinas justifies that something can be said about God relatively to creatures, enumerating the different divine attributes that imply it, including the activities of knowing and moving.<sup>828</sup> In the following chapter, he immediately states that these implied relations do not exist in God in a way of real entities.<sup>829</sup> He does not mean by it that the assertions of these relations about God are not true, but that these relations are the so-called "relations of reason", similar to the relation of "being known by Garfield": they are not accidents existing in God and even less his very substance, they are just the ways of human intellection considering God on the basis of something exterior to him.<sup>830</sup> Now, Grant argues that the divine actions that were spoken about in the chapter 11 are to be identified with these relations, and therefore being considered as mere extrinsic denominations of God. Moreover, he says that if these

<sup>825</sup> "*actus divinae voluntatis semper sit in actu, et non pertransiens in futurum, semper est quasi in egrediendo a voluntate; et ideo manet libertas divinae voluntatis respectu ipsius.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 1, a. 1, co., cf. *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, ad 10. See chap. 4. III. 2. *in fine*.

<sup>826</sup> GRANT & SPENCER (2015), p. 34.

<sup>827</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 28 – 33; GRANT (2019), p. 79 – 80.

<sup>828</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 11, n. 1 and 3 – 5.

<sup>829</sup> "*Huiusmodi autem relationes quae sunt ad suos effectus, realiter in Deo esse non possunt. Non enim in eo esse possent sicut accidentia in subiecto: cum in ipso nullum sit accidens ut in primo libro ostensum est. Nec etiam possent esse ipsa Dei substantia. Cum enim relativa sint quae secundum suum esse ad aliud quodammodo se habent, ut philosophus dicit in praedicamentis, oporteret quod Dei substantia hoc ipsum quod est ad aliud diceretur. Quod autem ipsum quod est ad aliud dicitur, quodammodo ab ipso dependet: cum nec esse nec intelligi sine eo possit. Oporteret igitur quod Dei substantia ab alio extrinseco esset dependens. Et sic non esset per seipsum necesse-esse, ut in primo libro ostensum est. Non sunt igitur huiusmodi relationes secundum rem in Deo.*" *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 12, n. 1 – 2.

<sup>830</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 13, n. 3 – 5 and a well-developed discussion of the notion in *De potentia*, q. 7, a. 11, co.

actions were something intrinsic to God, they would effectively base a real relation of God to their creaturely objects (on the supposition of object-essentialism) and the existence of such relation is something which Aquinas denies throughout all his career. To support this assertion, he repeatedly quotes Mark Henniger’s statement that Aquinas “held that a relation R of *a* to *b* is real only if *a* and *b* are really distinct extra-mental things, and there is a real extra-mental foundation in *a* for R. Aquinas also held that a relation R of *a* to *b* is of reason only if either (i) *a* and/or *b* is not real, or (ii) *a* and *b* are not really distinct, or (iii) there is no real foundation in *a* for R.”<sup>831</sup>

In my view, this reading of Aquinas’s text has multiple weaknesses. Firstly, action and relation are two distinct Aristotelian categories: while Aquinas knows relations that are based on actions of their subjects, it is difficult to imagine that he would identify them. It is even more difficult in the text where he makes explicit distinction of these two types of entities by both treating them in separate chapters and asserting contradictory statements about them. Aquinas discusses God’s actions in chapter nine and declares that “in God therefore his action is not something else than his substance and his power.”<sup>832</sup> Then, just before turning to the question of relations, he is even more explicit: “the multitude of actions which are attributed to God, as intellections, volitions, *the productions of things* and so on are not diverse things because any of these actions in God is his being (*esse*) itself, which is one and identical”<sup>833</sup> Finally, in the closure of his discussion of God’s relations to creatures, he states that “the aforesaid relations are said about God in a different way than the other [attributes] that are predicated about God. Because all the others, like wisdom [or] will, express his essence: but the aforesaid relations do not...”<sup>834</sup> Secondly, the assertion that the interiority of, say, God’s decision to save Peter would imply the existence of something that Aquinas would call the real relation of God to Peter is unwarranted at best. Either Henniger’s reproduction of Aquinas’s conception of the relations of reason, or Grant’s reading of this reproduction is defective. As Grant himself concedes, among Aquinas’s conditions of the real relation is also the following: the relating subject is not beyond the order of the thing to which it has relation. “Therefore, given the fact that God is beyond all the order of the creatures and all the

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<sup>831</sup> Cf. GRANT & SPENCER (2015), p. 16, n. 19 and p. 31, quoting HENNIGER, MARK G., *Relations: Medieval theories 1250 – 1325*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 7. See also GRANT (2019), p. 57.

<sup>832</sup> “*In Deo igitur sua actio non est aliud a sua substantia et sua potentia.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 9, n. 5.

<sup>833</sup> “*multitudo actionum quae Deo attribuitur, ut intelligere, velle, producere res, et similia, non sunt diversae res: cum quaelibet harum actionum in Deo sit ipsum eius esse, quod est unum et idem.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 10, n. 2 (the emphasis is mine).

<sup>834</sup> “*alio modo dicuntur de Deo praedictae relationes, et alia quae de Deo praedicantur. Nam omnia alia, ut sapientia, voluntas, eius essentiam praedicant: relationes vero praedictae minime...*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 13, n. 4.

creatures are ordained to him, but not vice versa; it is clear that the creatures relate to God in a real way, while in God there is no real relation of him to creatures”<sup>835</sup> While it might be not altogether clear which is the exact notion of *ordo* that Aquinas is using in this text, it seems that it has something in common with the ontological dependency; and in any case, it is clear that in Aquinas’s view, it frees God from any real relation to creatures, independently of whether he accomplishes all its other enumerated conditions or not. Now, in the quoted *Contra gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 12 Aquinas’s point is that the relation is something that depends on the thing to which it is related, while divine substance is independent of any creature. This is why God cannot be considered as the relation to creatures (cap. 12, n. 2), while he can be considered as the knowledge, the volition or the production of creatures (cap. 10, n. 2 – as discussed in the fifth chapter of this book, divine knowledge of the actual world does not depend on the world but causes it for Aquinas): no matter that some determination in him implies the existence of some other entity, this determination does not depend on this entity – it is an absolute, not a relative.

There is one thing that you might have noticed in the preceding lines. Among others, Aquinas identifies God’s substance also with God’s production of things. If you remember what was said about the Aristotelian theory of the relation between the agent and the activity (namely, the transitive action is not in the agent, it is the effect of the agent on the subject it is acting on), you may be quite surprised. Aquinas surely does not identify God with creatures: it seems then that the *producere* means an active state of the agent here, not its effect. Well, remember that I have suggested that Aquinas’s view was considered to be (and might really be) slightly more complicated than Lonergan thought. We shall see it in the next subchapter.

## II. 8. 5. The resistance and the violence

Finally, there are two arguments that are more directly connected with Aquinas’s theory of motion and its specific application in the case of the sinner. First, Aquinas states at some occasions that divine motion can be successfully resisted by man because of man’s freedom.<sup>836</sup> Given all what was said until now about the universal scope of God’s causality, it seems that some indeterminist possibilities need to be at work here. Second, Aquinas says that

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<sup>835</sup> “*Cum igitur Deus sit extra totum ordinem creaturae, et omnes creaturae ordinentur ad ipsum, et non e converso, manifestum est quod creaturae realiter referuntur ad ipsum Deum; sed in Deo non est aliqua realis relatio eius ad creaturas...*” *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 7, co. This article is mentioned in the very same GRANT & SPENCER (2015), p. 16, n. 19 as is the quotation of Henniger. See *De potentia*, q. 7, a. 11, co.

<sup>836</sup> Cf. *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2; *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 8.

the necessity coming from the agent is a violent coercion (*coactio*)<sup>837</sup> that is impossible in the case of the will – even for God.<sup>838</sup> To answer these objections, we need a more intimate look into the relation of the mover and the motion. Let us do just that.

### III. Mover and motion

#### Introduction

As we have seen earlier in this chapter (I. 1. 4), the relationship between mover and moved can be pretty simple on Aquinas's view: the movement is caused immediately in the moved by the mover. In this case, the motion and movement are just special cases of *actio* and *passio*, it is the same act taken from different points of view. No further analysis can be provided because there are no other entities that could explain this basic relation. Aquinas presents and sometimes uses this simple model, unfortunately without saying that in certain cases, there are different models to be used: some interpreters fell for this.<sup>839</sup> During the discussion of the Inductive argument we have already seen one more complicated case: the mover causes the movement via the nature of the moved whose concrete realisation it causes inasmuch as it is the generator of the moved (cf. II. 1. 1.). Now, we are going to see that Aquinas's picture of moving causality is way more complex. This picture is essential to grasp not only if we are to avoid the misunderstandings I have pointed to in the end of the last subchapter, but to positively understand the functioning of Aquinas's determinism of the voluntary actions and its reason d'être. I shall argue (with Lonergan and Loughran)<sup>840</sup> that, in Aquinas's view, free will is moved by the complex of motions rather than by one special divine motion, but contrary to them I hold that some of these motions basically correspond with the agent-actualising vial entities of the more classical Thomism; similarly to Maritain<sup>841</sup> I agree that these motions are not necessarily intrinsically irresistible, but contrary to him (and Lonergan) I hold with Loughran the determinism of their whole.

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<sup>837</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1, co.; III, q. 46, a. 1, co.

<sup>838</sup> Cf. for example *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 8.

<sup>839</sup> Schmitz's argumentation against the metaphysical possibility of Maritain's resistible motion seems to be based on such a failure, cf. SCHMITZ (2016), p. 44f. Cf. similar arguments in O' NEILL (2019), p. 252, and earlier NICHOLAS, (*Mystery of God's grace*, Eugene, Ore, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005, p. 25 – 26, quoted according to O' NEILL (2019), p. 233).

<sup>840</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 381; LOUGHRAN (1999), esp. p. 12 – 15.

<sup>841</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 38 – 42.

### III. 1 Taxonomy of movers

To my knowledge, there is no universal compatibilist. Everybody agrees that there are some kinds of determinist causation that are clearly incompatible with freedom: the compatibilism consists just in saying that not all the determinist causation is such. Thus, the compatibilist needs to work on distinguishing different kinds of causes and pointing out the differences that impede the generalisation of the freedom-destroying character of some of them, while the incompatibilist must argumentatively undermine this effort, e.g. by some counterexamples – or shouting loud that no matter differences, it is still all the same. I discuss Aquinas’s distinction of the specific causes of the free action in the next chapter, here I present some more general distinctions that are essential for the understanding of the following.

#### III. 1. 1. First mover and second mover

The first mover is a mover whose moving is independent of another mover. The second mover is a mover that is dependent on another mover.<sup>842</sup> Simple as it is, it is not so simple. First, the above-mentioned definition concerns “only” the utmost majority of Aquinas’s use of the term: exceptionally, he means the immediate mover by “first mover” – not the first but the last member of the chain of movers leading to the movement.<sup>843</sup> Second, as we have seen, there are different genera of movement and the meaning of “mover” is accordingly variable. Thus, the “first mover” can mean either the ultimate first mover of all the genera of movements (the one that “everybody calls God”),<sup>844</sup> or the first mover of one particular type of movement only, independent of any other mover of this type but not necessarily of any other mover at all.<sup>845</sup> Third, the mover can be either of efficient type, or of final type. As we have seen, no efficient mover can move without the final one and vice-versa. In Aquinas’s universe God is both the ultimate first efficient mover and final mover<sup>846</sup> (I am not sure whether this is the case in Aristotle) but on inferior levels of causality these roles are typically

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<sup>842</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 9, n. 2 – 4.

<sup>843</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 3, n. 1.

<sup>844</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 2 – 32; *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 2; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 1, s. c. 2.

<sup>845</sup> “*contingit aliquod principium motus esse primum in genere, quod tamen non est primum simpliciter sicut in genere alterabilium primum alterans est corpus caeleste, quod tamen non est primum movens simpliciter, sed movetur motu locali a superiori movente. Sic igitur principium intrinsecum voluntarii actus, quod est vis cognoscitiva et appetitiva, est primum principium in genere appetitivi motus, quamvis moveatur ab aliquo exteriori secundum alias species motus.*” *STh.*, I, q. 6, a. 1, ad 1, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 5, a. 3, ad 2; d. 27, q. 1, a. 3, co., *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 4, s. c. 2.

<sup>846</sup> “*Ostensum autem est supra quod primum movens et agens est Deus; finis autem eius non est aliud quam sua bonitas, ut etiam supra ostensum est. Necessse est igitur quod omnes actiones et motus quarumcumque creaturarum sint propter divinam bonitatem...*” *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1 cap. 103, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 44, a. 4.

divided to different entities and their causal relationship can be inverted depending on the type of causality: while the medicament is the efficient cause of healing, healing is the final cause of the medicament.<sup>847</sup>

The first mover is not suchlike just because he finds himself on the very beginning of the causal chain. Rather he is there because of the fundamental difference between his causal powers and the causal powers of second movers – consider the difference between the power station and the extension cable concerning the electrification of your appliances. Contrary to the second one, the causality of the first mover is essentially independent, it has larger (universal) scope and it can naturally provide the type of effects that are beyond the abilities of the second one (beginning with the primordial motion needed by the second one). The first mover's merit in the effect is therefore bigger than the proximate one's because contrary to the proximate one, it causes not only the effect itself but also the causality of all its other movers.<sup>848</sup> In the case of God, he is also the cause of all the (positively existing) aspects of the effect and not only of some of them: while the microwave-oven causes only the warmth of the lasagne, God causes also all the rest of it, down to its very matter (even if the latter is caused by him not inasmuch as he is the First mover, but inasmuch as he is the Creator).<sup>849</sup> Thus, the first mover is a mover (or cause) in much stronger sense than the second one.

### III. 1. 1. 1. The real causality of the second mover

And yet, the second mover is nonetheless a mover. Aquinas is very explicit: even on the inferior levels of causality, “to be the cause of another, one has no need to be the first cause of it”.<sup>850</sup> The fire is caused both by the arsonist and his match: it would be stupid to deny the causality of one in the name of the causality of other (of course, one can legitimately question the relative importance of their respective causalities). From Aquinas's gnoseological perspective, the occasionalism – the denial of the (efficient) causality of creatures in the name

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<sup>847</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 5, n. 7.

<sup>848</sup> Aquinas's conviction that “*primum movens principaliter est in agendo quam secundum*” (*De potentia*, q. 6, a. 3, ad 1) depends on more general doctrine concerning the relation of the first and second cause of any type, inspired by *Liber de causis*: “...*quod causa prima plus influat quam secunda, sic probat: eminentius convenit aliquid causae quam causato; sed operatio qua causa secunda causat effectum, causatur a causa prima, nam causa prima adiuvat causam secundam faciens eam operari; ergo huius operationis secundum quam effectus producitur a causa secunda, magis est causa causa prima quam causa secunda.*” *Super De causis*, l. 1. Cf. also *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 6, n. 3 for the relation between the extensions of being and causality and lib. 8, l. 21 for the limitlessness of power required for the activity of First mover.

<sup>849</sup> “*ipsa materia, et eius dispositiones non exeunt ab ordine illius agentis, quod est agens per modum dantis esse, et non solum per modum moventis et alterantis.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 25, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 44, a. 2.

<sup>850</sup> “*nec ad hoc quod aliquid sit causa alterius, requiritur quod sit prima causa eius.*” *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3, cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 2, ad 4.



of the all-encompassing causality of God – would be even less justified. Our notion of a mover (or of cause in general) comes from our experience with the second movers of his cosmological system: as for the First mover (cause), he is called mover/cause only by analogy with these inferior beings.<sup>851</sup> If the causality of this source of our speaking about God was compromised, the discourse about God as a First mover would be compromised as well.

Now, consider one question: was the causal synergy that immediately caused the movement of the fire-starting match determinist or indeterminist? Actually, we do not know. And I do not think that anybody of us cares when we are speaking about the causality of the match. But if we move to the arsonist and ask the same question, for some reason it suddenly matters: you meet objections questioning his causality in the name of the causality of factors that have predetermined him. The actual reasons for this questioning can be more or less subtle: here, I will limit myself to probably the least subtle of them which is the following: no matter what the poor arsonist does, the ignition of the fire is inevitable provided that the determinism is true – it is already decided by some preceding causes. And because his doing does not matter, he cannot be considered the (true) cause of the fire.

Aquinas meets this kind of reasoning in one of objections against the efficacy of prayer.<sup>852</sup> Why should I pray, say, for the salvation of my annoying neighbour? If the list of all the persons who are going to be saved is eternally predestined by God (as Aquinas believes),<sup>853</sup> either she is predestined and will be saved no matter my laziness, or she is not predestined, and all the prayers of the world could not save her. Aquinas answers that “in any order of causes one must consider not only the relation of the first cause to the effect, but also the relation of the second cause to the effect and the relation of the first cause to the second [cause]...”<sup>854</sup> Due to her exclusive attention for the first of these relations, the objector has mistaken the (determinist) predestinarianism for one kind of fatalism. What is the difference between these positions?

The fatalism (in the most ordinary sense of the term, I believe)<sup>855</sup> considers the decisions and efforts of lesser beings meaningless because of the predetermination of the results by some

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<sup>851</sup> Cf. the general doctrine concerning the naming of God in *STh.*, q. 13, a. 1 – 6 and my excursus in this problematic in chap. 2. I. 2.

<sup>852</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 95, n. 15 – 21 for the problem in general and *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 41, q. 1, a. 4; *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 6; *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 8 for its special instantiation in the case of prayer for salvation on the background of Augustinian doctrine of predestination.

<sup>853</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 4; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 7.

<sup>854</sup> “*In quolibet enim ordine causarum, attendendus est non solum ordo primae causae ad effectum, sed etiam ordo causae secundae ad effectum, et ordo causae primae ad secundam...*” *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 6, co.

<sup>855</sup> That being said, the term is quite often used in a broader sense; e.g., for any kind of necessitation of human actions (see RICE (2018)). I consider this use unfortunate, since it is another little factor contributing to the

higher force (fate): to put it simply, if you are a spider fallen into a bath that is being emptied, you finish in the drain no matter the direction you try to swim. *All the ways lead to the same end*. The predestination (in its classical, Augustin-depending sense) is directly focused only on one kind of result: the final salvation (or reprobation) of the individual is eternally determined by God. Now, *if* – for some independent reasons – you say that there is no causal dependence between our actions and our final end (as Luther seemed to state), this view could be considered a kind of limited fatalism (the final end of my life does not depend on me, but the final end of my studies could). Such a conception is even compatible with the libertarian freedom of our actions – their indeterminism does not matter because these actions themselves do not matter.<sup>856</sup> Nevertheless, Aquinas is pointing at the fact that such causal insignificance of our actions is in no way implied by the predestinarianism: the relation of the first cause to the effect (God predestines my salvation) impedes neither the relation of the first cause to the second cause (God makes me choose and realise good actions), nor the resulting relation of the second cause to the effect (my good actions cause my predestined salvation). The fatalist “No matter what I do...” argument is based on the confusion of two different perspectives. If you adopt the point of view of the election executed by the Highest Cause, *there is just one way to the end* because there is just one way at all. The actual efforts of inferior causes (e.g. human prayers) are far from being meaningless because they are an indispensable part of this one way: e.g., from the point of view of his eternal predestination, Augustin could not be saved without the prayers of his mother. It’s not that he was predestined to salvation thanks to these prayers – he was predestined so that he would be saved thanks to them. On the contrary, if you adopt more human view and consider the possibilities *simpliciter* (or if you adopt any other point of view save the point of view of the predestining God), you find that *there is a plurality of possible ways and corresponding plurality of possible results*: Monica could have not prayed and Augustin could have ended in hell, or he could have been saved thanks to the prayers of his African concubine, or without any prayers at all etc. On this level, there is no significant difference between determinist and indeterminist – *the same way can lead to the different results*. The inevitability of the result is bound to the former perspective, while the possibility of secondary causes to be otherwise is

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confusion in the matter that is already pretty much confusing. Also, it disregards the precise meanings that “fate” can have in authors who actually believe in its existence (like Aquinas does, cf. chap. 5. II. 3.).

<sup>856</sup> Cf. an interesting indeterminist reading of Luther in PASEWARK (1999) – even if I am not sure at all about its historical rightness.

bound to the latter one(s): it is only by pulling them out of their respective contexts and sewing them together that you get the illusion of fatalist implication of determinism.<sup>857</sup>

### III. 1. 1. 2. The first mover and the beginning of causal chains

From the comparison of the respective causalities of the first and second mover can be seen, why Aquinas finds the attempts to replace the first mover by the infinite sequence of second movers so inept: if Garfield got the ingenious idea to make his fridge work independently from the power station, the infinity of extension cables arguably would not do any good to him. Thus, contrary to some of his recent successors, Aquinas usually does not try to prove the existence of the first mover by the antecedent refutation of the possibility of infinite causal chain: mostly he proceeds the other way around, refuting (a type of) infinite causal chain by the need of the first mover.<sup>858</sup> A parenthesis to avoid a misunderstanding here: the “first mover” is conceptually different from the “immobile mover”. If Plato was right, the first mover would not be immobile but self-moving. Aquinas applies himself to prove that he is immobile (or self-moving in the sense that is compatible with Aristotelian immobility) and he does so by combining *O* with the impossibility of the infinite chain of *per se* movers (see below). But that does not mean that he is proving the existence of the FIRST mover by that. This is particularly clear in his well-structured argumentation in *Contra Gentiles*: while the impossibility of the infinite chain is a part of the argument for the immobility of the first

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<sup>857</sup> In Aquinas’s own words: “*omnis error qui in his accidit* [i.e., in the questions concerning the influence of prayers on the order decided by God], *ex hoc provenit quod non consideratur differentia inter universalem ordinem et particularem. Cum enim omnes effectus ordinem ad invicem habeant secundum quod in una causa conveniunt, oportet tanto esse communiorem ordinem, quanto est universalior causa. Unde ab universali causa, quae Deus est, ordo proveniens necesse est quod omnia complectatur. Nihil igitur prohibet aliquem particularem ordinem vel per orationem, vel per aliquem alium modum immutari: est enim extra illum ordinem aliquid quod possit ipsum immutare... Sed extra ordinem complectentem omnia, non potest poni aliquid per quod possit ordo ab universali causa dependens everti. Propter quod Stoici, qui in Deum sicut in causam universalem omnium ordinis rerum reductionem considerabant, ponebant quod ordo institutus a Deo nulla ratione potest immutari. Sed in hoc iterum a consideratione universalis ordinis recedebant, quod ponebant orationes ad nihil utiles esse, tanquam arbitrarentur voluntates hominum et eorum desideria, ex quibus orationes procedunt, sub illo universali ordine non comprehendunt. Cum enim dicunt quod, sive orationes fiant sive non, nihilominus idem effectus sequitur in rebus ex universali ordine rerum, manifeste ab illo universali ordine vota orantium sequestrant.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 95, n. 20.

<sup>858</sup> Cf. the argumentations against the infinite chain of movers in *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 14 – 15; *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 9, n. 2 – 4; *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, co.; *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 2 and *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 3. The inverse Aristotelian procedure arguing first for the impossibility of infinite chain and proving the existence of the first mover by it is commented by Aquinas in *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 2 and mentioned as one of three possible arguments in *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 12 – 13. But it seems that Aquinas himself is reserved towards it: in *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 9, n. 4 he relativizes its certitude by saying that the alternative argumentation uses a more certain way.

mover,<sup>859</sup> the need for the first mover is one of the arguments for this impossibility of the infinite chain.<sup>860</sup>

As mentioned before, Aquinas himself is not completely hostile to the idea of infinite chain of causes as such: he believes that the world began a limited time ago, but he is convinced that God could have done otherwise.<sup>861</sup> What he denies is the possibility of the infinite chain of *per se* causes. In this case, “*per se*” means that the cause is by its nature necessary for the production of the effect, while the “*per accidens*” cause is not, even if *de facto* it is its cause. Imagine the forging of the sword. Blacksmith, hammer, pliers and forge can be said *per se* causes of the sword, if they are taken in general. In contrast, this particular hammer and these particular pliers are causes *per accidens*. While it is impossible to forge the sword without any hammer at all, among thousands of hammers in this world there is probably no one that could not be replaced by another one. Aquinas denies that the *per se* chain could be infinite: it would imply the situation of the infinity of different extension cables without any power station to make them work. But he thinks that there is nothing contradictory in the idea of an immortal blacksmith that is working on his sword for the infinity of time, replacing each broken tool by another one he has himself prepared beforehand.<sup>862</sup> Thus, the actual state of the sword would have an infinity of *per accidens* causes (infinity of hammers and pliers), but only several *per se* causes (forge, hammer, pliers, blacksmith and limited number of higher movers).

It should be clear from the above-mentioned picture that Aquinas’s first mover is not to be confused with the starter of the movement on the beginning of time (some pusher of Big Bang, if you want). Hardly anything is so far from Aristotelian/Thomist (and also biblical, if I understand it at all) perspective, as the idea of a big watchmaker that launches the universe

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<sup>859</sup> “*omne quod movetur, ab alio movetur. Patet autem sensu aliquid moveri, utputa solem. Ergo alio movente movetur. Aut ergo illud movens movetur, aut non. Si non movetur, ergo habemus propositum, quod necesse est ponere aliquod movens immobile. Et hoc dicimus Deum. Si autem movetur, ergo ab alio movente movetur. Aut ergo est procedere in infinitum: aut est devenire ad aliquod movens immobile. Sed non est procedere in infinitum. Ergo necesse est ponere aliquod primum movens immobile.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 3.

<sup>860</sup> “*Aliam autem propositionem, scilicet quod in moventibus et motis non sit procedere in infinitum, probat tribus rationibus. ... Secunda ratio ad idem probandum talis est. In moventibus et motis ordinatis, quorum scilicet unum per ordinem ab alio movetur, hoc necesse est inveniri, quod, remoto primo movente vel cessante a motione, nullum aliorum movebit neque movebitur: quia primum est causa movendi omnibus aliis. Sed si sint moventia et mota per ordinem in infinitum, non erit aliquod primum movens, sed omnia erunt quasi media moventia. Ergo nullum aliorum poterit moveri. Et sic nihil movebitur in mundo. Tertia probatio in idem redit, nisi quod est ordine transmutato...*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 11 and 14 – 15.

<sup>861</sup> Cf. *De aeternitate mundi*; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 31 – 38; *STh.*, I, q. 46, a. 1 – 2; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 14 and 17; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>862</sup> “*Verbi gratia, ad esse cultelli exiguntur per se aliquae causae moventes, sicut faber, et instrumentum; et haec esse infinita est impossibile, quia ex hoc sequeretur infinita esse simul actu; sed quod cultellus factus a quodam fabro sene, qui multoties instrumenta sua renovavit, sequitur multitudinem successivam instrumentorum, hoc est per accidens; et nihil prohibet esse infinita instrumenta praecedentia istum cultellum, si faber fuisset ab aeterno.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad s. c. 5.

(no matter whether determinist or indeterminist) in the first instant of its existence and then – he just lets it go. In the typical case, on Aristotelian account the action of the mover and the movement of the moveable should be simultaneous: the mover’s motion does not precede the movement chronologically.<sup>863</sup> Aquinas arrives at certain relativization of this position: the mover must be simultaneous only with the beginning of the movement,<sup>864</sup> which actually permits the temporal distance between the mover’s action and its effects. Nevertheless, as we shall see more fully later in this subchapter, if I am to finish the phrase that I am writing just now, some motions proceeding immediately from the First mover must happen just now. (Fortunately enough, it seems that they have happened).

### III. 1. 2. Avicennian catalogues of efficient causes

The distinction of the first and the second is obviously not the only Aquinas’s distinction concerning the causality. As for the efficient causation by which we are preoccupied in the first place, he repetitively uses the catalogue he says to have borrowed from Avicenna: the distinction between completing cause (*perficiens*), preparing or disposing cause (*praeparans* or *disponens*), helping cause (*adiuvans*) that is sometimes replaced by commanding cause (*imperans*), and advising cause (*consilians*).<sup>865</sup>

1) The completing cause is the cause “that gives the accomplishment to movement or change, e.g. [the cause] that introduce the substantial form during generation,”<sup>866</sup> “or the artificial [form] in the case of artificial things, as a builder of a house.”<sup>867</sup> As for the elicited acts, “the completing cause is [the cause] because of whose action the agent is directly inclined to acting.”<sup>868</sup> It is the (efficient) cause in the most proper sense of the term because “the cause is something that is followed by effect. But the action of the completing one is immediately (*statim*) followed by effect, this not being the case of the action of the disposing one or the

<sup>863</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 3 – 4.

<sup>864</sup> “*Oportet autem movens et motum esse simul quantum ad motus principium, non tamen quantum ad totum motum, ut apparet in proiectis.*” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 11, ad 5.

<sup>865</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 5, n. 5; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 2, n. 3–8; *STh.*, I-II, q. 17, a. 1, arg. 1 and *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co. *Adiuvans* is replaced by *imperans* in *Summa* and *De malo*. *Comment on Metaphysics* and *Summa* name Avicenna as the author of the distinction (cf. *Sufficientia*, I, cap. 10). All the texts were written at the turn of 1260s and 1270s. As for the older texts, while the catalogue as such is not to be found there, its elements are nevertheless present, cf. the distinction of causes in *De veritate*, q. 28, a. 8, arg. 8 and ad 8, or *consilians* as a cause in *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 45, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 3.

<sup>866</sup> “*quod dat complementum motui vel mutationi; sicut quod introducit formam substantialem in generatione*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 5, n. 5.

<sup>867</sup> “*Perficiens autem dicitur causa efficiens, quae ultimam rei perfectionem causat, sicut quod inducit formam substantialem in rebus naturalibus, vel artificialem in artificialibus, ut aedificator domus.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 2, n. 4.

<sup>868</sup> “*in actibus elicendis causa perficiens est ex cuius actione agens directe inclinatur ad agendum.*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co.

advising one or the commanding one.”<sup>869</sup> The potter is a completing cause of the pot; the fire on the torch is the completing cause of the fire in the haystack ignited by the torch. As for the will, Aquinas allows for two completing causes of its acts: the will itself as a second cause and God as the first cause.<sup>870</sup>

2) The disposing cause is the cause “that makes the matter or the subject apt to the final accomplishment”, something “that does not induce the final completing form, but only prepares the matter for the form, as somebody who hews wood and stone is said to make a house. And this [cause] is not properly said the efficient [cause] of the house because the thing that he does, is not a house, only (a house) in potency. Nevertheless, it is called efficient more properly, if it induces the final disposition that is necessarily followed by the form...”<sup>871</sup> The example speaks for itself, let me add that for Aquinas, in the process of the justification of a sinner, the ability of free choice is only the disposing cause.<sup>872</sup>

3) The helping cause is a cause “that does not act for its own goal but for the goal of the other.” According to Aquinas “this is the relation of the secondary cause to the first one because the second cause acts for the goal of the first cause in the case of all the agents that are per se in order, e.g. soldiers for the goal of citizens.”<sup>873</sup> The difference between the helping and the disposing cause is that the former works on the principal effect and not only on the disposition to it.<sup>874</sup>

4) The advising cause is just what it seems to be. Aquinas only specifies the way by which the causality of the adviser works: she “gives to the agent the form through which it acts. Because the agent [acting] on purpose acts through her knowledge that is passed onto her by the adviser; as in the case of natural things, the generator is said to move heavy and light entities,

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<sup>869</sup> “*causa est ad quam sequitur effectus. Ad actionem autem perficientis statim effectus sequitur, non autem ad actionem disponentis vel consulentis vel imperantis...*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co. Aquinas speaks about the command given to somebody by an exterior authority. In contrast, in *STh.*, I-II, q. 17, a. 1 he means by *imperium* an act of reason moving the active potencies of its own subject thanks to its participation on the moving ability of the will; this is why he does not deny the premise of the third objection that states that “the command is immediately followed by act” (*ad imperium statim sequitur actus*).

<sup>870</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co.

<sup>871</sup> “*quod aptat materiam seu subiectum ad ultimum complementum*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 5, n. 5; “*quod non inducit ultimam formam perfectivam, sed tantummodo praeparat materiam ad formam; sicut ille, qui dolat ligna et lapides, dicitur domum facere. Et haec non proprie dicitur efficiens domus; quia id, quod ipse facit, non est domus nisi in potentiam. Magis tamen proprie erit efficiens, si inducat ultimam dispositionem ad quam sequitur de necessitate forma...*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 2, n. 5.

<sup>872</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 28, a. 8, arg. 8 and ad 8.

<sup>873</sup> “*Aduvans autem dicitur causa secundum quod operatur ad principalem effectum. In hoc tamen differt ab agente principali, quia principale agens agit ad finem proprium, adiuvans autem ad finem alienum...* Et haec est dispositio causae secundariae ad primam; nam causa secunda operatur propter finem primae causae in omnibus agentibus per se ordinatis, sicut militaris propter finem civilis.” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 2, n. 6.

<sup>874</sup> “*Aduvans vero est, quod non operatur ad proprium finem, sed ad finem alterius.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 5, n. 5.

inasmuch as it gives the form through which they are moved.”<sup>875</sup> “And this is the relation of the first agent [acting] by intellect to all the second agents, be it natural or intellectual ones. Because the first intellectual agent in all the cases gives the goal and the form of activity to the second agent, as the architect of the ship to the ship helmsman, and the first intellect to all the nature.”<sup>876</sup>

These four types of causality are obviously not mutually excluding. God as a completing cause of the natural form of subject is *eo ipso* the advising/generating cause of all its natural activities. If the natural inclination originated by the form is also the inclination that makes the subject act, God should also be considered the completing cause of these acts: Aquinas might have this in mind when speaking about both God and the will as the completing causes of voluntary acts. The same thing can also be considered either the disposing or helping cause, depending on the effect that is considered: e.g., for the chief of the construction the same stone mining guy is the disposing cause vis-a-vis the building of the house and the helping cause vis-a-vis the providing of the stone for the construction. Given Aquinas’s universal identification of the helping causes with the secondary causes, the definition of the formers by acting for somebody else’s goal needs to be considered as not excluding acting for their own sake: the relation to the chief being abstracted, the stone mining guy can obviously be considered as the completing cause of the form of the stone block he cuts out of the rock. As for the commanding cause, Aquinas does not give many details of its specificities and makes it include two radically different types of entities: the Devil’s precepts to those who have accepted him explicitly as their master<sup>877</sup> and the act of reason that moves another potencies to their acts.<sup>878</sup> This causality seems to have much in common with the causality of the adviser. It seems to me that the only relevant difference can consist in some another motion connected to the information that something is to be done.<sup>879</sup> In any case, its alternating with the helping cause shows that none of the catalogues should be considered exhaustive: they are

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<sup>875</sup> “*Consilians autem in his quae agunt a proposito, est quod dat agenti formam per quam agit. Nam agens a proposito agit per suam scientiam, quam consilians sibi tradit; sicut et in rebus naturalibus generans dicitur movere gravia vel levia, in quantum dat formam per quam moventur.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 5, n. 5.

<sup>876</sup> “*Et haec est habitudo primi agentis per intellectum ad omne agens secundum, sive sit naturale, sive intellectuale. Nam primum agens intellectuale in omnibus dat finem et formam agendi secundo agenti, sicut architector navis navim operanti, et primus intellectus toti naturae.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 2, n. 7.

<sup>877</sup> “*dicendum est, quod Diabolus humani peccati causa esse potest per modum disponentis vel persuadentis interius aut exterius; aut etiam per modum praecipientis, ut apparet in his qui se manifeste Diabolo subdiderunt.*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co.

<sup>878</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 17 discussing in extenso this type of act.

<sup>879</sup> “*ratio potest aliquid intimare vel denunciare dupliciter. Uno modo, absolute, quae quidem intimatio exprimitur per verbum indicativi modi; sicut si aliquis alicui dicat, hoc est tibi faciendum. Aliquando autem ratio intimat aliquid alicui, movendo ipsum ad hoc, et talis intimatio exprimitur per verbum imperativi modi; puta cum alicui dicitur, fac hoc.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 17, a. 1, co.; “*imperare nihil aliud est quam ordinare aliquem ad aliquid agendum, cum quadam intimativa motione.*” *Ibid.*, a. 2, co., cf. *ibid.*, a. 5, co.

just showing the multiplicity of the ways an efficient causal relationship can assume. Also, the first efficient agent is such first of all because of his providing of natures and other forms that give the very possibility to act by themselves to the secondary agents: this fact is to be held in mind to avoid a false image of the efficient causation as a limitation of the secondary agents' possibilities. To have a better insight here, another distinction must be made.

### III. 1. 3. Violent mover and mover from the inside

#### III. 1. 3. 1. One argument against a determinist reading of Aquinas

According to Eleonor Stump, "Aquinas explains that there are two sorts of necessity which might be taken to operate on the will. One is the necessity of coercion, which occurs when some cause outside the agent causally produces in the will a volition for some particular thing. This sort of necessity, Aquinas says, is incompatible with freedom. (In fact, as we saw earlier, there can be no such coercion of will for Aquinas...)"<sup>880</sup> Following this premise, Stump speaks about "Aquinas's insistence that *nothing* operates on the will with efficient causation"<sup>881</sup> and elaborates an ingenious attempt to understand Aquinas as a confirmed libertarian.

Aquinas is indeed consistently adamant about the impossibility of the coercion (*coactio*) of the will (see more in chap. 4. I.).<sup>882</sup> Stump's mistake consists in her conviction that the determinist efficient causality implies the coercion on his account. It seems to me that many libertarians fell for a similar error and therefore I will spend a bit more time on it. Stump's major textual argument is Aquinas's argumentation for the necessity of certain voluntary acts in *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1. During his distinguishing of different types of necessity here, Aquinas basically says the following: the necessity means that something cannot not be; beside others, such impossibility can proceed from the exterior agent; if this is so, it is the necessity of coercion that is impossible in the case of the will.<sup>883</sup> Stump finds this implying that no efficient cause (including God) can act deterministically vis-à-vis the will. As for me, I find it

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<sup>880</sup> STUMP (2003), p. 298 (I have omitted the number of the marginal note in the end of the first phrase).

<sup>881</sup> STUMP (2003), p. 390.

<sup>882</sup> Cf. for example *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 5, co., *De veritate* q. 22, a. 5 and 8; *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1, co.

<sup>883</sup> "*Necesse est enim quod non potest non esse. ... Alio modo convenit alicui quod non possit non esse, ex aliquo extrinseco, vel fine vel agente. ... Ex agente autem hoc alicui convenit, sicut cum aliquis cogitur ab aliquo agente, ita quod non possit contrarium agere. Et haec vocatur necessitas coactionis. Haec igitur coactionis necessitas omnino repugnat voluntati.*" *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1, co. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, co. could be invoked in the same sense: "*Necessarium ex conditione agentis, est necessarium per violentiam: non enim eum qui violenter currit, necesse est currere, nisi sub hac conditione, si aliquis eum cogit.*" See also *STh.*, III, q. 46, a. 1, co.



implying only that no efficient cause that acts deterministically vis-à-vis the will causes the necessity of effect in any habitual meaning of the term “necessity”. We have already seen that the kind of causal dependence on God has no importance for the modal qualification *simpliciter* of effects of created causes (cf. II. 7). To support my reading, I cannot get by with this observation though. Aquinas specifies that the necessity of coercion is not an absolute necessity but one kind of the necessity *ex suppositione* (the other kind being the necessity proceeding from the goal, e.g. necessity of the ship, given the will to cross the sea). Apparently, he wants to exclude also this type of necessity and not only the necessity *simpliciter*. Now, the determinist efficient causality of God implies without doubt some kind of necessity *ex suppositione* and obviously this necessity is the necessity caused by an agent. Therefore, it seems that even the divine determinist causation should be excluded by the nature of the will according to this text. The thing is that Aquinas explicitly makes a distinction between the necessity coming from the divine action and the necessity of coercion. The preparation for grace “can be considered inasmuch as it comes from the moving God. And then it has a necessity vis-à-vis the thing to which it is ordered by God; but not of coercion but of infallibility, because the intention of God cannot fail.”<sup>884</sup> Why is such distinction completely absent in the above-quoted text then? The libertarian reader could think that the distinction is a fruit of some evolution posterior to this article. A compatibilist like me could say that Aquinas’s presentation there is just not completely precise: after seeing all the meanings of modal terms he is aware of, it could be hardly required of him to mention all of them on every occasion he speaks about the modalities – there is no such exhaustive presentation anywhere in all his corpus. But I believe that there is more to it than that.

### III. 1. 3. 2. “Necessity” as one name of violence

The source-text of the precise catalogue of meanings of the term “necessity” that Aquinas is using in the quoted text can be without much difficulty found in Aristotle’s dictionary of

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<sup>884</sup> “*Alio modo potest considerari [i.e., the preparation for grace] secundum quod est a Deo movente. Et tunc habet necessitatem ad id ad quod ordinatur a Deo, non quidem coactionis, sed infallibilitatis, quia intentio Dei deficere non potest.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 112, a. 3, co., cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 8, co. (“*Deus potest mutare voluntatem de necessitate, non tamen potest eam cogere. ... omnis actio voluntatis in quantum est actio, non solum est a voluntate ut immediato agente, sed etiam a Deo ut primo agente, qui vehementius imprimat. Unde, sicut voluntas potest immutare actum suum in aliud ..., ita etiam et multo amplius, Deus.*”) and a. 9, co. (“*Alio vero modo potest intelligi voluntas immutari ab aliquo per modum causae efficientis: et sic dicimus, quod non solum nulla creatura potest cogere voluntatem agendo in ipsam, quia hoc nec Deus poterat; sed nec etiam potest directe agere in voluntatem ut eam immutet necessario, vel qualitercumque inclinet, quod Deus potest*”). For other text considering God’s non-violent efficient causation of voluntary acts, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 4, ad 1; *De veritate*, q. 28, a. 4, ad 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1 and ad 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88, n. 6; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co.

important notions in the fifth book *Metaphysics*.<sup>885</sup> In this text, Aristotle does not elaborate some philosophical theory of what the necessity should be: he just states the meanings for which the Greek term *anankaion* is *de facto* used and the relationship of these meanings. As I have already mentioned before (chap. 2. III. 2.), one of these meanings is said to be the compulsion that is opposed to the (internal) inclination.<sup>886</sup> The text does not say that the compulsion is caused by a mere necessity in the efficiently causal relation, it says that the compulsion itself is called a necessity. Aristotle is convinced that this meaning of the term is derived from the meaning “what cannot be otherwise”: because of the compulsion, the thing cannot but be hindered in the following of its proper impulses and in this sense it cannot be otherwise. In his comment to this passage, Aquinas explicitly states: “The necessity that comes from the exterior mover belongs to the third type [i.e., the violence]. For the violence happens when something is moved by exterior agent to something else without having the aptitude to it because of its proper nature. For if it is ordained by its proper nature to receive the movement from the exterior agent, then the movement will not be violent but natural, as is clear in the case of the movement of the celestial spheres by the separated substances and in the case of the movement of the inferior bodies by the superior ones.”<sup>887</sup> The beginning of the passage makes the same impression as *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1: if an exterior mover moves with necessity, it commits a violence on the moved. But Aquinas immediately denies that this is the case. If the interior principles of moveable are oriented to the reception of mover’s causality, there is no violence. It could hardly be otherwise: the violent is something “whose source is exterior and to which the power of its recipient contributes nothing.”<sup>888</sup> It is clear that for example the movement that is caused by the agent-generator in the generated being via the latter’s nature cannot be considered violent in any case. It is the same conception of violence that permits Aquinas to exclude the necessity of coercion in the will in the article quoted by Stump: the will is the capacity of interior inclination, its acts are therefore never

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<sup>885</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, V, 5.

<sup>886</sup> “We call ‘necessary’ ... (t)he compulsory and compulsion; i.e. that which impedes and tends to hinder, contrary to impulse and purpose. For the compulsory is called necessary (whence the necessary is painful...) ... a thing is said to do or suffer what is necessary in the sense of compulsory only when it cannot act according to its impulse because of the compelling force...” ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, V, 5 (tr. by W. D. Ross).

<sup>887</sup> “*Necessitas autem quae est a movente exteriori, pertinet ad tertium modum. Nam violentia est quando aliquid movetur ab exteriori agente ad aliud ad quod ex propria natura aptitudinem non habet. Si enim secundum suam naturam ordinetur ad hoc quod recipiat motum ab exteriori agente, tunc motus non erit violentus, sed naturalis. Sicut patet de motu caelestium orbium a substantiis separatis, et de motu inferiorum corporum a superioribus.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 6, n. 9.

<sup>888</sup> “*Est enim violentum, ut dicitur in III Ethicorum, cuius principium est extra, nil conferente vim passo.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 7, n. 4, cf. lib. 5, l. 10, n. 4; *Contra gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 22, n. 5; *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 6, ad 1; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, co. etc. The source text of the definition is ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1110 b.

completely without any interior source – otherwise they would not be acts of will at all.<sup>889</sup> But if an exterior agent can cause the movement without violence, how can Aquinas say that the necessity coming from the exterior agent is violent? Stump would probably answer that the non-violent agent must be indeterminist then – but Aquinas’s own example of the motion of celestial bodies excludes such an interpretation.<sup>890</sup> In my view, Aquinas just does not think that the non-violent determinist efficient causation makes the resulting movement necessary, i.e. necessary in any habitual meaning of the term. Obviously, it is not necessary in the sense of “compulsory”. Neither is it necessary *simpliciter* – if so, this necessity would come from the nature of the moveable object and not from the mover. Aristotle also mentions the necessities for the acquiring or well-being of some goal and the relationship between the premises and conclusion of the demonstration, neither of whose needs to be applied on such a movement. And that’s all. Aquinas’s “necessity of infallibility” just cannot be found in the catalogue – and for reason: in Aquinas’s own view the effects that are necessary only in this sense are just the effects that are normally called contingent.

### III. 1. 3. 3. External mover moving from inside

To support her interpretation, Stump quotes also the passage from *Contra gentiles* that says: “if the will is moved by any external principle, the motion will be violent. By being moved by an external principle, I mean a principle which moves in the manner of an agent and not in the manner of an end. But the violent is altogether repugnant to the voluntary. It is therefore impossible that the will be moved by an external principle as an agent cause. Rather, every motion of the will must proceed from an interior principle.”<sup>891</sup> I am not really sure about the way this quote arrived into Stump’s book: if it is read as a whole, the chapter it comes from proves the contrary of what Stump wants to make it say. The quoted text is immediately preceded by our now-well-known Aristotelian definition of violence<sup>892</sup> and immediately

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<sup>889</sup> “*hoc dicimus esse violentum, quod est contra inclinationem rei. Ipse autem motus voluntatis est inclinatio quaedam in aliquid. Et ideo sicut dicitur aliquid naturale quia est secundum inclinationem naturae, ita dicitur aliquid voluntarium quia est secundum inclinationem voluntatis. Sicut ergo impossibile est quod aliquid simul sit violentum et naturale; ita impossibile est quod aliquid simpliciter sit coactum sive violentum, et voluntarium.*” *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1, co.

<sup>890</sup> The actual movement of celestial bodies is kind of natural law for Aquinas, it cannot be otherwise save some divine miracle, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, co.

<sup>891</sup> “*Si igitur voluntas moveatur ab aliquo exteriori principio, erit violentus motus: dico autem moveri a principio extrinseco quod moveatur per modum agentis, et non per modum finis. Violentum autem voluntario repugnat. Impossibile est ergo quod voluntas moveatur a principio extrinseco quasi ab agente, sed oportet quod omnis motus voluntatis ab interiori procedat.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88, n. 5. I am quoting the English version used by STUMP (2003), p. 390.

<sup>892</sup> “*Violentum, ut dicitur in III Ethic., est cuius principium est extra, nil conferente vim passo.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88, n. 5.

followed by the following: “But no created substance is connected to the interior aspects of the intellectual soul, only God, who is the only cause of its being (*esse*) and holds it in the being. The voluntary movement can be therefore caused only by God.”<sup>893</sup> And in the next paragraph:

“The violent is opposed both to the natural and the voluntary because both need to come from the intrinsic principle. But an exterior agent moves naturally only inasmuch as it causes the intrinsic principle of movement in the moveable: as in the case of the generator that gives the form of heaviness to the generated heavy body, moving it naturally downwards. ... Therefore, the movement of the will can be caused without violence only by the agent that causes the intrinsic principle of the movement which is the potency of the will itself. And this is God, who alone creates the soul... Consequently, only God can move the will by the way of agent without violence.”<sup>894</sup> The chapter ends by two biblical assertions of God’s rule over human will<sup>895</sup> and is followed by Aquinas’s argumentation in favour of the thesis that God is the cause of the voluntary movements and not only of the will itself.<sup>896</sup>

### III. 1. 3. 4. Natural openness to be moved

I discuss the specificities of causing of voluntary movements in the next chapter. What I want to emphasise now is the following: In Aquinas’s view, the moveable entities (including the secondary movers) are naturally oriented to be moved by certain efficient movers, while they have no such openness vis-a-vis the others who are nevertheless (sometimes) able to move them too. While their moving by the latter is violent, the moving by the former is natural in the broad sense of the term.<sup>897</sup> The source of this distinction is apparently the following

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<sup>893</sup> “*Nulla autem substantia creata coniungitur animae intellectuali quantum ad sua interiora nisi solus Deus, qui solus est causa esse ipsius, et sustinens eam in esse. A solo igitur Deo potest motus voluntarius causari.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88, n. 5.

<sup>894</sup> “*Violentum opponitur naturali et voluntario motui: quia utrumque oportet quod sit a principio intrinseco. Agens autem exterius sic solum naturaliter movet, in quantum causat in mobili intrinsecum principium motus: sicut generans, quod dat formam gravitatis corpori gravi generato, movet ipsum naturaliter deorsum. ... Illud igitur solum agens potest causare motum voluntatis absque violentia, quod causat principium intrinsecum huius motus, quod est potentia ipsa voluntatis. Hoc autem est Deus, qui animam solus creat, ... Solus igitur Deus potest movere voluntatem, per modum agentis, absque violentia.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88, n. 6.

<sup>895</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88, n. 7, invoking Proverbs 21, 1 (“Like a stream is the king’s heart in the hand of the LORD; wherever it pleases him, he directs it.”) and Philippians 2, 13 (“For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.”) In Aquinas’s translation the causality of God is even more stressed “God is the one who, because of good will, makes in you both willing and accomplishing”).

<sup>896</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 89. The goal of chapter 88 was only to prove that God is the only higher agent that can do it.

<sup>897</sup> “*...hoc distat in motibus naturalibus et violentis; quod in motibus violentis impressio relicta a primo motore in secundis motoribus est praeter naturam eorum; et ideo operatio consequens ex tali impressione est eis difficilis et laboriosa: sed in motibus naturalibus impressio relicta a primo motore in secundis motoribus, est eis*

observation: while sometimes the moveable entity seems to struggle with the influence of the mover, in other cases it seems to welcome it, require it or even be made for it (without the influence of light and the visible objects, the eye would be useless). The comparison of the difference of these two causal relationships with the difference between the rape and the lovemaking offers itself. To my knowledge, the essence of the “natural potency for certain movement”<sup>898</sup> that is required for the non-violent character of the moving is never really explained by Aquinas in its generality. Obviously, it goes beyond the simple possibility to be moved that exists vis-a-vis the violent movements, too. Maybe it could be reduced to the intention of Creator’s intellect as in the case of the finality of prime matter.<sup>899</sup> Maybe it means the non-existence of any natural counter-inclination against such moving.<sup>900</sup> Or maybe it is just a primitive irreducible notion for Aquinas. In any case, even if there are two movements that have the same direction, one of them can be violent while the other is not, depending on their respective movers. E.g., if I push the seawater to the beach by my hands, I am moving it against its interior tendency and the motion I am realising is violent. Contrarily, if the Moon does the same during the high tide, according to Aquinas there is no violence because the water is naturally opened to the influence of the Moon.<sup>901</sup> Now, an infinitely stronger version of the relation that the Moon has vis-à-vis the water is had by God vis-à-vis any creature: as the First mover and the author of the nature of all the other beings, God finds any creature naturally opened to his influence. Thus, on Aquinas’s account God’s motion (i.e., the motion that comes immediately from him) can never be violent or against nature, even in the case of miraculous changes of the habitual functioning of some part of reality:<sup>902</sup> the virginal

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*causa naturalis; et ideo operatio hanc impressionem consequens est conveniens et suavis...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 1, co.

<sup>898</sup> “*etiam motus localis corporum caelestium est naturalis, licet sit a motore separato, in quantum in ipso corpore caeli est potentia naturalis ad talem motum.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 1, n. 4; “*Est enim motus secundum naturam, cuius principium est in ipso quod movetur: non solum autem principium activum, sed etiam passivum, quod quidem est potentia per quam aliquid est naturaliter susceptivum motionis alterius. Et ideo, cum corpora inferiora moventur a corporibus superioribus, non est motus violentus, sed naturalis: quia in corporibus inferioribus est naturalis aptitudo ut sequantur motiones superiorum corporum.*” *In De caelo*, lib. 3, l. 7, n. 5.

<sup>899</sup> Cf. probably *In Physic.*, lib. 1, l. 15, n. 10.

<sup>900</sup> I mean a positively existing contrary inclination here, not only an absence of disposition to be moved.

<sup>901</sup> “*Dicimus enim esse naturale, quod fit ab agente, cui naturaliter subditur patiens, quamvis etiam non sit secundum propriam naturam patientis; sicut enim fluxus et refluxus maris est naturalis, propter hoc quod causatur ex motu lunae, cui naturaliter subditur aqua, quamvis non sit naturalis secundum formam aquae.*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 11, l. 3; “*in rebus naturalibus videtur, quod quando aliquod corpus inferius a superiori movetur, est ei ille motus naturalis, quamvis non videatur conveniens motui quem naturaliter habet ex seipso; sicut mare movetur secundum fluxum et refluxum a luna; et hic motus est ei naturalis, ut Commentator dicit, licet aquae secundum se ipsum motus naturalis sit ferri deorsum*” *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1, cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 13, co.; *STh.*, II-II, q. 2, a. 3, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 136; *De operationibus occultis naturae*.

<sup>902</sup> “*Ita etiam cum omnis creatura sit naturaliter Deo subiecta, quicquid Deus facit in creatura, est simpliciter naturale, licet forte non sit naturale secundum propriam et particularem naturam rei in qua fit, puta cum caecus*

conception or the dividing of the sea are, *mutatis mutandis*, just another case of the phenomenon observed in the case of the high tide.<sup>903</sup>

In Aquinas's universe such a natural openness of the inferior being vis-à-vis the superior one is kind of a rule – the *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88 that we have just spoken about was written just to say that the human will has not this relation vis-à-vis the will of higher creatures. We shall see more about its intricacies in the following subsections. But beyond the medieval colour of some of them, there is at least one aspect of this view that seems to have a decisive impact even in the contemporary discussion between compatibilist and incompatibilist.

Recall one of the most common ways of argumentation against compatibilism. Let's have an individual whose choices are deterministically caused by an agent like an evil neurosurgeon with a sci-fi high-tech device, devilish psycho-manipulator or goddess Diana that has constructed the poor individual's zygote in the way that the determinist functioning of the universe makes him to make the choices she wants him to make.<sup>904</sup> The compatibilist usually admits that in such cases the individual would not be free or morally responsible for his choices – and she is caught. Where is the difference, asks the incompatibilist, between these determinist agents and the universal causal synergy whose determinism, on compatibilist account, should not bother us? The discussion eventually continues by the compatibilist's pointing to the relevant differences between the invoked freedom-destroying agents and that synergy, followed by the incompatibilist's inventing of other freedom-destroying agents that cannot be ruled out by the compatibilist's distinctions. In the end, the incompatibilist can simply state that there are no relevant differences between, say, the zygote created by Diana and all the other human zygotes. In such a case, the compatibilist has several ways out. She can reverse the argumentation against the incompatibilist, arguing that despite her own first impression, the spawn of Diana is free and morally responsible because there are no relevant differences between him and us: the wrong first impression was based on the unconscious confusion of Diana and a less powerful bio-engineer who could achieve the determinist control only by altering the normal functioning of the controlled individual. Or she can say

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*illuminatur et mortuus resuscitatur.” Super Rom., cap. 11, l. 3; De potentia, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1; Compendium theologiae, lib. 1, cap. 136.*

<sup>903</sup> Obviously, even if during the high tide the moving of the water itself is not violent, the movements of other entities that it causes (e.g. a destruction of a wharf) can be. In a similar way, a miracle can contain violence: the description of the dividing of the sea from Exodus (Ex 14, 21) makes the impression that the sea itself was violently moved by the wind that was the direct object of the miraculous divine motion; the Philistines were without doubt moved violently by Samson who was himself moved without violence by the Spirit of the LORD (Jdg 15, 14 – 16).

<sup>904</sup> Cf. MCKENNA & COATES (2021a); FURLONG (2019), p. 60 – 85; PEREBOOM (2007), p. 93 – 98; MELE (2006), p. 184 – 195.

that in the real universe not even Diana could ever achieve the determinist control over the individual by the way she was said to achieve it, and the incompatibilist is therefore arguing *per impossibile*: similarly, she could argue that no lion is a carnivore because Diana could create a koala without any relevant differences from lion, and since the koala is not a carnivore, neither the lion is. But neither of these answers explains, why there is (at least initially) an agreement concerning the goddess, neurosurgeons and psycho-manipulators and not concerning the universal synergy.

It seems to me that the reason is quite simple: while the causality of the habitual state of cosmic synergy is a “normal” presupposition of how human abilities work, the causality of neurosurgeons etc. is not. In Aquinas’s terms, we tend to implicitly consider the synergy of causes that are engaged in this state of “universal order of causes” as a mover to which we are “naturally pliable”: quite plausibly, all our capacities would be useless outside this causal network. This is why so many of us (both libertarians and compatibilists) tend to be assured that there is no harm in it for the freedom we intuitively believe in – even if our knowledge of this network is limited at best. On the other side, the intervention of a decisive causal factor that is alien to this normal state creates at least an impression that something could be wrong with the result, even if we cannot say the difference of the result in terms of contemporary physics, as in the case of Diana’s spawn. In my view, the intuitive plausibility of the suppression of freedom in the examples that invoke such factors is linked with this impression of unnaturality they make – the impression that does not concern directly the freedom and is only bolstered, not caused, by the affirmation of the determinism of these factors. Imagine that the proverbial neurosurgeon decided to remotely control a cockroach instead of a human. Without attributing the cockroach any freedom of will it could be deprived of, its manipulated state would still appear somehow wrong to us, no matter the assuring that its functioning is the same as the functioning of any other member of its species. Now, make the neurosurgeon’s influence indeterminist, lowering the reliability of the control device to 50%: do you have an impression that everything is all right with the insect then? Aquinas’s distinction between the violent mover and the mover to which the moveable is naturally pliable gives name to the intuition that makes us consider the causality of the neurosurgeon’s control device an intrusion while the causality of, say, the normal sources of sensorial perception not. Even in the absence of all the other differences, the supposed (absence of) natural pliancy vis-à-vis the mover makes the difference between the violent and non-violent moving. Now, the mere exclusion of violence does not fulfil all the conditions of freedom: but it removes the most obvious objection against it.

### III. 1. 4. Principal mover and instrumental mover

We have seen that any mover, save God, naturally presupposes the action of some another mover. Also, we have seen that for any cause, there are some effects that are naturally possible for it: the latter is the base for Aquinas's basic notion of possibility. Also, we have seen that there are possibilities beyond these possibilities: the mud cannot heal the born-blind – and yet, it does so in Jesus's hands. In the latter cases, Aquinas uses the notions of principal and instrumental cause.

#### III. 1. 4. 1. Notion of instrument

The instrument can be understood more or less broadly in Aquinas. In the narrow sense, it is something that is “moved by another in such a way that the mover does not give to it any principle of this movement, as in the case of the saw moved by the carpenter”. In the broadest sense it is “anything that moves while being moved by another, whether the principle of its movement is in it or not.”<sup>905</sup> The former of these meanings concerns the secondary movers that are moved violently; the latter concerns all the secondary movers at all, including the self-movers like human mind. What I am interested in now is neither of these two meanings though, but the following intermediary meaning: the instrumental cause/mover is something that produces the effects beyond its own natural possibilities because it is under influence of some higher cause that pursues these effects, this higher cause being called the principal cause of the effect.<sup>906</sup> As such, the instrumental cause is conceptually different from both the helping cause and the disposing cause that were mentioned earlier (see III. 1. 2. – all three notions can be sometimes applied on the same entity though): as is clear from the examples Aquinas had given at the occasion, the notion of neither of the latter ones requires the overcoming of their natural limits.

The notorious example of the instrumental cause taken in this sense is the carpenter's axe.<sup>907</sup> Taken as such, the axe has no skills, senses or capacity to move itself (if not the capacity to

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<sup>905</sup> “*instrumentum dupliciter dicitur. Uno modo proprie; quando scilicet aliquid ita ab altero movetur quod non confertur ei a movente aliquod principium talis motus; sicut serra movetur a carpentario... Alio modo dicitur instrumentum magis communiter quidquid est movens ab alio motum, sive sit in ipso principium sui motus, sive non.*” *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, ad 5.

<sup>906</sup> “*...agens vero principale est quod per suam formam agit; et hoc interdum agit per aliquod instrumentum, quod non agit ex virtute suae formae, sed ex virtute principalis agentis...*” *STh.*, I, q. 18, a. 3, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 44, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 3; a. 3, qc. 3, co.; *De malo*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 15 and ad 16; a. 3, co.

<sup>907</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 103, n. 8; *STh.*, I, q. 45, a. 5, co.; III, q. 62, a. 1, co.; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7.



fall): it is far from being able to craft the bed. And yet, it happens that it cuts the wood in a way that makes it bed: it's because it is in the hands of the carpenter. Illustrative as it is, this example can also be misleading, narrowing the notion of the instrumental cause to its narrowest sense, concerning only the entities that are moved violently by their user to achieve a goal that they do not pursue at all. Aquinas's universe is full of instrumental causes that are both more living and willing to do what the principal cause makes them do: all the entities that are used by God as media of miracles and/or as the means of salvation fall into this category,<sup>908</sup> on the top of all with the humanity of Jesus, his life and death, and his sacraments as sources of sanctifying grace.<sup>909</sup> But most importantly, all the functioning of universe is based on what can be called the natural instrumentality.

### III. 1. 4. 2. Natural instrumentality

The illustrative example of what it means can be found in Aquinas's texts concerning the functions of animal sperm.<sup>910</sup> The natural goal of this entity is obviously the generation of a new animal. But on Aquinas's account, the sperm alone is about as qualified to accomplish it as is the axe regarding the crafting of the bed. The sperm is only a vegetative form of life. The generation of an animal (i.e., of a being that is able of sensorial knowledge) by the sperm would therefore mean that the effect of sperm has a higher perfection than the sperm itself. The thing is that Aquinas is convinced that the effect can be at most as perfect as its cause<sup>911</sup> – well, at least as its principal cause. Aquinas's conclusion: the sperm causes the generation of animal only as an instrumental cause under the influence of the soul of the animal that has produced it.

Before looking at the precise way of the realisation of such an influence, let us consider the how deep the roots of this view are in Aquinas's conception of the causality in the world as he

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<sup>908</sup> “*virtus ad cooperandum Deo in miraculis in sanctis intelligi potest ad modum formarum imperfectarum, quae intentiones vocantur, quae non permanent nisi per praesentiam agentis principalis, sicut lumen in aere et motus in instrumento.*” *De potentia*, q. 6, a. 4, co.; “*praedestinationis effectus est salus humana, quae ab ea procedit sicut a causa prima; sed eius possunt esse multae causae aliae proximae quasi instrumentales, quae sunt ordinatae a divina praedestinatione ad salutem humanam, sicut instrumenta applicantur ab artifice ad effectum artis esplendum.*” *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 6, co.

<sup>909</sup> Cf. *STh.*, III, q. 2, a. 6; q. 7, a. 1, ad 3; q. 8, a. 1, ad 1; q. 13, a. 2, co.; q. 48, a. 6, co. for Jesus and his life and *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, co.; lib. 4, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 4; *STh.*, III, q. 62, a. 5, co.; *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 4, ad 3 for sacraments.

<sup>910</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 118, a. 1, ad 3, *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 18, q. 2, a. 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 89, n. 8; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 8, ad 14.

<sup>911</sup> “*quidquid perfectionis est in effectu, oportet inveniri in causa effectiva, vel secundum eandem rationem, ... vel eminentiori modo... Manifestum est enim quod effectus praeexistit virtute in causa agente, praeexistere autem in virtute causae agentis, non est praeexistere imperfectiori modo, sed perfectiori; ...; agens vero, in quantum huiusmodi, est perfectum.*” *STh.*, I, q. 4, a. 2, co.

knows it. Aquinas holds the following (arguably very problematic) view: the realisation of a general form in an individual can be causally explained only by an agent that is able to cause this form as such, i.e. all its realisations that ever happened, happen and will happen.<sup>912</sup> E.g., the felinity of Garfield can be causally explained only by some agent that is able to be the cause of all the cats in cosmic history. Thus, no member of the species has sufficient causal resources to provide the reproduction of this species in another individual. Who has it then? The ancient cosmology refers this power to celestial bodies whose duration was considered coextensive with time. Thus, “a human is generated by a human and the Sun.”<sup>913</sup> While my father is just an instrumental cause of my generation, Sun is its principal cause – or at least more principal than my father.<sup>914</sup> It’s that on Aquinas’s account the celestial bodies themselves are still not enough. They are causing the specific being only inasmuch as they are themselves instruments of a higher spiritual creature – in brief, they are the instruments of angels.<sup>915</sup> Thus, according to Aquinas no change of species like the generation of kittens or burning of the haystack to ashes can happen without these higher agents at work: Plato strikes back! Just to be complete, Aquinas’s application of this kind of instrumentality reaches down to the very bases of his causal thought too. The heat is a quality and therefore it is a being in a weaker sense of term than the substance: it can cause the change of substance only inasmuch as it is an instrument of the substance whose accident it is.<sup>916</sup> But I believe that you are already waiting for Aquinas’s last step concerning the apex of causal hierarchy. I will not disappoint you. The felinity is not the most universal form of a newly generated kitten: the beingness is. And vis-a-vis the beingness, even the highest creature has a similar relation as

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<sup>912</sup> “*In qualibet autem re naturali invenimus quod est ens et quod est res naturalis, et quod est talis vel talis naturae. Quorum primum est commune omnibus entibus; secundum omnibus rebus naturalibus; tertium in una specie; et quartum, si addamus accidentia, est proprium huic individuo. Hoc ergo individuum agendo non potest constituere aliud in simili specie nisi prout est instrumentum illius causae, quae respicit totam speciem et ulterius totum esse naturae inferioris. Et propter hoc nihil agit ad speciem in istis inferioribus nisi per virtutem corporis caelestis...*” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, co., cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 21, n. 5.

<sup>913</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 1; q. 91, a. 2, ad 2; q. 115, a. 3, ad 2; q. 118, a. 1, ad 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad s. c. 5 (“*similiter est in generatione animalis: quia semen patris est causa movens instrumentaliter respectu virtutis solis.*”); d. 17, q. 3, a. 1, ad 4; d. 18, q. 2, a. 3, co. and ad 2; *Super De causis*, l. 5; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, s. c. 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 76, n. 14; lib. 3, cap. 69, n. 24; cap. 104, n. 10... Aquinas receives the dictum from ARISTOTLE, *Physics*, II, 2 *in fine*.

<sup>914</sup> Aquinas regularly uses the example of the generation of a human despite the fact that the human is the only animal whose generation does not completely enter this framework on his account: the rational soul must be created immediately by God and the celestial bodies are just disposing the matter for its imprint, cf. for example *Super De causis*, l. 5 or *STh.*, I, q. 90, a. 2.

<sup>915</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 15, q. 1, a. 2, co. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 10, ad 4. While the scope of the causality of celestial bodies is sufficiently universal, it could be argued that their being is not. The humanity or felinity as such are universals, whereas Sun is a particular material being: it could be thought that it is therefore short of the perfection of its effect in a similar way as the sperm. The angels – the specific forms that are separated from the matter and more perfect than any material species (cf. *STh.*, I, q. 50, a. 1 – 2; q. 51, a. 1) – do not suffer from such problem.

<sup>916</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, ad 5; *STh.*, I, q. 115, a. 1, ad 5.

has Garfield to its species. Therefore, there is just one cause that can provide for it: the subsistent Beingness – Aquinas’s God. Any agent that causes any kind of being (which means any agent at all) can do it only inasmuch as God makes him do it.<sup>917</sup>

The conceptual duos “first mover/second mover” and “principal mover/instrumental mover” are clearly different as we have seen. While the first mover (taken as such) enables its dependent colleague to do what it is naturally supposed to do, the principal mover makes it do something beyond its own natural possibilities. Thus, contrary to the former, the latter relation is compatible with the violent character of the immediate moving of the source-mover: it can be against the internal inclination of the instrument (see the axe). But this violence is in no way implied by the nature of this relation, nor is the mindlessness of the instrument or some puppet-mastering on the side of the principal cause – this is limited only to the instruments in the narrowest sense of the term. On the contrary, what is implied is the partial assimilation of the instrumental entity to the higher level of being that is proper to the principal cause. Moses’s ability to cause the preternatural events during Exodus can be a good example of this (“See! I have made you as God to Pharaoh...”<sup>918</sup>); the symbiosis of some animals with these big blue guys in Cameron’s *Avatar*, making them able to participate on the (more or less) intelligent defence of their environment, is another one. In other words, to be(come) an instrumental cause does not mean any degradation of the entity, on the contrary, it means its upgrade in the literal sense of the term.

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<sup>917</sup> “*nihil agit ad speciem in istis inferioribus nisi per virtutem corporis caelestis, nec aliquid agit ad esse nisi per virtutem Dei. Ipsum enim esse est communissimus effectus primus et intimior omnibus aliis effectibus; et ideo soli Deo competit secundum virtutem propriam talis effectus: unde etiam, ut dicitur in Libro de causis, intelligentia non dat esse, nisi prout est in ea virtus divina. Sic ergo Deus est causa omnis actionis, prout quodlibet agens est instrumentum divinae virtutis operantis. ... Si autem consideremus virtutem qua fit actio, sic virtus superioris causae erit immediatior effectui quam virtus inferioris; nam virtus inferior non coniungitur effectui nisi per virtutem superioris; unde dicitur in Libro de causis, quod virtus causae primae prius agit in causatum, et vehementius ingreditur in ipsum. Sic ergo oportet virtutem divinam adesse cuilibet rei agentis, sicut virtutem corporis caelestis oportet adesse cuilibet corpori elementari agentis.*” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 66 and cap. 67, n. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 45, a. 5. As quoted by Aquinas himself, this doctrine is due to the *Book of causes*: cf. Aquinas’s commentary *Super De causis*, notably l. 1 (“*Causa secunda non agit in causatum suum nisi virtute causae primae; ergo et causatum non procedit a causa secunda nisi per virtutem causae primae; sic igitur virtus causae primae dat effectui ut attingatur a virtute causae secundae; prius ergo attingitur a virtute causae primae. ... quanto aliqua causa efficiens est prior, tanto eius virtus ad plura se extendit; unde oportet ut proprius effectus eius communior sit.*”), l. 3 (“*esse enim quod est communissimum, diffunditur in omnia a causa prima*”), l. 9 (“*si alicuius rei propria operatio inveniatur in re alia, oportet ex necessitate quod res illa habeat ex participatione alterius hanc operationem sicut effectus habet aliquid a causa: puta, si ferrum ignitum faciat propriam operationem ignis adurendo, oportet dicere quod hoc ferrum habeat ab igne sicut effectus a causa.*”), l. 18 (“*in unoquoque genere est causa illud quod est primum in genere illo, a quo omnia quae sunt illius generis in illo genere constituuntur, sicut inter elementaria corpora ignis est primum calidum a quo omnia caliditatem sortiuntur; non est autem in aliquo rerum ordine in infinitum procedere. Oportet igitur in ordine entium esse aliquod primum quod dat omnibus esse, et hoc est quod dicit quod res omnes habent essentiam per ens primum.*”) and l. 23.

<sup>918</sup> Ex 7, 1.

While there is a causal priority implied in the notion of the principal mover, there is no need for it to be the first mover in any relevant sense of the term. The inverse seems also true: prima facie there is no contradiction in the notion of the first mover that moves the second one only to the effects that are in proportion to the latter's nature. Nevertheless, Aquinas seems to occasionally consider this relationship as automatically implying the relation of principal and instrumental cause: the second mover is as such an instrument of the first one.<sup>919</sup> I am not completely sure, how far his opinion on this really goes: Aquinas might use the term only in its broader sense at least in some of these texts.<sup>920</sup> One thing is clear though: as for God and celestial bodies, he really means it.<sup>921</sup>

III. 1. 4. 3. The questioning of the place of natural instrumentality in Aquinas's thought  
Do not fear: I am not going to urge you to believe in Aquinas's astrology. Nor I am going to try to persuade you about the conception of universals that seems to be behind his argumentation for the cosmic instrumental system. I do not find it very convincing myself and if I understand anything about the Thomist general conception of universals, I cannot see how it fits in it. Nevertheless, Aquinas is impossible to be properly understood, if this part of his thought is neglected or arbitrarily cut off: it conditions both his reflection and formulations from his *Sentences* up to his *Treatise about grace* in *Prima-Secundae*. Bernard Lonergan wanted to see a kind of tension in Aquinas's application of these general principles. It seems so absurd that the fire in the haystack would need the help of the stars to burn it: consequently, in his view even though "St. Thomas was ready to credit the spheres with many marvelous influences, he was unwilling to affirm that fire cannot burn unless the celestial heat be added to the natural heat of that element..."<sup>922</sup> Aquinas allegedly gave up to give a precise description of the influence of these principal movers simply because in reality there is nothing left they could be possibly needed for: "if the perfect agent needs to be reduced from *posse agere* to *actu agere*, then is it God or is it the *corpus caeleste* that causes this transition

<sup>919</sup> "Omne autem quod movetur ab aliquo, agit in virtute moventis sicut instrumentum ejus..." *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 33, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, co.; "omne quod movet et movetur, habet rationem instrumenti..." *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 9, n. 8, cf. *ibid.*, n. 5. In *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 14 – 15 the arguments based respectively on the need for first mover and that for principal mover are identified, cf. also the free switching of the notions in *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 3 and the statements from its cap. 130 and 135.

<sup>920</sup> Cook seems to be of this opinion, cf. COOK (1996), p. 53.

<sup>921</sup> Cf. also "Omnia autem moventia quae sunt in mundo, comparantur ad primum movens, quod Deus est, sicut instrumenta ad agens principale." *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 44, n. 4 and *Super De Trinitate*, p. 1, q. 1, a. 1, co. for God and "virtutes activae in his inferioribus sunt instrumentales tantum; unde, sicut instrumentum non movet nisi motum a principali agente, ita nec virtutes activae inferiores agere possunt nisi motae a corporibus caelestibus." *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 9, ad 3 and *Super De Trinitate*, p. 1, q. 1, a. 4, ad 4 for celestial bodies.

<sup>922</sup> LONERGAN (2000), p. 91f.

in the perfectly hot fire? If God effects this change, then what is it that the *corpus caeleste* does? If the *corpus caeleste* effects *actu agere*, then what does God do?”<sup>923</sup>

I believe that the reader of preceding pages could already answer these questions: the celestial body grants the fire with the capacity to cause the specific form, God grants it with the capacity to cause the being. The resulting “*actu agere*” is consequently effected by all three agents in question simultaneously. On Aquinas’s view, the problem of the fire is not the question of some lacking celestial heat (besides, he believes that the celestial bodies affects its instruments by means of light<sup>924</sup>), it is the question of the disproportion between the nature of the heat and some parts of the ontological structure of its effect: Aquinas just thinks that it is similar to the (in)capacity of the baptismal water to cleanse the spiritual taint. Obviously, God could also grant the fire with all the necessary actualisations without any help from celestial body. But Aquinas’s God most of the time does not skip his subordinate causes: he just finds the acting through them much cooler.<sup>925</sup> It happens that Aquinas actually thinks that the time will come when the earthly instrumental causes will be deprived of the causality of some of their celestial movers. You may remember his early answer concerning the indestructibility of the damned bodies that I have mentioned above (chap. 2. II. 6.). In the time of the general resurrection, the movement of the celestial bodies will be stopped and with it, their enabling of inferior entities to alter each other will cease. Thus, the people in hell will not be ever burnt (not even physically injured) by the engulfing fire<sup>926</sup> (their suffering being exclusively on the level of perception).<sup>927</sup> Aquinas is not an optimist concerning the occurrence of haystacks

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<sup>923</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>924</sup> “*nulla actio est a corporibus superioribus in inferiora, nisi mediante luce, sicut ignis etiam agit mediante calore*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3, co.; “*sicut calor agit ad formam ignis quasi instrumentaliter in virtute formae substantialis, ita lumen agit quasi instrumentaliter in virtute corporum caelestium ad producendas formas substantiales, et ad hoc quod faciat colores visibiles actu, inquantum est qualitas primi corporis sensibilis.*” *STh.*, I, q. 67, a. 3, ad 3, cf. *De 42 articulis*, a. 23, ad arg; *In De caelo*, lib. 2, l. 10, n. 12.

<sup>925</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 77, n. 3 – 4: “*Quanto virtus alicuius agentis est fortior, tanto in magis remota suam operationem extendit: sicut ignis, quanto est maior, magis remota calefacit. Hoc autem non contingit in agente quod non agit per medium: quia quidlibet in quod agit, est sibi proximum. Cum igitur virtus divinae providentiae sit maxima, per aliqua media ad ultima suam operationem perducere debet. ... Ad dignitatem regentis pertinet ut habeat multos ministros, et diversos sui regiminis executores: quia tanto altius et maius ostendetur suum dominium, quanto plures in diversis gradibus ei subduntur. Nulla autem dignitas alicuius regentis est comparabilis dignitati divini regiminis. Conveniens igitur est quod per diversos gradus agentium fiat divinae providentiae executio.*”

<sup>926</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 44, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 2, co., cf. *Quodlibet VII*, q. 5, a. 1. In his later writings, Aquinas’s conception evolves and becomes in general more complex. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 89 does not invoke the former reason of the indestructibility, focusing on the changed condition of the resurrected body itself; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 177 combines both views. According to *De 43 articulis*, a. 19–26 and *De 36 articulis*, a. 10, 11, 14, 19, 20 the eschatological inalterability that will result from the absence of celestial movement will be preceded by the quick and massive destruction resulting from its cessation.

<sup>927</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 44, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 3, co.

anywhere nearby these guys:<sup>928</sup> but if there were some, their incombustibility should be the same.

Lonergan's opinion concerning the interior tension in Aquinas could be more effectively defended by the latter's silence concerning the higher principal causes in some of his texts discussing the inferior agents, sometimes in connection with the explicit affirmation of the absence of need for another mover than the mentioned ones.<sup>929</sup> It's just that this argument is solved by Aquinas himself when he treats him as an objection against the conception of natural instrumentality he is about to defend.<sup>930</sup> The inferior causes are sometimes self-sufficient, if considered in relation to their own level of reality. But the higher causes are a kind of stable cosmic background existing on another level than them and constituting this relative self-sufficiency when it exists. The thing is that when we are concerned by the earthly agents, most of the time we do not take their ultimate causal embedment into explicit account. Ask a florist about necessary preconditions for growing your favourite cactus successfully: it is most unlikely that she will include the current value of the gravitational constant into the list. Rebuke her for her forgetfulness – after all, comparatively small changes of G would likely have much more devastating effects on your cactus (and on the matter as we know it) than the fluctuation of, say, air humidity. You will merit an incredulous stare.

One aspect of Lonergan's question remains though. The principal cause makes the instrument overcome its natural limits. How? What is (ontologically speaking) the thing that God or another principal cause realises in the instrument? It happens that Aquinas has answered this question – once.

“...the natural ability, that is given to the natural things during their institution, is in them as a form which has a fixed and firm being in nature. But that which is made by God in a natural thing, by which [the thing] actually acts, is as *intentio* alone, having an incomplete being in the same way the colours are in the air and the artisanal ability in the instrument of an artisan.

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<sup>928</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 48, q. 2, a. 5: according to Aquinas, the animals, plants and all the other entities composed from four elements (save resurrected human bodies) will be dissolved forever by eschatological events.

<sup>929</sup> Cf. for example *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 8, n. 3 distinguishing the being in potency for habitus (e.g. knowledge) and the being in potency for act (e.g. the thinking of the object of knowledge): “*de prima potentia reducitur in actum cui coniungitur secunda potentia, per aliquod agens, scilicet per docentem. Sed quando sic se habet quod habet habitum scientiae, non oportet quod reducat in secundum actum per aliquod agens, sed statim per seipsum operatur considerando, nisi sit aliquid prohibens...*”

<sup>930</sup> Cf. *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, arg. 1 (“*ad actionem naturalem sufficit virtus activa ex parte agentis, et passiva ex parte recipientis.*”) and arg. 8 (“*...posita causa ex necessitate naturae agente, sequitur eius actio nisi per accidens impediatur, eo quod natura est determinata ad unum.*”). Aquinas answers that “*virtus activa et passiva rei naturalis sufficient ad agendum in ordine suo*” (ad 1) and that “*necessitas naturae, per quam calor agit, constituitur ex ordine omnium causarum praecedentium; unde non excluditur virtus causae primae*” (ad 8) (the emphasis is mine).

Consequently, as it is possible that the art gives an edge to the axe in such a way that [the edge] is a permanent form in the axe, but it is not possible to give to [the axe] the ability of art itself in a manner of some permanent form, as long as [the axe] has no intellect; in the same way, it is possible to furnish the natural thing with its proper ability as a permanent form in it, but not with the force through which it acts to [cause] the being as an instrument of the first cause, as long as it is not given to [the natural thing] to be the universal principle of being...”<sup>931</sup>

If you do not understand what Aquinas was speaking about in this text, do not be discouraged: this answer might have provoked more problems than it has resolved even among the experts on his writings. If we are to get out of this situation, we need to explore its broader background first.

### III. 2. Motion

The notion of the (physical) *premotion* having a decisive importance in the classical Thomist way to conceive the divine rule over created will in general and the nature of grace in particular, there has been a lot of discussion concerning the possibility to derive this notion from the texts of Aquinas speaking about the (divine) motion. The proponents of the classical view were obviously tending to answer affirmatively, while many recent interpreters have come to reject such an opinion. Let me introduce you a bit into the situation. The classical view – at least in its summarisation by the authors like Gredt or Matava – affirms the existence of the so-called “vial entities”.<sup>932</sup> A vial entity is an entity that is intrinsically a way to some another entity. Aquinas seems to consider this type of being in his comment to the fourth book of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, ascribing to it a beingness that is stronger than the beingness of privations, but weaker than the beingness of any of Aristotelian accidental categories, and naming the generation, corruption and movement as its examples.<sup>933</sup> Now, in

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<sup>931</sup> “...virtus naturalis quae est rebus naturalibus in sua institutione collata, inest eis ut quaedam forma habens esse ratum et firmum in natura. Sed id quod a Deo fit in re naturali, quo actualiter agat, est ut intentio sola, habens esse quoddam incompletum, per modum quo colores sunt in aere, et virtus artis in instrumento artificis. Sicut ergo securi per artem dari potuit acumen, ut esset forma in ea permanens, non autem dari ei potuit quod vis artis esset in ea quasi quaedam forma permanens, nisi haberet intellectum; ita rei naturali potuit conferri virtus propria, ut forma in ipsa permanens, non autem vis qua agit ad esse ut instrumentum primae causae; nisi daretur ei quod esset universale essendi principium...” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7.

<sup>932</sup> Cf. MATAVA (2016), p. 37–101; GREDET (1937), n. 839–848 (t. 2, p. 250–271).

<sup>933</sup> “Quaedam autem dicuntur entia, quia sunt via ad substantiam, sicut generationes et motus. Alia autem entia dicuntur, quia sunt corruptiones substantiae. Corruptio enim est via ad non esse, sicut generatio via ad substantiam. Et quia corruptio terminatur ad privationem, sicut generatio ad formam, convenienter ipsae etiam privationes formarum substantialium esse dicuntur. ... Sciendum tamen quod praedicti modi essendi ad quatuor possunt reduci. Nam unum eorum quod est debilissimum, est tantum in ratione, scilicet negatio et privatio, ... Aliud autem huic proximum in debilitate est, secundum quod generatio et corruptio et motus entia dicuntur.

the classical view the abilities to act that are proper to any created agent are in themselves insufficient for the action. They need some impulse to pass to act – a premotion. This premotion is not a new quality or another accident, it is something ontologically weaker, yet indispensable and irresistible. In composed sense, the created agent cannot but realise the act the premotion is orienting her to; without the premotion, she cannot act at all. The *intentio* Aquinas has spoken about in the text quoted in the end of the last section is supposed to mean this kind of entity: the etymology of the word (*in-tendere* – “tend to”) as well as its declared ontological incompleteness corresponds well with such a meaning.

Maritain and his lineage would probably sign all these opinions except one: the necessity of irresistibility. Maritain is a compatibilist in saying that the divine motion can be both irresistible and compatible with freedom, but he is convinced that most of the time this is not the case.<sup>934</sup> If it were, there would be no moral evil: God eternally determining the creature to the immoral act (namely, the God of Báñesian Thomism) is said to be a blasphemy against divine innocence.<sup>935</sup> In fact, free creatures can partially or completely “nihilate” the divine motion and most of the actual human acts (and all the immoral ones) presuppose the indeterminist (in)occurrence of such nihilation.<sup>936</sup>

As we have seen, contrary to Maritain, Lonergan is altogether opposed against the vial motions of classical Thomism as such. In his view, the divine motion of agents passes primarily by the inclinations connected to their forms, be it the very natures of the agents or their qualities (including the sanctifying grace), secondarily in the composing of these agents into the dynamic cosmic pattern called fate (*fatum*).<sup>937</sup> The concrete actions are not caused by some mysterious entity infused into the active potency, they just come from the emplacement of their duly formed agents into the context of another entities: the only motion needed by the fire to burn the haystack is the one that makes it close enough to the haystack. The causation of fate is indeterminist in the case of creaturely free decisions: its final result is infallible only because of it being in the hands of the transcendent Artisan that just (for)knows the result independently on anything else.<sup>938</sup> Keeping the overall simplicity of the Lonergan’s system, Loughran eliminates this mysterious aspect of it by denying the indeterminism: God’s

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*Habent enim aliquid admixtum de privatione et negatione. Nam motus est actus imperfectus, ut dicitur tertio physicorum.*” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 4, l. 1, n. 11 – 13.

<sup>934</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 38 – 39.

<sup>935</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 30 – 31.

<sup>936</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 38 – 42 for the introduction of the notion of the “shatterable” motion and p. 55 – 62 for Maritain’s reaction to objections and further application of the notion. For similar attitudes, cf. the positions of FEINGOLD (2016) and Francisco Marin Sola, presented in TORRE (2013).

<sup>937</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 277 – 315. For the most concise description of Lonergan’s position, cf. Loughran’s summary in LOUGHRAN (1999), p. 2 – 3.

<sup>938</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 147, 381 and 448.



knowledge of the results gets reducible to his knowledge of the initial conditions he decided to provide.<sup>939</sup> For both authors, the mysterious *intentio* means just the participation of the particular being on the universal pattern of causal relationships: it's just the intelligent organisation of the effects that the natural powers of the instrument have thanks to the other causal members of the "fate".<sup>940</sup> Following this interpretation, Lonergan considers Aquinas's conviction concerning the impossibility of the furnishing of the instrument with the *intentio* in a way of the permanent form as a result of his insufficient technological knowledge: had the medieval thinker known the gramophone, he would certainly speak otherwise...<sup>941</sup>

Recently, Matava has chosen yet another approach. Highlighting the similarities between Aquinas's description of *intentio* and his speaking about God's causing of beingness, he arrived at the conclusion that Thomas speaks about the same thing in both cases.<sup>942</sup> The instrumental *intentio* – and the divine motion as such – can be therefore reduced to the divine causality of beingness in the sense of Total Personal Creation Model.<sup>943</sup> God does not first create the individual and makes her move in an appropriate way as a next step. He is eternally giving the beingness to the individual with all the determinations it has anytime during her history. Divine motion only means that God gives beingness to the entity in movement. Following Grant's conception of God's simplicity and identity across possible worlds, this model is supposed to guarantee both the infallibility and the indeterminism of divine causality.

Finally, some of the defenders of the classical Thomism seem to read it (and Aquinas too) in a different way than the one described above. The mediating vial entity is either omitted or reinterpreted in a more immediate manner: thus, for Schmitz, the divine motion and the creaturely movement are the same act, in the way *actio* and *passio* is.<sup>944</sup>

Personally, I have finished with conviction that the above-mentioned plurality is caused by the fact that most of the authors I have quoted was preoccupied more with the question what Aquinas's motion should be than with the question what Aquinas actually says about it in about 250 cases of his use of the word.<sup>945</sup> The interpretation based only on several favourite

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<sup>939</sup> Cf. LOUGHRAN (1999), most notably p. 3 – 24.

<sup>940</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 287 – 296. Loughran seems to agree with this interpretation, cf. LOUGHRAN (1999), p. 7 – 8 (note 23 referring to *De potentia* q. 3, a. 7) and rejecting to add of new motions on p. 22 – 24.

<sup>941</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 292, note 112.

<sup>942</sup> Cf. MATAVA (2016), p. 251 – 254, reading *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7 in the light of *STh.*, I, q. 8, a. 1; q. 104, a. 1, ad 4 and q. 105, a. 5.

<sup>943</sup> Cf. MATAVA (2016), p. 282 – 294.

<sup>944</sup> Cf. SCHMITZ (2016), p. 43 – 47.

<sup>945</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, pr.; lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 6 and ad 3; lib. 4, d. 15, q. 4, a. 2, qc. 3, co.(3x); *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 14; lib. 3, cap. 4, n. 4; cap. 22, n. 9; cap. 65, n. 5 (2x); cap. 68, n. 8; cap. 95, n. 4 (2x); cap. 116, n. 5; cap. 149, n. 1; lib. 4, cap. 20, n. 3, 4 (2x) and 6; *STh.*, I, q. 27, a. 4, co.; q. 36, a.

texts can prove quite misleading in this case: you are familiar with the parable about the elephant and the blind men, aren't you?<sup>946</sup> To avoid this problem, let us take a look at the whole elephant first.

### III. 2. 1. Aquinas's use of *motio*

Looking at the dispute between the commentators, one could get impression that the notion of *motio* is one of the cornerstones of Aquinas's reflexion concerning the causation of movement. The truth is that most of the time Aquinas does not really favour the term. He uses it about sixty times less than the term *motus* which is striking if you make a comparison e.g. with the proportion of the grammatically similar couple *actio/actus*: *actus* is only five times more frequent than *actio*.<sup>947</sup> Also, for some reason the distribution of the term in Aquinas's texts is very uneven: nearly one half (117) of its occurrences can be found in *Summa*

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1, co.; q. 70, a. 3, co.; q. 78, a. 1, co.; q. 81, a. 1, ad 2; q. 103, a. 4, co. and ad 1; a. 5, ad 2; q. 111, a. 3, co.; q. 118, a. 1, ad 3 (2x) and ad 4; I-II, q. 1, a. 3, co.; a. 6, co.; q. 6, a. 1, co. (3x) and ad 2; q. 9, a. 1, arg. 1 a co. (3x); a. 2, arg. 3; a. 5, ad 2; a. 6, ad 3; q. 10, a. 2, co.; a. 4 co. and ad 1; q. 13, a. 2, ad 3; q. 16, a. 4, ad 1 (2x); q. 17, a. 1, ad 3; a. 2, co.; a. 5, co.; a. 7, ad 2; q. 37, a. 4, co. (6x) and ad 2; q. 38, a. 5, co. (2x) and ad 3; q. 44, a. 1, ad 3; q. 60, a. 1, co.; q. 68, a. 1, co. and ad 3; a. 2, co. (2x) and ad 3; a. 6, co.; a. 8, co.; q. 79, a. 2, s. c. and co.; q. 80, a. 2, co.; q. 81, a. 1, co. and ad 2; a. 3, co. (2x); a. 4, co.; q. 83, a. 1, co. (2x); a. 2, ad 1 (2x); a. 3, ad 3 (2x); q. 93, a. 1, co. (2x); q. 109, a. 1, co. (5x); a. 6, co. (5x) and ad 3; a. 7, co.; a. 9, co.; q. 111, a. 2, co.; q. 112, a. 3, ad 1; q. 113, a. 1, ad 3; a. 3, co. (2x); a. 6, co. (2x); a. 8, co. (3x); q. 114, a. 6, co. (2x); a. 7, co. (3x); a. 8, co. (2x); a. 9, co. (2x); a. 10, co. (2x) and ad 2; II-II, q. 47, a. 8, ad 3; a. 9, arg. 1; q. 52, a. 2, ad 1; a. 3, co.; q. 82, a. 1, ad 2; q. 104, a. 1, co.; a. 4, co.; q. 139, a. 1, co.; q. 171, a. 1, arg. 4; III, q. 54, a. 3, ad 2; q. 64, a. 5, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 2, co.; a. 7, arg. 2; q. 27, a. 4, ad 10; q. 28, a. 4, co.; a. 8, arg. 8 (2x); q. 29, a. 8, co.; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 9; q. 3, a. 2, s. c. and co. (4x); a. 4, co.; q. 4, a. 2, co. (2x); a. 6, co. (4x); q. 16, a. 11, co.; *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 1, co.; a. 12, co., ad 8 and ad 15; *De unione Verbi*, a. 5 co.; *Quodlibet I*, q. 3, a. 1, co.; q. 4, a. 2, ad 2 (2x); *Quodlibet II*, q. 3, co.; *Quodlibet X*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 2 (2x); *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 15 (2x); *De unitate intellectus*, cap. 5, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 45, 46 (2x) and 130; *De rationibus Fidei*, cap. 10, co.; *De operationibus occultis* (4x); *De 30 articulis*, ad 3 and ad 10; *De 36 articulis*, a. 3, ad arg. and a. 12, ad arg. (2x); *De 43 articulis*, a. 3, ad arg.; *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 6, n. 7 (3x); lib. 8, l. 13, n. 4; l. 23, n. 7; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 11, l. 11, n. 7; lib. 12, l. 9, n. 9; *In De caelo*, lib. 2, l. 7, n. 3 (2x); lib. 3, l. 5, n. 5; l. 6, n. 2 a 3; l. 7, n. 5 (2x) and n. 6; *Sententia De sensu*, tr. 1, l. 3, n. 6; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 2, l. 1, n. 4; lib. 7, l. 12, n. 2 and 4; lib. 10, l. 3, n. 10 – 11; *Tabula Ethic.*, cap. 4, vox 5 (*delectacio*), expos. 51; *Super De Trinitate*, p. 3, q. 6, a. 4, arg. 5; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 2, 4, 8 and 17; *Super De causis*, l. 9 and 18 (2x); *Super Is.*, cap. 11; *Super Iob*, cap. 31 and 39; *Catena in Mt.*, cap. 10, l. 2 *Catena in Lc.*, cap. 21, l. 8; *Catena in Io.*, cap. 1, l. 1 (2x); cap. 3, l. 2; cap. 5, l. 1; *Super Mt.*, cap. 10, l. 2; *Super Io.*, cap. 20, l. 3; *Super Eph.*, cap. 4, l. 5 (3x); *Super Philip.*, cap. 1, l. 3; *Super Heb.*, cap. 1, l. 2 and 3 (2x); cap. 12, l. 5; *Prima redactiones Summae contra Gentiles*, lib. 1 (2x) and lib. 3 (1x); *Puer Jesus*, pars 3; *Germinet terra*, pars 2.

<sup>946</sup> In fact, I do not really take a favourable view of the parable: it has become a cheap way to avoid any discussion in many both important and interesting domains. One can simply label all the contradicting religions, wisdoms or philosophies (or whatever you want) “blind men” and oblige them to humbly recognize the subjectivity of their account – implicitly attributing to herself the position of the sighted one that is indulgently watching all the blind ones fooling around the animal whose true form she sees. The reason why I dare to attribute to myself such an immodest position in the discussion concerning Aquinas's conception of *motio*, is the following: the number of available Aquinas's texts concerning this notion is limited (although high), I have analysed them all, I base my argumentation on this whole and I have never noticed anybody to do so. The partiality of textual samples is a plausible explication of the divergences between interpreters: I do not say that this limitation of perspective is inevitable and as such, I am far away from any a priori refusal of the factual discussion aimed to the correction of my view.

<sup>947</sup> I have made the statistics by using the online search tool *Index thomisticus*, accessible from <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/>.

*Theologiae*, thirty-five of whose belong to the so-called *Treatise on grace*, the final passage of *Prima-Secundae* (I-II, q. 109 – 114).<sup>948</sup> Thus, these six *questiones* contain more than one eighth of all the occurrences of the term in Aquinas, more than all his *Disputed questions*,<sup>949</sup> all the commentaries on Aristotle<sup>950</sup> or all the Aquinas’s works from the first half of his career together.<sup>951</sup> This peak of frequency of the term cannot be simply explained by the topic that is discussed in the *Treatise*: “*motio*” is either absent either nearly absent from two Aquinas’s earlier texts concerning this subject.<sup>952</sup> Thus, while it can be said that the final stage of Aquinas’s reflexion of grace cannot be understood without a proper comprehension of *motio* and vice versa, it cannot be said about his reflexion of grace as such.

### III. 2. 2. A quick excursus concerning grace

Aquinas’s texts about grace being of particular interest on the following pages, let us quickly get familiar with his use of this Pauline notion. The term “*gratia*” means a favour – both in the sense of someone’s special positive attitude to someone else and in the sense of some good that is done for or given to the latter person by the former because of this attitude.<sup>953</sup> In the former sense, the grace exists in God: it is his love for the persons that he has chosen for his adoptive children. In the latter meaning, it is something done for, or given to, man by God seeking human salvation. In this sense God himself can be called grace, inasmuch as he is the supreme gift for man.<sup>954</sup> On the other hand, grace can mean anything that the divine providence provides to man to stimulate his conversion (and maybe any gratuitous

<sup>948</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1, co. (5x); a. 6, co. (5x) and ad 3; a. 7, co.; a. 9, co.; q. 111, a. 2, co.; q. 112, a. 3, ad 1; q. 113, a. 1, ad 3; a. 3, co. (2x); a. 6, co. (2x); a. 8, co. (3x); q. 114, a. 6, co. (2x); a. 7, co. (3x); a. 8, co. (2x); a. 9, co. (2x); a. 10, co. (2x) and ad 2. Aquinas has begun with the writing of the *Summa* in October of 1265 and he had never finished it. *Treatise on grace* has been written sometimes during 1271, cf. TORRELL (2017), p. 233.

<sup>949</sup> There are 28 occurrences of the term in all this corpus (*De malo* 16, *De veritate* 7, *De virtutibus* 4, *De unione Verbi* 1), even by including all the occurrences from *Quodlibetales*, it makes only 34.

<sup>950</sup> There are twelve occurrences in *Commentary on Ethics*, eight in *Commentary on the Book on heaven*, five in *Commentary on Physics*, two in *Commentary on Metaphysics*, one in *Sententia De sensu et sensato* and *Tabula Ethicorum* – 29 in total.

<sup>951</sup> By the first half of Aquinas’s career, I mean the twelve years of writing preceding 1263. During this period, Aquinas used the term in his *Commentary on Isaias* (1x), *Commentary on Sentences* (6x), *De veritate* (7x), *Quodlibet X* (2x), *Super Boetium De Trinitate* (1x), first book of *Summa contra gentiles* (3x, including two occurrences in *Primae redactiones*) and in an indefinite part of *Compendium theologiae* (five occurrences in all the book), which makes 20 – 25 occurrences in total. As for the dating of texts, cf. TORRELL (2017), p. 152, 231 – 234 and 237 – 257.

<sup>952</sup> The term does not appear at all in *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23 – 29 and lib. 4, d. 17; *Contra gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 147 – 163 contains just one occurrence. There are five occurrences in *De veritate*, q. 24 and 27 – 29 though.

<sup>953</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 110, a. 1: “*secundum communem modum loquendi, gratia tripliciter accipi consuevit. Uno modo, pro dilectione alicuius, ... Secundo sumitur pro aliquo dono gratis dato.*” The third meaning of the Latin term is (the expression of) gratitude for the favour.

<sup>954</sup> “*nomine gratiae aliquid increatum significari possit; ut vel ipsa divina acceptatio vel etiam datum increatum quod est spiritus sanctus.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 26, q. 1, a. 1, co.

providential gift at all).<sup>955</sup> But most of the time Aquinas means by it some supernatural effect realised by God in man. Such effect can be of many different kinds<sup>956</sup> but the most important of them is without doubt so-called “grace making pleasing” (*gratia gratum faciens*): a supernatural quality of the soul that makes it graceful in the eyes of God by making it participate on divine nature, with the ability to accomplish Christ’s command to love like Himself as its consequence.<sup>957</sup> While speaking about the preparation for grace, the reception of grace or the good use of grace, I mean most often the grace in this sense of the term. Nevertheless, there is yet another meaning whose importance is difficult to be overestimated: a gratuitous divine *motio* that moves the creature to some meritorious good.<sup>958</sup>

### III. 2. 3. Meanings of motion

What Aquinas means by *motio* then? Well, many different things. To start, in about one fourth of all its occurrences the “*motio*” is quite undoubtedly interchangeable with “*motus*”<sup>959</sup> and in about twenty other cases such synonymy seems more or less possible.<sup>960</sup> As for the rest,<sup>961</sup> the

<sup>955</sup> “*gratia dupliciter potest accipi: vel ipsa divina providentia, qua omnibus rebus gratis impendit ex sua bonitate ea quae ipsis convenient ... quidquid illud fuerit quod hominem excitaverit ad convertendum se, ut gratiam gratum facientem accipiat, gratia gratis data dici potest...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 28, q. 1, a. 4, co. In the context of the article, it is seductive to understand “*divina providentia*” as effects of providential care, as is explicit in Parma (“*gratia dupliciter potest accipi: vel quodcumque excitativum voluntatis exhibitum homini ab ipsa divina providentia, qua omnibus rebus gratis impendit...*”).

<sup>956</sup> Cf. for ex. the division of *gratia gratis data* in *STh.*, I-II, q. 111, a. 4.

<sup>957</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 110 and q. 111, a. 1.

<sup>958</sup> “*si gratia accipitur pro gratuita Dei motione qua movet nos ad bonum meritorium, convenienter dividitur gratia per operantem et cooperantem.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 111, a. 2, co.

<sup>959</sup> Cf. the use of the term in *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, pr.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 22, n. 9; cap. 68, n. 8; *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 1, co. (3x) and ad 2; q. 17, a. 7, ad 2; q. 37, a. 4, co. (6x) and ad 2; q. 38, a. 5, co. (2x) and ad 3; q. 79, a. 2, s. c. and co.; q. 93, a. 1, co. (2x); *De malo*, q. 3, a. 2, s. c.; *De unitate intellectus*, cap. 5, co.; (probably) *De 30 articulis*, ad 3 and *De 36 articulis*, a. 12, ad arg. (2x); *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 6, n. 7 (3x); lib. 8, l. 13, n. 4; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 11, l. 11, n. 7; lib. 12, l. 9, n. 9; *In De caelo*, lib. 2, l. 7, n. 3 (2x); lib. 3, l. 7, n. 6; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 7, l. 12, n. 2 a 4; lib. 10, l. 3, n. 10 – 11; *Tabula Ethic.*, cap. 4, vox 5 (*delectacio*), expos. 51; *Super De Trinitate*, p. 3, q. 6, a. 4, arg. 5; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 2 a l. 8; *Super Iob*, cap. 39; *Catena in Lc.*, cap. 21, l. 8; *Catena in Io.*, cap. 1, l. 1 (2x); cap. 3, l. 2; cap. 5, l. 1; *Super Philip.*, cap. 1, l. 3; *Super Heb.*, cap. 1, l. 3 (2x); *Puer Jesus*, pars 3.

<sup>960</sup> Cf. the use of the term in *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; *In De caelo*, lib. 3, l. 7, n. 6; *Quodlibet II*, q. 3, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 20, n. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 78, a. 1, co.; I-II, q. 40, a. 1, ad 3; the last of the occurrences in q. 109, a. 1, co.; q. 113, a. 3, co. (2x); II-II, q. 47, a. 9, arg. 1; III, q. 54, a. 3, ad 2; one of occurrences in *De malo*, q. 3, a. 2, co. (“*cum Deus sit primum principium motionis omnium*”); q. 6, co. (4x); *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 15 (2x); one of occurrences in *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 46; *Sententia De sensu*, tr. 1, l. 3, n. 6; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 2, l. 1, n. 4; *Super De causis*, l. 18 (2x); *Super Iob*, cap. 31; *Catena in Mt.*, cap. 10, l. 2; *Super Heb.*, cap. 1, l. 2; cap. 12, l. 5.

<sup>961</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 6; lib. 4, d. 15, q. 4, a. 2, qc. 3, co.(3x); *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13, n. 14; lib. 3, cap. 4, n. 4; cap. 65, n. 5 (2x); cap. 95, n. 4 (2x); cap. 116, n. 5; cap. 149, n. 1; lib. 4, cap. 20, n. 4 (2x) and 6; *STh.*, I, q. 27, a. 4, co.; q. 36, a. 1, co.; q. 70, a. 3, co.; q. 81, a. 1, ad 2; q. 103, a. 4, co. and ad 1; a. 5, ad 2; q. 111, a. 3, co.; q. 118, a. 1, ad 3 (2x) and ad 4; I-II, q. 1, a. 3, co.; a. 6, co.; q. 9, a. 1, arg. 1 a co. (3x); a. 2, arg. 3; a. 5, ad 2; a. 6, ad 3; q. 10, a. 2, co.; a. 4 co. and ad 1; q. 13, a. 2, ad 3; q. 16, a. 4, ad 1 (2x); q. 17, a. 1, ad 3; a. 2, co.; a. 5, co.; q. 44, a. 1, ad 3; q. 60, a. 1, co.; q. 68, a. 1, co. and ad 3; a. 2, co. (2x) and ad 3; a. 6, co.; a. 8, co.; q. 80, a. 2, co.; q. 81, a. 1, co. and ad 2; a. 3, co. (2x); a. 4, co.; q. 83, a. 1, co. (2x); a. 2, ad 1

term is most of the time used in the context of the efficient causation of movement, but it can happen that it means the influence coming from the final cause.<sup>962</sup> In the case of the efficient causing of movement, *motio* can mean the same thing as *actio*.<sup>963</sup> In this case, it means the same act as the *motus*, only considered from another perspective (see I. 1. 4.). The relation between the mover and movement is immediate here and (as was exploited by Schmitz)<sup>964</sup> the motion without corresponding movement is a logical contradiction. But already in *Sentences*, Aquinas considers a more complicated situation: the existence of motion from the point of view of its force or effect (*secundum virtutem, sive effectum suum*) as distinguished from its existence from the point of view of the essence of act (*secundum essentiam actus*).<sup>965</sup> Explaining the biblical imperative “Pray without ceasing!”<sup>966</sup> he makes a parallel with the throwing of the stone. In a sense (*secundum essentiam actus*) the motion of the thrower ceases in the very moment he releases the stone: the activity of the thrower has no further influences on the movement of the stone, even if he is destroyed, nothing changes for the stone. Nevertheless, the influence of what the thrower caused in the stone before its releasing does not stop immediately: the force of the original motion progressively weakens until its complete disappearing, nevertheless it moves the stone as long as its movement continues in its direction. Similarly, considered as activity, my morning prayer of Our Father takes just a few tens of second; but considered as a force, it does not cease as long as I act according to its intention: the regular repetition is needed though because this impulse tends to be diminished in time in a similar way as inertia.

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(2x); a. 3, ad 3 (2x); q. 109, a. 1, co. (4x); a. 6, co. (5x) and ad 3; a. 7, co.; a. 9, co.; q. 111, a. 2, co.; q. 112, a. 3, ad 1; q. 113, a. 1, ad 3; a. 6, co. (2x); a. 8, co. (3x); q. 114, a. 6, co. (2x); a. 7, co. (3x); a. 8, co. (2x); a. 9, co. (2x); a. 10, co. (2x) and ad 2; II-II, q. 47, a. 8, ad 3; q. 52, a. 2, ad 1; a. 3, co.; q. 82, a. 1, ad 2; q. 104, a. 1, co.; a. 4, co.; q. 139, a. 1, co.; q. 171, a. 1, arg. 4; III, q. 64, a. 5, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 2, co.; a. 7, arg. 2; q. 27, a. 4, ad 10; q. 28, a. 4, co.; a. 8, arg. 8 (2x); q. 29, a. 8, co.; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 9; q. 3, a. 2, co. (3x); a. 4, co.; q. 4, a. 2, co. (2x); a. 6, co. (2x); q. 16, a. 11, co.; *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 1, co.; a. 12, co., ad 8 and ad 15; *De unione Verbi*, a. 5 co.; *Quodlibet I*, q. 3, a. 1, co.; q. 4, a. 2, ad 2 (2x); *Quodlibet X*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 2 (2x); *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 45, 46 and 130; *De rationibus Fidei*, cap. 10, co.; *De operationibus occultis* (4x); *De 30 articulis*, ad 10, *De 36 articulis*, a. 3, ad arg. a *De 43 articulis*, a. 3, ad arg.; *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 23, n. 7; *In De caelo*, lib. 3, l. 5, n. 5; l. 6, n. 2 and 3; l. 7, n. 5 (2x); *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 4 and l. 17; *Super De causis*, l. 9; *Super Is.*, cap. 11; *Super Mt.*, cap. 10, l. 2; *Super Io.*, cap. 20, l. 3; *Super Eph.*, cap. 4, l. 5 (3x); *Primae redactiones Summae contra Gentiles*, lib. 1 (2x) and lib. 3 (1x); *Germinet terra*, pars 2.

<sup>962</sup> Cf. the *motio* of loving by the loved one discussed in *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 45 – 46. According to *STh.*, I-II, q. 1, a. 6, co., “*ultimus finis hoc modo se habet in movendo appetitum, sicut se habet in aliis motionibus primum movens.*”

<sup>963</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 6; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 9. “*...calectio actio nihil aliud est quam motio quaedam a calore procedens, calectio vero passio nihil aliud est quam motus ad calorem...*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 1, a. 3, co.; “*Aedificator enim non causat esse domus nisi in quantum movet ad esse domus, quae quidem motio est factio domus, unde directe est causa fieri ipsius domus, quod quidem cessat aedificatore remoto.*” *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 130.

<sup>964</sup> Cf. SCHMITZ (2016), p. 43 – 47.

<sup>965</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 15, q. 4, a. 2, qc. 3, co. and later in *STh.*, II-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad 2: “*(M)otio moventis invenitur virtute in motibus mobilium.*”

<sup>966</sup> 1 Th 5, 17.

We have already seen that the movement can be caused by the impression of the form in the moveable: the generator imprints the nature, the adviser imprints the knowledge, let me add that Aquinas applies a similar principle in the case of magnetism.<sup>967</sup> But even if he draws a parallel between these cases and the cases of the violently projected objects on a regular basis,<sup>968</sup> he does not identify them. The inertia of an arrow is not caused by some new quality or another form that would give a new inclination to the arrow: the arrow is granted by the inclination alone.<sup>969</sup> Now, I have not seen Aquinas theorizing this point much but one thing is clear: his conception of moving cannot be reduced in the alternative between the immediate moving by the mover and the moving via some imprinted form. In the quoted texts, the motion of the arrow is obviously not the former<sup>970</sup> and Aquinas says that neither is it the latter. Is there anything more to be said about it?

### III. 2. 4. *Motio – intentio*

Aquinas says that the *motio* of bowman makes the arrow participate on the bowman's intellectual skills<sup>971</sup> – thanks to it, the arrow is able to hit the selected target with no brain, eyes or muscles. Also, the beingness of this *motio* is apparently somewhat weaker than the beingness of the form of, say, heaviness: it tends to disappear quickly. Having said as much, you probably already know where I am getting at: “that which is made by God in a natural thing, by which [the thing] actually acts, is as *intentio* alone, having an incomplete being in the same way the colours are in the air and the artisanal ability in the instrument of an artisan.”<sup>972</sup> – after all, the arrow is an instrument of the bowman.

<sup>967</sup> “*Sicut enim generans movet gravia et levia, in quantum dat eis formam per quam moventur ad locum, ita et magnes dat aliquam qualitatem ferro, per quam movetur ad ipsum.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 3, n. 7.

<sup>968</sup> Cf. *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 11, ad 5; *STh.*, I, q. 103, a. 8, co.; *In Physic.*, lib. 8, l. 8, n. 7.

<sup>969</sup> “*Quandoque enim id quod dirigitur in finem, solummodo impellitur et movetur a dirigente, sine hoc quod aliquam formam a dirigente consequatur per quam ei competat talis directio vel inclinatio; et talis inclinatio est violenta, sicut sagitta inclinatur a sagittante ad signum determinatum.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 1, co.

<sup>970</sup> In *In Physic.*, lib. 7, l. 3, n. 13 and probably also in lib. 8, l. 22 Aquinas describes another theory of inertia, trying to reduce it to the case of immediate moving by the mover. The initial mover of the projected object is said to also cause the movement of the part of the environment (e.g., of the air) that is in immediate contact with her, this part moves the part that is next to it etc. The movement of the projected object continues after its separation from the initial mover because of its being in contact with this moving environment: the arrow is moved by the air that touches it. To my knowledge, Aquinas never confronts these two conceptions of inertia. As far as I know, the explication by the moving environment appears only in his commentary on Aristotle's text, while the “only-inclination” theory seems to be (much more) commonly used by him.

<sup>971</sup> “*...virtus moventis apparet in motu mobilis. Et propter hoc in omnibus quae moventur a ratione, apparet ordo rationis moventis, licet ipsa rationem non habeant, sic enim sagitta directe tendit ad signum ex motione sagittantis, ac si ipsa rationem haberet dirigentem.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 13, a. 2, ad 3.

<sup>972</sup> “*id quod a Deo fit in re naturali, quo actualiter agat, est ut intentio sola, habens esse quoddam incompletum, per modum quo colores sunt in aere, et virtus artis in instrumento artificis.*” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7.

But there is better than that. The notion of motion is used by Aquinas as an explication of the ability of sacraments to cause the grace<sup>973</sup> and as the explication of why the sperm is able to be the cause of the animal soul:<sup>974</sup> in the latter case he notes that contrary to the inertia of thrown objects, the force given to the sperm by the parental organism is based in some intrinsic principle of the sperm.<sup>975</sup> Finally, the motion is also a key concept in Aquinas's mature explication of the transmission of the original sin.<sup>976</sup> The motion of the hand by the will is the reason why the hand participates in the sin of a spiritually deformed will; analogically, the seminal motion that causes the generation of new humans and that is universally derived from the motion of Adam's spiritually deprived soul makes his progeny participate in this state. It happens that Aquinas uses the mysterious notion of *intentio* in this context: "because of the sin of the first parent, his flesh was deprived of the force to be able to produce sperm through which the original justice would have been spread to others; and thus, the defect of this force is the defect of moral corruption in the sperm and some *intentio* of the latter, in the same way as we say that the *intentio* of colours is in the air and that the *intentio* of the soul is in the sperm"<sup>977</sup> But it is Aquinas's earliest discussion of sacramental force that explains why he is speaking about *intentio* in all these cases: "the force of the instrument taken as such, inasmuch as it acts to [produce] an effect beyond that which appertains to it according to its nature, is not a complete being having a fixed beingness in nature, but an incomplete being, as is the force to influence the sight that [i.e., the force] is in the air, inasmuch as it [i.e. the air] is an instrument moved by an exterior visible object; and such

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<sup>973</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 4. The term *motio* appears only in ad 10 in the explication of the ephemeral duration of the sacramental force in most of the sacraments, describing apparently the divine action here: but whole explication of the sacramental efficacy is based on the virtue that the principal agent gives to the instrument by moving it, cf. the corpus of the article and ad 4.

<sup>974</sup> "...*illa vis activa quae est in semine, ex anima generantis derivata, est quasi quaedam motio ipsius animae generantis, nec est anima, aut pars animae, nisi in virtute; sicut in serra vel securi non est forma lecti, sed motio quaedam ad talem formam.*" *STh.*, I, q. 118, a. 1, ad 3, cf. ad 4; "...*in semine est quaedam motio ab anima patris, quae movet materiam ad formam concepti.*" *De malo*, q. 4, a. 6, co. According to editors of Leonina edition (see *Opera omnia...*, t. 23: *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* (1982), p. 120), the source-texts of this conception are ARISTOTLE, *Physics*, II, 5 (194 b 30f) and *On generation of animals*, II, c. 3 (736 b 29ff).

<sup>975</sup> Cf. *Q. d. de anima*, a. 11, ad 2.

<sup>976</sup> "...*peccatum originale in isto homine ... nihil est aliud quam id quod ad ipsum pervenit per originem ex peccato primi parentis, sicut peccatum in manu ... nihil est aliud quam id quod pervenit ad manum ... ex motione primi principii peccantis, quod est voluntas; licet ex una parte fiat motio per naturalem originem, ex alia vero parte per imperium voluntatis.*" *De malo*, q. 4, a. 2, co., cf. a. 6, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 81, a. 1, co. and ad 2; a. 3, co.; a. 4, co.; q. 83, a. 1, co.; a. 2, ad 1; a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>977</sup> "*Ex peccato enim primi parentis destituta est caro eius illa virtute ut ex ea possit descindi semen per quod originalis iustitia in alios propagetur; et sic in semine defectus huius virtutis est defectus moralis corruptionis, et quaedam intentio eius; sicut dicimus intentionem coloris esse in aere, et intentionem animae esse in semine.*" *De malo*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 9, cf. ad 16.

beings got to be called *intentiones* and have something in common with the being that is in the soul and which is a diminished being...<sup>978</sup>

The parallelism between this text and *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7 is almost perfect, except that the text is about ten years earlier and does not speak about the force of created agent to cause the beingness but about the force of sacraments to cause the grace in their recipient. Before summarising the contribution of the comparison of these texts, let us rapidly look on Aristotelian theory of visibility which Aquinas systematically refers to in them.

### III. 2. 5. Colours in the air

The colours are the proper object of the sight.<sup>979</sup> Nevertheless, the eye is not able to sense the colour directly: if you put your favourite comics in the immediate contact with your eyes, you see nothing.<sup>980</sup> There must be a distance between the seeing and the seen and therefore a medium, a diaphanous entity to be more specific, the air being the most typical case<sup>981</sup>. If the medium is properly well-equipped by the light, it becomes an instrument by which the comics makes you see itself.<sup>982</sup> Thus, the immediate cause of your seeing of the colours is the (lightened) air. But the air itself has no colour – if it had, it would not be diaphanous. How can it make me see precisely the same colours that can be found on the pages of the comics then? It is because the comics caused a presence of the colours in the air, although they do not exist there in the same way as in the comics itself. The closest parallel to this kind of existence is the intentional presence of the colours in the cognizing subject: (while I am seeing blue colour and the blue is therefore somehow present in me, I do not become blue myself, at least not in the basic meaning of the word). Obviously, the meaning is not the same

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<sup>978</sup> “*virtus instrumenti in quantum huiusmodi, secundum quod agit ad effectum ultra id quod competit sibi secundum suam naturam, non est ens completum habens esse fixum in naturam, sed quoddam ens incompletum, sicut est virtus immutandi visum in aere, in quantum est instrumentum motum ab exteriori visibili; et huiusmodi entia consueverunt intentiones nominari, et habent aliquid simile cum ente quod est in anima quod est ens diminutum...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2, co. Cf. also: “*quia agens instrumentale non habet virtutem agendi ut aliquod ens completum, sed per modum intentionis, ut dictum est, et forma introducta continetur in eo per modum intentionis, sicut sunt species colorum in aere, a quibus aer non denominatur coloratus; et hoc modo gratia est in sacramentis sicut in instrumento, non complete, sed incomplete...*” *ibid.*, qc. 4, co.; “*haec virtus [in sacramentis] non est qualitas habens esse completum in natura, qualiter est virtus alicujus principalis agentis secundum formam suam, sed habet esse incompletum, sicut virtus quae est in instrumento ex intentione principalis agentis, et sicut similitudines colorum in aere...*” *ibid.*, d. 8, q. 2, a. 3, co. Cf. also *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 4, ad 4.

<sup>979</sup> “*Colores autem se habent ad visum, sicut obiecta...*” *Sententia De anima*, lib. 1, l. 2, n. 4.

<sup>980</sup> “*Oportet enim, ad hoc quod aliquid videatur, quod organum visus patiatur a visibili. Ostensum est autem, quod non potest pati ab ipso visibili immediate, quia visibile superpositum oculo non videtur.*” *Sententia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 15, n. 7.

<sup>981</sup> Cf. *Sententia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 14, n. 5 – 6.

<sup>982</sup> Cf. *Sententia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 14 – 15. Aquinas is convinced that this instrumental cause must exist if the visible quality is to affect the sight: should there be a vacuum between the eye and the visible object, the eye would see nothing (cf. l. 15, n. 7).



as in the case of the cognizing subject, otherwise the air itself would know the sensible qualities:<sup>983</sup> the common feature of these two types of being is that it is not a full-blown real existence (although in the case of mental intentions, this diminished being has kind of a higher perfection than the real being, as we have seen before). For this reason, at least in Aquinas's view, both these modes of beingness share the name of *intentio* or of the "spiritual being", as distinguished from the real being.<sup>984</sup>

### III. 2. 6. Instrumental motion: against Lonergan and Matava

By revealing the parallelism between the use of "*motio*" and "*intentio*" in the quoted texts, I do not intend to say that the meaning of these terms can be automatically identified, not even in these very texts. What I want to say is the following: in Aquinas's view, by moving her instrument the principal mover provides it with a force that makes it both participate on the superior causal powers of the mover and realise the effect intended by her. Aquinas calls this force *intentio*, stressing by his use of this term the inferior mode of beingness of these higher powers in the instrument. Speaking about *motio* in this context, he can very well mean this *intentio*, or else he can mean the *actio* by which this *intentio* is imprinted by the principal mover. In any case, in *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7 Aquinas states that any agent must be granted by the latter entity by God, if it is to cause the beingness of whatever effect at all.<sup>985</sup>

Before continuing, let us compare these findings with the interpretations of Lonergan and Matava. As for the latter, we can see that the alleged parallelism of *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7 with Aquinas's texts that speak about the divine causation of beingness<sup>986</sup> is false. In the latter cases, the discussed topic is the impossibility of the effect to perdure without the

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<sup>983</sup> "...odorare, est sic aliquid pati ab odore, quod sentiat odorem. Aer autem non sic patitur ut sentiat, quia non habet potentiam sensitivam; sed sic patitur ut sit sensibilis, in quantum scilicet est medium in sensu." *Sentencia De anima.*, lib. 2, l. 24, n. 13.

<sup>984</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3, co.; *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 14, n. 5; l. 20, n. 3; l. 21, n. 7; lib. 3, l. 1, n. 20 (Leonina lib. 2, cap. 25); l. 17, n. 18 (Leonina lib. 3, cap. 11). "*Dico autem immutationem naturalem prout qualitas recipitur in patiente secundum esse naturae, sicut cum aliquid in frigidatur vel calefit aut movetur secundum locum. Immutatio vero spiritualis est secundum quod species recipitur in organo sensus aut in medio per modum intentionis, et non per modum naturalis formae...*" *Ibid.*, lib. 2, l. 14, n. 20; "...ad quamdam diffusionem similitudinis formae in medio secundum similitudinem spiritualis intentionis quae recipitur de re in sensu vel intellectu, et hoc modo sol illuminat aerem, et color speciem suam multiplicat in medio." *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 8, co.

<sup>985</sup> The corpus of the article considers the instrumentality of both natural and voluntary agents and finishes by affirmation that "*Deus est causa actionis cuiuslibet in quantum dat virtutem agendi, et in quantum conservat eam, et in quantum applicat actioni, et in quantum eius virtute omnis alia virtus agit. ... ipse in quolibet operante immediate operetur, non exclusa operatione voluntatis et naturae.*" Ad 7 speaks only about natural things, but it is because these things were the object of seventh objection that denied that the natural agent would need any further actualisation from God: as we have seen (II. 1. 1.), the natural agents *sensu stricto* can appear the most self-sufficient of all the agents in the Aristotelian thought.

<sup>986</sup> Cf. my footnote 942.

uninterrupted action of its cause (of beingness): Aquinas uses the supposed instantaneity of the (dis)appearing of the light in the presence/absence of its cause as the illustration of the relation between the existence of creatures and God's causation.<sup>987</sup> In the case of the *intentio*, the text speaks about the colours, not about the light<sup>988</sup> (even if both are connected in Aquinas's thought) and its concern is the type of presence of the perfection of the principal cause in the instrument, not the duration of the entity in question (at least not directly).

It seems that the latter difference somehow escaped to Lonergan, too. Aquinas denies in the text that the instrument could be granted by the force of the principal cause in the way of *permanent form*. Lonergan reads it as an affirmation that the *intentio* cannot exist in the instrument permanently and makes a reverent fun of Aquinas's inability to anticipate the modern recording technology of Lonergan's time.<sup>989</sup> But while he is probably right about the latter, he is caricaturising Aquinas's awareness of possibilities of instrumentality: quite plausibly, Aquinas did not know the gramophones – but he knew the clock. In his account, the movements of reasonless tools *can* participate on the reason of their human user even after their separation from her: “the order of moving reason appears in all things that are moved by reason, even if they have not reason themselves; for instance, the arrow tends directly to the target thanks to the motion of bowman, as if it had itself the directing reason. And the same appears in the movements of clocks and of all the human inventions that are made by art.”<sup>990</sup> The sperm is yet another example of instrumental cause that, in Aquinas's account, keeps the force of the principal cause as long as it exists,<sup>991</sup> even if an evil incubus uses it for an

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<sup>987</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 8, a. 1; q. 104, a. 1, ad 4 and q. 105, a. 5.

<sup>988</sup> In *Summa*, Aquinas explicitly denies that the light would exist in the air in the way of *intentio*, as the colours do, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 67, a. 3, co.: “*quidam dixerunt quod lumen in aere non habet esse naturale, sicut color in pariete; sed esse intentionale, sicut similitudo coloris in aere. Sed hoc non potest esse, propter duo. Primo quidem, quia lumen denominat aerem, fit enim aer luminosus in actu. Color vero non denominat ipsum, non enim dicitur aer coloratus. Secundo, quia lumen habet effectum in natura, quia per radios solis calefiunt corpora. Intentiones autem non causant transmutationes naturales.*” He expresses the same view in *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3, co., although he says that the alternative opinion is “*valde probabilis*”. Interestingly enough, he seems to hold a different view in *De potentia* (which postdates *Sentences* and is supposed to immediately precede the composition of *Prima pars*, cf. TORRELL (2017), p. 233 and 240): “*Quaedam vero producuntur in materia et secundum imperfectam speciem et secundum imperfectum esse, sicut lumen in aere a corpore lucido. Non enim lumen est in aere sicut quaedam forma naturalis perfecta prout est in corpore lucido, sed magis per modum intentionis.*” *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 6, cf. q. 6, a. 4, co. quoted in footnote 994.

<sup>989</sup> “the *vis artis* cannot exist permanently in the instrument because the instrument has no intellect. Apparently, St Thomas did not foresee the gramophone.” LONERGAN (2000), p. 292, note 112, commenting “*...non autem dari ei [i.e., to the axe] potuit quod vis artis esset in ea quasi quaedam forma permanens, nisi haberet intellectum...*” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7.

<sup>990</sup> “*in omnibus quae moventur a ratione, apparet ordo rationis moventis, licet ipsa rationem non habeant, sic enim sagitta directe tendit ad signum ex motione sagittantis, ac si ipsa rationem haberet dirigentem. Et idem apparet in motibus horologiorum, et omnium ingeniorum humanorum, quae arte fiunt.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 13, a. 2, ad 3.

<sup>991</sup> Cf. my footnote 975.

artificial fertilisation far away from the man who has produced it.<sup>992</sup> In *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7 Aquinas has no motivation to deny these possibilities that he accepts elsewhere in his writings. The objector he is responding to in this text states that all that is necessary for the action of the natural agent should be granted to it as its natural power (cf. arg. 7). It is this possibility that Aquinas needs to deny, and this is precisely what he does: the *permanent form* he is speaking about means just the mode of existence of that natural power. The force of art cannot exist in the intellect-lacking instrument in this way just because the force of art existing in this way IS the (perfected) intellect: in Aquinas's terminology, it is the habitus (i.e., stable perfection) of practical intellect and its immediate effect is not an external activity (as the singing or the crafting of bed) but the intellectual preconception of this activity.<sup>993</sup> If it exists in the instrument, it must exist in some inferior mode of being – the mode of *intentio*. It is true that in the cases of rapid or even immediate fading of these entities, Aquinas uses their ontological inferiority as a plausible explanation of why it is so. But it does not mean that such transiency is inevitable for him.

What is more important, Lonergan's and Loughran's attempt to identify the *intentio* with the "dynamic pattern" of movements of instrument is doomed to the collision with the context of this notion in Aquinas: maybe it could be imaginable that some very special dynamic pattern of movements of Moses caused just the right movement of particles to divide the sea;<sup>994</sup> but it is not imaginable that any kind of such pattern makes baptismal water able of spiritual cleansing and divinising the soul of the baptized.

Now, by saying that the systems of these authors do not correctly express Aquinas's thought on this topic, I am not saying that their positions are speculatively harmed by this very fact. I would say that Loughran's compatibilism has no need to let some semi-existent instrumental *intentiones* haunt its rooms. It is more simple, elegant and comprehensible without them. Lonergan's "Aristotelian motion" is all what is needed by an Aristotelian (even if it concerns the actualisations of agents in much more extensive way than Lonergan thought). Compared to them, Aquinas's thought introduces one more irreducible type of entity to solve the problem whose very existence is doubtful. You got it: I am not convinced at all about the existence of Aquinas's instrumental *intentiones*. Nevertheless, I do not think that the only

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<sup>992</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 8, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 51, a. 3, ad 6; *De potentia*, q. 6, a. 8, ad 5. Aquinas considers likely that the *Nephilim* mentioned in Gen 6 were human individuals that were bred by demons in this way.

<sup>993</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 1, co; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 34; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 12 – 19.

<sup>994</sup> "*virtus ad cooperandum Deo in miraculis in sanctis intelligi potest ad modum formarum imperfectarum, quae intentiones vocantur, quae non permanent nisi per praesentiam agentis principalis, sicut lumen in aere et motus in instrumento.*" *De potentia*, q. 6, a. 4, co.

interest of the discussion of this topic is the right comprehension of the medieval author, permitting eventually to determine his much more plausible compatibilist doctrine (or whatever you want). The simplicity is always intellectually seductive, and Occam's razor is to be used: but the doctrines and notions it cuts off today are not to be forgotten – they could be painfully foraged for tomorrow. In any case, they represent the alternatives that must be counted with. Aquinas introduces a type of non-categorical entity that is supposed to connect the causality of different levels of other beings, both bolstering the relation of the causes and permitting to trespass the allegedly rigid categorisation of Aristotelian universe. The connection of the topics like sacramentality, seeing and fertility and the transposition of the conceptual framework used there to the divine agency founding any creaturely agency is not of a mediocre theological potential. Finally, Aquinas is obviously convinced that the daily events like the inertia of sockets thrown into the laundry basket and my very causing of this movement contain the aspects that largely exceed the level of my creaturely being, not to speak about some physical model of these events. For whatever it is worth, Aquinas's complex ontology of these events can serve as a warning against the swift mistaking of nearly complete misunderstanding of these events for their exhaustive explication. "In our world," said Eustace, "a star is a huge ball of flaming gas." "Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is, but only what it is made of."<sup>995</sup>

### III. 2. 7. Instrumental motion in the *Treatise on grace*

It is only if you open the *Treatise on grace* with the preceding sections in mind, that you will really see why classical Thomists so eagerly identified the mysterious *intentio* from *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7 and Aquinas's divine motion. The very first article discusses the question whether some truth can be known without grace.<sup>996</sup> Aquinas's nuanced answer is based on the affirmation that any agent needs the motion of God, if it is to act, in the same way as the fire needs the motion from the celestial body, if it is to alter the object it burns: "no matter how perfect is the heat that the fire has, it would not alter unless by the motion of the celestial body."<sup>997</sup> The goal of this Aquinas's argument is about the same as the goal of *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7 and so is the couple God/celestial body he is treating.<sup>998</sup> In the older

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<sup>995</sup> LEWIS (1964), p. 115.

<sup>996</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1.

<sup>997</sup> "...quantumcumque ignis habeat perfectum calorem, non alteraret nisi per motionem caelestis corporis." *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1, co.

<sup>998</sup> *De potentia* q. 3, a. 7 begins by asking only whether God acts within any natural activity, but from the very beginning of his *Respondeo* Aquinas speaks about God's activity as the condition sine qua non of any activity of

parallel text, Aquinas argues for his answer explicitly by the instrumental character of reason vis-à-vis God.<sup>999</sup> Add what we have already seen concerning the disastrous effects that the removal of celestial movement has for all the pyromaniacs given the instrumental relationship of fire vis-à-vis the celestial bodies in Aquinas's account (cf. chap. 2. II. 6 and III. 1. 4. 3.). As for me, it is clear that in this article the motion means either the causing of the instrumental intention in the secondary agent, or the instrumental intention itself. But does it mean that any divine motion Aquinas speaks about in the *Treatise* is of this type? Well, no.

The instrumentality of all created agent vis-a-vis God is testified already in Aquinas's *Sentences*<sup>1000</sup> and so is the notion of intention as an explanation of the instrument's ability to go beyond the limits of its nature.<sup>1001</sup> But to my knowledge, it is only in *De potentia* that the notion of *intentio* is explicitly applied on the instrumentality of creatures vis-a-vis the beingness.<sup>1002</sup> Actually, it is quite a weird situation. Aquinas either did not realise the possibility of the application of this notion, or he realised it but did not exploited it, or (which seems most probable to me) he might have had some doubts whether this application can be made, given some special features of God or beingness or something alike. This question will likely need to wait for its reliable answer until it is answered by Aquinas himself in the afterlife. What is important: for about fifteen years, Aquinas has been writing about God's moving of the will without engaging the notion of instrumental *intentio* – which does not mean that he engaged no notions at all. The importance of these other notions does not finish with the final adding of the instrumental *intentio* into the picture: its completing by the latter notion does not mean that Aquinas erased the other types of motion from it. Let us look at them.

### III. 2. 8. *Physics* and grace

The *Treatise on grace* is not the first text that wants to justify the dependency of any human action on the divine moving activity: this topic was discussed by Aquinas from the beginning of his career. I believe that there are three distinct stages in Aquinas's reflection on this subject, the explicit use of the notion of instrumental intention in this context marking the

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both nature and will. *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1 argues for this latter statement as for the premise for the assertion that the divine help (though not necessarily his supernatural help) is needed for any use of intellect and thus, for any cognition of the truth.

<sup>999</sup> Cf. *Super De Trinitate*, p. 1, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>1000</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4.

<sup>1001</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2 and 4.

<sup>1002</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 66 and cap. 67, n. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 45, a. 5: if the older texts speak about the force (*virtus*) of God that allows the action of a secondary agent, it seems that they mean the attribute of God, not a power existing in the inferior agent.

third one. The first one corresponds roughly with his writings coming from the 1250s. Although the universal instrumentality is invoked in order to give the justification in question in one smaller text from this period,<sup>1003</sup> the two main texts that concern it argue differently.<sup>1004</sup> Aquinas invokes Aristotle's argumentation for *O* from *Physics*, more precisely the part of Inductive argument (cf. II. 1. 1.) speaking about the need of animals to be moved by exterior impulses, if they are to begin any new movement. God's means to move the individual are multiple here: interior impulses, predications, diseases... All this and anything else can be called "gratuitously given grace" (*gratia gratis data*), inasmuch as it moves man to accept the sanctifying grace. That includes even "the act of the capacity of free decision that God makes in us and by which we prepare ourselves for" the sanctifying grace:<sup>1005</sup> Aquinas has probably never been so explicit about God's authorship of free decisions of humans. He was also never so close to the modern non-theological compatibilists as during this period of his life. Obviously, as for the supernatural form of sanctifying grace, he always stated that it needs to be infused in the soul by the supernatural agent.<sup>1006</sup> But as for the guiding of the individual to its reception or to its fruitful living, God seems to be said to be able to manage with the exterior impulses only – at least *De veritate* makes this impression: "...when a human begins to prepare himself for the grace, turning his will newly to God, it is necessary that he is induced to it either by some exterior occasions, like by an exterior admonition, or a corporal sickness or by something similar; or by an interior instigation, inasmuch as God works in the minds of men; or also by both these ways."<sup>1007</sup> It is not that the interior working of God is

<sup>1003</sup> Cf. *Super De Trinitate*, p. 1, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>1004</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 28, q. 1, a. 4, co.: "*gratia dupliciter potest accipi: vel ipsa divina providentia, qua omnibus rebus gratis impendit ex sua bonitate ea quae ipsis conveniunt... Si ergo primo modo accipitur gratia, nulli dubium est quod homo sine gratia Dei non potest se praeparare ad habendum gratiam gratum facientem: ut enim in 8 Physic. ostenditur, mutatio voluntatis effici non potest sine aliquo movente per modum excitantis: omne enim motum necesse est ab alio moveri. Nec differt quidquid sit illud quod huiusmodi variationis occasionem praebeat, quasi voluntatem excitando; sive sit admonitio hominis, vel aegritudo corporis, vel aliquid huiusmodi: quae omnia constat divinae providentiae subjecta esse et in bonum electorum ordinata. Unde quidquid illud fuerit quod hominem excitaverit ad convertendum se, ut gratiam gratum facientem accipiat, gratia gratis data dici potest: et sic sine gratia gratis data homo se ad gratiam non praeparat, etiamsi gratia gratis data dicatur ipse actus liberi arbitrii, quem Deus in nobis facit, quo ad gratiam gratum facientem praeparatur.*"; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 15, co.: "*impossibile est hominem incipere aliquid velle de novo, nisi sit aliquid quod ipsum moveat; sicut patet per philosophum, in VIII Phys., quod motus animalium post quietem necesse est praecedere alios motus, quibus anima excitatur ad agendum. Et sic, cum homo se ad gratiam incipit praeparare, de novo voluntatem suam convertendo ad Deum, oportet quod ad hoc inducatur aliquibus exterioribus occasionibus, utpote exteriori admonitione, aut corporali aegritudine, aut aliquo huiusmodi; vel aliquo interiori instinctu, secundum quod Deus in mentibus hominum operatur; vel etiam utroque modo. Haec autem omnia ex divina misericordia homini providentur; et sic ex divina misericordia contingit quod homo se ad gratiam praeparet.*"

<sup>1005</sup> "...etiamsi gratia gratis data dicatur ipse actus liberi arbitrii, quem Deus in nobis facit, quo ad gratiam gratum facientem praeparatur." *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 28, q. 1, a. 4, co.

<sup>1006</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 14, q. 3, a. 1; *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 3 – 4.

<sup>1007</sup> *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 15, co.

denied: Aquinas states from the beginning that God can move the will without forcing it in whatever he wants, either by imprinting a new form to it, or without such a form;<sup>1008</sup> he speaks about the interior impulse called “vocation”.<sup>1009</sup> But the relative importance of this type of influence is not particularly stressed before the beginning of sixties.

### III. 2. 9. On good fortune

The situation changes with *Summa contra gentiles*. Probably sometimes at the turn of the 1250s and 1260s, Aquinas has read the final part of Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics*, known then under the epithet *On good fortune*.<sup>1010</sup> Aristotle discusses the people whose decisions are usually appropriate to the particular situations despite the fact that the practical reason of these individuals is deficient and the decisions in question are often made without any deliberation. The reflection leads him to the question of the principle of movements of the soul. After evaluation of different answers, he concludes that it must be something better than reason – God (or a god). Aquinas invokes this text for the first time in the third book of *Contra gentiles*, arguing that God is also the cause of movements of the will and not only of the will itself.<sup>1011</sup> The mental activities (the text mentions understanding, counsel, choice and volition) have a beginning of their existence and as such they need the cause. The causal chain cannot be limited to another mental acts (it would imply an infinite regress), therefore it needs to be extended to something better than reason and only God fulfils such a criterion. “Thus, God is the first principle of our counsels and wills.”<sup>1012</sup> The “counsel” means the judgment of the practical reason regarding what should be done here and now. It is called counsel because it does not necessitate the will (see chap. 4. II. 4. 1.). In this text, Aquinas does not say a word about the relation between God’s causation of these respective acts: the question whether God governs the reason through the will or the will through the reason or both of them independently (or in some another, more complicated way) stay opened. The *First part* of *Summa theologiae* seems to answer it by the second option. The objection of the infinite cycle of the causal dependence between reason and will is answered as follows: “we must stop at the intellect as in the first one. It is because all the movements of the will are necessarily preceded by apprehension, but not all the apprehensions are preceded by the movement of the will, but the principle of counsels and understanding is some intellectual principle that is

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<sup>1008</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1 and ad 3; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 8.

<sup>1009</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 41, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3; lib. 4, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 2.

<sup>1010</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII (1248).

<sup>1011</sup> Cf. *Contra gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 89, n. 8.

<sup>1012</sup> “*Est igitur Deus primum principium nostrorum consiliorum et voluntatum.*” Ibid.

higher than our intellect; and this is God...”<sup>1013</sup> It would seem then that God causes directly some cognitive acts of reason and controls the will through them. Nevertheless, in the *Prima Secundae* Aquinas seems to adopt an inverse model. God is said the exterior mover of the will from the point of view of the executing of act (*quantum ad exercitium actus*). The will presupposes for its self-movement a counsel concerning the entities with some relation to its goal and this counsel presupposes the willing of that goal. To avoid the infinite regress, “it is necessary that the will begins its first movement because of the stimulus of an exterior mover.”<sup>1014</sup> Thus, God is said to move primarily the will, the judgments of practical reason being the consequences of this movement. But we are not finished yet: there are two other invocations of *Eudemica* by Aquinas in *Prima Secundae*.<sup>1015</sup> In the first case it concerns the God’s causation of Gifts of Holy Spirit:<sup>1016</sup> contrary to the preceding texts it speaks about a supernatural and non-evident divine intervention. Four gifts (wisdom, understanding, knowledge and counsel) concern intellect, three (fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord) the appetitive part of men.<sup>1017</sup> The goal of these gifts is to dispose man to good reception of another divine *motiones*.<sup>1018</sup> The other invocation of *Eudemica* appears in the second article of *Treatise on grace* that discusses the question whether the grace is necessary for the willing of good. The Aristotelian argument is used to answer the first objection that is based on the fact that human is master of his acts: Aquinas recalls that this mastery is realised by the

<sup>1013</sup> “*statur in intellectu sicut in primo. Omnem enim voluntatis motum necesse est quod praecedat apprehensio, sed non omnem apprehensionem praecedit motus voluntatis; sed principium consiliandi et intelligendi est aliquod intellectivum principium altius intellectu nostro, quod est Deus...*” *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3. It is quite strange that some recent studies discussing Aquinas’s conception of interaction between reason and will are completely skipping the role God has in this conception, cf. GALLAGHER (1994a) or SZLACHTA (2019).

<sup>1014</sup> “*necesse est ponere quod in primum motum voluntatis voluntas prodeat ex instinctu alicuius exterioris moventis*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 4, co. Aquinas’s attitude in *De malo*, q. 6, co. is very similar, although more developed: “*Cum igitur voluntas se consilio moveat, consilium autem est inquisitio quaedam non demonstrativa, sed ad opposita viam habens, non ex necessitate voluntas seipsam movet. Sed cum voluntas non semper voluerit consiliari, necesse est quod ab aliquo moveatur ad hoc quod velit consiliari; et si quidem a seipsa, necesse est iterum quod motum voluntatis praecedat consilium, et consilium praecedat actus voluntatis; et cum hoc in infinitum procedere non possit, necesse est ponere, quod quantum ad primum motum voluntatis moveatur voluntas cuiuscumque non semper actu volentis ab aliquo exteriori, cuius instinctu voluntas velle incipiat.*” Nevertheless, it seems that contrary to *Summa* God is said to cause directly the willing of the counsel and not only the willing of the goal because of which the counsel is willed. The text concludes by the affirmation of God’s moving of both the will and intellect: “*Relinquitur ergo, sicut concludit Aristoteles in capitulo De bona fortuna, quod id quod primo movet voluntatem et intellectum, sit aliquid supra voluntatem et intellectum, scilicet Deus...*”

<sup>1015</sup> I am skipping *STh.*, I-II, q. 80, a. 1, arg. 3 that wants to use this authority to prove the necessity of the exterior principle of immoral human decisions that would be parallel to God: the sin is said to need to be directly caused by Devil. Aquinas answers (ad 3) that God is the universal cause of all human acts and moral evil of some of them does not need another explication than human will itself, cf. the same problematic also in *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, arg. 11 and ad 11. I return to the ultimateness of the origin of sin in sinner’s will in chap. 6. I. 2 – 3.

<sup>1016</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 68, a. 1, co.

<sup>1017</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 68, a. 4, co.

<sup>1018</sup> “*...donum, prout distinguitur a virtute infusa, potest dici id quod datur a Deo in ordine ad motionem ipsius; quod scilicet facit hominem bene sequentem suos instinctus.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 68, a. 1, co., ad 3, cf. a. 6 and a. 8, co.: “*...omnes vires animae disponuntur ad hoc quod subdantur motioni divinae.*”



deliberation and the deliberation cannot be ultimately founded in another deliberations etc.<sup>1019</sup> Without any further specifications the text speaks about the divine moving of *liberum arbitrium* and about the moving of mind. The situation is similar in *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2 that will preoccupy us later (III. 2. 12.) because of its affirmation of the possible resistance against divine motion: the text refutes the Semipelagian conception of the preparation for grace, arguing by the need of the mind to be moved by God first of all.<sup>1020</sup> *Commentary on Romans* speaks about the use of the grace that was already given: this use is said to be one of the goods coming from divine predestination. Here, God is said to move the counsel, the argument from *Eudemica* is nevertheless mentioned in the context of more general argument based on the fact that God is the principle of all the movement.<sup>1021</sup> The counsel is the object of God's moving also in *Commentary on Second Corinthians*, arguing that all the good is to be credited to God: but the text does not seem to exclude another objects.<sup>1022</sup> *De sortibus* invokes *Eudemica* as a proof that the casting of lots can be a source of the knowledge of the truth (both sortition and the thing concerned by the sortition is ruled by God),<sup>1023</sup> *Commentary on Ethics* mentions it to say that the inclination to good is one of the things that is not in human power but is given to man from God: in both cases it is not said what and how God moves.<sup>1024</sup> *Contra retrahentes* quotes the text during the discussion of inner vocation to consecrated life: Aquinas argues by it in favour of his conviction that the called one must react immediately, without long deliberation and, above all, without consultation of his relatives.<sup>1025</sup>

In comparison with the texts from 1250s, the accent has clearly shifted from the bunch of exterior and interior impulses to the latter ones. Also, the moving role of God described by *Eudemica* does not directly require him to be the ultimate First Mover: it needs just that he is a superior being compared to human reason.<sup>1026</sup> In fact, Aquinas will never deny that the possibility to act directly in the inclinations of the soul requires that the agent is the creator of the soul itself. Given the fact that the only creator of the soul can be the Creator, no matter

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<sup>1019</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>1020</sup> Cf. *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2, co.

<sup>1021</sup> “*sicut etiam in rebus naturalibus non solum Deus causat ipsas formas in rebus, sed etiam ipsos motus et operationes formarum, eo quod Deus est principium omnis motus, cuius operatione cessante a movendo, ex formis nullus motus vel operatio sequitur. Sicut autem se habet habitus gratiae vel virtutis in anima ad usum ipsius, sic se habet forma naturalis ad suam operationem.*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 3.

<sup>1022</sup> “*Non est autem procedere in infinitum, sed est devenire ad aliquid primum, puta ad consilium*” *Super II Cor.*, cap. 3, l. 1.

<sup>1023</sup> Cf. *De sortibus*, cap. 4.

<sup>1024</sup> Cf. *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 10, l. 14, n. 9.

<sup>1025</sup> Cf. *Contra retrahentes*, cap. 9.

<sup>1026</sup> “*Huiusmodi autem primum oportet esse aliquid quod est melius ratione. Nihil autem est melius intellectu et ratione nisi Deus. Est igitur Deus primum principium nostrorum consiliorum et voluntatum.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 89, n. 8.

how superior a creature is, they are not able of this kind of moving.<sup>1027</sup> Nevertheless, if Avicenna's impossible opinion concerning the emanation of human souls from the souls of celestial bodies was accepted, there would be nothing surprising concerning the direct control of these higher creatures over the human will.<sup>1028</sup> More importantly, the *Eudemica* in no way requires the instrumentality of the mind vis-a-vis its mover. Aquinas clearly speaks about many different types of motions here: some of them are naturally necessary for the functioning of the mind, others are supernatural yet necessary for the salvation, others are linked to the personal vocation of the individual; some of them directly affect the reason, others the will or even inferior levels of affectivity. It is doubtful, whether they can be all included in one coherent picture or not. But it is highly implausible that they could be all reduced to the instrumental motion/intention – even in the case of the texts coming from the period when Aquinas verifiably used this notion for the description of the relation between God and secondary agent.

### III. 2. 10. The plurality of motions and the sovereignty of God

A further look on the *Treatise on grace* confirms such a pluralistic view. The instrumental motion that is spoken about in the first article concerns only created agents *taken as agents*.<sup>1029</sup> In contrast, in the sixth article Aquinas speaks about the divine motion that is connected with the mere fact that God is agent vis-a-vis *any creature*: “God being the first mover *simpliciter*, it is his motion that is the reason why all the things turn to him according to common intention of good by which anything intends to become similar to God in its own way.”<sup>1030</sup> It seems likely that this motion begins with the creation of the natures of the creatures that are oriented to God as to their goal. In any case it concerns all the creatures, while the instrumental motion is said to be distributed by God “according to project of his providence” and Aquinas refers to it to justify the need of divine motion with more particular

<sup>1027</sup> Cf. already quoted *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88; *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 6, co.; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5.

<sup>1028</sup> “*Sed secundum illos qui ponunt animam creatam ab intelligentiis (quod tamen fidei contrarium est), ipse Angelus vel intelligentia habet effectum intrinsecum voluntati, in quantum causat esse quod est intrinsecum ipsi voluntati; et secundum hoc Avicenna ponit, quod sicut corpora nostra immutantur a corporibus caelestibus, ita voluntates nostrae immutantur a voluntate animarum caelestium.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5.

<sup>1029</sup> “*Sic igitur actio intellectus, et cuiuscumque entis creati, dependet a Deo ... in quantum ab ipso movetur ad agendum.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1, co.

<sup>1030</sup> “*cum Deus sit primum movens simpliciter, ex eius motione est quod omnia in ipsum convertantur secundum communem intentionem boni, per quam unumquodque intendit assimilari Deo secundum suum modum.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 6, co.

goal.<sup>1031</sup> But there is also a motion that consists in the infusion of the sanctifying grace<sup>1032</sup> (a new supernatural quality of the soul) and probably also the motion via the inclination connected with this grace.<sup>1033</sup> Finally, some of motions that are spoken about during Aquinas's description of the preparation on grace cannot be argumentatively identified with any of the mentioned: i.e., while it is clear that they consist in some interior actualisation of the soul and most likely they did not consist in the impression of the form, it is not clear whether they can be identified with the instrumental *motio*.<sup>1034</sup> It is possible that Aquinas means some of the actualisations of mind he has spoken about in the texts inspired by *Eudemian Ethics*.

Conclusion? For Aquinas, there are many divine motions, not **the** divine motion. A grave misunderstanding can be caused by the presupposition that there is one (kind of) entity that God uses to move the creatures, that all the reliability of this moving depends on the irresistibility of this entity and that Aquinas speaks about it every time he says "divine motion". Aquinas's corpus in general and *Treatise on grace* in particular provides a different picture: a multiplicity of actualisations of different types concerning different aspects of the creature.

While some of these divine motions require a good disposition of their subject (as does the motion realising the form of sanctifying grace or the motions concerned by the Gifts of Holy Spirit), Aquinas explicitly states that others do not.<sup>1035</sup> In fact, the latter motions are the only way for the creature to acquire any good disposition she could ever have. Does it mean that human elevation to the good is made by God from the scratch? Well, yes. During his discussion of human preparation for the reception of grace, Aquinas is very clear. God has no need of any independent human help: "The infinitely powerful agent requires neither matter nor the disposition of matter that presupposes an action of another cause. Nevertheless, it is necessary that he causes himself both the matter and the due disposition for the form in the

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<sup>1031</sup> In the following texts, Aquinas refers to the motion whose indispensability was established in the first article: "in utroque statu indiget homo auxilio divino ut ab ipso moveatur ad bene agendum" (a. 2, co. - *utrum homo possit velle et facere bonum absque gratia*). "Indigent insuper in utroque statu auxilio Dei moventis ad mandata implenda, ut dictum est" (a. 4, co. - *utrum homo sine gratia per sua naturalia possit praecepta legis implere*). "Indiget tamen auxilio gratiae secundum alium modum, ut scilicet a Deo moveatur ad recte agendum. ... Primo quidem, ratione generali, propter hoc quod, sicut supra dictum est, nulla res creata potest in quemcumque actum prodire nisi virtute motionis divinae." (a. 9, co. - *utrum ille qui iam consecutus est gratiam, per seipsum possit operari bonum et vitare peccatum, absque alio auxilio gratiae*).

<sup>1032</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 113, a. 6 – 8.

<sup>1033</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 114, a. 3 and 6 – 8.

<sup>1034</sup> "omnis forma requirit susceptibile dispositum. Sed hoc quod homo moveatur a Deo non praeexigit aliquam aliam motionem, cum Deus sit primum movens." *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 6, ad 3. A similar problem concerns divine moving in q. 110, a. 2, co. and obviously the operative grace in q. 111, a. 2, co.

<sup>1035</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 6, ad 3; q. 112, a. 2, ad 3, cf. q. 113, a. 7, co.

thing that is to be caused, according to its condition. And similarly, for God's infusion of grace into a soul, no preparation that is not made by him himself is required."<sup>1036</sup> If God decides so, this preparation cannot fail: "the preparation ... can be considered inasmuch as it comes from the moving God. And then it has a necessity vis-à-vis the thing to which it is ordered by God, not the necessity of coercion, but the necessity of infallibility because the divine intention cannot fail, as is said also by Augustin in the book *On the predestination of the saints*, that by the beneficial doings of God whoever is liberated is most certainly liberated. Therefore, if the intention of the moving God is that the man whose heart he moves, reaches the grace, he will reach it infallibly..."<sup>1037</sup> The divine motion can also guarantee that the grace is never lost by mortal sin: it is the only normal way to assure the so-called final perseverance – the leaving of this life in the state of grace.<sup>1038</sup> The moral flawlessness of Virgin Mary in the part of her life preceding the conception of Jesus depended on such a providential care.<sup>1039</sup> On the other side of the moral spectrum, not even the deepest state of sin is an obstacle for God: if he wants, he can change a felon into a saint in (literally) no time, as he has done in the case of Paul of Tarsus:<sup>1040</sup> "Given the fact that the divine power is infinite, it can immediately dispose any created matter to a form, *and much more* the capacity of the free decision of man, whose movement can be instantaneous according to its nature."<sup>1041</sup> Yes, Aquinas is convinced that, in a way, God is more free in his works with the human free will

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<sup>1036</sup> "...agens infinitae virtutis non exigit materiam, vel dispositionem materiae, quasi praesuppositam ex alterius causae actione. Sed tamen oportet quod, secundum conditionem rei causandae, in ipsa re causet et materiam et dispositionem debitam ad formam. Et similiter ad hoc quod Deus gratiam infundat animae, nulla praeparatio exigitur quam ipse non faciat." *STh.*, I-II, q. 112, a. 2, ad 3, cf. q. 113, a. 7, co.

<sup>1037</sup> "Potest igitur praeparatio dupliciter considerari. Uno quidem modo, secundum quod est a libero arbitrio. Et secundum hoc, nullam necessitatem habet ad gratiae consecutionem, quia donum gratiae excedit omnem praeparationem virtutis humanae. Alio modo potest considerari secundum quod est a Deo movente. Et tunc habet necessitatem ad id ad quod ordinatur a Deo, non quidem coactionis, sed infallibilitatis, quia intentio Dei deficere non potest; secundum quod et Augustinus dicit, in libro de Praedest. Sanct., quod per beneficia Dei certissime liberantur quicumque liberantur. Unde si ex intentione Dei moventis est quod homo cuius cor movet, gratiam consequatur, infallibiliter ipsam consequitur..." *STh.*, I-II, q. 112, a. 3, co.

<sup>1038</sup> "...perseverantia autem viae non cadit sub merito, quia dependet solum ex motione divina, quae est principium omnis meriti. Sed Deus gratis perseverantiae bonum largitur, cuicumque illud largitur." *STh.*, I-II, q. 114, a. 9, co.

<sup>1039</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2f; *STh.*, III, q. 27, a. 3f. Aquinas was convinced that the conception of Jesus marked a new stage of the spiritual perfection of the Virgin: without reaching the state of heavenly glory, her sanctifying grace became so perfect then that the moral failure became impossible for her thanks to this interior perfection.

<sup>1040</sup> "Contingit autem quandoque quod Deus movet hominem ad aliquod bonum, non tamen perfectum, et talis praeparatio praecedit gratiam. Sed quandoque statim perfecte movet ipsum ad bonum, et subito homo gratiam accipit; secundum illud Ioan. VI, omnis qui audivit a patre et didicit, venit ad me. Et ita contigit Paulo, quia subito, cum esset in progressu peccati, perfecte motum est cor eius a Deo, audiendo et addiscendo et veniendo; et ideo subito est gratiam consecutus." *STh.*, I-II, q. 112, a. 2, ad 2; cf. q. 113, a. 10, co.

<sup>1041</sup> "Cum igitur virtus divina sit infinita, potest quaecumque materiam creatam subito disponere ad formam, et multo magis liberum arbitrium hominis, cuius motus potest esse instantaneus secundum naturam." *STh.*, I-II, q. 113, a. 7, co. The emphasis is mine.

than when he works with the inferior beings.<sup>1042</sup> The contrast with the typical libertarian vision of things could hardly be more striking.

But if all this is true, where do the differences in the human attitude to God come from? Aquinas consistently states that the difference comes from God.<sup>1043</sup> As we have already seen, he is convinced that the whole composed from the different grades of finite good is better than the whole containing only the highest grade. Also, the way containing the alternation of successes and failures is more proportionate to the natural fallibility of human nature<sup>1044</sup> which is the reason why Virgin Marys are relatively few; the instantaneous conversion of Paul is considered miraculous (i.e., something beyond the normal course of things) probably for the same reason.<sup>1045</sup> But this topic belongs to the sixth chapter.

### III. 2. 11. The resistance against motion

So far, so good – the complete sovereignty of God in the process of gratification matches pretty well with the determinist account concerning causality. What seems to be less in harmony with it (and with Aquinas’s statement that the differences in the participation of grace come from God) is Aquinas’s affirmation that as for the lack of grace, its ultimate reason is to be found in man, not in God:<sup>1046</sup> “Your perdition is from you, o Israel, your only help comes from me.”<sup>1047</sup> If it is to be properly understood, this statement must be read in the context of Aquinas’s general conception of God’s causal relation to non-being.

To put it simple, God is the cause of the beingness of all the beings, but he is not the cause of non-beingness of all the non-beings. *Exempli gratia*, he is the cause of beingness of all actually existing animals and, in a way, he can be said to be a cause of non-beingness of all extinct animals (cf. chap. 1. III. 3. and chap. 6. I. 3.). But he is not a cause of non-beingness of the possible animals that have never existed. Why? “God is not directly cause of this *defectus*, i.e. that the creature is from nothing ... because what belongs to the thing because of it itself

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<sup>1042</sup> “*Quanto aliqua sunt propinquiora moventi, tanto efficacius impressionem moventis assequuntur: nam et quae propinquiora sunt igni, magis ab ipso calefiunt. Substantiae autem intellectuales propinquiores sunt Deo quam substantiae naturales inanimatae. Efficacior est igitur impressio divinae motionis in substantiis intellectualibus quam in substantiis aliis naturalibus.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 95, n. 4.

<sup>1043</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 112, a. 4, co.

<sup>1044</sup> “*Homo autem mutabilis est secundum voluntatem quamdiu in hac vita vivit. Sic igitur divinitus gratuita dona homini dantur, ut ea possit per peccatum amittere: et sic peccata imputat, ut ea per gratuita dona remitti possint.*” *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 144.

<sup>1045</sup> *STh.*, I-II, q. 113, a. 10, co.

<sup>1046</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 8, ad 1; q. 112, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>1047</sup> Hos 13, 9, translated according to Aquinas’s Latin version, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 112, a. 3, ad 2; *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2. The English translations of this verse are multiple (see the corresponding page on *Bible Hub*), according to *New American Bible*: “Your destruction, O Israel! who is there to help you?”

is not caused in it because of another. But if left to itself, the created thing is nothing. Consequently, ‘to be from nothing’ is not given to the creature from God...”<sup>1048</sup> “To not exist if left to itself” is an essential feature of anything save God. Aquinas calls this feature “*defectus*”. This term has a broader meaning in Latin than English “defect”, it can mean any absence of any good or perfection. “In fact, *defectus* implies a simple negation of some good. But the “bad” is a name of the privation; therefore, the lack of something can be called *defectus*, even if [the good] is not supposed to be had, but it cannot be called bad, unless it is the *defectus* of the good that is supposed to be had.”<sup>1049</sup> As for the “to not exist if left to itself”, if God does not intervene, this *defectus* causes another *defectus*: the actual non-existence of the potential creature. Thus, in Aquinas’s account, pink luminescent unicorns owe their non-existence only to themselves because it is caused by their natural feature (although it is not caused by it with natural necessity).

What can be more surprising, if God intervenes with his creative power, according to Aquinas he must overcome a resistance posed by the nothingness – and this resistance is the most powerful resistance ever.<sup>1050</sup> Do not fear, Aquinas had not fallen in any type of fantasist dualism – he just analysed the notion of resistance. Imagine an evil computer wanting to control the Earth and some brave guys wanting to stop it. There are two ways of resistance against the computer: either by weakening the powers of the computer (like destroying its power plants, shooting its evil cyborgs etc.), or by weakening the dispositions of Earth to be controlled (like populating it by more of brave and intellectually independent people). The ultimate form of the first type of resistance would be complete elimination of powers of the computer (probably by destroying it). The most extreme form of the second type would be a complete annihilation of Earth (i.e., its total disappearing, not only its transformation in some cloud of particles or something like that): the computer would have nothing to control then –

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<sup>1048</sup> “*Hujusmodi autem defectus, scilicet quod creatura ex nihilo sit, Deus directe causa non est, ... quia quod convenit rei secundum se, non causatur in eo ex alio. Res autem creata si sibi relinquatur, nihil est; unde hoc quod est ex nihilo esse, non est creaturae a Deo...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 44, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>1049</sup> “*Defectus enim simplicem negationem alicujus boni importat. Sed malum nomen privationis est; unde carentia alicujus, etiam si non sit natum haberi, defectus potest dici; sed non potest dici malum, nisi sit defectus ejus boni quod natum est haberi.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 30, q. 1, a. 2, co., cf. lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4; *STh.*, I, q. 48, a. 5, ad 1; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 13.

<sup>1050</sup> “*in aliqua actione potest esse resistentia dupliciter. Uno modo ex parte agentis, quando scilicet ex contrario agente virtus ipsius debilitatur; alio modo ex parte ipsius effectus, quando ex contraria dispositione impeditur effectus. In omni autem actione ubi agens non patitur, prima resistentia non habet locum, sed solum secunda; unde in operationibus divinis non attenditur difficultas secundum resistentiam ad agentem, sed secundum impedimentum effectus. Magis autem impeditur effectus per subtractionem potentiae recipientis quam per rationem contrariae dispositionis: quia contraria dispositio non impedit effectum nisi in quantum facit potentiam indispositam. Et ideo major difficultas est in creatione, ubi omnino materia non praeexistit, quam ubi praeexistente materia est aliquid quod effectui contrariando repugnat.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 11, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 3, ad 2, cf. *ibid.*, d. 5, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 3, ad 4.

and with all its powers, it would be as good as completely powerless. According to Aquinas, the first type of resistance against God is impossible: God's infinite power is connected with his immutable being and no agent can weaken him then. Any resistance God encounters is of the second type – a lack of disposition to receive his causality. The total absence of any such disposition in the case of the non-existence of any subject is incommensurable with no matter how small disposition of existing subject. For Aquinas, it takes an infinite power to overcome the resistance of the former state. This is why neither the evil computer, nor any other finite being can manage the situation – and create from nothing.<sup>1051</sup>

What does it have to do with the affirmation that even in the determinist universe the ultimate reason of the sin, of the resistance against grace and of the final downfall, is in man and not in God? What was said about the relation of the creaturely out-of-nothingness to the non-existence of the creature as such can be also said about the relation of the former to the non-existence of any perfection of the existing creature that is not implied by the creature's nature, be it the perfection that is naturally required for the creature being in good state. Aquinas makes this transposition explicit in the case of moral perfection: "...to sin is nothing else than to fall off the good that belongs to somebody according to his nature. But any created thing needs to be kept in the good belonging to its nature by another, in the same way as it does not have any beingness, if not from another, and it is nothing, if considered in itself. But it can fall off the good by itself, in the same way as it can fall in the non-being by itself..."<sup>1052</sup>

Thus, in Aquinas's view the ultimate source of the resistance against grace (and of the moral evil as such) is to be found in the essential nothingness of the creature – not in some indeterminist nihilating of God's effort. God's infinite power can theoretically overcome all its resistance, making the initial nothingness into a perfect image of its own glory. If it does not, it is because God does not decide so. Voila, the Aquinas's view on the relation of God's causality and moral evil in nutshell. Its further elucidation is the topic of the last chapter of this book. As for now, there are several Aquinas's texts though that seem to undermine the present explication from the point of view of what is said about the divine motion itself.

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<sup>1051</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 5, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 3; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 4; *STh.*, I, q. 45, a. 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 21.

<sup>1052</sup> "...peccare nihil aliud est quam deficere a bono quod convenit alicui secundum suam naturam. Unaquaeque autem res creata, sicut esse non habet nisi ab alio, et in se considerata est nihil, ita indiget conservari in bono suae naturae convenienti ab alio. Potest autem per seipsam deficere a bono, sicut et per seipsam potest deficere in non esse..." *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2.

### III. 2. 12. The resisted motion and indeterminate motion

The resistance we have spoken about is an essential feature of all the objects of divine activity and if God decides to overcome it, he overcomes it. Aquinas's *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2 and *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 8 seem to speak about something else though: the divine motion that is overcome by the human resistance that is due to the free choice of man, with the actual sin as the result of the resistance. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 2 speaks more generally about the result of the divine motion that is conditioned by the dispositions of the creatures in the similar way as is the result of the stellar influence conditioned by the condition of the plants: if the disposition is good, a good action follows, if bad, a sinful action takes place. Finally, *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3 seems to say that the only motion concerning all humans is the motion to the good in general, while the motion to something determinate happens only sometimes: an indeterminist space for immoral choices seems to be indirectly included in this affirmation. The explanation of the apparent differences between these texts and the *Treatise on grace* by some evolution of Aquinas's thought does not seem very possible: it happens that all these texts are roughly contemporary.<sup>1053</sup> Does it mean that Aquinas's mature conception of divine motion was incoherent? Let us take a closer look.

#### III. 2. 12. 1. Successfully resisted motion

According to *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2, "God moves all things in conformity with their mode. And this is why the divine motion is participated by some with necessity, but by rational nature with liberty because of the rational faculty having [the openness] to [both] opposites. And this is why God moves the human mind to good in a way that the human can nevertheless resist this motion. And therefore, it comes from God that the human prepares himself to grace; but the cause of his lacking grace is not from God but from human..."<sup>1054</sup>

In the same tenor, according to *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 8 "as far as somebody follows the motion of the Holy Spirit, he does not sin; but when he resists, then he sins."<sup>1055</sup>

The latter quote comes from the article discussing the question whether charity (i.e., the virtue of supernatural love for God and a neighbour) can be lost and represents an answer to one of

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<sup>1053</sup> While *Prima Secundae* was likely written in 1271, the redaction of *Quodlibet I* most likely took place in 1269, *De virtutibus* in 1271 – 72 and *De malo* in 1267 – 71, cf. TORRELL (2017), p. 152, 233, 238 and 241f.

<sup>1054</sup> "Deus movet omnia secundum modum eorum. Et ideo divina motio a quibusdam participatur cum necessitate, a natura autem rationali cum libertate, propter hoc quod virtus rationalis se habet ad opposita. Et ideo sic Deus movet mentem humanam ad bonum, quod tamen homo potest huic motioni resistere: et sic ex Deo est quod homo se ad gratiam praeparet; sed quod gratia careat, non habet causam a Deo, sed ab homine..." *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>1055</sup> "...quamdiu aliquis sequitur motionem spiritus sancti, non peccat; sed quando resistit, tunc peccat." *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 8.



many objections against this possibility. Provided that the only way to lose charity is a mortal sin, the objector argues by the leading role of Holy Spirit in the life of the person gifted by this virtue: the power of Holy Spirit being unlimited, his leadership can never fail and the person that is led by him can consequently never sin.<sup>1056</sup> Given the quoted answer to this argument, one would expect Aquinas to assert some limitation of the real Spirit's control over man. But in fact, in the corpus of the article he says the contrary:

"...it is necessary to say that the motion of Holy Spirit is always efficacious in conformity with his intention because the Holy Spirit acts in the soul distributing to each person as he wants, as is said in 1 Cor 12. And therefore, the sin that excludes the charity cannot be in those to whom the Holy Spirit, according to his own judgement, wants to give the perseverant movement of the divine love. I say "cannot" from the point of view of the moving force, despite it being possible from the point of view of the changeability of the capacity of free decision (*liberum arbitrium*). In fact, these are the beneficial doings of God by which is most certainly liberated whoever is liberated, as is said by Augustin in the book *On the predestination of the saints*. But as for some persons, the Holy Spirit, according to his own judgement, gives them that they are moved by the movement of love for God for some time, but he does not give them that they persevere in it until the end..."<sup>1057</sup>

The compatibility of the likewise assertions with divine goodness is going to be the subject of the sixth chapter. What matters now – save to say that Aquinas contradicts himself in one and the same article, the following is implied: even if the motion of Spirit is resisted by man who does not follow it and therefore sins (losing charity), the motion still exactly accomplishes the intention of the Spirit. What can it possibly mean? Well, in my view it simply means that for Aquinas, the Spirit's choice of motion counted with the resistance against it. We do it all the time ourselves: knocking at the door, you would be unpleasantly surprised if the door did not resist your hand and end up being broken (as a spider web would); if you wanted them broken, you would use a different motion. This example can be obviously misleading: the solidity belongs to the perfection of the door that is directly desired by its user, while the man's fallibility is not. But the principle is similar. Let the Spirit remind me to read the latest article of Derk Pereboom this evening. If I were a better person than I am, this motion would

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<sup>1056</sup> Cf. *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, arg. 8.

<sup>1057</sup> "necesse est dicere, quod motio spiritus sancti semper est efficax secundum suam intentionem. Operatur enim in anima spiritus sanctus dividens singulis prout vult, ut dicitur I Cor., XII; et ideo quibus spiritus sanctus pro suo arbitrio vult dare perseverantem divinae dilectionis motum, in his peccatum caritatem excludens esse non potest. Dico non posse ex parte virtutis motivae, quamvis possit ex parte vertibilitatis liberi arbitrii. Ista enim sunt beneficia Dei, quibus certissime liberantur, quicumque liberantur, ut Augustinus dicit in Lib. de Praedest. Sanctor. Quibusdam autem spiritus sanctus, pro suo arbitrio, dat quidem ut ad tempus moveantur motu dilectionis in Deum, non autem dat eis ut in hoc perseverent usque in finem..." *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, co.

lead me to actually read the article and progress on my way to the knowledge of the true God. Given my actual state, after the motion makes me sit at my computer, my laziness takes lead and I finish by reading the next issue of my favourite comic book instead, progressing in the lowering of both my intellectual and moral level. The Spirit is not surprised though: he eternally knows that the result of this particular motion in my poor mind will be the reading of the comic book. What was his intention then? An advocate of the double predestination could say that he intended to make me commit this particular sin. Aquinas is not of this opinion. Despite being a sinful waste of time, the reading of the comics provides me with some limited good (say, a momentary relaxation). Also, it can eventually have some very beneficial accidental consequences, like the failing of the studies which leads to the existential crisis which leads to the liberation from false values which leads to sanctity... Without the intention to deliberate now about its meaning for divine goodness, let me simply say that Spirit's intention was to provide some (though limited) good that was realised while I was sinning. By saying so, I am not just making the (due or undue) extrapolation of Aquinas's principles: I am applying his explicit statements from the last *questio* of the *Treatise on grace*. One of the important topics of these ten articles is the relation between the divine motion and the meritorious character of human acts. To be brief, Aquinas states that the divine motion is the main reason why human good actions that are caused by it merit eternal salvation and the related goods.<sup>1058</sup> The last article discusses the question whether the receiving of earthly goods from God can be also included in the merit of man: if I can merit an eternal salvation, why could I not also merit the prosperity of my enterprise? The main biblical argument invoked in favour of affirmative answer is the case of Hebrew obstetricians that saved the life of Hebrew new-borns, cheating on pharaoh who wanted them killed, and the case of Babylonian king that fought the kingdom of Tyr: both are said to be granted by an earthly reward.<sup>1059</sup> Both the objector and Aquinas considers the actions of these persons immoral: Nabuchodonosor did not intend to serve the true God by attacking Tyr, he did it for his own reasons; as for the obstetricians, despite their very good intentions they committed a lie and Aquinas agrees with people like Augustin or Kant that no matter the reasons and circumstances, a lie is always immoral.<sup>1060</sup> This immorality of these actions is important: should they be rightful, it could be argued that they merited the earthly goods as the instruments of their salvation. In his answer Aquinas points at the fact that the earthly goods

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<sup>1058</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 114, a. 3 and 6 – 8.

<sup>1059</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 114, a. 10, quoting Ex 1, 15 – 20 and Ezk 29, 18 – 20.

<sup>1060</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 110, a. 3.

taken as such are not, absolutely speaking, good for man: they are good only from some limited point of view (i.e., from the point of view of some particular component of the earthly life). Their character of profitable reward is therefore to be accordingly relativized and in the same way the affirmation that they can be merited by good actions. Nevertheless, all these distinctions being made, Aquinas argues that the quoted persons received their retributions *because of the divine motion that moved them during these acts*.<sup>1061</sup> It is that the temporal things can be considered as, in a way, merited, “inasmuch as the men are moved by God to some temporal activities where they reach their goal with God’s help. And thus in the same way as the eternal life is absolutely speaking the reward for the actions of justice because of their relation to the divine motion...; the temporary goods, considered in themselves, have a character of reward because they have a relation to the divine motion by which the wills of men are moved to pursue them, despite the fact that sometimes the men do not have a rightful intention in these cases.”<sup>1062</sup> In this text, the role of God moving to the temporal good is at least as strong as in my example concerning the reading of comics instead of a philosophical article. The text would cope even with a stronger version of this role: the motion that does not move to the limited good because of my resistance but because of its specific nature. Nevertheless, it does not imply it: it is not said whether *motio* means an individual divinely caused factor of movement or the result of all the factors caused or permitted by God.

Such incertitude concerning the precise meaning of *motio* is connected also to the quoted article of *De virtutibus*. You have surely noticed that the motion I was speaking about in my exemplum about the comic book is a kind of moral motion: it has little to do with the physical promotion of classical Thomism or even with the instrumental motion of Aquinas himself. As for me, there is no reason to think that Aquinas speaks about the resistance against the latter in *De virtutibus*. It seems to me that he speaks much more likely about some *motio* that he actually mentions in the context of Holy Spirit elsewhere, which includes (broadly understood) inspiration, the causing of Seven gifts, the influence of these gifts or another

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<sup>1061</sup> “*illae retributiones dicuntur esse divinitus factae secundum comparisonem ad divinam motionem, non autem secundum respectum ad malitiam voluntatis. Praecipue quantum ad regem Babylonis, qui non impugnavit Tyrum quasi volens Deo servire, sed potius ut sibi dominium usurparet. Similiter etiam obstetrices, licet habuerunt bonam voluntatem quantum ad liberationem puerorum, non tamen fuit earum recta voluntas quantum ad hoc quod mendacium confinxerunt.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 114, a. 10, ad 2.

<sup>1062</sup> “*inquantum scilicet homines moventur a Deo ad aliqua temporaliter agenda, in quibus suum propositum consequuntur, Deo favente. Ut sicut vita aeterna est simpliciter praemium operum iustitiae per relationem ad motionem divinam, ...; ita temporalia bona in se considerata habeant rationem mercedis, habito respectu ad motionem divinam qua voluntates hominum moventur ad haec prosequenda; licet interdum in his non habeant homines rectam intentionem.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 114, a. 10, co.

motions whose good reception presupposes the presence of Gifts.<sup>1063</sup> I am surely not denying that the Spirit (taken as such) makes some physical motions in man in Aquinas's account. But I am drawing your attention to the fact that a successful resistance against Spirit's motion does not mean a successful resistance against ANY Spirit's motion and even less against everything that could be called divine motion in Aquinas. While the former undoubtedly took place while I denied my better self and began to read the comic book, nothing is said about what happens e.g. on the ontological level of the instrumental *intentio* that makes me able to elicit the act of reading as an instrumental cause in the hands of Universal cause of all being.

The situation is similar in *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2. Its goal is to refute the Semipelagian theory of the preparation for grace. The quoted text is a reaction to the objection in favour of this theory, stating that any human "could accept [grace] if he wanted to accept it. Consequently, if he wants, he can prepare himself for the grace without any exterior aid." The premise is based on Anselm's statement that "the reason why somebody lacks grace is not that God does not want to give it, but that he himself does not want to accept it."<sup>1064</sup> In the corpus of the article, Aquinas rejects the objector's conclusion: if any man is to want to accept the grace, he needs God's aid to be moved to such a willing first. Beside exterior moving factors like preachers, examples or diseases, he needs his heart being moved by God to the good from the inside (*quantum ad interiorem motum, prout Deus cor hominis interius movet ad bonum...*). As I have already mentioned, Aquinas argues here by Aristotle's reflexion concerning the conditions of the making of right decisions in the right time from the final passages of *Eudemian Ethics*: the act of choice comes from the act of counsel which is not perpetual and therefore must itself come from something else; the infinite regress of counsels being impossible "it is necessary that there is some exterior principle which moves the human mind to a counsel concerning what should be done. But this [principle] must be something better than the human mind... God, as the Philosopher concludes *ibidem*."<sup>1065</sup>

Given this context, what is the most natural interpretation of the resisted motion that is spoken about in the answer to the second objection? In my view, Aquinas speaks either about God's motion by which he moves directly the practical reason to the act of counsel (as in *Prima pars*

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<sup>1063</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 68; II-II, q. 52, a. 2 – 3; q. 139, a. 1, co.; q. 171, a. 1, arg. 4 and ad 4; *Super Is.*, cap. 11 and the interpretation of name "*Spiritus*" in *STh*, I, q. 27, a. 4, co. and q. 36, a. 1, co.

<sup>1064</sup> "*non ideo aliquis caret gratia quia Deus non vult dare, sed quia ipse non vult accipere. Si ergo vellet accipere, posset accipere. Potest ergo, si vult, se ad gratiam praeparare absque exteriori auxilio.*" *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2, arg. 2.

<sup>1065</sup> "*Unde oportet aliquod exterius principium esse quod moveat mentem humanam ad consiliandum de agendis. Hoc autem oportet esse aliquid melius humana mente... Deus, ut philosophus ibidem concludit.*" *Quodlibet I*, q. 4, a. 2, co.

or the commentaries on Apostle)<sup>1066</sup> or about his motion of the will that moves the practical reason to the act of counsel (as in *Prima Secundae* and *De malo*).<sup>1067</sup> In any case, this particular God's activity finishes by causing the intellectual act which is supposed to move the will to the particular kind of decision, but which can fail to do so due to the resistance in the subject, precisely for the reason mentioned by Aquinas: the (practical) reason can consider (nearly) any matter from the opposite points of view. This interpretation is confirmed also by the comparison of entities moved with the necessity and those moved with the liberty at the beginning of the answer. The divine moving via intentional form that can be resisted is parallel with the divine moving via natural form bound with natural necessity: as you may recall, this kind of divine moving is the most fundamental in Aquinas's view (see III. 1. 2.).<sup>1068</sup> Finally, the goal of the article is to show that an appropriate God's motion is a necessary prerequisite for any human right decision, not that God is a completing cause of the right decision. There is no need for Aquinas to speak here about the motions that belong to the latter type of causality.

I have already quoted Aquinas's text describing the voluntary impeding of the causality of subject's own counsels (see II. 4.): the subject can either cease to think about the counsel before it makes her act according to itself, or, even better, the subject can start to consider the things from some alternative perspective, producing a contrary counsel.<sup>1069</sup> Why would she do so? Well, because of the conjunction of her current state and the causal synergy of the rest of the universe, answers any determinist. But while such a possibility to resist is quite harmless for a physical determinist, it poses a true problem for a theological determinist, at least if it also concerns the rejecting of the right counsels in favour of wrong ones: it could be argued that such a rejection either could not occur, or it would have to be considered God's doing. Nevertheless, the latter would undermine Aquinas's argument that the primal cause of the lack of grace is always the lacking person herself due to her resistance, and the former is obviously false. I believe that the fallacy of this either-or can be best shown by the comment on the third of Aquinas's troublemaking texts mentioned above: *De malo*, q. 3, a. 2.

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<sup>1066</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3; *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 3; *Super II Cor.*, cap. 3, l. 1. Cf. also *STh.*, II-II, q. 52, a. 2, ad 1, concerning the gift of counsel: "*non fuit conveniens quod donum correspondens prudentiae praeceptum diceretur vel iudicium, sed consilium, per quod potest significari motio mentis consiliatae ab alio consiliante.*"

<sup>1067</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 4, co.; *De malo*, q. 6, co.

<sup>1068</sup> Cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 5, l. 2, n. 7.

<sup>1069</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 6, ad 15: "*illa causa quae facit voluntatem aliquid velle, non oportet quod ex necessitate hoc faciat: quia potest per ipsam voluntatem impedimentum praestari, vel removendo talem considerationem quae inducit eum ad volendum, vel considerando oppositum, scilicet quod hoc quod proponitur ut bonum secundum aliquid non est bonum.*"

Aquinas states in this text that despite the fact that God is not the cause of the sin, he is the cause of the act(ion) of sin. I.e., the sin being typically an activity affected by some deformation, God causes the activity but not its deformation. Aquinas's (and already Augustin's) basic way to explain this teaching is the analogy of limping.<sup>1070</sup> Imagine a man who limps because of his deformed leg but is healthy from all the other points of view. While the healthy moving force of the man causes the positive aspect of the limping (i.e., whatever is left there from the normal walk), it does not cause its negative aspect (i.e., the defects that differentiate it from the normal walk). This negative aspect is caused entirely by the deformed leg, more precisely by the deformation of the leg. Now, God is like the moving force, the sin is like the limping and the sinner is like the deformed leg. You may say that the comparison itself limps, the precise relations of compared entities being hugely different. Aquinas himself would not completely disagree with such an evaluation,<sup>1071</sup> but still, he thinks that it helps to illustrate his point. I discuss its intricacies later (chap. 6. I. 2 - 3.). For now, in *De malo* q. 3, a. 2 Aquinas combines it with the comparison taken from the astrology of his time. If the plant is healthy, it receives the influence of the celestial movement as it should, and all its activity is to be considered effect of this movement. But if the plant is indisposed, its activity is caused by heavens only in the way the limping is caused by the moving force. Its defects are caused by the original indisposition of the plant, not by the stars. In a similar way, if the free creatures that move themselves are well disposed to the reception of the divine motion, their actions are good and fully caused by God; if they are not, the resulting defects are to be considered effects of these creatures alone.<sup>1072</sup>

<sup>1070</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 2, co.; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 4; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 6, ad 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 71, n. 2 and 12; cap. 162, n. 5; *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 2, ad 2; I-II, q. 79, a. 2, co. According to the editors of Leonina edition (see *Opera omnia...*, t. 23: *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* (1982), p. 67), the comparison comes from AUGUSTIN, *De perfectione iustitiae hominis*, 2, 4 (PL 44, 294).

<sup>1071</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 3: the objector tried to use the orthopaedic comparison as an argument against the doctrine that the will of God is always accomplished. Aquinas points to the fact that the scope of God's causality is (contrary to the causality of human moving force) completely universal which makes it irresistible.

<sup>1072</sup> "*alio modo consequitur ex motu caelesti pullulatio plantae in qua virtus generativa non deficit, sed producit perfectum germen; alio modo pullulatio plantae, cuius virtus generativa est debilis, et producit germen inutile. Cum enim aliquid est in debita dispositione ad recipiendum motionem primi moventis, consequitur actio perfecta secundum intentionem primi moventis; sed si non sit in debita dispositione et aptitudine ad recipiendum motionem primi moventis, sequitur actio imperfecta; et tunc id quod est ibi actionis, reducetur ad primum movens sicut in causam; quod autem est ibi de defectu, non reducitur in primum movens sicut in causam quia talis defectus consequitur in actione ex hoc quod agens deficit ab ordine primi moventis, ut dictum est, sicut quidquid est de motu in claudicatione, est de virtute motiva animalis; sed quidquid est ibi de defectu, non est a virtute motiva, sed a tibia, secundum quod deficit ab opportunitate mobilitatis a virtute motiva. Sic ergo dicendum, quod cum Deus sit primum principium motionis omnium, quaedam sic moventur ab ipso quod etiam ipsa seipsa movent, sicut quae habent liberum arbitrium: quae si fuerint in debita dispositione et ordine debito ad recipiendum motionem qua moventur a Deo, sequuntur bonae actiones, quae totaliter reducantur in Deum sicut in causam; si autem deficiant a debito ordine, sequuntur actio inordinata, quae est actio peccati; et sic id quod est ibi de actione, reducetur in Deum sicut in causam; quod autem est ibi de inordinatione vel*

It could be easily thought that the indisposition in question is the resisting libertarian freedom. But Aquinas's argument does not suppose any indeterminism in the moved. It supposes only that its indisposition, if it exists, is not caused by the mover: notice that neither the leg, nor the plants freely decide whether they receive the motion of their respective movers in the state of good disposition or not. Whether man possess libertarian freedom or not, such an indisposition exists in him on Aquinas's account: his being-from-nothing implying the absence of any perfection, save the case of divine intervention. Obviously, this feature is common to all the humans and cannot explain why some of them sin while others do not. But Aquinas's goal in this article is not to answer this question: his goal is to explain the causal mechanism of sin in those who sin. But if the divine motion of an indisposed person implies her sin and all the persons begin indisposed, how is it possible that anybody ever arrives at good disposition? Here, the plurality of motions must be taken in consideration. Aquinas says that I sin if I am indisposed to the reception of divine motion, not that my sin proves that I was indisposed to the reception of any divine motion. If my cat escapes from my arms, it proves that I have not held it firmly enough. It does not prove that I could not have held it more firmly – or more tenderly. Imagine a Neo-Platonist philosopher that is attacked by some street thug and tries to stop him by providing a perfect argumentation proving that arbitrary violence harms more its perpetrator than its victim. If the thug was a better person than he is, the argumentation would make him realise the wrong of his ways and he would stop the aggression; being the intellectual *tabula rasa* that does not understand a word of the philosopher's speech and does not really care, the poor creature will likely resist to the intellectual motion and continue to follow his animal self. But it does not mean that the thug cannot be moved by any means at all: if the philosopher happens to be prof. John Rambo, he could carefully choose some physical motions that would be more appropriate to the needs of the affective structure of the thug (too emotional for a dry academism) – and begin his way to wisdom by making him understand that attacking passing philosophers had been the worst idea of his life.

By saying that the motion A would not be resisted in the case where the motion B was resisted, I do not say that the motion A is irresistible. I do not even say that this motion could not fail in some case where the motion B succeeded (the motion that is ineffective in the case of the thug could be effective in the case of, say, Nietzschean philosopher and vice-versa). I have no opinion concerning the existence of irresistible motions of the will in Aquinas's

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*deformitate, non habet Deum causam, sed solum liberum arbitrium.*" Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 2, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 2, co.

account of the normal functioning of the will, if the irresistibility means that independently on the moveable object and its circumstances, the intermediary moving entity cannot fail to cause one particular movement. While *De malo* suggests rather a picture of universal resistibility, *Treatise on grace* makes another impression by speaking about motion that does not require any preceding disposition in the subject<sup>1073</sup> and about the motions that move the person to the finite good sought by the morally wrong act.<sup>1074</sup> The problem is again the ambiguity of the term: the motion can mean either one of many types of moving entities, or just the effective moving by God to something that is achieved by the synergy of the multiplicity of these motions and the resistance in the moved. I wonder whether Aquinas himself considered the question: it does not seem to me that any topic he had actually treated would need it to be resolved. In Aquinas's account, given the whole of the universe and God's motions, there is just one possible state of anyone's will that can follow – the irresistibility of some particular motion does not seem to have much importance in such a context.

### III. 2. 12. 2. Indeterminate motion

Let us finish with the text that seems to say that the divine moving of the will to something determinate is limited only to some special cases. “God moves the will of human as a universal mover to the universal object of the will which is good. And without this universal motion the human cannot want anything at all. But the human determines himself by reason to want this or that which is truly good or apparent good. But nevertheless, God sometimes moves certain persons in a special way to want something determinate which is good, as in the case of the persons that he moves by grace, as it will be said below.”<sup>1075</sup>

The indeterminist interpretation depends on one of two possible reading of the structure of the last complex sentence that states the existence of some special type of divine moving, indirectly implying that this moving is not universalised (the exception proving the rule in cases non excepted). The adverbials “sometimes” (*interdum*) and “in a special way” (*specialiter*) can concern either the moving of “certain persons to want something determinate which is good”, or only the moving of “certain persons to want something determinate” (the

<sup>1073</sup> “*hoc quod homo moveatur a Deo non praeexigit aliquam aliam motionem, cum Deus sit primum movens.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 6, ad 3; “*Deus ad hoc quod gratiam infundat animae, non requirit aliquam dispositionem nisi quam ipse facit.*” *Ibid.*, q. 113 a. 7 co., cf. q. 112, a. 2.

<sup>1074</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 114, a. 10.

<sup>1075</sup> “*...Deus movet voluntatem hominis, sicut universalis motor, ad universale obiectum voluntatis, quod est bonum. Et sine hac universalis motione homo non potest aliquid velle. Sed homo per rationem determinat se ad volendum hoc vel illud, quod est vere bonum vel apparens bonum. Sed tamen interdum specialiter Deus movet aliquos ad aliquid determinate volendum, quod est bonum, sicut in his quos movet per gratiam, ut infra dicitur.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3.



“something” being eventually characterised as good). In the former case, Thomas would indirectly deny that God moves everybody to the determinate good; in the latter case, he would deny that God moves everybody to something determinate and state that all who are moved deterministically, are moved to the good. Now, it could seem that the former reading is either impossible or collapses in the latter: the alternative possibilities to the “moving to the determinate good” being the moving to evil (impossible for Aquinas), not moving at all (impossible and explicitly denied) or moving indeterminately (the second reading). But such a reduction is not necessary and requires forgetting the reason d’être of the text. The article discusses the question whether there is another exterior mover of the will beside God. The third argument in favour of affirmative answer argues by the existence of the evil in the will and the fact that God causes only good.<sup>1076</sup> In the passage in question Aquinas answers this argument by explaining the occurrence of evil by the mover that is not exterior: the will itself. But if this counterargument is to work, the functioning of will must not need any divine motion that would determine it to the moral good – and this is the reason why Aquinas speaks about the divine motion here. He says that the divine motion to the good in general is needed by will but does not exclude that the man determines himself to some apparent good. Then he admits the existence of the motion determining to good, but he says that it concerns only some persons and only sometimes. The good in question is plausibly not just any good but the “true” good – the good that is good for man as such and not just for some of his aspects. Should it be also any other good (i.e., also the good that is compossible with the sin), Aquinas would have no reason to speak about it here. Recall the case of obstetricians that Aquinas says are being moved by God to the determinate finite good that they sought by their immoral action.<sup>1077</sup> I could understand the denial of the generalisation of such a model in some article defending God’s sinlessness, but I can see no reason why Aquinas should deny it in *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 6. If something, it proves his point here: to explain sin, God and man are enough.

### Summary

Aquinas’s conception of efficient causality is intrinsically determinist: the solid establishment of this thesis is the main contribution of this lengthy chapter. Given the state of the causes, there is only one effect that can follow. The contingency in causal relationship means just that

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<sup>1076</sup> “*Deus non est causa nisi bonorum; secundum illud Gen. I, vidit Deus cuncta quae fecerat, et erant valde bona. Si ergo a solo Deo voluntas hominis moveretur, nunquam moveretur ad malum, cum tamen voluntas sit qua peccatur et recte vivitur, ut Augustinus dicit.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 6, arg. 3.

<sup>1077</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 114, a. 10.

the effect of some particular cause (or causes) can be impeded by another cause: while he clearly distinguishes their respective sources, Aquinas considers both the contingency of non-necessary natural events and the contingency of free decisions submitted to this general rule. Nevertheless, Aquinas's universe is far from being reducible to a complicated version of pinball: it includes a vast plurality of different kinds of movements, moving factors, moveable beings and mutual relationships of these entities, without the possibility to include any of these groups under one univocal notion. Most notably, the plurality of moving factors included in the relationship of moving God and moved man, as well as the distinguishing of the global view on this divine motion from its particular aspects allows to understand Aquinas's seemingly incoherent statements concerning the possibility to successfully resist against divine motion.

Several highlighted notions are to be decisive for the right understanding of Aquinas's compatibilist standpoint: the notion of natural openness of the moved vis-a-vis the mover; the notion of natural instrumentality considered as a participation of inferior agents on the ontological level of the higher ones; the overall negativity as a point of depart of God's working with man and the relation of this original nothingness to the moral evil. All these ideas (as well as some of others, e.g., the relation of movement and time) are yet to be fully exploited. After the necessary preliminary consideration of this fundamental conceptual framework, let us continue to Aquinas's compatibilist conception of freedom.

## 4. Freedoms and choices

Just as we call a man free who exists for himself and not for another, so we call this the only free science, since it alone exists for itself.

*Aristotle, Metaphysics I (982b)*

I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

*John 15, 15*

The man is said free, properly speaking, if he does not exist because of another, but because of himself. For the slaves belong to masters, and they act for the masters and for them they acquire anything they acquire. But the free men belong to themselves, inasmuch they acquire and act for themselves.

*Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on Metaphysics, lib. 1, l. 3, n. 7*

### Introduction

“Why (then) does he still find fault? For who can oppose his will?”<sup>1078</sup> The answer provided by Aquinas’s conceptual framework begins to emerge from the preceding chapters. In the creature, there are the residua of its original nothingness that provide a resistance against God’s will. This resistance is the ultimate origin of moral fault. Its success in my particular case is determined by the synergy of the causal factors that I am exposed to. My actual faults are not inevitable though: more precisely, there is no necessity of my failure, not in any commonly used sense of the term “necessity”.

If we stopped here, the answer would be obviously disappointingly weak – and it could not be better. The general reflexion concerning the causality, motion, modal notions etc., passes over (or under) the specificity of moral action: Satan’s breaking of the divine law and cockatiel’s breaking of the piece of cake are hardly distinguishable from this point of view. The compatibilist needs to show the relevant differences between these events and their relations to their sources, showing the nature of freedom that makes the demon accountable in a way the parrot is not.

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<sup>1078</sup> Rom 9, 19.

The goal of this chapter is to provide the explanation of Aquinas's compatibilist conception of freedom: it consists in showing that first, Aquinas's conception of freedom (notably the freedom of choice) does not contain anything incompatible with his determinist account of motion and causality; and second, it does not require it, managing to show the distinctive features of a free agent that can account for his moral responsibility in a sense that Aquinas needs to hold. I begin by exposing the fundamental notion of freedom that Aquinas uses; in the second subchapter, I discuss its application on the problem of free choices, treating the role of different human and extra-human factors whose synergy causes them; finally, I will finish the topic by explaining Aquinas's understanding of divine freedom.

## I. Freedoms

### Introduction

Having spent so much time with my highlighting of the conceptual plurality in Aquinas's thought, you are surely not surprised by the title that I have chosen: indeed, there is not only one freedom in Aquinas, there are many of them. It could hardly be otherwise with a thinker of his scope: it is more or less clear that the political freedom, the freedom of the child of God and the freedom concerned by the free-will debate are not completely the same freedoms. But beside proving that Aquinas was able of this rather banal observation, there is one important marketing reason for compatibilist to include the presentation of this plurality into his argumentation.

If I am not free, my responsibility for my actions is heavily questioned at least: most of us share this intuition, whether we are compatibilists or incompatibilists. Also, many of us consider themselves free (at least sometimes) in some important sense. Now, the lure of incompatibilism (to reverse Fischer's famous expressions)<sup>1079</sup> consists in the conjunction of providing an appealing notion of freedom and of showing that this freedom is incompatible with determinism. Conclusion: "Either you are undetermined, or you are not free. And if you are not free..." The thing is that even if the incompatibilist were right, the "either..., or..." statement would be a bit misleading at least. Uncontroversially, whether I have indeterminist free will or not, my political freedom (or the lack of it) is the same and the same is true about my features like "not being in prison" or "not being tied to the tree". In other words, there is a number of freedoms that I keep, no matter the determinism, and the incompatibilist typically

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<sup>1079</sup> Cf. FISCHER (2007), p. 45 and 80.

does not deny it: his point consists just in saying that determinism makes me miss the libertarian freedom of the will, and that this freedom is THE freedom that is necessary for my moral responsibility (and possibly also THE freedom that I intuitively perceive in my making of decisions). In his turn, the compatibilist usually agrees that the libertarian freedom is by definition impeded by determinism, but he states that there is a different freedom that manages to do the work. Now, the display of many different freedoms that we are used to speak about should prevent the incompatibilist from shooting his large-bore gun, namely the assertion that the compatibilist freedom is not freedom at all. If he shot it, he would face two alternatives: either the need to explain why the term is not allowed in this case, while it is commonly used elsewhere (even in the case of uncaged feral animals); or bite the bullet, forbid all the indeterminism-non-requiring notions of freedom, accept the resulting extravagance of his position – and admit at least, that most of the people do not share his conception of freedom, not to speak about them intuitively perceiving it.

I do not think that any of these moves would do any good to the incompatibilist project: it is much more reasonable to allow the compatibilist freedom to be a freedom but to state that it is not THE freedom required for moral responsibility etc. But then, it should not be simply said that either I am undetermined, or I am not free: the truth is that either I am (at least sometimes) undetermined, or I lack the freedom of will in, say, Robert Kane's sense of the term.<sup>1080</sup> If I am a libertarian philosopher building his position on cogent argumentation concerning the existence and/or the necessity of freedom defined by Robert Kane, this specification can be just a matter of terminological precision. But if it is not so and I am moving in the kingdom of vague and confused intuitions or would-be intuitions, the impression of the disastrous consequences of determinism that is caused by the statement "I am not free", is not altogether maintained by the statement "I am not free in Robert Kane's sense of the term". The incompatibilist claim that the libertarian freedom is THE freedom that I need to make sense of; my moral judgements get much less favourable context then. Whatever its appeal was while the only mentioned alternative to the controversial libertarian freedom was even more controversial compatibilist freedom, this appeal diminishes immediately when a bunch of different uncontroversial and libertarianism non-requiring freedoms shows itself. More precisely, the plurality of possible ways of conceiving freedom makes the alleged unicity of the way which permits the existence of a reasonable moral judgement doubtful; at its turn, the gnoseological priority of some of these ways questions the

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<sup>1080</sup> Cf. KANE (2007).

libertarian identification of pre-reflexively used notions with the libertarian notion of freedom.

### I. 1. *Causa sui*

“*I desire a free corrector who corrects only for correction itself. For according to the Philosopher in the beginning of *Metaphysics*, ‘free’ is called [the man] who is because of himself (*causa sui*); and not because of hate or envy.*”<sup>1081</sup> The definition of freedom in the terms of being or acting *causa sui* is used by Aquinas throughout all his career.<sup>1082</sup> Without a doubt, it is not the only definition he uses; nevertheless, I believe that the following will show that it is the fundamental one, at least for the matter that we are discussing.

Its origin is to be found far from the free will debate though. At the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle explains that the science he is about to expose serves literally nothing – because it is the most excellent and divine science of all. Saying this, he compares its status to the status of freeman: “as the man is free, we say, who exists for his own sake and not for another’s, so we pursue this as the only free science, since it alone exists for its own sake.”<sup>1083</sup>

The Greek expression “*αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα*” (“because of himself”), whose fate was to be translated as “*causa sui*”, is very general, there is little doubt though that Aristotle speaks about the finality here, saying that the purpose of free entities is in themselves, not in the others. In his commentary, Aquinas makes this reading explicit: “The man is said free, properly speaking, if he is not because of another (*alterius causa*), but because of himself (*causa suiipsius*). For the slaves belong to masters, and they act for the masters and for them they acquire anything they acquire. But the free men belong to themselves, inasmuch they acquire and act for themselves.”<sup>1084</sup> As for the metaphysics, “only the genus [of speculative] sciences is sought for itself” and “all the other sciences are ordained to this one as to their goal; therefore only

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<sup>1081</sup> “...liberum correctorem, qui solum propter correctionem corrigit, desidero. Liber enim, secundum philosophum in proem. *Metaph.* dicitur qui causa sui est, et non propter odium vel invidiam.” *Super Sent.*, q. 1, pr. (in Mandonnet’s edition the *Divisio textus prologi*).

<sup>1082</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, q. 1, pr.; lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4; d. 44, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1; lib. 3, d. 9, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 1; d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, co.; d. 34, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, s. c. 4; q. 24, a. 1, arg. 3; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, arg. 14; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 72, n. 8; cap. 88, n. 6; lib. 2, cap. 48, n. 3; lib. 3, cap. 112, n. 2; lib. 4, cap. 22, n. 5; *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3; q. 83, a. 1, arg. 3 and ad 3; q. 96, a. 4, co.; I-II, q. 108, a. 1, ad 2; II-II, q. 19, a. 4, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 76, co.; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1, l. 3, n. 7; *Super Iob*, cap. 1; *Super Mt.*, cap. 20, l. 2; *Super Io.*, cap. 15, l. 3; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 1; *Super II Cor.*, cap. 3, l. 3; *Super Gal.*, cap. 5, l. 3; *Super Tit.*, cap. 1, l. 1.

<sup>1083</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* I, 2 (982b, trans. by W. D. Ross).

<sup>1084</sup> “Ille homo proprie dicitur liber, qui non est alterius causa, sed est causa suiipsius. Servi enim dominorum sunt, et propter dominos operantur, et eis acquirunt quicquid acquirunt. Liberi autem homines sunt suiipsorum, utpote sibi acquirentes et operantes.” *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1, l. 3, n. 7, cf. n. 8.

this [science] is in the highest measure for itself.”<sup>1085</sup> It could seem that this text and the freedom it speaks about has nothing to do with the causal issues concerning the free will debate (after all, the distinction of freemen and slaves is not considered directly relevant for moral responsibility, not to speak about the possibility to attribute the latter to some speculative science) – it could seem so, if we forgot the relation of finality and efficient causality in Aquinas’s thought.

But let us not hasten. There are several complications concerning Aquinas’s reception of this Aristotle’s definition. *Causa* can be read both as nominative (the cause) and ablative (because), *sui* as different genitives of a reflexive pronoun (himself, herself or itself) or of a possessive pronoun (his, her or its own). While the original meaning is “because of himself”, it has been argued that Aquinas has read it differently, for example as “the cause that is in possession of itself” (the slave is the causal factor owned by somebody else, the freeman is not).<sup>1086</sup> It happens that the latter reading would ultimately mean the same thing as the original – as we have seen, Aquinas seems to understand the ownership in the terms of finalisation of owned in the owner.<sup>1087</sup> But if you explore all the occurrences of the definition in his corpus, you find that it is probably impossible to find one reading that could be uniformly applied to all of them: e.g., while in *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1 *causa* needs to be understood as nominative,<sup>1088</sup> in *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 9, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 1 or *STh.*, II-II, q. 19, a. 4, co. as ablative.<sup>1089</sup> In my view, there is no cogent reason to think that Aquinas has misunderstood or hesitated about the right meaning of the translation of Aristotle’s text though. What is for sure, he has extended the use of its principal idea – the freedom means that the causal principle is to be found in the very entity that is subjected to it – far beyond the

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<sup>1085</sup> “...solum hoc genus scientiarum propter seipsum quaeritur. ... omnes aliae scientiae in eam ordinantur sicut in finem; unde sola ista maxime propter se est.” Ibid., n. 8.

<sup>1086</sup> Cf. the interpretation of Olivier Boulnois in *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle II* (1990), p. 283 – 284. For further discussion concerning Aquinas’s alleged (des)interpretation of Aristotle’s expression, see SPIERING (2011) many of whose views are shared by me.

<sup>1087</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3: “Dicitur autem esse suum alicuius, quod ad ipsum ordinatur; sicut servus est domini...”

<sup>1088</sup> “...liberum est quod sui causa est, ut dicitur in I Metaphys.” (arg. 3) “...liberum arbitrium est causa sui motus, quia homo per liberum arbitrium seipsum movet ad agendum. Non tamen hoc est de necessitate libertatis, quod sit prima causa sui id quod liberum est, sicut nec ad hoc quod aliquid sit causa alterius, requiritur quod sit prima causa eius.” (ad 3).

<sup>1089</sup> “...secundum philosophum in principio Metaph., liber est qui causa sui est; unde servus dicitur qui causa alterius est, et servitium quod causa alterius agitur. Sed causa alterius agi dicitur dupliciter...” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 9, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 1; “...cum liber sit qui causa sui est, ut dicitur in principio Metaphys. servus est qui non causa sui operatur, sed quasi ab extrinseco motus.” *STh.*, II-II, q. 19, a. 4, co. Cf. also *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 1: “Cum enim liber est qui est causa sui, servus autem qui est causa alterius, sicut ab alio movente motus: si quis sic agat causa alterius, sicut ab alio motus, sic est servitus timoris, quae cogit hominem operari contra suam voluntatem; si vero aliquis agat causa alterius, sicut propter finem, sic est servitus amoris...”

Philosopher's intentions, without always deciding to keep the original grammatical structure that used to express it.

Sometimes you can find Aquinas saying that nothing can be *causa sui*.<sup>1090</sup> He means by it that nothing can be an efficient cause of its proper existence. To be an efficient cause, one must already exist. The ultimate reason is apparently the same as in the case of *O* – the potency taken as such cannot cause its proper actualisation. I as potentially existing cannot cause my actual existence then. In fact, *O* could count as a special instantiation of this general denial of efficient *causa-sui-ness*. Nevertheless, Aquinas does not reject the possibility of being *causa sui* on the level of formal causality: contrarily to the corporeal entities, immaterial substances are identical with their formal causes.<sup>1091</sup> Obviously, the same is true about final causality: the source-text from *Metaphysics* speaks precisely about it, the science that it considers being the only reason d'être of itself.

Or at least it seems to be said to be. While in its own order, the metaphysics can be surely considered autonomous from the point of view of final causality, if we shift to the (Aristotelian) cosmic scale, it is doubtful whether it is really without any ulterior goal (like God, for example). Maybe it could be argued that the ultimate realisation of this science is in fact identical with the Divine Self-thinking thinking and thus the *Metaphysics* actually IS the ultimate First Unmoved Mover of the universe.<sup>1092</sup> But the same solution can be hardly applied to Aristotle's assertion of the causal autonomy of free man, if taken literally. I am not very sure whether the Philosopher meant just that a free man is the goal of his own activities (as Aquinas seems to understand the text), or that he is the goal of his very existence (as the metaphysics is said to be), implying that the not-free men are made just for the benefit of others. In either case, in the Aristotelian universe *there is* something more fundamental the freeman depends on – Aristotle happens to speak about it in the very same text.<sup>1093</sup> This is why I think that it would be far-fetched to understand his “not for another” in the strongest sense possible. Contrarily to the existence of a slave, the existence of a free man is not ruled

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<sup>1090</sup> “*idem non est causa sui ipsius.*” *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 5, co. “*nec tamen invenitur, nec est possibile, quod aliquid sit causa efficiens sui ipsius; quia sic esset prius seipso, quod est impossibile.*” *Ibid.*, q. 2, a. 3, co., cf. q. 104, a. 2, ad 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 18, n. 4; *De veritate*, q. 10, a. 13, ad 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 20, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 2, ad 1.

<sup>1091</sup> Cf. *causa suiipsius* in *Super De causis*, l. 26; “*ipsa essentia Angeli est ratio totius sui esse*” *STh.*, I, q. 54, a. 2, ad 2; “*substantiae quae sunt formae subsistentes, non habent causam aliquam formalem sui esse et suae unitatis*” *ibid.*, q. 61, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>1092</sup> “...for God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle, and such a science either God alone can have, or God above all others.” ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* I, 2 (983a), cf. XII, 6, 7 and 9.

<sup>1093</sup> “And the science which knows to what end each thing must be done is the most authoritative of the sciences, and more authoritative than any ancillary science; and this end is the good of that thing, and in general the supreme good in the whole of nature. ... the good, i.e. the end, is one of the causes.” ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* I, 2 (982b), cf. the quotation of book XII in the preceding footnote.



by the goals of any other human individual – this is what the “not for another” surely means: the fact that his existence is ruled by some entities of higher orders is of no point for distinguishing it from the slavery – at least if we speak about the slavery in its narrow sense.

### I. 2. Society of slaves

The notion of slavery discussed by Aquinas is much broader than the basic meaning of this term. First of all, Aquinas uses the Aristotelian definition in his distinguishing between the tyrannical and non-tyrannical governance of society.<sup>1094</sup> The government is tyrannical by the very fact that the criterion of governing its subjects is its own profit: if so, it puts the finality of the subjects in itself and, *eo ipso*, treats them as its slaves because the freeman is *causa sui*, not *causa alterius*. Given the fact that “one man is not ordained by his nature to another as to his goal”<sup>1095</sup>, such state is against human nature (for once, I believe that Kant would be happy with Aquinas’s thought). It is also specifically prohibited by Jesus: “But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.”<sup>1096</sup> Otherwise said, not the subject but the ruler (taken as such) is naturally *causa alterius*, his purpose is the good of his subjects (more precisely, the “common good”), not the other way around.<sup>1097</sup>

### I. 3. Slaves of Jesus

Aquinas reflects on Aristotle’s definition of freedom both most frequently and most elaborately while speaking about the freedom/slavery that is proper to Christ’s disciples taken as such. Contrarily to many modern translations, the Vulgate does not selectively weaken the meaning of the Greek term “δοῦλος” by rendering it as “servant” when it describes the relation of man to Deity. Thus, Aquinas is well aware that for example Paul considered himself “a slave of Christ Jesus”.<sup>1098</sup> This seems to be in tension with Jesus’s own decision to consider his disciples friends, not slaves.<sup>1099</sup> Put it together with some other biblical assertions of freedom of Christians on one hand and their subjection or duty to serve on the other

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<sup>1094</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 96, a. 4; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 44, q. 1, a. 3; *Super Mt*, cap. 20, l. 2.

<sup>1095</sup> “*Unus enim homo ex natura sua non ordinatur ad alterum sicut ad finem...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 44, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1.

<sup>1096</sup> Mt 20, 26 – 27, cf. *Super Mt*, cap. 20, l. 2.

<sup>1097</sup> Recall Aquinas’s conditions of legality that were mentioned in chap. 1. II. 8. 1. Note that neither the form of the governance nor the means it uses matter for Aquinas’s conception of tyranny. Even if the government is democratic, the system is enslaving anyway if the majority keeps deciding according to their egoistic interests and not according to what is better for all.

<sup>1098</sup> Cf. Rom 1, 1; Tit 1, 1.

<sup>1099</sup> Cf. John 15, 15.

hand,<sup>1100</sup> and also with issues concerning the difference between the filial and the servile fear of God<sup>1101</sup> and you have quite a problem for Christian self-conception, with some practical extravagances (like a complete disrespect of moral laws in the name of the freedom of Spirit)<sup>1102</sup> as its potential spawns. Applying the Aristotelian definition, Aquinas tries to solve the problem by its disambiguation: “free is [the man] who is because of himself, who does what he wants, while the slave is [the man] who is because of another. But the cause which is the principle of action is of three kinds, i.e., the final, the formal and the efficient one.”<sup>1103</sup> The things are getting more complicated.

### I. 3. 1. Slaves of righteousness

The consideration of the formal cause by the above-quoted passage of the *Commentary on Letter to Titus* is kind of hapax in this context. Aquinas thinks that the Pauline alternative between the slave of sin and the slave of righteousness<sup>1104</sup> is to be understood in this sense: my general way of acting is caused either by my habitual moral and spiritual perfection (“righteousness”) or by its absence (constituting the “state of sin”). It could be argued that these states determine only the general orientation of actions, not their particular exercise and, as Aquinas mentions himself in his commentary of the source-text, neither of them is an irresistible cause of action. But the same is true about any ordinary slaver.<sup>1105</sup> That being said, the slavery in question is obviously much weaker analogy of slavery than the slavery of the citizens of tyranny. Both righteousness and sin are inner states of their bearers, and their causality does not preclude the latter to act *causa sui* in other (more important) senses of term. That being said, in one insightful remark Aquinas mentions an important reason why one of these states should be considered slavery in a stronger sense than the other, implying that the slave in question is in worse state than the slave in the most ordinary sense of the term. The state of sin “has true slavery, while its freedom is not true, but apparent. It is because the man

<sup>1100</sup> Cf. for ex. Mt 5, 14; 23, 11; Mc 9, 35; 10, 43; L 12, 47; 17, 10; J 12, 26; Rom 12, 16; 1 Cor 7, 22; 2 Cor 3, 17; Gal 2, 4; 5, 1 and 13; Ep 6, 5 – 7; Phil 2, 5 – 8; Jac 1, 25; 2, 12; 1Pt 2, 16.

<sup>1101</sup> Cf. the problems discussed in *STh.*, II-II, q. 19.

<sup>1102</sup> “*occasione istorum verborum, scilicet ubi spiritus domini, ibi libertas, et illorum, scilicet iusto lex non est posita, aliqui erronee dixerunt quod viri spirituales non obligantur praeceptis legis divinae.*” *Super II Cor.*, cap. 3, l. 3.

<sup>1103</sup> “*...liber est qui est causa sui, qui operatur quod vult; servus vero est qui est causa alterius. Sed triplex est causa, quae est principium operis, scilicet finalis, formalis et efficiens.*” *Super Tit.*, cap. 1, l. 1.

<sup>1104</sup> Cf. Rom 6, 16 – 22.

<sup>1105</sup> “*...homo naturaliter est liberi arbitrii, propter rationem et voluntatem, quae cogi non potest, inclinari tamen ab aliquibus potest. Semper ergo homo, quantum ad arbitrium rationis, remanet liber a coactione, non tamen est liber ab inclinatione. Quandoque enim liberum arbitrium inclinatur ad bonum per habitum gratiae vel iustitiae: et tunc habet servitutem iustitiae et est liber a peccato. Quandoque autem arbitrium inclinatur ad malum per habitum peccati: et tunc habet servitutem peccati et libertatem iustitiae.*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 6, l. 4.

is something which is [directed] by reason, and therefore *he is truly slave when something exterior leads him away from the things belonging to reason*. But the fact that somebody is not hindered by the bridle of reason from the following of concupiscence is freedom [only] according to the opinion of somebody who thinks that the supreme good consists in the pursuing of things desired by concupiscence.”<sup>1106</sup> On the contrary, the freedom of the state of righteousness “is the true freedom and the best slavery because by justice the man is inclined to the things that suit him, that are proper to man, and averted from the things that suit to the concupiscence, that are in the highest measure fit for beasts.”<sup>1107</sup> As we have seen in the first chapter, the sin is defined by its nonconformity to the finality of the sinning subject. In *this sense*, the actions of sinner are not *causa sui*: by realising them, the agent is not acting for his true goals, but for something else and in *this sense*, he is not free. By contrasting the interiority of reason and its requirements with the relative exteriority of the concupiscence-motivating factors, Aquinas makes the parallel between those factors and slavers clear. On the contrary, the slave of righteousness is led by his “master” to the achievement of his own (i.e., human, not beastly) goals and as such he is similar to the citizen of the society that is ruled for the sake of the ruled ones.

### I. 3. 2. Law of freedom

The consideration of the freedom defined by the habitual possibility to pursue one’s true finality also provides one of the reasons why the law of Christ is to be considered as the law of freedom according to Aquinas in *Prima-Secundae*: the sanctifying grace which is the most important aspect of this law inclines humans to act in conformity with what he is – otherwise he would act according to his corruption.<sup>1108</sup> His *Commentary on Second letter to Corinthians*

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<sup>1106</sup> “...iste status habet veram servitutem, libertatem autem non veram, sed apparentem. Cum enim homo sit id quod est secundum rationem, tunc homo vere est servus, quando ab aliquo extraneo abducitur ab eo quod est rationis. Sed quod aliquis freno rationis non cohibeatur a sequela concupiscentiae, est libertas quantum ad opinionem illius, qui summum bonum putat concupita sequi.” Ibid. (the emphasis is mine). The “concupiscence” does not have strictly sexual connotations here. Roughly speaking, it is the capacity of desire (no matter whether its object is food, a video game or a brand-new smartphone) inasmuch as it is not harmonised with reason. This lack of harmony is considered to be the effect of the original sin (cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 77, a. 5; q. 82, a. 3; q. 85, a. 3).

<sup>1107</sup> “Haec autem vera est libertas, et optima servitus; quia per iustitiam homo inclinatur ad id quod convenit ipsi, quod est proprium hominis, et avertitur ab eo quod convenit concupiscentiae, quod est maxime bestiale.” *Super Rom.*, cap. 6, l. 4, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 108, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>1108</sup> “liber est qui sui causa est. Ille ergo libere aliquid agit qui ex seipso agit. Quod autem homo agit ex habitu suae naturae convenienti, ex seipso agit, quia habitus inclinatur in modum naturae. Si vero habitus esset naturae repugnans, homo non ageret secundum quod est ipse, sed secundum aliquam corruptionem sibi supervenientem. Quia igitur gratia spiritus sancti est sicut interior habitus nobis infusus inclinans nos ad recte operandum, facit nos libere operari ea quae conveniunt gratiae, et vitare ea quae gratiae repugnant.” *STh.*, I-II, q. 108, a. 1, ad 2. The second reason is that this law does not impose anything else than what is necessary for salvation. For the relation of the new law and the grace, cf. *ibid.*, q. 106, a. 1.

looks at the same question from a different viewpoint, emphasizing the distinction between avoiding bad things because they are bad (do not forget the aristocratic connotations of the term) and avoiding bad thing just because they are forbidden. The habitual inclination given by grace makes man act in the former way which is why he acts *causa sui*. Here, Aquinas's point is not the relation of the motive to human true finality – the divine law is conformed to it no matter the reason why it is obeyed – but (the measure of) the interiorisation of this motive.<sup>1109</sup> What Aquinas probably has in mind here is just the inclination of affectivity, which makes his text close to his general explication of both slavish and friendly (or filial) relation between the disciple and his divine master (see the next subsection). But if we translated his “to avoid bad things because they are bad” as “to avoid bad things because it is understood that they are bad”, we would be quite close here to his general conception of voluntariness and freedom of will (see below, I. 4.).

### I. 3. 3. Slavery of love

To explain the non-slavish character of the slavery of Christ's disciples (and therefore the possibility to both affirm and deny them being slaves), Aquinas focuses principally on the distinction between the slavery from the viewpoint of final cause and the slavery from the viewpoint of (efficiently) moving cause.<sup>1110</sup> To put it briefly (as Aquinas does it sometimes), contrarily to a slave in the narrow sense of the term, a friend acts *causa sui* from the viewpoint of moving (i.e., efficient) causality, but he is a slave from the viewpoint of final cause because his love for his friend makes him act in favour of the friend and not for himself.<sup>1111</sup> While the slavery from the viewpoint of the efficiently moving cause is incompatible with true friendship, the slavery from the viewpoint of final cause is implied by it. Thus, if Paul or any other holy person is considered slave of God by an authoritative text,

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<sup>1109</sup> “*Et similiter ubi spiritus domini, ibi libertas, intelligitur, quia liber est, qui est causa sui: servus autem est causa domini; quicumque ergo agit ex seipso, libere agit; qui vero ex alio motus, non agit libere. Ille ergo, qui vitat mala, non quia mala, sed propter mandatum domini, non est liber; sed qui vitat mala, quia mala, est liber. Hoc autem facit spiritus sanctus, qui mentem interius perficit per bonum habitum, ut sic ex amore caveat, ac si praeciperet lex divina; et ideo dicitur liber, non quin subdatur legi divinae, sed quia ex bono habitu inclinatur ad hoc faciendum, quod lex divina ordinat.*” *Super II Cor.*, cap. 3, l. 3.

<sup>1110</sup> Cf. *Super Io.*, cap. 15, l. 3.; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 1; *Super Gal.*, cap. 5, l. 3 and even *Super Tit.*, cap. 1, l. 1: as said above, from the viewpoint of formal cause, one is always slave of something according to this text.

<sup>1111</sup> “*Cum enim liber est qui est causa sui, servus autem qui est causa alterius, sicut ab alio movente motus: si quis sic agat causa alterius, sicut ab alio motus, sic est servitus timoris, quae cogit hominem operari contra suam voluntatem; si vero aliquis agat causa alterius, sicut propter finem, sic est servitus amoris...*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 1.

the meaning is just that he loves God – and because of this love he does everything for God.<sup>1112</sup>

Given the fact that the source-text of the definition of freedom was concerned just with the final causality, this explication could seem strange. In fact, what Aquinas has in mind is a bit more complicated. In the narrow sense of the term “slave”, “the slave neither works for himself but for the master, nor because of himself (*a se*) but because of the will of the master, and by a kind of coercion.”<sup>1113</sup> Otherwise said, according to Aquinas the slave’s being *causa alterius* from the viewpoint of the final cause is a state that is itself caused by the efficient causation coming from the slaver: more precisely, the will of slave pursues the finality of the slaver only because of its coercion by the latter. Thus, the narrowly taken slavery implies the exteriority of final causality *which is conditioned by an exterior efficient coercion*. In the case of friendship, there is no such coercion: it is my will itself that takes a friend’s finality for its own. The only remaining exterior causality is the final one and it is given by my own volition. Obviously, spontaneous objections against such a distinction can be raised. First, as Aquinas himself affirms, the love properly speaking presupposes a cognition<sup>1114</sup> and human cognition most of the time depends on the causality of its object vis-à-vis its subject.<sup>1115</sup> It seems then that the volition founding the slavery of friendship presupposes some dependence on an exterior efficient causality in the same way as the slavery pure and simple: after all, it also is the volition of the slave that makes him a slave (preferring to obey the slaver rather than to be killed, tortured etc.). The precision concerning the coercion can seem unwarranted and even incomprehensible: does Aquinas not himself state that the will cannot be coerced, not even by God?<sup>1116</sup>

Let us begin with this second point. As for many other natural-language terms, Aquinas happens to state that the “coercion” (*coactio*) has more than one meaning<sup>1117</sup> – and he seems

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<sup>1112</sup> “*Hoc autem est servum Dei esse quod mente Deo inhaerere, nam servus est qui non sui causa est: ille autem qui mente Deo inhaeret se ipsum in Deum ordinat quasi servus amoris non timoris.*” *Super Iob*, cap. 1.

<sup>1113</sup> “*servus nec propter se operatur sed propter dominum, nec a se sed a domini voluntate, et quasi quadam coactione.*” *Super Io.*, cap. 15, l. 3.

<sup>1114</sup> “*non enim amaretur aliquid nisi aliquo modo cognosceretur*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 19, n. 8; “*cognitio est causa amoris, ea ratione qua et bonum*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 27, a. 2, co.; “*quod non potest amari nisi cognitum. amor non est nisi rei cognitae.*” *Super Mt.*, cap. 13, l. 2; “*amor cum non sit nisi rei cognitae, ad cognitionem et praesentiam rei cognitae inflammatur et excitatur affectus ad amorem*” *Super I Cor.*, cap. 13, vs. 8. This assertion does not concern Aquinas’s *amor naturalis* (cf. the general consideration of appetites in *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2), but the friendship in question obviously does not belong to this kind of “love”.

<sup>1115</sup> “*Scientia intellectus humani a rebus quodammodo causatur...*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 61, n. 7.

<sup>1116</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 8 – 9; *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 4.

<sup>1117</sup> “*est duplex coactio; quaedam sufficiens, quae compulsio vocatur; quaedam vero insufficiens, quae vocatur impulsio. Sciendum est igitur quod in partibus animae quaedam sunt quae compelli possunt: sed dupliciter. Qaedam enim compelluntur ex subjecto, sicut illae vires quae sunt organis affixae: cum enim sine organis operationes habere non possint, compulsis organis, ipsae virtutes prohibentur vel compelluntur, earum actibus*

to use all of them freely. We have already met the strongest of these meanings: the efficiently caused necessity whose source is exterior to its subject and to which the power of the subject contributes nothing.<sup>1118</sup> Aquinas repetitively denies the possibility of this type of coercion in the case of the will (*voluntas*) or voluntary actions:<sup>1119</sup> these terms denoting either the origin in an inner inclination, or an inner inclination itself, a coerced voluntary act would be a logical contradiction. Nevertheless, the “coercion” can be considered in a more general way, permitting both a weaker causality and its different type. As for the latter, the agent (or its active power) can be coerced not only by the causality that concerns it directly as a subject (e.g., by being tied and drugged), but also by the presentation of an object necessitating one specific response of some of agent’s powers (if exposed to the blinding light, the eyes cannot but narrow). Thus, while in Aquinas’s view human intellect is immune to the former type of coercion, it can be coerced in the latter way: facing an evidence or a demonstration, it cannot but accord the truth that was made evident for it.<sup>1120</sup> The necessitation is ultimately the work of the intellect’s own natural inclination to its activity<sup>1121</sup> which has the truth for its object<sup>1122</sup> – this is why we cannot speak about the violence in the narrow sense of the term here. But the feature that it has in common with the coercion in the strongest sense of the term consists in the necessitation coming from the outside and the possible contrariety to an intern inclination of the necessitated subject: e.g., if some nasty libertarian demonstrated his position to me, my intellect would be necessitated by an exterior agent, and since I am not my intellect, this necessitation could be against my very important intern inclination – my jilted will for compatibilism.<sup>1123</sup> It seems that this “against inclination” feature is considered by Aquinas as

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*violenter extortis. Quaedam vero sunt quae quidem subjecto non compelluntur, quia organis affixae non sunt, compelluntur tamen objecto, sicut intellectus...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>1118</sup> “*duplex est necessitas: necessitas scilicet coactionis, ... et necessitas naturalis inclinationis... Coactio nihil aliud est, quam violentiae cuiusdam inductio. Violentum autem est, secundum philosophum in III Ethicorum, cuius principium est extra, nil conferente vim passo; sicut si lapis sursum proiciatur...*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 29, q. 1, a. 1, co.; d. 49, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 2, ad 2. See chap. 3. III. 1. 3 and the notion of violence in the beginning of chap. 3. II. 1. 1.

<sup>1119</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 5, co., *De veritate* q. 22, a. 5, 8 and 9; *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1; I-II, q. 6, a. 4.

<sup>1120</sup> “*in nobis sunt quaedam vires quae coguntur ex subiecto et obiecto, sicut vires sensitivae, quae excitantur et per commotionem organi, et per fortitudinem obiecti. Intellectus vero non cogitur ex subiecto, cum non utatur organo corporali; sed cogitur ex obiecto, quia ex efficacia demonstrationis cogitur quis conclusioni consentire.*” *De veritate*, q. 11, a. 3, ad 11, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 48, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1; lib. 2, d. 8, q. 1, a. 5, ad 7; lib. 4, d. 17, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 2, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, ad 3.

<sup>1121</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 12, ad 2.

<sup>1122</sup> “*objectum intellectus est verum*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co.; d. 39, q. 1, a. 2, co.; lib. 3, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 3, ad 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 26, n. 2; cap. 107, n. 9; *STh.*, I, q. 54, a. 2, co.; q. 82, a. 4, ad 1; I-II, q. 3, a. 7, co.; q. 9, a. 1, co. *in fine*; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 7, co.

<sup>1123</sup> “*coactio non est contraria intellectui secundum suam rationem, sicut et voluntati. Intellectus enim etsi habeat inclinationem in aliquid, non tamen nominat ipsam inclinationem hominis, sed voluntas ipsam inclinationem hominis nominat. Unde quidquid fit secundum voluntatem, fit secundum hominis inclinationem, et per hoc non potest esse violentum. Sed operatio intellectus potest esse contra inclinationem hominis, quae est*

essential for the coercion in any sense of the term, mere necessitation not being enough: he states that contrary to the intellect, the will cannot be coerced by its object, despite his regularly admitting that it can be necessitated by some of its objects, if it is exposed to them.<sup>1124</sup>

The things are different if we look at Aquinas's notion of non-necessitating coercion. In his *Sentences*, beside the "sufficient" coercion that he calls "compulsion", Aquinas includes in the general notion of *coactio* also the "insufficient" influences that he calls "impulsion".<sup>1125</sup>

While the very notion of the will excludes the compatibility of its acts with the former, it does not preclude them being compatible with the latter.<sup>1126</sup> If a pirate knocks me cold and throws my unconscious body into the sea, my leaving the board is a case of the "compulsion". If he tells me to jump, threatening me with his sabre, it is the case of the "impulsion": while the threatening sabre is quite strong a motive to jump (it influences my will), in itself it is not enough (in itself it neither determines nor eliminates my voluntary response) – a poor swimmer as I am, I can decide to prefer to fight the pirate rather than fight the sea (or, more likely, to be run through by the sabre rather than to drown). Now, Aquinas distinguishes two types of coercive factors in this weaker sense of the term, those that exist in the soul itself, like its habitus and dispositions, and those concerned with the body, like its weaknesses or punishments.<sup>1127</sup> While the impossibility of compulsion is a defining feature of freedom of decision, the absence of these two sources of impulsion in the voluntary agent is the basis for two freedoms in a stronger sense of the term: freedom from sin (*peccatum*) and freedom from misery.<sup>1128</sup>

As you may notice, not all the will-influencing factors are considered coercive here, but only the "bad" ones. Why is it not possible to also speak also about freedom from justice (i.e., from the state that inclines the will to good choices), or even about freedom from glory (i.e., from

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*voluntas; ut cum alicui placet aliqua opinio, sed propter efficaciam rationum deducitur ad assentiendum contrario per intellectum.*" *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, ad 3.

<sup>1124</sup> "si proponatur voluntati aliquod bonum quod completam boni rationem habeat, ut ultimus finis, propter quem omnia appetuntur; non potest voluntas hoc non velle..." *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co. Cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 2; *De malo*, q. 6, co. Following AUGUSTIN, *De civitate Dei*, V, 10 (PL 41, 152), Aquinas occasionally states that this necessity does not impede the freedom of the will vis-à-vis these objects, even if it impedes the freedom of choice, cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, co.; q. 24, a. 1, ad 20; *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1, see below, chap. 4. II.

<sup>1125</sup> "est duplex coactio; quaedam sufficiens, quae compulsio vocatur; quaedam vero insufficientis, quae vocatur impulsio." *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>1126</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4 – 5.

<sup>1127</sup> See Aquinas's notion of punishment in chapter 1. III. 3.

<sup>1128</sup> "Si autem dicatur libertas per remotionem impellentis seu impediens, hoc est dupliciter: quia hoc quod impellit liberum arbitrium aut impedit, vel facit hoc per se, sicut habitus et dispositiones, quae fiunt in ipsa anima, et sic est libertas a peccato: vel per accidens, sicut impotentiae vel poenalitates, quae sunt ex parte corporis, usum liberi arbitrii impediens; et sic est libertas a miseria." *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 5, co., cf. *De malo*, q. 6, ad 23.

the eschatological state that makes morally bad choices impossible)? We have already seen that the former is actually possible for Aquinas. In fact, in his comment on the sixth chapter of *Romans*, he operates a very similar distinction as in *Sentences*, just using the term “inclination” instead of “impulsion” and the term “coercion” (*coactio*) in its strongest sense only: both good and bad inclinations imply a slavery here and the absence of any of them means that human is free in this or that way.<sup>1129</sup> Yet, as we have seen, the people who are free from justice are actually less free for Aquinas than the slaves of righteousness. In *Sentences*, this view is the same, if not more pronounced. The human capacity of free choice is basically oriented to good, this is why the influence of a bad inclination is impeding it in the basic sense of the term, while a good inclination only in a sense (*secundum quid*), inasmuch it impedes bad choices: a good woman could not decide to murder her child without much interior difficulties.<sup>1130</sup> Not even this kind of impeding can happen in the state of glory: since this state implies the moral goodness of all subject’s volitions (and their fulfilment), none of her volitions is hindered by this habitual state of hers.<sup>1131</sup>

As we shall see, in one slightly later text Aquinas admits that there is at least one kind of freedom that is lost in the state of glory (and it is better this way), defining the freedoms in question by a mere possibility to be otherwise. What is important in this earlier text is that it shows very clearly some important conceptual connections existing in Aquinas’s mind: even in its weaker sense, “coercion” means “impeding” and this “impeding” concerns some actually existing tendency in the subject (and not a mere hypothetical possibility of this tendency); in the case of the conflict of inner tendencies, only the impeding of the conformity to the most fundamental natural tendency is the “impeding” properly speaking.

If we return to the question of the difference between the efficient influences of a slaver and a friend, the answer seems to be quite clear now: by using the fear based motivation, the slaver puts the slave into a state that is against his will, which is (normally) not the case of friendship. Moreover, the slavery in its narrow sense is against human nature, as we have seen

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<sup>1129</sup> “*homo naturaliter est liberi arbitrii, propter rationem et voluntatem, quae cogi non potest, inclinari tamen ab aliquibus potest. Semper ergo homo, quantum ad arbitrium rationis, remanet liber a coactione, non tamen est liber ab inclinatione. Quandoque enim liberum arbitrium inclinatur ad bonum per habitum gratiae vel iustitiae: et tunc habet servitutem iustitiae et est liber a peccato. Quandoque autem arbitrium inclinatur ad malum per habitum peccati: et tunc habet servitutem peccati et libertatem iustitiae.*” *Super Rom.*, cap. 6, l. 4.

<sup>1130</sup> “*liberum arbitrium quamvis possit in bonum et in malum, tamen per se in bonum ordinatum est: et ideo illud quod impedit ipsum a bono, simpliciter impeditivum ipsius est, et corruptivum; et propter hoc libertas ab eo quod impedit a bono, simpliciter libertas dicitur, quae est libertas a peccato; quod autem impedit illud a malo, quod corruptio ejus est, non est impeditivum ejus nisi secundum quid*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2, cf. *ibid.*, a. 4, ad 5.

<sup>1131</sup> “*de ratione beatitudinis vel gloriae est ut aliquis omnia habeat quae vult, et nihil mali velit...; et ideo gloria in nullo impedit usum liberi arbitrii; et propter hoc non assignatur aliqua libertas a gloria: nulla enim voluntas miseriam quaerit et gloriam fugit, cum omnes naturaliter beati esse velint.*” *Ibid.*, a. 5, ad 4.



above (I. 2.), while the friendship is one of the highest human goods.<sup>1132</sup> this contrast seems to be actually the reason of the former contrast concerning the willingness to accept these states. For both of these reasons, the efficient influence of the (future) friend by his vis-à-vis cannot be considered a coercion of the latter, submitting oneself to friendship is naturally desirable and the corresponding acting *causa alterius* is penetrated by its being (also) *causa sui*. Depending on the viewpoint, it can be considered as both slavery and freedom then: but notwithstanding the viewpoint, its goodness for humans is incontestable.

The moral? By loving a person, one loses one kind of freedom, but gets another one, more important. By applying the abovementioned notion of friendship to God – the ultimate goal of human life – the freedom-dimensions of this relation are appropriately bolstered. I will not develop this topic here. My goal is just to provide a bit more differentiated image of causal dependence in the context of human action: putting it together with what was said about the natural openness to the causality of certain movers (see chap. 3. I. 3. 4.), I hope that the reader could be more resistant now against the images of robots, puppets and other uninspiring creatures who sometimes happen to fight for the incompatibilist cause.<sup>1133</sup> Also, the freedoms that were considered above constitute a mental background of Aquinas’s reflection on the “freedom of the will” and the quasi-necessary condition for the right contextualisation of this notion. The incompatibilists sometimes make the impression that the libertarian notion of the free will is a kind of primordial notion, while its compatibilist vis-à-vis is a *cache-misère*, artificially invented only as a far-fetched means of the salvage of what is (un)salvageable.<sup>1134</sup> We are ready to understand the inverse character of Aquinas’s thought process now: we can therefore take a step further to see how he compares the epistemologically prior notion(s) of freedom with the inherent characteristics of the reason-based activity and finds there yet another analogy of this notion. And yes, it happens that the result is compatibilist.

#### I. 4. Voluntary agent

It could appear that the contrary is true though. The defining of freedom by “*causa sui*” seems to concede the main intuition of source-incompatibilism:<sup>1135</sup> if the determinant of my action is

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<sup>1132</sup> “*amicitia est perfectissimum inter ea quae ad amorem pertinent, omnia praedicta includens; unde in genere hujusmodi ponenda est caritas, quae est quaedam amicitia hominis ad Deum, per quam homo Deum diligit, et Deus hominem; et sic efficitur quaedam associatio hominis ad Deum*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 2, a. 1, co. Cf. *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 8, l. 1, n. 1 – 7 (and more generally, all the lib. 8 – 9).

<sup>1133</sup> Cf. VIHVELIN (2018).

<sup>1134</sup> Cf. for example ALSTON (1989), p. 262: “The ‘compatibilist’ interpretation of ‘within one’s power’, by contrast, was specifically devised to ensure a compatibility of free will and determinism.” (Sic!).

<sup>1135</sup> Cf. FISCHER (2007), p. 61 – 71; MCKENNA & COATES (2021) 1.2.

outside me, I cannot be considered free. But Aquinas leaves no doubt that he does not understand the things this way: “The freedom does not necessarily require that the free [entity] is the first cause of its own [movement] though, just as for being the cause of another [entity] it is not required to be its first cause. God is therefore the first cause moving both the natural and the voluntary causes.”<sup>1136</sup> As we have seen (cf. chap. 3. III. 1. 1.), this assertion does not mean that the causality of first cause and non-first cause is equal: accordingly, God is *causa sui* (and therefore free) in the highest measure.<sup>1137</sup> So far, nothing so surprising. What is more interesting is that sometimes, Aquinas argues for the existence of will in God just based on the existence of this freedom in him – and not vice versa.<sup>1138</sup> Given the fact that the notion of God’s will is based on the creaturely (more precisely, human) realisation of the will,<sup>1139</sup> there must be some kind of *causa-sui*-ness that Aquinas considers a distinguishing characteristic of the latter. But what can it be, if not the first and only determining cause of its own acts? In fact, there are at least two different characteristics that can be covered by the label *causa sui* in this context. One of them concerns only the capacity of free decision and I discuss it in the next subchapter. The other, more fundamental, is the following.

Consider a woman who is guiding her blind husband through the streets, heading, without his knowing, for his surprise birthday party in his preferred café (for example’s sake, suppose that the blind man has no relevant perception of the streets that he is being guided through). The couple’s little trip has a happy end: instead of being lost in the streets, crashed by a vehicle or lynched by a passing mob, both arrive in the café at time. Who is the cause of this outcome? Strictly speaking, both of them: should the husband abstain from his activities like walking or holding the hand of his wife, her causal powers would hardly suffice to achieve the end that she has intended. But notwithstanding this, most of the people would probably tend to answer the question by an unambiguous “Her!”. The reason is obvious: contrary to her husband, the

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<sup>1136</sup> “*Non tamen hoc est de necessitate libertatis, quod sit prima causa sui id quod liberum est, sicut nec ad hoc quod aliquid sit causa alterius, requiritur quod sit prima causa eius. Deus igitur est prima causa movens et naturales causas et voluntarias.*” *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>1137</sup> “*Hoc [i.e., divine freedom of decision] etiam ex ipsa nominis ratione haberi potest. Nam liberum est quod sui causa est, ... Hoc autem nulli magis competit quam primae causae, quae Deus est.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 88, n. 6, cf. the assertion of most noble realisation of freedom in God in *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, co.

<sup>1138</sup> “*Liberum est quod sui causa est: et sic liberum habet rationem eius quod est per se. Voluntas autem primo habet libertatem in agendo: in quantum enim voluntarie agit quis, dicitur libere agere quamcumque actionem. Primo igitur agenti maxime competit per voluntatem agere, cui maxime convenit per se agere.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 72, n. 8; “*voluntas radix est libertatis. Sed libertas praecipue competit Deo; liber enim est qui causa sui est, ...; quod maxime de Deo verificatur. Ergo in Deo invenitur voluntas.*” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, s. c. 4 (the argument is in favour of Aquinas’s position and Aquinas does not correct it in any way), cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 43, q. 2, a. 1, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 23, n. 6 – 8; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 5, co.; q. 3, a. 15, co.

<sup>1139</sup> See the general consideration of the speaking about God in *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 12 and q. 13; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 1, l. 1.

wife sees the way; given this perception, she determines their trajectory. In other words, an important causal principle of the final outcome – the perception of the route – is present in her, not in the husband. Thus, as the bearer (and the source) of this principle, she is cause in a more robust sense than him: i.e., her state permits to provide some explanations of the outcome that cannot be given on the basis of the state of her husband.

To better evaluate the causal superiority of this brave women, let us compare her with some high-tech navigation device that could lead the husband in her stead, being programmed not only to follow the determined direction, but also to detect and avoid the collision with some objects etc. While the navigational efficacy of such device could be equal or even higher than the efficacy of a (at times inattentive) wife, it could provide much poorer explanation of its effect than the woman. E.g., the device contains the reasons why the blind man never collides with any harmful object, but it does not contain the reasons why to avoid rather than pursue such a collision. Contrary to it, the woman's knowledge of the harmful effects of a collision together with her knowing why it is good to preserve the health of her husband allows such an explanation. Moreover, if the wife happens to be a Thomist moral philosopher, this explanation can theoretically be followed up to the first auto-evident principles implied by the very notion of good/goal.

In Aquinas's view, the fundamental *causa-sui*-ness of a voluntary agent (if compared with the other kind of agents) consists in something very like the causal superiority of the wife (by "voluntary agent" I mean the bearer of what Aquinas could call "perfect voluntariness", as distinguished from "imperfect voluntariness" which he sometimes accords also to will-less animals).<sup>1140</sup> In Aquinas's vocabulary, the "will" (*voluntas*), understood as the name of a human faculty, means the ability of inclinations that follow the intellectually perceived motives:<sup>1141</sup> alternatively, the "will" can also mean any of these inclinations themselves or even an exterior expression of such an inclination (like the "last will") – we shall meet these distinctions more in detail while speaking about God's will(s) in chap. 6. II. As I have already mentioned (chap 1. II. 5.), "intellectually perceived motives" do not necessarily mean what we would call "reasoned", "reasonable" or even "intellectual" motives. When conceptualised,

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<sup>1140</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 2.

<sup>1141</sup> "*sicut in rebus naturalibus invenitur forma, quae est principium actionis, et inclinatio consequens formam, quae dicitur appetitus naturalis, ex quibus sequitur actio; ita in homine invenitur forma intellectiva, et inclinatio voluntatis consequens formam apprehensam, ex quibus sequitur exterior actio*" *De malo*, q. 6, co.; "*appetitus rationalis, qui voluntas dicitur, est alia potentia ab appetitu sensibili.*" *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 4, co. *in fine*; "*Actus ... humanus autem est, secundum quod aliquatenus ratione deducitur: quod contingit in illis actibus tantum qui imperantur a voluntate, quae consequitur deliberationem rationis.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 40, q. 1, a. 5, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 59, a. 4, co.; q. 80, a. 2; *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 3, l. 14, n. 8 – 10; l. 15, n. 7; l. 16, n. 5 – 11 (Leonina lib. 3, cap. 8 – 10); *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 90, n. 2; lib. 3, cap. 26, n. 8.

“sex with the neighbour’s wife would be pleasurable” or “sex with the neighbour’s wife would make me happy” are intellectually perceived motives, even though these ideas are due to the irrational passions and the latter of them is false. The inclinations emerging from the (will of the) agent due to the exposure of intellect to these opinions must be distinguished from the inclinations that are awakened by the sensorial input taken as such (the aforesaid passions) and obviously from the so-called natural appetites that are connected to the very identity of the entity without presupposing that this entity is equipped by any preceding knowledge (e.g. the gravity).<sup>1142</sup>

I skip the rather intricate relationship between these three types of inclinations in the case of human decision making, focusing only on their respective differences from the viewpoint of the explanatory force of their principles. In Aquinas’s account, no activity can be fully explained without a recourse to an intellectual apprehension at its source: only intellect can represent not only the goal of the activity, but also the fact that this goal is (my) goal and the relation of the activity to this goal.<sup>1143</sup> Compared to it, the sensorial perception (taken as such) can represent the goal (more precisely, some of its sensible characteristics) but neither its “goal-ness” nor the reasons why such and such activity is in proportion to pursue this goal. It does not mean that reasonless animals cannot act for the goals which they perceive: it is just that their perception alone cannot explain why they do so (in a similar way as the navigation device alone could not explain why it should be programmed to avoid a collision that it avoids). The same is a fortiori true about the nature of entities without any cognition at all. Aquinas is convinced that the very fact of their “tending to something” (“*intentio*” in yet

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<sup>1142</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, co. *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 1 – 2; *De malo*, q. 6, co. As already mentioned, while natural appetite does not presuppose the cognition, but is presupposed both for the cognition and the response of the cognition based appetitive faculties to this cognition, cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 12, ad 2 for natural appetite of intellect and *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, co. (“*et voluntati ipsi inest naturalis quidam appetitus boni sibi convenientis*”) or *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 1 for the natural appetite of will.

<sup>1143</sup> “*omne quod consequitur aliquem finem, oportet quod fuerit determinatum aliquo modo ad illum finem: alias non magis in hunc finem quam in alium perveniret. Illa autem determinatio oportet quod proveniat ex intentione finis ... invenimus duos appetitus: scilicet appetitum naturalem, ...et iterum appetitum voluntarium, qui est inclinatio cognoscentis finem, et ordinem in finem illum; et inter hos duos appetitus est medius unus, qui procedit ex cognitione finis sine hoc quod cognoscatur ratio finis et proportio ejus quod est ad finem, in finem ipsum; et iste est appetitus sensitivus.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, co.; “*Quod autem aliquid determinet sibi inclinationem in finem, non potest contingere nisi cognoscat finem, et habitudinem finis in ea quae sunt ad finem: quod est tantum rationis.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 4, co.; “*Cum enim omne agens seu motum agat seu moveatur propter finem, ... illa perfecte moventur a principio intrinseco, in quibus est aliquod intrinsecum principium non solum ut moveantur, sed ut moveantur in finem. Ad hoc autem quod fiat aliquid propter finem, requiritur cognitio finis aequalis.*” ... “*Est autem duplex cognitio finis, perfecta scilicet, et imperfecta. Perfecta quidem finis cognitio est quando non solum apprehenditur res quae est finis sed etiam cognoscitur ratio finis, et proportio eius quod ordinatur in finem ad ipsum. Et talis cognitio finis competit soli rationali naturae. Imperfecta autem cognitio finis est quae in sola finis apprehensione consistit, sine hoc quod cognoscatur ratio finis, et proportio actus ad finem. Et talis cognitio finis invenitur in brutis animalibus, per sensum et aestimationem naturalem.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 1, co. and a. 2, co.

another sense of the term) can be explained only by the causation of their nature by an agent equipped by intellect, in a similar way as the target-hitting of arrow can be explained only by the reference to the art of the shooter.<sup>1144</sup> To avoid mistakenly assuming that this is argumentation in favour of some Intelligent Design or Anthropic Principle theory: in itself, this Aquinas's position has quite nothing to do with the complexity of activity or its effects. The simplest phenomena (like the fall of a stone) are the first that need the abovementioned explanation in his account. Granted that it is the nature of the stone (or of subatomic particles constituting it) that makes it fall toward barycentre, how can it be that nature "does" it without knowing where the barycentre is? (If you prefer to use the metaphorical notion of "laws of nature", the things can get even more amusing.) I am not sure whether Aquinas is a victim of a crude anthropomorphism here or whether he is pointing at the real weirdness to which we are mostly blind because us being used to to the way the natural agents behave, thinking therefore that there is no need of further explanation. Be it anyway, in Aquinas's account the cause-ness of natural agents is just a feeble derivative of the cause-ness of agents acting on the basis of the intellectual representation.

If we look at the perfectly voluntary agent from the point of view of freedom defined as *causa-sui-ness*, we can state the following. In Aquinas's view, the voluntary agent is the only agent whose very notion does not imply the need for an exterior explanation of its actions. This explanatory autonomy is not based on the libertarian freedom though but on the (possible) presence of all the relevant determinants of the voluntary activity in its intellectual source. Obviously, such a totality can be unqualifiedly realised only in God: the intellectual state of the brave wife that I have spoken about before cannot fully explain neither the formation of its proper content nor the existence of its subject or the circumstances that she finds herself in, all of these being relevant determinants of her activity though. Nevertheless, even if the woman does not contain all the explanatory principles of her action, it can be said that she contains all the relevant categories of its explanatory principles (at least on the level of creatures): most notably, at least implicitly perceived notion of good/goal and of the proportion of the intended action to the good/goal assures the representation of one kind of the ultimate *reason d'être* of the action in any user of reason. This distinctive feature of the

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<sup>1144</sup> "*Intendere autem finem impossibile est, nisi cognoscatur finis sub ratione finis, et proportio eorum quae sunt ad finem in finem ipsum. Cognoscens autem finem et ea quae sunt ad finem, non solum seipsum in finem dirigit, sed etiam alia, sicut sagittator emittit sagittam ad signum. Sic ergo dupliciter aliquid tendit in finem. ... Alio modo directum ab alio; et hoc modo omnia secundum suam naturam tendunt in fines proprios et naturales, directa a sapientia instituyente naturam. Et secundum hoc invenimus duos appetitus: scilicet appetitum naturalem, qui nihil aliud est quam inclinatio rei in finem suum naturalem qui est ex directione instituentis naturam, et iterum appetitum voluntarium...*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, co., cf. for ex. *ibid.*, lib. 1, d. 43, q. 2, a. 1, co.; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 15, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 23, n. 6; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 4, co.

voluntary agency could obviously be weakened by denying the aforesaid principal dependence of natural agency on the cognizing source of nature(s): as I have insinuated I have not found any convincing not question-begging argumentation in Aquinas concerning this point. Weakening does not mean eliminating though. Even if the natural agent does not a priori require any intellectual source and the explanation of its agency by the principles that are intrinsic to it can be considered, in a way, complete, nothing changes concerning the fact that the causal principles contained in the voluntary agent enable providing the answers on questions that cannot be answered by the intrinsic principles responsible for the non-voluntary agency (maybe because it is utterly unreasonable to ask them in the latter case). Consider the difference between the twitch of an eyelid and intentional winking: while both activities are equal as far as possible physical explanation (on compatibilist view at least) are concerned, only in the case of the latter the state of agent can give you reasons *for what* the winking was done. Thus, I am the cause of winking in a sense in which I am not the cause of the eye-twitch (and in which the fire is not the cause of its burning) – because on this level of causality, twitching is either caused by a different agent or it is utterly causeless.

The specific *causa-sui*-ness of the voluntary agent will become even more clear if you recall (or even accept) Aquinas's conception of intellectual activity that I touched upon in the third chapter.<sup>1145</sup> The so-called “possible intellect”<sup>1146</sup> is supposed to be just the possibility of the existence of things in an intentional way, very much like the prime matter is the possibility of the existence of things in the physical way.<sup>1147</sup> In the typical case (concerning the naturally known sensible entities), the way of the existence of the entities in the intellect is both weaker and higher than their natural way of existence: on the one hand, unlike the prime matter that has become water, the intellect that has become water will not quench the thirst; but on the other hand, the intelligibility of water that is merely potential in the former case is at least partially actual in the latter. The intellectual way of the existence of water is caused by the “agent intellect”, the human faculty that renders the sensorially perceived, potentially

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<sup>1145</sup> See chap. 3. I. 1. 3.

<sup>1146</sup> “*distinguitur secundum philosophos triplex intellectus: scilicet intellectus possibilis, intellectus agens, et intellectus in habitu: et dicitur intellectus possibilis qui est in potentia ad recipiendum omnes formas intellectas, sicut oculus est in potentia ad recipiendum omnes colores; intellectus autem agens dicitur qui facit intelligibilia in potentia esse in actu, sicut lumen quod facit colores in potentia visibiles, esse actu visibiles: intellectus autem in habitu vel formalis ab eis dicitur quando intellectus possibilis jam perfectus est specie intelligibili, ut operari possit: nulla enim potentia passiva habet operationem nisi per speciem objecti sui perfecta fuerit, sicut visus non videt antequam recipiat speciem coloris.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, co.

<sup>1147</sup> “*Intellectus autem noster possibilis se habet in ordine intelligibilium, sicut materia prima in ordine rerum naturalium, eo quod est in potentia ad intelligibilia, sicut materia prima ad naturalia.*” *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 2, ad 3; “*anima humana est ultima secundum naturae ordinem in gradibus intellectus; unde se habet intellectus ejus possibilis ad omnia intelligibilia, sicut se habet materia prima ad omnes formas sensibiles*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 31, q. 2, a. 4, co.

intelligible entities actually intelligible, its role being similar to the role of the sunlight providing the actual visibility of coloured objects.<sup>1148</sup> I do not intend to spend the time necessary for the thorough discussion of this topic; but you may notice that in this case, the man has the role of the principal agent, elevating some lower entity on his own level of beingness.<sup>1149</sup> Anyway, the goal (the cause of causes) existing in this way becomes a feature of the agent who acts for its sake, the same being true about the relations that connect it with the activity. My activity may be determined by many exterior factors – but by knowing them, I become them in a way, and my voluntary activity is directly caused by them only inasmuch I become them. Thus, I act *causa sui*.

So, we have an agent that is formed as such by an internal teleological structure which is established by his own intellectual activity, containing the reasons for this activity in the measure which is impossible for reasonless agents. Note that none of these features presupposes that the causal origin of this structure is indeterminist. Aquinas is able to account for the distinction between morally responsible and morally non-responsible agents (and also between more or less morally responsible agents)<sup>1150</sup> without any reference to such origin then. The incompatibilist illusion that the determinism makes us puppets, pawns or robots should be completely dispersed by now: none of these entities is causally comparable to man and their common being under influence of a determinist *or indeterminist* causation would change nothing in it (provided that the robots are just passive executors of program and not a true artificial intelligences like T-800 in the end of the second *Terminator* or Number Five in *Short circuit*; in the latter cases, I do not see why these robots could not be considered as at least partially morally responsible agents). Is that enough? It is not. Beside many incompatibilist counterexamples that stay unresolved, there is Aquinas's own claim: If man acts by necessity, morality is doomed to perish.<sup>1151</sup> In his view, the freedom of will as we have seen it above is not enough. We need the freedom of choice.

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<sup>1148</sup> “*Sicut autem in sensu visus est duplex activum: unum quasi primum agens et movens, sicut lux; aliud quasi movens motum, sicut color factus visibilis actu per lucem: ita in intellectu est quasi primum agens lumen intellectus agentis; et quasi movens motum, species per ipsum facta intelligibilis actu.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 14, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 2, co., cf. *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 2, co. For Aquinas's extensive discussion of this topic, cf. his comment on Aristotelian source-text of this conception in *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 3, l. 7 – 10 (Leonina lib. 3, cap. 1 – 4), the opusculum *De unitate intellectus, Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 59 – 62 and 73 – 78, *Q. d. de anima*, a. 3 – 5 and the consideration of intellect and his activities in *STh.*, I, q. 79 and 84 – 88.

<sup>1149</sup> See chap. 3. III. 1. 4. and 3. III. 2. 4 – 5.

<sup>1150</sup> See Aquinas's conception of the diminution (as distinguished from the negation) of voluntariness because of ignorance, affective pressure or lack of time impeding proper deliberation, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 73, a. 6, co.; q. 76, a. 4, co.; q. 77, a. 6, co.; *De veritate*, q. 15, a. 5, co.; q. 26, a. 7, ad 1; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 8, co.

<sup>1151</sup> “*Si enim non sit aliquid in nobis, sed ex necessitate movemur ad volendum, tollitur deliberatio, exhortatio, praeceptum et puniatio, et laus et vituperium, circa quae moralis philosophia consistit.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co.

## II. *Liberum arbitrium*

### Introduction

Aquinas is convinced that there are some objects – most importantly happiness and God (if contemplated directly as he is in his essence) that the voluntary agent necessarily wills if his intellect gets to consider them.<sup>1152</sup> With respect to these objects, we have free will, but not free choice or judgment.<sup>1153</sup> The loving reaction to God seen as He sees himself meets par excellence the criteria of the *causa-sui-ness* that defines the voluntary act. On this level, it is the freest act ever done, given the perfection of the interiorization of causal principle which causes it.<sup>1154</sup> It should be added that there is hardly any act that is so much in the interest of the person who performs it: it enjoys the accomplished freedom also from this point of view then. Nevertheless, if you are seeing God face to face, you have no choice but to love him: more precisely, your possibility of choice concerns only the particular expressions of love that you are enjoying, not the loving of God itself.<sup>1155</sup> Therefore, as we shall see, this love lacks one type of *causa-sui-ness* that is proper to the utmost majority of our voluntary attitudes to other objects – the one that Aquinas calls “freedom of judgment” and distinguishes it from the “freedom of will” in the above-quoted text.<sup>1156</sup> It must be said that Aquinas keeps his typically footloose relation to the terminological coherence in this case too: even in the close

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<sup>1152</sup> “*si proponatur voluntati aliquod bonum quod completam boni rationem habeat, ut ultimus finis, propter quem omnia appetuntur; non potest voluntas hoc non velle...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co.; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5; *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1; I-II, q. 10, a. 2; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3; q. 6...

<sup>1153</sup> “*in appetibilibus, de fine ultimo non iudicamus iudicio discussionis vel examinationis, sed naturaliter approbamus, propter quod etiam de eo non est electio, sed voluntas. Habemus ergo respectu eius liberam voluntatem, cum necessitas naturalis inclinationis libertati non repugnet, secundum Augustinum, V de civitate Dei; non autem liberum <iudicium>, proprie loquendo, cum non cadat sub electione.*” *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, ad 20, cf. *ibid.*, q. 23, a. 4, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1 (following AUGUSTIN, *De civitate Dei*, V, 10 (PL 41, 152).

<sup>1154</sup> Cf. the divinisation of human intellect by its in-formation by divine essence in *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 1 – 10 (“*Cum autem aliquis intellectus creatus videt Deum per essentiam, ipsa essentia Dei fit forma intelligibilis intellectus. Unde oportet quod aliqua dispositio supernaturalis ei superaddatur... Et hoc augmentum virtutis intellectivae illuminationem intellectus vocamus; sicut et ipsum intelligibile vocatur lumen vel lux. Et istud est lumen de quo dicitur Apoc. XXI, quod claritas Dei illuminabit eam, scilicet societatem beatorum Deum videntium. Et secundum hoc lumen efficiuntur deiformes...*” a. 5, co.) and *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2.

<sup>1155</sup> “*Electio autem, cum non sit de fine, sed de his quae sunt ad finem, ut iam dictum est; non est perfecti boni, quod est beatitudo, sed aliorum particularium bonorum.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 13, a. 6, co.; “*voluntas eorum qui Deum per essentiam videntes, manifeste cognoscunt ipsum esse essentiam bonitatis et beatitudinem hominis, non potest Deo non inhaerere, sicut nec voluntas nostra potest nunc beatitudinem non velle.*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co.; “*in beatis sunt aliqui actus ordinati ad finem, vel quasi procedentes ex consecutione finis, sicut quod Deum laudant; vel quibus alios pertrahunt ad finem quem ipsi sunt consecuti, sicut sunt ministeria Angelorum et orationes sanctorum.*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 52, a. 3, ad 1.

<sup>1156</sup> As unlikely as it seems, Lonergan must have looked past this distinction somehow: he apparently thinks that the “freedom of will” in the quoted texts is supposed to be the same freedom that implies the (de)meritorious character of activity (although Aquinas denies such possibility in *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 7), see his assertion (LONERGAN (2000), p. 95) that this Aquinas’s “momentary aberration” (the “moment” would take about one third of Aquinas’s writer career, sic!) is in opposition to later ecclesial censure of Jansen’s assertion that *libertas a coactione* is enough for meriting (DS 2003). If any Aquinas’s statement is in contradiction with this censure, it is *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5, see my footnote 1187.



neighbourhood of his distinguishing these two notions, you can find texts where the “freedom of will” is supposed to mean just the fact that the reaction of the will is not necessary and coincides with the freedom of judgement then.<sup>1157</sup>

In the remainder of the book, I will use the designation “freedom of will” in its broader sense; for the freedom defined by the contingency of the volition in question I will use more specific (and therefore hopefully unequivocal) terms, for example “the freedom of choice”. The ability connected with the latter freedom is usually called “*liberum arbitrium*”. Up to now, I have translated this term usually as the “ability of free decision”. From now on, I prefer to withhold the Latin *terminus technicus*. In the literature, “*arbitrium*” is sometimes translated simply as “will”,<sup>1158</sup> which is misleading: for Aquinas, the very location of this ability in the will is a disputed question and although his answer is affirmative, it is also nuanced: “*liberum arbitrium* is the faculty of both reason and will”.<sup>1159</sup>

According to some, Aquinas’s conception of freedom of choice has known a very significant evolution during his career: his positions in texts like *Prima Secundae* and *De malo* are supposed to be in more or less direct opposition to what he states in his earlier writings.<sup>1160</sup> Other scholars find this conviction baseless or at least exaggerated, possibly coming from the tendency of the former ones to foist their own conception of the freedom of choice on mature Aquinas.<sup>1161</sup> I side with the latter ones: without denying the evolution concerning the preferred terminology, the level of elaboration or emphasizing this or that aspect of the problem, it seems to me that Aquinas’s views concerning the freedom of choice are *mostly* coherent throughout his career, at least from the viewpoints that are of any real interest for the topic of this book.<sup>1162</sup> My presentation of his conception will therefore disregard the

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<sup>1157</sup> Cf. for ex. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 48; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 1, a. 1, co.; lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3. These differences can hardly be explained by an evolution in Aquinas’s views: Augustin’s compatibilist passage from *De civitate* is used by Aquinas already in *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5 (see arg. 4, s. c. 1, co. in prin., ad 4, ad s. c. 1 and 3) without any trace of amendment: “*libertas, secundum Augustinum, opponitur necessitati coactionis, non autem naturalis inclinationis.*” (ad s. c. 3).

<sup>1158</sup> Consider the number of translations of Luther’s “*De servo arbitrio*” as “(On the) Bondage of the Will” (Fleming H. Revell, 1990; Baker Academic, 2012; A Martin Luther Book, 2012; Vision Press, 2017; CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012...) that can be found on Web.

<sup>1159</sup> “*Est autem homo dominus suorum actuum per rationem et voluntatem, unde et liberum arbitrium esse dicitur facultas voluntatis et rationis.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 1, a. 1, co., cf. q. 13, a. 1; q. 17, a. 1; I, q. 83, a. 2 – 4; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 15, co.; q. 24, a. 4 – 6; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 1, a. 2 – 3.

<sup>1160</sup> Cf. for ex. LONERGAN (2000), p. 54, n. 33 and p. 94 – 96 following the positions of Odon Lottin, expressed for ex. in LOTTIN (1935). See my footnote 1156.

<sup>1161</sup> Cf. LOUGHRAN (1999), p. 2 – 3, n. 5; KIM (2008) – the latter author provides references to the most important earlier participant of the discussion (p. 221 – 222).

<sup>1162</sup> *Exempli gratia*, as Lonergan notes (LONERGAN (2000, p. 94)), the term *liberum arbitrium* “fails to appear” in the titles of all the will discussing articles in *STh.*, I-II, q. 6 – 17: in comparison with the texts like *De veritate*, q. 24, the difference seems undeniable. The thing is that despite its absence in these titles, the term is far from being forgotten by mature Aquinas. *Index Thomisticus* identifies more than 120 occurrences of it in *Prima Secundae* (mostly in the Treatise on grace (q. 109 – 114)). It is not much compared to *De veritate* (about 600

chronological order of his works most of the time: the observations concerning his views on the freedom of exercise in relation to the ultimate goal (II. 3.) will show that attributing of this notion to the mature stage of his thought only is doubtful at least.

## II. 1. The root of freedom

While the topic of the preceding subchapter can be considered as kind of Aquinas's processing of the intuitions that are behind the so-called source incompatibilism,<sup>1163</sup> now we move over to his rendering of what is likely behind the alternate possibilities incompatibilism:<sup>1164</sup> the freedom as a possibility to do otherwise. Like in the preceding case, there are three levels of agents from this point of view.<sup>1165</sup>

1) The entities that are driven by their nature alone tend to act uniformly, independently on circumstances; the result can vary only because of some external impediments of the natural tendency.

2) Contrary to them, the animals are moved by their sensorial perception: therefore, their activities vary according to the various perceptions they are exposed to. Their reactions to the particular type of perception is always the same though: their sensorial ability called sometimes "estimative power" (*vis* or *virtus aestimativa*)<sup>1166</sup> judges the attractiveness or the repulsiveness of perceived realities in a naturally predetermined way. Nevertheless, unlike the fire or stone, by performing this judgement they are the causes of the particular type of action that they perform: Aquinas occasionally states that they are equipped with conditional freedom then – they could act differently, if they perceived different things than they

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occurrences), but it is still much more than less than 70 occurrences in the whole of *Summa contra gentiles* which is supposed to reflect Aquinas's earlier views.

<sup>1163</sup> Cf. FISCHER (2007), p. 61 – 71; MCKENNA & COATES (2021) 1.2.

<sup>1164</sup> Cf. KANE (2007), p. 5 – 13; MCKENNA & COATES (2021) 1.1.

<sup>1165</sup> "*quaedam agunt absque iudicio, sicut lapis movetur deorsum; et similiter omnia cognitione carentia. Quaedam autem agunt iudicio, sed non libero; sicut animalia bruta. Iudicat enim ovis videns lupum, eum esse fugiendum, naturali iudicio, et non libero, quia non ex collatione, sed ex naturali instinctu hoc iudicat... Sed homo agit iudicio, quia per vim cognoscitivam iudicat aliquid esse fugiendum vel prosequendum. Sed quia iudicium istud non est ex naturali instinctu in particulari operabili, sed ex collatione quadam rationis; ideo agit libero iudicio, potens in diversa ferri.*" *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, co.; *De malo*, q. 6, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, co. and ad 7.

<sup>1166</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 3, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3; lib. 2, d. 20, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5; d. 24, q. 2, a. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 78, a. 4; q. 81, a. 2, ad 2 and a. 3; I-II, q. 24, a. 4, ad 3; *De veritate*, q. 18, a. 8, co.; q. 25, a. 2, co.; *Q. d. de anima*, a. 8, ad 20; a. 13, co.; *Sententia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 13, n. 13 – 16; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 6, l. 7, n. 21; *Super Iob*, cap. 40. Aquinas considers this ability as the highest perfection beasts have: "*in intellectus simplici visione continuatur homo superioribus substantiis, quae intelligentiae vel Angeli dicuntur, sicut animalia continuantur hominibus in vi aestimativa, quae est supremum in eis, secundum quam aliquid simile operibus rationis operantur.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 1.

perceive.<sup>1167</sup> The principle “same perception – same reaction” obviously holds only if the “perception” means the whole of all the sensorial perceptions, including those that are contained in animal’s imagination and memory: Aquinas has some level of the awareness of the animal capacity to learn.<sup>1168</sup>

3) We have seen that, unlike animals, the beings that are equipped with intellect perceive the very goodness/goal-ness taken as such and are attracted by it; they also perceive the relationship of other things to this goal. The will is naturally inclined to good as such, which inclination therefore tends to possess of the good that lacks nothing (the happiness) which is to be found in God, more precisely in the eternal vision of his essence, this inclination being the expression of God’s orienting of all his doings toward God. Thus, God is the ultimate goal of the intellectual being’s striving and any attractiveness of whatever attracts her is derived from the fact that the entity is in some way related to him. It would be reductionist to conceive this relation just as a relation of means for the acquisition of the goal, as is sometimes insinuated by the translation of Aquinas’s term “*quod est ad finem*” by “means”: firstly, the term does not necessarily mean this type of means, it may also denote the “means” of the expression of the possession of the goal, in a similar way as the creation is the means of God’s self-expression;<sup>1169</sup> secondly, at least the notion of the similarity to one’s goal is another type

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<sup>1167</sup> “*Bruta autem habent aliquam similitudinem rationis, in quantum participant quamdam prudentiam naturalem, secundum quod natura inferior attingit aliquantulum ad id quod est naturae superioris. Quae quidem similitudo est secundum quod habent iudicium ordinatum de aliquibus. Sed hoc iudicium est eis ex naturali aestimatione, non ex aliqua collatione, cum rationem sui iudicii ignorent... Et similiter est in eis quaedam similitudo liberi arbitrii, in quantum possunt agere vel non agere unum et idem, secundum suum iudicium, ut sic sit in eis quasi quaedam conditionata libertas: possunt enim agere, si iudicant esse agendum, vel non agere, si non iudicant. Sed quia iudicium eorum est determinatum ad unum, per consequens et appetitus et actio ad unum determinatur ... necesse habent ab ipsa visione alicuius rei vel a passione insurgente moveri ad fugiendum vel prosequendum, sicut ovis viso lupo necesse habet timere et fugere; et canis insurgente passione irae, necesse habet latrare, et prosequi ad nocendum.” De veritate, q. 24, a. 2, co.; “*inclinatio appetitus sensitivi partim est ab appetente, in quantum sequitur apprehensionem appetibilis ... partim ab objecto, in quantum deest cognitio ordinis in finem: et ideo oportet quod ab alio cognoscente finem, expedientia eis provideantur. Unde ad ea naturali inclinatione moventur. Et propter hoc non omnino habent libertatem, sed participant aliquid libertatis.” Super Sent., lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, co.; “*Sunt igitur animalia irrationalia quodammodo liberi quidem motus sive actionis, non autem liberi iudicii” Contra Gentiles, lib. 2, cap. 48, n. 3.***

<sup>1168</sup> “*in potestate hominum est ut eisdem rebus similiter repraesentatis, sive sint praecepta et prohibitiones, sive sint beneficia et flagella, eligant vel fugiant iudicio rationis; sed in brutis est iudicium naturale determinatum ad hoc quod id quod uno modo proponitur vel occurrit, eodem modo accipiatur vel fugiatur. Contingit autem ex memoria praeteritorum beneficiorum vel flagellorum ut bruta aliquid apprehendant quasi amicum, et prosequendum vel sperandum; et aliquid quasi inimicum, et fugiendum vel timendum: et ideo post flagella, ex passione timoris, quae inde eis insurgit, inducuntur ad obediendum nutui instructoris.” De veritate, q. 24, a. 2, ad 7, cf. Sententia Metaphysicae, lib. 1, l. 1, n. 10 – 13, the mention of elephants in Super Iob, cap. 40 and the reflection concerning the punishing of animals in Primae redactiones Summae contra Gentiles, lib. 3.*

<sup>1169</sup> “*illud quod est ad finem, est duplex: quoddam enim est distans a fine, et quoddam est conjunctum fini... Ita dico, quod quaedam ordinata sunt ad finem ultimum beatitudinis, quae ipsi coniunguntur, ut videre, amare, et huiusmodi; et respectu horum erit sempiterna et libera election...” Super Sent., lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4.*

of the relation “*ad finem*” that is to be taken into account.<sup>1170</sup> But the example of the means permits to render Aquinas’s general idea concerning the ultimate root of the *liberum arbitrium*: there are many possible ways to reach the goal and even more that can appear so.<sup>1171</sup> As Aquinas notices in one of his later texts, this plurality is connected to any intellectually conceived goal by virtue of generality of its conceiving: any general concept can be realized by an indefinite number of particular ways – and the activities performed for achieving the goal are particular entities. In itself, the wish for a house does not determine whether the house should be built round or square, a round house could have an indefinite number of different sizes etc.<sup>1172</sup>

## II. 2. Bad choices

As it was said, the house itself is wanted only inasmuch it is perceived as something good, i.e. attractive, i.e. only inasmuch it is somehow (positively) related to the Ultimate Good and this relation is (at least implicitly) perceived through the notion of good that is predicated about the house. But this latter condition can be fulfilled by virtually any being at all: nothing is so bad that it could not be conceived as good at least from some viewpoint, if not the misery

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<sup>1170</sup> “*Aliud vero est obiectum voluntatis, quod quidem natum est inclinare voluntatem, in quantum est in eo aliqua similitudo vel ordo respectu ultimi finis naturaliter desiderati; non tamen ex hoc obiecto voluntas de necessitate immutatur, ut prius dictum est, quia non in eo singulariter invenitur ordo ad ultimum finem naturaliter desideratum.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, co.

<sup>1171</sup> “*ad finem ultimum multis viis perveniri potest, et diversis diversae viae competunt perveniendi in ipsum. Et ideo non potuit esse appetitus voluntatis determinatus in ea quae sunt ad finem, sicut est in rebus naturalibus, quae ad certum finem et determinatum non habent nisi certas et determinatas vias.*” *De veritate*, q. 22 a. 6 co.; “*alia volita non habent necessariam habitudinem ad illud primum volitum vel secundum veritatem vel secundum apparentiam, ut scilicet absque illis primum volitum haberi non possit...*” *ibid.*, q. 24, a. 1, ad 18; “*In his autem quae ad finem ultimum ordinantur, nihil invenitur adeo malum quin aliquod bonum admixtum habeat, nec aliquod adeo bonum quod in omnibus sufficiat: unde quantumcumque ostendatur bonum vel malum, semper potest adhaerere, et fugere in contrarium, ratione alterius quod in ipso est, ex quo accipitur, si malum est simpliciter, ut apparens bonum; et si bonum est simpliciter, ut apparens malum*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co.; “*Ratio enim circa contingentia habet viam ad opposita... Particularia autem operabilia sunt quaedam contingentia, et ideo circa ea iudicium rationis ad diversa se habet, et non est determinatum ad unum.*” *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1, co.; “*in omnibus particularibus bonis potest considerare rationem boni alicuius, et defectum alicuius boni, quod habet rationem mali, et secundum hoc, potest unumquodque huiusmodi bonorum apprehendere ut eligibile, vel fugibile.*” ... “*non omne quod est ad finem, tale est ut sine eo finis haberi non possit; aut, si tale sit, non semper sub tali ratione consideratur.*” *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 13, a. 6, co. and ad 1.

<sup>1172</sup> “*forma intellecta est universalis sub qua multa possunt comprehendi; unde cum actus sint in singularibus, in quibus nullum est quod adaequet potentiam universalis, remanet inclinatio voluntatis indeterminate se habens ad multa: sicut si artifex concipiat formam domus in universali sub qua comprehenduntur diversae figurae domus, potest voluntas eius inclinari ad hoc quod faciat domum quadratam vel rotundam, vel alterius figurae.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co.; “*Ad hoc igitur quod ex apprehensione intellectus sequatur motus aut quaecumque actio, oportet quod universalis intellectus conceptio applicetur ad particularia. Sed universale continet in potentia multa particularia. Potest igitur applicatio conceptionis intellectualis fieri ad plura et diversa. Iudicium igitur intellectus de agibilibus non est determinatum ad unum tantum.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 48, n. 5.

inasmuch it is understood as the perfect deprivation of all good.<sup>1173</sup> In a way, even the wanting of sin for sin itself is possible because in the trespassing of the divine law, there is a fake imitation of freedom and divine omnipotence.<sup>1174</sup> As we have already seen while speaking about the logical possibility, there is nothing with no similarity to the Supreme Good because no similarity would imply no being: to consider the most extreme case, even the negations, taken as such, are similar to the supreme Good, precisely by their dissimilitude to the limited goods.<sup>1175</sup> Now, since anything can be wanted because it is considered good, as a reverse-side of this, nearly anything can be rejected as well. If I happen to want to build the house on the riverside because I perceive it as good, by the way of consequence I reject the house-less state of this riverside: notwithstanding all the goodness that can be found in it, it impedes the precise variant of the good which I am wanting just now – and as such, I perceive it as bad. In contrast, an environmentalist that wants to preserve the virginal nature of the riverside in question because she perceives it as good, rejects my construction project as an abomination.<sup>1176</sup> If you recall that the most immediate obstacle to good, and therefore the first analogate of “bad”, is a mere lack of good, you can see that the only thing that cannot be rejected for it being considered as bad is the thing that does not lack any form of good and is

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<sup>1173</sup> “*nihil est adeo malum quod non possit habere aliquam speciem boni; et ratione illius bonitatis habet quod movere possit appetitum.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, ad 6. “*In his autem quae ad finem ultimum ordinantur, nihil invenitur adeo malum quin aliquod bonum admixtum habeat*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co.; “*miseria nunquam potest accipi ut bonum, quia dicit rationem perfecti mali; et ideo nullus potest velle esse miser.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 2, ad 3. q. 23, a. 4, co. (cf. *ibid.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 13, a. 6, co.; *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, co.).

<sup>1174</sup> “*in illo furto, ut Augustinus, ibidem, dicit, erat aliquid speciem boni habens, hoc scilicet, facere aliquid contra legem, in quo quaedam libertatis umbra apparet; unde dicit: quid ergo in illo furto ego dilexi, et in quo Deum meum vitiose atque perverse imitatus sum? Et solvit dicens: an libuit facere contra legem saltem fallacia, quia potentatu non poteram, ut libertatem captivus imitarer, faciendo impune quod non liceret, tenebrosa omnipotentiae similitudine?*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 4, ad 3 (concerning Augustin’s famous stealing of pears from *Confessiones*, lib. 2).

<sup>1175</sup> “*omnia existentia, sunt ex pulchro et bono et omnia non-existentia supersubstantialiter, quia scilicet negationes omnium rerum conveniunt Deo per suum excessum.*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 8; “*Quod enim dicitur quod Deus est sine intellectu et sine sensu, non est accipiendum secundum defectum, quasi Deus deterior sit his quae habent sensum vel intellectum, sed secundum excessum accipi debet, quia scilicet omnia intelligibilia excedit. Sic etiam attribuimus ei irrationale, in quantum est supra rationem; et attribuimus ei imperfectionem, in quantum est perfectus super omnia et ante omnia; et attribuimus ei quod est caligo impalpabilis et invisibilis, in quantum est lumen inaccessible, excedens omne lumen quod a nobis videri potest vel per sensum vel per intellectum.*” *Ibid.*, cap. 7, l. 3, cf. *ibid.*, cap. 4, l. 2 (similitude of God and prime matter) and cap. 7, l. 1 – 2 (concerning different negative predicates, including stupidity and madness). Cf. chap. 1. I. 3.

<sup>1176</sup> “*Si autem proponatur sibi aliquod obiectum quod non secundum quamlibet considerationem sit bonum, non ex necessitate voluntas feretur in illud. Et quia defectus cuiuscumque boni habet rationem non boni, ideo illud solum bonum quod est perfectum et cui nihil deficit, est tale bonum quod voluntas non potest non velle, ...Alia autem quaelibet particularia bona, in quantum deficient ab aliquo bono, possunt accipi ut non bona, et secundum hanc considerationem, possunt repudiari vel approbari a voluntate, quae potest in idem ferri secundum diversas considerationes.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 2, co.

perceived as such.<sup>1177</sup> In Aquinas's view, this is true about God, when he is seen in his essence.<sup>1178</sup>

Under normal conditions of the earthly life, even God can be rejected though.<sup>1179</sup> The heavenly greybeard orders me not to sleep with the cute girl I have met in the bar – what an annoying bigotry from his side! Here, God is perceived as bad, inasmuch he is an obstacle to the good of a supposedly pleasurable experience. The thing is that the analogies that make God known to me (even if they are much more appropriate than the one that I have just quoted) can at most inform my reason that all the good that is achievable through sex with the girl is achievable on a much higher level in God; but beside the cloudy nature of these notions, making their motivating force rather limited, they change nothing about the fact (also known by reason) that if I do not reject the heavenly moralist, the precise good that I am about to desire *now* will be lost *now*.

Obviously, Aquinas is far from saying that reason cannot establish any objective criteria concerning what to choose: natural law is such a criterion, based on the nature of man, God and the relations they have vis-à-vis the possible objects of choice.<sup>1180</sup> These criteria have an impact on actual choices only inasmuch as following them itself is perceived as good though. But while I can know that this following is aimed at good that is good in all the respects, this following itself is not good in all the respects: it implies that the cute girl will not warm my bed tonight. Much more than the analogically known God, the idea of rational ordering of life can be found wanting in many respects by the reason itself – and thus, deliberately rejected.

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<sup>1177</sup> “*Si ergo apprehendatur aliquid ut bonum conveniens secundum omnia particularia quae considerari possunt, ex necessitate movebit voluntatem; et propter hoc homo ex necessitate appetit beatitudinem, quae, secundum Boetium est status omnium bonorum congregatione perfectus.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co. “*si proponatur voluntati aliquod bonum quod completam boni rationem habeat, ut ultimus finis, propter quem omnia appetuntur; non potest voluntas hoc non velle; unde nullus non potest non velle esse felix, aut velle esse miser.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>1178</sup> “*voluntas eorum qui Deum per essentiam videntes, manifeste cognoscunt ipsum esse essentiam bonitatis et beatitudinem hominis, non potest Deo non inhaerere, sicut nec voluntas nostra potest nunc beatitudinem non velle.*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co. cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 2, ad 3; q. 24, a. 8, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 2, co. and Aquinas's discussion of eschatological beatitude in *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49.

<sup>1179</sup> “*Deus dupliciter potest considerari: vel in se, vel in effectibus suis. In se quidem, cum sit ipsa essentia bonitatis, non potest non diligere; unde ab omnibus videntibus eum per essentiam diligitur, et ibi quantum quisque cognoscit, tantum diligit. Sed in aliquibus effectibus suis in quantum sunt contrarii voluntati, sicut sunt poenae illatae, vel praecepta quae gravia videntur, ipse Deus refugitur, et quodammodo odio habetur. Et tamen oportet quod illi qui eum quantum ad aliquos effectus odiunt, in aliis effectibus eum diligunt; sicut ipsi Daemones, secundum Dionysium in IV cap. de divinis nominibus, appetunt esse et vivere naturaliter, et in hoc ipsum Deum appetunt et diligunt.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 2, ad 3; “*Deus, necessariam quidem connexionem habet cum beatitudine hominis, quia sine eo non potest homo esse beatus; verumtamen necessitas huius connexionis non manifeste apparet homini in hac vita, quia Deum per essentiam non videt; et ideo etiam voluntas hominis in hac vita non ex necessitate Deo adhaeret.*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 2, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 48, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>1180</sup> See chap. 1. II. 8.

Does it mean that no matter the level of intellectual perfection, it is always possible to choose a morally bad act? Aquinas does not think so. The vision of divine essence not only necessitates the adhesion of will to God but it also assures that all the things are seen from his perspective, the seeing one is therefore unable to perceive anything else as attractive without immediately perceiving the divine Source of this attractivity in this attractivity itself: in this perspective, all the possible attractivity of an immoral act would just represent the Reason why not to choose it.<sup>1181</sup> But beside the beneficiaries of this state, any intellectual creature is able to sin; at least in the universe as we know it. The minimal requirement for the possibility of moral failure is the possibility of only partial consideration of motivating factors. Even the highest angels, free from any passion, error, lack of necessary knowledge or even inadvertence properly speaking are subjected to this possibility in their initial state. As Aquinas puts it (at least) in his mature discussion of their fall, these creatures are not able to englobe both natural and supernatural aspects of their existence by a single act of consideration: having considered the natural aspects first (including their relation to God on the natural level), they are not necessitated to the act of consideration of what is above the natural order (like the supernatural love for God).<sup>1182</sup> It is not that they do not know about it, they are just able not to take it into consideration.<sup>1183</sup>

### II. 3. Master of one's own act

The meaning of the *causa-sui-ness* proper to *liberum arbitrium* can now become clear.<sup>1184</sup> Contrary to animals, the content of judgement concerning the values of respective objects of this faculty is not naturally determined. This determination of judgement concerning a particular object is caused by an activity of the judging subject, while a non-rational animal

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<sup>1181</sup> “*divinam essentiam videntes, cognoscent ipsum Deum esse finem maxime amandum; cognoscent etiam omnia quae ei uniunt, vel quae ab eo disiungunt in particulari, cognoscentes Deum non solum in se, sed prout est ratio aliorum; et ex hac cognitionis claritate in tantum mens roborabitur, quod in inferioribus viribus nullus motus insurgere poterit nisi secundum regulam rationis. Unde sicut nunc immutabiliter bonum in generali appetimus, ita immutabiliter in particulari bonum debitum appetunt beatorum mentes.*” *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 8, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 62, a. 8; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 7, q. 1, a. 1.

<sup>1182</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2 – 4 and *STh.*, I, q. 58, a. 2 and 5. I agree with the tradition of classical commentators that Aquinas’s angels would be unable of moral sin, if God let them in the state of pure nature (i.e., without any supernatural vocation), cf. SIMON (1988), COURTÈS (1953) and COURTÈS (1954). For an alternative view, cf. JOURNET – MARITAIN – DE LA TRINITÉ (1961). While I agree that Maritain’s explanation of the possibility of moral failure of a purely intellectual being in the state of pure nature works, it is incompatible (at the very least) with Aquinas’s mature position: Aquinas’s angels are likely more perfect than the purely intellectual being as Maritain conceived it. Unfortunately, an appropriate discussion of this topic is far beyond the scope of this book.

<sup>1183</sup> “*huiusmodi peccatum non praeexigit ignorantiam, sed absentiam solum considerationis eorum quae considerari debent.*” *STh*, I, q. 63, a. 1, ad 4.

<sup>1184</sup> “*intellectus et finem cognoscit, et id quod est ad finem, et habitudinem unius ad alterum; et ideo ipse sui iudicii causa esse potest, quo appetat et agat aliquid propter finem. Liberum autem dicimus quod sui causa est.*” *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 76., cf. *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, co.

causes only the determination of the activity proceeding from its naturally determined judgement: Aquinas compares animal's passivity vis-à-vis the determination of the judgement to the passivity of an inanimate object concerning their natural movements.<sup>1185</sup> This is what Aquinas most often calls to be “the master of one's own acts” (*dominus sui actus*)<sup>1186</sup> and considers it a necessary condition for moral responsibility.<sup>1187</sup> But before looking into this topic, let us see more clearly what it implies for him.

### II. 3. 1. Three freedoms

If by “freedom” is meant will's non-necessitation to one state, the *liberum arbitrium* in its earthly state comports three kinds of freedom: the freedom in relation to its object (i.e. the possibility to want different objects), the freedom in relation to its act (i.e. the possibility to want or to not want) and the freedom in relation to its ordering towards its goal (the possibility to want good or bad things).<sup>1188</sup> Following the terms used for the first two relations in Aquinas's mature writings, the freedom in relation to act got called “the freedom of exercise” and the freedom in relation to object “the freedom of specification”: I shall use this terminology.<sup>1189</sup>

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<sup>1185</sup> “*recte consideranti apparet quod per quem modum attribuitur motus et actio corporibus naturalibus inanimatis, per eundem modum attribuitur brutis animalibus iudicium de agendis; sicut enim gravia et levia non movent seipsa, ut per hoc sint causa sui motus, ita nec bruta iudicant de suo iudicio, sed sequuntur iudicium sibi ab alio inditum. Et sic non sunt causa sui arbitrii, ... Homo vero per virtutem rationis iudicans de agendis, potest etiam de suo arbitrio iudicare, in quantum cognoscit rationem finis et eius quod est ad finem, et habitudinem et ordinem unius ad alterum: et ideo non est solum causa sui ipsius in movendo, sed etiam in iudicando*” *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, co., cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 47, n. 4.

<sup>1186</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 17, q. 2, a. 3, co.; lib. 2, d. 7, q. 1, a. 2, co. and ad 2; d. 8, q. 1, a. 5, ad 7; d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, co. and ad 3; a. 2, s. c. 2.; d. 35, q. 1, a. 4, co.; d. 39, q. 1, a. 2, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 47, n. 3; cap. 48; cap. 101, n. 2; lib. 3, cap. 155, n. 4; *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 5; q. 57, a. 4, ad 3; I-II, q. 6, a. 2, ad 2; q. 9, a. 3, s. c.; q. 10, a. 1, ad 1; II-II, q. 50, a. 2, co.; q. 95, a. 7, co.; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 12, ad s. c. 2; q. 29, a. 6, co.; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 12 – 13; q. 9, a. 1, ad 3; *De malo*, q. 6, s. c. 3; *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 1, co. and ad 12; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 143; *De rationibus Fidei*, cap. 5, co.; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 5; *Super Iob*, cap. 14; *Super I Cor.*, cap. 13, vs. 8; *Super Rom.*, cap. 9, l. 3. Nevertheless, there are the texts where Aquinas uses the expression in a broader sense, e. g. just to express the relative easiness with which the *liberum arbitrium* can act, cf. for ex. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 1, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 20, a. 2, co.

<sup>1187</sup> See chap. 1. II. 5. In *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5, Aquinas exceptionally states that the determination of the will *ad unum numero* would not impede meriting of Christ “*quia in illud non coacte, sed sponte tendit; et ita est actus sui dominus.*”

<sup>1188</sup> “*Cum autem voluntas dicatur libera, in quantum necessitatem non habet, libertas voluntatis in tribus considerabitur: scilicet quantum ad actum, in quantum potest velle vel non velle; et quantum ad obiectum, in quantum potest velle hoc vel illud, etiam eius oppositum; et quantum ad ordinem finis, in quantum potest velle bonum vel malum.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, co.

<sup>1189</sup> “*voluntas movetur dupliciter, uno modo, quantum ad exercitium actus; alio modo, quantum ad specificationem actus, quae est ex obiecto.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 2, co.; “*potentia aliqua dupliciter movetur: uno modo ex parte subiecti; alio modo ex parte obiecti. Ex parte subiecti quidem, sicut visus per immutationem dispositionis organi movetur ad clarius vel minus clare videndum; ex parte vero obiecti, sicut visus nunc videt album nunc videt nigrum; et prima quidem immutatio pertinet ad ipsum exercitium actus, ut scilicet agatur vel non agatur aut melius vel debilius agatur: secunda vero immutatio pertinet ad specificationem actus, nam actus specificatur per obiectum.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co. As always in Aquinas, this terminological distinction must be



We have already seen where the freedom of specification comes from and how it allows the freedom concerning the relation to the goal. That being said, the possibility of bad choice is not implied by the freedom of specification alone: it also presupposes the possibility of an intellectual deficiency (i.e., limited consideration of motivating factors, see previous subsection) and as such, it is not an essential part of freedoms of *liberum arbitrium* – it is its appendix inasmuch the *liberum arbitrium* exists in imperfect beings.<sup>1190</sup>

Contrary to the possibility of bad choices, the freedom of exercise is an essential aspect of *liberum arbitrium*. According to Aquinas it has even greater scope than the freedom of specification; namely, there is no object at all whose willing would not be free from this viewpoint.<sup>1191</sup> While thinking about beatitude, I cannot but will it: my will is not able to perform another type of act vis-à-vis this object. Nevertheless, I am able to avoid this willing by avoiding thinking about beatitude at all. I can go to bed, get drunk on liquor or maybe even lose myself in an abstract calculation of a fascinating equation. Sure, there is a natural orientation of my person as a whole (and of my will in particular) to the happiness that cannot be eradicated by any means:<sup>1192</sup> but I can impede its proliferation into voluntary activity.

In this perspective, the freedom of exercise is just a spin-off of the freedom of specification. In Aquinas's words, my exercise of willing happiness is free just because the very act of thinking about happiness (or even willing happiness itself) are only particular goods:<sup>1193</sup> they are not good from all the points of view (e.g., they are incompatible with sleeping). Thus,

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approached *cum grano salis*: Aquinas passes freely between “specification” and “determination” (see also *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 1) and his distinction concerns explicitly the (non)necessitation of will, not its freedom: (the critical editions of) the corpuses of these articles do not contain the term “*liber(tas)*” at all.

<sup>1190</sup> “*Secunda autem diversitas in quam liberum arbitrium potest, attenditur secundum differentiam boni et mali. Sed ista diversitas non per se pertinet ad potestatem liberi arbitrii, sed per accidens se habet ad eam, in quantum invenitur in natura deficere potenti. Cum enim voluntas de se ordinatur in bonum sicut proprium obiectum: quod in malum tendat, non potest contingere nisi ex hoc quod malum apprehenditur sub ratione boni; quod pertinet ad defectum intellectus vel rationis, unde causatur libertas arbitrii.*” *De malo*, q. 16, a. 5, co. Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3; lib. 2, d. 7, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; d. 44, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; lib. 3, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; *STh.*, II-II, q. 88, a. 4, ad 1; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, co.; q. 24, a. 7, ad 4. The impossibility of failure actually aggrandizes the freedom of *arbitrium*: “*quod liberum arbitrium diversa eligere possit servato ordine finis, hoc pertinet ad perfectionem libertatis eius, sed quod eligat aliquid divertendo ab ordine finis, quod est peccare, hoc pertinet ad defectum libertatis. Unde maior libertas arbitrii est in Angelis, qui peccare non possunt, quam in nobis, qui peccare possumus.*” *STh.*, I, q. 62, a. 8, ad 3.

<sup>1191</sup> “*Si ergo apprehendatur aliquid ut bonum conveniens secundum omnia particularia quae considerari possunt, ex necessitate movebit voluntatem; et propter hoc homo ex necessitate appetit beatitudinem... Dico autem ex necessitate quantum ad determinationem actus, quia non potest velle oppositum; non autem quantum ad exercitium actus, quia potest aliquis non velle tunc cogitare de beatitudine; quia etiam ipsi actus intellectus et voluntatis particulares sunt*” *De malo*, q. 6, co. “*Cuiuslibet enim voluntatis actus est in potestate ipsius respectu cuiuslibet obiecti.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, co., cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 2, co.

<sup>1192</sup> “*etiam voluntas, in quantum est natura quaedam, aliquid naturaliter vult; sicut voluntas hominis naturaliter tendit ad beatitudinem.*” *STh.*, I, q. 41, a. 2, ad 3; I-II, q. 10, a. 1 (notably ad 2). It is so-called natural love (*amor naturalis*) “*qui inest cuilibet potentiae respectu sui obiecti*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 2, ad 1, cf. *ibid.*, q. 1, a. 2, co. – even if the potency is inactive.

<sup>1193</sup> Cf. my footnote 1191.

even if I cannot voluntarily reject the happiness, I can reject the willing of happiness – even for happiness’s own sake (arguably, the state of sleep-deprivation would not make me very happy)! Concerning this point, Aquinas is as clear in *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, as he is in *De malo*, q. 6.<sup>1194</sup>

### II. 3. 2. Universal scope of freedom of exercise

If there is a passage that seems to exceed Aquinas’s average expressions on this account, it is not to be found in the texts that are supposed to contain Aquinas’s mature conception of freedom but in their parallel text that predates them by more than ten years: the comparison of scopes of different freedoms of will in *De veritate*. While the freedom of specification is said to concern only the willing of the entities which are related to the Goal, and not the willing of the Goal itself, the freedom of wrong choice adding to this limit the condition of man being in the state that does not exclude failure, the freedom of exercise is said to concern the willing of any object *in any state of nature*.<sup>1195</sup> *Prima facie*, this seems to imply that even in the state of heavenly glory the creature is able to abstain from the love for God. Such assertions would seem very strange, given the general context of Aquinas’s eschatological opinions<sup>1196</sup> and Aquinas’s simultaneous stating that the blessed ones have not the freedom required for making a bad choice. I used to consider this passage simply as a dissident text which was due to some Aquinas’s inattention, but now I believe that it might reflect the measure of his compatibilism.

The freedom of exercise vis-à-vis God requires the freedom of specification vis-à-vis the act of willing of God: the performing of this act must be an object of choice. This is precisely what Aquinas states in a passage of *Sentences*: refuting the objection that beatitude excludes *liberum arbitrium*, he does not point to the free choices concerning different ways of

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<sup>1194</sup> Contrary to what Kim seems to concede to Lottin’s followers “the indetermination of the will with respect to the ultimate end” (KIM (2008), p. 230) is asserted in *De veritate* at least as strongly as in Aquinas’s mature texts, see below.

<sup>1195</sup> “*libertas voluntatis in tribus considerabitur: scilicet quantum ad actum, in quantum potest velle vel non velle; et quantum ad obiectum, in quantum potest velle hoc vel illud, etiam eius oppositum; et quantum ad ordinem finis, in quantum potest velle bonum vel malum. Sed quantum ad primum horum inest libertas voluntati in quolibet statu naturae respectu cuiuslibet obiecti. Cuiuslibet enim voluntatis actus est in potestate ipsius respectu cuiuslibet obiecti. Secundum vero horum est respectu quorundam obiectorum, scilicet respectu eorum quae sunt ad finem, et non ipsius finis; et etiam secundum quemlibet statum naturae. Tertium vero non est respectu omnium obiectorum, sed quorundam, scilicet eorum quae sunt ad finem; nec respectu cuiuslibet status naturae, sed illius tantum in quo natura deficere potest. Nam ubi non est defectus in apprehendendo et conferendo, non potest esse voluntas mali etiam in his quae sunt ad finem, sicut patet in beatis. Et pro tanto dicitur, quod velle malum nec est libertas, nec pars libertatis, quamvis sit quoddam libertatis signum.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, co.

<sup>1196</sup> Cf. for ex. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 4, co. or *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 62.

expression of beatitude, as he does in a similar situation in *Secunda Secundae*; instead, he states that the beatitude comports sempiternal *free election of activities* unifying the blessed one with God, like seeing and loving.<sup>1197</sup> Now, as Aquinas understands it, the freedom of specification vis-à-vis any volition is supposed to be given by the fact that this volition is just a particular good. Does it concern also the love proceeding from the beatific vision and the beatific vision itself? It does: while in these acts I possess illimited good, they are not themselves illimited good, if not in some relative sense of the term (this is why they can be more or less perfect).<sup>1198</sup> It seems that from this viewpoint the space for their voluntary renunciation exists then. Moreover, it seems very plausible that such a renunciation could be done in agreement with God's will in Aquinas's universe – and that it has actually happened. Consider the cases of so-called “*raptus*” of Moses and Paul of Tarsus according to Aquinas, God has already given these special individuals a transient vision of his essence during their terrestrial life.<sup>1199</sup> If this is the case and Aquinas's views on volition are applied, it was impossible (*in sensu composito*) for them to renounce God during this state, but for this very same reason it was necessary for them to voluntarily renounce the illimited duration of their present vision of God, provided that God's will of its transience was perceivable for them in God's essence. During the full-fledged beatitude both vision and love is supposed to be ceaseless, and this state is therefore impossible with renouncing these acts. But if you are a soft determinist like Aquinas (cf. chap. 3. II. 6 – 7.), you are used to such a situation – the opposite of the actually realised choice is always impossible with the entirety of its causal context, all you require is that it is not impossible with the elements of this context whose relation to the will you consider as defining for the freedom of choice. It is obvious that the determination concerning the willing of beatific vision in the state of Glory is somewhat stronger than in the case of a “normal” choice: a clearly perceived necessary connection of this act with what the will necessarily wills in this state is quite uncommon. Nevertheless, the relation between the act and the capacity of willing, taken as such, is that of contingency – and Aquinas apparently does not require more.

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<sup>1197</sup> “*quaedam ordinata sunt ad finem ultimum beatitudinis, quae ipsi fini conjunguntur, ut videre, amare, et hujusmodi; et respectu horum erit sempiterna et libera electio*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4: compare with already quoted *STh.*, II-II, q. 52, a. 3, ad 1.

<sup>1198</sup> Cf. different levels of beatific vision of different individuals for ex. in *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 6 – 8; q. 62, a. 9; *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2, a. 4; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 58.

<sup>1199</sup> Cf. *STh.*, 175, q. 3; *De veritate*, q. 13, a. 2; *Super II. Cor.*, cap. 12, l. 1 – 2, interpreting this way Nu 12, 8 and 2 Cor 12, 2 – 4.

### II. 3. 3. Facing the regress

The freedom of exercise is based on the possibility of different judgements concerning the act in question. But given this non-determination, why have I judged this way rather than that way – and why have I judged at all? If I answer that I judged (so) because I decided so (after all, the intellectual activities are voluntary), the vicious circle is on its way. Aquinas indeed agrees that in the practical matters, there is kind of reciprocal causality of intellect and will:<sup>1200</sup> I have made the choice based on the judgement that I have chosen to make because of another judgement that I had chosen to make before because etc. In fact, if the explication stayed here, there would be two grave problems to address: the infinity of acts of both intellect and will that seems to be presupposed by any choice and the unanswered question concerning the ultimate reason why this particular choice has been made. In his influential article, Gallagher tried to answer both problems in libertarian terms:<sup>1201</sup> even the fact that in Aquinas's account the concerned acts of intellect and will are chronologically simultaneous, their infinite regress is said to be harmless, apparently because it does not imply any prolongation of time necessary for the process to happen; as for the ultimate reason why the *liberum arbitrium* determines itself in the way it actually determines itself, it is said to be the matter of mystery of contingency. The text can serve as a particularly good example of a striking contrast between the libertarian interpreter of Aquinas and Aquinas himself. Regardless the simultaneity and instantaneity of mental acts in question, Aquinas is very explicit about the impossibility of their infinite cycle<sup>1202</sup> – it is not counterintuitive to suppose that his reasons have something to do with the impossibility of replacement of a power plant by the infinite number of extension cables we have spoken about before (see chap. 3. III. 1. 1.). He is even more explicit in giving a name to the ultimate source of the voluntary acts: after rejecting the option of celestial bodies, he points unambiguously at the God of *Good fortune*.<sup>1203</sup>

Have I begun the book with this chapter, the textual argument for Aquinas's causal determinism should take place at this point. Given the fact that both this argument and the analysis of divine moving of man have been established in previous chapter, I am not to repeat myself: if the reader requires them and does not remember them, she can always return to the second and the third subchapter of that chapter. My goal here and now being only to show that Aquinas's conception of *liberum arbitrium* is indeed compatibilist friendly, I

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<sup>1200</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 82, a. 4; I-II, q. 9, a. 1; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 12; *De malo*, q. 6.

<sup>1201</sup> Cf. GALLAGHER (1994a).

<sup>1202</sup> Cf. my footnote 781.

<sup>1203</sup> See chap. 3. III. 2. 9.

content myself with plainly saying that the actual form of the sequence of intellectual and volitional acts is determined by the concurrence of the state of their agent and external factors, most notably God. The latter being the only agent (save the will itself) that can change the state and the activity of will in whatever he wants, his motion also assures the beginning of this sequence. The non-determination that we have seen founding the freedom of *liberum arbitrium* is fully compatible with the determinism on the level of efficient causality: it is defined exclusively by the relation of the object of an intellectual apprehension to the ultimate goal that is naturally willed by the will.

Is it therefore possible to say with Báñez that as far as the intellectual judgement concerning the object is not determined by the object itself, the freedom of voluntary act resulting from the judgement is in no way endangered by any imaginable antecedent causal condition of this judgement?<sup>1204</sup> I believe that it is possible – but it would be too hasty to say it now, for at least two independent reasons.

First, the natural non-determination of the *liberum arbitrium* concerning anything but the ultimate goal is supposed to make it a paradigmatic (if not only) example of the contingency *ad utrumque* in Aquinas's thought. But if this is the case and the factor that ultimately removes the non-determination is exterior to the *liberum arbitrium* and to the man as such, it could seem that the actual choice says more about this exterior factor than about the choosing person: after all, if not for that exterior factor, she would be indifferent, as far as she is concerned, would not she? That would leave the compatibilist account unattractively flawed. Second, while defending the existence of *liberum arbitrium*, Aquinas himself seems to be preoccupied by the exclusion of the determining efficacy of different causal factors, like stars, demons, passions etc.<sup>1205</sup> It seems therefore that his exigences concerning this freedom go beyond the relation between the will and its object. Before addressing these objections, it seems to be convenient to present the Aquinas's actual image of human decision making.

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<sup>1204</sup> Cf. BÁÑEZ, DOMINGO, *In Iam*, 19, 8 (for the conception of contingency) and 10 (for its application of human *liberum arbitrium*) in *Scholastica commentaria...*, p. 428ff and 443f: “*Quotiescumque actus voluntatis oritur ex praedicta radice iudicii, semper erit liber. ... Quidquid antecesserit vel committabitur vel supervenerit ad actum voluntatis, si non tollat iudicium illud circa medium respectu finis, non destruet libertatem operationis.*” (p. 444).

<sup>1205</sup> Cf. for ex. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 15, q. 1, a. 3; d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 10; q. 22, a. 9; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3; q. 6; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 85 – 88; *STh.*, I, q. 106, a. 2; q. 111, a. 2; q. 115, a. 4; I-II, q. 9, a. 5; q. 10, a. 3; II-II, q. 95, a. 5...

## II. 4. Faculty of reason and will

My goal in this section is not to provide an exhaustive presentation of Aquinas's psychology of choice and even less the possible evolutions that this psychology has undergone during his life. The following is just a synthetic picture, based principally on Aquinas's mature discussion of the topic in the *Treatise on human acts*.<sup>1206</sup> I draw it only to avoid the most basic misunderstandings concerning this topic.

### II. 4. 1. Origin of decisions

As is notoriously known, the mental activity of Aquinas's human begins by sensorial perception.<sup>1207</sup> Aquinas does not exclude that the knowledge comes into the human mind without external sensation, namely by its direct infusion by God, or by influencing the imagination by angels:<sup>1208</sup> but in the present state of things, it is typically at most a supplementary source of human knowledge for him. Now, there are two basic ways in which the sensorial perception can be subjected to an influence: the exposition to the entities that are apt to be its objects, or by the changing of the disposition of its organs.<sup>1209</sup> By turning Garfield's head in the direction of lasagne or by cleaning his nose so that he can better smell it, I realise the latter kind of influence; by causing its olfactory and visual perception, the lasagne realises the former. There is no need to emphasize the measure in which both these aspects are subjected even to the causality of corporeal entities to whom the human is normally exposed.<sup>1210</sup>

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<sup>1206</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 6 – 21.

<sup>1207</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 84, a. 6 – 8; q. 89, a. 1; *De veritate*, q. 10, a. 6; q. 19, a. 1, co. *in fine*; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 81 – 82; *Q. d. de anima*, a. 15, co.; *Quodlibet VIII*, q. 2, a. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 80-81, n. 13; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 31, q. 2, a. 4, co.

<sup>1208</sup> Cf. notably the case of Christ (*Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 14, q. 1, a. 1; d. 18, q. 1, a. 3, ad 5; *STh.*, III, q. 9, a. 3 and q. 11; *De veritate*, q. 20, a. 3) and that of first man (*STh.*, I, q. 94, a. 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 23, q. 2, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 18, a. 4), the prophecy, including its natural analogates (*De veritate*, q. 12, a. 3 and 7 – 9; *STh.*, II-II, q. 172 – 173) and the influencing of human intellect by higher creatures in general, cf. for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 111, a. 1; *De malo*, q. 16, a. 12; *De veritate*, q. 11, a. 3...

<sup>1209</sup> “*potentia aliqua dupliciter movetur: uno modo ex parte subiecti; alio modo ex parte obiecti. Ex parte subiecti quidem, sicut visus per immutationem dispositionis organi movetur ad clarius vel minus clare videndum; ex parte vero obiecti, sicut visus nunc videt album nunc videt nigrum.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co.

<sup>1210</sup> Given the ancient theory concerning the relation of celestial bodies to the terrestrial physical movements, Aquinas means that “*motus corporales humani reducuntur in motum caelestis corporis sicut in causam, in quantum ipsa dispositio organorum congrua ad motum, est aequaliter ex impressione caelestium corporum; et in quantum etiam appetitus sensitivus commovetur ex impressione caelestium corporum; et ulterius in quantum corpora exteriora moventur secundum motum caelestium corporum, ex quorum occurso voluntas incipit aliquid velle vel non velle, sicut adveniente frigore incipit aliquis velle facere ignem.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 5, ad 2, see below.

Let us skip the complicated structure of inner stages of sensorial perception that happen after that:<sup>1211</sup> let us just say that this perception as a whole awakes two radically different kinds of responses in man. First, in a way that is very similar to other animals, the sensorially perceived reality awakes sensory appetites<sup>1212</sup> that are conform to its evaluation by the human equivalent of estimative power (called by Aquinas *vis cogitativa*).<sup>1213</sup> Both this power and these appetites have material organs<sup>1214</sup> and their activities can therefore be effectively manipulated by exterior material factors such as alcohol or the influence of stars, the innate disposition of the body of particular human having a great impact on her resulting affective state.<sup>1215</sup> Thus, obviously with some measure of approximation, the knowledge of these physical factors permits to foresee quite reliably the future development of the affective state of a human individual. Quite plausibly, Aquinas finds that most of the humans make their decisions most of the time according to this state of theirs, which makes the resulting activities of multitudes foreseeable as well.<sup>1216</sup> This is why, in Aquinas's account, notwithstanding the freedom of choice the astrologers can predict the collective events like wars (the stars being the natural first movers in the realm of corporeal entities): you can never be completely sure whether this particular hot-tempered person will not decide to avoid the conflict for once. But put many of such persons together: the more there are, the more it is difficult to imagine that all of them stay in peace.<sup>1217</sup> What is more important, before the

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<sup>1211</sup> See for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 78, a. 4 or *Q. d. de anima*, a. 1.

<sup>1212</sup> “*in nobis est quidam appetitus sensitivus consequens apprehensionem sensus*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 48, q. 1, a. 4, co.; “*Quaedam vero ad bonum inclinantur cum aliqua cognitione; non quidem sic quod cognoscant ipsam rationem boni, sed cognoscunt aliquod bonum particulare; sicut sensus, qui cognoscit dulce et album et aliquid huiusmodi. Inclinatio autem hanc cognitionem sequens, dicitur appetitus sensitivus.*” *STh.*, I, q. 59, a. 1, co.; “*Appetitus autem sensitivus est qui ex praecedenti imaginatione vel sensu consequitur; et hic vocatur motus sensualitatis.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 3, a. 1, co., cf. *ibid.*, lib. 3, d. 26, q. 1, a. 2, co.; d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 90, n. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 20, a. 1, ad 1 and most notably q. 80 – 81; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 4 and q. 25. For different activities of this faculty, cf. most notably Aquinas's Treatise on passions in *STh.*, I-II, q. 22 – 48.

<sup>1213</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2, a. 2, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 60, n. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 78, a. 4, co.; q. 81, a. 3; *Q. d. de anima*, a. 13, co.; *Sententia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 13, n. 13–16. The terminological distinction is not categoric though, cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 77, a. 1, co.; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 6, l. 9, n. 15.

<sup>1214</sup> “*Appetitus autem sensitivae partis est virtus in organo corporali, et est immediatum principium corporalis motus; unde omnia quae accidunt in appetitu sensitivo, sunt conjuncta cum quadam transmutatione corporali*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1, co.; “*appetitus sensitivus in hoc differt ab appetitu intellectivo, qui dicitur voluntas, quod appetitus sensitivus est virtus organi corporalis, non autem voluntas. Omnis autem actus virtutis utentis organo corporali, dependet non solum ex potentia animae, sed etiam ex corporalis organi dispositione*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 17, a. 7, co.; “*interdum ipsa vis cogitativa, quae est potentia animae sensitivae, ratio dicitur, quia confert inter formas individuales, sicut ratio proprie dicta inter formas universales, ... Et haec habet organum determinatum, scilicet mediam cellulam cerebri*” *De veritate*, q. 15, a. 1, co. *in fine*.

<sup>1215</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 15, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4; d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 85, n. 19.

<sup>1216</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, ad 2; *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 5, ad 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 85, n. 20.

<sup>1217</sup> “*multitudo ut in pluribus sequitur inclinationes naturales, in quantum homines multitudinis acquiescunt passionibus; sed sapientes ratione superant passionem et inclinationes praedictas. Et ideo magis est probabile de aliqua multitudine quod operetur id ad quod inclinatur corpus caeleste, quam de uno singulari, qui forte per rationem superat inclinationem praedictam. Et simile esset, si una multitudo hominum cholericorum poneretur,*

voluntary activity can even take place, the man is already inclined to something: recall Avicenna's opinion concerning the (non)existence of the contingency *ad utrumque* in the free agent taken as a whole.<sup>1218</sup>

Second, the intellect actualises the intelligible content of the sensorial perception. Again, I skip the potentially lengthy discussion concerning Aquinas's view on the precise way of its happening (most notably the question of *species expressa*).<sup>1219</sup> What matters for our purpose is the following.

1) While the human intellect is ordinarily dependent on sensorial perception, the content of knowledge that it provides is not reducible to the content of sensorial knowledge taken as such. Aquinas does not believe in (human) innate ideas,<sup>1220</sup> he would agree that the presence of the stone in his intellect depends on its presence in his senses: but contrary to the full-blown Empiricist, he does not suppose that the cognitive potentiality of the latter presence is fully exploited by the senses.<sup>1221</sup> As the sight can perceive the colour of the stone, notwithstanding the fact that the stone that contains the colour is blind to it, so the intellect can understand the meaning of the visual perception (e.g. that the colour must inhere in some subject), notwithstanding the fact that sight itself does not see this meaning.

2) The intellect has a natural appetite which inclines it to its activity. While this activity can be further controlled by will, this inclination is its independent source (much like the gravity moves the body of animal independently on its vital inclinations). This breaks the vicious circle of intellect-will dependency.<sup>1222</sup> The source of this appetite, and therefore the mover of intellect in the way of generator, is God: while Aquinas never does it explicitly, this kind of moving could be the most general and the most fundamental way of understanding of divine moving described in *On good fortune*.<sup>1223</sup>

3) The first notions grasped by the intellect are most general notions, beginning with the notion of being (*ens*).<sup>1224</sup> Obviously, this intellectual apprehension is far away from the

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*non de facili contingeret quin ad iracundiam moverentur, quamvis de uno posset magis accidere.*" *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 10, ad 7.

<sup>1218</sup> Cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 2, l. 8, n. 3 and chap. 3. II. 3.

<sup>1219</sup> See GORIS (1996), p. 137 – 212.

<sup>1220</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 84, a. 3.

<sup>1221</sup> "*principium humanae cognitionis est a sensu; non tamen oportet quod quidquid ab homine cognoscitur, sit sensui subiectum, vel per effectum sensibilem immediate cognoscatur*" *De malo*, q. 6, ad 18. For Aquinas's conception of intellect as distinguished from senses, see the section I. 4.

<sup>1222</sup> "*non est procedere in infinitum; statur enim in appetitu naturali, quo inclinatur intellectus in suum actum.*" *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 12, ad 2; "*amor naturalis est in omnibus potentiis et in omnibus rebus*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>1223</sup> See chapter 3. III. 1. 2. *in fine* and 3. III. 2. 9.

<sup>1224</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 1, a. 3, co.; d. 24, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2; *STh.*, I-II, q. 55, a. 4, ad 1; q. 94, a. 2, co.; *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1, co.; *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 7, ad 15 and ad s. c.; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 4, l. 6, n. 10.



articulate knowledge about the fact of this apprehension (or even the ability to name its respective components).<sup>1225</sup> The apprehension of these most basic notions gives rise to the first most general judgements (like the principle of non-contradiction) that are hereafter habitually present as the basis for any further reasoning.<sup>1226</sup> For the voluntary activity, the notion of good (i.e., the being inasmuch as it is attractive) is of particular importance. Its understanding gives origin to the first self-evident principle of morality and of practical reasoning as such that I have already mentioned in the first chapter: “The good is to be sought, the bad is to be avoided.”<sup>1227</sup> This provides the basis for any further rational evaluation of pursuing the attractive entities, whether it is right or mistaken.

4) In a similar way as the sensorial perception, the intellectual knowledge awakes an appetite of perceived good – the will.<sup>1228</sup> Its first act is a simple volition of the apprehended good.<sup>1229</sup> We are describing this act when we are saying that we (would) like something: in itself it does not mean that we will do anything at all for its acquisition (retain this basic meaning of the term “*voluntas*” for the Aquinas’s discussion of God’s will to save all humans in chap. 6. II.) – even a lazy couch potato has usually a simple volition of health. Under further influence of a rational apprehension of things the will can pass to a more active attitude in which it tends to ordain the things to the acquisition of the good it likes: the *intentio* (in yet another sense of the term).<sup>1230</sup> While I would like to be both rich and healthy, I only intend to be the latter, the knowledge concerning the conditions of a life of an average philosopher impeding any rational hopes (and therefore intentions) concerning the former. Under the influence of my intention of preserving my health, my intellect is moved to the search of means to do it, the deliberation or “counsel” (*consilium*). It eventually provides an intellectual judgement

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<sup>1225</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 85, a. 3; “*eo quod habitualiter inest, quandoque aliquis uti non potest propter aliquod impedimentum, sicut homo non potest uti habitu scientiae propter somnum. Et similiter puer non potest uti habitu intellectus principiorum, vel etiam lege naturali, quae ei habitualiter inest, propter defectum aetatis.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 1, ad 4.

<sup>1226</sup> “*primum principium indemonstrabile est quod non est simul affirmare et negare, quod fundatur supra rationem entis et non entis, et super hoc principio omnia alia fundantur*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2, co., cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 4, l. 6. For the notion of *intellectus principiorum*, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 3, q. 4, a. 1, ad 4; lib. 2, d. 3, q. 1, a. 6, ad 2; d. 24, q. 2, a. 3; q. 3, a. 3, ad 2; lib. 3, d. 23, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 3, co.; q. 3, a. 2, ad 1; *STh.*, I, q. 17, a. 3, ad 2; q. 79, a. 12, co.; I-II, q. 51, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 12, co.; q. 15, a. 1, co.

<sup>1227</sup> Cf. chap. 1. II. 8. 4., most notably the footnotes 236 and 239 – 241.

<sup>1228</sup> “*obiectum appetitus sensitivi est bonum per sensum apprehensum, obiectum vero appetitus intellectivi, vel voluntatis, est bonum sub communi ratione boni, prout est apprehensibile ab intellectu*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 24, a. 1, co.; “*cum omnis inclinatio consequatur aliquam formam, appetitus naturalis consequitur formam in natura existentem, appetitus autem sensitivus, vel etiam intellectivus seu rationalis, qui dicitur voluntas, sequitur formam apprehensam. Sicut igitur id in quod tendit appetitus naturalis, est bonum existens in re; ita id in quod tendit appetitus animalis vel voluntarius, est bonum apprehensum.*” *ibid.*, I-II, q. 8, a. 1, co., cf. *De malo*, q. 6, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 90, n. 2; lib. 3, cap. 26, n. 8; *STh.*, I, q. 59, a. 4, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 2, a. 1, co.

<sup>1229</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 8, a. 2; q. 12, a. 1, ad 4.

<sup>1230</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 12.

concerning what is to be done here and now.<sup>1231</sup> Given the aforesaid non-necessary relation of particular acts and entities to the good, the moving efficacy of any “counsel” is contingent: rightly or not, any counsel can be evaluated as wanting and changed. In the case that it is efficacious, it moves the will to the act called “choice” or “election” (*electio*) of the means (or other entity related to the wanted goal).<sup>1232</sup> Then the choosing will moves the intellect to the act of “command” (*imperium*) which determines the will to the act of “use” (*usus*), moving directly the active power which is supposed to realise the chosen act.<sup>1233</sup>

Two remarks here. First, Aquinas considers both intellect and will as immaterial faculties.<sup>1234</sup> It is true that in the present state of man, they cannot normally work without the support of sensorial faculties: I cannot think without imagination, be it the imagination of either written or pronounced words.<sup>1235</sup> Nevertheless, taken in themselves, their activity is not the activity of any corporeal organ. That poses some important limits to the possibilities of their being moved. A corporeal agent can weaken their activities or even switch them off via affection of sensorial organs, impeding the needed sensorial support.<sup>1236</sup> A higher intellectual creature can upgrade the intellectual light of a lower one<sup>1237</sup> and, as said before, the intellect can be “coerced” by argumentation (cf. I. 3. 3.). But as for the will (and, consequently, the intellectual acts depending on the will, too), Aquinas insists that no created agent can necessitate or infallibly move the will of another, neither by its exposition to whatever

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<sup>1231</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 83 a. 3; I-II, q. 14.

<sup>1232</sup> *STh.*, I, q. 83 a. 3; I-II, q. 13. I omit the act of consent (*consensus*) which consists in the “liking” of the means which are deliberated about in a similar way, as simple volition consists in the liking of the goal. This act can be attributed to both intellect and will, consisting in the inclination of appetite to the means, given their relation to the reason’s judgement about them (most notably the reasons concerning Supreme Good contained in so-called superior reason), cf. *STh.*, I, q. I-II, q. 15; q. 74, a. 7. Contrary to the “choice”, the consent can concern several impossible means: if I consent to only one means, the difference between consent and choice is just conceptual. “*Potest enim contingere quod per consilium inveniuntur plura ducentia ad finem, quorum dum quodlibet placet, in quodlibet eorum consentitur, sed ex multis quae placent, praeaccipimus unum eligendo. Sed si inveniatur unum solum quod placeat, non differunt re consensus et electio, sed ratione tantum, ut consensus dicatur secundum quod placet ad agendum; electio autem, secundum quod praefertur his quae non placent.*” *STh.*, I, q. I-II, q. 15, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>1233</sup> *STh.*, I-II, q. 17 for the *imperium* and q. 16 for the *usus*.

<sup>1234</sup> “*potentiae immateriales reflectuntur super sua objecta; quia intellectus intelligit se intelligere, et similiter voluntas vult se velle et diligit se diligere.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 17, q. 1, a. 5, ad 3; “*Potentis autem animae superioribus, ex hoc quod immateriales sunt, competit quod reflectantur super seipsas; unde tam voluntas quam intellectus reflectuntur super se, et unum super alterum, et super essentiam animae, et super omnes eius vires.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 12, co.; “*Cum enim homo liberam electionem habeat, libera autem electio competat ei ex hoc quod rationem et voluntatem habet, quae quidem sunt immaterialia: manifestum est quod homo quantum ad electionem nulli corpori subiicitur, sed potius dominatur.*” *Super Io.*, cap. 2, l. 1; “*Ratio autem est potentia animae non alligata organo corporali. Unde relinquitur quod voluntas sit potentia omnino immaterialis et incorporea.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 5, co., cf. q. 10, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>1235</sup> *STh.*, I, q. 84, a. 7; q. 89, a. 1; *De veritate*, q. 19, a. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 80-81, n. 13; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 31, q. 2, a. 4, co.

<sup>1236</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 3, co.; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, ad 6; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 84, n. 14.

<sup>1237</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 111, a. 1; *De malo*, q. 16, a. 12; *De veritate*, q. 11, a. 3.

potential object of volition you want, nor by directly influencing the faculty of will.<sup>1238</sup> Garfield’s sensual appetites might be determined to be attracted by immediately devouring lasagne, but his will not, since it can also react to the attractiveness of watching TV, possibly incompatible with the provision of the lasagne. I can turn Garfield’s head to the desired direction, so that his eyes look at the reality from the viewpoint I prefer. But I cannot do it with his will: without any organ, it is not within my grasp – nor within the grasp of the highest of angels, as Aquinas believes. Unfortunately, this well-known conviction of his can easily overshadow another one, namely that, although without necessity and not directly, the creaturely agents indeed move the will!<sup>1239</sup> The passions and their organs are vastly opened to the influences of other creatures and by the very fact also the answer to the question what appears good to the human from the viewpoint of these passions. True, the impact of this viewpoint on will is said to be contingent by Aquinas. But recall Aquinas’s general view on causal contingency: if something is moved without necessity, it means only that the movement can be blocked by an impediment (cf. chap. 3. II. 2 – 7.). That means that the will is effectively moved by sensory appetites unless it is impeded by something. We return to this point in the following subsection.

Second, in Aquinas’s account, any act of will is preceded by some act of intellect: the whole interaction of these faculties begins by intellectual apprehension; the choice is efficacious only thanks to the intellectual representation of its content imbued by its moving force, determining the will to realise the choice (the theory of instrumental *motio* strikes again); most importantly, the choice itself exists only on the basis of the judgement that this particular choice is to be made – in other words, the interactions between the intellect and the will themselves that are presupposed for the performance of choice cannot be considered chosen. More precisely, they could have been chosen (or rejected), if there was a previous choice concerning them and, obviously, the choices can be made concerning the future performing of such interactions or their components. I can choose to deliberate about some of my past counsels and make different choices that will be based on a more thorough investigation of the topic. But ultimately, there must be some first choices that result from some first counsels

<sup>1238</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 10, co.; q. 22, a. 9; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 85; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co.; q. 6; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 15, q. 1, a. 3; d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; *STh.*, I, q. 106, a. 2; q. 111, a. 2; I-II, q. 10, a. 2 – 3.

<sup>1239</sup> “*nulla creatura potest directe immutare voluntatem, quasi agendo intra ipsam voluntatem; potest autem extrinsecus, aliquid proponendo voluntati, eam aliquantulum inducere, non tamen necessario immutare.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, co.; “*manifestum est quod voluntas potest moveri a corporibus caelestibus, in quantum scilicet corpora exteriora, quae sensui proposita movent voluntatem, et etiam ipsa organa potentiarum sensitivarum, subiacent motibus caelestium corporum.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 5, co.; “*passio appetitus sensitivi movet voluntatem ex ea parte qua voluntas movetur ab obiecto, in quantum scilicet homo aliquantulum dispositus per passionem, iudicat aliquid esse conveniens et bonum quod extra passionem existens non iudicaret.*” *Ibid.*, q. 10, a. 3, co., cf. q. 9, a. 2.

whose following was not chosen at all: for if it was chosen, their choice would have to be based on some even more preceding counsel, otherwise it would not be a choice – and the infinite regress is on its way.<sup>1240</sup> Moreover, any voluntary act that would be supposed to account for the fact that a choice is following a particular counsel would have to be preceded by an intellectual apprehension, otherwise it would not count as voluntary for Aquinas – nor would it count as free.<sup>1241</sup>

Before discarding this perspective simply by naming it “intellectualist” (or somehow even more harshly), look at its intuitive appeal. Consider once again the difference between the twitch of eyelid and the voluntary winking at somebody. The only difference that I perceive between these acts is the fact that I knew why I was going to perform the latter, more precisely, that I was doing it because I had thought (or at least felt) that it would be fine to do it. In contrast, as for the twitch I am not sure at all, whether it was me who did it or whether it is something that only happened to me (or, maybe, which of these expressions would be more proportionate). Have the twitch been wholly determined by an exterior factor, caused by the internal structure of the eyelid or entirely causeless on the efficient level of causality, there would be no difference concerning one point: the twitch is far from what I would call a free act. Aquinas’s insistence on the cognitive base of any voluntary act just follows this intuition. This is quite important if we are to understand the abovementioned Báñezian statement.<sup>1242</sup> Performing free choice cannot be explained by the intellectual impossibility to reject the reasons that the choice is based on: concerning this point, the viewpoint of this classical Thomist is in agreement with the Libertarians. For the latter, this act is ultimately a matter of an indeterministic twitch: for sure, this twitch does not consist in acting for no reasons at all, but in the action of following the reasons that are possible not to be followed, without any further reasons that would be both determining and implying the acting according to the aforementioned reasons. The compatibilist reader of Aquinas just cannot see why the twitch is preferable to the determining causation here. For sure, the determining causation includes the possibility of control which is excluded by the indeterminist twitch and in this sense, the libertarian is free from control – but so is the twitching eye. While eliminating the responsibility of the preceding agents, the twitch itself does not make me freer or more

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<sup>1240</sup> “*cum voluntas non semper voluerit consiliari, necesse est quod ab aliquo moveatur ad hoc quod velit consiliari; et si quidem a seipsa, necesse est iterum quod motum voluntatis praecedat consilium, et consilium praecedat actus voluntatis; et cum hoc in infinitum procedere non possit, necesse est ponere, quod quantum ad primum motum voluntatis moveatur voluntas cuiuscumque non semper actu volentis ab aliquo exteriori, cuius instinctu voluntas velle incipiat.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co.

<sup>1241</sup> As for the act of “*consensus*” and its intellectual basis, see my footnote 1232.

<sup>1242</sup> Cf. my footnote 1204.

responsible than the uncontrollable eyelid is. The relevant difference between me and my twitching eye comes just from the fact that contrary to the eyelid, my will acts for reasons – but this aspect of choice is secured by the compatibilism at least as well as by the libertarianism.

#### II. 4. 2. The dispositions before the decisions

For better or worse, Aquinas does not believe that the explanation of human choice can be successfully finished by referring to a further unexplainable twitch. The divine motion of mind is the factor that is directly responsible for the first contingent mental act leading to the choice.<sup>1243</sup> As I mentioned in the preceding chapter, I have some doubts whether Aquinas has a stable theory concerning the precise way and location of this motion. It seems that at times he works with the idea of determining intellect to some particular counsel, while at other times he finds necessary the determination of the will to the volition of a particular goal or some particular counsel. In fact, these options are not mutually exclusive. Both intellect and will can be directly affected by God at any contingent step leading to a choice: given Aquinas's conception of universal instrumentality of agents,<sup>1244</sup> at least the actualisation by some instrumental *intentio* seems to be needed anyway for any of these steps in his account. Two extreme positions could be imaginable here:

a) God changes the disposition of the will only and only by actualising different vial entities in it; because of these differences, an completely identical person in completely identical circumstances can make a complete spectrum of entirely different possible choices (this possibility being defined just by the abstract possibility to consider the object of the choice as good by human reason).

b) God moves the will by organising the external circumstances only, including the corporeal factors determining the corporeal dispositions of man from his very conception; these circumstances determine both the affective dispositions indirectly disposing the will and the cognitive states of man, the state of the will being the function of these two types of factors.

I believe that Aquinas never held neither of these positions, although at times he could have come more or less close the former (the writings from the last period of his life)<sup>1245</sup> or to the latter (see the question of operative grace in *De veritate*).<sup>1246</sup> The latter is incompatible with

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<sup>1243</sup> For different variations of this view in Aquinas, see chap. 3. III. 2. 7 – 9.

<sup>1244</sup> Cf. chap. 3. III. 1. 4 and III. 2. 4 – 6.

<sup>1245</sup> Cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 7.

<sup>1246</sup> Cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 8.

the instances of the (exclusively) divine operations in the will which are to be found also in his earlier writings.<sup>1247</sup> The former reading would not take into account the bond between the choice and its actual context that Aquinas seems to hold. My choice can never be contrary to the final “counsel” of my intellect.<sup>1248</sup> Now, the fact that I have adopted the particular viewpoint that had lead me to this counsel can be for Aquinas caused by at least one of three different reasons: its rational superiority (I do not choose other perspectives because my reason/conscience truthfully informs me that given my ultimate goal, I should not do it), its occurrence to my mind (I do not choose others because I do not think about them) or its conformity to my inner dispositions (I do not choose others because it would be against my character; or I am just not in the mood to do it).<sup>1249</sup> It is obviously impossible to decide to act like Socrates if I have never heard about the way of acting that was proper to Socrates. Can I decide so, if I am a very different (read “worse”) man than Socrates? No, since “according as each one is, such does the end seem to him.”<sup>1250</sup> Firstly, for the very identification of the right way to apply general rules in the particular situation I need the already mentioned ability of *prudentia* (see chap. 1. II. 8. 3.) which can exist only inasmuch as my affectivity is perfected by moral virtues.<sup>1251</sup> In his older writings Aquinas also appears to be quite sceptic concerning the very possibility of choices contrary to the vices or even the dominating passions which

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<sup>1247</sup> Cf. the explicit distinction in *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 28, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3: “*Deus non tantum iuvat nos ad bene agendum per habitum gratiae, sed etiam interius operando in ipsa voluntate, sicut in qualibet re operatur, et exterius occasiones et auxilia praeibendo ad bene agendum*”. Cf. *ibid.*, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1 and ad 5; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 8, co. and a. 9, co.; “*voluntas hominis non est determinata ad aliquam unam operationem, sed se habet indifferenter ad multas; et sic quodammodo est in potentia, nisi mota per aliquid activum: vel quod ei exterius repraesentatur, sicut est bonum apprehensum; vel quod in ea interius operatur, sicut est ipse Deus; ut Augustinus dicit in Lib. de gratia et libero Arbitr., ostendens multipliciter Deum operari in cordibus hominum.*” *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 14, co. While in the latter text, Aquinas might not be clear whether the interior motion is actually necessary for the determination of the will, it is clear that it is an ordinary means of this determination for him.

<sup>1248</sup> “*Appetitus enim cognitionem sequitur, cum appetitus non sit nisi boni, quod sibi per vim cognitivam proponitur. Et quod quandoque appetitus videatur cognitionem non sequi, hoc ideo est, quia non circa idem accipitur appetitus et cognitionis iudicium: est enim appetitus de particulari operabili, iudicium vero rationis quandoque est de aliquo universalis, quod est quandoque contrarium appetitui. Sed iudicium de hoc particulari operabili, ut nunc, nunquam potest esse appetitui contrarium.*” *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 2, co.

<sup>1249</sup> “*quod voluntas feratur in id quod sibi offertur magis secundum hanc particularem conditionem quam secundum aliam, potest contingere tripliciter. Uno quidem modo in quantum una praeponderat.... Alio vero modo in quantum cogitat de una particulari circumstantia et non de alia... Tertio vero modo contingit ex dispositione hominis...*” *De malo*, q. 6, co. in fine. *STh.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 2 simply states: “*Quod autem aliquid videatur bonum et conveniens, ex duobus contingit, scilicet ex conditione eius quod proponitur, et eius cui proponitur.*”

<sup>1250</sup> *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1, arg. 5 (transl. of Fathers (1920)) quoting ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 5. For Aquinas’s reception of the maxim, see *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 7, q. 1, a. 2, co.; d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 5 and ad 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 95, n. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1, ad 5; I-II, q. 9, a. 2, co.; q. 10, a. 3, arg. 2 and ad 2; q. 58, a. 5, co.; II-II, q. 24, a. 11, co.; *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, arg. 19 and ad 19; a. 10, co.; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 9; q. 6, co.; *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 5, arg. 2 and ad 2; a. 9, arg. 21 and ad 21; q. 2, a. 12, co.; q. 5, a. 2, co.; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 3, 1. 13, n. 2; *Tabula Ethic.*, cap. F; *Super I Cor.*, cap. 2, 1. 3; *Super Heb.*, cap. 5, 1. 2; *Super Rom.*, cap. 8, 1. 1.

<sup>1251</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 58, a. 5; q. 65, a. 1; *De virtutibus*, q. 5 a. 2.

came to pervert the individual's judgement concerning the goal, if these states are not removed first.<sup>1252</sup> the existence of *liberum arbitrium* in these states is defended by the simple fact that human could have avoided them by the choices she had made, when she was not determined by them yet.<sup>1253</sup> In his later writings, Aquinas mentions the possibility to resist any such inclination (at least during the earthly life) during its existence too,<sup>1254</sup> given the fact that it never comes to determine all the aspects of a human being. But even if I arrive to choose a good act despite my contrary affective inclinations, I cannot do it in a way a virtuous human would.<sup>1255</sup>

If the decision making corresponds with what was described above, why to speak about the contingency *ad utrumque* in the case of *liberum arbitrium*? Well, contrary to other active powers, in the case of the nature of *liberum arbitrium* there is typically no preponderance of the tendency vis-à-vis this or that object of it: abstractly speaking, many different entities related to the goal can be more or less equal from its viewpoint. But that does not mean that the particular subject of this power, or even the particular state of this power, is without any such preponderance. Similarly, while (abstractly speaking) the reason can conceive anything from any perspective and there is nothing then that could not be considered attractive and therefore chosen, that is not to say that all these perspectives (and choices) are always available to the human at any moment, no matter her dispositions. As Hume once noticed, it is not so much to suppose that under normal circumstances, my morally and intellectually outstanding lifelong friend *cannot* decide to try to assassinate me without any reason and a reasonable chance to succeed at all; or, if you want a more ordinary example, the will of professionals assuring the execution is generally not considered less reliable than the other executing tools.<sup>1256</sup>

I believe that by accepting this rather banal observation concerning real-life choice making, the mystery of the truth-makers of the so-called counterfactuals of freedom<sup>1257</sup> can be

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<sup>1252</sup> “*de peccato nullus potest poenitere, nisi vel passione cessante, vel habitu remoto, quo malum finem eligebat.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 7, q. 1, a. 2, co.; d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 95, n. 3.

<sup>1253</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5.

<sup>1254</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1, arg. 5 and ad 5; q. 10, a. 3, arg. 2 and ad 2, but already *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 10, co. which seems to be much more nuanced than later *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 95, n. 3. *De malo*, q. 6, co. argues just by the possibility to remove the influencing affective state too.

<sup>1255</sup> “*aliquis antequam habeat virtutem, operatur actum virtuosum; aliter tamen postquam habet virtutem. Nam antequam habeat virtutem operatur quidem iusta sed non iuste, et casta sed non caste; sed postquam habet virtutem, operatur iusta iuste, et casta caste.*” *De malo*, q. 2, a. 4, ad 11, cf. *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 2, l. 4.

<sup>1256</sup> Cf. HUME, DAVID, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sec. 8, 70, (p. 45).

<sup>1257</sup> For a most brief introduction into “grounding objection”, cf. for ex. GRANT (2019), p. 156 – 157, for a more elaborated presentation including its historical Báñezian form, cf. MATAVA (2016), p. 131 – 168, for different ways of answering the problem within Molina and Jesuit tradition, see DVORÁK (2014).

peacefully dispersed. To address just one of its historically most famous examples,<sup>1258</sup> if fleeing David finds a refuge in a town which is ruled by some treacherous spineless men, you do not (and neither God does) need any “super-comprehension”<sup>1259</sup> to know that they would hand him over to Saul, should David be there when the king arrives with his army. It is about as foreseeable as the natural phenomena like the boiling of the water heated at one hundred degrees Celsius. Speaking from the viewpoint of purely logical possibility, the things *can* evolve in a different way: you can change one of the normally presupposed conditions, like the atmospheric air pressure or the absence of another significant army-force, and neither the water boils, nor David is betrayed. God can even make a miracle that impedes the natural effect of heat like in the case of three young men in the furnace<sup>1260</sup> or instantly turn criminals into saints, like in the case of Paul of Tarsus.<sup>1261</sup> None of this changes the fundamental truth of the propositions “Water boils at hundred degrees” and “These cowardly men betray David, if they are forced”, true under the condition of the tacit clause “under the humanly normal circumstances”. Aquinas himself works with the notion of “according to the disposition of lower causes” that he finds useful notably in his treatment of the so-called “prophecy of commination”.<sup>1262</sup> When Jonah informs the citizens of Nineveh about their coming doom, his assertions are truthful despite the LORD’s decision to spare Nineveh in the end.<sup>1263</sup> He does not announce an irrevocable decision of the Highest Cause concerning the future, but, much more humanly, he is speaking about what is to be according to the actually existing disposition of lower causes (recall once more Aquinas’s opinion about the basic sense of the modal notion). Notice that the Ninevites themselves seem to have understood the prophecy in a similar way: it has not motivated them to the desperation or to the desertion of the city, but to the immediate radical imploration of the LORD to change their fate. Jonah himself confesses to have feared that the things would actually evolve this way.

#### II. 4. 3. The choice reveals the agent

As you can see, in the normal decision making there is no originally indifferent subject that would be simply moved to one direction by an external factor. Yes, the choices are the agent’s

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<sup>1258</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 23, 10 – 13.

<sup>1259</sup> The divine way of knowing the entity in a deeper way “than that in which it exists in itself” (MATAVA (2016, p. 144) quoting Freddoso’s translation of MOLINA, pars IV, d. 53, m. 1), see MATAVA (2016), p. 148 – 149.

<sup>1260</sup> Cf. Dan 3, 17ff.

<sup>1261</sup> Cf. Act 9.

<sup>1262</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 174, a. 1; *De veritate*, q. 12, a. 10; a. 11, ad 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 46, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 2, arg. 3 and ad 3; *Super Mt.*, cap. 1, l. 5; *Super Heb.*, cap. 6, l. 4; *Super Rom.*, cap. 3, l. 1.

<sup>1263</sup> Cf. Jon 3, 2 – 4, 2 (compare with Ezk 33, 13 – 16).



responses to particular external factors, they would not exist without the latter, and they would be different, should the latter be different. But should the agent be different, they would be different, too. As Cook points out, it is the complete self of the agent that determines the particular answer to the external stimuli.<sup>1264</sup> As such, this answer reveals who the agent is: given the fact that the particular form of this complete self is determined by an indefinite number of this agent's own acts, it also reveals whom the agent has made from herself then. In fact, the evaluation of the agent according to her choices is much more appropriate here than it would be in the case of the libertarian free will: in the latter case, the particular choice says nothing about its subject apart the fact, that she did it and therefore was able to do it.

It can be argued that this aspect of self-construction is weakened and even disappears, as we go back to the initial activities of the subject. And it could be argued that given the determinist relation between these initial stages and all that follows, all the complex structure that is based on them should be considered just a reflection of something exterior to the agent. But for Aquinas, not even the initial state of the creature is indifferent – it is the state of nothingness: I believe that the connotations that this state has in Aquinas's viewpoint do not need to be spelled out anymore (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 11). As we have already seen in the preceding chapter (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 12. 1.), in both the activity and the structure that founds it, Aquinas distinguishes two aspects: its perfection and its lack of perfection. Thus, as for the first aspect, any perfection achieved by the creature is a doing of God and he *is* therefore to be considered its cause in a much stronger way than the creature itself. Aquinas would eagerly agree that any good in man is indeed more the revelation of divine grace than the revelation of good deeds of man. “What do you possess that you have not received?”<sup>1265</sup> It rests that the good (a part of it, anyway) also reveals man's subordinate causality, his relative *causa-sui*-ness we have spoken about. As we have seen, that still means that the voluntary agent contains much more of the explanatory principles of her acts (here, the good acts) than any other creature. Consequently, it is possible to evaluate the agent according to these acts (even if God is to be praised for them much more than the agent herself). In contrast, as for the second aspect, any lack of perfection can be finally traced back to the original nothingness of the creature and in this sense, it reveals its deepest nature, i.e., what it is if left to herself.

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<sup>1264</sup> “In other words, the total “I” in all its ineffable individuality will be the determinant in the last analysis of the suitability of any given object in the order of specification; it will do this as dispositive cause vis-à-vis the inclination(s) of the will. Thus, in any moral judgment, ... the disposition of the subject in its most intangible depths will account for the decision and election finally made.” COOK (1996), p. 71.

<sup>1265</sup> 1 Cor 4, 7, cf. *Super I Cor.*, cap. 4, l. 2.

Nothing attractive, nothing good. The full consideration of the second aspect needs to wait for the final chapter of this book.

## II. 5. The most powerful under God

Until now, Aquinas's conception of freedom seems to do quite well on the determinist background. If it is so, why does he find so essential that human free choice cannot be moved with necessity by any creature?<sup>1266</sup> It seems that such a possibility should not bother him. Two different questions of unequal importance for our topic must not be confused here: the question of necessity excluding the freedom of choice and the question of the possibility of infallible (even if not necessarily permanent) control of human volitions by creatures. Aquinas denies both and it happens that the objectors against the freedom of choice use the arguments supposing the possibility of infallible control: but that does not mean that in Aquinas's view too, the "moving with necessity" included in the latter case includes automatically the necessity concerned in the former case.

Which is the necessity that would eliminate the freedom of choice according to Aquinas? My argumentation was supposed to show that it is not the necessity given all the imaginable factors including God's immediate causation: as we have seen, this kind of necessity is compatible with the possibility to be otherwise in the basic sense of the term (cf. chap. 2. I. 2. and chap. 3. II. 6 – 7.). In contrast, the freedom in any relevant sense requires the non-existence of the necessity in the sense of violence (cf. chap. 2. III. 2 and chap. 3. III. 1. 3.). As we have seen, this kind of necessity is excluded by the very nature of will conceived as a capacity of internal inclination: any movement of the will is an act of internal inclination and as such, it is not violent in the narrow sense of the term. As for the violence in the broader sense of the term (such as applied at the decision which is made because of a gun pointed at one's head), according to Aquinas it does not eliminate the freedom of choice:<sup>1267</sup> in itself, this factor does not imply that there is just one kind of choice that can be made – while most of humans would obey in such a situation, some would prefer to fight or die.

Nevertheless, Aquinas is clear about the fact that the violence is not the only necessity that must be excluded, should the choice be free and morally accountable.<sup>1268</sup> Contrary to the

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<sup>1266</sup> Cf. my footnote 1238.

<sup>1267</sup> See I. 3. 3.

<sup>1268</sup> *“quidam posuerunt, quod voluntas hominis ex necessitate movetur ad aliquid eligendum; nec tamen ponebant quod voluntas cogereetur. Non enim omne necessarium est violentum... Haec autem opinio est haeretica: tollit enim rationem meriti et demeriti in humanis actibus. Non enim videtur esse meritorium vel demeritorium quod aliquis sic ex necessitate agit quod vitare non possit. Est etiam annumeranda inter extraneas*

libertarian interpreters, I argue that the non-violent necessitation that he excludes is only the natural necessitation. To prevent a misunderstanding: Aquinas's natural necessity is a narrower notion than physical determinism. The blooming of a tree may be determined by the synergy of physical factors – yet it is a paradigmatic example of the contingent event for Aquinas because, depending on circumstances, it can both happen and not happen.<sup>1269</sup> In contrast, something is naturally necessary, only inasmuch it happens no matter the circumstances. Contrary to the kind of necessity, which is implied by simple determinism, the extension of the natural necessity to all the voluntary acts would imply exactly what Aquinas says that the necessity he speaks about would imply: it would exclude the utility of any exhortation, punishment etc.<sup>1270</sup> The determinism allows the existence of a reasonable conviction that these social practices will determine that most of the people behave in the required way, which makes their performance reasonable. In contrast, the natural necessity of volitions would make those activities foolish: people would behave as they behave, no matter what.

Now, the notion of the natural necessity can be qualified differently: in the second chapter we saw that “no matter circumstances” do not normally include the cases of divine miraculous intervention; in this subchapter, we have already seen that for Aquinas the will has the natural necessity of volition of the ultimate goal, provided that it is thought about (there is no freedom of specification concerning this object), but not absolutely speaking (there IS the freedom of exercise). Analogically, depending on the viewpoint the behaviour of animals can be considered as contingent (it depends on circumstances) or naturally necessary (the judgement concerning the object of their apprehension is naturally determined, at least concerning its most basic elements). Now, should all the objects of will awake a naturally necessary response in the same way as the ultimate goal does, the very Aquinas's notion of *liberum arbitrium* (although not the notion of freedom of will) would be eliminated. We have seen the way in which Aquinas excludes the possibility of such universal necessitation, his argument excluding the natural necessitation of the will by any particular good. Given the fact that the universal good is proposed to the will only by God (be it in the sense realised by the constitution of its nature, or in the sense concerning the beatific vision), no creature can move

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*philosophiae opiniones: quia non solum contrariatur fidei, sed subvertit omnia principia philosophiae moralis.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co.

<sup>1269</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 7; q. 23, a. 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 67, n. 6; lib. 3, cap. 72, n. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13, ad 1... See chap. 2. III. 1 and chap. 3. II. 2 – 7.

<sup>1270</sup> “*Si enim non sit aliquid in nobis, sed ex necessitate movemur ad volendum, tollitur deliberatio, exhortatio, praeceptum et punitio, et laus et vituperium, circa quae moralis philosophia consistit.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co., cf. *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, s. c. 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 85, n. 11; *STh.*, I, q. 83, a. 1, co.

it with necessity via any object.<sup>1271</sup> In the impossible case that it could, the type of resulting volition would be reducible to (and therefore conform with) the nature of willing subject: it could never be considered bad then and the moral discrimination would become impossible; it would also lack the specific *causa-sui*-ness of acts of *liberum arbitrium* as we know it (as was the case of volition of the ultimate goal).

What about the causation of volition by the direct influence of the will, in the way the Garfield's vision of lasagne is caused by directly moving his head by a mechanical force? Aquinas is convinced that it is impossible, since the only entity that can move an interior inclination in this way is the active power to perform this inclination and the agent-source of this active power (the generator). In the case of immaterial beings (including human souls) who are the subjects of the will, only God can be the latter.<sup>1272</sup> This conviction is based on Aquinas's conception of immateriality which is the necessary condition for the existence of intellect and will as he understands them.<sup>1273</sup> A contrary opinion ultimately implies the denial of the very base of freedom (the nature of these faculties) in his view then: those who subjected human volitions to the necessitating influences of stars were unable to see the fundamental difference between the intellect and the sensorial faculties.<sup>1274</sup> Now, let us suppose that the celestial body was somewhat directly involved in the production of human soul after all: would its direct necessitation influence eliminate the freedom of choice, as Aquinas's objectors regularly suggest? I believe that it would, provided that it would be really naturally necessitating: in such a case, the content of the intellectual counsel determining the

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<sup>1271</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 6, co., *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 106, a. 2; q. 111, a. 2.

<sup>1272</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 6, co., *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 106, a. 2; q. 111, a. 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 88. For the question of producing of immaterial beings, see chap. 2. I. 4., for general consideration of the impossibility of the creation by creature, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 45, a. 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 20 – 21; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 4; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>1273</sup> “*Ex hoc enim quod anima humana universales rerum naturas cognoscit, percipit quod species qua intelligimus, est immaterialis; alias esset individuata, et sic non duceret in cognitionem universalis. Ex hoc autem quod species intelligibilis est immaterialis, perceperunt quod intellectus est res quaedam non dependens a materia; et ex hoc ad alias proprietates cognoscendas intellectivae animae processerunt.*” *De veritate*, q. 10, a. 8, co.; “*Operatio enim cuiuslibet rei est secundum modum substantiae eius. Intelligere autem est operatio penitus immaterialis. Quod ex eius obiecto apparet, a quo actus quilibet recipit speciem et rationem, sic enim unumquodque intelligitur, in quantum a materia abstrahitur; quia formae in materia sunt individuales formae, quas intellectus non apprehendit secundum quod huiusmodi. Unde relinquitur quod omnis substantia intellectualis est omnino immaterialis.*” *STh.*, I, q. 50, a. 2, co.; “*voluntas sit quaedam vis immaterialis sicut et intellectus, respondet sibi naturaliter aliquod unum commune, scilicet bonum, sicut etiam intellectui aliquod unum commune, scilicet verum, vel ens, vel quod quid est. Sub bono autem communi multa particularia bona continentur, ad quorum nullum voluntas determinatur.*” *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 10, a. 1, ad 3, cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 10, co.; *Q. d. de anima*, a. 2, ad 6; *Sententia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 5, n. 4 – 7; l. 12, n. 5 – 6; lib. 3, l. 4 (Leonina lib. 2, cap. 28).

<sup>1274</sup> “*Ponere autem quod voluntas hominum moveatur ex impressione caelestis corporis sicut appetitus brutorum animalium moventur, est secundum opinionem ponentium non differre intellectum a sensu.*” *De malo*, q. 6, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 15, q. 1, a. 3, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 115, a. 4, co.; I-II, q. 9, a. 5, co.; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 10, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 85, n. 18; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 14.

choice would be naturally necessary in the same way as the influence of the celestial body (or any other purely natural agent) is. But such an option is difficult to conceive: Aquinas remarks that not even the material entities in the sublunar sphere are necessitated so by these celestial bodies – the proverbial blooming of tree can be impeded, no matter what the Sun does.<sup>1275</sup>

Contrary to the natural necessity implying necessitation by stars, the infallible moving of the will by intellectual agent – God – easily preserves the contingency of decisions (i.e., the decisions are different depending on circumstances, they are not the same no matter what). But could an angel not assure the same? I believe that he could, if he could move the will in the way God does it. Aquinas mentions the opinion of Avicenna who is said to have held a similar view. According to him, higher spiritual creatures *are* involved in the creation of the lower ones and can move them from inside then: this moving is supposed not to eliminate the freedom of choice for the very same reason God’s moving does not do it in Aquinas’s view.<sup>1276</sup> As said above, this option is metaphysically impossible (and heretic) for Aquinas which is probably the reason why he does not spend much time with the question of human freedom under this eventuality. In any case, I cannot recollect any text where he would explicitly state that Avicenna’s model would actually eliminate the freedom of choice of man, or any other statement implying that an infallible moving of human will by an angel would have some unwanted consequences of this kind.

Do not get me wrong here. I am surely not stating that the impossibility of the direct control of will by angels or demons has no importance for Aquinas: while I do not intend to spend the time necessary for the thorough textual argumentation concerning this point here, I am pretty sure that it has. The fact that nobody but God and me can decide about the outcome of my

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<sup>1275</sup> “*quia natura inferior est talis quae impediri potest, et deficere in minori parte; ideo impressiones corporum caelestium non recipiuntur in corporibus inferioribus secundum necessitatem, ut semper ita eveniat, sed ut in pluribus*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 15, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 86; *STh.*, I, q. 115, a. 6; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 9, ad 1; *De malo*, q. 6, ad 21.

<sup>1276</sup> “*quia ponunt animas humanas creari a Deo mediantibus intelligentiis, ponunt quod motores orbium causent ipsos motus voluntatis, praeter ordinem motus; ut Avicenna dicit in fine Metaph. suae, quod varietas operum voluntatis reducitur sicut in causam in conceptiones uniformes motorum caelestium. Nec tamen ponunt quod tollatur libertas electionis, cum impressio recipiatur per modum recipientis. Haec etiam positio falsa est et contra fidem, quae immediate animas humanas a Deo creari ponit.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 15, q. 1, a. 3, co.; “*secundum illos qui ponunt animam creatam ab intelligentiis (quod tamen fidei contrarium est), ipse Angelus vel intelligentia habet effectum intrinsecum voluntati, in quantum causat esse quod est intrinsecum ipsi voluntati; et secundum hoc Avicenna ponit, quod sicut corpora nostra immutantur a corporibus caelestibus, ita voluntates nostrae immutantur a voluntate animarum caelestium; quod tamen est omnino haereticum.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, co., cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 87.

moral endeavour<sup>1277</sup> and that in this sense, the *liberum arbitrium* is the most powerful entity under God,<sup>1278</sup> seems to be something essential for Aquinas’s Christian self-conception. As we have just seen, on the philosophical level he thinks that is the matter of metaphysical necessity that this is so: the nature of *liberum arbitrium* actually excludes any other direct mover. It is just that it is supposed to exclude it because of some antecedent conditions of its freedom, not directly because of its freedom itself. Compare the epistemic status that the impossibility of the direct control of the will by angels and the existence of the freedom of choice have in Aquinas’s view. The latter is a difficult question of metaphysics – somebody like Avicenna was mistaken about it. The former however is supposed to be the matter of evidence, as the existence of contingency is:<sup>1279</sup> if you deny it, in Aquinas’s view you are either the victim, or the morally corrupted author of some common sophistry.<sup>1280</sup>

## II. 6. Aquinas’s freedom in the confrontation with some contemporary arguments against compatibilism: a brief preview

In a dreamworld, where the addition of several hundred pages does bother neither the editor, nor the reader, something like a thorough discussion of the prospective of Aquinas’s account in relation to both historical and contemporary arguments used against compatibilist accounts of human freedom should follow. Given the state of the actual world, another path must be chosen. I assume that the reader has no need for me to provide her with the introduction into the Free will discussion because she is either already acquainted with it or can easily find it elsewhere.<sup>1281</sup> Also, I do not consider possible to adequately react to be it the most representative members of different ongoingly evolving lineages of arguments concerning this issue (not even to adequately present them), provided that this section is not to surpass any reasonable space-limits.<sup>1282</sup> In the following, I provide just a summarised version of the starting points from which Aquinas’s above-described account could confront the most

<sup>1277</sup> “*Si ergo aliqua creatura posset immutare voluntatem, posset aliquis iustificari vel peccator effici per aliquam creaturam: quod falsum est; quia nullus fit peccator nisi per seipsum, nec aliquis fit iustus nisi Deo operante, et ipso cooperante.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 9, s. c. 2, cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3.

<sup>1278</sup> “*Bernardus dicit, quod liberum arbitrium potentissimum est sub Deo.*” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, s. c. 2; a. 9, s. c. 1; q. 24, a. 8, arg. 5, inspired maybe by BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, cap. 10 (PL 182, 1019, according to editors of Leonina in *Opera omnia...*, t. 22, fasc. 3: *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 21 – 29 (1973), p. 623).

<sup>1279</sup> Cf. my footnote 804.

<sup>1280</sup> “*Ad huiusmodi autem positiones ponendas inducti sunt aliqui homines partim quidem propter proterviam, partim propter aliquas rationes sophisticas, quas solvere non potuerunt*” *De malo*, q. 6, co., cf. *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, co. *in principio*.

<sup>1281</sup> Cf. for ex. VIHVELIN (2018); MCKENNA & COATES (2021); FISCHER – KANE – PEREBOOM – VARGAS (2007).

<sup>1282</sup> Cf. my footnote 5. Even given the chosen methodological limitation of his approach to the matter, Furlong’s discussion of the consequence-style and the manipulation-style arguments takes about fifty pages, cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 34 – 85.

important incompatibilist styles of argumentation. Personally, I was never much impressed by any of these arguments: nevertheless, any impression that any of them is supposed to be definitively refuted in the end of this section is unambiguously wrong.

#### II. 6. 1. The garden of forking paths, the fatalism and the ultimate sourcehood

Some concerns can be addressed very briefly, since they were already answered elsewhere. The perception of the future as of the garden of forking paths is safeguarded by Aquinas's conception of modal notions (cf. chap. 2. I. 2.). There are actually "true" alternative possibilities in our future, provided that the "possibilities" are taken in their basic, common, daily-use-bound sense. It is only when you use the "possibility" in a rather uncommon sense (e.g., defined by the viewpoint of Predestination) that just one path remains. Even from this viewpoint, the perspective is radically different from what is ordinarily implied in the notion of "fatalism": contrary to the latter viewpoint, my every choice and action matters, it is even necessary for the constitution of the path I am going to take (cf. chap. 3. I. 1. 1.).

As for the intuition of being an ultimate source of one's actions, human *causa sui* is the explanatory principle of its activities in the sense none of its created determining factors is (cf. I. 4.). Its explanatory character is outmatched only by God: yet God is not the source of it in any sense we have experience with, if not analogically speaking (cf. chap. 1. I. 3.). Thus, the conviction that any common intuition concerning the sourcehood directly concerns also God's relation to my actions is rather counterintuitive. It must be admitted that the determinist causality of an angel would be a more real problem from this viewpoint: my former assertion (if correct) that Aquinas's compatibilism could have admitted it, if his conception of causation of immaterial entities did not forbid it (II. 5.), would imply a slight touch of revisionism vis-à-vis this intuition, except if the domain concerned by this intuition was said to be only the sphere of natural objects of human intellect (which does not include Angels) – which is not unlikely.

#### II. 6. 2. Consequence style arguments

Following Van Inwagen's *An Essay on Free Will*, one of the most popular ways of arguing against compatibilism has tried to pass this way: "If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequence of laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it's not up to us what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the

consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us.”<sup>1283</sup> Targeting physical determinism seen through the prism of a specific conception of causality, the argument can easily be adapted to concern any kind of determinism at all:<sup>1284</sup> e.g., the laws of nature and events in the remote past can easily be replaced by divine eternal causality, partially passing through the neo-platonically upgraded Aristotelian created agents. There were some concerns about the formal validity of the original form of the argument and repairs made by those who think that its principal idea is correct though.<sup>1285</sup> I will not dwell on these issues: if I understand it, the defender of Aquinas’s account can gladly accept the argument, while considering its conclusion inconsequential for the sake of its proponents. Indeed, there is a theologically important sense in which our present and future acts are “not up to a person’s will or exertion, but up to God, who shows mercy.”<sup>1286</sup> Yet, it is entirely different story to believe that this sense of “being up to somebody” (or its physicalist counterpart, for what it matters) is engaged, when we ordinarily speak about freedom of choice. In fact, it could be considered quite unbelievable: recall what was said concerning Aquinas’s conception of the basic sense of modal notions (cf. chap. 2. I. 2.) and of secondary movers (chap. 3. III. 1. 1. 1.). I confess not to being acquainted with the whole of the tradition of consequence style arguments: but I doubt that many of its contemporary proponents would like to state that it implies that there is no sense in saying that people die *because of* tsunami (since the event is determined by some antecedent factors that have not occurred *because of* the tsunami in question) or that the ability of a particular piece of metal to be in both solid and liquid state depending on circumstances can be in no way conceived for the determinist world – an imminent suspicion of the mistake in formalisation of these notions would be the price. Obviously, the examples of girls affected by a psychological disorder in relation to the choice of puppies<sup>1287</sup> are not needed to know that the tenable conception of the freedom of choice is not achieved by the combination of any random “because” and “ability to be in different states depending on circumstances” (after all, the same would be true about “the ability to be in different states independently of circumstances”). Yet, the proof that the determinist is *eo ipso* unable to offer such a conception is beyond the scope of the consequence argument, as well as the relation of its notion of “being up to somebody” to the common distinguishing between free agents and the others.

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<sup>1283</sup> VAN INWAGEN (1983), p. 16 and p. 56.

<sup>1284</sup> Cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 36 – 40.

<sup>1285</sup> Cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 37; VIHVELIN (2018).

<sup>1286</sup> Rom 9, 16 (I have slightly changed NAB translation to mimic Van Inwagen’s phrase).

<sup>1287</sup> Cf. MCKENNA & COATES (2021), 2.2.



### II. 6. 3. Manipulation style arguments & co.

I have already touched upon this kind of arguments while speaking about Aquinas's notion of natural openness of the moved in relation to some movers (see chap. 3. III. 1. 3. 4.): there I have already expressed the conviction that the pre-reflexive perception of this notion (or of the notion of its contrary opposite) can be the reason that is in an important measure responsible for the differences concerning the "intuitive" relation of different determinist factors to human freedom. In particular, I believe that it is the relation to this notion which explain the oddness many compatibilists (including me) can feel while listening to the story of Diana the goddess and her offspring whose difference from the normal individual born into the determinist world is difficult to be found otherwise.<sup>1288</sup> If you are one of them, make the following mental experiment: let us state that Diana is a spiritual substance that has presided over the begetting of any human individual we have ever known (in a way some Aquinas's angels do, cf. chap. 3. III. 1. 4. 2.) and her deterministic planning is a generalised matter. As for me, once I have got used to this image, I have felt no more concern for the freedom of the population of this universe than for the freedom of the population living in a purely physically determined universe. I presume that this is because I accepted Diana as a natural part of the world – and therefore as no threat for its natural features.

That being said, Aquinas's account has more to say than that, most notably in relation to the argumentation in the style of Pereboom's four-case argument concerning the poor individual Plum who is determined to kill White by the different determining factors: the pressing of the button on the high-tech device influencing his brain (case One), the neurological programming at the beginning of his life (case Two), communitarian educational practices in early childhood (case Three) and the state of the normally functioning determinist world in his childhood (case Four).<sup>1289</sup> The point is that there seems to be no significant difference between any two directly following cases and therefore no significant difference between the first (intuitively incompatible with Plum's freedom) and fourth. If you think that it is actually so, just recall the (true) reason why Aquinas thinks that the contingent effects can be infallibly controlled only by God (cf. chap. 3. II. 8. 2.). You will realise that the imaginary remote control of one human subject by another could hardly get along just with the kind of necessity *ex suppositione* that Aquinas would acknowledge as implied in the determinism; not even the remote control of the TV set can. To be more specific, to control Plum just on the basis of this

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<sup>1288</sup> Cf. MELE (2006), p. 184 – 195.

<sup>1289</sup> Cf. PEREBOOM (2007), p. 93 – 98; FURLONG (2019), p. 61 – 73; MCKENNA & COATES (2021a).

kind of necessity, the malevolent neuroscientist would need to control (or at least calculate with) *all* the causal factors (and their combinations) that could possibly encounter the former – otherwise his T-Rex would break the fence the first time a greedy fat-man unexpectedly shuts down the power. Only God or a God-like entity could control anything this way – which means that this is not the kind of control we have a lot of direct experience with. My remote control of TV works on another principle: the reaction of TV to the buttons on my control is (or at least I would wish that it is) a matter of what Aquinas would call natural necessity, or maybe rather the contingency *ut in pluribus* (cf. II. 5 and chap. 2. III. 1.) – the same particular stimulus implies the same reaction independently of (at least the most of the other normal) circumstances. Now, while some level of this kind of determination in relation to the willing or refusing of some objects is compatible with what we know (and what Aquinas knows) about the unimpaired function of mind (consider the normal mother unwilling to torture her child to death), in relation to other objects it is definitely incompatible with it. From Aquinas’s viewpoint, the level of control that is described in the manipulation arguments in relation to the activities like killing another person could not be achieved (if it could be achieved at all) without an important impairment of the normal ability of reason to perceive both positive and negative aspects of its object and to consider it from different viewpoints. This is something that we have experience with in the case of victims of successful propaganda, brain-washing or mental illness. The simultaneous assertion of this control and of the absence of any such impairing (which is essential for the argument’s ability to do its job) makes the controlled person in question a camouflaged square circle.

It is not the determinism (implied in all the figures of manipulation argument) but the impression of the impairment of the ability to choose as we know it (similar to the impression that the square circle must be circular) that makes the assertion of the freedom in the case of Pereboom’s remote control of Plum so counterintuitive. But if taken seriously, Plum’s situation in case Two (programming at the beginning of life) is even more different from case Four than case One is: the alteration (read “the damaging”) of his mental abilities required for assuring an imminent outcome is not as important as something that could assure both its own permanence and the outcome several decades later, no matter all the possible and possibly cumulative antagonist influences Plum could encounter during the time.

I confess that there was a time when cases Two and Four seemed closer to me, too: but it was only while I have lived under spontaneous impression that during the decades, the impact of the initial unnatural intervention would (or at least could) be mitigated by immersing Plum into the normal world, whose various influences would make his state in the moment of

killing White more normal than in case One. But inasmuch as this would be the case, the programmers could not determine Plum's final decision. Case Three is closer to Four than One and Two are, inasmuch as it does not introduce any sci-fi technics but mind-damaging procedures that actually inhabit our world. Still, if the result achieved by Plum's formators in his childhood implies that Plum, standing before the choice like whether to kill White or not, is determined to choose to kill *no matter what happens during the time preceding the decision*, his situation is essentially the same as in case Two. If, on the contrary, the killing is just humanly uncertain (even if in some measure predictable) outcome of the damage done in childhood, it corresponds to the phenomena that can be observed and when the moral responsibility of the individual can be questioned (as it would be if the same psychological state appeared for any other reason). Nevertheless, as we have seen (I. 4.), Aquinas's conception of freedom as *causa-sui-ness* allows to replace the question "Is he free/responsible or not?!" by the question "What is the measure of his freedom/responsibility?": while the social hammering of, say, racial hate against White into Plum's head mitigates the *causa-sui-ness* of this feature of his character, it does not eliminate it completely, provided that Plum's reason worked. Secondly, the assertion that any ordinary person in the determinist world is in relation to any of her choices in the relevantly same situation as Plum is questionable at least: while she is surely as determined as Plum, she is not necessarily determined in the way Plum is – her mind can be determined to function normally or even perfectly, not to an impaired state.

### **III. God of the chosen ones**

#### Introduction

While Aquinas's Holy Scriptures often consider God as a source of freedom of others (in very various senses of the term),<sup>1290</sup> they are not particularly overflowing with explicit assertions that God himself is free: I am not completely certain that there is none, but I cannot recollect any such passage at all. Maybe their authors have just felt no need to state the obvious. Concerning the attribution of acts like choice or election to the Divinity, it is quite different story though. Many entities are said to be chosen by the LORD (Abraham, Israel, Jerusalem,

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<sup>1290</sup> Apart the story of Exodus, cf. for ex. Jdg 3, 9.15; 5, 11; 6, 14; Job 39, 5 (sic!); Ps 55, 19; 66, 12; 106, 10; Rom 8, 21; 2 Cor 3, 17...

the king, Paul, all the believers in Christ etc.),<sup>1291</sup> the texts occasionally being more or less explicit concerning the weakness or even non-existence of positive motives for this choice on the side of chosen ones.<sup>1292</sup> God is also portrayed as behaving in a manner enabling the realization of a meaningful prayer (or even a discussion with him) in order to assure that he acts (or does not act) in a certain particular way: it is written that certain divine acts would have been performed, if such a human intervention had not occurred.<sup>1293</sup> From the human viewpoint at least, nearly nothing (particularly nothing bad) is settled in advance here: one can even hope that God will not actually perform the actions that he is saying to perform in the future; sometimes one can even reasonably count on it.<sup>1294</sup> That being said, God's answer to a prayer, be it the prayer of the most holy person, is either not granted, or, if granted, it is possible to be realised in humanly very surprising way.<sup>1295</sup>

Sketchy as they are, I believe that the most important outlines of the theological data that rule Aquinas's thought about God's freedom are provided here. Note that God's possibility of having, *ceteris paribus*, other effects than he actually has (or even of the creating of different possible worlds) is not an immediate part of these data: it belongs to them only inasmuch as it is implied by the fact that God is being said to actually perform the choices. Inutile to add that the Bible contains no speculative theory concerning the nature of divine (or any other) choosing.

### III. 1. Brief remarks concerning extrinsicist viewpoint

To keep this in mind is essential for evaluating what I take for Aquinas's approach to the question, as contrasting to the approach lately developed particularly by W. Matthews Grant<sup>1296</sup> and focused primarily on the compossibility of the simple necessary infallible first cause with multiple mutually excluding effects. We have already seen some of its outlines in the previous chapter (cf. chap. 3. II. 8. 3 – 4.). Regarding the mental states of God, Grant mentions two basic strategies to preserve all the attributes that the classical theism finds desirable: 1) God's mental states (like knowledge and volitions) concerning actual world are

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<sup>1291</sup> Cf. for ex. Dt 7, 6 – 7; 16; 17, 15; 1Sam 10, 24; Neh 9, 7; Ps 105, 6; 106, 23; Is 41, 8; Zach 1, 17; 2, 16; 3, 2; Act 7, 20; 10, 41; 13, 17; Mt 24, 31; L 18, 17; Rom 8, 33; 9, 11; 11, 7; Gal 1, 15; Eph 1, 4; Col 3, 12; Heb 11, 23; 1 Pt 2, 9; Ap 17, 14...

<sup>1292</sup> Cf. Dt 7, 7; 1Cor 1, 26 – 29; Jam 2, 5; Jdg 6, 15; 1Sam 9, 21...

<sup>1293</sup> "He would have decreed their destruction, had not Moses, the chosen leader, withstood him in the breach to turn back his destroying anger." Ps 106, 23 referring probably to Ex 32, 7 – 14, cf. Am 7, 1 – 6 or Jon 3, 7 – 10.

<sup>1294</sup> See the question of the prophecy of commination in the end of II. 4. 2., cf. also Jdg 10, 11 – 16; Is 38; 2 Sam 24, 13 – 16; 1 Kg 21, 21 – 29; Ezk 33, 13 – 16.

<sup>1295</sup> Cf. Jesus's prayer in Mt 26, 39par that Heb 5, 7 considers to be actually answered, see also the case of Abraham's intercession for Sodom in Gen 18, 23 – 32 and 19, 27 – 29, or categoric Ezk 14, 12 – 20.

<sup>1296</sup> Cf. most notably GRANT (2001), (2010) and (2019).

extrinsic denominations of God (much as “being known by Garfield” is an extrinsic denomination of Bucephalus), based on the relation that the actual world has to him; 2) all these mental states are in fact one intrinsic act of God (identical therefore with God), but their “being the knowledge or volition of (something) in this actual world” is just their accidental property (and ultimately just their extrinsic denomination) – the same act could be as easily the knowledge or volition of a different actual world or of no world at all.<sup>1297</sup> Grant decidedly opts for the first of these strategies (as in the case of God’s activities *ad extra*).<sup>1298</sup>

I concede that there are important theoretic reasons for this preference. The defender of God’s freedom of choice would like that there is a plurality of different possible volitive acts offered to God: if you say that no matter the result (actual world), God still necessarily performs the same volitive act, someone could argue that your defence of God’s freedom of choice has finished by denying it. Also, the alternative strategy consists in the denial of the object-essentialism of acts and is therefore undermined by the strong intuitive appeal of this opinion.<sup>1299</sup> It is true that this alternative could much more easily be accommodated with Aquinas’s unequivocal assertions that the volitive and cognitive acts are interior to their agents and that these God’s activities are identical with God:<sup>1300</sup> in addition, Aquinas indeed seems to allow the possibility of the same act to be the knowledge of different things in the case of the natural knowledge of angels.<sup>1301</sup> But as we have already partially seen in the previous chapter (chap. 3. II. 8. 3 – 4.) and we shall see it more extensively in the chapter that follows (chap. 5. I.), there is neither the need, nor the possibility to use this model in the case of Aquinas’s God anyway.

As for Grant’s extrinsicist alternative, it seems quite counterintuitive to me to reduce the differences between the relevantly different cognitive and volitive states to mere different extrinsic denominations of the subject of these states: as Aquinas, I tend to think that Garfield’s knowledge and love concerning lasagne is at least as real property of him as is his fatness and I consider difficult to believe that Garfield’s familiarisation with Bucephalus in fact does not imply any change in Garfield, if not of some similar type as in Bucephalus. But I do not insist on this point. In contrast, I dare to insist on the fact that the utilisation of a

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<sup>1297</sup> For the place of the latter option in the Thomist tradition, cf. GRANT & SPENCER (2015), p. 42 – 56. More recently, Widerker and Zemach have argued for a similar model in the case of God’s knowledge, using the contributions of the structuralist gnoseology, cf. WIDERKER & ZEMACH (1989), p. 117 – 120.

<sup>1298</sup> Cf. most notably GRANT (2019), p. 56 – 97 and 143 – 150.

<sup>1299</sup> Cf. GRANT (2019), p. 82.

<sup>1300</sup> Cf. my footnote 823.

<sup>1301</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 57, a. 3, ad 3; *Quodlibet VII*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2 – 3. According to Aquinas, the angelic intellects contain all the perfection that is naturally possible for them from the very beginning of their existence. Does it mean that the Devil either already knows my future sins, or will never know them at all? No because the ideas that he possesses from the beginning become the knowledge of my sins only when my sins come to pass.

similar model could do rather a bear's service to the libertarian project. If the only difference between my choice of *A* and my choice of *B* consists in the different context of my entirely same inner state, my choosing of *A* rather than *B* is determined by the state of my context – and I am not sure whether this is something that any libertarian would like to hear. If such a situation is to be compatible with the libertarian freedom of the choice between *A* and *B*, I would say that that the subject would need to have some previous control over the determining context – a control that is not ultimately undermined in the same way as was the choice between *A* and *B*.

Now, it is true that God is traditionally considered to be in control of what happens in the world – the determination of his volition by the actual world could be acceptable then (except that one would await rather an inverse relation). But Grant himself admits in one of his older articles that in this account, it is difficult to see how such divine control of the world could be possible: nothing in the state of God predetermines anything in the state of the world. It seems that the same objection must be extended to God's very volitions of the world, then. Grant proposes “a provisional response” by the reduction of this problem to the problem of the control of libertarian free agency: for the exact same reasons it is difficult to see, how the libertarian agent is in control of her decisions. But we admit that she is in control, so why not to make a similar admission in the case of God?<sup>1302</sup>

First, I would remark that rather than a viable answer, the attribution of the control to the libertarian free will is a problem of its own right. I know what the control means in the case of the hand on the steering wheel controlling the car: under the given circumstances, the overall change of direction of the car is implied by the position of steering wheel which is itself implied by the movement of my hands. If the same movement of the wheel could have resulted in two opposite changes of direction, or if the wheel could have moved differently without any change in the movement or the position of my hands, I would say that the car was out of my control (and decline any responsibility of eventual accidents). On compatibilist account (like the one that I tried to present in the previous subchapter), the will is like the wheel of a well-functioning car and the notion of control can be clearly applied. The cost of this clarity is the difficulty with pretending that the will has the ultimate control over its decisions. Its pre-elective state both determines its choices and is unquestionably ultimately out of its control because this state is caused by some exterior factors that exist independently of the will. In contrast, on libertarian account the relation of the will to its choices seems like

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<sup>1302</sup> Cf. GRANT, (2010), p. 44, n. 53 referring to O'Connor's “agent-causes”. Unfortunately, I have not found any reflexion about this problem in Grant's last monography.

the situation of an uncontrollable car: the same state of the will/wheel permits radically different movements/choices. Contrary to the compatibilist, the libertarian can argue then that the voluntary decisions are not controlled by anything else, but she can hardly explain the very possibility of any control of these decisions by her will itself.

I am not saying that this problem is necessarily fatal for libertarian conception. The libertarian can always say that she just cannot apply the same notion of control that we use in the other cases, but that that does not mean that the will is not in control of its decisions in some another, further unexplainable way. If we suppose that the will is a unique ability and that the choice is both its effect and its immanent state, maybe we should not be surprised that one extra irreducible notion is needed to describe this relation. You understand that I do not encourage the pursuit of such a strange notion: in my view, one bird in compatibilist's hand is more than worth two in the libertarian bush – that is, I think that the two birds would not be much worthier, even if the libertarian caught them. I do not say that the libertarian cannot succeed in chasing them though, I just remark that this success should not be a priori considered as granted. But even by swallowing the libertarian control of will in these terms, the problem with Grant's God remains. I have supposed that the identity of choice is an inner state of the choosing subject – I have already mentioned the problem of what its extrinsicist conception implies for the libertarianism. But if this is so, then there is an essential difference between the libertarian control over choices and Grant's problem of God's control over the world: while the choice is an inner state of the willing subject, the state of the world is not any state of God (surely not on Grant's account), if not his extrinsic denomination – it is supposed to be God's effect. Now, even if I admitted that the indeterminism does not impede the control in the relation will-choice, I would surely deny that something similar can be said about, say, the relation of choice and its *exterior* effects. Inasmuch as my decision to walk is compatible both with my walking and my falling to the ground, I am not in control of my movements (more precisely, my decision is not in control of them) – otherwise I do not know, what should “not to be in control” mean. If there are any mutually impossible properties of my walking that are all compossible with my successful choice to walk (like the features resulting from the automatic adaptation to the properties of terrain, accidental twitches of muscles etc.), I would say that their precise state (as distinguished from their general feature “meeting the requirements of successful walking”) is out of this choice's control, too. In Grant's account, God's volition of *A* is impossible with non-*A*, but only because it is an extrinsic denomination that God has because of *A*: contrary to God himself, it is not any

source of *A*. As for God himself, he is compossible with both *A* and non-*A* – this is precisely the feature of Grant’s conception that was supposed to make it so sexy.

Does it mean that Grant’s conception necessarily fails in its effort to harmonize libertarianism and divine universal causality? I would not say so. Provided that its extrinsicist conception of choice is applied to God only, it permits the existence of the robust libertarian freedom in man: in this, it succeeds in much more unequivocal way than the general Molinist strategy, without any unwanted by-products that could be targeted by grounding objections etc. As for God, it must be not forgotten that all our speaking about him is analogical: the only question is which type of how strong or weak analogy is to be used. Aquinas reports the opinion that all the perfections that are attributed to God are attributed to him only inasmuch as he is the cause of their occurrence in creatures: God is called wise *just* because he is the cause of all the wisdom.<sup>1303</sup> While I agree with him that the philosophical reasons for this opinion are not cogent, I would not say that it contradicts directly the basic data of the biblical view – the latter could be theoretically read this way. Much more easily, the biblical image of choosing God could be considered as an analogical description of Grant’s God: the analogy in question would not be so weak as in the previous case. But I would like to stress the weakness of the actual motives that could be proposed in favour of such a conception. If there was any motivation for the defence of the compossibility of the entirely identical God with different possible worlds, it would be the libertarian conception of free choice. If I think that the freedom of choice requires that there is, *ceteris paribus*, a possibility of different choices, I commit myself to presume that God’s free choice of, say, Israel implies that God is compossible with different choices and thus with different possible worlds, including those where Israel is no more chosen than the Papuans. On the contrary, if I agree with the soft determinist that while freely choosing something, I could not, *ceteris paribus*, choose anything else (or with compatibilist stating that this impossibility does not preclude the freedom of choice), I cannot see any reason at all, why to think differently about God. But the inverse position seems to be opened to criticism as well: if one needs some robust libertarian freedom in the case of man, the satisfaction with the extrinsicist account in the case of the strongly asserted sovereign choices of God would be highly questionable: while it preserves the contingency of divine choices, it does it only by inverting their intuitive relation to their objects – Israel was not miraculously saved from Egypt because God decided so; God decided so because Israel was miraculously saved (without the least determination of his inner state by Israel, though). Again, I agree that pointing at the weakness of the analogy between God

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<sup>1303</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 2, co.



making a choice and a man making a choice is a possible way out of this objection. And I agree that Grant's conception allows to meet some important demands that are behind the success of Open Theism & co., and to satisfy them in much more intellectually interesting way. But I argue that what I take for Aquinas's conception of divine choice allows much more intuitive reading of his sacred texts.

### III. 2. Pure act – of choice

I believe that to understand Aquinas's view concerning the divine freedom of choice, the best option is to look at it in its broader context, represented by his argumentation against the statement that God acts by necessity and his discussion of the question whether he could have acted better than he did.<sup>1304</sup> Aquinas discusses two main variants of the necessitarian conception of divine activity. According to the first, the divine activity is determined by natural necessity, much in the way of a fire producing of the heat. According to the second, it is determined by a psychological or moral necessity: a supremely good God has to create the best of possible universes (no, Leibniz was not the first to come with this idea).

Let us begin with the second view. You can distinguish the goodness of an object of someone's doing (to feed one cat is a lesser good than to save millions of children from starvation) and the goodness of carrying it out (whether the cat is fed skilfully, wisely, with an undivided motivation etc.) Aquinas agrees that God cannot act better than he acts, if the "better" concerns purely the latter viewpoint.<sup>1305</sup> Concerning the goodness of the object, this is a more complicated story. If the "best of" means "better than any other", no "best of possible worlds" is conceptually possible for Aquinas, for very similar reasons as "the highest finite number". From the viewpoint of its ultimate goal (God), the actual world is the "best" in the sense that it could not be ordained to a better goal – but it seems that in this sense many (or rather all the) possible worlds are the best possible for him.<sup>1306</sup> Aquinas's view seems to

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<sup>1304</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 3; q. 25, a. 5 – 6; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 43, q. 2 – d. 44, q. 1, a. 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 81 – 83; lib. 2, cap. 23, 24 and 27; *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, co.; *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 5; q. 3, a. 15 – 16.

<sup>1305</sup> "*Si vero ly melius sit adverbium, et importet modum ex parte facientis, sic Deus non potest facere melius quam sicut facit, quia non potest facere ex maiori sapientia et bonitate.*" *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 6, ad 1.

<sup>1306</sup> "*ordo qui est ad finem, potest considerari vel ex parte ipsius finis; et sic non posset esse melior, ut scilicet in meliorem finem universum ordinaretur, sicut Deo nihil melius esse potest.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 2, co.; "*illud quod facit, est optimum per ordinem ad Dei bonitatem: et ideo quidquid aliud est ordinabile ad eius bonitatem secundum ordinem suae sapientiae, est optimum.*" *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 5, ad 15. Aquinas further applies this notion of optimality in the question of Jesus's humanity, Virgin Mary, or created beatitude, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 3; *STh.*, q. 25, a. 6, ad 4. The reading of Aquinas's occasional, more succinct assertions of the optimality of a created reality needs to take it into consideration.

allow also other types of a similar best-ness,<sup>1307</sup> but notwithstanding this, from the most of the viewpoints<sup>1308</sup> (and in the most intuitive sense of the term) any possible world is worse than some other possible worlds (as any finite number is smaller than some another finite number). While in the Leibnizian optic, the connexion of omnipotence, omniscience and supreme Goodness in God implies the creation of the best of possible worlds, for Aquinas it implies its impossibility: no limited being (i.e. anything that is not God) can use up all the power, creativeness and love of the Infinite – God could always do better.<sup>1309</sup> Aquinas also entertains the idea that for any mere creature, no matter how perfect, God could have created an equally perfect match.<sup>1310</sup> But most fundamentally, there is no need for God to create any world at all. Aquinas does not believe that the motivation for a particular choice (and the eventual moral obligation to perform it) comes from the mere fact that its object is, absolutely speaking, better than any other (even in the cases where it would be possible): as we have seen before, all of this is important only inasmuch as it is related to the finality of the subject making the choice. If a higher good is not necessary from this viewpoint, its preference is neither morally obligatory, nor psychologically necessitating. Now, God is the first efficient and the ultimate final cause of the universe. Both his existence and his infinite perfection is wholly independent of anything else. The creation of the world is related to the latter not as a means of its achievement, conservation or further magnification, but as its mere non-necessary expression. To repeat the comparison that I have already used, it is like a casually taken selfie of a happy couple: it is cute, yes; but there is neither psychological nor moral necessity to take it.<sup>1311</sup> To be exact, there is no psychological nor moral necessity, if you make the abstraction of the actual God’s free decision.<sup>1312</sup>

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<sup>1307</sup> *Exempli gratia*, no world could be better (or worse) from the viewpoint of the completeness of the ordaining of its elements toward the Goal (100%), or from the viewpoint of the essential goodness of its members, provided that they stay the same, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>1308</sup> For the most complete enumeration of these viewpoints, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 2, co. Between this text and *STh.*, I, q. 25, there might be a little evolution concerning the possibility of an amelioration of the order of the actual universe without creating any actually non-existing individuals (cf. *STh.*, I, q. 25, a. 6, ad 3 and maybe *ibid.*, a. 5, ad 3): but this question is without any relevant impact on our issue.

<sup>1309</sup> See the reception of this viewpoint in the *Catechism of Catholic church*, quoted in my footnote 33.

<sup>1310</sup> “*quantumcumque nobiliori modo aliqua creatura pura in Deum ordinetur aliquo modo ei assimilata, possibile sit aliquam aliam creaturam modo aeque nobili in ipsum Deum ordinari, et divinam bonitatem repraesentare*” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, co.

<sup>1311</sup> “*Intellectus enim divinus apprehendit non solum divinum esse, quod est bonitas eius, sed etiam alia bona, ut supra ostensum est. Quae quidem apprehendit ut similitudines quasdam divinae bonitatis et essentiae, non ut eius principia. Et sic voluntas divina in illa tendit ut suae bonitati convenientia, non ut ad suam bonitatem necessaria.- Sic autem et in nostra voluntate accidit: quod, cum ad aliquid inclinatur quasi necessarium simpliciter ad finem, quadam necessitate movetur in illud; cum autem tendit in aliquid solum propter convenientiam quandam, non necessario in illud tendit.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 82, n. 11, cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 3, co.

<sup>1312</sup> “*cum bonitas Dei sit perfecta, et esse possit sine aliis, cum nihil ei perfectionis ex aliis accrescat; sequitur quod alia a se eum velle, non sit necessarium absolute. Et tamen necessarium est ex suppositione, supposito*

But here, the objection of natural necessity attacks in force. God’s very beingness, his essence and all his attributes, including his immanent activities, are one and the same reality. In fact, their distinction is connected only with the distinction of human manners of speaking about this reality, without being based on any real difference in God himself<sup>1313</sup> (the difference between the Persons of Trinity being on a different level).<sup>1314</sup> As such, it seems that the essence of God must imply (in the strongest sense of the term) anything that he is and does – which is exactly what “natural necessity” is supposed to mean. The possibility to do otherwise is not the only thing that seems to be excluded by it; the objector questions also the freedom as such and the very voluntary character of God’s activities.<sup>1315</sup>

We have already seen one part of Aquinas’s answer to it. The first analogate of natural necessity, the natural agents like fire or the Sun, are characterised by intrinsic dependency of their inner principle of activity (nature) on an explanatorily richer type of principle. Unlike them, the voluntary agents enjoy a (more) complete interiority of the principles of their action which makes them free – *causa sui*. God being the entity that is necessary by itself and ultimate efficient, exemplar and final cause of anything (positively existing) else, he is *causa sui* par excellence. Therefore, he is free and therefore he is a voluntary agent.<sup>1316</sup> But this is not the only way for Aquinas to arrive to this conclusion. Two of the others are particularly interesting for our purposes. Firstly, God’s simplicity implies that he is identical with his own activity (sic!), which means that it cannot be transitive (apparently it would mean that God’s substance is something else than God) which means that it is immanent and there are only two types of such activities properly speaking: the cognition and the appetite – none of them exist in a natural agent like fire.<sup>1317</sup> Secondly, the Pure Act is fully actual, therefore fully self-intelligible. While speaking about his essence or nature, it must be not forgotten that from the

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*enim quod velit, non potest non velle, quia non potest voluntas eius mutari.*” *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 3, co., cf. *ibid.*, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 83.

<sup>1313</sup> “*omnes rerum perfectiones, quae sunt in rebus creatis divisim et multipliciter, in Deo praeexistunt unite. ...puta cum hoc nomen sapiens de homine dicitur, significamus aliquam perfectionem distinctam ab essentia hominis, et a potentia et ab esse ipsius... Sed cum hoc nomen de Deo dicimus, non intendimus significare aliquid distinctum ab essentia vel potentia vel esse ipsius...*” *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 5, co., cf. p. 146.

<sup>1314</sup> Cf. for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 27, a. 1, ad 2 and q. 28.

<sup>1315</sup> “*operatio Dei est eius essentia. Sed essentia sua est ei naturalis. Ergo naturaliter operatur quidquid operatur.*” *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 15, arg. 8, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 43, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 2

<sup>1316</sup> Cf. my footnote 1138.

<sup>1317</sup> “*duplex est actio: una quae manet in agente et est perfectio ipsius, ut videre: alia quae transit in exteriora et est perfectio facti, sicut comburere in igne. Divina autem actio non potest esse de genere illarum actionum quae non sunt in agente: cum sua actio sit sua substantia, ut supra ostensum est. Oportet igitur quod sit de genere illarum actionum quae sunt in agente et sunt quasi perfectio ipsius. Huiusmodi autem non sunt nisi actiones cognoscens et appetentis, Deus igitur cognoscendo et volendo operatur. Non igitur per necessitatem naturae, sed per arbitrium voluntatis.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 23, n. 5, cf. *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 15, co. Contrary to the volitions or emotions, Aquinas consider the natural appetite as a mere tendency to activity, not an activity itself.

point of view of this intelligibility, it is more similar to the intentional forms of human mind than to the natures of material beings. Therefore, by the very fact that something proceeds from God's essence, it proceeds from the intellectually grasped reality. But the proceeding from the intellectual grasp of reality is just what defines the voluntary activity in the strong sense of the term.<sup>1318</sup> Probably for this reason, Aquinas occasionally denies that there is any natural appetite in God.<sup>1319</sup> That being said, Aquinas agrees with the use of notion of "natural necessity" for the activities like the love of God by God himself.<sup>1320</sup> But even in these cases, at least one common condition of this modality is not fulfilled: the necessity in question is not the necessity imposed by any other entity, not even in a way the natural form imposes some necessities to its subject. God can be considered necessarily righteous: but he cannot be considered the slave of righteousness (cf. I. 3. 1).

To understand correctly Aquinas's argumentations mentioned in the previous paragraph, we must keep in mind that for him, any discourse about God is only analogic. Strictly (i.e., univocally) speaking, God is neither voluntary nor natural agent. Strictly speaking, God *is not* at all – if we use the "is" in any sense that can be univocally predicated about creatures.<sup>1321</sup> Thus, the question is not whether our notion of "voluntary" or "free" is completely adequate to express God's reality. It surely is not, none of our notions is. The question is whether it is either completely misleading, or, at least, fit to be replaced by some much less inadequate notion. Aquinas states that it is not. What he argues for is that we can make a right analogy between God and voluntary agents that we know. The situation can be compared to the drawing of geometrical entities. By drawing a line segment along the ruler, you do not aspire to make an indiscernible image of the line segment in the geometrical sense of the term. An indiscernible image of the line segment would be unidimensional, therefore invisible and therefore useless. Contrary to the true line segment, your drawing has some very little height and width, and it is probably not completely straight. But notwithstanding all this, you would insist that it is correct and useful representation of the line segment, much better than something that you could draw without a ruler, and, contrary to a zigzag stroke, a

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<sup>1318</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 23, n. 4; *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, co.; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 15, co. *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 1, co.

<sup>1319</sup> "*in Deo est voluntarius appetitus tantum, quia ipse determinat omnia et non determinatur ab aliquo: in Angelis autem voluntarius cum naturali, in quantum determinatur a Deo ad aliquid volendum naturaliter; in homine autem voluntarius cum spirituali [probably miswritten "sensibili" ?] et naturali; in animalibus sensibilis cum naturali; in aliis naturalis tantum.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>1320</sup> "*Respectu igitur illius principalis voliti, quod est sua bonitas, voluntas divina necessitatem habet, non quidem coactionis, sed naturalis ordinis, quae libertati non repugnat, ... non enim potest Deus velle se non esse bonum, et per consequens se non esse intelligentem vel potentem, vel quodcumque eorum quae ratio eius bonitatis includit.*" *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, co.

<sup>1321</sup> "*impossibile est aliquid praedicari de Deo et creaturis univoce.*" *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 5, co.

representation that is not false. *Mutatis mutandis*, Aquinas thinks that the notion of “voluntary” belongs to correct drawings of God. He does not deny at all that God can be compared to natural agents: while answering the arguments based on the Dionysian solar analogy, he just explains what the latter is supposed to mean, he does not say that it is wrong.<sup>1322</sup> But the notion of a natural agent implies a limitation that is absent in the notion of a voluntary agent: should they compete, it is the latter that gives the true representation of God.

This necessarily analogical character of thinking and speaking about God in earthly conditions must be not forgotten when it comes to the description of God via more complex analogies, like those that are involved in the conception of God’s free choices. Harm Goris once accused both parties of the controversy *De auxiliis* from the oblivion of the specifics of the discourse concerning Aquinas’s God (most notably the implications of his teaching about divine simplicity) just because they had dared to eagerly discuss the question of the “natural” order between different divine immanent activities.<sup>1323</sup> While I would like to hope that none of my interpreters will ever attribute me a similarly grave blunder, based only on a similarly poor familiarisation with my primary texts,<sup>1324</sup> I agree that the problem Goris is pointing to is potentially very dangerous. In fact, I suspect that Goris’s criticism itself comes from his falling victim to it after all. Provided that Aquinas is right that the origin of all our notions is to be ultimately found in our intellect’s cognizing *of creatures*, any of them, be it the “will”, the “knowledge” or even the “simplicity” itself, originally signifies some (more or less) complex entity.<sup>1325</sup> Goris is obviously aware of the fact that all these notions can be applied only analogically in the case of God, but he seems unaware of the fact that this application he is himself committed to requires the same possibility that he denies in the cases of meticulously elaborated structures of the post-tridentine scholastic: absolutely simple God can be somewhat truthfully (even if poorly) known via analogies of complex entities. The question concerning the relations of different cognitive and volitive acts of God is just the question of the structure of an intentional activity that could serve as a plausible analogy of Pure Act. The Bible implies that some of similar analogies are plausible, while others are not:

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<sup>1322</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1, ad 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 41, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; d. 43, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 15, ad 1; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 4, ad 1.

<sup>1323</sup> Cf. GORIS (1996), p. 80 – 82.

<sup>1324</sup> Judging according to his footnotes and bibliography, Goris sentenced both Molina and Báñez just on the basis of the secondary sources and the English translation of about one sixth of Molina’s *Concordia*, cf. GORIS (1996), p. 66 – 82, 307 – 308 and 313.

<sup>1325</sup> “*et sic non est unum eo modo quo alia, neque habet unum quasi participans ipso; sed tamen unum est, elongatum ab istis quae hoc sunt unum, in quantum est super unum quod invenitur in existentibus creatis*” *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 2, l. 6. Cf. chap. 1. I. 3.

regarding the (non)extermination of Israel in the desert, God *is like* somebody whose decision was influenced by an intercession of a best friend; regarding the election of some subjects, he *is not like* somebody motivated by antecedent qualities of the entity he is about to choose.<sup>1326</sup> Could it be that in the latter case he is like someone who chooses actually bad subjects because he foresees their future good actions? Or rather like someone who bases his choice on no motive regarding the chosen (one)? The complicated structures of scholastic theologies of predestination were supposed to answer similar questions concerning the plausible analogy of God in this regard. It could be surely said that in this case, there is no plausible analogy at all on this level of specification: one would need to be satisfied only with the general attribution of voluntariness to God then, resigning to any explanatorily stronger picture. But such a conclusion cannot be directly warranted by the simple assertion of divine simplicity or alterity. In the following chapters, I shall argue that Aquinas tries to provide an explanatorily stronger conception without falling victim to any undoubtedly unplausible consequence of such aspiration. Here I limit myself to finish by showing why the Pure Act can be considered as an act of *liberum arbitrium*.

As I have already argued (cf. chap. 3. II. 8. 3.), the analogy that Aquinas has in mind in this context is a choosing man. Not a man that has not chosen yet, being in potency and therefore imperfect. Not even a man that has already chosen, his choice being already done and, in this sense, something he can do nothing with. God is like a man in the very instant of his choosing: his choice emerges from his will, it just happens, he is just doing it, it is neither future nor past.<sup>1327</sup> Now, while the past choices are, as past, beyond the influence of the will (or anything else) and in this sense necessary (cf. chap. 2. I. 1.), Aquinas states that there is a possibility to choose otherwise which exists *simultaneously* with the choice. Once I have considered these assertions to be the most suggestive textual support for the libertarian reading of Aquinas's conception of (divine) will. I believe that after our common journey across Aquinas's conception of agents and modal notions, you are more immune against a similar mistake than my former self: while the only interpretation of this possibility explicitly excluded in the text by Aquinas is the compossibility of two opposite elective states, there is really no reason to think that the possibility that he has in mind is the possibility *omnis ceteris paribus*, hard to be found elsewhere in his texts and incompatible with his explicit assertions

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<sup>1326</sup> See my footnotes 1292 and 1293.

<sup>1327</sup> “*actus divinae voluntatis semper sit in actu, et non pertransiens in futurum, semper est quasi in egrediendo a voluntate; et ideo manet libertas divinae voluntatis respectu ipsius. Unde potest dici, quod Deus potest non velle hoc; non tamen potest ut simul velit et non velit, vel ut nunc velit et postmodum non velit, accipiendo post et nunc ex parte voluntatis, quia mutabilis esse non potest.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 1, a. 1, co., cf. *ibid.*, d. 44, q. 1, a. 4, ad 4; *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, ad 10.

concerning agency. Indeed, at least on one occasion Aquinas explicitly relates this possibility to God's *liberality*.<sup>1328</sup> that means that different options are possible for God inasmuch as God is not obliged to perform his actual activity by his justice (and ultimately by his finality). This conception perfectly matches Aquinas's general views concerning the (root of the) freedom of choice that we have seen before, his theory of efficient causality and his assertion that only the possible from the viewpoint of *potentia ordinata* is possible for God in the fullest sense of the term. Aquinas's very explicit assertions concerning the fact that God's immanent states that depend on his choices (that could have been different) and his states that do not depend on them are actually the very same entity, their distinction coming just from the limited viewpoint of our earthly apprehension of them,<sup>1329</sup> is easily understood: in fact, the necessity of God's simple being and its possibility to be otherwise conceived this way are not in tension – the latter is actually an implication of the former.

Is such possibility to be otherwise sufficiently strong to safeguard the analogy of the freedom of choice? It seems to me that it is. Let us compare God and a choosing man. The particular act of choice is impossible both with non-choosing and with any other choice: inasmuch as he performs this act, the choosing man cannot (*in sensu composito*) perform anything else anymore than God. In both cases, this impossibility is not caused by the relation of the object of this act to the ultimate finality of the subject: taken in itself, the object of choice never necessitates human will (cf. II. 1 – 3) and as we have seen above, the same can be said about the relation of creatures to God's will. Also, the act of choice is not predetermined by the very nature of acting subject in the case of man. Depending on the viewpoint, you can either say the same in the case of God, given the aforesaid relation of creatures to his natural willing of himself, or just state that there is actually no nature preceding the divine choice, the divine nature being just different name for this very Act (I suppose that not even the most zealous libertarian would deny that the free choice is formally determined by *its own* individual

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<sup>1328</sup> “*actus praedestinationis aeternitate mensuratur, et non in praeteritum transit: et ideo semper eodem modo possibilis rationem habet, in quantum est ex liberalitate voluntatis divinae; sed ex parte effectus in praeteritum transit, et secundum hoc possibilis rationem amittit.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 4, ad 4, cf. also parallel *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 6, ad 3 and more general consideration in *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 5, ad 1, 2, 5, 6 and 13. Obviously, the “*liberalitate*” could be easily a misspelled “*libertate*” – but apparently neither Mandonnet nor Parma has found any sufficient support for this in the manuscripts.

<sup>1329</sup> Arg. 5 of above-quoted *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 1, a. 1 states that God's knowledge “*est ipsum esse ejus. Sed ipse non potest non esse. Ergo non potest non scire quod scit.*” Aquinas answers in ad 5 that “*licet esse et scire [the actual world] sint idem secundum rem, tamen scire sequitur voluntatem ut imperatum ab ipsa, esse autem non; et ideo esse suum non subjacet libertati voluntatis, sicut scire operativum creaturae.*” Cf. *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 5, ad 5 and ad 6: “*absolutum et regulatum non attribuuntur divinae potentiae nisi ex nostra consideratione: quae potentiae Dei in se consideratae, quae absoluta dicitur, aliquid attribuit quod non attribuit ei secundum quod ad sapientiam comparatur, prout dicitur ordinata.*” ... “*potentia Dei numquam est in re sine sapientia: sed a nobis consideratur sine ratione sapientiae.*” See chap. 2. II. 5.

identity). Finally, nothing, save God, can infallibly determine the human choice – and there is surely no agent at all determining the first agent.

To be brief, in its relation to creatures, Aquinas's Pure act shares practically all the relevant features of the act of choice – it could be considered as a Subsistent Choice. The only such feature that it misses is to have its origin in some potency that is compossible with its non-being: the Subsistent Choice lacks this dependency. As for myself, I would not count it as an argument against its freedom. It seems to me that the only freedom-corroborating property that any such potency has as a feature of choosing agent is the exclusion of the natural determination of choice. In the case of the agent whose only nature is his activity itself, this function has a place no more. The independence of electing God vis-à-vis the creatures is warranted by the non-necessitation from the side of an object and the same is true about the possibility to do otherwise: if God is like a choosing man who can do whatever he chooses to do and Judas's fidelity, taken in itself, implies no impossibility to be chosen, there is a sense in which God can realise the world where Judas does never betray anybody. The notion of *potentia absoluta* (cf. chap. 2. II. 5.) gains its content here.

The cost of the abovementioned conception is something that could be considered as a kind of weakening of the independence of God vis-à-vis the actual world: without any causal dependence on it, God is nonetheless impossible with its non-existence. I argue that given the theological data of the most widespread theism, this is not cost at all. During the last century, the immutable scholastic God has often been accused to be far away from the biblical Lord who appears to be touched by the relationship to his chosen ones. Without aspiring to resolve all these objections (or conceding that all of them are justified), we can state the following: while granting all the immutability, necessity and causal independence that an Aristotelian could desire, Aquinas's conception of God presents God's personal choices as having much more intimate place in the chooser's being than their creaturely equivalents have even in the case of the most fervent human relationship. While the latter are accidental perfections of their subjects (at best), God's free choice belongs to his very essence. "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands..."<sup>1330</sup>

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<sup>1330</sup> Is 49, 16 (King James Bible Translation).



## 5. Foreknowledge, providence and predestination

Your eyes foresaw my actions; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be. How precious to me are your designs, O God; how vast the sum of them!

*Psalm 139, 16 – 17*

But your providence, O Father! guides [the boat], for you have furnished even in the sea a road, and through the waves a steady path, showing that you can save from any danger, so that even one without skill may embark.

*Wisdom of Salomon 14, 3 – 4*

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.

*Romans 8, 28 – 30*

However, it is preposterous to speak of occurrence of events in time as the cause of eternal foreknowledge. And yet if we believe that God foresees future events because they are about to come to pass, what is it but to think that the occurrence of events is the cause of His supreme providence?

*Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, Book V, Prose III*

The whole order of the universe is for the first mover, namely for the unfolding of the content of the intellect and will of the first mover in an ordained universe. And therefore, it is necessary that all the ordering of the universe comes from the first mover.

*Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on Metaphysics, Book XII, Lesson 12*

## Introduction

At this stage of our journey, the question of divine foreknowledge should have already lost much of its traditionally troublemaking character.<sup>1331</sup> In the determinist universe, there is no principal problem with the infallible knowledge of the future – well, at least not for somebody who is equipped with the illimited knowledge and understanding of the present state of things.<sup>1332</sup> As for the freedom of infallibly (fore)known actions, the necessity implied by the infallible knowledge seems to be much less threatening to it than the necessity implied by the determinist causation: the compatibilist which is able to swallow the latter should be therefore able to swallow also the former. The same should be true concerning the defence of the antinecessitarian intuitions. There is no need to laboriously seek the precise formulation of the Ockhamist distinction between hard and soft facts<sup>1333</sup> and as for the question of truth-makers of counterfactuals of freedom, we have seen that it has quite obvious solution in this account (cf. chap. 4. II. 4. 3). The implementation of the notion of providential care and that of predestination seems also rather straightforward. For the following reasons I have decided to dedicate one full chapter to these topics tough.

As for the divine knowledge in general: first, Aquinas's explication of the divine knowledge of actual world provides one most massive textual argument for the determinist interpretation of this author. While the argument from the general conditions of efficient causality is composed of Aquinas's scattered statements concerning more or less directly this topic, the notion of the so-called "causal knowledge" is the stable way of Aquinas's answer to the problem whose discussion appears in about all his texts concerning divine knowledge. As such, it provides an important corroboration of interpretative views that were defended in the third chapter of this book.

Second, despite its massive employment, it has been argued that the theory of "causal knowledge" does not represent adequately Aquinas's view, being only one of its components at best. While some of the arguments proposed in favour of such account are rather funny, others have an indisputable initial plausibility. Questioning not only the theo-gnoseological argument for the determinist interpretation but the determinist interpretation as such, both types of arguments merit to be addressed.

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<sup>1331</sup> "if it were held that free will is compatible with causal determination, there would be no significant additional problem in reconciling free will with divine foreknowledge." HASKER (1989), p. 220.

<sup>1332</sup> By the illimited understanding of X I mean the cognition of all the implications of X.

<sup>1333</sup> The point is that while the implication by an antecedent uncontrolled "hard fact" (like the state of the physical universe) is supposedly incompatible with freedom, the implication by an antecedent "soft fact" (like the truth of a proposition concerning the future) is not. For a helpful introduction into this tradition, cf. most of the articles in FISCHER (1989).

Third, it has been argued that despite the misleading appearance, the problem of necessity implied by the foreknowledge is not just a feeble shadow of the analogical problem implied by the determinist causation, but an independent and equally dangerous threat for human freedom. It has also been argued that contrary to many of his followers, Aquinas was aware of it and treats the problem accordingly.<sup>1334</sup> I shall discuss both these assertions.

As for the providence: first, notably some of Aquinas's earlier statements concerning this topic have seduced some interpreters to the conviction that (young) Aquinas held the possibility of a failure of providence. I intend to show these readings mistaken.

Second and most importantly, the general features of Aquinas's conception of providence shall be presented as a necessary condition of understanding of the place of moral badness in the whole of Aquinas's vision of things.

Finally, Aquinas's view on the nature of predestination, and its relation to other divine mental acts needs to be clarified, if his position is not to be considered incoherently oscillating between the (semi-)Pelagianism and a theory of double predestination. This clarification is the content of the final part of this chapter.

One final introductory remark. While speaking about divine cognition, Aquinas uses most of the time the term *scientia* that suggests both the subjective and the objective certitude of the cognitive state that it designates: the intellect in the state of *scientia* is unable to doubt about its truth, and it cannot be false.<sup>1335</sup> It is quite an exclusive cognitive state: the disciplines that we call "natural sciences" today generally do not provide it. Not surprisingly, Aquinas does not make an exception from the common use of this term in a broader sense,<sup>1336</sup> but while predicating it about God, he is adamant about its strong meaning: divine *scientia* cannot be wrong, not only because it is divine,<sup>1337</sup> but because it is *scientia*.<sup>1338</sup> In the contemporary

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<sup>1334</sup> Cf. GORIS (1996), p. 53 – 99: "The basic error of the three, by now classical, main ways of approaching the problem of God's fore-acting, represented by Ockham, Báñez and Molina, is that each fails to distinguish the two problems at stake, and in particular to recognize that temporal fatalism is a problem by its own right. Aquinas will prove to be a better guide." (p. 98).

<sup>1335</sup> "*in nobis sunt quaedam potentiae et habitus cognoscitivi in quibus nunquam falsitas esse potest, sicut sensus, et scientia, et intellectus principiorum*" *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12, co.; "*Quidam enim sunt habitus intellectus, qui important omnimodam certitudinem ad completam visionem eius quod intelligitur, sicut patet de intellectu, qui est habitus primorum principiorum... Hoc etiam facit habitus scientiae, et sic talis habitus intellectus et scientia, faciunt certitudinem et visionem.*" *Super Heb.*, cap. 11, l. 1, cf. the comparison of different intellectual states in *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 1, co.; *STh.*, II-II, q. 2, a. 1, co.; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 6; *Expositio Posteriorum*, lib. 1, l. 44, n. 2 – 11.

<sup>1336</sup> Cf. for ex. the further discussed *scientia artificis* in *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 1; d. 39, q. 1, a. 2; q. 2, a. 1, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 66, n. 3; lib. 2, cap. 26, n. 6; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 8; a. 11, co.; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 5, co.; *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 10, l. 2, n. 23.

<sup>1337</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13, co.; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 17; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4; d. 40, q. 3, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12, co.; *In Symbolum Apostolorum*, pr.

<sup>1338</sup> "*contingentia enim videtur duplici ratione effugere divinam cognitionem. ... Secundo propter ordinem scientiae ad scitum; quia cum scientia sit certa cognitio, ex ipsa ratione certitudinis etiam exclusa causalitate,*

discussion, the “(prae)scientia” is generally rendered by “fore(knowledge)” rather than “(pre)science” and the “knowledge” is mostly understood as implying the truth of the known (as opposed to the “belief”) very much like the Latin term that it translates. In the following text, I follow this terminology: unless the contrary is obvious or explicitly stated, “knowledge” means *scientia* in its strong sense.

## I. Divine Knowledge

### I. 1. The knowledge of Artisan

Aquinas takes for granted and demonstrated that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the ultimately first completely immobile mover of the universe that was philosophically discovered by Aristotle (or maybe already by Plato).<sup>1339</sup> In this context, it is not only the knowledge of future events but the very knowledge of any logically non-necessary state of the actual universe that seems to be problematic in God’s case. After all, God is to be completely independent vis-à-vis anything else and by knowing something, the knower seems to be under the influence of the known because the state of his mind depends on the features of the known.<sup>1340</sup> The content of Aristotle’s own view on this topic was famously subjected to controversies – I do not intend to enter them. Be it anyway, one of the means that can be used to reconcile Aristotelian divine immutability and Biblical extensive divine knowledge of the world consists in turning the typical relation between the knower and the known: the divine knowledge in question is not caused by the known, but vice-versa. God does not know that the Earth is round because the Earth is round; the Earth is round because God knows that it is round. Divine knowledge of the world is similar to the knowledge that an artisan has about his artefact:<sup>1341</sup> inasmuch the state of an actual bed is determined by the idea of the bed that the artisan has established in his mind, the artisan knows the bed before the bed comes to be. In

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*requirit certitudinem et determinationem in scito, quam contingentia excludit, et quod scientia ex ratione certitudinis suae requirat determinationem in scito patet in scientia nostra, quae non est causa rerum, et in scientia Dei respectu malorum.” Super Sent., lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.*

<sup>1339</sup> See *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 1 (notably s. c. 2 and ad 3) – Aristotelian argumentation is to prove the properties of the Christian God who is already believed in. As an argument for the very existence of (something that everybody would call) God which is later identified as the God of Christian faith, it begins to appear only in *Contra gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 13. As for Aquinas’s attempts to reconcile Aristotle’s and Plato’s views concerning first mover, see chap. 3. I. 5.

<sup>1340</sup> “*Deus non habet in se potentiam passivam; haec enim est principium transmutationis, quae a Deo est procul. Ergo non perficitur aliquo alio a se. Sed perfectio cognoscentis dependet a cognoscibili, quia perfectio cognoscentis est in hoc quod actu cognoscit; quod non est nisi cognoscibile. Ergo Deus non cognoscit aliud a se.” De veritate, q. 2, a. 3, arg. 13, cf. STh., I, q. 14, a. 5, arg. 3.*

<sup>1341</sup> “*Deus habet cognitionem de rebus creatis per modum quo artifex cognoscit artificiatam, quae est artificiatorum causa.” De veritate, q. 2, a. 8, co., cf. the references in my footnote 1336.*

fact, it comes to be only thanks to this knowledge, this knowledge being therefore a (remote) cause of its existence. Now, in the case of the human artisan this kind of knowledge is obviously limited from multiple viewpoints: it does not concern all the features of the bed; as for the features that it concerns, the measure of its correspondence with their realisation in the actual bed can be various; most importantly, to establish his idea of the bed which is to be crafted, the artisan needs some theoretical knowledge (e.g. that of material, geometry, basic laws of physic and the needs of a sleeping person) whose achievement depends on the exterior world. The point of the explication of divine knowledge of the world by divine causal relationship to the world consists in the denial of all such limitations: God’s causal knowledge concerns all the features of its object up to its last detail; the correspondence of its effect cannot be but total; it does not depend in any way on any source outside God. To put it simply, God knows everything that is because he is the total cause (and not only the cause of some aspects) of everything that is.<sup>1342</sup> The determinist prerequisites of such theory are not difficult to grasp: if the divine causality is to grant any explanation of divine knowledge, this causality must be as infallible as this knowledge which – at least for the classical theism that Aquinas confesses – is absolutely infallible.<sup>1343</sup> Add the conviction about divine omniscience<sup>1344</sup> – and you will see why any unqualified version of the explanation of divine knowledge in the term of its being the cause of its (immediate) object is abhorrent for any libertarian worthy of his name.<sup>1345</sup> As for Aquinas, he seems to be far from such repulsion though – the explanations of divine knowledge in terms of the “knowledge of artisan” (*scientia artificis*) inhabits his treatises about divine knowledge with iron regularity.<sup>1346</sup>

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<sup>1342</sup> “*Cum enim [God] sciat alia a se per essentiam suam, inquantum est similitudo rerum velut principium activum earum, necesse est quod essentia sua sit principium sufficiens cognoscendi omnia quae per ipsum fiunt, non solum in universalis, sed etiam in singulari. Et esset simile de scientia artificis, si esset productiva totius rei, et non formae tantum.*” *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 11, co.; “...*in causis universalibus quae non sunt tota causa rei non potest particularare perfecte sciri. Sed Deus est causa omnium universalis, ita quod est perfecta causa uniuscujusque; et ideo se cognoscens, omnia perfecte cognoscit.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 36, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2, cf. *ibid.*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>1343</sup> “...*oportet omnem Dei cognitionem esse certissimam et infallibilem...*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 63, n. 4, cf. my footnote 1337.

<sup>1344</sup> “*Deus dicitur omnisciens quia scit omnia scibilia*” *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 7, ad 1; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 3 – 5; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 5 – 6 and 11; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2 – 3; d. 36, q. 1, a. 1.

<sup>1345</sup> Matthews Grant keeps the explaining of the divine knowledge of the actual world in the terms of divine causality (God knows it because he causes it), but in his account this knowledge IS NOT the cause of the actual world (only God is): the knowledge of this actual world is just an extrinsic denomination of God (or, alternatively, of his cognitive act) whose “existence” depends on the actual world, or, alternatively, differs from the actual world only in a way the Aristotelian *actio* differs from *passio* (see chap. 3. I. 1. 4.), cf. GRANT (2019), p. 145 – 155. While the term “causal knowledge” could also denote this kind of view without a doubt, in the remainder of this book I use it in the narrower sense – the knowledge which is the cause of its *immediate* object (for the notion of immediacy in question, see below I. 2. 2.). For the relation between Grant’s and Aquinas’s conception of divine activities, see chap. 3. II. 8. 3 – 4 and chap. 4. III.

<sup>1346</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 35, q. 1, a. 3; d. 36, q. 1, a. 1; d. 39, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 3 – 5 and 8; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 49, n. 2; cap. 50, n. 2ff; cap. 65, n. 2ff; cap. 66, n. 3 and 6; cap. 67, n. 4; cap. 68,

## I. 2. The questioning of causal explanation

Does it mean that there is no way in which a libertarian reader could resist the fact of the massive presence of causal conception of divine knowledge in Aquinas's texts? Well, she can try to show that the causal explanation is just one part of Aquinas's more complicated picture of this problem.<sup>1347</sup> Without denying that Aquinas's God is equipped by the vast artisanal knowledge of his creation, Eleonor Stump stated that this is not the only way of God's knowledge that Aquinas had worked with. The thing is that in Aquinas's view God knows some entities that he does not cause according to him – let the sin and God himself be two extreme examples of those.<sup>1348</sup> According to Eleonor Stump, this is enough to prove that the emphasis that was put on the causal explanation of divine knowledge by more classical Thomists like Leo Elders or Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange is guilty of the terrible flattening of Aquinas's view; it forgets the other element of this view, namely the notion of divine eternal seeing.<sup>1349</sup> Aquinas's name for the divine knowledge of the world “the knowledge of vision” (*scientia visionis*)<sup>1350</sup> seems to be quite encouraging (indeed, even realising) the application of some kind of “perceptual paradigm of knowledge” to God<sup>1351</sup> and his strong dependence on Boethius's *Consolation of philosophy* in this matter is another argument for the same conclusion: as both these authors put it, all the reality (including all the moments of time) is eternally present to the *eternal gaze* of God.<sup>1352</sup> The timeless infinity of this presence excludes any change that should bother the Immutable mover, yet it does not necessarily mean that the Mover causes whatever he sees – which is precisely what Boethius seems to seek to show in his defence of the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom.<sup>1353</sup> Now, “Aquinas takes the doctrine of divine eternity to be required to account for God's knowledge

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n. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 5, co.; a. 8, ad 1; a. 11, co.; *Quodlibet*, V, q. 1, a. 2, co.; VIII, q. 1, a. 2, co.; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 133; *De substantiis separatis*, cap. 14.

<sup>1347</sup> Cf. Stump's discussion of this topic in her *Aquinas*, p. 159 – 187.

<sup>1348</sup> “...on Aquinas's view, there are many things God is said to know that no one supposes Aquinas takes God to cause. To begin with, there is God's knowledge of himself, his nature and existence, and of necessary truths ... if we restrict the discussion to God's knowledge of temporal things in the actual world ... for example, Aquinas says, ‘it does not follow that God is the cause of evils because he knows evils.’” STUMP (2003), p. 160 – 161, quoting *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 15, ad 1.

<sup>1349</sup> Cf. STUMP (2003), p. 185 – 187.

<sup>1350</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 4; d. 39, q. 1, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12; *STh*, I, q. 14, a. 9 and 12.

<sup>1351</sup> Cf. STUMP (2003), p. 185, riposting against Shanley's rejection of such possibility in SHANLEY, BRIAN, “Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas” in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1997), p. 197 – 224, p. 205 (quoted according to STUMP (2003), p. 511 and 593).

<sup>1352</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5 and *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12 (concerning God's knowledge of future contingent entities) where Aquinas explicitly quotes the final book of the Boethius's *Consolation*, cf. BOETHIUS, *Consolation of Philosophy*, book V, prose 6.

<sup>1353</sup> Cf. BOETHIUS, *ibid.*, prose 3 (questioning the viewpoint of those who state that foreknowledge is not the cause of its object, but vice versa) and 4 (defending the first part of this opinion, without accepting the second).

of future contingents; and the point of the doctrine is to support the claim that all the temporal things – whether they are past, present, or future with respect to us – are in fact present with respect to God. But it is hard to understand why God’s mode of cognition would require its objects’ presence, unless we recognize that Aquinas’s attempt to parse divine epistemic contact with created things in terms of God’s as it were ‘seeing’ them.”<sup>1354</sup> To be brief, it seems that Aquinas’s statement concerning divine knowledge are far too complex to allow its satisfactory explanation in the terms of divine determinist causation.

### I. 2. 1. The uncontroversial limits of causal explanation

Before answering the hard core of the preceding argument, I would like to make a brief point concerning what can be reasonably call into question – and what cannot. First of all, I do not know any (be it alleged) disciple of Aquinas who would state that the relationship of the divine knowledge to ALL its object is causal. As for Stump’s quoting of Elders as an example of similar position,<sup>1355</sup> I firmly encourage the reader to read Elders’s pages about divine knowledge in the quoted book and judge by herself, whether Stump’s attributing of such blunder to this venerable scholar is at least remotely justifiable. There are two areas of divine knowledge the independence of whose objects on divine causality cannot be reasonably called in question: divine self-knowledge and divine knowledge of logical possibilities of creation.

Concerning the divine self-knowledge, Aquinas’s point is difficult to be mistaken for anything else: God’s illimited actuality makes him unlimitedly known by himself.<sup>1356</sup> As I have already mentioned (cf. chap. 3. I. 1. 3.), for Aquinas the intelligibility is a property that follows the beingness taken as such: it is the unintelligibility that needs to be explained by an obstacle, namely by some limitation of the being. As for God, he enjoys in unlimited measure the manner of being thanks to which my intellectual representation of stone is actually my knowledge of the stone. He has by himself the property that the stone acquires thanks to the human intellect that cognizes it; he has it not by an act of self-reflection (as human intellect returning to itself) but by his very being.<sup>1357</sup> God is not the only entity in Aquinas’s universe

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<sup>1354</sup> STUMP (2003), p. 185 – 186.

<sup>1355</sup> “To begin with, since on Elders’s sort of interpretation, God’s knowledge is always the cause of what God knows, it follows that God does not know human evil if he does not cause it.” STUMP (2003), p. 161, referring to Elders’s position expressed in his *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, New York, E. J. Brill, 1990, p. 230 –238.

<sup>1356</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 2 – 4.

<sup>1357</sup> “*Ex hoc enim aliquid in actu sentimus vel intelligimus, quod intellectus noster vel sensus informatur in actu per speciem sensibilis vel intelligibilis. Et secundum hoc tantum sensus vel intellectus aliud est a sensibili vel intelligibili, quia utrumque est in potentia. Cum igitur Deus nihil potentialitatis habeat, sed sit actus purus, oportet quod in eo intellectus et intellectum sint idem omnibus modis, ita scilicet, ut neque careat specie*

that enjoys such a privilege: angels and demons know their natures this way, too; in fact, humans being the only intellectual creatures whose substance is not by itself actually intelligible for itself.<sup>1358</sup>

As for the entities that are not God, Aquinas distinguishes two kinds of divine knowledge: the “knowledge of simple apprehension” (aka “knowledge of intelligence”) (*scientia* or *notitia simplicis apprehensionis* or *intelligentiae*) and the already mentioned “knowledge of vision”.<sup>1359</sup> As for their objects, they correspond respectively with the natural knowledge (*scientia naturalis*) and the free knowledge (*scientia libera*) of the later Molinist theology.<sup>1360</sup> Knowledge of simple apprehension concerns the logical possibilities, knowledge of vision the actual world. Concerning the relations between the logical *possibilia* and divine attributes, I refer the reader to my brief reflexion in the second chapter (I. 2.); it is sufficient to say here that for Aquinas the logical possibility conditions the scope of divine efficient causality and not vice-versa. At best, the content of the former could be determined by the nature of divine causal power; but as I have argued, it is very unlikely that Aquinas ever held this view (which does not mean that he did not think that these possibilities can be known by knowing God’s power). Be it anyway, Aquinas is very explicit about God’s knowledge of these *possibilia* by knowing his own attributes<sup>1361</sup> and I have never encountered any interpretation that would question his allegiance to this position.

### I. 2. 2. The causal knowledge and the knowledge of *defectus*

To my knowledge, if any Thomist ever spoke about the exclusivity of causal knowledge, it always concerned only *the divine knowledge of actual world*. This theory comes from the need to demonstrate (or at least to show that it is possible) that God knows the actual fate of

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*intelligibili, sicut intellectus noster cum intelligit in potentia; neque species intelligibilis sit aliud a substantia intellectus divini, sicut accidit in intellectu nostro, cum est actu intelligens; sed ipsa species intelligibilis est ipse intellectus divinus. Et sic seipsum per seipsum intelligit.*” *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 2, co.

<sup>1358</sup> “Nihil autem differt, ad hoc quod forma sit principium actionis, quod ipsa forma sit alii inhaerens, et quod sit per se subsistens, non enim minus calor calefaceret si esset per se subsistens, quam calefacit inhaerens. Sic igitur et si aliquid in genere intelligibilium se habeat ut forma intelligibilis subsistens, intelliget seipsum.” *STh.*, I, q. 56, a. 1, co.; *De veritate*, q. 8, a. 6, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 98, n. 1 – 2.

<sup>1359</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 4; d. 39, q. 1, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 8 and a. 9, ad 2; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 9 and 12.

<sup>1360</sup> Cf. MOLINA, *Concordia*, ad q. 14, a. 8 (p. 3 – 4) and ad q. 14, a. 13, pars IV, disp. 52 (p. 339).

<sup>1361</sup> “...quorundam vero quae nec fuerunt, nec sunt, nec erunt, quae scilicet nunquam facere disposuit, habet quasi speculativam cognitionem; et quamvis possit dici quod intueatur ea in sua potentia, quia nihil est quod ipse non possit, tamen accommodatius dicitur quod intueatur ea in sua bonitate, quae est finis omnium quae ab eo fiunt; secundum, quod scilicet, intueatur multos alios modos esse communicationis propriae bonitatis...” *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 8, co.



particular sparrows<sup>1362</sup> (not his knowledge of all the logical possibilities connected with these sparrows, or even his self-knowledge); Aquinas uses it just to elucidate this kind of problem. To avoid another misunderstanding of Stump’s argument: the theory of “causal knowledge” does not state that this knowledge is the cause of all which is known thanks to it. It states that this knowledge is the cause of its immediate object, and that all the rest of the actual world is known to God thanks to the knowing of this immediate object. Aquinas is quite clear about this point: by knowing himself, God knows the entities that are from him, and by knowing them, he also knows their *defectus*.<sup>1363</sup> As we already know (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 11.), the semantic range of *defectus* begins with the simple being-from-nothing of potential creatures and ends with the moral privations of the Devil. God knows that there are no pink dancing unicorns: the non-existence of these unicorns is not caused by God (it is the effect of creaturely nothingness of these unicorns), but the knowledge of his effects (i.e., of everything positively existing) based on the knowledge of what he is going to cause (which does not include any pink dancing unicorns) and combined with the knowledge of himself (who is the only independent cause of beingness) gives him the precise knowledge of the non-occurrence of these *possibilia* in the actual world. Is it possible to apply the same model to the divine knowledge of sin? Yes, it is, on two conditions: first, the privation that constitutes the moral depravity must be implied by the limitation of God’s effects as surely as is the non-existence of pink unicorns; second, despite this implication, it must still be possible to consider the sin itself as not caused by God, as Aquinas unwaveringly states. I believe that the question of the first of these conditions has been sufficiently answered by the third and fourth chapter. As for the second condition, this topic belongs to the content of the next chapter: as for now, let us just say that the divine knowledge of a feature of the world that is not caused by God does not necessarily mean any exception from the divine causal knowledge as the Thomist tradition has understood it.

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<sup>1362</sup> Cf. Mt 10, 29 – 31; L 12, 6 – 7.

<sup>1363</sup> “...per hoc quod Deus cognoscit essentiam suam cognoscit ea quae ab ipso sunt, et per ea cognoscit defectus ipsorum.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 36, q. 1, a. 2, co.; “cum Deus habeat propriam cognitionem de omnibus suis effectibus, unumquodque prout est in sua natura distinctum, cognoscens; oportet quod omnes negationes et privationes oppositas cognoscat, et omnes contrarietates in rebus repertas; unde, cum malum sit privatio boni, oportet quod ex hoc ipso quod scit quodlibet bonum et mensuram cuiuscumque, quod cognoscat quodlibet malum.” *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 15, co.; “cum hoc sit esse mali, quod est privatio boni, per hoc ipsum quod Deus cognoscit bona, cognoscit etiam mala” *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 10, co.

### I. 2. 2. 1. Lonergan's objective falsity

It would be inappropriate to pass over in silence Lonergan's criticism of the (very classical) model of divine knowledge of *defectus* that I have proposed above. More radical than Stump, Lonergan, if I understand him correctly, completely denies that Aquinas's explanations of divine knowledge in terms of divine causality are actually supposed to be its explanations.<sup>1364</sup> Aquinas allegedly only states that divine knowledge is not caused by its object but is its cause (read, Lonerganian indeterminist cause, cf. chap. 3. I. 1. 4.) instead. The object is known by God by the very fact that it is knowable thanks to the absolute character of divine knowledge: there is no other explanation.<sup>1365</sup> Let us avoid a misunderstanding. Obviously, if we are speaking about the simple, eternal and by itself necessary entity that is, beside others, called "divine knowledge", this entity can be explained by no other entity, if by "explained" we mean something like "being shown to be implied by something more primordial". Yet, it can be doubted whether some feature, like the knowledge of the actual world, can be reasonably attributed to this entity. To be more exact, it can be asked whether this entity can be called (be it analogically) "knowing the actual world", or whether such appellation is to be rather denied for some similar reasons like "body" or "penitent". In this sense, divine knowledge of the world needs to be explained, i.e., to be made plain by eliminating the objections against it and, if possible, by showing positive reasons for it. What Lonergan seems to say is that even the latter type of explanation needs to end by the assertion of absolute and all-encompassing character of divine knowledge (something like "God knows your deeds because he knows everything because he is God"), Aquinas's assertions of causal character of divine knowledge are supposed to serve at most as denials of the dependence of this knowledge on its object. You can see the connection between this position and Lonergan's view on activity that we saw in the third chapter: the most perfect knowledge of the immanent state of Lonergan's agent as agent would actually not imply anything determinate concerning her effects. I consider sufficiently shown by the same chapter that with Aquinas's agent, the situation is completely different and the possibility to explain the knowledge of the world by the perfect knowledge of the immanent state of First Agent would be to be inferred from this conception, even if Aquinas never said anything concerning this point. I let the reader judge by herself whether Aquinas's texts quoted in the section I. 1. of the present chapter can be reasonably

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<sup>1364</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 328 – 333 (most notably the footnote 32) and p. 448. The latter passage is very brief, the former apparently lacks proper revision (one paragraph ends in midsentence) and the reading is complicated by Lonergan's distinction between "foreknowledge as knowledge and foreknowledge as knowledge of such an event" (p. 328). Nevertheless, it seems to me that Lonergan's footnote 32 necessitates the reading that I adopt.

<sup>1365</sup> Cf. *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 16 quoted by LONERGAN (2000), p. 329, n. 32.

considered as allowing Lonergan's reading (and whether the similarity of this reading to the position of Lonergan's Jesuit confrere Suarez is purely coincidental). Aquinas's passage quoted by Lonergan to support his reading just states the necessary connection between the knowability and being known by God: it does not deny in any way that this connection can be explained in terms of something else.

Like Stump, Lonergan considers the moral badness a category whose divine knowledge cannot be explained causally. He knows all too well the (very classical) explication of such possibility that I have presented in the preceding section, but he believes that it is one of nasty Báñezian inventions. According to him, for Aquinas the actual world does not contain only two categories of objects that the Báñezians work with, the so-called positive truths (corresponding to God's effects) and negative truths (corresponding to the negations that are implied by the fact that God has not caused something), but also a third category: the "objective falsity", corresponding to the moral badness whose existence is permitted by God, but apparently not implied by his inactivity.<sup>1366</sup> Contrary to the truths, the objective falsity is knowable, but unintelligible because it does not participate on the intelligibility of divine intellect – it cannot be explained. God's reprobation of the sinner is its antecedent, but not its cause "because sin has no cause, but is unintelligible, inexplicable, and not to be related explanatorily to the intelligible. But if it is antecedent yet not a cause, and if there are three categories and not two, then how can it be infallible? The answer to that lies in the theory of divine transcendence: God's knowledge is infallible."<sup>1367</sup> Lonergan considers the tripartite distinction of objects of divine knowledge as completely essential for the understanding of divine knowledge of evil and it is obvious that something like that is actually required by the libertarian system of his. But, what is interesting, he quotes none of Aquinas's texts concerning God's knowledge of bad things to prove that Aquinas actually ever worked with this notion in this context. His confident unqualified attribution of this tripartite distinction to the medieval thinker is almost entirely based on one passage from *Prima pars* where Aquinas states that in things that come from God, there is no falsity in relation to divine intellect, *perhaps (forte)* except for the case of voluntary agents who are able to withdraw themselves from an ordaining of divine intellect in the case of the sin.<sup>1368</sup> In this article, Aquinas considers different ways in which the analogical notion signified by the Latin term *falsum* can

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<sup>1366</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 329 – 333.

<sup>1367</sup> LONERGAN (2000), p. 333.

<sup>1368</sup> "in rebus dependentibus a Deo, falsitas inveniri non potest per comparationem ad intellectum divinum, cum quidquid in rebus accidit, ex ordinatione divini intellectus procedat, nisi forte in voluntariis agentibus tantum, in quorum potestate est subducere se ab ordinatione divini intellectus; in quo malum culpaе consistit, secundum quod ipsa peccata falsitates et mendacia dicuntur in Scripturis..." *STh.*, I, q. 17, a. 1, co.

be applied to extramental objects. The most fundamental way is based on the relation of the object to the intellect at its source: the table is *falsum* (which would probably be best translated as “wrong” in this case) if it does not correspond to the intellectual project of its maker. Aquinas states that relatively to God’s intellect nothing is to be considered *falsum* in this way because whatever happens, happens according to God’s ordaining; then he states that the sins of voluntary agents could *perhaps* be considered as an exception, explaining this way the scriptural appellation of sins as falseness or lies. I concede that out of its context, the passage could suggest something similar to Lonergan’s reading, except that the question why Aquinas relativises his statement by “perhaps” could be annoying in this case. But as it belongs to Aquinas’s *Treatise on One God* which contains pretty unequivocal statements of the determinist inescapability of the whole of the ordering of Universal Agent (like that of q. 22, a. 2),<sup>1369</sup> Lonergan’s reading is completely far-fetched. Even one of the texts that he quotes to support his reading actually shows the very limited meaning the sinner’s withdrawing from divine ordaining has for Aquinas: it just means sinner’s opposition to some particular good that would be appropriate for him according to his nature or state (the appropriateness is derived from God’s intellect and expressed by the natural law, cf. chap. 1. II. 8. 2.).<sup>1370</sup> Aquinas’s “perhaps” is a well-chosen expression: while from a certain viewpoint a parallel can be found between the relation of sinner to God’s intellect and the relation of failed table to the craftsman’s project, absolutely speaking this parallelism would need to be denied – the craftsman’s art and control over the result failed, God’s wisdom and ordaining did not. I discuss Aquinas’s assertions concerning the escaping of a providential ordering more thoroughly below (see II. 4.). Concerning the special causal status of moral badness and its relation to God (notably God’s will), we shall see more about it in the sixth chapter. For now, let the striking contrast between Lonergan’s “sin has no cause” and Aquinas’s assertion

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<sup>1369</sup> Cf. for ex. ad 1: “*Non enim subducitur aliquid ab ordine causae particularis, nisi per aliquam aliam causam particularem impediendam,...* Unde, cum omnes causae particulares concludantur sub universali causa, impossibile est aliquem effectum ordinem causae universalis effugere.”

<sup>1370</sup> “*dicuntur aliqui vel cogitare vel loqui vel agere contra Deum, non quia totaliter renitantur ordini divinae gubernationis, quia etiam peccantes intendunt aliquod bonum, sed quia contranitantur cuidam determinato bono, quod est eis conveniens secundum suam naturam aut statum*” *STh.*, I, q. 103, a. 8, ad 1, quoted by LONERGAN (2000), p. 330 – 331, n. 36, which is to be read in context of the corpus of this article (not quoted by Lonergan at all): “*ordo divinae providentiae dupliciter potest considerari, uno modo in generali, secundum scilicet quod progreditur a causa gubernativa totius; alio modo in speciali, secundum scilicet quod progreditur ex aliqua causa particulari, quae est executiva divinae gubernationis. Primo igitur modo, nihil contranitur ordini divinae gubernationis.*” *Ibid.*, co. Lonergan also quotes *De malo*, q. 16, a. 4, ad 22 where Aquinas states that while the absence of the conservation of the creature in good implies the fall into non-good, the absence of grace does not imply sin, except for the case of fallen nature: but the grace in question is just the supernatural habitual grace (the objection concerns the question whether the demons were created in the state of grace!), not the whole of divine causal influence.

that the sin must have a cause<sup>1371</sup> be the warning against the fundamental differences between the viewpoints of these two thinkers in this matter.

### I. 2. 3. Boethius's view on divine gaze

It cannot be denied that Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* is one of master sources of Aquinas's reflexion concerning the topic of divine cognitive acts vis-à-vis the world – and there is no trace of causal knowledge in Boethius's explanation of this topic. In fact, Boethius does all he can to show that the knowledge implies no causal dependence, neither the dependence of the known object on the knower, nor the dependence of the knower on the known. According to him, it is simply against reason that the latter could happen in the case of divine knowledge of the world: "...it is preposterous to speak of occurrence of events in time as the cause of eternal foreknowledge."<sup>1372</sup> But if the inverse was true in the case of future voluntary acts, in Boethius's view it would threaten the existence of human freedom – and his Philosophy does not seem to amend his opinions concerning this precise point.<sup>1373</sup> His strategy to hold together both the divine foreknowledge and the freedom of future human acts is therefore quite different from the strategy of classical Thomism. Its point can be summarised in three steps.

First, the possibilities of knowledge of an object depend on the cognitive power rather than on the object itself.<sup>1374</sup> Now, divine *intelligentia* surpasses the possibilities of human reason in a similar way as the reason surpasses the possibilities of senses, or, for example, the sight the possibilities of the touch.<sup>1375</sup> This analogy is to eliminate the objection that it is impossible for God (or anybody else) to know the future if it is not already determined by the present or past.

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<sup>1371</sup> "*cum inordinatio peccati, et quodlibet malum, non sit simplex negatio, sed privatio eius quod quid natum est et debet habere; necesse est quod talis inordinatio habeat causam agentem per accidens, quod enim natum est inesse et debet, nunquam abesset nisi propter causam aliquam impediendam.*" *STh.*, I-II, q. 75, a. 1, co., cf. *ibid.*, I, q. 49, a. 1, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 13: "*Quod est in potentia ad utrumque oppositorum, non constituitur in actu alicuius eorum nisi per aliquam causam: nulla enim potentia facit se esse in actu. Malum autem est privatio eius quod quis natus est et debet habere: ex hoc enim unumquodque dicitur malum esse. Est igitur malum in subiecto quod est in potentia ad ipsum et ad suum oppositum. Oportet igitur quod malum habeat aliquam causam.*" (n. 3).

<sup>1372</sup> BOETHIUS, *Consolation of Philosophy*, book V, prose 3.

<sup>1373</sup> Cf. *ibid.* for Boethius's concern and prose 4 for Philosophy's answering: "First, I inquire into the reasons, why you are dissatisfied with the solution proposed, which is to the effect that, seeing the fact of foreknowledge is not thought the cause of the necessity of future events, foreknowledge is not to be deemed any hindrance to the freedom of the will." (I have slightly modernized Rosher's translation). The remainder of the *Consolation* explains the compossibility of certain knowledge of an object without any causal relation between the object and the knower.

<sup>1374</sup> "...men think that all knowledge is cognized purely by the nature and efficacy of the thing known. Whereas the case is the very reverse: all that is known is grasped not conformably to its own efficacy, but rather conformably to the faculty of the knower." *Ibid.*, prose 4.

<sup>1375</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, prose 4 and 5.

The lower cognitive power cannot know all the objects of the higher cognitive power (nor the exact way of knowing of the higher cognitive power, for what it matters). This is perfectly normal. Any objector who argues against the divine infallible knowledge of my contingent future on the basis of the incomprehensibility of its possibility has just forgotten this elementary fact. The earthworms cannot touch the stars – that does not mean that I cannot see them.

Second, the future is a future only in relation to some of the creatures; as for God, everything is present for him.<sup>1376</sup> God is eternal and his eternity does not mean that he exists for infinity of time, but that his existence is not subjected to temporal categories. If you forgive me for now an expression that is not completely appropriate, God is outside of time. The temporal relations like “being before” or “being after” concern only temporal creatures: God knows all these relations, but he is not subjected to any of them. The end of the world is no more “future” for him than my writing of these lines, Jesus’s birth or the Big Bang. The same is obviously true about the designation “past”. Why does not the “present” share exactly the same fate? Taken univocally, this notion would be obviously inappropriate as well because it implies attributing some temporal coordinates to God. Nevertheless, the present time has some analogical similitude with the eternity as Boethius understands it. While my existence is diluted in the flow of time from which I will never actually possess more than a little slice at given time, most of it being always either passed or not yet arrived, God’s possession of his own existence is illimited – there is nothing lost or not yet achieved in him.<sup>1377</sup> Therefore, he lives all his infinity in a similar way as I live the very moment that I am living just now. This concerns his cognitive activity, too: he perceives all the events of the time at once in a similar way as I perceive the whole page of the comics that I am looking at just now. This is the reason why Boethius is very reserved vis-à-vis the application of the term “foreknowledge” in the case of God:<sup>1378</sup> it is as if I said that I am foreknowing the fate of Garfield depicted at the bottom of the page while I am about to perceive the page as a whole. Voila, the eternal gaze.

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<sup>1376</sup> “Since, then, every mode of judgment comprehends its objects conformably to its own nature, and since God abides for ever in an eternal present, his knowledge, also transcending all movement of time, dwells in the simplicity of its own changeless present, and, embracing the whole infinite sweep of the past and of the future contemplates all that falls within its simple cognition as if it were now taking place.” BOETHIUS, *Consolation of Philosophy*, book V, prose 6.

<sup>1377</sup> “Eternity is the possession of endless life whole and perfect at a single moment. ... Accordingly, that which includes and possesses the whole fulness of unending life at once, from which nothing future is absent, from which nothing passed has escaped, this is rightly called eternal; this must of necessity be ever present to itself in full self-possession and hold the infinity of movable time in an abiding present.” Ibid.

<sup>1378</sup> “If you will carefully consider the immediate presentment whereby it discriminates all things, you will more rightly deem it of foreknowledge as of something future, but knowledge of a moment that never passes. For this cause the name chosen to describe it is not prevision, but providence, because, since utterly removed from things

Third, by (correctly) seeing that somebody (be it the proverbial sitting Socrates, Jones working on his lawn or a politician lying again) does what he does, I am surely not eliminating his freedom of doing it.<sup>1379</sup> Yes, provided that I am non-mistakenly seeing him, it is necessary that his activity is the same as is the activity that I am seeing. But that does not mean that his action is, absolutely speaking, necessary and even less so that it is such because of me. Here, Boethius makes a very influential distinction between the conditional necessity, implied by such a seeing, and the absolute necessity that would actually mean the negation of freedom.<sup>1380</sup> His precise understanding of this distinction can be the object of discussion<sup>1381</sup> and we can skip it. What matters is the parallelism whose highlight was prepared by the second step: the divine knowledge of my future is very much like my cognitive activities that have no causal or chronologic anteriority vis-à-vis their objects. Same as these activities, God's certain knowledge of my future is neither based on any necessity of its object (as is my foreknowing of tomorrow's sunrise) nor does it influence this object in any freedom threatening way (as would be my knowledge of the effects of some determinist manipulation that I am about to make). It lets me free.

#### I. 2. 4. Eternally gazing through the ideas: Aquinas's selective reception of Boethius

Let me be clear: I find Boethius's explanation quite sufficient for his needs. Its major weakness – the obscurity concerning the relation between the state of world that God eternally sees, and God's free choices concerning this state – can be quite easily amended by a theory of middle knowledge:<sup>1382</sup> God's knowledge of my actual future is based on his *middle* knowledge of what I would libertarian-freely do in any possible circumstances and his *free* knowledge of his own choice to actualise one particular set of these circumstances. Molina's own explication of the middle knowledge by the fact that God is supereminently more perfect

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mean and trivial, its outlook embraces all things as from some lofty height." Ibid. (I have slightly modernized Rosher's translation).

<sup>1379</sup> "Why then do you insist that the things which are surveyed by the Divine eye are involved in necessity, whereas clearly men impose no necessity on things they see. Does the act of vision add any necessity to the things which you see before your eyes? 'Surely not.' And yet, if we may without unfitness compare God's present and man's, just as you see certain things in in this your temporary present, so does He see all things in His eternal present." Ibid. (I have slightly modernized Rosher's translation).

<sup>1380</sup> "there are two necessities – one simple: as that men are necessarily mortal; the other conditioned; as that if you know that someone is walking, he must necessarily be walking: For that which is known cannot indeed be otherwise than as it is known to be, and yet this fact by no means carries with it that other simple necessity. For the former necessity is not imposed by the thing's own proper nature, but by the addition of a condition. No necessity compels one who is voluntarily walking, to go forward, although it is necessary for him to go forward at the moment of walking." Ibid.

<sup>1381</sup> Compare EVANS (2004) and KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 47 – 61.

<sup>1382</sup> Cf. Molina's original formulation in his *Concordia*, ad q. 14, a. 13, pars IV, disp. 52 (p. 340 – 341).

than the object of this knowledge, is surely not completely the same thing as the first step of my summary of Boethius's argument: but their affinity can hardly be denied. All that being said, I cannot find any trace of such affinity in Aquinas.

It is not that Aquinas's "artisanal knowledge" goes frontally against Boethius's most important intentions: in Molinist account, the artisanal knowledge and kind of the non-artisanal eternal gaze CAN live in a harmonious complementarity. But I was not able to find any text containing but the trace of the unquestionable quotation of the first step in Aquinas. Given Aquinas's vast use of other Boethian material (including the second and the third step of the abovementioned argumentation),<sup>1383</sup> this absence is shouting. At the very least, one is obliged to think that he does not consider the artisanal explanation insufficient. In addition, Aquinas's own explicit interpretations of the expressions that could suggest the existence of some other type of knowledge of actual world corroborate in fact the causal view. If Aquinas counted with some special kind of perceptivity in God, the justification of the term "knowledge of vision" would provide the best occasions to spell it out. Instead, he insists on the weakness of this analogy – the "vision" is said to be just a metaphor here.<sup>1384</sup> More precisely, the term is said to be chosen to suggest the condition of known object (it is outside of the knower), not the way of knowing, the way of knowing being the same as in the case of the knowledge of simple apprehension – God's knowing of himself.<sup>1385</sup>

Aquinas also explicitly denies the causally neutral relation between the divine knowledge of creatures and the creatures themselves. On his view, if something is known via its similitude in the knower, there are only three possibilities: either the knower causes the known, or the known causally influences the knower, or both of them are related to some higher cause. The second possibility is typical for human knowledge, the third for angelic knowledge of the world, but both of them are impossible in the case of the First cause.<sup>1386</sup> Note that neither the knowledge of moral badness nor the self-knowledge of God is directly concerned here: as it was already said, Aquinas's God knows himself by himself, not by the similitude of himself,

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<sup>1383</sup> *Index thomisticus* identifies more than six hundred explicit quotations of Boethius in Aquinas's corpus, cf. my footnote 1352 concerning the divine knowledge of future contingent entities.

<sup>1384</sup> "si nomen visionis ad immaterialem cognitionem transferatur, hoc non erit nisi metaphorice." *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 9, ad 3.

<sup>1385</sup> "scientia simplicis notitiae et visionis nullam differentiam important ex parte scientis, sed solum ex parte rei scitae: dicitur enim scientia visionis in Deo ad similitudinem visus corporalis, qui res extra se positus intuetur ... sed scientia simplicis notitiae, ut supra probatum est, est eorum quae non sunt, nec erunt, nec fuerunt: nec alio modo scit Deus ista et illa..." *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 9, ad 2.

<sup>1386</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 14, co.: "cum omnis similitudo attendatur secundum convenientiam alicuius formae, oportet quod quaecumque sunt similia, ita se habeant, quod vel unum sit causa alterius, vel ambo ex una causa causentur. In omni autem scientia est assimilatio scientis ad scitum; unde oportet quod vel scientia sit causa sciti, vel scitum sit causa scientiae, vel utrumque ab una causa causetur. ... in Deo nihil potest esse causatum, cum ipse sit quidquid habet. Unde relinquitur quod scientia eius sit causa rerum."



and he knows the badness by the similitude of the limited good that is the subject of that badness.<sup>1387</sup> In fact, the quoted text does not explicitly exclude the possibility of divine knowledge of the badness by some another way: but it excludes any conception of the eternal gaze that would be a means of knowledge of all the history independently of causal knowledge.

It is true that Aquinas says many times that God knows the things in their own being, and not only in himself or in their causes.<sup>1388</sup> But this expression eventually gets disambiguated by Aquinas himself too: again, it concerns what God knows, not the means of his knowledge.<sup>1389</sup> In this former sense it means that God knows the created things themselves as they exist in creaturely way, not only their virtual or intentional existence in Him (or in any other cause or knower) – in this sense, he does not know them only inasmuch as they are in himself. If this assertion would be taken in the latter sense, it would be false: God (as any other knower) knows these creaturely existing things only via their representation in himself. Aquinas calls these representations of God’s effects in God “ideas”, apparently drawing from his platonic sources here.<sup>1390</sup> But contrary to the entities postulated by Plato, divine ideas of Aquinas concern also the particular entities (*singularia*) taken as such.<sup>1391</sup> It is interesting to compare Stump’s assertion that Aquinas’s ideas concern only “things such as substances and artifacts” and not “acts, events, or states of affairs”,<sup>1392</sup> with Aquinas’s explicit statements concerning this issue: “Plato who was the first one who introduced ideas, has not stated that there are the ideas of accidents, but only [the ideas] of substances ... But because we state that God is the immediate cause of whichever thing inasmuch as he operates in all the secondary causes and that *all the secondary effects come from his predefinition*, therefore we state that he contains not only the ideas of first beings, but also [the ideas] of the secondary [beings], and therefore

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<sup>1387</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 6 concerning God, and a. 15, ad 1 concerning the badness: note that the latter text was partially quoted by Stump to prove her point concerning Aquinas’s reserves vis-à-vis causal theory of divine knowledge (cf. my footnote 1348) – unfortunately skipping Aquinas’s assertion that God knows the badness by the similitude of the contrary good, the knowledge of which was said to be the cause of its object in the immediately preceding article.

<sup>1388</sup> Cf. the statements about the knowledge of future contingents in *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13.

<sup>1389</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 4 and *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2: “*Deus non cognoscit res tantum secundum quod in ipso sunt, si ly secundum quod referatur ad cognitionem ex parte cogniti, quia non cognoscit in rebus solum esse quod habent in ipso secundum quod sunt unum cum eo, sed etiam esse quod habent extra ipsum, secundum quod diversificantur ab eo; si autem ly secundum quod determinet cognitionem ex parte cognoscentis, sic verum est quod Deus non cognoscit res nisi secundum quod sunt in ipso, quia ex similitudine rei, quae est idem cum in ipso existens.*”

<sup>1390</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 36, q. 2; *De veritate*, q. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 15.

<sup>1391</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 3, a. 8.

<sup>1392</sup> STUMP (2003), p. 182. Stump argues (p. 178 – 182) that Aquinas’s divine knowledge is a formal, not an efficient, cause of its effect and that the formal causation can, properly speaking, concern only substances etc. She is convinced that this is enough to prove that Aquinas has not held the assumption that “what is effected by the causation of the divine cognition includes all actions, events, and states of affairs in the world.” (p. 179).

[the ideas] of both substances and accidents...”<sup>1393</sup> Moreover, any accident which is not implied by the nature of its subject is said to have its own idea in God<sup>1394</sup>; against the objection that many particular entities happen by chance and as such are not predefined (which is required for the existence of an “idea” of them), Aquinas answers that “even though something happens by chance from the viewpoint of the proximate agent, nothing happens by chance from the viewpoint of the agent who foreknows all things.”<sup>1395</sup> Otherwise said, in God, there is not only the idea of “man” in general, but also the idea of Andrew Jones, the idea of his 395th kiss to Sandra and the idea of his tomorrow’s meeting with his Maker due to a car accident. Even the evils of punishment have their ideas in God, inasmuch they come from him as the expressions of the order of justice.<sup>1396</sup>

#### I. 2. 5. A brief commentary on *Super Sent.*, I, 38, 1, 5

An attentive reader has noticed that nearly all of my quotations in the preceding section come from Aquinas’s *De veritate*. This text is one of Aquinas’s relatively early writings, but I do not know about any positive reason to think that the clarifications it provides concerning divine knowledge are not held by their author in his later works – at least I have not seen such a reason among his statements concerning divine knowledge as such. The things are more complicated in the case of Aquinas’s even earlier writings, namely his *Commentary on Sentences*. While *De veritate* provides Aquinas’s first long exposition of what I call the theory of transcended contingency (cf. chap. 3. II. 8. 2.),<sup>1397</sup> it is difficult to find any indubitable trace

<sup>1393</sup> “...Plato, qui primus introduxit ideas, non posuit ideas accidentium, sed solum substantiarum ... Sed quia nos ponimus Deum immediatam causam uniuscuiusque rei secundum quod in omnibus causis secundis operatur, et quod omnes effectus secundi ex eius praedefinitione proveniant: ideo non solum primorum entium, sed etiam secundorum in eo ideas ponimus et sic substantiarum et accidentium...” *De veritate*, q. 3, a. 7, co. (the emphasis is mine).

<sup>1394</sup> “Quaedam vero sunt accidentia, quae non sequuntur inseparabiliter suum subiectum, nec ex eius principiis dependent. ... Et talium accidentium est idea in Deo distincta ab idea subiecti, sicut etiam artifex concipit formam picturae domus praeter formam domus.” Ibid.

<sup>1395</sup> “quamvis aliquid sit a casu respectu proximi agentis, nihil tamen est a casu respectu agentis qui omnia praecognoscit.” *De veritate*, q. 3, a. 8, ad 3, referring to his more elaborated statements from a. 2, co.: “...videmus quod ea quae sunt casualiter quoad nos, sunt Deo praecognita, et ordinata ab ipso. Unde necesse est dicere, quod tota distinctio rerum sit praedefinita ab eo. Et ideo necesse est in Deo ponere singulorum proprias rationes, et propter hoc necesse est ponere in eo plures ideas.” Cf. already *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1: “aliud est de forma existente in mente artificis et de idea rei quae est in mente divina: quia forma quae est in mente artificis, non est causa totius quod est in artificiatio, sed tantum formae; et ideo esse hanc domum, et cetera quae consequuntur naturam per formam artis, nescit artifex nisi sensibiliter accipiat: sed idea quae est in mente divina, est causa omnis ejus quod in re est; unde per ideam non tantum cognoscit naturam rei, sed etiam hanc rem esse in tali tempore, et omnes conditiones quae consequuntur rem vel ex parte materiae vel ex parte formae.”

<sup>1396</sup> “poenae malum exit a Deo sub ratione ordinis iustitiae; et sic bonum est, et ideam habet in Deo.” *De veritate*, q. 3, a. 4, ad 8.

<sup>1397</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 5 with an anticipation of this position already in q. 6, a. 3, ad 3.

of this doctrine in the *Commentary*.<sup>1398</sup> It is true that, as I have shown, even its first book already contains the views on modality, efficient causality and chance that imply his later answer to the problem.<sup>1399</sup> Nevertheless, the measure of Aquinas’s consciousness of this implication could be reasonably questioned, for his explication of divine knowledge of future contingents seems to contain more than one assertion that is incompatible with this view. I believe that this incompatibility is just apparent though: to prove it, let us look at the most challenging text – Aquinas’s *Super Sent.*, I, 38, 1, 5.

#### I. 2. 5. 1. The context

This article is a part of the long treatment of divine cognitive and other cognition-allowing properties (d. 35 – 41). The knowledge is the first operative attribute of God Aquinas discusses after having dealt with the trinitarian questions. This discussion is followed by the passages concerning divine power (d. 42 – 44) and divine will (d. 45 – 48), preparing the discussion of creation in the second book of the *Commentary*. The article belongs to the *questio* that treats some problematic relations of divine knowledge to different problematic objects, beginning with the causality of the former. It immediately prepares the analyses of the invariability of divine knowledge (d. 39, q. 1), of the providence (d. 39, q. 2) and of the predestination, reprobation and election (d. 40 – 41); it is itself preceded by more general consideration of this knowledge and of its extension to different objects (d. 35 – 36), and also by one *distinctio* consecrated to the topic of divine and angelic “being somewhere” (d. 37).

The article is preceded by repeated assertions that the status of the universal cause of the world allows God to know any feature of anything in the world, down to the very individuality of material entities that is unintelligible for human reason, by knowing himself.<sup>1400</sup> It is said that this is because God is the total cause of any of these features.<sup>1401</sup> The knowing of badness and of other *defectus* is reduced to the knowing of positively existing entities.<sup>1402</sup> The article is followed by assertions concerning modal notions, chance and agency that we have already seen in preceding chapters: the (im)possibility of particular effect

<sup>1398</sup> Cf. maybe *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>1399</sup> Cf. my footnotes 444, 448, 769 and 790.

<sup>1400</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 35, q. 1, a. 3 and d. 36, q. 1, a. 1.

<sup>1401</sup> “*quod primum principium in geometricis non sufficit ad certam cognitionem eorum quae consequuntur, hoc est, quia ipsum non est tota causa eorum; unde oportet quod adjunctis omnibus aliis, in eorum notitiam veniatur. Sed ipse Deus est perfecta causa omnium quae ab ipso sunt; cum nihil possit accipi quod ab ipso non sit: et ideo ipse per essentiam suam omnia perfecte cognoscit.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 35, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2; “*in causis universalibus quae non sunt tota causa rei non potest particulare perfecte sciri. Deus est causa omnium universalis, ita quod est perfecta causa uniuscujusque; et ideo se cognoscens, omnia perfecte cognoscit.*” *Ibid.*, d. 36, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; cf. *ibid.*, ad 4 and d. 38, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1.

<sup>1402</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 36, q. 1, a. 2, co.

in the particular situation is defined by the natural potencies of the natural proximate causes of this type of effect;<sup>1403</sup> so is its (non)casual character;<sup>1404</sup> the agent *ad utrumque* is said to need to be determined, if she is to act.<sup>1405</sup> With all this in mind, let us see Aquinas's treatment of divine knowledge of contingent entities in the problematic article.

#### I. 2. 5. 2. The *sic et non*

As arguments against divine knowledge of contingent entities, Aquinas lists seven objections, arguing that divine knowledge implies (either as its prerequisite, or as its effect) the necessity and/or the determination of its object that is incompatible with the contingency of this object. Then he mentions two opposite arguments, based respectively on the doctrine of divine repaying of human deeds (to repay them, God must know them) and the doctrine of his omniscience (God knows everything and the contingent entities belong to this everything). The contingency of some worldly events in general and of human actions in particular are the further non-questioned premisses of these arguments: it is considered not only an implication of faith and of philosophical demonstration, but also as something that leaps to the eyes.<sup>1406</sup> Further in the article, Aquinas does not correct these two arguments in any way and there is no reason to think that they do not represent his own view. As for the asserted easy epistemic accessibility of the contingency of some worldly events, recall that weaker the notion of contingency, more comprehensible is such kind of view.

#### I. 2. 5. 3. Two distinct problems

Aquinas begins his answer to the problem by relating it to the problem of divine knowledge of particular beings, stating that the anthropomorphic conception of divine intellect was the reason why some philosophers denied the divine knowledge of both these (after all, largely coextensive) parts of reality.<sup>1407</sup> As for the problem connected to the knowledge of material individua, he refers his reader to his earlier discussion of it. This discussion has taken place two *distinctiones* before<sup>1408</sup> and its result is not mentioned explicitly in the article about the knowledge of contingent entities: nevertheless, it is worthy of mentioning that Aquinas

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<sup>1403</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 42, q. 2, a. 3.

<sup>1404</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>1405</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, a. 3, co.

<sup>1406</sup> “*non omnia ex necessitate contingunt, ut ad ipsum sensum patet, et a philosophis probatum est, et in fide suppositum est.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, s. c. 2 (the emphasis is mine).

<sup>1407</sup> “*quidam philosophi ... negaverunt, Deum de particularibus contingentibus cognitionem habere, cogitantes intellectum divinum ad modum intellectus nostri; et ideo erraverunt.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>1408</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 36, q. 1, a. 1.

achieved his solution by recourse to the notion of causal knowledge there. Contrary to any other intellect (or agent), God is the cause of everything in the individual, not only of its more or less generalizable form. His perfect self-knowing therefore implies also the knowledge of the very individuality that he is about to cause.<sup>1409</sup>

As for the contingency, Aquinas identifies two different difficulties related to the divine knowledge of the bearers of this feature.<sup>1410</sup> The first concerns the relation between the cause and the caused thing: it seems that the effects of a necessary immutable cause need to be necessary too, and the divine knowledge is an immutable cause of things – its objects cannot be contingent then. This problem is mentioned by the very first objection of the article. The second difficulty concerns the relation of the knowledge (*scientia*) to its object: the knowledge must be certain, and this certitude requires that the truth about the state of this object is determined – which seems to be incompatible with the possibility to be otherwise which is meant by the “contingency”. This problem is not dependent on causality: the settled state of the truth is required also by human knowledge or by divine knowledge of evils, even if neither of them causes its object. With the exception of the first one, all the introductory objections against the divine knowledge of contingent entities relate in some way to this second difficulty.

#### I. 2. 5. 4. The problem of causality

Aquinas considers the solution of the first difficulty manifest.<sup>1411</sup> The modality of effect depends on its proximate cause because the force of the remote cause is received in the proximate cause according to the condition of the latter. The causal action of Sun may be necessary and invariable, yet its effect concerning the blooming of tree can be blocked by an impediment concerning the reproductive powers of the tree – this effect is therefore

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<sup>1409</sup> “...cum Deus cognoscit res per essentiam suam quae est causa rerum, eodem modo cognoscit res quo modo esse rebus tradidit; unde si aliquid est in rebus non cognitum ab ipso, oportet quod circa illud vacet divina operatio, idest quod non sit operatum ab ipso ... quia nos ponimus Deum immediate operantem in rebus omnibus, et ab ipso esse non solum principia formalia, sed etiam materiam rei; ideo per essentiam suam, sicut per causam, totum quod est in re cognoscit, et formalia et materialia; unde non tantum cognoscit res secundum naturas universales, sed secundum quod sunt individuatae per materiam...” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 36, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>1410</sup> “contingentia enim videtur duplici ratione effugere divinam cognitionem. Primo propter ordinem causae ad causatum. Quia causae necessariae et immutabilis videtur esse effectus necessarius; unde cum scientia Dei sit causa rerum, et sit immutabilis, non videtur quod possit esse contingentium. Secundo propter ordinem scientiae ad scitum; quia cum scientia sit certa cognitio, ex ipsa ratione certitudinis etiam exclusa causalitate, requirit certitudinem et determinationem in scito, quam contingentia excludit, et quod scientia ex ratione certitudinis suae requirat determinationem in scito patet in scientia nostra, quae non est causa rerum, et in scientia Dei respectu malorum.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>1411</sup> “de primo quidem satis manifeste potest accipi. Quandoque enim sunt causae multae ordinatae, effectus ultimus non sequitur causam primam in necessitate et contingentia, sed causam proximam...” *ibid.*

contingent. The same can be said about the causality of divine knowledge if it operates its effects through contingent causes.

Clear? In fact, not quite. The thing is that some years later Aquinas rejects a remarkably similar answer as insufficient (and even similar to the positions incompatible with faith), replacing it by the “theory of transcended contingency”. As I have already mentioned (cf. chap. 3. II. 8. 2) according to this view the contingency of the contingent effect is the result of the efficacy of the divine cause: wanting the existence of contingency for the good of the universe, God infallibly determines both the happening and the contingency of some of his effects by realising them via contingent causes. In its first well developed exposition in *De veritate*, Aquinas puts this vision of things in contrast with an alternative theory that seeks the ultimate source of the contingency on the level of secondary causes only – a theory that could be precisely illustrated by the image of the Sun which fails to make a tree bloom.<sup>1412</sup> Contrary to the theory of transcended contingency, the latter conception allows that the ultimate determining factor of the result of causal process is out of the causal control of remote cause taken as such. In fact, it suggests it: it is not the Sun who decides whether this particular tree was sterilised by some poisonous matter or not; does God decide then, whether I decide to obey his commandments or not?

The reading of the Sun-tree comparison in the terms of the theory that Aquinas rejects as insufficient in *De veritate* is really quite intuitive. If it was correct, *De veritate* would mark a decisive turn away from Aquinas’s former theologically indeterminist approach to this problem. But there is no implacable need to understand the comparison this way. Aquinas himself sometimes understand it differently, using it also in some later texts that are already dominated by the theory of transcended contingency.<sup>1413</sup> The thing is that while it is vaguer than this theory, in itself, this comparison contains nothing explicitly incompatible with it, even if it is also compatible with some different views. It does not directly deny the orchestration of contingent causes and their impediments by the divine cause: it just

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<sup>1412</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 5, co.: “cum voluntas sit rerum omnium prima causa, producit quosdam effectus mediantibus causis secundis, quae contingentes sunt, et deficere possunt; et ideo effectus contingentiam causae proximae sequitur, non autem necessitatem causae primae. Sed hoc videtur esse consonum his qui ponebant a Deo omnia procedere secundum necessitatem naturae ... Similiter ab uno omnino immobili dicunt procedere aliquid quod est immobile secundum substantiam, mobile autem et aliter se habens secundum situm ... secundum quam viam non posset poni, a Deo immediate causari multitudinem, et res corruptibiles et contingentes. Quod est sententiae fidei contrarium, quae ponit multitudinem rerum etiam corruptibilium immediate a Deo creatam...” This criticism is to be distinguished from Aquinas’s rejection of the attempts to explain the contingency of the consequent (an entity known by God) of a necessary antecedent (divine knowledge) in a similar way (cf. *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 7 and already *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, ad 4): the relation between antecedent and consequent is not to be confused with the relation between cause and effect, see below.

<sup>1413</sup> Cf. *Contra gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 67, n. 6; lib. 3, cap. 72, n. 2 and 8; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13, ad 1.

exclusively focuses on the conditioning of the modality of effect by the modality of its proximate cause, the latter conviction being held by the theory of transcended contingency anyway. While the article from the *Commentary on Sentences* is not clear concerning the exact meaning of this comparison, it states at least that contrary to the Sun, the divine knowledge cannot coexist with the *defectus* of secondary causes concerning the effect that it intends.<sup>1414</sup> As for the failure of the influence of the remote cause that is suggested as the necessary condition of contingency, one can hold Aquinas's later view without giving up this opinion completely: we have already seen the compatibility of the successful resistance against particular divine motion with the success of the whole divine causal activity (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 12. 1.). Finally, the very fact that Aquinas chooses the image of the contingency which is proper to a natural phenomenon does not encourage at all the idea that he insists on a very strong conception of the possibility to be otherwise here. Depending on the situation, the tree can bloom more or less successfully or do not bloom at all: this is the only type of contingency that is clearly implied by the example. Anything more would need an argument if it were to be justifiably seen in Aquinas's text: as we have seen above, even very close context of this text contains Aquinas's statements concerning modal notions and the requirements for agency providing a strong argument against any such view instead (cf. I. 2. 5. 1.). Add the proximate texts insisting on the theory of causal knowledge<sup>1415</sup> – and you will find the indeterminist reading reasonably impossible.

#### I. 2. 5. 5. The problem of knowledge

Compared to the problem of causality, the difficulty concerning the relation of the knowledge and its object awakes quite bigger doubts for young Aquinas: the proportion of numbers of objections (1:6) that spell them out shows it itself. The reason is simple: while the notion of causality is compatible with a failure, the notion of knowledge (*scientia*) is not. "For it cannot be that simultaneously God knows that some person will run, and this person fails to run; and this is so because of the certitude of knowledge and not because of its [or "his"?] causality."<sup>1416</sup> Isolated from its context, this passage could misleadingly suggest that Aquinas explicitly denies the dependence of the certitude of divine knowledge on divine causal status.

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<sup>1414</sup> "*causa prima necessaria potest simul esse cum defectu causae secundae, sicut motus solis cum sterilitate arboris; sed scientia Dei non potest simul stare cum defectu causae secundae.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>1415</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 35, q. 1, a. 3; d. 36, q. 1, a. 1; d. 39, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>1416</sup> "*Non enim potest esse quod Deus sciat simul hunc cursurum, et iste deficiat a cursu; et hoc est propter certitudinem scientiae et non propter causalitatem ejus.*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

In fact, he just restates in slightly different words his initial assertion of the independence of the problem that is posed by the knowledge taken as a knowledge vis-à-vis the problem of the knowledge taken as a cause.<sup>1417</sup> “For if any certain knowledge is to exist, it is necessary to find some certainty in the known.”<sup>1418</sup> If God (or anybody) is to know the things, they must be settled – somewhere.

It is only here that the question of time enters the stage. Aquinas begins by discussing the (verbally) paradoxical question of the beingness of things BEFORE they come to be.<sup>1419</sup> He states that the only beingness which they have then is to be found in their causes. There are three types of causes. Some of them cause their effects necessarily and irresistibly and the knowledge of these causes allows therefore the demonstration of these effects, the latter having a certain and determined beingness in the former. The sunrises and eclipses are given as examples here. Other causes cause their effects only in most cases and their knowledge allows a conjectural knowledge of these effects, as in the case of the weather forecast or medical prognosis. Finally, there are the causes *ad utrumque*: there is no determination or certainty of their effects in them, and their knowledge therefore does not allow any knowledge of their effects at all. In the immediately following passage Aquinas gives the example of such effect – Socrates’ action of running.

Before continuing, note the following: Aquinas speaks about the existence of the things in TIME which precedes their becoming. The “causes” he is speaking about are therefore temporal entities, considered inasmuch as they have not yet caused their effect, the latter belonging only to their future. This is explicitly said by Aquinas who reminds this article during his discussion of predestination: inasmuch as it is in its causes, the thing is only a future *possibile*.<sup>1420</sup> It is also likely that he has only the proximate causes in mind here: first,

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<sup>1417</sup> “Secundo propter ordinem scientiae ad scitum; quia cum scientia sit certa cognitio, ex ipsa ratione certitudinis etiam exclusa causalitate, requirit certitudinem et determinationem in scito, quam contingentia excludit...” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>1418</sup> “Oportet enim invenire ad hoc quod sit certa scientia, aliqua certitudinem in scito.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>1419</sup> “antequam res sit non habet esse nisi in causis suis. Sed causae quaedam sunt ex quibus necessario sequitur effectus, quae impediri non possunt, et in istis causis habet causatum esse certum et determinatum, adeo quod potest ibi demonstrative sciri, sicut est ortus solis, et eclipsis, et hujusmodi. Quaedam autem sunt causae ex quibus consequuntur effectus ut in majori parte, sed tamen deficiunt in minori parte; unde in istis causis effectus futuri non habent certitudinem absolutam, sed quamdam, in quantum sunt magis determinatae causae ad unum quam ad aliud; et ideo per istas causas potest accipi scientia conjecturalis de futuris, quae tanto magis erit certa, quanto causae sunt magis determinatae ad unum; sicut est cognitio medici de sanitate et morte futura, et iudicium astrologi de ventis et pluviis futuris. Sed quaedam causae sunt quae se habent ad utrumque: et in istis causis effectus de futuro nullam habent certitudinem vel determinationem; et ideo contingentia ad utrumlibet in causis suis nullo modo cognosci possunt.” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>1420</sup> “Praescientia etiam non imponit necessitatem rebus nec in quantum est causa, cum sit causa prima, cujus conditionem effectus non habet, sed causae proximae; nec ratione adaequationis ad rem scitam quae ad rationem veritatis et certitudinis scientiae exigitur, quia adaequatio ista attenditur scientiae Dei ad rem non



he just said that the contingency or necessity of effect depends solely on them; second, his tripartite classification concerns directly the causes, not the effects, and should the remote causation count, the same celestial bodies should belong to all three categories – which would make the classification not very clear-cut. Anyway, attentive reading of the text excludes considering God as one of the “causes” that Aquinas speaks about here – nothing is future for God.<sup>1421</sup>

Recall that the article does not question God’s knowledge of future contingent entities because they are future, but his knowledge of contingent entities as such because – as contingent – their state is not settled. Now, Aquinas just agreed with the impossibility of the knowledge of future contingent (*ad utrumque*) entities inasmuch as they are future because as future, they could exist only in their temporarily preceding causes and in them, they have no determined existence because they are contingent. Yet, he argues that there is the possibility of knowing the contingent entities, if they are present – seeing the running Socrates being the obvious example of such cognition.<sup>1422</sup> The thing is that – contrary to the assumptions which are the foundations of the second difficulty – something can be both settled and contingent. It is necessary that Socrates runs, while he runs: Aquinas apparently takes for granted that this necessity does not exclude the contingency of running, the required non-determination being to be found elsewhere. While the contingent thing is present, its beingness is determined; it is contingent though because it was not determined in its causes in the time that preceded its realisation.

Aquinas continues by saying that God eternally knows not only the causes of things but also these things themselves inasmuch as they exist “in their determined beingness”: otherwise, his getting to know the things themselves would mean a growth of his knowledge and that is impossible. Also, God does not know only his own relation (*ordo*) to the thing – the relation thanks to whose power “the thing was future” – but the beingness of the thing itself: note that God’s relation to the thing is both said the source of the being of the thing and mentioned

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*secundum quod est in causis suis, in quibus est ut possibile futurum tantum, sed ad ipsam rem, secundum quod habet esse determinatum, prout est praesens, et non futurum: et hoc supra expositum est.” Super Sent., lib. 1, d. 40, q. 3, a. 1, co.*

<sup>1421</sup> “*Cum igitur Deus sit aeternus, ... cognitio sua intuetur omnia temporalia, quamvis sibi succedentia, ut praesentia sibi, nec aliquid eorum est futurum respectu ipsius, sed unum respectu alterius.” Super Sent., lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.*

<sup>1422</sup> “*contingentia ad utrumlibet in causis suis nullo modo cognosci possunt. Sed quando jam efficiuntur in rerum natura, tunc habent in seipsis esse determinatum; et ideo quando sunt in actu, certitudinaliter cognoscuntur, ut patet in eo qui videt Socratem currere, quia Socratem currere dum currit, necessarium est; et certam cognitionem habere potest.” Super Sent., lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.*

separately from the “causes” here.<sup>1423</sup> This assertion cannot be taken as a pretext for denying the causal character of the divine knowledge vis-à-vis the beingness of the thing itself. Several lines below, Aquinas adds that God knows the very being of the thing, and not only its being in his cognition (i.e. God does not know only that he knows the thing, but the thing itself)<sup>1424</sup> – and he obviously does not mean that God knows the real being of the thing independently of the presence of the thing in his cognition. As he has explained in the immediately preceding article, the distinctions between the knowledge of the real being (*esse in esse naturae*), the knowledge of the being in cognition and the knowledge of the being in the power of the cause concern different types of being belonging to the same thing, not different ways of knowing this thing.<sup>1425</sup> All these parallel “not only..., but also...” expressions intend to exclude the images that imply some limited knowledge: the knowledge of the scientist who knows that the observed celestial motion implies an eclipse to come in two hundred years, but will never see the eclipse itself; my awareness of my intention to do something, without any cognitive contact with the result of this intention; knowledge of the concept of thing that would let the thing itself escape. Thus, Aquinas says that the divine knowledge of the world is not limited to the knowledge of God’s (cognitive or causal) relation to the world, not that the former knowledge is not included in God’s self-knowledge thanks to him being the cause that is determined to the causation of the world.

Next, Aquinas invokes Boethius, namely the second and the third step of his argument that I have distinguished above. The knowledge follows the modality of the knower. Therefore, as is the simple and indivisible eternity present to all the times despite the successivity of time, so the cognition of eternal God watches all the temporal beings as present, despite them succeeding one after another.<sup>1426</sup> This is the crucial part of Aquinas’s argument. In the rest of his answer, he just draws the consequences and illustrates them, arriving at the desired goal:

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<sup>1423</sup> “*intellectus divinus intuetur ab aeterno unumquodque contingentium non solum prout est in causis suis, sed prout est in esse suo determinato. Nisi enim hoc esset, cum re existente ipsam rem videat prout in esse suo determinato est, aliter cognosceret rem postquam est quam antequam fiat; et sic ex eventibus rerum aliquid ejus accresceret cognitioni. Patet etiam quod Deus ab aeterno non solum vidit ordinem sui ad rem, ex cujus potestate res erat futura, sed ipsum esse rei intuebatur.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>1424</sup> “*Cum ergo Deus uno aeterno intuitu, non successivo, omnia tempora videat, omnia contingentia in temporibus diversis ab aeterno praesentialiter videt non tantum ut habentia esse in cognitione sua. Non enim Deus ab aeterno cognovit in rebus tantum se cognoscere ea, quod est esse in cognitione sua; sed etiam ab aeterno vidit uno intuitu et videbit singula tempora, et rem talem esse in hoc tempore, et in hoc deficere.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

<sup>1425</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 4, co.

<sup>1426</sup> “*Quod qualiter sit, evidenter docet Boetius in fine de Consol. Omnis enim cognitio est secundum modum cognoscentis, ut dictum est. Cum igitur Deus sit aeternus, oportet quod cognitio ejus modum aeternitatis habeat, qui est esse totum simul sine successione. Unde sicut quamvis tempus sit successivum, tamen aeternitas ejus est praesens omnibus temporibus una et eadem et indivisibilis ut nunc instans; ita et cognitio sua intuetur omnia temporalia, quamvis sibi succedentia, ut praesentia sibi, nec aliquid eorum est futurum respectu ipsius, sed unum respectu alterius.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co.

an eternal knower can know all the contingent entities of all times at once; for him it is no foreknowledge, even if it can be called so by us, if it concerns something that is future relatively to us – while fully sharing Boethius’s reserves vis-à-vis the term “foreseeing” here, Aquinas needs to defend the rightfulness of Biblical vocabulary.<sup>1427</sup> The question is: how does the argument work? Does Aquinas presuppose some non-causal knowledge of the world here? The presence of the eternity to all the times is a key notion here – the presence of all the temporal things to divine knowledge is justified by it. But what does it exactly mean that the eternity is present to all times? A clarification concerning these two notions needs to be done here.

### I. 3. Time, eternity and presence in Aquinas

First, recall what “time” means for Aquinas – “the measure of movement with respect to prior and posterior”,<sup>1428</sup> measured by the soul.<sup>1429</sup> Consequently, the time is not a condition of existence taken as such: it concerns the being of entities in movement only. Analogically to it, the eternity is also a measure, but it concerns the illimited changeless being of God.<sup>1430</sup> It could be said that eternity is for God what time is for the beings in movement, but one crucial difference must be kept in mind then. Time is a feature of the being in movement; it is not identical with this being (or its movement) itself. As for the eternity, it is just another analogy expressing God himself: God is not only eternal, he is the Eternity itself.<sup>1431</sup>

<sup>1427</sup> “*secundum Boetium melius dicitur providentia quam praevidentia: quia non quasi futurum, sed omnia ut praesentia uno intuitu procul videt, quasi ab aeternitatis specula. Sed tamen potest dici praescientia, in quantum cognoscit id quod futurum est nobis, non sibi.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, co., cf. par ex Rom 8, 29.

<sup>1428</sup> “*ex hoc quod numeramus prius et posterius in motu, apprehendimus tempus; quod nihil aliud est quam numerus prioris et posterioris in motu.*” *STh.*, I, q. 10, a. 1, co., cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 16, n. 6; l. 17, n. 10 – 11; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 2, a. 1, co. For an extensive discussion of time, cf. Aquinas’s comment on the source-text of his conception in *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 15 – 1. 23.

<sup>1429</sup> “*illud, quod est de tempore quasi materiale, fundatur in motu, scilicet prius et posterius, quod autem est formale, completur in operatione animae numerantis, propter quod dicit, quod, si non esset anima, non esset tempus*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 2, a. 1, co., cf. *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 16, n. 6.

<sup>1430</sup> “*ratio aeternitatis consequitur immutabilitatem, sicut ratio temporis consequitur motum*” *STh.*, I, q. 10, a. 2, co., cf. *ibid.*, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 8 q. 2 a. 1 – 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 15; *Super De causis*, l. 2: “*Nomen igitur aeternitatis indeficientiam quamdam sive interminabilitatem importat: dicitur enim aeternum quasi extra terminos existens...*”

<sup>1431</sup> “*cum Deus sit maxime immutabilis, sibi maxime competit esse aeternum. Nec solum est aeternus, sed est sua aeternitas, cum tamen nulla alia res sit sua duratio, quia non est suum esse. Deus autem est suum esse uniforme, unde, sicut est sua essentia, ita est sua aeternitas.*” *STh.*, I, q. 10, a. 2, co.; “*duratio Dei, quae aeternitas ejus est, et natura ipsius sunt una res; et tamen distinguuntur ratione, vel modo significandi*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad s. c. 9, cf. *ibid.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1.

### I. 3. 1. Besides the time and the eternity

Time and eternity are not the only notions of their kind. I have already mentioned the “instant” (or “now”), that has the same relation to one moment of the motion, as has the time to the motion as such (the “moment” meaning a state without any distinguishable stages).<sup>1432</sup> Aquinas compares the eternity to it (both are some measures of changeless state)<sup>1433</sup> – the difference between them consists obviously in the illimited being of the eternity. There is also the “*aevum*”, the measure of the substantial being of angels, demons and others indestructible creatures: simply said, while the time measures the being of change or of the subject that can be changed as a subject (i.e., it can be subjected to the substantial change, cf. chap. 3. I. 1. 2.), and the eternity is incompatible with any change at all, the *aevum* measures the being of the subject that cannot be changed as a subject but can be connected with change thanks to its changeable accidental properties like location or activity.<sup>1434</sup> Finally, there is the angelic time: the measure of the succession of angelic cognitive and voluntary acts. Contrary to the time of the corporeal world, it must be (according to young Aquinas) or can be (according to his more mature self) discrete, composed entirely from instants.<sup>1435</sup> This difference is given by the difference of the changes which are measured by these times. Among the changes of material beings, the change of place is primordial: at least in the natural order, all the other changes are ultimately derived from it. The nature of the change of place is continual – it is itself derived from the continual nature of the spatial magnitude that is concerned by it. Thus, two different instants of physical time need to be separated by a temporal continuum because two different points in space need to be separated by some distance.<sup>1436</sup> In contrast, the change of angelic acts does not depend on the local movement of bodies and two different acts do not need to be separated by anything else (and in themselves, they do not need to contain any succession): two instants of time that measures them can therefore follow immediately one after another, and their time does not need to contain any irreducible continuum at all.<sup>1437</sup>

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<sup>1432</sup> Cf. p. 168. See *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 18 and lib. 6, l. 5, n. 1 – 9.

<sup>1433</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 2, a. 2; *STh.*, I, q. 10, a. 2, a. 1, ad 5; a. 2, ad 1; a. 4, ad 2.

<sup>1434</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 2, a. 2, co.; d. 19, q. 2; lib. 2, d. 2, q. 1, a. 1 – 2; *STh.*, I, q. 10, a. 5 – 6; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 10, ad 8 – 9; a. 14, ad s. c. 9; *Quodlibet X*, q. 2, co.; *Quodlibet V*, q. 4; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 5, l. 1 – 3.

<sup>1435</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 4, a. 1 – 3; *STh.*, I, q. 53, a. 1 – 3.; *Quodlibet I*, q. 3, a. 2.

<sup>1436</sup> Cf. the discussion of these topics in my chap. 3. I. 1. 1.

<sup>1437</sup> “*cum motus Angeli non sit continuus (quia non est secundum necessitatem conditiones habens magnitudinis per quam transit, sicut est in illis quae sunt sic nata in loco esse ut eorum substantia sit commensurata terminis loci, scilicet corporibus), sed per successionem operationum, in quibus nulla est ratio continuitatis; ideo tempus illud non est continuum, sed est compositum ex nunc succedentibus sibi ut numerus ipsarum operationum succedentium sibi tempus vocetur, sicut ipsa successio operationum dicitur motus: et quot sunt operationes ex quibus componitur motus secundum diversa loca, tot erunt nunc, ex quibus componitur tempus. Et hoc etiam consonat ei quod philosophus dicit in 6 Physic., quod ejusdem rationis est indivisibile moveri, et tempus componi*”

### I. 3. 2. The relativity of time

The latter assertion can be surprising: maybe you have supposed that Aquinas should work with some intrinsic properties of time that will later delimit the possibilities of the form that the succession of angelic activities can take. In fact, the inverse is true. It is because, absolutely speaking, for Aquinas the time is in change, not the change in time. Let me explain. Some of us tend to consider space and time absolute entities: a kind of primordial frameworks that need to be there if it is to be possible to put the things somewhere (or “somewhen”). The space as a super-box, the time as a super-river carrying this super-box, if you want. Well, as a good Aristotelian, Aquinas does not believe in any such entities. For him, time and space are in the temporal and spatial things and depend ontologically on them. I will skip the detailed consideration of the space:<sup>1438</sup> let me just say that for Aquinas all the corporeal things are supposed to be inside of the ultimate corporeal entity of immense yet finite magnitude – a Super-body if you want. The Super-body is in no place (even if any of its parts is in a place), because the place is defined as “the boundary of the containing” body and the Super-Body is by definition contained in nothing else, the idea of a subsistent space which could serve as such a container being considered as impossible.<sup>1439</sup>

As for the time, it is a measure, and therefore a feature, of the change, which is itself a feature of some changing subject – and that is all. No metaphysical super-river to flow in – Aquinas’s ontology is super-economical here. The existence of change implies the existence of (some) time, but it does not mean that, absolutely speaking, the change has any need of time to exist – it is the time which has need of change to exist. That being said, most of the changes in our world are in some more or less stable relation to other changes and their measures. On

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*ex nunc, et motum ex momentis, et lineam ex punctis...*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 4, a. 3, co.; “*continuitas enim accidit tempori ex parte motus numerati, et non secundum formam suam qua numerus est*” *ibid.*, lib. 2, d. 2, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4, cf. *De veritate*, q. 8, a. 4, ad 15.

<sup>1438</sup> For an extensive discussion of space-like properties of reality see Aquinas’s comment on Aristotle’s views in *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 1 – 14.

<sup>1439</sup> “*cum locus sit terminus continentis, ... cui vero corpori non adiacet aliquod corpus exterius continens ipsum, minime est in loco. Tale autem corpus in mundo non est nisi unum, scilicet ultima sphaera, quaecumque sit illa. Unde secundum hanc determinationem sequitur quod ultima sphaera non sit in loco. Sed hoc videtur impossibile: quia ultima sphaera movetur in loco; nihil autem movetur in loco, quod non sit in loco. Huius igitur dubitationis difficultas non accidit iis qui tenent sententiam de spatio. Non est enim eis necesse dicere quod ad hoc quod sphaera ultima sit in loco, quod habeat corpus continens; sed spatium quod intelligitur penetrare totum mundum et omnes partes eius, est locus totius mundi et cuiuslibet partium eius, secundum eos. Sed haec positio est impossibilis: quia vel oportet dicere quod locus non sit aliquid praeter locatum, vel quod sint aliquae dimensiones spatii per se existentes, et tamen subintrantes dimensiones corporum sensibilium: quae sunt impossibilia.*” ... “*Et ideo magis approbo sententiam Themistii, qui dixit quod ultima sphaera est in loco per suas partes.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 7, n. 2 – 3 and 7. For the problematic of “*spatium*”, see *ibid.*, l. 6.

Aristotelian view, all the other changes depend on the circular celestial movement.<sup>1440</sup> Given this relation, there is a Time with capital T, the Time that is common for all, the Time that anybody needs, the Time that waits for nobody etc.: it is just the measure of this first movement.<sup>1441</sup> The idea of time that is an absolute framework that our own possibility of movement depend on is partially justified by this (note that our units of time are originally defined by the parts of cosmical circulation).<sup>1442</sup> Nevertheless, it is also limited by it. The first movement is not conditioned by any preceding, subsistent time. The unity of time is not a priori granted: should not all the changes depend on one primordial change, there would be several or even many different incommensurable times in the universe. In fact, this is exactly the case of Aquinas's angels.<sup>1443</sup>

### I. 3. 3. Aquinas – a Presentist

If you accept the aforesaid vision of time, you get a relatively simple conceptualisation of this traditionally troublemaking feature of reality, allowing in addition some perks like the possibility of the pluralist vision of time. Nevertheless, there are some considerable losses that you have to get over in this case. One of them is the dream about time travel. Without the imaginary super-river, there is nothing to sail upstream, let alone to create a new branch of the river by entering the super-box which contains the reality somewhere in the upper reaches of the river. An omnipotent being may have the ability to return the universe in exactly the same

<sup>1440</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 82, n. 6; *In Physic.*, lib. 4, l. 7, n. 9 and Aquinas's comment on Aristotle's argumentation in *ibid.*, lib. 8, l. 19 – 20.

<sup>1441</sup> “*est unus primus motus, qui est causa omnis alterius motus. Unde quaecumque sunt in esse transmutabili, habent hoc ex illo primo motu, qui est motus primi mobilis. Quicumque autem percipit quemcumque motum, sive in rebus sensibilibus existentem, sive in anima, percipit esse transmutabile, et per consequens percipit primum motum quem sequitur tempus. Unde quicumque percipit quemcumque motum, percipit tempus: licet tempus non consequatur nisi unum primum motum, a quo omnes alii causantur et mensurantur: et sic remanet tantum unum tempus.*” *In Physic.*, lib. 4 l. 17 n. 4; “*inter alios motus circulares, maxime uniformis et regularis est primus motus, qui revolvit totum firmamentum motu diurno: unde illa circulatio, tanquam prima et simplicior et regularior, est mensura omnium motuum. ... Ex hoc igitur colligere possumus, quod si prima circulatio mensurat omnem motum, et motus mensurantur a tempore, inquantum mensurantur quodam motu; necesse est dicere quod tempus sit numerus primae circulationis, secundum quam mensuratur tempus, et ad quem mensurantur omnes alii motus temporis mensuratione.*” *Ibid.*, l. 23, n. 11, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 3, a. 3, ad 4; lib. 2, d. 2, q. 1, a. 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 84, n. 6; *STh.*, I, q. 10, a. 6, co.; *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9, ad 11. Aquinas does not think that the relation of the cosmic time to the celestial movement is of metaphysical necessity though: “*si motus firmamenti non statim a principio incoepit, tunc tempus quod praecessit, non erat numerus motus firmamenti, sed cuiuscumque primi motus. Accidit enim tempori quod sit numerus motus firmamenti, inquantum hic motus est primus motuum, si autem esset alius motus primus, illius motus esset tempus mensura, quia omnia mensurantur primo sui generis.*” *STh.*, I, q. 66, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>1442</sup> Cf. *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9, ad 11.

<sup>1443</sup> “*Nullus motus mensuratur per motum caeli, nisi qui est ordinatus ad ipsum. Unde etiam probant philosophi, quod si essent plures mundi, oporteret esse plures primos motus, et plura tempora. Unde cum motus Angeli nullum ordinem habeat ad motum caeli, et praecipue si motus ejus dicatur successio operationum, ut dictum est, oportet quod non mensuretur tempore quod est mensura primi mobilis, sed alio tempore, cujus temporis naturam ex natura motus accipere oportet.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 4, a. 3, co., cf. *Quodlibet II*, q. 3.

state as it was fifty circulations of Earth-Sun system ago and then let the things proceed differently than during these fifty years – but this new reversed state and its future would still have the original fifty years as their past. You can understand now, why the change of past is a logical contradiction for Aquinas.<sup>1444</sup> “So *Back to the future* is a bunch of bullshit?”<sup>1445</sup> Aquinas would likely extend the subject of Ant-man’s disappointed quote to most of the spectacular time-manipulations that you have ever seen in movies (beware, after reading Aquinas, *Doctor Strange* will never be the same).

What is more important, for the very same reason one of the most popular explications of divine foreknowledge has serious problems in Aquinas’s universe: the Boethius-like image of God sitting on the balcony of his elevated manor called Eternity and overlooking all the watercourse of the super-river of time bellow is *prima facie* difficult to understand in this view.<sup>1446</sup> Let me be more specific. The Boethian conception of foreknowledge is sometimes considered to presuppose a non-presentist conception of time, represented most notably by what is called the B-theory of time.<sup>1447</sup> According to this view, the distinguishing of the past, the present and the future is something like the distinguishing of the north and the south: the distinction speaks about equally real parts of one englobing reality and it depends only on the position which is held by the subject which performs the distinguishing – what is “in the north” for me is not necessarily “in the north” for northern Norwegians. In a similar way, the time as such is a tenseless reality and all the events that ever happened or will happen are equally real: the fact that Abraham Lincoln’s birth or the moment of my death is not present for me now, does not mean that it is any less real than my writing of these lines; both these events are somewhere “out there”, as is Las Vegas or the crater of Etna, notwithstanding that I happen not to be there. The image of the super-river can be well adapted to this theory: on my little boat I can see just a little part of the stream that precedes me until the nearest turn, but notwithstanding the limitations of my perspective, all the river exists – and if there is somebody with sufficiently elevated watching point, he can see all of it at once. Boethius’s image of the Providence looking at “all things as from some lofty height”<sup>1448</sup> strongly

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<sup>1444</sup> See p. 117, especially my footnote 443.

<sup>1445</sup> See *Avengers: Endgame* (2019).

<sup>1446</sup> See my footnote 1378.

<sup>1447</sup> For a better introduction to the topic, see EMERY – MARKOSIAN – SULLIVAN (2020) whose vocabulary I am adopting. There are the non-presentist variants of A-theory which actually allow a similar view on foreknowledge as B-theory, but for simplicity’s sake I am skipping them: Aquinas’s view is surely not among them.

<sup>1448</sup> BOETHIUS, *Consolation*, book V, prose 6.

suggests something similar and Aquinas's reception of it seems to be committed to the same.<sup>1449</sup>

In contrast, the presentist theory of time insists that the only actually existing time is the present. The past is the past because it exists no more; the future is the future because it does not exist yet. The day of my first birthday is not somewhere behind the turns of the river: it does not exist anymore. Any absolute knower would know that the only existing day is the day that you can see in your calendar – and the precise content of this knowledge would change in 24 hours to come and then again. It seems quite difficult to see, how an atemporal knower could manage to cope with the knowledge of time, as described by this theory then.

And yet, Aquinas is a convinced presentist. The time is an epiphenomenon of movement, not some mysterious force behind it. For the very same reason, it is not a tenselessly existing container. The things that are no more cannot be held somewhere in the river of time simply because the river of time (if the expression is convenient at all) is not something that holds but something that is held – and, by definition, only its present part has something that could hold it. Note that I am not speaking about Boethius here – it might be that his original view is really committed to B-theory. Neither I am pronouncing myself against the plausibility of B-theory (or any other non-presentist theory) itself: while I find the presentism both more economic and intuitive, I have nothing in particular against its alternative, should any moderately strong argument in its favour appear (I guess that many libertarians could be less friendly here). What I am saying is that Aquinas's time is far away from the views of B-theorists and any other non-presentists. The metaphor of divine vantage point observing all the time in a similar way, as the watch tower observes all the plain, the road crossing it and the travellers on the road, must be taken very cautiously then. If you take the “observation” too literally, the past and the future cannot be observed for the very same reason why nobody can travel there there is nothing to observe or nowhere to travel to, and not even being outside of time changes that.

That being said, even if Aquinas was a B-theorist, the things would not work without some further explanation. The accepting of the B-theory actually solves the problem with the (in)determined existence of contingent realities (they exist in another part of the B-theorist's time-block), but that is not the whole of the problem: in itself, the determined existence of

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<sup>1449</sup> “*ea quae temporaliter in actum reducuntur, a nobis successive cognoscuntur in tempore, sed a Deo in aeternitate, quae est supra tempus. Unde nobis, quia cognoscimus futura contingentia in quantum talia sunt, certa esse non possunt, sed soli Deo, cuius intelligere est in aeternitate supra tempus. Sicut ille qui vadit per viam, non videt illos qui post eum veniunt, sed ille qui ab aliqua altitudine totam viam intuetur, simul videt omnes transeuntes per viam.*” *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13, ad 3, cf. for ex. *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 19; *De rationibus Fidei*, cap. 10, co.; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12, co.; q. 5, a. 1, ad 4.



Cygnus X-1 does not make me know this astronomical object. Aquinas states in the article that the divine knowledge of times is based on his presence to the known. If we return to the watchtower-metaphor, we can see why: the observation is permitted only by the fact that the watchtower and the road share a common space; should the watchtower be on the opposite side of the planet, its height or exteriority alone would not make the road present to the watcher. Now, let us say that the spacetime is a tenselessly existing reality, containing all the events of history, and God eternally exists outside of it: would it make God present to the content of spacetime or vice-versa? There is a fantasy suggesting that the tenseless existence of time makes it similar to the atemporal eternity of God and puts it therefore in the same “space”, God’s being outside of time permitting him to see it all at once (as an astronaut in the space can see all the Earth – well, at least the surface of its near side). But that is just a fantasy. Is there actually anything that can be shared by God and the (B-theory’s) spacetime? Obviously, it is neither time nor eternity – and it seems difficult to find anything else to do the work.<sup>1450</sup>

#### I. 3. 4. The causal presence

If all this is true, how can Aquinas state that the Eternity is present to all times, as he does in *Super Sent.*, I, 38, 1, 5? I believe that there is no need for speculation,<sup>1451</sup> for Aquinas’s own answer can be found just in the preceding *distinctio*: luckily (or intentionally?) enough, Aquinas discusses the notion of “presence” here.<sup>1452</sup> The 37<sup>th</sup> *distinctio* is interested in the way in which the incorporeal beings (God and angels) can be in places and in other beings. If you have a body, to be somewhere means that the confines of your body are within (or partially within) the confines of that place or bodily entity. The spiritual beings have no such confines and from this viewpoint, they have no location: in themselves, angels and demons are nowhere. These beings are said to be somewhere only inasmuch as their activity has a causal relation to an entity in this place. Angel is where he acts: it could be better to say that the place in question is in the Angel than that the Angel is in the place.<sup>1453</sup> What about God? If we skip all the considerations of the distinctions of the traces, images and similitudes of God in the creation, Lombard’s authority mentions three ways of God being in any creature:

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<sup>1450</sup> Cf. STUMP (2003), p. 138 – 139.

<sup>1451</sup> That being said, I find Stump’s and Kretzmann’s attempt to formulate ET-simultaneity interesting and potentially very useful, cf. STUMP (2003), p. 138 – 144.

<sup>1452</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2.

<sup>1453</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 3 and, for the later discussion of the same problematic, *STh.*, I, q. 52.

by essence, by power and by presence.<sup>1454</sup> Aquinas explains this distinction as follows: “inasmuch [God] operates in the thing, he is said to be in the thing by presence, inasmuch as it is necessary that the operating [agent] is in some way present to the object of operation; and because the operation does not leave the divine force from which it comes out, he is therefore said to be in the thing by power; and because the force is the essence itself, the consequence is therefore that he is in the thing also by essence.”<sup>1455</sup> Briefly said: for God, to be present means to act. Let me acknowledge immediately that this interpretation of “presence” is limited to Aquinas’s earlier writings. It is repeated again some ten years later in *Compendium*,<sup>1456</sup> but in *Summa theologiae* and *Commentary on John* it is replaced by another view: God is in the thing by essence, inasmuch as he is connected to it as the cause of its beingness; he is in the thing by power, inasmuch as the thing is subjected to his power, and he is in the thing by presence, inasmuch as the thing is perfectly known by him.<sup>1457</sup>

Note that if you applied this later meaning of the “presence” in Aquinas’s argument in *Sentences*, you would probably make it a vicious circle: God is said to be able to know the things because they are present to him, and they are present to him because the Eternity (i.e., God) is present to all the times – which would only mean that the Eternity knows them then. In contrast, Aquinas’s earlier reading of the distinction makes the argument just another instantiation of the argument that he uses all the time: God’s causal status grants him the knowledge of all his effects and their implications. Given all the other contemporary statements concerning the causal knowledge, it allows to lift any doubt concerning the type of presence that he is speaking about when he discusses the relation between the Eternity and the times in his earlier texts. The eternity – “the possession of endless life whole and perfect at a single moment”<sup>1458</sup> – causes changelessly all the things, all the changes and all the times; in the third chapter (cf. chap. 3. II. 6.) we saw Aquinas’s view on it. This is why all the different

<sup>1454</sup> “*Ex his aliisque pluribus auctoritatibus aperte monstratur, quod Deus ubique et in omni creatura essentialiter, praesentialiter, potentialiter est.*” PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quatuor sententiarum*, lib. 1, d. 37, cap. 1.

<sup>1455</sup> “*secundum hoc quod operatur in re, dicitur esse in re per praesentiam, secundum quod oportet operans operato aliquo modo praesens esse; et quia operatio non deserit virtutem divinam a qua exit, ideo dicitur esse in re per potentiam; et quia virtus est ipsa essentia, ideo consequitur ut in re etiam per essentiam sit.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2, co.

<sup>1456</sup> “*dicitur Deus in omnibus esse per essentiam, potentiam et praesentiam. Per essentiam quidem, in quantum esse cuiuslibet est quaedam participatio divini esse, et sic essentia divina cuilibet existenti adest, in quantum habet esse, sicut causa proprio effectui; per potentiam vero, in quantum omnia in virtute ipsius agunt; per praesentiam vero, in quantum ipse immediate omnia ordinat et disponit.*” *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 135.

<sup>1457</sup> “*est in omnibus per potentiam, in quantum omnia eius potestati subduntur. Est per praesentiam in omnibus, in quantum omnia nuda sunt et aperta oculis eius. Est in omnibus per essentiam, in quantum adest omnibus ut causa essendi, sicut dictum est.*” *STh.*, I, q. 8, a. 3, co., cf. *Super Io.*, cap. 1, l. 5.

<sup>1458</sup> BOETHIUS, *Consolation of Philosophy*, book V, prose 6, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 2, a. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 10, a. 1; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 8; *Super De causis*, l. 2; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 14, ad s. c. 1.

times are simultaneously present to it – the divine ideas of temporal things are kind of B-theory’s time that has its place in Aquinas’s worldview after all. This way, God knows the settled being that all things have in the times of their existence – the being that makes the things knowable notwithstanding their contingency. This is also Aquinas’s answer to the second objection in *Super Sent.*, I, 38, 1, 5.<sup>1459</sup> He concedes that related to divine knowledge, the thing is necessary (ad 3), even absolutely (i.e., logically) necessary (ad 4): “The actually existing entity does not exist.” is a logical contradiction. That does not impede the contingency of the thing because it can be considered without this respect (e.g. as existing in its own cause) and as such, it is indetermined (and, even for God, unknowable) (ad 5 and ad 6). The knowledge of the things under all the modalities that they have in different times is simultaneous for God: therefore, the change of known objects does not found any need of growth of knowledge in him (ad 7).

### I. 3. 5. Epilogue – the relation between foreknowledge and causality

If all this is correct, the very article that seemed to represent the master argument against attribution of the theory of purely causal divine knowledge of the actual world to Aquinas proves the contrary – if it is read attentively and related to its more or less immediate context. Is it therefore possible to reduce the problem of knowledge of contingent entities to the problem of the causation of contingent entities? It depends on the reduction. The question of knowledge makes troubles independently of the question of causality; while the answer of the former can argue by the failure of particular divine motion to defend the contingency of effect, the answer of the latter cannot profit from anything similar that could be used to defend the contingency of infallibly known. Clearly, at least in his youth Aquinas considered the latter problem much more difficult. The necessities that are threatening the contingency are not the same either. Nevertheless, while the problems are not the same, the solution is – or at least its most important ingredient is. Aquinas denies neither the necessity of the effect from the viewpoint of divine causality nor the necessity of the known from the viewpoint of divine knowledge (we saw the role this necessity has in his interpretation of Scripture, cf. chap. 2. II. 5.): he just states that these necessities are compatible with contingency – more precisely,

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<sup>1459</sup> “*futurum contingens non est determinate verum antequam fiat, quia non habet causam determinatam; et ideo ejus certa cognitio haberi non potest ab intellectu nostro, cujus cognitio est in tempore determinato et successive. Sed dum est in actu, determinate verum est; et ideo a cognitione quae est praesens illi actui, potest certitudinaliter cognosci; sicut patet etiam de visu corporali: et quia cognitio divina aeternitate mensuratur, quae eadem manens omni tempore praesens est, ideo unumquodque contingentium videt prout est in suo actu.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2.

with the obvious feature of some events that we would normally call contingency. He points to the fact that this feature is defined by the relation of the thing to its secondary causes (or to the state of its causes that temporally precedes the causation) and as such is in no way threatened by any infallible knower or primal cause of its bearer. Added Aquinas's causal conception of divine presence, the reconciliation of the contingency with the causal determinism provides two most relevant elements of its reconciliation with the infallible foreknowledge: it allows the presence of God to contingent entities, making them possible to be known by him, and it shows a safe place where to situate the contingency, notwithstanding the necessity implied by the knowledge itself. That being said, it takes the discussion of the problem of foreknowledge itself to become aware of the role that the causal compatibilism can have there.

#### I. 4. The need for atemporality

Any view that would try to resolve the problem of the foreknowledge of future contingents merely by divine atemporality can be challenged by the possibility that the eternal knower communicates his knowledge to some temporal entity. As you can see, Aquinas's solution is immune against such objection – the contingency being defined as it is, it is of no importance whether the kind of necessity that is implied by being known is related to eternal or temporal cognitive act. It is better for him: a defence of foreknowledge that could not include infallible prophecies pronounced in time would probably be of limited use for any traditional Christian theologian. Nevertheless, this advantage of Aquinas's solution could be – and actually was – used to question whether the solution is actually Aquinas's.<sup>1460</sup> It is that Aquinas manifestly considers God's timelessness as a necessary condition of the functionality of his model of divine foreknowledge. He explicitly states that if an entity is not above or outside the order of time, it cannot foreknow future contingents in themselves: it can get to know them only by the way of conjecture made on the basis of the determination of their present causes, if there is

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<sup>1460</sup> “Finally, on this interpretation, God's knowledge of future contingents should be explainable just as God's knowledge of anything else is, namely, as a function of the causal efficacy of the divine cognition. In fact, there should be no special problem about God's knowledge of future contingents. If God's knowledge of things in time is always causative, then God's knowledge of a future free action should also be adequately explained in the same way: God knows it in virtue of causing it. But Aquinas manifestly supposes that God's knowledge of future contingents has to be explained in a very different way, in terms of God's eternity. ... Aquinas here clearly supposes that God's eternity is crucial to explaining God's knowledge of future contingents.” STUMP (2003), p. 161 – 162. Stump quotes *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12; *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 13 and *Contra gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 66 to support her claim. Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 328, n. 30.

any.<sup>1461</sup> But if all God's seeing of future contingents in themselves is explainable in terms of causal knowledge, this requirement seems incomprehensible: it is enough to have the perfect knowledge of causal web leading to a future contingent event and you should be able to see them too, notwithstanding that you are some time-immersed version of the Laplacian demon. I concede that Aquinas's texts have not given to me any manifest reason to hold that the timelessness of the knower is a necessary condition for her being able of the causal knowledge of contingent entities. It is clearly impossible that such a knower is equally present in relation to all temporal entities: at least her own temporally differentiated states would not be equal from this viewpoint. Some contingent entities would actually be future for her, and the present state of their proximate causes would be not enough to know them, but absolutely speaking, in the determinist universe it does not constitute an unsurpassable obstacle: the knower could get that knowledge simply by universalising her scope to *all* the causal conditions. Also, it is not clear to me why the timelessness should be, absolutely speaking, of any help in this matter. That being said, it is not clear to me why the timelessness should be, absolutely speaking, of any help to know the future contingents in any other way, surely not in any other way that could be easily found in Aquinas's texts. Let us suppose that there was no way to explain Aquinas's requirement of timelessness in terms of what he thinks about the causal knowledge then: even in such a situation, the hypothesis that it refers to the necessary (and maybe sufficient) condition of some other mysterious way of divine knowing which Aquinas would work with and which would be a necessary complement of divine causal knowledge would not make the relation between different components of Aquinas's texts (and these texts themselves) clearer – it would make them more obscure. But I do not think that we are in such a situation. While I am not sure at all that Aquinas is right in connecting the foreknowledge and timelessness (as you may remember, I do not think that there are any manifest reasons to consider Aquinas's conception of divine knowledge the only coherent option, cf. Intro, III.), I think that there are manifest reasons for Aquinas to think that this connection exists, and the causal explanation of foreknowledge constitutes no need to wonder why he thinks it, as it was pretended.

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<sup>1461</sup> Cf. also *De malo*, q. 16, a. 7, co. (“*quia futura, prout futura sunt, nondum habent esse in seipsis; esse autem et verum convertuntur; unde cum omnis cognitio sit alicuius veri, impossibile est quod aliqua cognitio respiciens futura in ratione futuri, cognoscat ea in seipsis. Cum autem praesens, praeteritum et futurum sint differentiae temporis, temporalem ordinem designantes: omne quod qualitercumque est in tempore, comparatur ad futura sub ratione futuri. Et ideo impossibile est quod aliqua cognitio subiacens ordini temporis, cognoscat futura in seipsis. Talis autem est omnis cognitio creaturae, ut post dicitur. Unde impossibile est quod aliqua creatura cognoscat futura in seipsis; sed hoc est proprium solius Dei, cuius cognitio est omnino elevata supra totum ordinem temporis, ita quod nulla pars temporis comparatur ad cognitionem divinam sub ratione praeteriti vel futuri; sed totus decursus temporis, et ea quae per totum tempus aguntur, praesentialiter et conformiter eius aspectui subduntur.*”) or *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 19 – 20.

Let us begin by specifying what Aquinas is exactly saying about this connection – and what he is not. Firstly and most importantly, despite the possible first appearance, he *does not deny* the possibility that a time-immersed being can have infallible foreknowledge of some future contingents: such knowledge is the most proper feature of the supernatural gift of prophecy in his view.<sup>1462</sup> What he denies is that such being could get such knowledge independently of its providing by a higher, and ultimately timeless, knower.<sup>1463</sup> Secondly, in Aquinas’s view the foreknowledge-preventing feature is not only the fact that you are subjected to the time to which the future contingents in question belong, but the very fact that you are subjected *to any time at all*: the demons exist outside of cosmic time, yet they allegedly cannot see my tomorrow sins because, beside others, their immanent activities are subjected to the time of their own.<sup>1464</sup> The illustration of the problem by the image of watchtower has its important limits from this viewpoint: to include the latter condition, the watchtower would need to be *outside of any possible road*, if its scope was to be able to take in the whole of *any road at all*. Why should Aquinas think so? Consider what the knower’s immersion in (any) time means for him: there is a succession of knower’s states, implying that she is in a movement (in a broad sense of the term, cf. chap. 3. I. 1. 3.), implying that there is some kind of at least partial incompleteness of the perfection of at least some of the aforesaid states of her and that these states ultimately depend on an influence of an external mover. Briefly said, in Aquinas’s mind the time is connected with a limitation. In particular, Aquinas is convinced that there must be a time in angelic (or demonic) activities precisely because he is convinced that not even the most perfect intellectual creature is naturally able to consider all the possible content of its knowledge at once:<sup>1465</sup> we have seen the importance this view has for Aquinas’s doctrine

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<sup>1462</sup> “*futura contingentia verius sunt procul a cognitione quam quaecumque alia, et ideo praecipue videntur ad prophetiam pertinere, in tantum quod quasi praecipua prophetiae materia in definitione prophetiae ponantur*” *De veritate*, q. 12, a. 2, co., cf.; *STh.*, II-II, q. 171, a. 3; *Super Is.*, cap. 1, l. 1; “*certitudo divinae praescientiae non excludit contingentiam singularium futurorum, quia fertur in ea secundum quod sunt praesentia et iam determinata ad unum. Et ideo etiam prophetia, quae est divinae praescientiae similitudo impressa vel signum, sua immobili veritate futurorum contingentiam non excludit.*” *STh.*, II-II, q. 171, a. 6, ad 1; *De veritate*, q. 12, a. 11.

<sup>1463</sup> Answering the objection that demons can know the future “*ex revelatione bonorum spirituum*” (*De malo*, q. 16, a. 7, arg. 10), Aquinas simply states that “*hoc quod Daemones ex revelatione supernorum spirituum aliqua cognoscunt, eorum naturalem facultatem excedit*” (*ibid.*, ad 10).

<sup>1464</sup> “*substantia et operatio Daemonis est quidem supra tempus, quod est numerus motus caeli, tamen in eius operatione adiungitur tempus, secundum quod non omnia simul actu intelligit. Quod quidem tempus est vicissitudo quaedam affectionum et conceptionum intelligibilium*” *De malo*, q. 16, a. 7, ad 3 (answering the objection that demons are beyond time and therefore indistinctly knowing the past, the present and the future), cf. *STh.*, I, q. 57, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>1465</sup> “*in conceptionibus et affectionibus Angelorum est quaedam temporalis successio ... Non enim Angeli omnia simul actu intelligunt: quia non omnia intelligit unus Angelus per unam speciem, sed diversa diversis speciebus: <et> tanto unusquisque Angelus naturaliter per pauciores species plura cognoscit, quanto superior est. ... sicut etiam in hominibus videmus quod quanto aliquis est altioris intellectus, tanto ex paucioribus plura cognoscere potest. Solus autem Deus uno, scilicet sua essentia, omnia cognoscit. Ideo autem homo non potest simul multa*

about the possibility of the fall of angels (cf. chap. 4. II. 2. *in fine*). Now, to infallibly infer (be it its proper) future contingent states (like the aforesaid fall), the knower would need to consider the totality of its (temporally or eternally) present causally relevant conditions: that means that in the universe under the permanent influence of the compatibilist-freely deciding God, Lucifer would need the illimited comprehension of God, if he was to infallibly foresee his own fall, not to speak about getting the position of the Laplacian demon. Given God's infinity, this is impossible for created (and therefore finite) intellect in Aquinas's view:<sup>1466</sup> not even the beatific vision provides that, which is why angels who enjoy this vision do not automatically know all God's intentions concerning the temporal subjects of their custody.<sup>1467</sup> Now, if you parted from Aquinas's conviction about this impossibility and even say that the ability of illimited comprehension of God is natural for Lucifer, you would need to make further important changes in Aquinas's convictions if the thing is to work. Aquinas believes that not even God can get through the infinite entity by the succession of finite steps. The only way to do it is to comprehend it at once by one infinitely comprehending act.<sup>1468</sup> If this is so, the illimited comprehension of God could be never achieved by the succession of limited cognitive acts. Lucifer would need to make it at once – and by the very fact he would be in the state of the ultimate perfection,<sup>1469</sup> seeing everything that God knows. But if he was naturally able to do it, the basis for the existence of time in him (the partiality of the consideration of the content of knowledge) would disappear, Lucifer's volitive state being determined by his cognitive state and simultaneous to it.<sup>1470</sup> thus, if Lucifer is to infallibly know the future

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*actu intelligere, quia non potest perfecte et finaliter intellectus eius fieri in actu secundum diversas species, sicut nec idem corpus secundum diversas figuras. Unde et circa Angelos dicendum est, quod omnia illa quae Angelus per unam speciem cognoscit, potest simul cognoscere; quae autem per diversas species cognoscit, non potest simul cognoscere, sed successive. Ista autem successio non mensuratur per tempus quod causatur a motu caeli, supra quem sunt affectiones et conceptiones Angelorum; superius autem non mensuratur ab inferiori, sed oportet quod ipsae conceptiones et affectiones sibi succedentes causent diversa instantia huius temporis. In ea igitur quae secundum unam speciem Angelus apprehendere non potest, necesse est quod moveatur in diversis instantibus sui temporis.”* *De malo*, q. 16, a. 4, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 3, q. 3, a. 1, 2 and 4; *STh.*, I, q. 55 and q. 58, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 8, a. 8 – 10 and 14; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 98 and 101.

<sup>1466</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 7; *De veritate*, q. 8, a. 2; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 55; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 14, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1 (concerning the soul of Christ); lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2, a. 3 and 5.

<sup>1467</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 113, a. 8; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 11, q. 2, a. 5; “*alii a Christo, quamvis videant Deum per essentiam, non tamen vident omnia quae Deus videt, eo quod essentiam divinam non comprehendunt. Non est enim necessarium quod sciens causam, sciat omnes ejus effectus, nisi causam comprehendat, quod non competit intellectui creato*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2, a. 5, co.

<sup>1468</sup> “*intellectus discurrens per rem, non potest comprehendere rem infinitam, quia finiret eam numerando partes ejus; sed scientia Dei sine discursu uniformiter est unius et multorum, finitorum et infinitorum.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 1, a. 3, ad 5, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 14, a. 12; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 9.

<sup>1469</sup> The limitless comprehension of God would realise in the supreme manner the state to which all the intellectual creatures tend as to (the ultimate way of acquisition of) their ultimate goal, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 25, 37 and 63; *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1 *STh.*, I-II, q. 2, a. 8 and q. 3, a. 8.

<sup>1470</sup> “*motus liberi arbitrii ... non habet successionem, sed est simplex et instantaneus. ... ad motum voluntatis non praeexigitur nisi actus apprehensivae virtutis: qui quidem motus in eodem instanti est cum actu voluntatis, eo*

contingent events, he needs to be timeless – exactly as Aquinas says. You could say that he needs to achieve the ability of the infinite cognitive act by making finite cognitive acts first: but then you must deny Aquinas’s conviction about angel’s possession of all its natural (habitual) perfections in the moment of its creation.<sup>1471</sup> You could imagine some kind of voluntary leaving of ultimate perfection in a manner of Origenian or kenotic theology: you are in contradiction with Aquinas’s conception of beatitude.<sup>1472</sup> You could say that the infinite cognitive act could be a natural final point of a bodily knower, like human: here you would need to deny all what Aquinas says about the source of human knowledge of God and its constitutive limitations.<sup>1473</sup> Without a doubt, you could still invent a cleverer way to reconcile the limitless knowledge of God and the temporal status of the knower: but no matter how clever it is, the limitation of perfection that is needed for the mutability and consequently for the temporality of the knower will still be at odds with the limitlessness of perfection that Aquinas requires for the possibility to the perfectly comprehend God.

On the contrary, the connection between the notions of eternity, immutability and illimited perfection<sup>1474</sup> makes the connection between the former and the knowledge of entities that can be infallibly foreknown only thanks to the illimited knowledge of their causal conditions quite intuitive. God knows the future thanks to “the stability of his eternity”<sup>1475</sup> – which is “the possession of endless life whole and perfect at a single moment”<sup>1476</sup> – because this stability frees him from the conditions of knowers who need to consider (or even get) their knowledge successively and as such will never achieve the required cognitive penetration of the infinite. Now, I am not saying that Aquinas’s emphasis on timelessness is due to some independent reasoning about the implications that time has in his cosmological system: in such a case, it would not be likely that there was no trace of it in Aquinas’s texts, and I do not know about

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*quod bonum apprehensum movet voluntatem. Simul autem est motio moventis et motus mobilis.” De veritate, q. 29, a. 8, co. (concerning the first instant of existence of the soul of Christ whose supernatural cognitive perfection makes him the most perfect created knower on Aquinas’s view, see *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2, a. 5, co.).*

<sup>1471</sup> “*sunt quaedam substantiae spirituales superiores quae sine aliquo motu vel discursu statim in prima et subita sive simplici acceptione cognitionem obtinent veritatis; sicut est in Angelis, ratione cuius deiformem intellectum habere dicuntur.*” *De veritate*, q. 15, a. 1, co., cf. *ibid.*, q. 8, a. 15; *STh.*, I, q. 55, a. 2; q. 58, a. 1 and 3. Besides, even if preceded by a time, this activity would still count for eternal for Aquinas because of the very fact of its succession-less divine character, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 3.

<sup>1472</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 5, a. 4; *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 3.

<sup>1473</sup> See the beginning of chap. 4. II. 4. 1. for the sketch of natural functioning of human cognition and *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 12 and q. 13, a. 5 (and my chap. 1. I. 3.) for its implications for the knowledge of God.

<sup>1474</sup> Cf. for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 9, a. 1 – 2 and q. 10, a. 2 – 3.

<sup>1475</sup> “*Sunt etiam quaedam futura quae non habent causas determinatas in natura, et precipue quae fiunt ex libero arbitrio; et harum praecognitionem nullus habet nisi Deus, cui omnia sunt praesentia, propter stabilitatem suae aeternitatis, vel aliquis accipiens a Deo. Et si quidem inspiratione divina talia praedicuntur, erit prophetia*” *Super Is.*, cap. 3, l. 3.

<sup>1476</sup> BOETHIUS, *Consolation of Philosophy*, book V, prose 6, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 8, q. 2, a. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 10, a. 1; *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 8; *Super De causis*, l. 2; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 14, ad s. c. 1.



any such trace. The matter of fact is that Aquinas do not provide any elaborated theory about this topic. What I think is that he simply takes over Boethius's formulation of the topic and applies it, inasmuch as it is possible and profitable given his own viewpoint: you can compare the situation with Aquinas's repeated quotation of 23rd proposition of *Liber de causis* (see below III. 3.). It happens that, for reasons that I mention above, this formulation can quite easily enter his worldview: Aquinas cannot imagine any knower whose temporal character would not impede the autonomous knowledge of future contingents; in contrast, the Eternity implies the presence to anything that exists. It does not mean that Aquinas has taken over all the reasons that Boethius could have had for his formulation. It surely does not mean that the impossibility of the Laplacian demon can be shown as Aquinas does it independently on some more or less doubtful specifics of his worldview. But it means that the fact that this formulation belongs to his worldview constitutes no mystery that would need to be explained by him holding a theory of contingency, divine knowledge or time, that is to be found nowhere in his texts and contradicts some of them.

## II. The Providence

### II. 1. The meaning of term

The Latin term *providere* means originally “to see forwards”, then “to foresee”, “to be farsighted”, “to take care” of something or “to provide” something.<sup>1477</sup> The term “providence” (*providentia*) therefore does not automatically have religious or theological connotations: it can be attributed to anybody who is organising something or taking care of something.<sup>1478</sup> It primarily designates some human property: its theological use is just an analogical attribution of this property to God. In Aquinas's view, this particular analogy has a particular importance for our comprehension of the divine though – he is convinced that the very Latin term for God (*Deus*) is derived from it.<sup>1479</sup> The view on the precise meaning of this analogy has undergone an evolution in his thought though.

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<sup>1477</sup> Cf. the entry “*providere*” in LEWIS & SHORT (1879).

<sup>1478</sup> “*similatur providentia ista qua Deus mundum gubernat providentiae oeconomicae, qua aliquis gubernat familiam, vel politicae qua aliquis gubernat civitatem aut regnum, per quam aliquis ordinat actus aliorum in finem...*” *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 2, co.

<sup>1479</sup> “*...hoc nomen Deus est nomen operationis, quantum ad id a quo imponitur ad significandum. Imponitur enim hoc nomen ab universali rerum providentia, omnes enim loquentes de Deo, hoc intendunt nominare Deum, quod habet providentiam universalem de rebus. ... Ex hac autem operatione hoc nomen Deus assumptum, impositum est ad significandum divinam naturam.*” *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 8, co., cf. *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 12.

In *Commentary on Sentences*, Aquinas states that somebody is called provident because he correctly judges in the matter of factors that help or impede the achievement of the goal.<sup>1480</sup> It is an intellectual activity and as such it belongs to the attribute of divine knowledge, more precisely to the divine intellectual project (*ratio*) of the world. This project can be called “knowledge”, if it is considered as a cognitive act; it can be called “disposition” (*dispositio*), if it is considered inasmuch as it concerns mutual ordering of different parts of universe and ordering of the universe vis-à-vis its ultimate Goal; it can be called “providence” inasmuch as it concerns the conservation of this ordering.<sup>1481</sup> These distinctions being made, Aquinas accepts the possibility to attribute the effect of the disposition to the providence without a second thought because the disposition is, in a way, included in the providence.<sup>1482</sup> Also, while the providence can be considered purely inasmuch as it is an intellectual project, it can be considered also inasmuch as its realisation is wanted by God, or even inasmuch as it is made to happen by him: if considered in these ways, it does not belong only to divine intellect, but also to divine will, or even to both his will and power.<sup>1483</sup> These distinctions – and their sliding character – are to be kept in mind, if the reader is not to be lost in Aquinas’s discourse about this matter: a good example of such necessity is the reading of Aquinas’s early statement concerning the relation between divine election and the “disposition” of creatures that we shall see later (III. 2.).

Beginning with *De veritate*, Aquinas gets to include into his understanding of providence its relation to the practically/intellectual Aristotelian habitus enabling the right judgment concerning what is to be done here and now – the *fronesis*.<sup>1484</sup> The Latin name of this habitus is “*prudentia*”: as Aquinas correctly notices, this name has its origin in the abbreviated “*providentia*”.<sup>1485</sup> He familiarizes himself with Cicero’s analysis according to which the *providentia* is one of the three parts of *prudentia* (besides memory and intelligence).<sup>1486</sup> Cicero probably simply meant the ability of foresight by the term: the *providentia* is supposed to make see the things to happen before they happen. In Aquinas’s reading though, the

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<sup>1480</sup> “*providus enim dicitur qui bene coniectat de conferentibus in finem, et de his quae impedire possunt.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 1, co.

<sup>1481</sup> “*in Deo scientia dicitur, secundum quod habet cognitionem et sui ipsius, et eorum quae facit. Sed dispositio dicitur ratione duplicis ordinis quem ponit in rebus; scilicet rei ad rem, secundum quod juvant se invicem ad consequendum finem ultimum; et iterum totius universi ad ipsum Deum... Providentia autem dicitur secundum quod rebus ita ordinatis attribuit ea quae ordinem conservant et propellit omnium inordinationem.*” *Ibid.*

<sup>1482</sup> “*providentia includit dispositionem et addit: et propter hoc etiam per providentiam disponere dicitur.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>1483</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>1484</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 4 (1140).

<sup>1485</sup> Cf. *STh.*, II-II, q. 49, a. 6, ad 1.

<sup>1486</sup> Cf. MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, *De inventione*, II, cap. 53, n. 160.

providence is more than that: it is the accomplishing part of *prudentia* whose task is actually the same as the task of the *prudentia* itself – to direct its subject to her goal.<sup>1487</sup> This analysis results in the redistribution of the tasks of divine disposition and divine providence in Aquinas’s view: the ordering of the universe to the Ultimate goal belongs to the providence now, the disposition keeping only the mutual ordering of the parts of the universe. The reason why the effect of the disposition can be attributed to the providence changes too: the effect of providence is the final cause of the effect of disposition.<sup>1488</sup> Finally, the relation of the providence to divine will gets more pronounced. The *prudentia* presupposes a good state of human appetites.<sup>1489</sup> Not only a vicious person is unable to act virtuously: her theoretical knowledge of moral rules may be completely flawless, she is still unable to recognise what is actually virtuous here and now. In a similar manner, the divine providence depends on a particular state of divine appetite, namely the divine decision to communicate the ultimate good (i.e., Himself) to universe: consequently, this intellectual project cannot be understood without considering the divine will too. As before, the relation of providence to divine power is that of logical anteriority: narrowly speaking, the providence is a divine immanent act, not something that God does in the world.<sup>1490</sup> I am not saying by this that nowhere in Aquinas’s later writings the term can mean the latter (too) – but it would be a less proper use of the term then. Most notably, in *Summa theologiae* Aquinas tends to speak rather about “divine ruling” (*gubernatio divina*) in this case – and he discusses this topic only after speaking about Trinity, creation and the principal parts of created world, some eighty *questiones* after his discussion of divine providence in the narrow sense of the term.<sup>1491</sup> It is essential to distinguish his speaking about these two topics: while the divine providence in the narrow sense of the term does not engage any secondary causes, being the work of God alone, a big part of divine rule is realised by the means of creatures.<sup>1492</sup> That being said, these creatures are still just “unprofitable servants”<sup>1493</sup> (or maybe some very little girls “helping” their mother to prepare

<sup>1487</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 1; *STh.*, II-II, q. 49, a. 6.

<sup>1488</sup> “*Dispositio ergo pertinet ad illum ordinem quo res progrediuntur a principio: dicuntur enim aliqua disponi secundum quod in diversis gradibus collocantur a Deo, sicut artifex diversimode collocat partes sui artificii... Sed providentia importat illum ordinem qui est ad finem. Et sic providentia differt ab arte divina et dispositione, quia ars divina dicitur respectu productionis rerum; sed dispositio respectu ordinis productorum; providentia autem dicit ordinem in finem. Sed quia ex fine artificii colligitur quidquid est in artificiato; ordo autem ad finem est fini propinquior quam ordo partium ad invicem, et quodammodo causa eius; ideo providentia quodammodo est dispositionis causa, et propter hoc actus dispositionis frequenter providentiae attribuitur.*” *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 9.

<sup>1489</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 58, a. 5; II-II, q. 47, a. 13.

<sup>1490</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 1, ad s. c. 3 and q. 6, a. 1, co.

<sup>1491</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 22 concerning *providentia* and q. 103ff concerning the *gubernatio*.

<sup>1492</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 2 and q. 103, a. 6.

<sup>1493</sup> Cf. L 17, 10.

the lunch): God does not make them participate on his rule because he needs them, but because they need it. More precisely, by doing so, they are gifted with more extensive participation on divine perfection which is their final goal.<sup>1494</sup>

## II. 2. The providence – the self-propagation of the Good

It was said that the providence concerns the direction of something to the goal. In the case of the divine providence, the goal is God himself. Let me briefly restate some observations made in the first chapter.<sup>1495</sup> Aquinas's God is not a goal to realise nor to safeguard, and there is no question of any contribution to his own good: he has no need of anything else from these viewpoints. God is the goal to manifest: the creation of the world by the Trinity can be compared to the taking of the selfie by a happy couple in the moment of their enjoying themselves, taken just because they like the situation whose very flat and otherwise imperfect representation is captured in the picture (and despite the fact that the actual contribution of the picture to their happiness shall be very small, if any). The aristocratic – attractivity based – conception of the “good”<sup>1496</sup> actually implies one of the neo-platonic aspects of Aquinas's thought about this notion: the good tends to diffuse and communicate itself.<sup>1497</sup> The perfect Good loves himself (because it is a perfect realisation of all what makes something attractive, including the ability to perceive the attractivity) and for the very same reason he tends to share its similitude to other entities – inasmuch they are similar to the Good, they are good and therefore attractive for the Good.<sup>1498</sup> Thus, even if the infinite Good has no need of

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<sup>1494</sup> “*Voluit enim Deus perfectionem suae bonitatis, creaturae alteri communicare secundum quod possibile erat. Divina autem bonitas duplicem habet perfectionem: unam secundum se ... aliam prout influit in res, secundum, scilicet, quod est causa rerum, unde et divinae bonitati congruebat ut utraque creaturae communicaretur; ut, scilicet, res creata non solum a divina bonitate haberet quod esset et bona esset, sed etiam quod alii esse et bonitatem largiretur; sicut etiam sol per diffusionem radiorum suorum non solum facit corpora illuminata, sed etiam illuminantia...*” *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 8, co.

<sup>1495</sup> Cf. most notably chap. 1. II. 6 and III. Int.

<sup>1496</sup> Cf. chap. 1. I. 1. and II. 2.

<sup>1497</sup> “*bonum dicitur diffusivum per modum finis, secundum quod dicitur quod finis movet efficientem.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 34, q. 2, a. 1, ad 4, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 1, ad 4; *De potentia*, q. 7, a. 5, ad 7; *Super Psalmo 24*, n. 6; *Super Mt.*, cap. 25, l. 2. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4 d. 46 q. 2 a. 1 qc. 2 co.

<sup>1498</sup> “*Communicatio esse et bonitatis ex bonitate procedit. Quod quidem patet et ex ipsa natura boni, et ex eius ratione. ... Ratio vero boni est ex hoc quod est appetibile. Quod est finis. Qui etiam movet agentem ad agendum. Propter quod dicitur bonum esse diffusivum sui et esse.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 37, n. 5; “*per hoc quod tendunt in suam perfectionem, tendunt ad bonum: cum unumquodque in tantum bonum sit in quantum est perfectum. Secundum vero quod tendit ad hoc quod sit bonum, tendit in divinam similitudinem: Deo enim assimilatur aliquid in quantum bonum est. Bonum autem hoc vel illud particulare habet quod sit appetibile in quantum est similitudo primae bonitatis. Propter hoc igitur tendit in proprium bonum, quia tendit in divinam similitudinem, et non e converso. ... Bonum autem suum cuiuslibet rei potest accipi multipliciter. Uno quidem modo, secundum quod est eius proprium ratione individui. Et sic appetit animal suum bonum cum appetit cibum, quo in esse conservatur. Alio modo, secundum quod est eius ratione speciei. Et sic appetit proprium bonum animal in quantum appetit generationem proles et eius nutritionem, vel quicquid aliud operetur ad conservationem vel defensionem individuorum suae speciei. Tertio vero modo, ratione generis. Et sic appetit*

anything else, it is still very natural for it to realise something else. As I have already mentioned, the objection considering this attitude as egocentric is misplaced here. The defectivity of egocentrism consists just in the mistaken taking of one's limited goodness for the only goodness that counts, as if anything else was dependent on it: but in the singular case of God, this very attitude is not mistaken. An egocentric person loves the others principally as means for his own benefit, but Aquinas's God has no benefit from creatures, surely not for himself.<sup>1499</sup> The trinitarian language can be both more illuminating and convincing here, reminding us that the divine being whose similitude God seeks to realise in all he does consists in the ultimate self-giving relationship; the Father tends to realise the glorifying image of his Son and the Son the glorifying revelation of the Father etc. But as I said, Aquinas himself does not consider the invocation of these trinitarian features of divine action necessary to justify the fact that God takes himself for what he truly is – the ultimate goal and criterion of anything else. Also, the finality that God has in mind while he is conceiving the providential project is not a finality that is superposed to the creatures from outside: it constitutes the most intimate finality of themselves. In the limits of its limited nature, anything desires to be like God – if you allow me the neologism, it could be said that for Aquinas “to be” means “to god”.<sup>1500</sup> Now, God not only IS, he IS as knowing and known, as loving and loved. While all these features are One in him, in the creation they are dispersed; nevertheless, “to know/love God” and “to make God known/loved” are two features that particularly strengthen the similitude of any creature to God – inasmuch as it does so, its most intimate desire is being accomplished.<sup>1501</sup>

The keeping of this in mind is unconditionally necessary to understand what Aquinas is saying while speaking about the providential ordering of created reality. It is also worth of noting that the origin of these ideas is not due to Aquinas's theological speculation only. In

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*proprium bonum in causando agens aequivocum: sicut caelum. Quarto autem modo, ratione similitudinis analogiae principiatorum ad suum principium. Et sic Deus, qui est extra genus, propter suum bonum omnibus rebus dat esse. Ex quo patet quod quanto aliquid est perfectioris virtutis, et eminentius in gradu bonitatis, tanto appetitum boni communiorem habet, et magis in distantibus a se bonum quaerit et operatur. Nam imperfecta ad solum bonum proprii individui tendunt; perfecta vero ad bonum speciei; perfectiora vero ad bonum generis; Deus autem, qui est perfectissimus in bonitate, ad bonum totius entis. Unde non immerito dicitur a quibusdam quod bonum, in quantum huiusmodi, est diffusivum: quia quanto aliquid invenitur melius, tanto ad remotiora bonitatem suam diffundit.”* *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 24, n. 6 – 8, cf. my footnotes 170 and 171.

<sup>1499</sup> While it is spoken about “greater glory of God”, it should be beware whether one wants to speak about a feature of the world (which ameliorates the state of the world, not that of God), or about the intrinsic glory of God (which cannot be greater).

<sup>1500</sup> Given the fact that God is subsistent beingness (cf. *STh.*, I, q 3, a. 4) and the name “Who is” is from several viewpoints his most proper name (cf. *ibid.*, q. 13, a. 11).

<sup>1501</sup> Cf. my footnotes 179 – 182.

his sacred texts, there are assertions of God’s acting out of love for his people;<sup>1502</sup> there are also assertions of his acting out of wanting to be known, recognised or glorified;<sup>1503</sup> finally there are assertions that “this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ”,<sup>1504</sup> that the glorification of God and his child is in mutual relation etc.<sup>1505</sup>

### II. 3. The fate

The imprint of the providence into the creation results in the more or less stable network of causal relationships between the creatures, conditioning any possible future event. It is this network that is to be named “fate” (*fatum*) according to Aquinas.<sup>1506</sup> More precisely, he thinks that it is to be named so in his writings from fifties. Beginning with *Summa contra gentiles*, he shows more restrictive (Augustinian) attitude: while the network in question could be still considered the truth behind the pagan discourse on fate, the Christians should not share the pagan terminology because there would be a danger of adopting pagan doctrines together with pagan names.<sup>1507</sup> But notwithstanding these prudential measures concerning the terminology (that Aquinas himself proclaims more than he observes them), Aquinas’s doctrine is mostly<sup>1508</sup> the same in his systematic expositions of this topic throughout all his career. The

<sup>1502</sup> Cf. Dt 7, 7 – 8; 10, 15; Ps 78, 67 – 72; Wis 11, 24 – 26; Is 43, 4; 48, 14; Hos 11; Mal 1, 2 – 3; Rom 8, 37; 9, 13; Eph 2, 4 – 5; 1J 4, 10.

<sup>1503</sup> Cf. most notably the favourite refrain of Ezekiel (6, 7.13; 7, 4.9; 11, 10.12; 12, 20; 13, 9.14.21.23; 14, 8; 15, 7; 17, 21; 20, 26.38.42.44; 22, 22; 23, 49; 24, 24; 25, 5; 35, 9; 36, 11; 37, 6.13.14; 38, 16; 39, 7) and his insistence on God’s name as his motivation for what he does (20, 9.14.22; 36, 20 – 23). For other similar passages cf. Ex 6, 7; 8, 6.18; 9, 14.16.29; 14, 4; 16, 12; Dt 29, 5; Jos 4, 24; 1King 9, 7; 20, 28; Ps 25, 11; 109, 27; 115, 1; Is 26, 15; 41, 20; 43, 7.10; 45, 6; 61, 3; 63, 14; Jr 14, 20 – 21; J 11, 4; Rom 3, 4 – 7; 9, 17; 2Cor 4, 15; Eph 1, 5 – 14.

<sup>1504</sup> J 17, 3.

<sup>1505</sup> Cf. J 13, 31 – 32.

<sup>1506</sup> “*fatum est ordinatio secundarum causarum ad effectus divinitus provisos.*” *STh.*, I, q. 116, a. 4, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 39 q. 2 a. 1 ad 5 and less explicitly also *De veritate*, q. 5 a. 1, ad 1 and ad 5; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 93, n. 5.

<sup>1507</sup> “...*quia cum infidelibus nec nomina debemus habere communia, ne ex consortio nominum possit sumi erroris occasio; nomine fati non est a fidelibus utendum, ne videamur illis assentire qui male de fato senserunt, omnia necessitati siderum subiicientes. Unde Augustinus dicit, in V de civitate Dei: si quis voluntatem vel potestatem Dei fati nomine appellat, sententiam teneat, linguam corrigat...*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 93, n. 6. Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 116, a. 1, co.; *Quodlibet XII*, q. 4; *Catena in Mt.*, cap. 2, l. 1; *Super Mt.*, cap. 2, l. 1. Beside the astrological conception of fate, Aquinas also has in mind the necessitarian vision of (some) Stoics (cf. also *De malo*, q. 16 a. 7 ad 14 – 16; *Expositio Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14, n. 10 and 14; *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 3, pr.), and any conception of reality allowing certain divination, cf. *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 138.

<sup>1508</sup> *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 138 narrows the applicability of “fate” to human affairs only, similarly to “*fortuna*” (cf. chap. 3. II. 5). In contrast, *In Physic.*, lib. 5, l. 10, n. 4 allows that fate means just the order of natural causes. Finally, *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, l. 3, n. 13 – 27 works with the astrological meaning of “fate”, denying the necessitating ability that was supposed to be connected with the fate in this sense of the term, not the rightness of the attribution of term itself, see also *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, s. c. 7.; *Super Iob*, pr. and cap. 1; *Super Psalmo 35*, n. 1. Some pagan conception of fate is apparently meant also in the denials of its role or existence in *Super Io.*, cap. 2, l. 1; *Super I Cor.*, cap. 12, l. 2; *Super Eph.*, cap. 4, l. 3; *Super Col.*, cap. 1, l. 5.

fate is considered as a powerful, yet not completely all-encompassing factor. It is a created reality and it neither includes, nor precludes immediate divine causations: anything that depends on them (such as the ultimate state of the blessed souls) is beyond fate. If taken as a whole, no creature can successfully resist it though – it is that all of the creaturely causal attitudes are by definition parts of the fate:<sup>1509</sup> your very (irrational) decision to resist the fate contributes to its constitution. Nevertheless, if I take Aquinas right, his conception actually allows you to successfully resist the fate (i.e., to make fate achieve different form than the one to which it was heading before), *provided that you consider only the part of the fate that is already realised in the particular (moment of) time* (e.g. in the time preceding an important decision). It is that your free decisions are ultimately naturally dependent on an immediate activity of God in your will, whose activity is beyond fate. It might be that the all the ordering of the created universe at the time of Jonah’s predication tended to the imminent destruction of Nineveh: the grace of quasi-miraculous conversion of its inhabitants was nonetheless able to save it, changing its fate.

Seductive as it can be given the contemporary common way of speaking, in Aquinas the *fate* can be in no way interchanged for *predestination*. In fact, from several viewpoints these two are exact opposites: the predestination is uncreated, eternal, unchangeable and contrary to the fate, deciding about human’s ultimate destiny (see chap. 5. III.).<sup>1510</sup>

#### II. 4. The failure of providential ordering

Can divine providence fail? After our discussion of Aquinas’s view concerning divine causality and divine knowledge, a categoric “No” in *Summae* is not a surprising answer.<sup>1511</sup> Nevertheless, some of his early assertions concerning this subject has caused quite a confusion concerning the precise meaning and the justification of this “No”. As we have seen (cf. chap 1. II. 6.), the inner inclinations of creatures to their ultimate created goal come from God: it is him who directed each particular chicken to grow into hen and reproduce its species and each particular human to be divinised and eternally look into his face. Nevertheless, it is all too clear that many creatures (even most of them?) turn away or are turned away from this

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<sup>1509</sup> “...*fatum est ordinatio secundarum causarum ad effectus divinitus provisos. Quaecumque igitur causis secundis subduntur, ea subduntur et fato. Si qua vero sunt quae immediate a Deo fiunt, cum non subdantur secundis causis, non subduntur fato; sicut creatio rerum, glorificatio spiritualium substantiarum, et alia...*” *STh.*, I, 116, a. 4, co.

<sup>1510</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 23; *De veritate*, q. 6 – 7; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40 – 41; *Contra gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 163.

<sup>1511</sup> “*indissolubilitas illa et immutabilitas quam Boetius tangit, pertinet ad certitudinem providentiae, quae non deficit a suo effectu, neque a modo eveniendi quem providit.*” *STh.*, I, q. 22, a. 4, ad 3, cf. *ibid.*, ad 2; a. 2, ad 1; q. 103, a. 7 – 8; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 94, n. 7 – 9.

path and do not actually achieve what they were made for: the chicken is eaten by a fox and becomes its nourishment, the human is seduced by devil and becomes his eternal slave. In Aquinas's view it does not mean that the providence is defeated. God is both good and powerful enough to make this failure beget some (even higher) good<sup>1512</sup> and there is nothing that would not ultimately serve to the goal of the providential project: the death of the chicken serves for the good of the fox, the damnation of the sinner for the good of justice etc.<sup>1513</sup> But the question is how could the aforesaid failure happen at all? Some Aquinas's earlier texts were read as assuming that the providential causality just cannot effectively control everything and all the time.<sup>1514</sup> Now and then, some individuals of fallible species inevitably escape its custody – and God cannot but attend to the resulting mess. Aquinas also states that these individual failures cannot endanger the success of the whole: while God does not save all the individual chickens, he is still able to assure that the domestic fowl will not finish in extinction; while he does not impede all my deviations, he can still guarantee that the whole of my life will end by final salvation – provided an optimistic opinion that he has predestined me to it.<sup>1515</sup> But where does this ability to guarantee the success (or survival) comes from? Well, some of those who understand Aquinas's texts as assuming the incomplete providential control, simply state that in this stage of his thinking, Aquinas is unable to explain it.<sup>1516</sup> On Paluch's account, the best thing that Aquinas can be found to propose is some kind of

<sup>1512</sup> “*Neque enim Deus omnipotens ... cum summe bonus sit, ullo modo sineret mali esse aliquid in operibus suis nisi usque adeo esset omnipotens et bonus ut bene faceret et de malo.*” AUGUSTIN, *Enchiridion*, cap. 11 (PL 40, 236) quoted (more or less freely) by Aquinas for ex. in *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, pr.; lib. 2, d. 29, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 4; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 6, ad 4; *STh.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1; q. 22, a. 2, ad 2; I-II, q. 79, a. 4, arg. 1; II-II, q. 10, a. 11, co.; q. 78, a. 4, co.; *Super Io.*, cap. 9, l. 1; *Super I Cor.*, cap. 11, vs. 19; cap. 11, l. 4; *Super Rom.*, cap. 8, l. 6; cap. 11, l. 2, and apparently directly inspiring others formulations, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 2, co.; d. 47, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3; lib. 4, d. 13, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2; d. 19, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 2; *STh.*, II-II, q. 73, a. 4, ad 3; III, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 4, arg. 5 and 10; ad 5 and 10; *De malo*, q. 13, a. 4, ad 6.

<sup>1513</sup> “*iste modus providentiae extendit se etiam usque ad bruta animalia, ... Et ideo malum quod accidit in eis, recompensatur per bonum naturae, ... sicut quod mors muscae est victus araneae. ... defectus voluntatum contingentes praeter intentionem providentiae praescivit Deus et ordinavit eos in bonum non tantum naturae, sed etiam similis generis, sicut in bonum justitiae quod ostenditur cum culpa per poenam ordinatur, et in bonum voluntatis aliorum, qui per eorum nequitiam vel corriguntur de peccatis, vel in meritis et gloria crescunt*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, co.

<sup>1514</sup> “*potest aliquid ab ordine providentiae quantum ad id quod intentum est, exire; sicut Deus vult omnes homines salvos fieri, licet non omnes salventur: non autem ab ordine praedestinationis.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 1, a. 2, co. (for God's will to save all humans see below, chap. 6. II.); “*Ordo enim providentiae dupliciter certus invenitur. Uno modo in particulari; ... sicut patet in motibus caelestibus, et in omnibus quae necessario aguntur in natura. Alio modo in universali sed non in particulari; sicut videmus in generabilibus et corruptibilibus, quorum virtutes quandoque deficiunt a propriis effectibus, ad quos sunt ordinatae sicut ad proprios fines, sicut virtus formativa quandoque deficit a perfecta consummatione membrorum; sed tamen ipse defectus divinitus ordinatur ad aliquem finem, ut patet ex dictis, dum de providentia ageretur; et sic nihil potest deficere a generali fine providentiae, quamvis quandoque deficiat ab aliquo particulari fine. Sed ordo praedestinationis est certus non solum respectu universalis finis, sed etiam respectu particularis et determinati, quia ille qui est ordinatus per praedestinationem ad salutem, nunquam deficit a consecutione salutis.*” *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, co. See the interpretation defended by PALUCH (2004), p. 140ff.

<sup>1515</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, co.

<sup>1516</sup> Cf. PALUCH (2004), p. 309.



statistical certitude – God is like a machine-gunner who shoots so many bullets in the direction of his target that it is (practically) impossible that none of them hits it.<sup>1517</sup> This Aquinas’s theological gap is allegedly to be amended only by his later theory of transcended contingency. The necessary prerequisite of any similar reading of Aquinas’s texts is a massive non-consideration of Aquinas’s early statements about divine causality, knowledge and their relationship: it is significant that Paluch’s extensive treatment of Aquinas’s theory of predestination in *Sentences* is about completely blind to Aquinas’s more general discussion of divine knowledge as such that prepares it.<sup>1518</sup> But how should the reader interpret Aquinas’s statements about the failing of the ordering of providence then?

Recall our earlier discussion of what I called the *Discrepancy problem* (cf. most notably chap. 2. II. 6 – 7.). According to Aquinas, one hundred percent providential protection against failure would make the failure impossible in an important sense of the term (as it actually did in the case of moral infallibility of Virgin Mary, or immortality of prelapsarian Adam), transferring the creature to a higher grade of nature and emptying the lower grade then: *in this sense of modal terms*, the contingency of creaturely success would be eliminated, which is, in general, undesirable. Hence the reason why God’s usual guidance of a predestined person contains failing motions (even if Aquinas does not use this term in these early texts yet) whose failures need to be righted then. But if God is still in control, what does escaping the Providence mean? Aquinas actually does not speak about escaping the providence as such, but about leaving some providential ordering (*ordo providentiae*) and he is specific in saying that unlike predestination, providence concerns *the ordering of whichever good to whichever goal*.<sup>1519</sup> If I understand him right, the aforesaid innate inclinations (or the fallible divine motions in general) are examples of such orderings and by deviating from their goals, the creature leaves some *ordo providentiae* (or, if you want, some part of *ordo providentiae* taken in general), with no implication of them getting in the slightest out of the hand of the Provident One. Actually, Aquinas not only states that God can assure the final result of the sequence of sometimes failing creaturely acts (the hens are not going to extinct, the predestined ones are not going to die impenitent): he states that any particular failure is ordered by God to some particular utility, contrasting his position with the opinion that God

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<sup>1517</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 143, n. 3.

<sup>1518</sup> Cf. PALUCH (2004), p. 73 – 111: the only references to *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 35 – d. 38, q. 1, a. 3 that I have found in this book concern the division of the text (p. 72, n. 1 – 2), the justification of God’s possibility to know *singularia* (p. 124, n. 1 and p. 126, n. 3) and the distinction between *scientia approbationis* and *scientia visionis* (p. 129, n. 1).

<sup>1519</sup> “*providentia respiciat ordinem uniuscujusque boni ad quemlibet finem*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 1, a. 2, co.

controls the general conditions of creaturely existence only and assures just that all the failures serve to some (further indefinite) utility.<sup>1520</sup> It would be actually difficult to see why the Providence can assure the success of this secondary particular ordering, while she was unable to control the occurrence of previous failures. By contrast, the reasons of Aquinas's assertions are perfectly comprehensible on the determinist background, provided that one is not mistaken concerning his vocabulary: the predestination concerns one specific type of orderings the predestination concerns specifically one type of orderings that never fail; the providence includes any (good) ordering that ever existed, including all those who are eventually frustrated (i.e., God knowingly lets them be frustrated) as for the achievement of their particular goals.

Let us see the matter more in detail. Each creature is ordained by God to seek its similitude with him in a particular way: a chicken is to become an adult fowl and make more chickens. If the chicken is eaten by a fox instead, this particular ordering fails. This failure is further ordered by God to another manifestation of himself (e.g. by the life of the fox) – and if (or when) this ordering fails too, the failure is ordered again. Come what may, the fate of the chicken will manifest God in some way, even if it is not in the way sought by its nature – the universal ordering cannot fail.<sup>1521</sup> Is it of any consolation for the chicken? Well, it could be: should the chicken be both morally perfect and philosophizing, aware of the fact that the ultimate reason why it desired to grow and reproduce is achieved in some way even by its premature death, the badness of its being devoured by the fox would lose its absolute appearance. It would not cease to be bad though. As in other cases, Aquinas is far from denying the rightness of common notions in the name of the relations to the ultimate principles: the death is bad for the chicken, full stop. The fox is naturally evil for it.<sup>1522</sup> All the

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<sup>1520</sup> “*quidam praedictum providentiae modum retulerunt tantum ad species naturalium rerum, non autem ad singularia, nisi in quantum participant in natura communi, quia non ponebant Deum cognoscere singularia; dicebant enim, quod Deus taliter naturam alicuius speciei ordinavit, ut ex virtute quae consequitur speciem, talis actio consequi deberet; et si aliquando deficeret, quod hoc ad talem utilitatem ordinaretur, sicut corruptio unius ordinatur ad generationem alterius; non tamen hanc virtutem particularem ad hunc particularem actum ordinavit, nec hunc particularem defectum ad hanc particularem utilitatem. Nos autem Deum perfecte cognoscere omnia particularia dicimus; et ideo praedictum providentiae ordinem in singularibus ponimus, etiam in quantum singularia sunt.*” *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 4, co., this text being most likely the “*dicta*” that the above-quoted passage of *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, co. refers to. For *Sentences*, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, co.: “*quia divina cognitio aequaliter est singularium et universalium, ut supra habitum est; et ejus qui summe bonus est, est ordinare omnia ad finem, secundum quod nata sunt: non videtur conveniens non omnium etiam singularium providentiam esse. Et praeterea hoc est expresse contra sententiam domini, Matth. 10, dicentis, quod unus ex passeribus non cadit in terram sine patre caelesti, idest sine providentia ejus.*”

<sup>1521</sup> “*nihil potest deficere a generali fine providentiae, quamvis quandoque deficiat ab aliquo particulari fine*” *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, co.

<sup>1522</sup> “*nihil prohibet aliquid esse naturaliter malum in his quibus naturaliter contrarietas inest; ignis quidem in se bonus est, sed naturaliter est malus aquae, quia eam corrumpit, et e converso. Et eadem ratione lupo est naturaliter malus ovi.*” *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2, co.; “*Dicitur autem Deus facere mala, vel creare, in quantum creat*

negative feelings that it can have towards the carnivore are justified (provided that they are purposeful for the survival). The chicken that would march into the fox's mouth just in the name of some great cycle of nature would be both a bad chicken and a bad philosopher. To take a more serious example, Aquinas is convinced that the affective repulsion that was manifested by Jesus in Gethsemane against the chalice of suffering<sup>1523</sup> was an adequate reaction that the perfect humanity of the perfect man had to such a hideous fate.<sup>1524</sup> Even if the highest level of voluntary activity (called *voluntas ut ratio*) is supposed to be in conformity with the requirements of the ultimate goal, the lower levels of human beings that are not supposed to be able to perceive the relation of these requirements to the goal make no mistake when they find some of them repulsive according to their own natural criterions. Actually, they would be malfunctioning if they did not find them such! Jesus is conformed to God's will by both accepting the Cross and by profoundly desiring to escape it.<sup>1525</sup> If he accepted it without such a desire, being in the affective state of mind of a masochist, nihilist, suicide or daredevil (or even a passionless Stoic), he would not be more conform than he had been – he would be, at least at some level of his being, *bad*. Even an inhuman fate is to be decidedly embraced for the love of God – but that does not mean that it is to be embraced as if it was not inhuman.

## II. 5. For others and for themselves

Aquinas does not think that the good of universal ordering is the only good that is never let down by God. Concerning this question, much of his views concerning the running of the universe is based on two distinctions. Firstly, while divine providence guides all the creatures, there are the entities which are guided according to what is convenient for some other entities and the entities which are guided according to what is convenient for themselves. Secondly,

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*ea quae secundum se bona sunt, et tamen aliis sunt nociva: sicut lupo, quamvis in sua specie quoddam bonum naturae sit, tamen ovi est malus*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2 cap. 41 n. 12, cf. cap. 48, n. 6; cap. 74, n. 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 2, a. 1, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 59, a. 3, co.; q. 78, a. 4, co.; q. 81, a. 3, co.; q. 83, a. 1, co.; I-II, q. 29, a. 6, co.; *De regno*, lib. 1, cap. 1; *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 7, co.; q. 24, a. 2, co.; q. 25, a. 2, co.; *Q. d. de anima*, a. 13, co.; *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9, ad 14 for sheep's natural judgment concerning of wolf – I presume that it is not undue to transpose these assertions to fox and chicken.

<sup>1523</sup> Cf. Mt 26, 37 – 39; Mc 14, 33 – 36; L 22, 41 – 44.

<sup>1524</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 17, q. 1, a. 2; *STh.*, III, q. 18, a. 5 – 6; q. 21, a. 4.

<sup>1525</sup> “*Si enim apprehendatur aliquid esse volitum a Deo, quod praecipue per signum operationis manifestatur; voluntas deliberata, quae sequitur rationem, prout est comprehendens et conferens de ista ratione bonitatis, tenetur illud velle, quamvis voluntas naturalis et appetitus sensitivus refugiant; et in refugiendo voluntati divinae conformantur, in quantum tendunt in bonum secundum rationem apprehensam; sicut est in illo qui pie dolet de morte patris, vel alicujus utilis in Ecclesia.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 48, q. 1, a. 4, co. – the whole of the *questio* discusses the general conditions of the conformity of our will to God's.

most notably in the case of the latter group, the providence does not guide the bad ones in the same manner as the good ones.<sup>1526</sup>

Aquinas's formulations concerning the distinguishing features of the first two groups are not the same across his different works and in this case, I have no ambition to make a thorough chart of the development of his ideas: I will limit myself to two prominent examples. The third book of *Contra gentiles* seems to identify the group of entities which are guided according to what is convenient for themselves with that of rational (or intellectual) creatures, arguing principally 1) by the superiority of their ultimate goal consisting in the immediate acquisition of God via knowledge and love (any other particular good in the universe is to be subordinated to this goal then, cf. chap 1. II. 6.) and 2) by them being masters of their acts (the reasons of their particular state are to be found in themselves and not only outside of themselves then, cf. chap. 4. I. 4. and II. 3.).<sup>1527</sup> In contrast, in the earlier *De veritate* the distinction corresponds simply with the distinction between perishable and imperishable entities because, as is said, the perfection (i.e., the accomplished state) of the universe consists in the latter *essentially* (i.e., if I take it right, their relation to this perfection is that of subject and not only that of means).<sup>1528</sup> Besides the rational and intellectual creatures, the latter is supposed to also include celestial bodies and the species of perishable entities taken as such: while the individual chicken will inevitably perish, according to the Aristotelian natural science the species of fowl perdures forever with natural necessity. As we have seen, Aquinas does not share this opinion (no fowl perdures the apocalyptic events, and contrary to human bodies, the poultry will not rise from the dead), nevertheless, as we have seen too, it has no impact on his reception of Aristotelian natural necessities: if the supernatural revelation is left out of account, the world as we know it does not show any signs of temporal limits of its actual state in his view and apparently, it does not seem to him that the eventual elimination of fowls in the end of Time should have any significant consequences for the way of their providential guiding while the cosmic cycle is supposed to continue in its natural way. But

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<sup>1526</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 3 – 7; *Contra gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 111 – 113; *Super Mt.*, cap. 10, l. 2; *Super Rom.*, cap. 8, l. 6.

<sup>1527</sup> “*Oportet tamen aliquam rationem providentiae specialem observari circa intellectuales et rationales naturas, prae aliis creaturis. Praecellunt enim alias creaturas et in perfectione naturae, et in dignitate finis. In perfectione quidem naturae, quia sola creatura rationalis habet dominium sui actus, libere se agens ad operandum... In dignitate autem finis, quia sola creatura intellectualis ad ipsum finem ultimum universi sua operatione pertingit, scilicet cognoscendo et amando Deum...*” *Contra gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 111, n. 1. This view seems quite close to *Super Rom.*, cap. 8, l. 6 where the criterion is the nobility of the creature.

<sup>1528</sup> “*aliquid providetur dupliciter: uno modo propter se, alio modo propter aliud; sicut in domo propter se providentur ea in quibus consistit essentialiter bonum domus, sicut filii... alia vero providentur ad horum utilitatem, ut vasa... Et similiter in universo illa propter se providentur in quibus consistit essentialiter perfectio universi; et haec perpetuitatem habent, sicut et universum perpetuum est. Quae vero perpetua non sunt, non providentur nisi propter aliud.*” *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 3, co.

why should the (im)perishable character of the entity be so decisive for the way of its providential guidance at all? If I understand Aquinas's reasoning, it is because in the universe with infinite future like the one that he believes in, from the long-term perspective any good that is limited to the perishable existence is relatively insignificant compared to the good that will exist forever: after the expectable perishing of its bearer, the former will no longer exist at all (the presentism strikes again!). Sooner or later, the brave chicken dies and the only part of its good that will count then is its contribution to the good of something that has not perished. The Providence, looking at the final state of any process, principally guides the chicken according to what contributes to the goods which will endure then: ultimately the good which is realised in the imperishable entities.

The phrase "guided according to what is convenient for themselves" is not to be misunderstood. First of all, Aquinas does not say that the entities that are guided so are not subordinated to any further finality: there is only one such entity in his reality, God, and even on the level of the created universe, any creature is ordained to the good of the whole order of the universe and is supposed to serve to other creatures too. But provided that the goodness of the order (and therefore of other creatures) requires that I receive what is convenient for myself, there is no contradiction in me being governed according to what is convenient for me and according to what is convenient for the universe. It can be even actually said that I am the goal of everything, if it just means that all the reality is supposed to contribute to my individual good.<sup>1529</sup>

Secondly, if Aquinas says that something is convenient for me, in this context he does not necessarily mean that it is good for my individual accomplishment. What he means is that what I receive is proportionate to the good that is to be realised *in me* (in contrast to the good that is to be realised in the others), depending on my own antecedent goodness or badness. In the case of the perishable entities, such proportion is held only contingently the best chicken ever can have the worst fate because the principal criterion of its providential guiding is the good of imperishable entities and the question whether the chicken acts as a good chicken or not is of secondary importance. In contrast, in my case (my soul being imperishable, and my body being meant to become so, too) this proportion holds necessarily. Inasmuch as I am good, my fate is good (for me). Inasmuch as I am bad... well, then it depends: Aquinas's ultimate principle of reality is not some kind of karma but both just and merciful free agent. The goods coming from being forgiven by God (such as the humility of a former sinner) are one of the available options of good that is convenient to be realised in a bad person. The

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<sup>1529</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 112, n. 8 – 10; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3; *Super Rom.*, cap. 8, l. 6.

good of just punishment is another such option.<sup>1530</sup> To be more specific: by the very fact of abandoning the requirements of the finality of my rational nature (which is what means to be “bad” in the case of human), I make me inept of the reception of the good that I am made for. Also, proportionally to my rejection of my rationality, I am doomed into the position that is similar to the state (of the most) of irrational beings: my defective activity (and consequently myself) serves principally for the good of others and not for my individual good.<sup>1531</sup> But contrary to the chicken that has this state naturally, its fate being without proportion to its individual quality, my degradation on the level of cattle<sup>1532</sup> is not natural but punitive, and this state is in an exact proportion to my individual quality. The Providence has not stopped to provide for me according to what is convenient for me: serving to others as if I was an irrational animal is the good of Justice that is realised on me and in me.

## II. 6. The Providence and the happiness

Aquinas is well aware of the fact that one of the most popular arguments against the providential guidance of human lives is that contrary to what was stated in the previous section, there seems to be no apparent connection between individual’s moral goodness and the goodness of his fate. The aforesaid strict distinguishing between chickens and humans in this regard seems to be unwarranted by our daily experience at best: many bad events seem to have no sense or even damage the good of good guys, while the bad guys are sometimes all

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<sup>1530</sup> “*spirituales creaturae incorruptibiles sunt etiam secundum individua, etiam eorum individua sunt propter se provisiva; et ideo defectus qui in eis contingunt, ordinantur in poenam vel praemium, secundum quod eis competit, non autem solum secundum quod ad alia ordinantur. ... Et ideo humani actus sub divina providentia cadunt hoc modo quod et ipsi provisores sunt suorum actuum, et eorum defectus ordinantur secundum quod competit eisdem, non solum secundum quod competit aliis; sicut peccatum hominis ordinatur a Deo in bonum eius, ut cum post peccatum resurgens humilior redditur, vel saltem in bonum quod in ipso fit per divinam iustitiam, dum pro peccato punitur. Sed defectus in creaturis sensibilibus contingentes ordinantur solum in id quod competit aliis, sicut corruptio huius ignis in generationem illius aeris.*” *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 5, co. See chap. 1. III. 3.

<sup>1531</sup> “*secundum quod ipsi diversimode se habent in providendo, diversimode providetur eis. Si enim rectum ordinem in providendo servant; et in eis divina providentia ordinem servat congruum humanae dignitati, ut, scilicet, nihil eis eveniat quod in eorum bonum non cedat ... Si autem in providendo ordinem non servant, qui congruit rationali creaturae, sed provideant secundum modum animalium brutorum, et divina providentia de eis ordinabit secundum ordinem qui brutis competit; ut scilicet ea quae in eis bona vel mala sunt, non ordinantur in eorum bonum proprium, sed in bonum aliorum...*” *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 7, co. This is special case of a more general principle held by Aquinas: “*In ordine autem eorum quae sunt ad finem, omnia intermedia sunt fines et ad finem... et ideo quidquid est in recto ordine providentiae, cadit sub providentia non solum sicut ordinatum ad aliud, sed sicut ad quod aliud ordinatur. Sed illud quod exit a recto ordine, cadit sub providentia solum secundum quod ordinatur ad aliud, non quod aliquid ordinetur ad ipsum...*” *ibid.*, a. 4, co.

<sup>1532</sup> Aquinas quotes Ps 49 (48), 21: “For all their riches, if mortals do not have wisdom, they perish like the beasts.” according to the Latin translation saying that “the man, while honoured, does not understand, is compared to the stupid cattle and is made similar to it” (“*homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit, comparatus est iumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis*”), cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 7, co.; *STh.*, I-II, q. 91, a. 6, co.; II-II, q. 64, a. 2, ad 3; *Super Psalmo 35*, n. 3; *Super Psalmo 48*; *Super Mt.*, cap. 10, l. 2; cap. 21, l. 1; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 7.

too lucky – I suppose that there is no need of particular examples of such situations.<sup>1533</sup> Aquinas answers that the seeming of pointlessness of many aspects of the daily life is completely normal, since our intellectual relation to the providential guiding is similar to the situation of a layman entering an artisan’s workshop: without adequate knowledge of the art in question, the number of tools can seem completely purposeless – which does not mean that they have no rational purpose in artisan’s hands<sup>1534</sup> (recall the dialogue of Thao and Kowalski concerning the loads of stuff in Kowalski’s garage in Eastwood’s *Gran Torino*). But what is more important to understand his view, Aquinas believes that any evil actually contributes to the good of its “victim”, *provided that the latter relates to it as a good human should*. If you recall the content that the notions of human good and a good human have for Aquinas (see chap. 1. I – II.), you should not be surprised. The good human is such because of his conformity to the requirements of human nature, implying the love for God above all and the organisation of all the rest of one’s activity according to this love: inasmuch as your nice neighbour is not such, she is a bad human (aristocratically speaking), no matter the cookies she makes you every birthday (or the fact that “she has never harmed anyone”). The ultimate goal (in the sense of *finis quo*, see the footnote) of human life consists in the realisation of the divine image in one’s own mental activity.<sup>1535</sup> Inasmuch as the attitude of a good human is kept, anything that the Providence exposes them to is helpful for them from the viewpoint of this latter good: the morally successful confrontation with evil deepens moral perfection, heightens the merits of the person and guides her further to her salvation. As for the other goods, they are to be subordinated to the ultimate goal anyway and God actually provides both them and their privations depending on what he wants to use in guiding the man to this goal:<sup>1536</sup> a deadly illness is by definition detrimental for my body, yet it can be still very

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<sup>1533</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, arg. 5; *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 5, arg. 5 – 6; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 141, n. 5.

<sup>1534</sup> “*non est tamen dubium quin in omnibus bonis et malis, quae eveniunt sive bonis sive malis, sit recta ratio, secundum quam divina providentia omnia ordinat. Et quia eam ignoramus videtur nobis quod inordinate et irrationabiliter eveniant; sicut si aliquis intraret officinam fabri, videretur ei quod instrumenta fabrilis essent inutiliter multiplicata, si nesciret rationem utendi unoquoque; quorum tamen multiplicatio ex causa rationabili esse apparet ei qui virtutem artis intuetur.*” *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 5, ad 6, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5 (comparing God’s situation to that of physician taking care of persons without the knowledge of medicine), *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 141, n. 1 – 6 or *Super Iob*, cap. 9: “*Contingit autem quandoque quod Deus aliquibus vel tribulationes vel etiam aliquos spirituales defectus evenire permittit ad procurandum eorum salutem, sicut dicitur Rom. VIII 28 diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum; sic ergo Deus ad hominem venit eius procurando salutem, et tamen homo eum non videt quia beneficium eius non percipit; e contrario vero multis Deus manifesta beneficia non subtrahit quae tamen in eorum perniciem vergunt, et ideo dicitur quod Deus sic recedit ab homine quod homo eum non intelligit recedentem.*”

<sup>1535</sup> Cf. my footnotes 179 – 185.

<sup>1536</sup> “*Ista tamen inordinatio si diligenter advertitur, invenitur non in his ad quae per se ordinatur humana opera, et quae per se sunt homini bona vel mala. Habet enim bonum opus semper sibi adjunctum bonitatis praemium in perfectione virtutis, quae est bonum humanum, et in consecutione beatitudinis, ad quam opera humana*

profitable for me, provided that it leads me to deepening of my relationship to God. As Paul has said, “we know that all things work for good for those who love God...”<sup>1537</sup> Thus, no matter what happens to a good man, he is supposed to be actively grateful for it: this attitude is one of the components of Jesus’s eucharistic thanksgiving in Aquinas’s view.<sup>1538</sup>

Here we arrive to one of the most important reasons of why Aquinas’s God is most likely to win no “Miss Congeniality” title: he only contingently cares for the happiness of good people – provided that we understand “happiness” as implying the earthly life which is not filled with major personal losses, terrible pains and ultimate failures of one’s projects. Do not misunderstand me. In Aquinas’s view, God guides the good ones to their true happiness: it is just that the opinions of the multitude concerning the happiness are fatally flawed.<sup>1539</sup> Granted that perfect happiness implies having of all what one wants, the ignorance concerning the true nature and reasons of one’s desires make many humans unable to identify the reality that would satisfy them this way.<sup>1540</sup> It does not mean that all their ideas are completely wrong though. While denying that the true human happiness could be found anywhere else than in the mental union with God (and ultimately in the eschatological beatific vision),<sup>1541</sup> Aquinas resists the temptation to state that the bodily goods are completely insignificant for it and our frustration from their loss is therefore erroneous (see above II. 4.). He is not denying that the

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*ordinantur; et e contrario est de malis. Sed ista permixtio videtur accidere in his bonis quae extra hominem sunt, vel quae non sunt bona ejus in quantum est homo, sicut in bonis corporalibus et in bonis naturae; cum tamen ista permixtio semper ordinatur ad id quod est per se hominis bonum, scilicet gratiae, vel gloriae, secundum apostolum Rom. 8, 28: diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum, vel in justitiae divinae manifestationem...” Super Sent., lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5, see Aquinas’s exposition of the Johannic metaphor of pruning in Super Io., cap. 15, l. 1.*

<sup>1537</sup> Rom 8, 28, cf. Super Rom., cap. 8, l. 6; De veritate, q. 5, a. 7, co.; STh., I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 4; Super II Thes., cap. 3, l. 1 or Super I Cor., cap. 3, l. 3: “Omnia, inquit, vestra sunt, id est, vestrae utilitati deservientia, secundum illud Rom. VIII, 28: diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum”, commenting 1Cor 3, 21 – 22: “everything belongs to you, Paul or Apollos or Kephas, or the world or life or death, or the present or the future: all belong to you...”

<sup>1538</sup> “Item tertio, orare pro beneficiis suscipiendis et gratias agere pro susceptis, ideo dicit in omnibus, scilicet bonis et adversis, gratias agite. Rom. VIII, 28: diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum. Col. II, 7: abundantes in illo in gratiarum actione.” Super I Thes., cap. 5, l. 2, commenting 1Thes 5, 18: “In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”; “Item gratias egit. Et de quo? De duobus, de signo et signato. De signo, quia de effectu; de signato, quia de passione. In quo signatur quod non solum de bonis gratias reddere debemus, sed etiam de malis et adversis; I ad Thess. V, 18: in omnibus gratias agentes; ad Rom. VIII, 28: diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum.” Super Mt., cap. 26, l. 4, commenting Jesus’s thanksgiving during the Last Supper (Mt 26, 27), see also Super Io., cap. 11, l. 3 (concerning Jesus’s gladness from not being near to his friend Lazar to prevent his death in J 11, 15).

<sup>1539</sup> For Aquinas’s extensive discussion of happiness (or beatitude), including the rejection of its popular yet erroneous conceptions, cf. STh., I-II, q. 2 – 5; Contra gentiles, lib. 3, cap. 25 – 63; Super Sent., lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1 – q. 2, a. 1.

<sup>1540</sup> “appetere beatitudinem nihil aliud est quam appetere ut voluntas satiatur. Quod quilibet vult. Alio modo possumus loqui de beatitudine secundum specialem rationem, quantum ad id in quo beatitudo consistit. Et sic non omnes cognoscunt beatitudinem, quia nesciunt cui rei communis ratio beatitudinis conveniat. Et per consequens, quantum ad hoc, non omnes eam volunt.” STh., I-II, q. 5, a. 8, co., cf. ad 3.

<sup>1541</sup> Cf. STh., I-II, q. 2, a. 8 and q. 3, a. 8; Contra Gentiles, lib. 3, cap. 25, 37 and 63; Super Sent., lib. 4, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1.



level of happiness that is possible in the terrestrial life requires the support of some lesser goods and he considers ultimately convenient that the perfect union with God in the afterlife is supplemented also by the fulfilment of bodily and social aspects of human after the Resurrection of flesh.<sup>1542</sup> But while God guides all good humans to this ultimate happiness, it does not mean that he intends to make them happy (be it in the terrestrially possible measure) during all the time of the duration of their goodness.

Aquinas is a believer who has not yet got ashamed of identifying the afterlife as the focal point of human life and the viewpoint that is to be used to evaluate the relative importance of all the temporary goods – or evils: Eleonor Stump has clearly identified the measure of difference between his perspective and what she calls “our” (I guess that she means post-Jonasian Western) vision of things.<sup>1543</sup> I believe that her emphasis on the eschatological aspect of Aquinas’s view in explaining his different relation to the question of human suffering in divinely guided world, as well as her analogy of chemotherapy, is a bit unilateral though. Be it the suffering, the tempting demon, my past moral failures or any other thinkable evil, Aquinas is adamant that inasmuch as I keep the attitude of a good human, it contributes to my good *immediately*: I become humbler, more patient, more circumspect, more independent or something like that.<sup>1544</sup> This is not to say that I get always better in all the spiritual respects: *exempli gratia*, Aquinas means that the greatness of theological love that was lost by my past sins is not necessarily fully recovered by penitence. Nevertheless, great as it was, this former love was not enough to prevent me from mortal sin which would completely destroy it: my bigger humility and circumspection (that my past sins procured for me thanks to my attitude towards them as a good human’s attitude should be) provide me a better chance to preserve my love in the future, whose preservation is better for me than love’s greater level followed by its complete loss.<sup>1545</sup>

If you are Aquinas’s good human then, you are not condemned to the hope that the same God who he has let you in the position of a helpless prey of evils during all your earthly life suddenly changes his attitude after your death, procuring you all at once a heavenly reward.

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<sup>1542</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 4, a. 4 – 8; *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 43, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1 – 2; d. 49, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 79, n. 10 – 13.

<sup>1543</sup> Cf. STUMP (1999).

<sup>1544</sup> See my footnotes 1536 and 1537. For the utility of past (even mortal) sins, cf. also *Super Psalmo 26*, n. 9 and *Super II Cor.*, cap. 12, l. 3. For the demons as training aids of good humans, see *STh.*, I, q. 64, a. 4, co.: “*Angeli, secundum suam naturam, medii sunt inter Deum et homines. Habet autem hoc divinae providentiae ratio, quod inferiorum bonum per superiora procuret. Bonum autem hominis dupliciter procuratur per divinam providentiam. Uno modo directe... Alio modo indirecte, dum scilicet aliique exercetur, impugnatus, per impugnationem contrarii. Et hanc procuracionem boni humani conveniens fuit per malos Angelos fieri, ne totaliter post peccatum ab utilitate naturalis ordinis exciderent.*”

<sup>1545</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 31, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 3, arg. 1 and ad 1.

Through Aquinas's eyes, you are not a helpless prey of evils at all: you can rather be compared to an anglerfish which consumes the lesser would-be predators who came to devour its lappet. God's acting in your afterlife is not in contrast but in continuity with what you are living just now: being the image of GOOD which is glorified even through bad things. However, if you are a bad human (which does not mean that you are not considered "good" by most of your neighbours, or by some humanistic morality of a slavish type) you risk that all the pains of your life will have a less glorious consequences for you. Yes, the bad things you encounter (or even do) can also serve for your (true) good, helping to make you good human instead, as Stump's chemotherapeutic analogy suggests: Aquinas has no doubt about the actual realisation of this possibility – recall the extreme case of the therapeutical hardening of heart (cf. chap. 1. III. 4.). But as we have seen, he is far from pretending that this is the only option. The evils can be pure and simple punishments for your badness, realising on you the good of justice without any necessary relation to your later moral improvement – your eventual damnation will be just a more consequent state of your terrestrial hardening of heart that has preceded it then. If you are feeling the vine-grower's knife cutting you, it is not necessarily that he is pruning you to make you better then; it might be that he is just cutting you away for you are only worthy to be burnt.<sup>1546</sup>

Now, the question: what about people who were changed from good to bad by the events of their life – and never became good again? It seems that despite the original goodness of these individuals these morally corrupting factors were actually bad for them. To my knowledge, Aquinas has never discussed the thing in these terms. I believe that his account can resist this objection though. In his view, the morally corrupting factors cannot corrupt you without you making a bad choice concerning them: in this case, you are not relating to them as a good human would, otherwise good choices, despite these factors, would make you an even better human then before (even if not necessarily in all the respects, as we have seen). There can be exterior or even interior factors that appear independently of your preceding choices and make further good moral decisions extremely difficult, yet, provided that you are not deprived of the use of reason, you can still make the right choices, although with many difficulties (recall

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<sup>1546</sup> Cf. J 15, 1 – 6 and Aquinas's commentary in *Super Io.*, cap. 15, l. 1, quoting also L 13, 1 – 9. In his comment on Jesus's explication of the condition of the man blind from birth by "it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him" (J 9, 3), Aquinas enumerates five different categories of possible reasons for God's inflicting of scourges (*flagella*) on someone: "*Quandoque quidem ad initium damnationis... Et hoc flagello percutitur peccator in hac vita sic, ut sine retractatione et fine puniatur in alia... Quandoque autem ad correctionem... Quandoque autem flagellatur aliquis non propter praeteritorum correctionem, sed ad futurorum praeservationem... Quandoque autem ad promotionem virtutis: ut scilicet cum in aliquo nec praeterita culpa corrigitur, nec futura prohibetur, dum sine inopinata salus persecutionem sequitur, salvantis virtute cognita, ardentius amatur... Quandoque vero ad manifestationem divinae gloriae: unde et hic dicitur ut manifestentur opera Dei in illo.*" *Super Io.*, cap. 9, l. 1.

the tortured martyrs of whatever religion you want). On the contrary, if an exterior factor deprives you of the possibility to use your reason, you are no more able of morally relevant activity and your moral status is therefore conserved for the time of duration of this state – which is not bad at all, provided that this status was good (recall the consideration of death as the protection against future moral corruption).<sup>1547</sup> It could obviously be argued that only a libertarian is allowed to make the previous move to excuse the Providence from the fall of an originally good human: the possibility to make different choices *omnis ceteris paribus* seems to be the condition sine qua non for the possibility to state that the providential causality would be good for him, if he has not spoiled its impact by his bad choice. A soft determinist like Aquinas is bound to admit that from the viewpoint of the whole of causal conditions, a previously good individual was not able (*in sensu composito*) not to make just the one choice that made him bad (cf. chap. 3. II. 6 – 7) and this seems to imply that this whole was actually detrimental for him despite all his goodness. But here, the determinist can still answer that the resulting choice could not be better only given the actual limits of the goodness of the falling good human: if he has been better than he actually was, the same influence that determined his fall would not need to have the same kind of impact, provided that the same influence was possible at all in such a case (recall the state of Mary after her second consecration).<sup>1548</sup> If we regress to consider also the causal conditions that determined the previous, too feeble state of his goodness, we ultimately finish with a human who is without any actual goodness at all, being in the state of pure *defectus*, and God who somewhat ameliorates this state without there being any goodness on the side of this human that could motivate him. Thus, while all the human good is ultimately traceable to God, any limitation of this good is a residuum of his own – and only his own – original nothingness (cf. chap. 4. II. 4. 3.) – including the very weakness of this good that later implied that this human was going to morally fall, should the influence of a certain whole of causal factors occur. The ultimate source of the detrimental character of the whole of causal influences that the good individual is subjected to is to be always found in the original non-goodness of this individual then, inasmuch as it was not suppressed by him under the motion of divine grace. In this sense, the view that inasmuch as I am good, nothing that occurs is bad for me, can hold on even in the determinist universe containing the Hell inhabited also by former good humans.

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<sup>1547</sup> See p. 94 – 95.

<sup>1548</sup> Cf. my footnote 581.

Does it mean that “all things work for good for those who love God”<sup>1549</sup> *inasmuch* as these guys love God? I believe that such reading is not incompatible with Aquinas’s views, but I have actually never seen him read the authoritative text this way. The thing is that while he occasionally seems to use it as an illustration of the providential care concerning good humans without any further specification,<sup>1550</sup> he means (in the last period of his career at least) that the passage actually does not concern all of them, due to the final part of the verse and the verses that immediately follow: “all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined... And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.”<sup>1551</sup> To put it simply, as Aquinas states brutally in one of last articles he has ever written, if we include into “all things” also the lovers’ own sins, then all things do not work for good of all those who love God, but only of those among them who are *predestined*.<sup>1552</sup> This leads us to one of the hottest topics in the history of Western theology.

### III. Special case of predestination

#### Introduction

As a Christian theologian, Aquinas needs to put together two aspects of biblical picture of the relation between God’s salvific action and human moral activity: God retributing anybody according to her deeds<sup>1553</sup> and God saving gratuitously his chosen ones, independently of their deeds.<sup>1554</sup> Aquinas’s conception of predestination is an attempt to answer the problem of these

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<sup>1549</sup> Rom 8, 28.

<sup>1550</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 7, co.; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 5; *De decem praeceptis*, pr.

<sup>1551</sup> Rom 8, 28 – 30. Aquinas’s Latin text adds “as holy ones” in the end of the v. 28 (“*his qui secundum propositum vocati sunt sancti*”), probably under the influence of Ep 1, 4 and the last divine activity is described by the word “aggrandized” (“*magnificavit*”). As far as our interests go, I do not think that these changes have any relevant impact on Aquinas’s global understanding of the text.

<sup>1552</sup> “...*non omnibus diligentibus Deum cooperatur in bonum hoc ipsum quod per peccatum a Dei amore cadunt, quod patet in his qui cadunt et nunquam resurgunt, vel qui resurgunt iterum casuri, sed in his qui secundum propositum vocati sunt sancti, scilicet praedestinati, qui, quotiescumque cadunt, finaliter tamen resurgunt. Cedit igitur eis in bonum hoc quod cadunt, non quia semper in maiori gratia resurgant, sed quia resurgunt in permanentiori gratia, non quidem ex parte ipsius gratiae, quia, quanto gratia est maior, tanto de se est permanentior; sed ex parte hominis, qui tanto stabilis in gratia permanet quanto est cautior et humilior.*” *STh.*, III, q. 89, a. 2, ad 1. Interrupted by his death, Aquinas’s work on *Tertia* finished with q. 90, a. 4. Cf. *Super Rom.*, cap. 8, l. 6 and *Super Eph.*, cap. 1, l. 4.

<sup>1553</sup> Cf. for ex.: “By your stubbornness and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself for the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in good works, but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness.” Rom 2, 6 – 8.

<sup>1554</sup> Cf. for ex.: “For there is no distinction; all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus...” Rom 3, 22 – 24; “For he says to Moses: “I will show mercy to whom I will, I will take pity on whom I will.” So it depends not upon a person’s will or

seemingly incompatible aspects. It is paramount to keep in mind that by speaking about it, Aquinas (as probably any other premodern Christian thinker) intends to refer exclusively to the divine activity that the term “to predestine” refers to in Pauline letters and one passage of *Acts of apostles*. The limited number of these texts allows their exhaustive quotation.

Aquinas reads in his scripture that “...we do speak a wisdom to those who are mature, but not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away. Rather, we speak God’s wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God *predestined* before the ages for our glory, and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”<sup>1555</sup>

“For those he foreknew he also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he *predestined* he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.”<sup>1556</sup>

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he *predestined* us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. ... In him we were also chosen, *predestined* in accord with the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.”<sup>1557</sup>

“Indeed they gathered in this city against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed, Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do what your hand and (your) will had long ago *predestined* to take place.”<sup>1558</sup>

“Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised previously through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but *predestined* as Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>1559</sup>

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exertion, but upon God who shows mercy. ... Consequently, he has mercy upon whom he wills, and he hardens whom he wills.” Rom 9, 15 – 16.18 (see above chap. 1. III. 5).

<sup>1555</sup> 1 Cor 2, 6 – 8 – for the sake of the terminological unity that is proper to Aquinas’s Latin translation (and, except for the last of the following texts, also to the Greek original) I have replaced the “predetermined” of NAB by “predestined”.

<sup>1556</sup> Rom 8, 29 – 30.

<sup>1557</sup> Ep 1, 3 – 6.11 – 12. I have replaced both “destined” of NAB by “predestined”.

<sup>1558</sup> Act 4, 27 – 28. I have replaced “planned” of NAB by “predestined”.

<sup>1559</sup> Rom 1, 1 – 4. I have replaced “established” of NAB by “predestined”.

With exception of the last one, all the texts use the verb “*prooridzein*” that means “to predefine”, “to predetermine” or something similar. The last text describes Jesus by the participle of the prefix-less verb “*horidzein*”, the original meaning being most likely something like “established” here: nevertheless, the Latin translation by “*praedestinitus*” has connected the texts with the others, making it the primary scriptural source of the questions concerning the predestination of Jesus.<sup>1560</sup> But independently of this, you can see that all these texts concern divine salvific activity connected in some way with the person of Christ. The Christian tradition has not overlooked this fact. Aquinas inherits the notion of predestination that concerns exclusively the achievement (as distinguished from the non-achievement) of supernatural salvation (the Glory) and its prerequisites (that can be encapsulated under the name of “grace”):<sup>1561</sup> it is the part of the providence ordaining some intellectual creatures to the achievement of these goods, making them an analogy of the person of incarnated Son then.<sup>1562</sup> Beside this content, the second delimiting feature of the predestination within the providence is its certitude: as already mentioned, while the providence includes both fallible and infallible orderings, the predestination means infallible ordering only.<sup>1563</sup>

Two disclaimers here. Firstly, while I believe that Aquinas’s theology of predestination is more than compatible with what is said about God’s organisation of human salvation in Aquinas’s sacred texts, I do not actually think that his notion of predestination is identic with the notion(s) that New Testament describes by the term “*prooridzein*”. I believe that Paul has a bit broader vision of things in this regard, and the understanding of his “all things work for good” is to be read in slightly weaker sense than Aquinas does it. Since the discussion of this issue would be obviously out of the scope of this book which is supposed to treat Aquinas’s compatibilism and not my venturing into the details of biblical exegesis, I will not dwell on this issue though.

Secondly, the following is in no way supposed to be an exhaustive presentation of Aquinas’s theology of predestination: I am going to touch only its aspects that are of some importance for the issue of this book, mostly as the sources of (not only potential) confusion that is to be avoided. One of the most important of these troublemaking aspects is the aforesaid relation between human acts and divine predestination, connected with the indue mistaking of predestinarianism for fatalism: but since it was already discussed in chap. 3. III. 1. 1. 1., I will

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<sup>1560</sup> Cf. *STh.*, III, q. 24; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 7, q. 3; d. 10, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 3 and q. 3; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 3.

<sup>1561</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 1, co.; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 163; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 3; *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 1, a. 2.

<sup>1562</sup> Cf. *STh.*, III, q. 24, a. 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 10, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 2, co.; *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 3

<sup>1563</sup> See above II. 4.

not return to it here. I begin with another similar problem, connected with the non-consideration of the specificities that the notion of predestination has due to his origin in the New Testament's discourse about salvation and not in a general philosophical theory concerning the course of the cosmos. Understood in its theological sense, the predestination neither implies nor is implied by theological determinism or divine universal foreknowledge. Thus, as I have already mentioned earlier in this book, there are some suggestions how to reconcile (even individual) predestination with radical indeterminism.<sup>1564</sup> On the other side, the entities that will not achieve the supernatural salvation (like chickens or demons) may be subjected to divine determinism, but that does not make them *predestined* – at least not in Aquinas's sense of the term. In itself, the denial of predestination or the exclusion of something from the scope of predestination means neither the denial nor the limitation of divine determinist causality then. Let us see some cases where the misinterpretation of such denials in Aquinas could be seductive though.

### III. 1. The foreknown ones and the double predestination

Aquinas systematically states that God predestines those whom he predestines not only independently of their merits, but even of his foreknowledge of their merits: on the contrary, the predestination to the salvation is the reason of the existence of any merits of predestined ones to be foreknown.<sup>1565</sup> These individuals are sometimes contrasted with the so-called “foreknown ones” (*praesciti*):<sup>1566</sup> as for the latter, God has not predestined them to anything at all, but foreknows their demerits and wants to reprobate them then – that all the foreknown ones will finish in Hell is equally certain as that all the predestined ones will be saved. The terminological distinction between the predestined ones and the foreknown ones is similar to the distinction between humans and animals: strictly speaking, human/predestined one is animal/foreknown one too, yet he has something more beside his animality/being foreknown – the reason/being ordained to the salvation. The animals and the foreknown ones are being named by the generic term because they have not this “more”.<sup>1567</sup>

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<sup>1564</sup> See above p. 218.

<sup>1565</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 5; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 41, q. 1, a. 3; *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2.

<sup>1566</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 4, a. 1, arg. 2 and ad 2; lib. 3, d. 26, q. 2, a. 4, ad 5; d. 31, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, arg. 6; d. 32, q. 1, a. 5; *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 1, arg. 10 and a. 4; *STh.*, I, q. 20, a. 4, arg. 5; q. 113, a. 4, ad 3; II-II, q. 83, a. 7, ad 3; *Super Io.*, cap. 10, l. 5.

<sup>1567</sup> “*mala appropriantur praescientiae, non quia praescientia sit magis proprie de malis quam de bonis, sed quia bona habent aliquid aliud respondens in Deo quam praescientiam, mala vero non; sicut etiam convertibile non indicans substantiam appropriat sibi nomen proprii, quod etiam aequae proprie definitioni convenit, propter hoc quod definitio aliquid dignitatis addit.*” *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 1, ad 10.

Without our previous examination of Aquinas's notions like agency or foreknowledge (and distinguishing between predestination and divine determinism), it could seem that the foreknown ones enjoy libertarian freedom (and apparently, so much the worse for them). On the contrary, this examination being made, it seems that God's attitude to the predestined heading toward Heaven and foreknown heading toward Hell is actually the same: God's foreknowledge is connected with the fact that his causal influence deterministically implies what he foreknows (see above I. 1. and I. 2. 2.). Beside following biblical terminology, why not to say then that God predestined the foreknown ones to their damnation in the same way as he has predestined the chosen ones to their salvation? In Aquinas's view there is a difference in the voluntary attitude of God in these two cases. As a part of providence, the predestination is situated into divine knowledge by Aquinas, nevertheless, it is the knowledge whose content depends on God's voluntary activity, namely election and love (*dilectio*).<sup>1568</sup> God eternally *foreknows* all the individuals that he wanted to create but in the case of his special chosen ones he *wants* not only their existence, but also the accomplishment of this existence in their salvation: their predestination presupposes this special voluntary act. In contrast, God has no parallel will to damn concerning the (other) foreknown persons. Aquinas does not say that God does not want to damn them at all: he wants it because it is just – but he wants it only on the basis of the foreknowledge of their sins.<sup>1569</sup>

To put it more clearly:

as for those who will be saved, God foreknows them and freely chooses to save them, therefore he orders/predestines their salvation and the means for this salvation (including their good deeds) – and makes it all happen;

as for those who will be damned, God foreknows them without choosing to save them, therefore he foreknows that their existence will not be ordered to the salvation, which includes that their deeds will be deficient and ultimately sinful, and only on the basis of this foreknowledge of sin he wants to damn them.

On the level where the foreknowledge is complemented by the (choice of) predestination in the case of the predestined ones, there is just the foreknowledge in the case of the foreknown ones. The unmerited divine will to save in the former case has no counterpart in the latter case, if not its own absence. The divine will to damn is situated elsewhere and contrary to the

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<sup>1568</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 4; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 1, a. 2 and d. 41, q. 1, a. 2.

<sup>1569</sup> “*pro tanto reprobatio ad praescientiam dicitur in Deo pertinere, quia nihil positive ex parte voluntatis est in Deo respectu mali culpae; non enim vult culpam, sicut vult gratiam. Et tamen etiam reprobatio dicitur praeparatio quantum ad poenam, quam etiam Deus vult voluntate consequenti, sed non antecedenti.*” *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 1, ad s. c. 5 (for the distinction of antecedent and consequent will, see chap. 6. II.). Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 4, a. 1 and *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 3, ad 2.



salvific will, it is merited – it is conditioned by the foreknowledge of sins. In this regard, Aquinas’s conception is essentially different from the theory of so-called double predestination, attributed to the Reformers in whose view, an exact symmetry was supposedly to be found between eternal conditioning of salvation and damnation.<sup>1570</sup> According to the theory of double predestination,

as for those who will be damned, God foreknows them and freely chooses to damn them, therefore he orders/predestines their damnation and the means for it (including their bad deeds) – and makes it all happen.

As in the case of the salvation, the divine will to damn is unmerited here, conditioning or even directly causing the sins. Contrary to Aquinas’s conception, the theory of double predestination was considered abhorrent by the authority of the Catholic church and persecuted by repeated condemnations, culminating during the council of Trident: both the idea of God causing the sin and wanting to damn without reason was considered incompatible with both the biblical and the traditional views.<sup>1571</sup>

Nevertheless, even the view like Aquinas’s seemed strongly opened to critics – just recall Maritain’s invectives against classical Thomism that, as far as we can see now, seem to concern Aquinas himself too.<sup>1572</sup> There is no unconditioned will to damn in God: but the absence of the will to save is itself an unconditioned, voluntary and conscious state of his. It is true that God is not like an evil super-sorcerer who curses some mother to massacre her baby and commit suicide just because he wants it (the theory of double predestination); but he is like a superhero who does not stop this tragedy just because he does not want to – even if he would be able to prevent it effortlessly. Beside awaking such disgusting association, the very denial of the divine will to save in the case of some human persons seems to contradict some explicit biblical assertions in the same measure as the Double predestination does.<sup>1573</sup> If you add the determinist account of free choices and Aquinas’s assertions that the bad things are permitted only to avoid the thwarting of goods, some serious questions arise concerning the

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<sup>1570</sup> For recent comparison of this view with Aquinas’s, cf. CAVALLI (2016). I have no intention to enter the question of possible nuances of real-life theories of double predestination: I sincerely apologise to any of their supporter who would find my presentation a simplifying caricature of their view then – of course, on the condition that this finding was defensible.

<sup>1571</sup> “*Aliquos vero ad malum divina potestate praedestinos esse, non solum non credimus, sed etiam, si sunt qui tantum mali credere velint, cum omni detestatione illis anathema dicimus.*” DS 397, cf. DS 596, 628, 1556, 1567: as you may note in the case of DS 628, the terminological usage reserving the name “predestination” to God’s ordaining to salvation was not always kept in the Catholic Church, without there being any possibility of doubt though that the text teaches the same radical asymmetry between God’s attitudes to the preparations of salvation and that of damnation as the other texts.

<sup>1572</sup> Cf. chap. 1. I. Int. See also Int. VI. concerning the controversy *De auxiliis* and its aftermaths.

<sup>1573</sup> Cf. most notably 1Tim 2, 4, Mt 18, 14 or 2Pt 3, 9.

real distinction between the Reformed and the Thomist view. After all, according to the latter, God positively wants the cluster of causal chains that inevitably leads to ultimate sinful choice and this choice is said to be necessary for some good that God wants too. The actual possibility of Aquinas's account to defeat these objections is the topic of the next chapter. Before addressing it, let us see some other proposals that were considered as his own despite them being contrary to his determinist viewpoint.

### III. 2. The election on the basis of the disposition

Why God elects one person and not another? In his mature texts, Aquinas unambiguously states that there is no reason to be found, beside the very fact of the divine choice.<sup>1574</sup> More precisely, on the general level it can be understood why God elects some people only, and not all of them or none of them (the manifestation of divine goodness requires different created goods, including the just punishment of some and the merciful gratification of others);<sup>1575</sup> but as for the particular individuals, they are strictly interchangeable – the destiny of Peter and Judas could have been switched without any harm for the perfection of the world or anything else (obviously, except for Peter). This unequal treating of initially equal individuals is not unjust because it happens on the level of gratuitous (supernatural) gifts and by definition, no individual has any right to be provided by them, not even on the supposition that they were granted to his neighbour.<sup>1576</sup> Note that this does not mean that Aquinas allows the existence of

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<sup>1574</sup> “*Praeexigitur* [for predestination] *etiam et electio, per quam ille qui in finem infallibiliter dirigitur ab aliis separatur qui non hoc modo in finem ordinantur. Haec autem separatio non est propter aliquam diversitatem inventam in his qui separantur quae posset ad amorem incitare: quia cum nondum nati essent aut aliquid boni egissent aut mali, dictum est: Iacob dilexi, Esau autem odio habui; ut dicitur Roman., cap. IX, 11-13.*” *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 1, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3; *Super Io.*, cap. 6, l. 5; *Super II Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 3.

<sup>1575</sup> “*ex ipsa bonitate divina ratio sumi potest praedestinationis aliquorum, et reprobationis aliorum. Sic enim Deus dicitur omnia propter suam bonitatem fecisse, ut in rebus divina bonitas repraesentetur. Necesse est autem quod divina bonitas, quae in se est una et simplex, multiformiter repraesentetur in rebus; propter hoc quod res creatae ad simplicitatem divinam attingere non possunt. Et inde est quod ad completionem universi requiruntur diversi gradus rerum, ... Et ut multiformitas graduum conservetur in rebus, Deus permittit aliqua mala fieri, ne multa bona impediatur, ... Sic igitur consideremus totum genus humanum, sicut totam rerum universitatem. Voluit igitur Deus in hominibus, quantum ad aliquos, quos praedestinat, suam repraesentare bonitatem per modum misericordiae, parcendo; et quantum ad aliquos, quos reprobat, per modum iustitiae, puniendo. Et haec est ratio quare Deus quosdam eligit, et quosdam reprobat. ... Sed quare hos elegit in gloriam, et illos reprobavit, non habet rationem nisi divinam voluntatem. ... Sicut etiam in rebus naturalibus potest assignari ratio, cum prima materia tota sit in se uniformis, quare una pars eius est sub forma ignis, et alia sub forma terrae, a Deo in principio condita, ut scilicet sit diversitas specierum in rebus naturalibus. Sed quare haec pars materiae est sub ista forma, et illa sub alia, dependet ex simplici divina voluntate. Sicut ex simplici voluntate artificis dependet, quod ille lapis est in ista parte parietis, et ille in alia, quamvis ratio artis habeat quod aliqui sint in hac, et aliqui sint in illa.*” *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3.

<sup>1576</sup> “*Neque tamen propter hoc est iniquitas apud Deum, si inaequalia non inaequalibus praeparat. Hoc enim esset contra iustitiae rationem, si praedestinationis effectus ex debito redderetur, et non daretur ex gratia. In his enim quae ex gratia dantur, potest aliquis pro libito suo dare cui vult, plus vel minus, dummodo nulli subtrahat debitum, absque praeiudicio iustitiae. Et hoc est quod dicit paterfamilias, Matt. XX, tolle quod tuum est, et vade.*”

some brute, inexplicable facts. God's choice is just another name for God's essence (see chap. 4. III. 2.) whose necessary being and truth is supremely intelligible for any mind that is strong enough to understand it – it is just that the perfect comprehension of this necessary truth is possible only for God's own infinite intellect.<sup>1577</sup>

Nevertheless, according to Aquinas's earliest texts, the divine election should be based on the previous disposition of the chosen ones:<sup>1578</sup> apparently, if Peter was chosen to salvation and Judas not, it is because Peter was better disposed than Judas. Here again, an unprepared reader could easily infer that God's deciding about the destiny of human individuals is supposed to be conditioned by some (foreknown) self-acquired dispositions of these individuals that is no more (deterministically) controlled by God – otherwise the explication of their election by these dispositions would be just the postponing of the explicandum, wouldn't it? These Aquinas's statements can be rightly understood only if they are situated in the context of his conception of divine ordering acts. While the predestination and the election concern the supernatural ordering of a human individual, they presuppose more general divine activities concerning this person, namely the providence and the *dispositio* (see II. 1.): at this stage of Aquinas's thought, the latter includes both the divine ordering of the creature to other creatures and its ordering to its ultimate end.<sup>1579</sup> In the quoted texts, Aquinas does not say that there is a good disposition that I could have (or even get) independently of God's gratuitous care (nor he wants to explain the choices of the Immobile Mover by something exterior to him): he just states that the supernatural part of God's care is in some proportion to its more fundamental non-supernatural part. The measure of the compatibility of these assertion with the New Testament's vision of election might be disputable: I will not venture into the sticky questions whether Aquinas falls into the Semi-pelagianism at this early stage of his thought (or, more importantly, which content the notion of Semi-pelagianism is supposed to include or imply). What counts for the purpose of this book that is that these early assertions do not

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*An non licet mihi quod volo, facere?*" *ibid.*, quoting Mt 20, 14 – 15 where the inequality concerns the proportion of the reward to the effort. Cf. also *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2, ad 9 and q. 7, a. 6, ad 3.

<sup>1577</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 12, a. 7 and q. 14, a. 3.

<sup>1578</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 4, a. 2, co.; d. 41, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>1579</sup> "*Ista ergo excogitatio nominatur nomine scientiae, ratione solius cognitionis ... Sed ratione ordinis excogitati in re operanda, vocatur nomine dispositionis: quia dispositio ordinem quemdam significat; unde dispositio dicitur generationis ordinatio. ... dispositio dicitur ratione duplicis ordinis quem ponit in rebus; scilicet rei ad rem, secundum quod juvant se invicem ad consequendum finem ultimum; et iterum totius universi ad ipsum Deum...*" *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 1, co.; "*electio divina non praeexigit diversitatem gratiae, quia hoc electionem consequitur; sed praeexigit diversitatem naturae in divina cognitione, et facit diversitatem gratiae, sicut dispositio diversitatem naturae facit.*" *Ibid.*, d. 41, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2; "*electio divina requirit diversitatem in electis, non tamen quae sit causa voluntatis eligentis, immo potius e converso: sic enim dispositio ejus causat rerum diversitatem in naturis.*" *Ibid.*, a. 3, ad 4.

weaken in any way the firstness of God's initiative, nor the completeness of his rule over anyone's destiny.

### III. 3. Two Neo-Platonic motives in Aquinas's explications of the limitations of good

Contrary to the teaching that was touched upon in the preceding paragraph, the explication of the limitation of the goodness of creatures by their limited receptivity to God who was prepared to give much more than the creature received, is used by Aquinas systematically during most (if not all) of his career.<sup>1580</sup> "God, inasmuch as it is on him, is prepared to give the grace to all ... but only those are deprived of grace who make in themselves an obstacle to grace; it is as if someone closed eyes while the world was illuminated by the Sun – if something bad followed from this, it would be imputed to him as his fault, despite the fact that he cannot see without being preceded by the light of the Sun."<sup>1581</sup> It could seem that the libertarian freedom (or at least a freedom that is not under complete divine control) is needed if this metaphor is to work.

For better understanding of the divine "inasmuch as it is on him", the thorough discussion of Aquinas's notion of divine antecedent will is needed (see chap. 6. II. 2.). Here I just want to emphasize the thematic connection of similar assertions with what we have already seen. Even if he does not state (anymore) that there is some direct proportion between the natural disposition of human and the supernatural gifts that he receives, Aquinas still holds the view that if there is any limitation on the latter level, it is the human's limitation on the former level which is responsible for it. In some of these texts, the autonomy of human from the illuminating Sun very plausibly depicts the relation of this natural level to the supernatural gifts (necessary for the good function of man in the state of fallen nature)<sup>1582</sup> – there is no need to extend it to divine influences in general. Obviously, were Aquinas a libertarian, such extension would be necessary, otherwise his argument could not plausibly explain the thing that it is supposed to explain. . But after seeing all Aquinas's conceptual tools allowing the

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<sup>1580</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 4, a. 2, ad 4; d. 46, q. 1, a. 1; lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3, co.; d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 159, n. 2; *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 8; *Super Io.*, cap. 1, l. 5; cap. 6, l. 4n; cap. 12, l. 7; *Super Heb.*, cap. 12, l. 3; *Super Eph.*, cap. 3, l. 2.

<sup>1581</sup> "Deus enim, quantum in se est, paratus est omnibus gratiam dare, ... sed illi soli gratia privantur qui in seipsis gratiae impedimentum praestant; sicut, sole mundum illuminante, in culpam imputatur ei qui oculos claudit, si ex hoc aliquod malum sequatur, licet videre non possit nisi lumine solis praeveniatur." *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 159, n. 2 (an answer to the objection that the necessity of grace for good action eliminates the responsibility of man for his moral failures).

<sup>1582</sup> See the same "ocular" metaphor in *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, s. c. 1: "ille qui clausum habet oculum materiale, non potest lumen materiale suscipere. Sed ille qui non se praeparat faciendo quod in se est, non aperit oculum spirituale, quem peccando clausit. Ergo non potest lumen gratiae spiritualis recipere..." Cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 6, co.

explanation of moral imputability in compatibilist terms, there is no reason to impose on him here the requirements that he has never accepted elsewhere.

I am not saying that all Aquinas's assertions of the aforesaid type can be explained in terms of difference between natural and supernatural order though. The thing is that not all of them could be explained in terms of libertarian freedom too. Aquinas's early statement that God does not cause any badness at all uses the argument "God is present, but the creature is absent" in relation to all the creatures indistinctly.<sup>1583</sup> The situation is very similar in Aquinas's comment on the immediate source-text of the solar comparison: the causality of Sun concerns all that exists (at least).<sup>1584</sup> But given all what we have already seen about natural nothingness of creatures, and most notably the resistance that this nothingness means for God's causation in Aquinas's view, I believe that the reader can already infer the most plausible interpretation. Closed eyes are an initial state of any creature at all – the only question is whether the Sun shines strongly enough to shine through its eyelids and prompt its eyes open.

Aquinas's recovery of another Neoplatonist idea, seemingly attributing strictly egalitarian attitude to God, is to be understood in similar terms. "Even though God, inasmuch as it is on him, has the same relation to all, all does not have the same relation to him, and this is why the grace is not prepared equally to all."<sup>1585</sup> While Aquinas quotes Dionysius in this context too,<sup>1586</sup> the source-text is to be seen in the twenty third proposition of pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis*.<sup>1587</sup> As in the case of Dionysius's text though, the text relates the equality of the attitude of the Cause to *all its effects* and not only to the free entities. Aquinas reads this assertion in different ways throughout his career: in his *Commentary* to it he states that equality concerns only the relation of the cause to its effects AFTER their first institution – otherwise there would be the need of the plurality of recipients of the first causation before this causation takes place, and this is absurd.<sup>1588</sup> He holds a similar position already in the

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<sup>1583</sup> "bonum autem completum, quod universaliter omni boni causa est, non est causa defectus alicujus boni, neque etiam per suam absentiam: quia ipsum, quantum in se est, semper praesens est, vicissitudinem non patiens absentiae et praesentiae." *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3, co. We have seen the relation of this assertion to Aquinas's apparently contrary statements in chap. 1. III. 3.

<sup>1584</sup> Cf. *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 1 and 3, see also cap. 9, l. 2: "inquantum est ex parte sui, semper est eodem modo, omnibus praesens, sed quod omnia non semper eodem modo se habeant ad ipsum, provenit ex variatione quae contingit circa res."

<sup>1585</sup> "quamvis Deus, quantum in se est, aequaliter se habeat ad omnes, non tamen aequaliter se habent omnes ad ipsum; et ideo non aequaliter omnibus gratia praeparatur." *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 2, a. 1, ad 6.

<sup>1586</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 6.

<sup>1587</sup> Cf. *Liber de causis*, prop. XXIII and Aquinas's *Super De causis*, l. 24, noticing the parallel assertion of Proclus.

<sup>1588</sup> "Est autem attendendum quod duplex est actio causae primae: una quidem secundum quam instituit res, quae dicitur creatio, alia vero secundum quam res iam institutas regit. In prima igitur actione non habet locum

much earlier *De veritate*, specifying that the first *dispositio* of things concerns anything that proceeds from simple divine will, regardless of the moment of its first appearance, and includes also the preparation of grace.<sup>1589</sup> In other passage of the same work, the proposition is explained in terms of divine simplicity:<sup>1590</sup> speaking about real differences, there are no different parts or moods or states of God, God is absolutely simple and immutable and therefore he is the same vis-à-vis all the creatures. Also, Aquinas happens to explain the proposition by the distinction between the extensive and intensive aspect of love: while God loves different creatures differently from the viewpoint of the extensive aspect (he wants different goods for different creatures), he loves all equally from the viewpoint of the intensive aspect (the intensity with which he wants these different goods is the same, i.e. infinite).<sup>1591</sup>

Obviously, none of this explanation can be applied to the use of the proposition in the above-quoted passage of *Sentences*. Nonetheless, there is a parallelism between the relation of the content of this passage and the content of its counterparts in *De veritate* or the *Commentary on De causis* on one hand and the relation of Aquinas's respective views concerning the different gratification of persons on the other hand. In later writings, it is simply said that different states of creatures are ultimately caused by the difference in the attitude of God preceding their first institution; Aquinas does not believe at this time that the difference in the gratification of person is warranted by some preceding difference on the natural level. In contrast, in his *Sentences* Aquinas believes that the difference on the level of gratification is based on the difference on the level of *dispositio*: his reading of the twenty third proposition in the sense that the different gratification is based on different relations of humans to equally disposed God does not need to say anything more than this.

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*quod hic dicitur, quia, si oportet omnem diversitatem effectuum reducere in diversitatem recipientium, oportebit dicere quod sint aliqua recipientia quae non sint a causa prima, quod est contra id quod dictum est supra...*" *Super De causis*, l. 24

<sup>1589</sup> "*habitudinem Dei ad res possumus dupliciter considerare. Uno modo quantum ad primam rerum dispositionem, quae est secundum divinam sapientiam diversos gradus in rebus constituentem; et sic non eodem modo se habet Deus ad omnia. Alio modo secundum quod iam rebus dispositis providet; et sic similiter se habet ad omnia, in quantum omnibus aequaliter dat secundum suam proportionem. Ad primam autem rerum dispositionem pertinet totum hoc quod dictum est a Deo procedere secundum simplicem voluntatem, inter quae etiam praeparatio gratiae computatur.*" *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2, ad 5.

<sup>1590</sup> "*Deus secundum hoc similiter dicitur se habere ad res, quod in eo nulla est diversitas; et tamen ipse est causa diversitatis rerum, secundum quod per scientiam suam rationes diversarum rerum penes se continet.*" *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 2, ad 9, cf. similar reasoning in *STh.*, I, q. 20, a. 3, ad 1: "*dicitur Deo aequaliter esse cura de omnibus, non quia aequalia bona sua cura omnibus dispenset; sed quia ex aequali sapientia et bonitate omnia administrat.*"

<sup>1591</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 32, q. 1, a. 4.

## 6. Will to Good and deficient causality

“All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

*Gospel of John 1, 3 – 5*

“...it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light.”

*Letter to Ephesians 5, 14*

“This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.”

*First letter to Timothy 2, 3 – 4*

“...we must argue in one wise concerning God, or the will of God, insofar as His will is proclaimed to us, revealed, offered to our acceptance, and made the ground of worship; and argue in another wise, concerning God insofar as he is unproclaimed, unrevealed, unoffered, and unworshipped. ... For this is what the proclaimed God is about, even taking away sin and death, that we may be saved. ... But the God which is hidden in the majesty of his own nature, neither bewails nor takes away death; but works life and death, and all things in all things. For when acting in this character, He does not bound himself by his word, but has reserved to himself the most perfect freedom in the exercise of his dominion over all things.”

MARTIN LUTHER, *Bondage of the Will*, part III, sec. XXVIII

### Introduction

Let us restate the most important achievements of the previous chapters. The freedom of decision forbids two necessities – the natural necessity and the coercion, neither of which is implied by the determinist causation from remote causes for Aquinas. The specific relation of the agent to her free decisions consists in the fact that *primo*, the former is the cause of the latter in a much stronger sense than in the case of the other activities; *secundo*, the activity is agent’s immanent feature. Aquinas’s sin is fundamentally a bad activity in the sense of aristocratic morality: its moral badness consists ultimately in the nonconformity of this activity to the ultimate purpose of agent consisting in the manifestation of God by knowledge and love – the activity is not aimed to this goal by the sinning agent. The ultimate cause of

this non-aiming is to be found in the natural nothingness of the creature that God permits to be partially persisting, being able to give it a purpose anyway. On this background, we can finally accept the challenge of accounting for Aquinas's position on God's causal relation to sin. This position has two fundamental parts: first, God is the cause of all the sinful activities without being the cause of their sinfulness; second, God wants that all human beings are saved. As we shall see, both parts are closely related.

## I. Cause of the act of sin

### I. 1. God of *Romans*

“God is said to hand somebody over to spurious senses or to incline the wills to the bad not by acting or moving but rather by abandoning or not impeding; [it is] as if somebody did not give the hand to another person who is about to fall – he would be called the cause of the fall of the latter. But this non-providing of help against the fall is done by God on the basis of just judgment.”<sup>1592</sup> Cut out of its context, this passage would make the impression that Aquinas wants to argue that God actually is the cause of the sin, even if only by the way of omission of help and not directly. The confusing fact that this text is a part of the article where Aquinas tries to prove that God is not the cause of sin at all can serve as a good introduction to Aquinas's perspective on this problem, explaining at least one of its aspects that are easy to be both misunderstood and misevaluated.

Aquinas's theories of first mover and first agent provide an important source of argumentation in favour of God's causation of sin, most notably if their determinist reading is correct.<sup>1593</sup> In chap. 1. III. 2. we have seen that the same theories provide the base for the contrary ideas as well though – Aquinas's speculative argumentation against the possibility of divine causation of sin is built on the impossibility of the first efficient cause of universe to act against the ultimate finality of the same universe.<sup>1594</sup> Yet, before being the God of whatever mutation of Aristotelian cosmology, Aquinas's God is the Lord of Christian authoritative texts. One of the

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<sup>1592</sup> “*Deus dicitur tradere aliquos in reprobum sensum, vel inclinare voluntates in malum, non quidem agendo vel movendo, sed potius deserendo vel non impediendo: sicut si aliquis non daret manum cadenti, diceretur esse causa casus illius. Hoc autem Deus ex iusto iudicio facit, quod aliquibus auxilium non praestat ne cadant.*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 1, cf. *Super Rom.*, cap. 1, l. 7: “*Deus non dicitur tradere homines in immunditiam directe, inclinando affectum hominis ad malum, quia Deus omnia ordinat in seipsum, Prov. XVI, v. 4: universa propter se operatus est dominus, peccatum autem est aliquid per aversionem ab eo. Sed indirecte tradit homines in peccatum, in quantum iuste subtrahit gratiam per quam homines continebantur ne peccarent; sicut si aliquis alicuius substantiaculum tolleret, diceretur facere casum eius.*”

<sup>1593</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 3 a. 1 arg. 4, 5, 7, 16; *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, arg. 2 – 3; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 2 and 4.

<sup>1594</sup> Cf. p. 96 – 97, especially footnote 348.



determinants that are set by this fact to Aquinas's discourse is often neglected. Augustinian *Gloss* to the first chapter of *Romans* states that God inclines human wills to the bad:<sup>1595</sup> its authority is that of probable veracity,<sup>1596</sup> belonging to *the* Father of Church that has defended the faith against the earliest and most fundamental errors in the matter of grace. Not so radical, the first chapter of *Romans* itself speaks about the punitive handing over to some misguided human faculties:<sup>1597</sup> its authority is that of total certitude connected with providing theological insight transcending any commonly accessible earthly means.<sup>1598</sup> At least in the latter case, corroborated by all the other biblical texts concerning the hardening, the blinding etc., Aquinas simply cannot pretend to know better. And while he has his (also biblical) reasons to deny that God causes sin,<sup>1599</sup> he cannot deny that the sayings of the quoted authorities make more or less strong impression that the latter does so. In such a situation, it is not enough for Aquinas to only prove that God is not the cause of sin. He must also show that this God's not-causing of sin is nonetheless pretty much similar to the causing of sin – similar enough to explain that the aforesaid biblical authorities speak about God as they do.

God IS LIKE somebody who does not help a falling person – and because this unhelpful bystander is commonly said (*dicitur*) to be the cause of the fall, in a like way God can be said (*dicitur*) to incline or to hand over. As we shall see below, Aquinas would agree that in some particular cases the bystander is actually the cause of the fall (even if not in the same sense as somebody who had pushed the falling guy), but this is not his point here – his answer is concerned by the manner of speaking only. Denying the divine causation of sin, he just wants to justify that “to incline” can mean simply “to not impede the inclination” – without any further consequences concerning the real causal attributes of the non-impeding agent. You could question the success of his justification: after all, if such use of the term were legitimate, the expression “God causes the sin” should be legitimate too, possibly meaning only “God does not impede the causation of sin”. I would agree, with the saving clause that, for some reason, this manner of speaking would be very untraditional in the premodern Christian context, while the former expressions are not – maybe because of them being less

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<sup>1595</sup> Cf. my footnote 81.

<sup>1596</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2: “*Auctoritatibus autem canonicae Scripturae utitur proprie, ex necessitate argumentando. Auctoritatibus autem aliorum doctorum Ecclesiae, quasi arguendo ex propriis, sed probabiliter.*”

<sup>1597</sup> “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Therefore, God handed them over to degrading passions. ... And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God handed them over to their undiscerning mind to do what is improper.” Rom 1, 25 – 26.28.

<sup>1598</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 1, a. 5 – 6 and 8.

<sup>1599</sup> Aquinas quotes *Wisdom of Solomon*, stating both “For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.” (Wis 11, 24) and “Equally odious to God are the evildoer and his evil deed...” (Wis 14, 9), cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1, s. c. 3; *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, s. c.

abstract and connoting more than the causal character that needs to be denied.<sup>1600</sup> But no matter the terminology, one thing is of importance: either Christian God is the cause of sin, or at least He is described by the revelation as if he behaved in a way that is very similar to that of a cause of sin. In other words, if a conception of God does not awake some relevant impressions that his relation to sin is causal, it is either not Christian, or not adequate – unless it explains why the Christian revelation should speak as it speaks concerning this matter. Now, it could be questioned whether the content behind Aquinas’s professed denial of God’s causation of sin should not be considered rather as its admission: while I shall argue that Aquinas succeeds in denying what he wants to deny, I admit that the relationship of his God to sin could be still taken for causal, provided that some broader (or simply different) notion of cause is used. But while such balancing on the edge could appear disturbing, this feature of his position should be considered rather as its advantage, considering the God it is supposed to account for.<sup>1601</sup>

## I. 2. The origin of sin

We have already seen different aspects of Aquinas’s conception of the genesis of sin in previous chapters (cf. chap. 1. II. 6., chap. 3. III. 2. 12. 1. and chap. 4. II. 2). We can summarise them as follows. The human (or any other intellectual creature) is basically oriented to the Good as such, yet his perception usually meets only limited goods and even when he turns his mind to the illimited Good, the latter is perceived only by the means of analogies with limited goods. To proceed rightly, the human would firstly need to judge his options from the viewpoint of the Good: yet this judgement is not innate and is itself only a limited good among others (cf. chap. 4. II. 3. 2.). That means that in the beginning of the practical-intellectual activity such judgement is not yet performed, and its performing is not naturally necessitated in the manner that growth is necessitated by the nature of the plant. Thus, without some exterior cause making the human perform this judgment, its non-existence perdures. This non-existence is not in itself bad – it becomes bad only when the human under the influence of existing causal stimuli makes decisions notwithstanding this non-consideration of the ultimate criterion of goodness, his voluntary activity being therefore

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<sup>1600</sup> The expression “God is a vertebrate” is inadequate, despite the fact that the expression “God is a lion” is not, even though a lion is a vertebrate: it is that the analogy of the latter expression is based on a different parts of the notion of a lion (e.g., its strength, dominance and supposed fearlessness), while the part corresponding to “vertebrate” immediately concerns some features that need to be denied about God (God has no vertebral column).

<sup>1601</sup> For convergent statements in the libertarian camp, cf. GRANT (2019), p. 141 – 143.

without aiming to its ultimate purpose.<sup>1602</sup> There is no need of a stimulus that would be directly aimed to provoke a morally bad decision in this situation: even a stimulus that is supposed to serve humans is enough to destroy them, if they do not react to it properly.<sup>1603</sup>

Note the essential role that the freedom of choice has in this Aquinas's description of things: it will help to avoid the libertarian reading of Aquinas's assertions relating the ultimate explication of sinful acts to the creaturely freedom.<sup>1604</sup> Inasmuch as the nature of the agent determines her activity (as in the case of the proverbial blooming of a plant), the agent is able to perform a *peccatum* only if this natural determination is impeded by some inner defect of hers. This defect is itself a bad state and one can ask where it came from. In Aquinas's view, such questioning needs to finish with another agent who damaged the former while pursuing her own goals. The badness of the activity of the plant is therefore to be always explained by a badness of its physical state which is further explained by the antagonist character of another entity which is bad for the plant (be it naturally, e.g., a hungry caterpillar; or accidentally, e.g., a trampling football player) without being necessarily itself in the bad state from the viewpoint of its own nature.<sup>1605</sup>

In contrast, inasmuch as some perfection of the activity is not determined by the nature of the agent, there is not necessarily a need of another explication of the absence of this perfection than this non-determination itself. Why does the plant not speak French fluently? Well, it is because it is a plant – a further explication would be needed if it spoke French. The thing is that the lack of language perfection is not a bad state in the case of the plant (even if speaking

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<sup>1602</sup> “*peccare nihil aliud est quam deficere a bono quod convenit alicui secundum suam naturam. Unaquaeque autem res creata, sicut esse non habet nisi ab alio, et in se considerata est nihil, ita indiget conservari in bono suae naturae convenienti ab alio. Potest autem per seipsam deficere a bono, sicut et per seipsam potest deficere in non esse, nisi divinitus conservaretur.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2; “*voluntas sine adhibitione regulae rationis vel legis divinae, est causa peccati. Hoc autem quod est non adhibere regulam rationis vel legis divinae, secundum se non habet rationem mali, nec poenae nec culpae, antequam applicetur ad actum. Unde secundum hoc, peccati primi non est causa aliquod malum, sed bonum aliquod cum absentia alicuius alterius boni.*” *Ibid.*, q. 75, a. 1, ad 3, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>1603</sup> “*Ita enim bonum male sumptum nocet, sicut prodest malum quo quis bene utitur, sicut stimulus Satanae Paulo.*” *Super I Cor.*, cap. 11, l. 7, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 141, n. 6 and *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, ad 2, reflecting the Latin version of Wis 14, 11 stating that “the creatures of God are made for the hate, the temptation of soul of humans and the mouse-trap of feet of unwise ones” (*creaturae Dei in odium factae sunt, et in tentationem animae hominum, et in muscipulam pedibus insipientium*).

<sup>1604</sup> See for ex. *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, co.: “*Huius autem quod est non uti regula praedicta, non oportet aliquam causam quaerere; quia ad hoc sufficit ipsa libertas voluntatis, per quam potest agere vel non agere...*”

<sup>1605</sup> “*Est ergo duplex modus quo malum causatur ex bono. Uno modo bonum est causa mali in quantum est deficiens; alio modo in quantum est per accidens. Quod quidem in rebus naturalibus de facili apparet ... Huius vero mali quod est monstruositas partus, causa est virtus deficiens in semine. Sed si quaeratur causa huius defectus quod est malum seminis, erit devenire in aliquod bonum quod est causa mali per accidens, et non in quantum est deficiens. Huius enim defectus qui est in semine, causa est aliquod principium alterans, quod inducit qualitatem contrariam qualitati quae requiritur ad bonam dispositionem seminis. Cuius alterantis virtus quanto fuerit perfectior, tanto hanc qualitatem contrariam magis inducit, et per consequens defectum seminis consequentem. Unde malum seminis non causatur ex bono in quantum est deficiens; sed causatur ex bono in quantum est perfectum.*” *Ibid.*

French was possible, as in the case of a parrot) and the same is true about any lack of perfection that could be explained in the same way: the natural goal of the plant supposedly does not require anything more than the activities that it is naturally determined to perform and the notion of (the lack of) its due good corresponds with it (cf. chap. 1. II. 3.). The situation is different in the case of free creatures: while they are naturally determined to tend to their ultimate goal (although in different way than the plants, cf. chap. 4. I. 4.) and this goal implies some objective requirements concerning their activities (cf. chap. 1. II. 5 – 8.), there is no natural determination concerning the performance of the corresponding activities (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 11.). This imperfection is not in itself bad: it does not mean the lack of any due good – it is natural for free creature not to be naturally determined on this level. It does not imply any bad consequences for its bearer either: it is compatible with a supremely perfect activity, like that of Beatific vision. Yes, it is compatible with a supremely looser-like activity too, and it implies the need for completion by an exterior causal support – but except for God, there is no other entity that does not require an exterior causal support in one way or another. As you know, in Aquinas’s determinist universe the absence of *any* determination to an activity equals the absence of this activity (in such a situation, the latter is impossible *in sensu composito*, cf. chap. 3. II. 2 – 7.). Thus, if the agent is determined neither by its nature, nor by any exterior source to the aforesaid practical judgment evaluating the things from the viewpoint of the ultimate Goal, the absence of this judgement follows. As said before, this absence is still not bad in itself (e.g., when you are sleeping), but becomes bad as the component of the decision-making which is disoriented due to it. Still, in itself it can be explained by the natural condition of free creature, in the same way as the plant’s or parrot’s inability to speak French does not require another explanation than the very fact that they are not naturally French speakers. The bad states of the volitions that are derived from it can be therefore fully explained by the natural condition of the willing subject without any need of recourse to another bad state of her or even an exterior antagonist factor that would cause it. Voila, the role of freedom of choice in Aquinas’s explanation of the origin of moral sin. You can easily understand the impact of this conception in the view of God’s participation on this process. Aquinas states that God is the cause of the act (or action) of sin, yet he is not the cause of the sin itself.<sup>1606</sup> I have already explained what he means by it (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 12. 1.): the sin is like a limp – it has a positive aspect (like moving forwards) and a negative aspect (like the absence of speed, balance, elegance, easiness). God is the cause of the positive aspect of sin in the way the healthy parts of the locomotor system are the cause of the fact that

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<sup>1606</sup> Cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 1 – 2; *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1 – 2; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1 – 2.

the limping person moves after all. The absence of the naturally sufficient aiming to the Good is the cause of the negative aspect of sin in the way a broken ankle is the cause of all the badness contained in limping. The “sin” names the activity inasmuch as it is subjected to bad state: saying that God is the cause of sin would suggest that he is the cause of this bad state as well. Yet the latter is not true: the ultimate source of moral badness is to be found in the natural nothingness of the free creature, particularly in the aforesaid absence of its natural determination to the performance of good actions. God is not cause of this feature, since it is connected to the creature with absolute necessity, independently of God’s causal activity (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 11.).

To avoid a misunderstanding: this distinction of positive and negative aspects concerns the ontological structure of a sinful immanent act of will, it is not supposed to be automatically applied to all its effects outside the will. Exempli gratia, if the sin makes the sinner an antagonist to the physical good of some other creatures, all its power to harm them comes from its positive aspect and Aquinas *does not deny* that the physically bad states resulting from the decisions to lie, rape or murder are causally related to the author of this positive aspect. As we have seen, his God is the ultimate cause of all the *malum poenae* – from this viewpoint, there is no relevant difference between Auschwitz and some equally deadly natural disaster (cf. chap. 1. III. 3.): “If evil befalls a city, has not the LORD caused it?”<sup>1607</sup> To be less abstract, Aquinas would not deny that God is the cause of the killing of Christians by Nero. Quite independently of Nero’s subjective motivations, God decided the moment and the way of leaving this world for any of his servants (and his enemies as well), be it the cross of his Son or of any of his followers. There is really no question of trying to speak God out of the responsibility for the death and pain of the innocent ones (after all, Aquinas considers them profitable, cf. chap. 5. II. 6.): the victim blaspheming God because of him letting her fall into the hands of an evildoer is not mistaken concerning this precise point. It is just the causal relation of the messed-up aspect of creaturely volitions that happen in this context (be it the evildoer’s criminal decisions, or the victim’s choice to commit blasphemy instead of accept God’s will) to God that Aquinas wants to avoid, nothing more.

### I. 3. *Causa defectus*

Does Aquinas succeed in his attempt to show that God is not the cause of sin (in Aquinas’s sense of the phrase)? Let us not be too hasty. The origin of moral badness does not need to be

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<sup>1607</sup> Am 3, 6.

necessarily traced outside of the sinner. Nevertheless, it does not mean that it should not be traced there. Without putting in doubt the free causality of a hitman, the godfather is nonetheless considered to be the cause (albeit indeterminist) of the crimes that he ordered to be executed; the biological father of the hitman that has systematically neglected his education during his childhood can be also considered the cause of his criminal adulthood. It seems that at least the latter model should be applied to God (no matter the existence or non-existence of human libertarian will, inasmuch as I can say). Aquinas himself is far from saying that there can be no other cause of my sins than myself: e.g., the Devil is the cause of the sins of those who have succumbed to his temptation, although not in the same sense as the sinners themselves – he is their disposing, convincing or commanding cause, but contrary to the sinners, he is never their completing cause (cf. chap. 3. III. 1. 2.).<sup>1608</sup> Aquinas’s denial of God’s being in an analogical position proceeds from the application of his general position concerning the causation of bad states.

### I. 3. 1. Causation of bad states

Contrary to the pure absence of good, the bad state always needs a cause: there must be something that impeded the natural inclination from achieving its purpose; more generally, the bad state is not implied by nature (otherwise it would be natural and not bad) and its connection with the entity then needs to be explained somehow.<sup>1609</sup> In his oldest discussion of this subject, Aquinas enumerates three categories of factors that can cause a bad state: an antagonist agent, a deficiency in the instrument and the indisposition in the matter. The last of those cannot be applied in the case of moral sin because the volition does not directly consist in the transformation of the matter.<sup>1610</sup> As for the second, at this stage of his thinking Aquinas

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<sup>1608</sup> “*dicendum est, quod Diabolus humani peccati causa esse potest per modum disponentis vel persuadentis interius aut exterius; aut etiam per modum praecipientis, ut apparet in his qui se manifeste Diabolo subdiderunt. Sed per modum perficientis causa peccati esse non potest. ... Relinquitur ergo quod nihil aliud sit directe causa peccati humani nisi voluntas.*” *De malo*, q. 3, a. 3, co.

<sup>1609</sup> “*cum inordinatio peccati, et quodlibet malum, non sit simplex negatio, sed privatio eius quod quid natum est et debet habere; necesse est quod talis inordinatio habeat causam agentem per accidens, quod enim natum est inesse et debet, nunquam abesset nisi propter causam aliquam impediendam.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 75, a. 1, co.; “*malum praeternaturaliter inest ei cui inest. Si enim aliquis defectus est alicui rei naturalis, non potest dici quod sit malum eius, sicut non est malum homini non habere alas, nec lapidi non habere visum, quia est secundum naturam. Omne autem quod praeternaturaliter inest alicui, oportet habere aliquam causam; non enim aqua esset calida nisi ab aliqua causa.*” *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, co., cf. *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 13 – 14.

<sup>1610</sup> “*defectus incidit praeter intentionem agentis. Hoc autem contingit tripliciter. Aut ex parte ejus quod intentum est ab agente, quod cum non compatiatur secum quamdam aliam perfectionem, excludit eam, ut patet in generatione naturali. ... Aut ex parte materiae recipientis actionem, quae indisposita est ad consequendam perfectionem quam agens intendit inducere, ut patet in naturalibus in partibus monstruosis, et in artificialibus in ligno nodoso, quod non dirigitur ad actionem artificis... Aut ex parte instrumenti, ut patet in claudicatione, quia*

means that it is to be applied in the case of initial moments of sinful activity that happen without deliberation, the instrument in question being the lower faculties of a human. The first category is to be applied in the case of the deliberate sinful action, the antagonist agent being the will itself (apparently disoriented by the malfunctioning of those lesser faculties?). In Aquinas's later texts both this distinction and its application to the problem of sin are partially reworked. The deficiency in the instrument is generalised to the deficiency in any type of efficient cause<sup>1611</sup> and both first and second (reworked) category are applied at the sinning will itself, without any distinguishing of the type of sin in question.<sup>1612</sup> Also, in the most mature text concerning this question Aquinas appears to increase his focus on the question of "indirect" causation of bad state,<sup>1613</sup> understood in the sense of the causation by inaction (more precisely by not impeding of the influence of the direct cause) as in the case of the negligent parent or navigator:<sup>1614</sup> while in the earlier texts this problematic has a marginal, if any, place, in *Prima-Secundae*'s article concerning God's causation of sin it becomes the part of the central distinction Aquinas works with.<sup>1615</sup> More generally, there is a big fluctuation concerning the space that Aquinas grants to different aspects of the question in different texts where he discusses it. I shall not spend more time with these differences.

Aquinas's mature view can be summarised as follows. The causality of any agent is determined by its goal which means that any agent always tends to effect something good

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*a virtute gressiva sequitur gressus distortus propter curvitatem cruris. Malum autem culpa ex duobus horum modorum contingere potest; scilicet vel ex parte ejus quod intentum est, vel ex parte instrumenti. Ex defectu enim materiae, culpa malum non accidit: quia operationes morales non sunt factiones, ut per eas aliquid in materia constituatur, ut in 6 Ethic. dicitur, sed sunt actiones in ipsis agentibus permanentes, et eos perficientes aut corruptentes."* *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3, co.

<sup>1611</sup> Cf. already *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, co.: "*Quod enim agit propter finem, non deficit a fine nisi propter defectum alicujus, vel sui ipsius, vel alterius; et illud in quo invenitur defectus, erit causa obliquoationis a fine, sive sit ipsum principale agens, vel materia, vel instrumentum agentis, vel quidquid aliud...*", cf. *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 1; I-II, q. 75, a. 1; *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 10, n. 6 – 18; cap. 13 – 14; *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3; q. 3 a. 1.

<sup>1612</sup> "*voluntas ... est causa mali secundum utrumque praedictorum modorum, scilicet et per accidens, et in quantum est bonum deficiens. Per accidens quidem, in quantum voluntas fertur in aliquid quod est bonum secundum quid, sed habet coniunctum quod est simpliciter malum; sed ut bonum deficiens, in quantum oportet in voluntate praeconsiderare aliquem defectum ante ipsam electionem deficientem, per quam eligit secundum quid bonum, quod est simpliciter malum...*" *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, co.

<sup>1613</sup> "*homo dupliciter est causa peccati vel sui vel alterius. Uno modo, directe, inclinando scilicet voluntatem suam vel alterius ad peccandum. Alio modo, indirecte, dum scilicet non retrahit aliquos a peccato...*" *STh.*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, co.

<sup>1614</sup> "*idem est causa contrariorum quandoque; sicut per suam praesentiam gubernator est causa salutis navis, per absentiam autem suam causa est submersionis eius.*" *In Physic.*, lib. 2 l. 5 n. 7 (commenting the source text of the example systematically used in this context), cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 4, a. 2, ad 4; lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2, a. 1, arg. 3/ad 3; q. 3, a. 1, ad 4; *STh.*, I, q. 49, a. 2, ad 3; I-II, q. 79, a. 1, co. in relation to the question of evil, for more general or simply different uses cf. *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 3, co.; *De principiis naturae*, cap. 4; *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 3, l. 21, n. 4; *De 36 articulis*, a. 19, ad arg.; *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 3, arg. 8/ad 8.

<sup>1615</sup> As for the presence of these notion in *De malo*, see q. 3, a. 1, ad 1: the terminological distinction of direct and indirect cause has another meaning in this work, the indirect cause being the cause that caused the good conditions for the effect (the drying of the wood is the indirect cause of the fire), cf. *De malo*, q. 3, a. 5, co.

from its (not necessarily good) viewpoint.<sup>1616</sup> In such a situation, an agent causes a bad state either because she is not up to her goal, (partially) failing in its achievement (the case of the deficiency of the agent), or because her goal is a good which is incompatible with another good whose privation defines the bad state in question (the case of the antagonism of agent). The bad state can also occur in agent's effect without any causal origin in the agent herself: it can be fully due to the indisposition in the recipient of agent's causation (e.g., the matter). The bad state can also occur in agent's effect without any causal origin in the agent herself: it can be fully due to the indisposition in the recipient of the agent's causation (e.g., the matter). Note that agent's inability to overcome this indisposition does not automatically mean that she is to be considered as a deficient agent for Aquinas: a master carpenter's inability to make a good chair from putrid wood does not count as the causally explanatory deficiency in regard of the bad state (or the nonexistence) of the chair – the putridness of wood does.<sup>1617</sup>

As for the indirect causation by inaction, it appears to be reducible to the case of the deficiency of the agent in Aquinas's view: Aquinas states that the navigator is the indirect cause of the shipwreck only when he is able and obliged (*debet*) to impede it<sup>1618</sup> which means that without any preceding failure on the side of this agent the emerging bad state cannot be considered her effect. The difference between the direct and indirect causality consists just in the fact that the deficiency does not concern the production of the lacking good itself, but the elimination of some impediments of this good (it seems to me that in some cases this distinction can be just a distinction of viewpoint). Note that the ultimate criterion of whether the agent's inaction is to be considered the cause of bad state is the relation of the absence of action to the nature of the agent considered as such: inasmuch as the action is impossible for her, its absence is not causal; inasmuch the action is not her duty (*debitum*), i.e., the agent does not need to perform it to be conform to her goal (cf. chap. 1. II. 3 – 4.), its absence is not causal too, even if the action is possible.

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<sup>1616</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 41, n. 5 – 10; lib. 3, cap. 2 – 3 (for the relation between efficiency and finality, see chap. 3. II. 1. 2.). For the application of this rule in the case of the intentional committing of evil for evil itself, cf. chap. 4. II. 2., most notably the footnotes 1173 and 1174.

<sup>1617</sup> “*Si enim materia sit indisposita ad recipiendam impressionem agentis, necesse est defectum sequi in effectu... Nec hoc imputatur ad aliquem defectum agentis, si materiam indispositam non transmutat ad actum perfectum: unicuique enim agenti naturali est virtus determinata secundum modum suae naturae, quam si non excedat, non propter hoc erit deficiens in virtute, sed tunc solum quando deficit a mensura virtutis sibi debitae per naturam.*” *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 10, n. 8.

<sup>1618</sup> “*Ab aliquo autem dicitur esse aliquid dupliciter. Uno modo, directe, quod scilicet procedit ab aliquo in quantum est agens, sicut calefactio a calore. Alio modo, indirecte, ex hoc ipso quod non agit, sicut submersio navis dicitur esse a gubernatore, in quantum desistit a gubernando. Sed sciendum quod non semper id quod sequitur ad defectum actionis, reducitur sicut in causam in agens, ex eo quod non agit, sed solum tunc cum potest et debet agere. Si enim gubernator non posset navem dirigere, vel non esset ei commissa gubernatio navis, non imputaretur ei navis submersio, quae per absentiam gubernatoris contingeret.*” *STh.*, I-II, q. 6, a. 3, co., cf. *ibid.*, q. 79, a. 1, co.



Do you wonder whether there can be a possible action that is necessary for preventing a shipwreck from happening, whose performing would not be necessary for the navigator's conformity to his goal (which includes the shipwreck prevention)? Well, maybe it could not exist if the navigator was kind of the subsistent art of navigation that is supposed only to ceaselessly perform all the possible actions to prevent the shipwreck. The real-life navigators are not supposed to do so: for example, they are allowed to take rest sometimes, or, as in Aquinas's example, the ship can be simply not committed to their care (e.g., when they are on board simply as passengers). In any case, their shipwreck preventing finality is ultimately derived from their finality of human being put in the particular context (including, beside others, a certain function they have during the navigation): the actual requirements that the former places on them are both derived and limited by the latter and while they include the actions that are necessary for the shipwreck prevention under normal circumstances, they do not include all the possible actions that can be possibly necessary in all the possible circumstances. If the shipwreck occurs due to some event unexpectedly occurring during navigator's time off, the navigator is not its cause, even in the case that he was able to do more than his duty and if he happened to do so at the crucial moment, the ship would be saved.

### I. 3. 2. Causation of moral sin and the *debitum naturae*

If we return to the problem of the causation of moral sin, the sinner (more precisely, the sinner's will) can be considered as both the deficient agent and the agent antagonist to herself:<sup>1619</sup> the absence of the sufficient natural aim to the right activity makes her first and she becomes second in the very act of choosing a goal that is contrary to the Ultimate goal. Now, while God can be considered as an antagonist agent in the case of the particular good, in Aquinas's view he cannot be considered as an antagonist to the universal good. The reasons of this were already stated in the first chapter (chap. 1. III. 2.): this good is the very reason why God does anything at all outside of himself. He cannot be considered a deficient agent either, just because there is no limitation of perfection in him.<sup>1620</sup> Despite appearing to be the

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<sup>1619</sup> See my footnote 1612.

<sup>1620</sup> "*Peccatum vero, secundum quod proprie in moralibus dicitur et habet rationem culpae, provenit ex eo quod voluntas deficit a debito fine, per hoc quod in finem indebitum tendit. In Deo autem neque activum principium potest esse deficiens, eo quod eius potentia est infinita; nec eius voluntas potest deficere a debito fine, quia ipsa eius voluntas, quae etiam est eius natura, est bonitas summa, quae est ultimus finis et prima regula omnium voluntatum ... Peccatum enim, prout nunc de peccato loquimur, consistit in aversione voluntatis creatae ab ultimo fine. Impossibile est autem quod Deus faciat voluntatem alicuius ab ultimo fine averti, cum ipsemet sit ultimus finis. Quod enim communiter invenitur in omnibus agentibus creatis, oportet quod hoc habeat ex*

most proportionate interpretation of the position that Aquinas attributes to God in the case of hardening of hearts (cf. also chap. 1. III. 4), the conception of God as an indirect cause of sin can be excluded by the same kind of reasoning. God lets the sinner fall on the basis of the wise and just judgment<sup>1621</sup> which implies that, contrary to the guilty navigator, there is no duty (*debitum*) of him that he would not fulfil.

Let me note that, to my knowledge, the latter solution of the parallelism with the missing navigator is as such proper only to *Prima-Secundae*. In *Sentences*, Aquinas tries to eliminate it differently: God is present, it is the creature (sinner) who is absent.<sup>1622</sup> We have already seen what he most likely means by it (cf. chap. 5. III. 3.). In *Prima*, he uses an intermediate formulation: the causation of shipwreck is attributed to the navigator only if he had not done what was required for avoiding it and God does not abstain from providing what is necessary for salvation.<sup>1623</sup> The dependence of the causal character of inaction on inaction's being the failing of one's duty seems to be implicit here, implied in the notion of requirements of the finality that is sought.

For an unprepared reader, this passage could be troublemaking. Firstly, for Aquinas the occurrence of the shipwreck is apparently compatible with the navigator's doing of all what is required to avoid it. But I hope that the notions behind this have been sufficiently explained in the previous subsection. What is more challenging for a determinist reader is the assertion that God's doing of all what is necessary for salvation is apparently compatible with damnation: it seems that this compossibility requires an indeterminism concerning the occurrence of this result, otherwise the whole of all the necessary conditions would be equivalent with the sufficient condition of it. Moreover, the assertion seems to be enrooted in Aquinas's more general convictions concerning the *debitum naturae* (cf. chap. 1. III. 1.): if God does not provide all what is necessary for the finality that he has himself given to the creature, it seems that his activity concerning the creature is not proportionate to its goals and is therefore

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*imitatione primi agentis, ... Unumquodque autem agens creatum invenitur per suam actionem, alia quodammodo ad se ipsum attrahere, assimilando ea sibi; vel per similitudinem formae, sicut cum calidum calefacit; vel convertendo alia ad finem suum, ... Est igitur hoc Deo conveniens quod omnia ad se ipsum convertat, et per consequens quod nihil avertat a se ipso. Ipse autem est summum bonum. Unde non potest esse causa aversionis voluntatis a summo bono, in quo ratio culpae consistit prout nunc loquimur de culpa.” De malo, q. 3, a. 1, co., cf. STh., I, q. 48, a. 6, co.; q. 49, a. 2, co.; De malo, q. 1, a. 5, co.; Contra Gentiles, lib. 3, cap. 162.*

<sup>1621</sup> “Contingit enim quod Deus aliquibus non praebet auxilium ad vitandum peccata, quod si praeberet, non peccarent. Sed hoc totum facit secundum ordinem suae sapientiae et iustitiae, cum ipse sit sapientia et iustitia. Unde non imputatur ei quod alius peccat, sicut causae peccati, sicut gubernator non dicitur causa submersionis navis ex hoc quod non gubernat navem, nisi quando subtrahit gubernationem potens et debens gubernare.” STh., I-II, q. 79, a. 1, co.

<sup>1622</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 40, q. 4, a. 2, ad 4 and lib. 2, d. 37, q. 2 a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>1623</sup> “submersio navis attribuitur nautae ut causae, ex eo quod non agit quod requiritur ad salutem navis. Sed Deus non deficit ab agendo quod est necessarium ad salutem. Unde non est simile.” STh., I, q. 49, a. 2, ad 3.

defective – Aquinas’s assertion of its coming from God’s wise and just judgment would be undermined then. Of course, absolutely speaking, the *debitum naturae* does not concern the supernatural perfections, but provided that God has decided at some point that the finality of the creature is to be supernatural, the supernatural character of it and some of its prerequisites do not change anything in the applicability of this notion.

I believe that this conclusion can be easily resisted based on what we have seen in preceding chapters though. First, recall the basic meaning that the notions like “possible” or “necessary” have in Aquinas’s view (cf. chap. 2. I. 2.): the possibility of something is defined by the active or passive potency of the entity which is its proper proximate efficient or material cause. From this viewpoint, the ultimately perseverant theological love for God (which implies salvation) is possible for any sanctified individual by the very fact that she was given sanctifying grace (making her the proper cause of this effect), in the same sense as it is possible for any healthy cat to beget a kitten, or for the fire to light the hay. The fact that the external causal conditions are going to (deterministically) impede these results is of no consequence here (cf. chap. 3. II. 3.). Now, inasmuch as these effects are possible, it means that all their necessary conditions are established, and, in this sense, God has provided all that is necessary for salvation: in the same sense, you would say that by giving a gun to Jones, you have given to him all he needs to kill Black (notwithstanding that you have not given to him the occasion to shoot, precise aim etc.). I do not intend to discuss whether in Aquinas’s view, God’s doing of all what is necessary for the salvation should imply that God actually gives the sanctifying grace to any human or angelic individual at some point of their existence: what counts for me is that, notwithstanding the determinist viewpoint, it does not imply that God determines all these individuals to the actual acquisition of the salvation.

It could seem that I am just playing with words here: it is clear that in some very important sense of the term, in the abovementioned case God has not provided all that was necessary for the salvation of the sinner in the determinist universe – and it seems that it is this sense of term that counts, for it implies sinner’s eternal damnation. Well, it really counts, if we are speaking about the final destiny of the individual. If we are speaking about the fulfilment of the *debitum naturae* in the case of this individual, it is another question. Do not forget that this *debitum* is not a kind of a priori rights which would be possessed by the creature in relation to God: it is “only” the requirement of God’s own wisdom, goodness etc., implying that God does not do anything without accomplishing all the necessary prerequisites for the success of what he is doing, and its content is determined by this. If God wants a human, he must provide her with all that constitutes human identity and all that she needs for what he wants

her to be and to do – but only inasmuch as he wants it. The precise implications that are, from this viewpoint, connected with God’s decision to make the supernatural salvation the ultimate proper goal of mankind in the actual determinist world could be disputed. But it would imply the determinist’s avoiding the damnation of some (or even many), only if it was impossible for God to ordain some (or many) individuals’ missing of their ultimate proper goal to the goal that he is seeking in the creation of the universe as such. As we have seen before (cf. chap. 5. II. 4.), Aquinas is quite clear about God’s being able to do it. His views actually tend to the contrary conclusion: it seems that for him it would be rather the exceptionless success of fallible entities that would be difficult to ordain to this goal (see also chap. 2. II.). If it seems far-fetched to you, consider the finality of enemies in a typical videogame. Their ultimate proper goal is to eliminate the player and they must be equipped to be able to do it: the programmer must provide them with all that is necessary for it (in the sense specified in the preceding paragraph). Yet, their failure is far from being absurd from the viewpoint of the game – it would be their too frequent success that would ultimately spoil it. Obviously, the relations of God, universe and fallible intellectual creatures are not the same as the relations of the programmer, the videogame and the hostile characters in it: but they coincide from the viewpoint of the mutual (in)dependence of their respective goals and the implications that it has for the possibility of reasonably allowing a failure of some of them. Given that this possibility exists, the actual allowing of failure cannot be considered as a mistake of the allowing one and this inaction has not a causal relation to the allowed failure in Aquinas’s terms then.

### I. 3. 3. Intuitive appeal and intuitive problem of Aquinas’s argumentation

Do you feel that something frays at the edges in Aquinas’s argumentation? You might be right: but let us consider the intuitive appeal of its components first. Imagine a room illuminated by a single lamp, its distant corners being drowned in shadows though. Let us be agreed that the lamp is the one determining factor of the measure of lighting in any part of the room: does it mean that the lamp is the cause of the weakness of lighting in the corners? The answer can vary. If the lamp is bad, we would answer affirmatively without hesitation (the deficiency of the agent). The same could be the case, if the lamp contained something to impede a part of its own light to spread (e.g., the lampshade – an antagonist factor). But if neither is the case, we would hardly say that the corners are dark because of the lamp, for similar reasons that would stop us from saying that the lamp is the cause of the darkness in the

cellar two floors below – or in the core of Pluto. The lamp cannot lighten these distant places and because this very inability is not judged to mean that the lamp is bad, the darkness is not to be considered the fault and therefore the effect of the lamp – even if the amount of dimming or darkness is entirely determined by it. Obviously, the lamp has no word in deciding where it is placed – it cannot just decide to enter the cellar. But imagine that you are there, and you can decide. If you want, you can take the lamp and descend to the cellar or leave into the night and lighten the garden or even the entrance of the cave in the nearby forest. You have enough lamps to lighten all these places. If you do not decide so, will you admit that the forest is entirely dark *because of you*? You did have the possibility of choice after all! Actually, there is one kind of situation when such an assertion would not merit an incredulous stare. Imagine night-time scout game in the forest and you are supposed to lighten some particular places containing tasks, hanged men, or even some real dangers and you forget to do it at one of them. “*Because of you* it was completely dark there!” would be quite comprehensible accusation in this case: most likely, you would not get along by defending yourself by the truth that the darkness of the forest is originally based on some physical or ontological principles that are independent of you. “You were supposed to impede these principles and you did not do so!” screams your (unfortunately philosophically educated) accuser. Note that the force of the argument comes from the “be supposed to” which corresponds to Aquinas’s “*debet*”. The very possibility to influence the situation by one’s choice is not enough to justify the accusation, not even the knowledge of what is happening in the forest, if it does not imply that the knower “is supposed to” do something – otherwise the causality would be attributable to the majority of the neighbourhood (the possibility of influence) and to all the persons that have some awareness of the game. This holds even in the extreme case of the precise knowledge of the fact that another person does not do her duty: you are not considered the cause of the cluttered front yard of your messy neighbours by the only fact that you see it, you are able to tidy it up, you know that it will last unless you do so – and you just walk away. The things would be different, if the mess were due to your children’s activities: here you *are supposed* either prevent your kids from doing the mess, or at the very least to eliminate it promptly. If you have not succeeded to do the first thing, as long as the mess is there, it is there because of you (notwithstanding the direct causation of children).

This leads us to the criticism to which the classical Thomist view on God’s non-causation of sin (corresponding in main terms with what I presented above as Aquinas’s view) was subjected by Jacques Maritain and his followers. Maritain compares Báñezian God to an adult

person who witnesses a child trying to write by pen. The child is unable to write correctly, unless an adult helps them, leading their hand. The Báñezian God is like an adult who may help the child for a time, but then leaves them, knowing all too well that the child's writing will immediately become illegible. Is the adult not a cause of the scribble that appears on the paper after his departure? Maritain considers obvious that he is – and even if one succeeded to show the contrary “thanks to the resources of logic and of skilfully elaborated definitions and distinctions”, the application of this model on God's relation to sinner would still make God responsible for moral evil and its consequences in some nasty manner.<sup>1624</sup> In my view, Maritain's conviction that one would need a skilful logical competence to question his evaluation of the causal role of the adult is very questionable. The intuitive causal role of the adult varies immensely depending on the situation. Is the adult a babysitter who is supposed to help the child until the child learns how to write? Is the adult a random visitor who helped the child by pure kindness before returning to more important tasks? Is the child a studious beginner that just needs to be helped? Or is it a studious beginner that most of all needs to be not helped? Or is it a lazy brat who was supposed to master the handwriting three months ago and puts all their effort in avoiding any effort possible to avoid? “I failed my homework because the mailman has not helped me enough!” – what would you think about such an identification of a cause of bad state?

But it might be that Maritain had actually in mind some special situation when the adult is effectively supposed to help the child, maybe because he wants it himself that the child learns to write and there is no other way for him to achieve this goal than by helping the child. In other words, a situation similar to the relation between God and human. Now, if God himself wants humans act sinlessly and does not provide what is necessary for this act, is God's action itself not *peccatum* being disproportionate to its goals? Is the wisdom not (if not the justice) of his doing denied by this? We have seen above that Aquinas has an answer to it: God behaves this way only because he is able to ordain the *malum* of moral failure to the ultimate purpose that he seeks in the universe.<sup>1625</sup> Even the eternal hate against God that is performed by devil manifests God: the demon's suffering (coming from the fact that the internal affective conflict implied by the hate impedes the achievement of its angelic purpose) manifests the order of Justice that holds the universe.<sup>1626</sup> God is not irrational while permitting the perpetual

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<sup>1624</sup> Cf. MARITAIN (1966), p. 28 – 31.

<sup>1625</sup> See above chap. 6. I. 3. 2. and also my footnotes 1512, 1513 and 1575.

<sup>1626</sup> “*divina intentio non frustratur nec in his qui peccant, nec in his qui salvantur, utrorumque enim eventum Deus praecognoscit, et ex utroque habet gloriam, dum hos ex sua bonitate salvat, illos ex sua iustitia punit.*” *STh.*, I, q. 63, a. 7, ad 2 (concerning the possibility that the highest angel finished in Hell).

duration of this sin, in fact, it is the only rational possibility: the sinless universe would suffer the gap in the degrees of perfection, manifesting God imperfectly – and this would effectively be against divine wisdom.<sup>1627</sup> The problem of this answer consists in its tending to assimilate the relation between God and sin to the relation between fire and the destruction of wood: if the sin is a necessary reverse side of the proliferation of Good, is the Good itself not to be considered as an agent who is antagonist to the particular good that is opposed to sin, in the same way as is the fire antagonist to the integrity of the wood? To put it succinctly, it seems that either the permission of sin is actually not reasonable, and then God is the cause of sin as a deficient agent, or it is reasonable as Aquinas states, and then God is the cause of sin as an agent whose goals are opposed to sinlessness. Aquinas’s argument against the latter alternative, based on the opposition between sin and the ultimate Good that God seeks, would seem to be built on equivocation: while the sin is actually opposed to this Good, inasmuch as it should be sought by the sinner, it is not in opposition to the manifestation of this Good in the universe that God has actually chosen. To evaluate the ability of Aquinas’s account to resist (not only) this objection, we must return to his distinction that was mentioned in the very beginning of our journey: the antecedent and the consequent will.

## II. The antecedent will

### Introduction

“God wants all humans to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. But it does not happen this way. Therefore, the will of God is not always fulfilled.”<sup>1628</sup> “But [this opinion] is contradicted by what is said in Psalm 113: God has done everything what he wanted.”<sup>1629</sup> The Hen lamenting over Jerusalem who has not obeyed her saving will.<sup>1630</sup> The irresistibly willing Potter hardening the jars of perdition to make the wrath of his justice known.<sup>1631</sup> Two apparently incompatible images of God, both of which are parts of one collection of sacred texts that are considered to contain an infallible revelation of the Divine. A tension that arrives at its peak in the question of the ultimate salvation of all: have the damned ones lost

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<sup>1627</sup> Cf. the texts quoted in my footnotes 597 and 599.

<sup>1628</sup> “*Deus vult omnes homines salvos fieri, et ad agnitionem veritatis venire. Sed hoc non ita evenit. Ergo voluntas Dei non semper impletur.*” *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, arg. 1. Cf. 1 Tim 2, 3 – 4: “This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.”

<sup>1629</sup> “*Sed contra est quod dicitur in Psalmo CXIII, omnia quaecumque voluit Deus, fecit.*” *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, s. c. Cf. Ps 115, 3: “Our God is in heaven; whatever God wills is done.” Aquinas (and Vulgate) uses different division of the text of *Psalter* than most of the contemporary editions.

<sup>1630</sup> Cf. Mt 23, 37 – 39; L 13, 34 – 35.

<sup>1631</sup> Cf. Rom 9, 19 – 24.

Heaven DESPITE or BECAUSE OF the state of God's will? Over two thousand years, Christians have not lacked the invention in their attempts not to get this issue wrong.

This question of God's relation to the ultimate salvation/damnation can be theoretically disconnected from the question of his relation to moral goodness/badness. First, while I have never heard about any Christian thinker denying the existence of the sin, the denial of the occurrence of any definitive damnation appears to have its adherents, as has the solution of the abovementioned tension that is based on it.<sup>1632</sup> Secondly, the final destiny of man can be conceived as independent of his actions<sup>1633</sup> and in any case, God's will that all are saved does not require God's will that all behave rightly all the time. Nevertheless, none of these options is available for Aquinas. First, he apparently considers obvious that the damnation actually concerns some (indeed, most of them) humans<sup>1634</sup> – I have not found any Aquinas's article that would consider some contrary opinion, be it to refute it. Aquinas's only concern in this theological area is (allegedly) Origenian thesis that this damnation is to never be perpetual<sup>1635</sup> – a thesis that would be in contradiction with the doctrine previously proclaimed by the Fourth council of Lateran.<sup>1636</sup> Second, as many other Christian theologians he thinks that despite its more fundamental causal background, the ultimate destiny of man can be considered as a result of his previous activities, especially if this destiny is a bad one. God “will repay everyone according to his works...”<sup>1637</sup> Given all of this, the question of God's will concerning salvation implies the question of God's will concerning some morally relevant activities – and the question of the permission of the ultimate sin that defines the definitive moral state of the reprobated individuals. Add the fact that even in absence of an explicit assertion, the moralising parts of the Scripture suggests that the Lord actually wants everybody to act rightly all the times. How is it possible that this is not the case then?

## II. 1. *Velle sine vellendo*

The historical discussion of the issue of “irresistible will vs. salvific will” is pretty much focused on the right interpretation of 1 Tim 2, 4, saying that God “wills everyone to be saved

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<sup>1632</sup> Cf. DANÉLOU (1940), VON BALTHASAR (1987), p. 48 – 51, and VON BALTHASAR (1988), p. 74 – 92.

<sup>1633</sup> Cf. p. 218.

<sup>1634</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 23, a. 7, ad 3.

<sup>1635</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 46, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 1, co.; *Super Mt.*, cap. 25, l. 3.

<sup>1636</sup> “...[Christus] redditurus singulis secundum opera sua, tam reprobis quam electis: qui omnes cum suis propriis resurgent corporibus, quae nunc gestant, ut recipiant secundum opera sua, sive bona fuerint sive mala, illi cum diabolo poenam perpetuam, et isti cum Christo gloriam sempiternam.” (DS 801). Compare with the condemnation of Origenism by the synod of Constantinople (DS 411).

<sup>1637</sup> Rom 2, 6, cf. *Super Rom.*, cap. 2, l. 2 or for ex. the question of meriting in *STh.*, I-II, q. 114 or “Your perdition is from you...” in chap. 3. III. 2. 11. of this book.



and to come to knowledge of the truth.” It is not the only Biblical text suggesting that God wants the salvation of all human beings<sup>1638</sup> – but it seems to be the one that is most difficult to be understood differently. Just for comparison, if you quote that “it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost”<sup>1639</sup>, the negator of the universal salvific will can be quickly done with it, saying that the negation of this volition does not imply the assertion of the contrary volition; if you speak about God’s yearning to gather the children of unwilling Jerusalem,<sup>1640</sup> they say that the text says neither that God wanted Jerusalem willing nor that the gathering of the children wanted by God actually failed.<sup>1641</sup> 1 Tim 2, 4 is just much harder to crack than anything else.

As Bonaventure of Bagnoregio puts it, there are two basic ways to explain the text in a way that is not in contradiction with the irresistibility of divine will. Either you do not take its assertion of the universal distribution of the salvation in its strongest possible sense, or you take the same approach in the case of the volition which it asserts.<sup>1642</sup> In his commentary on the verse, Aquinas mentions two interpretations of the former type and three of the latter.<sup>1643</sup>

## II. 1. 1. *Modus distribuendi*

The solutions that are based on the reinterpretation of the “everyone” has been forged probably by Augustin. For him, two things are clear: firstly, it is most certain that for God no object of his volition is impossible;<sup>1644</sup> secondly, it is impossible that God “who had not wanted to perform the mighty miraculous acts in front of those, whom he has said to have repented, if he had done them”,<sup>1645</sup> wanted to save all of them. What about 1 Tim 2, 4 then? Well, first of all consider the following assertion: “At this school, all children are taught Latin by Mr. Jones.” This claim does not necessarily imply that all children at the school are actually taught Latin. According to context, it can simply mean that all children that are taught

<sup>1638</sup> Cf. Ez 18, 23; 33, 11; Mt 18, 14; 23, 37; L 13, 34; 1Tim 4, 10; 2Pt 3, 9.

<sup>1639</sup> Mt 18, 14.

<sup>1640</sup> Cf. Mt 23, 37par.

<sup>1641</sup> Cf. AUGUSTIN, *Enchiridion*, cap. 97 (PL 40, 276 – 277); PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quatuor Sententiarum*, lib. I, d. 46, c. 2.

<sup>1642</sup> “*necesse est quod fiat vis in modo distribuendi vel in modo volendi*” BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO, *Commentary on Sentences*, lib. I, d. 46, a. 1, q. 1, co.

<sup>1643</sup> Cf. *Super I Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1.

<sup>1644</sup> “*illud tamen esse certissimum, nihil eorum illi [Deo] esse impossibile, quaecumque voluerit*” AUGUSTIN, *De civitate Dei*, XXI, 5, 2 (PL 41, 716), cf. *Enchiridion*, cap. 103 (PL 40, 280 – 281).

<sup>1645</sup> “*qui virtutes miraculorum facere noluit apud eos quos dicit acturos fuisse paenitentiam si fecisset*” AUGUSTIN, *Enchiridion*, *ibid.*, referring to Mt 11, 21ff par.

Latin (maybe a minority of the children at said school) are taught it by Jones.<sup>1646</sup> This linguistic phenomenon used to be called “accommodated distribution” and Augustin believed that 1 Tim 2, 4 *can* be read this way: its message would be simply that no one will be saved, if not by the will of God.<sup>1647</sup> If this reading seems far-fetched to you, you have my sympathy, but consider that at least the Latin translation of the text actually was (and therefore could have been) understood this way by some of its important medieval readers: Peter Lombard considered this interpretation more probable than all the others that he had known.<sup>1648</sup> It is actually quite sticking with the context of the verse that is preceded by exhortation to the prayer for all and followed by the assertion of God’s unicity, considered as the justification of this exhortation.<sup>1649</sup>

Augustin himself does not state that the text *must* be read as a case of the accommodated distribution though. Alternatively, in his view “everyone” (literally “all humans” in both Latin and Greek) can mean all the categories of individuals (*genera singulorum*) rather than all the individuals of these categories (*singula generum*).<sup>1650</sup> Simply speaking, the assertion of God’s will to save all is the justification of the preceding exhortation to pray for all, including kings and all in authority: it is very natural to read this exhortation as a demand to pray that does not exclude any category of persons (not even the leaders of the pagan world); in contrast, it would be hardly possible to pray for each human individual in particular. Thus, the meaning of “all humans” from the verse 4 could be very easily reduced to the meaning of the same expression in the verse 2.<sup>1651</sup>

## II. 1. 2. Causal locution

Causal locution means that the name of the effect is used to name the cause: this way, the “death”, meaning originally the end of life, can also mean the factor that ends the life. In his discussion of naming of God, Aquinas meets an opinion that all the positive predicates concerning God work this way, expressing only the fact that God is the cause of the respective

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<sup>1646</sup> “...cum de aliquo litterarum magistro, qui in civitate solus est, dicimus: Omnes iste hic litteras docet, non quia omnes discunt, sed quia nemo nisi ab illo discit, quicumque ibi litteras discit...” *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, 8, 14 (PL 44, 971).

<sup>1647</sup> Cf. AUGUSTIN, *Enchiridion*, cap. 103 (PL 40, 280) or *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, 8, 14 (PL 44, 971).

<sup>1648</sup> Cf. PETER LOMBARD, *Libri quatuor Sententiarum*, lib. I, d. 46, c. 2.

<sup>1649</sup> Cf. 1Tim 2, 1 – 8.

<sup>1650</sup> Cf. AUGUSTIN, *Enchiridion*, cap. 103 (PL 40, 280 – 281) or *De correptione et gratia*, 14, 44 (PL 44, 943). Augustin reminds “every garden herb” from L 11, 42; there is also “the root of all evils” in 1 Tim 6, 10, at least if it is not a hyperbole.

<sup>1651</sup> Despite him preferring another reading, Aquinas recognises the force of this interpretation: “*hoc magis facit ad intentionem apostoli.*” *Super I Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1. Later, Báñez finds himself obliged to admit the same: “*haec expositio est satis germana textui*” BÁÑEZ, *In Iam*, 19, 6, p. 422.

determinations in creatures.<sup>1652</sup> Saying that God is intelligent supposedly means that he is the cause of all the intelligence in the world – while taken in himself, God is no more intelligent than the sculptor is the sculpture. As we have seen, Aquinas rejects this opinion – more precisely, he rejects it as a general theory of the naming of God. He believes that God’s names can be based on a stronger analogy<sup>1653</sup> – but he does not deny that in some cases it is only the latter that is meant, “I am the Resurrection...” being the representative case.<sup>1654</sup> What would mean 1 Tim 2, 4, if this theory of naming were applied? It would mean that God is the cause of the human willing the salvation of all – which is precisely another possible meaning proposed by Augustin.<sup>1655</sup> While some of Aquinas’s followers were quite excited by this interpretation,<sup>1656</sup> Aquinas himself does not seem to share these feelings: his comment on 1 Tim is the only text where he briefly quotes it.<sup>1657</sup>

### II. 1. 3. Will of sign

The notion of “will of sign” (*voluntas signi*) is based on a special case of the causal locution: the names of the affective states use to be transferred to their effects – the wrath can mean both the emotional state of the person and her destructive actions motivated by these emotions. Moreover, the type of external activity that is connected with certain emotional state in the case of man can keep the name of this state, even if it is performed by an agent without such emotions or without any emotions at all: we speak about the rage of the storm, notwithstanding that the storm feels no more aggressive emotions than a stone. In Aquinas’s account, all the attributions of emotions to God need to be read this way except for two: love and joy.<sup>1658</sup> The more or less frequent attribution of wrath, hate, regret or sadness to God in the Bible is to be taken only as a description of the fact that God performs some exterior actions that are typical for individuals affected by these emotions. As for the love and joy, they can be predicated about God inasmuch as they can name voluntary states without any

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<sup>1652</sup> “*Alii vero dicunt quod haec nomina imposita sunt ad significandum habitudinem eius ad creata, ut, cum dicimus Deus est bonus, sit sensus, Deus est causa bonitatis in rebus. Et eadem ratio est in aliis.*” *STh.*, I, q. 13, a. 2, co.

<sup>1653</sup> “*praedicta nomina divinam substantiam significant, imperfecte tamen, sicut et creaturae imperfecte eam repraesentant. Cum igitur dicitur Deus est bonus, non est sensus, Deus est causa bonitatis, vel Deus non est malus, sed est sensus, id quod bonitatem dicimus in creaturis, praeexistit in Deo, et hoc quidem secundum modum altiore.*” *Ibid.*

<sup>1654</sup> Cf. *Super Io.*, cap. 11, l. 4 commenting on J 11, 25.

<sup>1655</sup> Cf. AUGUSTIN, *De civitate Dei*, XXII, 2 (PL 41, 752 – 753) or *De correptione et gratia*, 15, 47 (PL 44, 945).

<sup>1656</sup> According to Báñez, this interpretation is “*multo probabilior*”, “*elegantissima et valde litteralis*”, cf. BÁÑEZ, *In Iam*, 19, 6, p. 421ff.

<sup>1657</sup> *Super I Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1.

<sup>1658</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 3, a. 2, ad 2; q. 19, a. 11, co.; q. 20, a. 1, ad 2.

intrinsic imperfection. The same is true about the “will” itself (principally in the sense of the actual volition)<sup>1659</sup> – yet the possibility of a stronger analogy does not impede the possibility of the weaker one. Even in the case of man, “the will” can mean an exterior expression of volition, as is clearly in the case of the texts called “last will”. For reasons which might be connected with the Latin translation of *Ephesians* 1, 9,<sup>1660</sup> the will taken as the immanent state of God is called “the will of good pleasure” (*voluntas beneplaciti*), while the will taken as the exterior sign of the former is called simply “the will of sign”.<sup>1661</sup> This notion permits to explain some scriptural passages speaking about “the wills of God”<sup>1662</sup> – in fact, Aquinas distinguishes five types of the will of sign: prohibition, precept, counsel, operation and permission.<sup>1663</sup> But most importantly, it opens the space for holding together the irresistibility of God’s will (of good pleasure) and the possibility that some divine will is not fulfilled – inasmuch as the notion concerns only the inscriptions on the tables of the Decalogue, there is nothing surprising in successfully breaching Gods will. The *Summa of brother Alexander* uses it as its favourite means of elucidation of this problematic.<sup>1664</sup>

Nevertheless, the application of this notion on divine volition mentioned in 1 Tim 2, 4 is quite a complicated affair. Its connection with Augustin’s authority seems doubtful at best, despite the fact that some of its many users from 12<sup>th</sup> century made their best to show that it exists.<sup>1665</sup> Bonaventure was convinced that the text speaks without doubt about the immanent state of God, not about his exterior manifestation.<sup>1666</sup> In his comment on 1 Tim, Aquinas is less categorical, mentioning the application that is quite similar to the interpretation proposed by

<sup>1659</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 1; *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, a. 1; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 1.

<sup>1660</sup> “...he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his good pleasure that he set forth in him.” Ep 1, 9 – I have replaced “favor” of NAB by “good pleasure” (*eudokia*). *Super Eph.*, cap. 1, l. 3.

<sup>1661</sup> “*Quia vero voluntas in nobis habet quamdam animi passionem consequentem; ideo, sicut alia nomina passionum metaphorice dicuntur de Deo, ita et nomen voluntatis. Dicitur autem nomen irae de Deo, quia in eo invenitur effectus qui solet esse irati apud nos, scilicet punitio; unde ipsa punitio, qua punit, Dei ira nominatur. Et simili modo loquendi, illa quae solent esse signa voluntatis apud nos, Dei voluntates appellantur: et pro tanto dicitur voluntas signi, quia ipsum signum quod solet esse voluntatis, voluntas appellatur.*” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 3, co., cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, a. 4, co.; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 11 – 12.

<sup>1662</sup> Aquinas quotes Ps 111, 2 (“Great are the works of the LORD, to be treasured for all their delights.”), rendered by his Latin translation as “*magna opera domini, exquisita in omnes voluntates eius.*”

<sup>1663</sup> “*signa voluntatis dicuntur ea, quibus consuevimus demonstrare nos aliquid velle. Potest autem aliquis declarare se velle aliquid, vel per seipsum, vel per alium. Per seipsum quidem, inquantum facit aliquid, vel directe, vel indirecte et per accidens. Directe quidem, cum per se aliquid operatur, et quantum ad hoc, dicitur esse signum operatio. Indirecte autem, inquantum non impedit operationem...Et quantum ad hoc, dicitur signum permissio. Per alium autem declarat se aliquid velle, inquantum ordinat alium ad aliquid faciendum; vel necessaria inductione, quod fit praecipiendo quod quis vult, et prohibendo contrarium; vel aliqua persuasoria inductione, quod pertinet ad consilium.*” *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 12, co.

<sup>1664</sup> Cf. *Summa fratri Alexandri*, p. 1, inq. 1, t. 6, q. 5 (attributed by its title to Alexander of Hales).

<sup>1665</sup> Cf. (PSEUDO?)HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *Summa sententiarum*, tr. 1, c. 13 (PL 176, 65C) who (des)interprets Augustin’s *De correptione* 15, 47 this way. Augustin actually speaks about simple causal locution there, see the previous subsection.

<sup>1666</sup> Cf. BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO, *Commentary on Sentences*, lib. I, d. 46, a. 1, q. 1, co.

Abelard:<sup>1667</sup> “[God] wants to save everyone because he has offered the precepts, counsels and remedies of salvation to everyone.”<sup>1668</sup>

As in the case of the causal locution, this comment is the only place where Aquinas mentions this interpretation. You can guess why. If the “will of sign” meant what it usually means for him (the sign of the will of good pleasure), its application to the problematic verse would be useless: it would imply that God actually wants the salvation of all also by his will of good pleasure – which should be irresistible. If the notion is to solve anything at all, it must be taken in a weaker sense, the analogy being on the same level as in the case of divine wrath: God is said to want to save all humans only because he behaves as somebody who wants to save all humans (offering them the means of salvation) – even if such will to save is equally absent in him, as are the aggressive feelings absent in the “raging” storm. But here, it seems that the exact parallelism of both analogies is impossible to keep. The analogy of wrath profits from the fact that in (scholastic) God, there are no passions at all and consequently, there is no emotional state contrary to wrath. Moreover, there is something in God that has an analogical role as this passion, inasmuch as it moves God to an exterior destructive activity: his will to keep the justice. The analogy of wrath is therefore weak yet justified. In contrast, God *has* a will and according to the interpretation in question, this will happens to be in the state that is contrary to salvation of all. Speaking in such a situation about the willing to save everyone would be plainly deceiving and the same could be said about any exterior sign (and therefore about any “will of sign”) making the same impression. Thus, the defender of the existence of divine will of sign whose orientation does not correspond to divine will of good pleasure must face the objection of making God a deceiver – unless he shows the truth-maker of the sign in question.

## II. 2. *Voluntas antecedens*

All these four solutions have one thing in common: God’s will of good pleasure is in the state that is not directed to the salvation of all, full stop. Aquinas mentions these interpretations in his commentary on 1 Tim<sup>1669</sup> and first two of them also in the articles concerning the question whether the will of God is always fulfilled.<sup>1670</sup> He never says a word against them. But it is more than clear that he does not believe them adequate – at least not fully adequate. You can

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<sup>1667</sup> Cf. PETER ABELARD, *Introductio ad theologiam*, 1. 3, c. 4 (PL 178, 1093B – D).

<sup>1668</sup> “*vult salvare omnes, quia omnibus proposuit salutis praecepta, consilia et remedia*” *Super I Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1.

<sup>1669</sup> Cf. *Super I Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1.

<sup>1670</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1.

verify this by looking through the other mentions of 1 Tim 2, 4 in his corpus: I have identified about twenty of them and with one possible exception, none of them makes any amendment concerning the seeming universalist extension of God's salvific will.<sup>1671</sup> Except for (mature) Augustin and some of his followers, the situation is similar in the patristic tradition: the Fathers mostly believe that the limitation of salvation does not come from God's will, but from human free decision.<sup>1672</sup> Aquinas's own conception of things is obviously firmly based – on both these traditions.

Should this book speak about Aquinas's libertarian conception of providence, this would be the place where you would read about the salvific influence of one of the Eastern Fathers who redeemed Latin theology of will from the choking clasp of Augustin's determinism. Since you are still reading the nasty compatibilist, the things shall be more complicated. Yes, Aquinas's own interpretation of 1 Tim 2, 4 (the interpretation number five in his *Commentary*) works stably with the distinction elaborated by John of Damascus whose viewpoint is in many respects in about exact opposition to Augustin and, inasmuch as I understand him, really requires the existence of a libertarian freedom (at least some moderately libertarian freedom like the Molinist one) in humans. Yes, Aquinas states that the volition described in 1 Tim 2, 4 concerns God's will of good pleasure and that "all humans" means most likely all human individuals of all the time. But no, as we have seen above, Aquinas does not give up in the least the Augustin's idea that the respective numbers of saved ones and damned ones are determined by God, not by humans. Some scholars believed that by trying to hold both of these together, he put himself in contradiction with himself – maybe reflecting some irreducible tension between the two aspects of the mystery.<sup>1673</sup> As for me, I believe that Aquinas knew better.

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<sup>1671</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 159, n. 2; *STh.*, II-II, q. 83, a. 5, ad 2; III, q. 70, a. 2, ad 3; *Contra impugnantes*, pr.; *Super Mt.*, cap. 6, vs. 10; cap. 18, l. 2; cap. 20, l. 1; *Super Io.*, cap. 1, l. 5 (!!!); cap. 5, l. 6; cap. 6, l. 4; cap. 7, l. 5; cap. 12, l. 7; cap. 17, l. 2 and 6; cap. 19, l. 5; *Super Rom.*, cap. 10, l. 1; *Super Eph.*, cap. 3, l. 2; *Super I Thes.*, cap. 5, l. 1 – 2; *Super II Thes.*, cap. 2, l. 3; *Super Heb.*, cap. 12, l. 3. The only exception could be found in *Super Tit.*, cap. 2, l. 3: the passage in question could be read in the sense of Augustin's interpretation by *genera singulorum*.

<sup>1672</sup> Cf. for example IRENAEUS OF LYON, *Adversus haereses*, IV, 37, 1 (PG 7, 1099 – 1100); AMBROSE OF MILAN, *De interpellatione David*, III, 2, 4 (PL 14, 879 – 880); *De cain et abel*, 2, 3, 11 (PL 14, 364 – 365); *De poenitentia*, I, 7, 32 (PL 16, 476); AMBROSIASTER, *In epistulam beati Pauli ad Timotheum primam*, 2, 4 (PL 17, 491 – 493); PSEUDO-JEROME, *Commentary on The First letter to Timothy*, 2, 4 (PL 30, 919); JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilia de ferendis reprehensionibus*, n. 6. (PG 51, 144)...

<sup>1673</sup> Cf. my footnote 432.

## II. 2. 1. The position of John of Damascus

Note that the problem of 1 Tim 2, 4 is not solved only by the assertion that God is not in a perfect control over human decisions. Does it mean that God wants the salvation of those whom He (fore)knows to never accept it? An affirmative answer would need to face the objection that God knowingly wants something that will never happen, and this seems to contradict his wisdom. Some Fathers try to answer negatively, saying that God wants the salvation of all *provided that they do not turn away from it*, or something like that.<sup>1674</sup> This seems quite reasonable, the problem is that it is not what is written in 1 Tim 2, 4: the divine will for salvation has no conditions there. As a solution of this problem, the viewpoint of the tradition coming from John of Damascus is quite simple. “To want” (be it the biblical Greek “*thelein*” or Latin “*velle*”) can mean different things. Beside others, it can describe the state of will tending to something in the way that will make the willing subject proceed to the achievement of the wanted goal *under the condition that no important impediment occurs*. The conditional status is therefore included in the meaning of the verb, it does not need to be expressed otherwise. If I say that *I want* to go for a walk, most of us would understand that I am not implying that I will try to realise it no matter what: such things as bad weather or sudden plumbing accident are more than enough to make this state of will compatible with me staying at home. The New Testament itself provides examples where a similar meaning is obvious.<sup>1675</sup> Being aware of this, Damascene makes the distinction of what he names antecedent will (*prohégoumenon thelema*) and consequent will (*hetomenon thelema*). Warning, we arrived at the locus of the most frequent confusions.

First, despite its being famous thanks to its application on God’s will in Damascene’s *On orthodox faith*,<sup>1676</sup> the distinction can concern about any willing subject, as is clear from its application in the less known *Against Manicheans*.<sup>1677</sup> Second, the “will” does not mean the faculty but the activity – the volition. The antecedent will and the consequent will mean two different types of volitions proceeding from the same will. I insist on the plural of “volitions” – there is not one Antecedent will and one Consequent will. Third, for Damascene, the distinguishing feature of both types of volition is their origin: according to *Against Manicheans*, the antecedent will is what the subject wants because of herself, while the

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<sup>1674</sup> “...in omni locutione sensus et conditio latet ... Vult enim Deus omnes homines salvos fieri ... non enim sic vult ut nolentes salventur: sed vult eos salvari si et ipsi velint.” AMBROSIAS, *Commentary on The First letter to Timothy*, 2, 4 (PL 17, 492), cf. AMBROSE OF MILAN, *De interpellatione David*, III, 2, 4 (PL 14, 879 – 880).

<sup>1675</sup> “Although he wanted to kill him, he feared the people, for they regarded him as a prophet.” Mt 14, 5. “Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.” Mc 14, 36.

<sup>1676</sup> Cf. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 29.

<sup>1677</sup> Cf. JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra Manicheos*, 79.

consequent will is what she wants because of what happens. *On orthodox faith* specifies that “what happens” is something that the subject did not want to happen. Note that, contrary to what we shall see in Aquinas, the distinction does not seem to be concerned with the conditional or unconditional character of the volition nor with the immediacy of its relation to the pursuing of what is wanted. If I awake desiring to go for a walk in the local forest, this desire belongs to my antecedent will. If I realise this idea, all the acts elicited by my will still belong to my antecedent will. But if I realise that the local forest is engulfed by a blizzard and I am reasonable enough to decide to stay home, the decision belongs to my consequent will. It seems to me that if the factor impeding me from going for a walk was not bad weather but a sudden yet most welcome visit of my girlfriend, on Damascene’s terms this decision should belong to the antecedent will too – but this question does not seem to have any relevance for his theological use of the distinction. What is relevant is the following: my consequent will for staying home does not change the fact that my antecedent will was and, in some measure, still is to go for the walk.

Now, according to Damascene, 1 Tim 2, 4 speaks about God’s antecedent will. God is omnipotent, omniscient and all-ruling, but when he decided to create some reasonable beings (*ta logika*) in His own image, by the very fact he had to make them “self-potent” (*autexousia*) as He was himself.<sup>1678</sup> Given this fact, their activities can be determined only by themselves. Conclusion? “...the things that depend on us are not done by Providence but by our *autexousion*.”<sup>1679</sup> God has still control over the world because strictly speaking, the only things that depend on us are our decisions and not their accomplishments. The latter require either the cooperation (*synergia*) of God, or at least his abandonment or permission (*enkataleipsis* or *parachorésis*). As for the decisions themselves, God foreknows all of them from eternity and none of them happen without being at least permitted by him, as is the case of the sin that is possible because of the mutability of the creature.<sup>1680</sup> If God foreknows that the creature will turn herself away from him, his will gets three aspects: 1) his antecedent will that is his original project of her existence, everything that he wants for her either independently of sin, or on the supposition that there was no sin, including the creature’s own morally correct decisions; 2) his consequent will that concerns everything he wants for the creature considering her foreknown sin, including his eventual forgiveness or punishment; 3) the permission concerning the sin itself which is not wanted by God in any way.

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<sup>1678</sup> Cf. *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith.*, II, 27; III, 14; IV, 19.

<sup>1679</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 29 (my translation, reflecting the French version of *Sources Chrétiennes*).

<sup>1680</sup> Cf: *ibid.*, II, 27 and 30.



As much as I can say, Damascene’s account is clearly libertarian. Note however that it is not the libertarianism that actually solves the problem of 1Tim 2, 4 here: it is the possibility to conceive the coexistence of two contrary volitions, given the fact that they happen on two different levels of willing. The libertarianism provides Damascene with quite appealing and largely shared explanation of the reasons at the origin of this contrariety in the will of (indeterminist) God. But are they the only possible reasons? A brief familiarization with a thinker who discussed the problem in Paris a century before Aquinas shows that they are not.

## II. 2. 2. The position of Hugh of Saint Victor

As I have mentioned, any thinker who wants to profit from the notion of the will of sign to answer the question of the unaccomplished divine will needs to face the objection concerning the truth-maker of the sign in question. If God does not want my salvation, why does he give me salvific precepts etc.? In his *De sacramentis*, Hugh of Saint Victor answer by the distinction of wanting something (*velle*) and wanting that something is realised (*velle esse*).<sup>1681</sup> Latin *velle* (as well as Greek *thelein*) can mean simply “love” or “like”.<sup>1682</sup> God wants all the possible goods in the sense that he likes all of them, approves them and desires them. But that does not mean that he wants all of them to be realised. Such thing is even impossible, since some goods exclude others: e.g., God might enjoy both the idea of Jones spending all his life in a monastery as a pious monk and the idea of him living a simple life as a humble father of a family – but he cannot realise both. The whole of goods that he wants to be realised therefore does not include an (infinitely) great number of goods that he wants.<sup>1683</sup> In the quoted book, Hugh does not explicitly apply this conception on 1 Tim 2, 4 – the *Questions on the First letter to Timothy* that has been attributed to him do it though.<sup>1684</sup> Compared to Damascene’s antecedent will, Hugh’s *velle* seems to include even weaker volitive states. If I understand him right, *velle* does not really imply *velle esse* even in the absence of *velle esse* of some contrary good. In any case, the non-accomplishment of divine *volitum* does not need any incompatibilist explanation: if anything, its reason is not the

<sup>1681</sup> Cf. HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *De sacramentis*, l. 1, p. 4, c. 6 and 11 – 14 (PL 176, 236 and 238 – 240).

<sup>1682</sup> For the New Testament’s use of the verb in this sense, cf. Mt 27, 43 or Mc 12, 38.

<sup>1683</sup> “*vult Deus bonum... et vult omne bonum, et omne malum non vult. ... Et ideo voluit bonum... quia suum sui bonum et de suo, et amicum sibi et de suo, et dilexit suum et approbavit, et concupivit ad se et amavit in desiderio aeterno.*” HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *De sacramentis*, l. 1, p. 4, c. 13 (PL 176, 239/240) – speaking about good that God is not going to realise! “*Videtur enim hoc solum dici cum dicitur Deus vult malum, quia bonus malum diligit et approbat quod pravum est, et amicum sibi reputat iniquitatem, et gaudet quasi de consimili et bonum putat quod malum est*” *ibid.*, c. 12 (PL 176, 239) – against the formulation “*Deus vult malum*”.

<sup>1684</sup> “*Ideoque alii sic exponunt: Deus vult, etc., placeret ipsi, si omnes salvarentur...*” *Questiones in Epistulam primam ad Timotheum*, q. 13 (PL 175, 596D).

occurrence of something incompatible that God has not wanted, but the incompatibility of something whose occurrence God has wanted. In the following you will see that (some of) Aquinas's ideas concerning Damascene's distinction are actually remarkably close to Hugh's notions. I am not stating that Aquinas draws his conception directly from Hugh: while he quotes *De sacramentis* quite early in his career,<sup>1685</sup> as far as I know he never explicitly invokes it in this context. Yet, Hugh shows that the Parisian Augustinian environment was equipped with the means to provide a parallel solution of the problem in question in the terms that are similar to Damascene's position, yet without any concession to libertarianism. Whether Aquinas's own position is the result of the conflation of both approaches, or whether it is just the product of reading Damascene under the influence of similar theological notions as those that moved Hugh is of minor interest.

### II. 2. 3. Antecedent and consequent will in Aquinas

In the end of the 1250s, at the very beginning of his longest article consecrated to the distinction of the antecedent and the consequent will, Aquinas states that "the understanding of the distinction is to be assumed from the words of Damascene who has introduced this distinction."<sup>1686</sup> Some scholars have taken this explicit expression of allegiance to the Eastern Father as a kind of methodological imperative in their interpretation of Aquinas's position,<sup>1687</sup> apparently believing that a simple transposition of *On orthodox faith* in Aquinas's discourse would do the thing. I suspect that the assertions of the principial internal contradiction of Aquinas's position are one of the late consequences of this attitude.<sup>1688</sup> Obviously, Aquinas asserts himself to be in agreement with the patristic authority that he uses. Whether he understands its contribution to the problem in the same terms as modern patrology is another question. It is yet another question, whether he understands it in the same terms throughout all his career. As for me, it seems that Aquinas's use (if not understanding) of the distinction can be split into three distinct periods.

#### II. 2. 3. 1. *Sentences*

Aquinas follows the other great commentators of *Sentences* who, contrary to their author, do not believe that Augustin's theory of accommodated distribution is the smartest answer to the

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<sup>1685</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 1, s. c. 7.

<sup>1686</sup> "*distinctionis [voluntatis antecedentis et consequentis] intellectus ex verbis Damasceni est assumendus, qui hanc distinctionem introduxit.*" *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 2, co.

<sup>1687</sup> Cf. ARFEUIL (1964), p. 32.

<sup>1688</sup> Cf. my footnote 432.

problems of 1Tim 2, 4: just as Alexander of Hales,<sup>1689</sup> Bonaventure<sup>1690</sup> or Albert the Great,<sup>1691</sup> he bases his conception on the distinction of the antecedent and consequent will. Does it mean that he understands the terms in the same way as (the Latin translation of) Damascene whom he quotes? No. First, the “antecedent will” is not always delimited vis-à-vis the consequent will. The very first appearance of the term in Aquinas’s corpus is connected to the distinction of the antecedent will, concomitant (*concomitans*) will and accessory (*accedens*) will – otherwise said, it has nothing to do with Damascene’s distinction.<sup>1692</sup> I mention it because Michal Paluch has fallen for this.<sup>1693</sup> When it really comes to the introduction of Damascene’s distinction, the change of perspective is apparent from the very beginning: in Aquinas’s account, God’s “consequent will considers merits” or “deeds”<sup>1694</sup> – not sins as in Damascene. As he continues his exposition, Aquinas states that God’s antecedent will for some particular human individual considers nature of the latter, while the consequent will takes into consideration also “his others circumstances, e.g. him being willing ... or also resisting.”<sup>1695</sup> In Damascene, the distinction was based on the origin of volition (I want X because of myself vs. I want X because of something that I have not wanted). Here, the distinction is based on two different aspects of the individual concerned by the volition. In Damascene, the consequent will presupposes some opposition against the willing subject – presumably, if there were no sin at all, God would have no consequent will. In Aquinas’s *Sentences* this is not the case – even in a sinless universe, God’s final will for me would be his consequent will for me. The connection of God’s antecedent will with human nature makes a seductive impression that the former is either implied by the latter, or at least that it is the same for all the human individuals. But if you remember Aquinas’s use of the notion in the case of Isaac’s sacrifice,<sup>1696</sup> you know that this impression is wrong. Aquinas actually holds a general statement that God’s commands, prohibitions and counsels given to humans are signs of his

<sup>1689</sup> Cf. ALEXANDER OF HALES, *Commentary on Sentences*, lib. I, d. 46, 1 – 3.

<sup>1690</sup> BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO, *Commentary on Sentences*, lib. I, d. 46, a. 1, q. 1; d. 47, a. 1, q. 1.

<sup>1691</sup> ALBERT THE GREAT, *Commentary on Sentences*, lib. I, d. 46, C, a. 1.

<sup>1692</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 6, q. 1, a. 2 and later *De potentia*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2. *Antecedens*, *concomitans* and *accedens* name the relation of will to some other entity: the will is *accedens*, if it newly relates to some already existing subject’s action; it is *concomitans*, if it relates to an entity as to its object only (without there being any precedence), it is *antecedens*, if the will is a principle of the entity.

<sup>1693</sup> Cf. PALUCH (2004), p. 275, n. 1 and p. 284, n. 1.

<sup>1694</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 41, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 5 and ad 5. See the same shift in Bonaventure’s *Commentary*, lib. I, d. 46, a. 1, q. 1, co.

<sup>1695</sup> “*dicendum, secundum Damascenum, quod voluntas est duplex; scilicet antecedens, et consequens: et hoc contingit non ex aliqua diversitate voluntatis divinae, sed propter diversas condiciones ipsius voliti. Potest enim in unoquoque homine considerari natura ejus et aliae circumstantiae ipsius, ut quod est volens et praeparans se ad salutem suam, vel etiam repugnans et contrarie agens.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>1696</sup> “*quamvis Deus non vellet voluntate consequente, quod Abraham filium occideret, voluit tamen voluntate antecedente, quod voluntas Abrahae in hoc ferretur, secundum quod erat jam ordinatum*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, ad 1, see chap. 1. II. 1.

antecedent will, while God’s operations and allowing (*permissio*) are (in different ways) signs of his consequent will.<sup>1697</sup> When he says that the antecedent will considers the nature of the entity that it concerns, he does not say that it cannot consider *anything but this nature*. As he understands the term here, the antecedent will can consider the individual characteristics and circumstances too: “it is to be considered that something, if taken in itself, is beyond antecedent will, while after the subtraction of something it belongs to antecedent will.”<sup>1698</sup> What makes the antecedent will different from consequent will is that the consideration of circumstances is partial at most, as it does not consider *all* of them.<sup>1699</sup> The assertion of the very existence of antecedent will in God is justified by a more general statement that “every good is wanted by God”<sup>1700</sup>: “anything’s relation to being wanted by God is the same as its relation to being good.”<sup>1701</sup> You may recollect Hugh’s conception of *velle* (II. 2. 2.) and Aquinas’s own conception of simple volition (cf. chap. 4. II. 4. 1.). It is also worthy of noting that Aquinas does not apply his notion of antecedent will only in the case of God: humans have antecedent will too.<sup>1702</sup> It is in this context that Aquinas states for the first time that antecedent will is a “*velleitas*”—an act that you perform when you *would want* or *would wish* something, without wanting it unconditionally: even in human, its nonaccomplishment is compatible with beatitude.<sup>1703</sup>

Let me summarise. In Damascene, antecedent will seems to cover all the spectrum of volitions, beginning probably by a timid “would like” awakened by the first impression given

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<sup>1697</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 2, co.: “*Signa autem voluntatis quaedam respondent voluntati antecedenti, ut praeceptum, consilium et prohibitio, quibus omnibus ordinatur rationalis natura in salutem, quod est voluntatis antecedentis. ... Sed alia duo signa, scilicet permissio et operatio, respondent voluntati consequenti, sed diversimode: quia operatio pertinet ad ipsum effectum, de quo est voluntas consequens; ... Sed permissio pertinet ad causam, quae voluntati consequenti subjicitur, ut sit potens deficere et non deficere; cujus tamen effectus, scilicet deficere, non pertinet ad voluntatem consequentem neque antecedentem...*”

<sup>1698</sup> “*considerandum est, quod aliquid secundum se acceptum est praeter voluntatem antecedentem, quod aliqua conditione adveniente vel subtracta est de voluntate antecedente*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 4, co.

<sup>1699</sup> Cf. explicitly later in *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, co.: “*Consideratis autem omnibus circumstantiis personae, sic non invenitur de omnibus bonum esse quod salvetur... Et quia hoc modo se habet aliquid ad hoc quod sit volitum a Deo, sicut se habet ad hoc quod sit bonum; ideo istum hominem sub illis conditionibus consideratum, non vult Deus salvari, sed tantum istum qui est volens et consentiens; et hoc dicitur voluntas consequens, eo quod praesupponit praescientiam operum non tamquam causam voluntatis, sed quasi rationem voliti...*”

<sup>1700</sup> “*cum omne bonum sit volitum a Deo, hoc [i.e., the salvation of all humans] etiam Deus vult, et hoc vocatur voluntas antecedens, qua omnes homines salvos fieri vult*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, co.

<sup>1701</sup> “*hoc modo se habet aliquid ad hoc quod sit volitum a Deo, sicut se habet ad hoc quod sit bonum*” *ibid.*

<sup>1702</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 1, co.; qc. 2, ad 3; lib. 4, d. 14, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 3, ad 5.

<sup>1703</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 2, ad 3: “*voluntate consequente vult majus bonum alteri quam sibi, sibi autem intensius; sed voluntate antecedente vult sibi majus. Sed hoc non impedit quietem desiderii: quia haec voluntas non est voluntas simpliciter, sed conditionata, vel velleitas quaedam...*” (concerning the comparison of love for others and love for herself in Heaven). For other occurrences of this rare term in Aquinas, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2; lib. 3, d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, co.; a. 3, qc. 4, ad 1; d. 34, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 3, expos.; lib. 4, d. 14, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 6, ad 3; d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 3; d. 43, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 2; *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1; I-II, q. 13, a. 5, ad 1; III, q. 21, a. 4, co.; *De malo*, q. 16, a. 3, ad 9.

by an attractive object and ending by the decisive act that makes the realisation or pursuit of the wanted thing happen immediately. The consequent will seems to mean the same in the case of reactions to something unwanted. In contrast, in Aquinas's *Sentences*, the notion of antecedent will covers the spectrum of volitions awakened by more or less incomplete consideration of an (not necessarily attractive) object. The consequent will means the volition that is realised on the basis of the consideration of all the (subjectively relevant) things to consider, making the realisation or pursuit of the wanted thing happen immediately, be it the reaction on something unwanted or not. Thus, while in Damascene antecedent and consequent will can name equally strong acts of the will and antecedent will reveals more about its subject because it comes purely from it, in Aquinas's *Sentences* the antecedent will is essentially a weaker type of volition than the consequent will and the measure of spontaneity is irrelevant for the distinction. Applying the distinction to 1 Tim 2, 4, both authors agree that the text speaks about the antecedent will which means only some weaker type of divine volition here: but while for Damascene, it is an antecedent will which is limited to this weaker type of volition only because of being impeded, for Aquinas it is a weaker type of volition just because it is an antecedent will.

### II. 2. 3. 2. *De veritate*

Written during the last four years of the 1250s, *De veritate* contains a remarkable shift in Aquinas's way of speaking about Damascene's distinction. To put it simply, it corresponds much more with Damascene's own ways – maybe more than Damascene's ways themselves. Already in sixth *questio*, Aquinas mentions the Damascene's "because of us" (*ex nostra causa*) as a feature of God's consequent will<sup>1704</sup> – this move is without any precedent in his *Sentences*.<sup>1705</sup> He still reads it in the sense of his preceding texts though: his explanation of "because of us" as "inasmuch we have various relations to salvation that is to be merited..." concerns both sins and good deeds. The specialised article from the 23rd question that I have quoted at the beginning of this section seems nevertheless very faithful to its proclaimed program.<sup>1706</sup> Arg. 2 still speaks about the circumstances in the case of the consequent will and

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<sup>1704</sup> "voluntas consequens, ut dicit Damascenus, est ex nostra causa, scilicet in quantum nos diversimode nos habemus ad merendam salutem vel damnationem." *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2, arg. 2; "praedestinatio includit voluntatem consequentem, quae respicit aliquo modo id quod est ex parte nostra, non quidem sicut inclinans divinam voluntatem ad volendum, sed sicut id ad cuius productionem divina voluntas gratiam ordinat; vel etiam sicut id quod ad gratiam quodammodo disponit, et gloriam meretur." *Ibid.*, ad 2.

<sup>1705</sup> The closest text I was able to find is *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5: "istae conditiones ... sub quibus existentem Deus eum salvum esse non vult, sunt ex ipso homine."

<sup>1706</sup> Cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 2.

Aquinas's answer in ad 2 states that the motivation for antecedent will is the nature of the individual that it concerns.<sup>1707</sup> Also, alongside Damascene's authority, *Sed contras* argues by the fact that beside the will that is proper to God as Creator, there is a habitual will in him that is proper to God as God and the relation of those wills is that of anteriority (*antecedens*) and posteriority (*consequens*).<sup>1708</sup> But the corpus of the article is unequivocal in its basing the distinction on the difference of the relation of the volition to its subject. The consequent will is defined as God's reaction to the deficiency of the creature: it is said similar to the second intention of the nature "that, being unable to transmit the form of perfection because of the indisposition [of the matter], transmits to it [i.e., to the matter] what it is capable [to receive]."<sup>1709</sup> Taken in themselves, some of the following mentions of the distinction could even make impression that Damascene's defining of the divine consequent will by reaction to (foreknown) sin was radicalised by Aquinas: they give impression that Aquinas reduces consequent will to the will of something which was not part of God's first intention in any way, i.e., to the will of punishment.<sup>1710</sup>

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<sup>1707</sup> "ex parte volitorum non potest ordo in voluntate poni nisi dupliciter: aut respectu diversorum volitorum, aut respectu unius voliti. ... Si autem respectu unius voliti, hoc non potest esse nisi secundum diversas circumstantias in illo volito consideratas." Ibid., arg. 2. "aliquem hominem vult Deus salvari voluntate antecedente, ratione humanae naturae, quam ad salutem fecit; sed vult eum damnari voluntate consequente, propter peccata quae in eo inveniuntur. Quamvis autem res in quam fertur actus voluntatis, sit cum omnibus suis conditionibus, non tamen oportet quod quaelibet illarum conditionum quae inveniuntur in volito, sit ratio movens voluntatem; sicut vinum non movet appetitum bibentis ratione virtutis inebriandi quam habet, sed ratione dulcedinis; quamvis simul utrumque in uno inveniatur." Ibid., ad 2.

<sup>1708</sup> "Deo competit voluntas habitualis aeterna secundum quod Deus est, et voluntas actualis secundum quod creator est, volens res actu esse. Sed haec voluntas comparatur ad primam sicut consequens ad antecedens. Ergo in voluntate divina antecedens et consequens invenitur." *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 2, s. c. 2.

<sup>1709</sup> "patet in operatione naturae, quod ex parte virtutis formativae, quae est in semine, est quod animal perfectum producat: sed ex parte materiae recipientis, quae quandoque est indisposita, contingit quandoque quod non producat perfectum animal, sicut contingit in partibus monstruosis. Et sic dicimus de prima intentione naturae esse quod animal perfectum producat; sed quod producat animal imperfectum, est ex secunda intentione naturae: quae ex quo non potest materiae propter suam indispositionem tradere formam perfectionis, tradit ei id cuius est capax. Et similiter etiam est considerandum in operatione Dei qua operatur in creaturis. Quamvis enim ipse in sua operatione materiam non requirat, et res a principio creaverit nulla materia praeexistente, nunc tamen operatur in rebus quas primo creavit, eas administrans, praesupposita natura quam prius eis dedit; et quamvis etiam possit a creatura omne impedimentum auferre, quo perfectionis incapaces existunt; tamen secundum ordinem sapientiae suae disponit de rebus secundum earum conditionem, ut unicuique tribuat secundum suum modum. Illud ergo ad quod Deus creaturam ordinavit quantum est de se, dicitur esse volitum ab eo quasi prima intentione, sive voluntate antecedente. Sed quando creatura impeditur propter sui defectum ab hoc fine, nihilominus tamen Deus implet in ea id bonitatis cuius est capax; et hoc est quasi de secunda intentione eius, et dicitur voluntas consequens." Ibid., co.

<sup>1710</sup> "Deus miseretur secundum id quod ex eo est, punit autem secundum id quod ex nobis est, .... unde ex principali intentione miseretur, sed punit quasi praeter intentionem voluntatis antecedentis, secundum voluntatem consequentem. » *De veritate*, q. 28, a. 3, ad 15.

## II. 2. 3. 3. *Summa theologiae* and Aquinas's later biblical commentaries

Compared to the early period of his writing, the fifteen years following the completion of *De veritate* are surprising in two ways. Firstly, Aquinas's interest in the distinction seems to be abruptly decreased:<sup>1711</sup> beside its obligatory discussion in the *Commentary on 1 Tim*<sup>1712</sup> and its quite interesting development in the context of the question of the relation between marriage and celibacy in the *Commentary on 1 Cor*,<sup>1713</sup> I have found just two occurrences in *Prima pars*<sup>1714</sup> and one short mention of antecedent will in the *Commentary on Psalms*.<sup>1715</sup> Secondly, the remarkable shift of expression from the final part of *De veritate* is without posterity. The *Prima pars* returns to the understanding of the distinction, as we have seen it in *Sentences*, differing maybe just by using slightly more general terms: something can be considered either “absolutely” or “with something added” and while the first type of consideration is the basis for antecedent will, the second type (provided that “something added” includes “all the particular circumstances”) is the basis for consequent will.<sup>1716</sup> Antecedent will is not the will absolutely speaking but only a “*velleitas*”.<sup>1717</sup> The conception of both New testament commentaries is the same,<sup>1718</sup> the mention in the *Commentary on*

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<sup>1711</sup> Aquinas's *Sentences* mention at least one of the members of the distinction in lib. 1, d. 41, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 5 and ad 5; d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3 and ad 5; a. 4, ad 3; d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, co. and ad 3; a. 2, ad 1; a. 3, co.; lib. 3, d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 2; d. 31, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 1, co.; qc. 2, ad 3; d. 32, q. 1, a. 2, co. and ad 4; lib. 4, d. 14, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 3, ad 5: the distinction can be considered to be something like main topic of lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 1 and of the most of lib. 1, d. 47. *De veritate* mention it in q. 6, a. 1, ad s. c. 5; a. 2, arg. 2 and ad 2; q. 23, a. 2; a. 3, co.; q. 28, a. 3, ad 15, whole of q. 23, a. 2 being consecrated only to it.

<sup>1712</sup> Cf. *Super 1 Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1.

<sup>1713</sup> “*Est autem voluntas antecedens de eo, quod absolute consideratum est melius, ... voluntas autem consequens est de eo, quod est melius, consideratis circumstantiis personarum et negotiorum...*” *Super 1 Cor.*, cap. 7, l. 1, commenting 1Cor 7, 7: “Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am...” (Latin “*volo autem omnes esse sicut meipsum*” using stronger expression than English translation).

<sup>1714</sup> Cf. *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1; q. 23, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>1715</sup> Cf. *Super Psalmo 13*, n. 2. Both “*voluntate consequente rationem deliberatam, volebat mori*” in *Super Heb.*, cap. 5, l. 1 and “*...nolo mortem peccatoris, verum secundum se, sed tamen ex consequenti vult eam propter peccatum*” in *Super Io.*, cap. 17, l. 6 are evidently just the cases of homonymy, which makes the absence of mentioning Damascene's distinction in the context where its use would be very natural even more striking.

<sup>1716</sup> “*Aliquid autem potest esse in prima sui consideratione, secundum quod absolute consideratur, bonum vel malum, quod tamen, prout cum aliquo adiuncto consideratur, quae est consequens consideratio eius, e contrario se habet. Sicut hominem vivere est bonum, et hominem occidi est malum, secundum absolutam considerationem, sed si addatur circa aliquem hominem, quod sit homicida, vel vivens in periculum multitudinis, sic bonum est eum occidi, et malum est eum vivere. Unde potest dici quod iudex iustus antecederet vult omnem hominem vivere; sed consequenter vult homicidam suspendi. Similiter Deus antecederet vult omnem hominem salvari; sed consequenter vult quosdam damnari, secundum exigentiam suae iustitiae.*” *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1.

<sup>1717</sup> “*Neque tamen id quod antecederet volumus, simpliciter volumus, sed secundum quid. Quia voluntas comparatur ad res, secundum quod in seipsis sunt, in seipsis autem sunt in particulari, unde simpliciter volumus aliquid, secundum quod volumus illud consideratis omnibus circumstantiis particularibus, quod est consequenter velle. Unde potest dici quod iudex iustus simpliciter vult homicidam suspendi, sed secundum quid vellet eum vivere, scilicet inquantum est homo. Unde magis potest dici velleitas, quam absoluta voluntas.*” *ibid.*

<sup>1718</sup> “*Est autem voluntas antecedens de eo, quod absolute consideratum est melius, ... voluntas autem consequens est de eo, quod est melius, consideratis circumstantiis personarum et negotiorum...*” *Super 1 Cor.*, cap. 7, l. 1. “*voluntas potest dupliciter considerari, scilicet in universali vel absolute, et secundum aliquas circumstantias et in particulari. Et prius est absoluta consideratio et in universali, quam in particulari et comparata. Et ideo*

*Psalms* being too short to allow anything but the reading according to the meaning attested in the former texts.

#### II. 2. 4. *Velleitas*

So, Aquinas has deeply transformed Damascene's notions in his *Sentences*, then, he suddenly changed his mind in *De veritate*, only to return to his original position on all the rare occasions when he mentions these notions in his later texts? One thing is clear: any confident assertion that "the distinction of both wills is present ... in the same terms throughout the works"<sup>1719</sup> of Aquinas would need to be nuanced. Nevertheless, the hasty hermeneutics of disunity could prove to be too simplistic, too. It has been argued that during the redaction of *De veritate* q. 23, a. 2, Aquinas had *On orthodox faith* opened on his table<sup>1720</sup> – such fact could explain the important changes in his way of expression. Is it possible that despite these changes, he spoke about identical notions all the time? There are some important portions of unsaid in both groups of texts. In *De veritate*, nothing (if not one unopposed *Sed contra*) permits to say that the antecedent will is *by definition* a weaker type of volition as it is in *Sentences* – yet there is nothing that would explicitly state the contrary. In *Sentences*, it is not specified which, if any, type of circumstances defines the consequent will: yet, for some reason, in the case of human consequent will Aquinas never mentions any particular circumstance that would be actually under the control of the human in question in the moment of the volition;<sup>1721</sup> in the case of God's consequent will, he always mentions either the acts of human ability of free decision, or something in connection with its consequences.<sup>1722</sup> If you take into consideration the fact that (except for Jesus and, in a way, prelapsarian humans) even human good deeds are the acts of redeemed sinners for Aquinas (famously denying the

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*voluntas absoluta est quasi antecedens, et voluntas alicuius rei in particulari est quasi consequens.*" *Super I Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1. Note that in the latter text "*voluntas absoluta*" means the volition based on the consideration of something "*absolute*"; i.e., without the consideration of its particular context (I would like to go for a walk), while elsewhere (cf. *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 2, co. *in fine*), the same term is synonymous with "*velle simpliciter*" and means a volition in the strong sense of the term, corresponding with the decision actually made (I finally decided to stay home because of bad weather).

<sup>1719</sup> DAGUET (2003), p. 315 (my translation).

<sup>1720</sup> Cf. ANTONIOTTI (1965), p. 60 – 61, n. 3.

<sup>1721</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 1, co. (the damnation of certain individuals); qc. 2, ad 3 (having merited less than someone else); lib. 4, d. 14, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 3, ad 5 (having not sinned). The same can be said about later texts: *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1 (the existence of murders); *Super I Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1 (the storm) and *Super I Cor.*, cap. 7, l. 1 (the number of predestined to be accomplished).

<sup>1722</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 41, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 5 and ad 5; d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3 and ad 5; a. 4, ad 3; d. 47, q. 1, a. 1, co. and ad 3; a. 2, ad 1; a. 3, co.; lib. 3, d. 32, q. 1, a. 2, co. and ad 4, the same being the case in his later writings, cf. *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1; q. 23, a. 4, ad 3; *Super Psalmo 13*, n. 2; *Super I Cor.*, cap. 7, l. 1; *Super I Tim.*, cap. 2, l. 1.



immaculate conception of Mary),<sup>1723</sup> it might be possible to hold that even in *Sentences*, the consequent will is actually always the reaction to something unwanted. The only text where such interpretation seems to be impossible is the abovementioned passage from *Commentary on the First letter to Corinthians*: the reason of Paul's consequent will that some people are allowed to get married (compared with God's consequent will that some people are damned, sic!) is supposed to be the predestined individuals that are not engendered yet – Aquinas could hardly think that the Apostle was annoyed that the actual number of Christ's ultimately faithful disciples was yet to increase.

For an achievement of a better insight into this question, I believe that one seeming tension in the text of *De veritate* is revealing. Aquinas compares God's production of the actual state of the world to the generation of a handicapped offspring. The nature, inasmuch as it would be up to it, tends to produce healthy offspring, but if a defective state of the matter at its disposition does not permit this result, the nature does what is possible, more precisely, what the matter permits. Aquinas believes that a similar schema can be applied at God's working with the creatures, the antecedent will being parallel with nature's original tendency to the procreation of healthy offspring, while the consequent will to its secondary tendency resulting in the procreation of a monster.<sup>1724</sup> The thing is that he simultaneously states that God's creative activity does not presuppose any matter at all and that God is able to remove any impediment that makes the creature incapable of perfection – so much for the fidelity to Damascene's libertarianism here. The reason of the limitation of removing the impediment is seen in the nature of creatures – God, following the order of his wisdom, organises things according to their condition, giving any entity according to its *modus*.<sup>1725</sup> The very providing of this nature, inasmuch as it is oriented to the beatitude, is seen as the expression of the antecedent will for the salvation though.<sup>1726</sup> Thus, the nature has an ambiguous position – it is both the principle of the orientation to perfection and the reason why perfection is realised by God only in a limited way. But how is it possible given the fact that it is God who has given

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<sup>1723</sup> “*beata virgo in peccato originali fuit concepta*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, co., cf. *STh.*, III, q. 27, a. 2: “*si nunquam anima beatae virginis fuisset contagio originalis peccati inquinata, hoc derogaret dignitati Christi, secundum quam est universalis omnium salvator.*” (ad 2).

<sup>1724</sup> Cf. my footnote 1709.

<sup>1725</sup> “*Quamvis enim ipse in sua operatione materiam non requirat, et res a principio creaverit nulla materia praeexistente, nunc tamen operatur in rebus quas primo creavit, eas administrans, praesupposita natura quam prius eis dedit; et quamvis etiam possit a creatura omne impedimentum auferre, quo perfectionis incapaces existunt; tamen secundum ordinem sapientiae suae disponit de rebus secundum earum conditionem, ut unicuique tribuat secundum suum modum.*” *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 2, co.

<sup>1726</sup> “*Illud ergo ad quod Deus creaturam ordinavit quantum est de se, dicitur esse volitum ab eo quasi prima intentione, sive voluntate antecedente. ... Quia ergo Deus omnes homines propter beatitudinem fecit, dicitur voluntate antecedente omnium salutem velle...*” *ibid.*; “*sicut aliquem hominem vult Deus salvari voluntate antecedente, ratione humanae naturae, quam ad salutem fecit*” *ibid.*, ad 2.

the nature? And what does it mean that inasmuch as it would be up to him, he would want something different than that which is actually permitted by the nature that he has himself created without any dependence on anything else?

I hope that you can remember some crucial parts of the answer that were already described earlier in the book. Without any matter to depend on, God needs to face the resistance that is bigger than any indisposition of matter: the natural nothingness of the creature (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 11.). He can eliminate it in any possible way – yet whatever he does, there is always more (and different things) that could have been done and is not done (cf. chap. 4. III. 2.). This is the condition that is implied by what it means to be a created being. This is also something that does not belong to God’s will as something that would depend on him – or that he would desire. Yes, you have understood: if I get Aquinas’s position right, his God, as for him (*quantum est de se*), would want to realise a completely illimited Good – another God.<sup>1727</sup> If you are surprised, recall that God is the ultimate goal of every God’s activity. And if you want, make some reflexion concerning the Generation of Son and the Procession of Holy Spirit from the Father. Obviously, there is an infinite difference between Trinitarian relations and creation. It is absolutely impossible to create another God: I know it, Aquinas knows it and Aquinas’s God knows it better than anyone else. Yet, my assertion is not that God *wants* another God in the strongest sense of the verb: I state that he *would want* another God, if another God was possible. Both in *Sentences* and in *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas states that the antecedent will is a *velleitas*<sup>1728</sup> and from the viewpoint of the problem that we are discussing, this type of volition has three important characteristics in his works: *velleitas* does not need to be necessitated by its object,<sup>1729</sup> the non-accomplishment of *velleitas* is compatible with beatitude<sup>1730</sup> and *velleitas can concern something (knowingly) impossible without being contrary to the wisdom.*<sup>1731</sup>

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<sup>1727</sup> To my knowledge Aquinas never formulates it this way and my statement can be therefore taken for an extrapolation. But I believe that it provides a good understanding of what Aquinas actually says: in the process of natural generation that he uses as an example of what he is speaking about, the nature would like to make another individual(s) of same nature exist.

<sup>1728</sup> Cf. my footnote 1717.

<sup>1729</sup> “*dicendum quod manet voluntas non absoluta, sed conditionata, quae velleitas dicitur, ut scilicet peccaret, si impune liceret.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 34, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 3, expos. (concerning the state of the persons who avoid sin because of fear from punishment).

<sup>1730</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2 (the souls in limbo are in the state of natural beatitude despite their unaccomplished *velleitas* to be saved) and lib. 3, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 2, ad 3 (the souls in Heaven are in the state of supernatural beatitude despite their unaccomplished *velleitas* to have merited a higher level of this beatitude than they have merited), cf. also lib. 4, d. 43, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 2.

<sup>1731</sup> “*quamvis voluntas completa non possit esse alicujus sapientis de impossibili; tamen voluntas conditionata, quae et velleitas dicitur, esse potest de impossilibus; qua etiam sapiens aliquid vellet quod impossibile est, si possibile foret*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 3 (the morally and intellectually perfect souls in

A fundamental pure pre-creational divine conditional volition as described above would correspond well with what is described as antecedent will in unopposed *De veritate* 23, 2, s. c. 2 (see II. 2. 3. 2.). That being said, I do not state that all Aquinas's mentions of divine antecedent will mean only this volitive state – I do not think so. As said before, Aquinas's earlier statement justifying the existence of divine antecedent will by the fact that God has some kind of volition in relation to every good (see II. 2. 3. 1.) seems to work with a more modest analogy of simple volition – spontaneous reaction of will to perceived good.<sup>1732</sup> Moreover, it is clear that God's antecedent will reflected in at least some of his precepts (like the antecedent will concerning Abraham's decision to sacrifice Isaac or, say, ceremonial precepts concerning the purification of sinners) is a kind of a higher-grade volition, conditioned by God's free decisions concerning the actual situation of sinful mankind.<sup>1733</sup> But while Aquinas apparently speaks about different types of volitions at different occasions, all these types of volition can be put together to constitute a coherent whole – a working analogy of God conceived as a willing subject. The connection between the wish for unlimited good and the spontaneous willing of any good is natural at least (although it could be conceived in different ways). As for the volitions reflected in (also unbeyed) precepts and other divine stimuli orienting to perfection (like natural inclinations), this perfection-orienting aspect is an expression of the divine “*quantum est de se*”, as described above.

Now, I am not saying that Aquinas had all this as a whole explicitly in mind whenever he said “antecedent will”. The primary motivation behind the use of the notion is not to make an exhaustive anatomy of divine (or any) volition, it is just to make intelligible the unfulfilling of something that is willed by an omnipotent, omniscient and all ruling subject: depending on the context, the very formulation of the distinction between weaker and stronger types of

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Heaven have a *velleitas* to not have sinned), cf. also *ibid.*, d. 14, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 6, ad 3; d. 43, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 2; *STh.*, I-II, q. 13, a. 5, ad 1; *De malo*, q. 16, a. 3, ad 9.

<sup>1732</sup> Cf. p. 313, footnote 1229. Also in his later texts, Aquinas states that the very intelligibility of a particular good for God implies that God (in a way) wants it, at least inasmuch as he wants himself as an agent in whose power virtually all his possible effects pre-exist, cf. *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 78, n. 6 (“*Bonum intellectum, in quantum huiusmodi, est volitum. Sed Deus intelligit etiam particularia bona, ... Vult igitur etiam particularia bona.*”) and *STh.*, I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 2 (“*actus cognoscitivae virtutis est secundum quod cognitum est in cognoscente, actus autem virtutis appetitivae est ordinatus ad res, secundum quod in seipsis sunt. Quidquid autem potest habere rationem entis et veri, totum est virtualiter in Deo; sed non totum existit in rebus creatis. Et ideo Deus cognoscit omne verum, non tamen vult omne bonum, nisi in quantum vult se, in quo virtualiter omne bonum existit.*”) following immediately after Aquinas's exposition of antecedent will in the *Prima Pars*.

<sup>1733</sup> Given the fact that neither of these precepts is as such implied by natural law (and the former is its partial dispensation), it is clear that God knows others possible good ways of conduct than those he has actually commanded and inasmuch as they are good, he wants them. The fact that he has commanded these particular ways and not the others means that he wants them in a stronger sense than the others (in a way I could prefer to date a particular girl and not the others despite me liking other girls as well), although not (necessarily) in the sense of consequent will (I do not date anybody, since I decided to play videogames or visit the local church with my friends instead).

volitions may be everything you need here. Nevertheless, while the speculative peak of Aquinas's reflexion about this notion might have been achieved only in *De veritate*, the principle of this achievement is omnipresent in Aquinas's works: the ultimate reason of all doings of Infinite Good is the love for Infinite Good.<sup>1734</sup>

## II. 3. Antecedent will and some divine determinist's problems with sin

### II. 3. 1. God and the causation of sin

Aquinas's creative reception of the notion of antecedent will makes the capability of his determinist viewpoint to avoid some of the alleged unwanted implications of divine determinism explicit. Let me start with the dilemma that I mentioned before (I. 3. 3. *in fine*): is the sin something whose existence helps to the perfection of universe, and therefore the promotor of this perfection should be considered as its cause in the way the fire is the cause of the destruction of the wood, or is it rather something that is against that perfection, and therefore its permission is a mistake on the side of the Almighty? We have seen that during most of his career, Aquinas tends to answer that the permission of sin actually is necessary for the perfection of universe. Yet, his view on divine finality, explicated in his reworking of the notion of antecedent will in *De veritate*, permits to show the fundamental difference between fire and God: the destruction of wood necessarily follows the self-propagation of the fire, inasmuch as this self-propagation is perfect; the sin is supposed to necessarily follow the self-propagation of the Good, inasmuch as this self-propagation is necessarily limited given the possibilities of its recipient. In the end, what Aquinas shows here is that the explanation of the bad state by the indisposition of matter (cf. I. 3. 1.) can be *analogically* applied to the origin of moral sin after all. I am emphasizing "analogically": the logical possibilities of creatures *are not* matter and they cannot be considered as something completely independent from God (see Aquinas's conception of logical possibility in chap. 2. I. 2.).<sup>1735</sup> Yet, inasmuch as the limitations they include are something that belongs *per se* to the creature and is not caused by God (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 11.), the analogy with the limited exploitability of a piece of matter can be made and Aquinas makes it: recall his interpretation of the "creation from nothing" where "nothing" means the state of creatures "before" creation (cf. chap. 3. I. 2.).

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<sup>1734</sup> Cf. chap. 1. II. 6.

<sup>1735</sup> Surely not from Aquinas's God: in the case that the *possibilia* are considered a God-independent domain as in some Scotist views (cf. KNUUTTILA (1993), p. 140 – 149), the analogy would be stronger.

This view permits the resistance to a very suggestive argument proposed by Peter Furlong, turning against the determinist one of his favourite analogies of God's relation to creation, that of the writer and the novel.<sup>1736</sup> To simplify a bit, is it not counterintuitive to state that a novelist who caused all the positive states of his heroes, did not also cause their morally privative states? I believe that in many (maybe in most of the) cases, it would be very counterintuitive. The thing is that while moral privation of an actual person is in an important way antagonist to God's intention for the representation of illimited Good (although it is a necessary correlate of any such representation, at least if Aquinas is right), moral privation of a fictional character is not, as such, antagonist to the writer's intention to write a good novel, not even in the case that the writer was herself a morally perfect person. If the writer (be it for the sake of a good story or for the sake of finishing off a character she got tired with) leads her hero into the temptation to which the character succumbs, it would be difficult to show in which way she is not like the farmer killing his cattle to get what he wants. Yet, consider the case of a writer who is supposed to write a novel about a child living in a crime-riddled slum. Presumably, the child's story will contain features such as child abuse, sexual violence, alcoholism, drug-addiction etc., the features whose very description is disgusting for any normally disposed reader. In theory, the writer could eliminate all of it, describing a paradisaal (or at least decent) life in the slum. But if she does not do it (and provided that she has not sought to make her reader disgusted), I would hesitate whether to say that these features are in the novel *because* of her; I would tend to say that they were there because of the subject she was writing about, in the way that the fissures are in the statue made from fissured wood just because of this fissured wood.

Moreover, consider the negative features of fictional entities whose relation to the goal of the writer considered as writer is (or can be) actually approximatively the same as that of sin and God. The writer is trying to reproduce a both rich and intense experience that would take just one moment in the real life (say, a beautiful girl walking in the garden next to the gothic church one evening of May): after two single-spaced pages of text, the experience is still terribly under-described. Some part of this state can be due to his being a bad writer: but even if he was the best writer ever, there are still the limited possibilities of the written text to reproduce the real-life entities that he cannot overcome. It is true that he determines

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<sup>1736</sup> Cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 92 – 93. It is the first of the three arguments (cf. *ibid.*, p. 91 – 104) construed by the author to show that what he calls the Modest privation solution (*ibid.*, p. 88 – 91: the MPS is supposed to avoid the necessity to admit God's causation of sin) is not plausible. I agree that the MPS, as Furlong formulates it, does not correspond with our intuitions concerning the causation of bad states: most notably, it does not take into account the case of the antagonist agent, as Aquinas does (cf. I. 3.).

everything that the text contains; it can be even said that some level of underdescription is necessary for him to succeed in the description (half a page might be less exhaustive, yet more efficient than fifty pages – recall Aquinas’s views concerning the written law in chap. 1. II. 8. 8.): but provided that he does no mistakes, and he actually wishes to describe the experience (rather than to avoid the description), the assertion that he is the cause of its underdescription seems highly unplausible to me.

You might argue that the causation of the poor writer has nothing to do with what determines the conditions of the written text (or of the credible story about childhood in the slum), while the causation of the determinist God is supposed to determine, well, everything else. This might be true, but Aquinas’s position points to the fact that there is also an important sense in which the latter part of the assertion is false. The initial nothingness of the creature does not depend on God’s efficient causation – in this sense the claim that determinist “God is the cause of the initial creaturely state of affairs”<sup>1737</sup> is false. All this is not to deny that God’s non-causation of sin resembles the causation of sin in a way that no other non-causation of sin does. But given the scriptural description of God’s relation to human bad deeds (cf. chap. 1. III. 4 – 5. and chap. 6. I. 1.) and the general consideration of divine Goodness (cf. chap. 1. I. 3.), I think that it should not be an unwanted result at all. As I have already said, I do not even deny that there might be a plausible conception of causation whose notion of cause would actually include God’s relation to sin as described by Aquinas:<sup>1738</sup> as we have seen in the case of Aquinas’s discussion of God’s causation of physical evil (cf. chap. 1. III. 3.), the application of the term is less important than the conceptual content behind it.

### II. 3. 2. Union with God’s will in relation to past and future possible sins

More than the very question of divine causation of sin (and the related objections of divine blameworthiness etc.), it is the questioning of the personal and moral union with God that is to be the greatest problem for the divine determinist’s viewpoint according to Furlong’s view. In particular, it seems to him that it is difficult to conceive the contrition for past sins, since these were “willed as part of the divine plan ‘from the beginning.’”<sup>1739</sup> The determinist sinners seem to need to choose: either they “should not wish that they had not sinned”, willing that their past was precisely the same as it was (but then the notion of contrition is somewhat

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<sup>1737</sup> FURLONG (2019), p. 100. Furlong means the first instant of the universe here which means that what he says is true, yet his argument seems to be oblivious to the sense in which this initial state is not initial in every relevant sense of the term.

<sup>1738</sup> Maybe Furlong’s second objection against MPS (FURLONG (2019), p. 93 – 97) presents such a conception.

<sup>1739</sup> FURLONG (2019), p. 199.

weakened if not emptied), or they should will for it to be different (but then they want that God's consequent will not fulfilled, being hypocrite while praying "thy will be done"), or they want that not only their past but also God's will was different (which seems to mean a very presumptuous attitude in relation to their rights and competence to want to correct God's views).<sup>1740</sup>

I believe that this trilemma that, I agree, is not much of a choice, can be avoided by Aquinas's conception: you may have already noted his way of answering it in my quotations of texts where he speaks about antecedent willing that the blessed ones in heavens perform in relation to the past limitation of their merits.<sup>1741</sup> In Aquinas's view, the past cannot be changed (cf. chap. 2. I. 1. and chap. 5. I. 3.) and *in this sense* it is impossible that it is different than it is: if you know it (and you are a rational person), your volition for it to be different can be only on the level of a *velleitas* (you would like it, if it only was possible).<sup>1742</sup> Even if you resist Aquinas's (and Bruce Banner's) heavy authority and think that the past can be changed (which would likely mean that omnipotent God can change it), the relation between God's will and your wish for your past to be different differs in nothing from your wish for anything else to be different than it is: the past does not reveal anything about God's will concerning its possible "future" change of this same past; by willing this change, you are not in explicit conflict with God's will then, no more than by willing to change your present bad ways of conduct in some more or less indefinite future. That being said, even for those who would believe that the change of past is theoretically possible, I doubt that the wish that God miraculously change it would be considered as a constitutive element for an authentic contrition. If I am right (or if Aquinas is right about the immutability of the past), your repentant willing that your sinful past was not sinful is not the striving of your will to something that is to be achieved (be it by God's miracle), which means that it is actually a willing in a weaker sense, belonging to Aquinas's antecedent wills or *velleitates*. Note that this voluntary state is different from a possible *velleitas* to not sin while having sex with neighbour's wife: if you awakened, realising that your past sin was just a dream or a premonition (like Jesus in the end of *Last temptation* or Lomax in the end of *Devil's advocate* – provided that their authors have not meant these events to be the actual changes of past of their heroes), the latter *velleitas* is no impediment for making the same sin again in real life, while the former is. Now, inasmuch as *you would like* for your past to be "better" (or even

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<sup>1740</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 200 – 203: Furlong's presentation is much more nuanced, yet I believe I have captured the essence of the three possibilities he thinks to be the only existing, as well as their respective disadvantages.

<sup>1741</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 31, q. 2, a. 3, qc. 2, ad 3 and lib. 4, d. 14, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 3, ad 5.

<sup>1742</sup> Cf. my footnote 1731.

completely sinless), you neither *want* that God's actual consequent will was not fulfilled nor that God's will be different from what it is – at least no more than God himself wants both of it, since *he himself would like too that the past in question was sinless* (by his antecedent will). Also, there is no insult in thinking that God could have made your past (or anything else) better than he did – it is an acknowledgement of the limitlessness of his power: the blasphemy begins when you think that it was your right that he should have done so.

What about God's consequent will? Contrary to what Furlong states, Aquinas's repentant sinner can (more precisely must) conform his voluntary state to what he knows about God's consequent will too – but he must avoid doing it in a confused manner that characterises Furlong's description of the first horn of his trilemma. Damascene already (cf. II. 2. 1) unequivocally stated that moral badness *is not wanted* by God's consequent will and Aquinas is of the same view: unlike the realisation (*operatio*) of goods that is the sign of what God consequently wills, the allowing of the existence of moral evils is the sign of the consequent will only inasmuch as it shows what the latter does not exclude, not what the latter wills.<sup>1743</sup> Since in Aquinas's view, the “not-excluded” is implied by “willed”, it could be said that the past state of the world is consequently willed by God, “sins and all”, but only if the aforesaid distinction of the voluntary attitudes included in this “willed” is kept in mind. Aside from this, the imitation of this divine voluntary attitude by human must count with one important difference: for God, my past is something that he eternally chooses to realise, while for me it is something that I can do nothing with now and my possible voluntary attitudes towards it are hereby limited. To be specific, under typical circumstances, I cannot *strive* for having done the right choices in my past, whether I have done them or not:<sup>1744</sup> I can, at most, wholeheartedly approve or disapprove them or their lack. If I am imitating God's consequent will in relation to my past, it means then that I approve all its aspects that God wills and I do not approve yet accept all what God does not will yet accepts. Note that this acceptance is fundamentally different from the acceptance of moral badness that appears in the sinful attitude held against one's moral conscience: in the latter case I accept a negative state that is impossible with my present coherent love and striving for Illimited Good and I am doing it for the sake of some limited or even illusory good; in the former case I accept a negative state

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<sup>1743</sup> Cf. my footnote 1697.

<sup>1744</sup> Even a defender of the immutability of past might strive for a past event to have happened in the following way: he can pray that X have happened, if he does not know, whether it happened, or even when he knows that it happened, considering that the possible worlds without X, which is not the case of the possible worlds containing X alone. But I do not think that this interesting spiritual posture is to be considered a typical voluntary relation to the aspects of our past that we are glad about (cf. STUMP (2003), p. 505 – 506, n. 78).



that is compossible with my present coherent love and striving for Illimited Good (since the state is conceived as past and therefore not existing anymore) and I am doing it just for the sake of the love for Illimited Good. Contrary to the alternatives presented by Furlong, I cannot see in which way this kind of acceptation would contrast with what we would consider the contrition of a sinner who returned to “thy will be done” stance: the humility that is included in the acceptation of the fact that I was not (and I had no right to be) given the part of a blameless hero in the story of the world is surely more conform with it than the absence of this acceptation – just consider the shouting representation of such absence in *Jesus Christ Superstar*’s Judas committing suicide.

So, both God and the repentant sinner would wish that the sinner’s past was sinless, both approve all the good in his actual past and both disapprove yet accept (in the aforesaid sense) all the moral evil in it. I would say that the union of their willing is generically as perfect as possible (given the obvious immense difference between human and divine willing) without any counterintuitive consequences for the repentant sinner’s relation to his former sins. What about his decisions concerning his immediate future? Furlong discusses the following problem: the determinist follower of divine will could decide to act against God’s command, considering that if he decides so, it is God’s will that he decides so.<sup>1745</sup> To make this problem more acute, let us take the case of apostles informed by Jesus about their imminent treason<sup>1746</sup> – contrary to most of us, these guys could have a certitude in relation to God’s consequent will concerning one of their future sins. Does it mean that they should will their future traitorous decision? I believe that an important distinction is to be made in relation to the “future” here. If the decision is future in the sense that I am not about to do it now (but, say, later tonight), there is a sense in which it is not in my power now: my present decision does not have an irresistible power to prevent me from abandoning it one second later, if a new important motivating factor occurs. In this sense, an apostle who is sure about his future sins can adopt a similar voluntary attitude in relation to them *now* as is the one that he adopts in relation to his past sins: we have seen that this attitude does not imply the type of acceptation of moral evil that is typical for sinful act. Obviously, contrary to the past, the future states are something that can be strived for – but this attitude would deepen the imitation of God’s will only in relation to what God consequently wills, which is not the case of moral evil.

If the “future” decision means the decision that I am presently about to make (and is “future” inasmuch as it is not done yet), its consciously sinful character is conceptually impossible

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<sup>1745</sup> Cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 194 – 198.

<sup>1746</sup> J 16, 32.

with its being presently motivated by union with God's will – the sin is defined precisely by the abandoning of this finality. I can be sure then that God does not consequently will me to realise this logical impossibility. To be more specific, I can be sure that he will not allow it – it simply cannot be enabled, not even by him. If God told me that I am going to make a sinful decision in this sense of “going to make”, it would equal the revelation that my current motivation is actually not the union with his will but something different (even if I am deluding myself from this viewpoint), or, more likely, a cognitive stimulus meant for making me to change my ways.<sup>1747</sup>

Now, the fact that God's consequent will is always fulfilled has little impact for the implications that the connection of my nature and my individual context has for what it means for me to coherently strive for the union with God (see the sketch in chap. 1. II. 8.). Yes, it is true that if I am blaspheming him both directly and by abusing my neighbours, my state is still partially willed and partially allowed by God and nothing in it is contrary to his consequent will – but any cracked garbage bin can outcompete me from this viewpoint: this is simply not the level of union with God's will that the most fundamental inner tendency of human is up to. This does not mean that I “must sever the goal of human life from doing God's consequent will”:<sup>1748</sup> in the determinist universe any entity's goal is to do God's consequent will and any entity does it equally, if we look at it from the mere viewpoint of the perfect coherence with it. The equality disappears, when we consider the proportion between what God's consequent will actually wills and what it only allows; a morally good decision has decisively a better proportion of the former in relation to the latter. Also, absolutely speaking there is more consequently willed perfections in the morally perfect holy man or woman, than in a baby who is innocent just because it is unable of any morally accountable activity. From both these viewpoints, it is the goal of my life that God's *consequent willing* is realised in me in measure as high as I can achieve – God wants me to be a representation of Illimited Good. The way to make it is to follow God's antecedent will, more precisely the divine antecedent will that I know via his precepts, prohibitions and advices, be it his statements contained in the divine law, the general rules of natural law or the individualised orders of my prudence (provided that I have this virtue).

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<sup>1747</sup> Cf. Aquinas's notion of prophecy of commination, p. 320, esp. footnote 1262. Aquinas believes that if God revealed to an individual their own future damnation already during his earthly life (he considers this revelation contrary to God's wisdom), the individual could take it just as a warning, cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 48, q. 1, a. 4, ad 2: “nulli sua damnatio revelatur ... si tamen revelaretur, posset credere secundum comminationem et non secundum praescientiam dictum: tenetur tamen velle voluntate deliberata istum ordinem iustitiae, quo si in peccatis moritur, damnatur; quia hoc est quod Deus vult, et non damnationem per se, neque culpam.”

<sup>1748</sup> FURLONG (2019), p. 221.

Thus, the morally perfect individual does not need to choose, whether to follow God's command, or rather God's consequent will: she knows that she will follow both, inasmuch as she follows the former (and that without this, she would follow the latter only in a less perfect way from at least two viewpoints). If she has some kind of certitude that this harmony will not be kept in the future, she can still adopt the union with God's will without breaking her present union with God's command, humbly accepting her future sins in the way that was described above. It is only when she has already abandoned the will to unite herself with God's will that her present state implied by God's consequent will and the state that is commanded to her becomes incompatible: but this incompatibility would bother her, only if she got to seek the union again and if she did it, by that very fact the incompatibility would disappear. Aquinas's devil has an intellectual certitude that the state of divine consequent will will never be in coherence with him following God's law: but this certitude is based on the certitude that he will never abandon his present posture of rejection of God as he knows him.

### **III. Light and sacramentality**

“One may begin to suspect that even if divine determinists can avoid saying that God causes sins, and even if they can further maintain that God is morally blameless, their defenses of God amount to nothing more than appeals to technicalities, and that no such technicalities can help us make sense of a loving God who inflicts such evil on the world.”<sup>1749</sup> In the introduction to this book, I have stated that Aquinas's account is not supposed to be a defence of God at all, at least not in the way the modern theodicies are supposed to be: it is supposed to show the properties of God according to what he is manifesting about himself through both the whole of the universe and each particular aspect of it (and in particular of the sacred texts that Aquinas believes in), not to fend off the claims that the universe (or some sacred text) does not match some preestablished standard of values that God would be supposed to be adjusted to, if he existed. That being said, it is undeniable that a very important part of Aquinas's account takes a form of rebutting particular objections and there are many technicalities that are to be found there; my own presentation of it, trying to explain some of Aquinas's less intuitively understandable notions multiple-times and defending it against some alternative interpretation of what it speaks about, does not help to avoid an all too often decisive underside of this fact: all these trees can completely hide the forest. It is not just that, as I have mentioned before, Aquinas's God is not likely to become the God of the year. The

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<sup>1749</sup> FURLONG (2019), p. 160.

very ability of him to be the God, with whom any loving relationship can be established, might stay unclear at best. In this last subsection, I would like to provide a little remedy to this problem, trying to provide a sense of Aquinas's loving God in somewhat juicier way.<sup>1750</sup> As for me, I have never thought that the inability to sing and dance before the primordial *Causa sui* is as independent of one's individual limitations concerning singing and dancing as Heidegger probably believed<sup>1751</sup> – but I concede that there are some conceptual representations much more suitable to these activities. I think that Aquinas's analogy of light could be one of them.

Forget for a moment the discourse about wavelengths and electromagnetic fields. For Aquinas, the light is essentially something that makes something manifest. The term primordially concerns the sensible entity that allows the perception of colours via diaphanous media (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 5.): Aquinas sometimes distinguishes between *lux* (the light as the property of an originally shining object) and *lumen* (the light as received in the air or in another diaphanous – in itself not-shining – object), this terminological distinction is not however stable in him and I will disregard it in the following.<sup>1752</sup> The terms are secondarily applied to anything whose relation to the manifestation of anything is like the relation of physical light to the manifestation of colours, most notably in an intellectual/spiritual domain: in this sense, literally any manifestation of anything is realised by light. Young Aquinas considered the latter use of the term only metaphorical, yet he still thought that the light in the proper sense of the term (the “*physical*” one) is responsible for any sensorial perception at all (and therefore indirectly also for any human intellectual knowledge in the present state of

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<sup>1750</sup> My intention is concerned with the “loving relationship” as described in Aquinas's sacred texts and presupposed by the following spiritual theory and practice of the religious tradition he belongs to. It might be that this relationship is not the “true” personal relationship as defined by this or that contemporary thinker (or even not some thinker's “true” love): inasmuch as this does not question the compatibility with the aforesaid sources, it is not concerned by my intention here. E.g., I concede that the notion of the “model of parental love” as conceived by Furlong in his chapter introduced by above-quoted concern (cf. FURLONG (2019), p. 160 – 177) is of limited applicability to Aquinas's determinist God: but it is difficult to be applied to the Biblical divinity at the first place. Besides the fact that the primary analogue of a biblical fatherhood is not any western (post)modern conception of ideal father, but rather the fathers you would typically encounter throughout ancient Near East (consider the beating father of Heb 12, 5 – 11), and that depending on entities it is related to, the asserted parental relation clearly implies a very various content (compare Is 45, 9 – 11 with the relations implied in J 8, 41 – 47 or Rom 8, 14 – 30), Bible uses other expressions forbidding any unqualified transposition of any of them: for ex., biblical God is like a patriarchal husband of his former adoptive child (Ezk 16), a jealous lover of a hired woman (Hos 1 – 2), legislator and judge (Jac 4, 12) or king-owner of slaves (Mt 18, 23 – 35), owner of domestic animals (Ezk 34; L 15, 4 – 7) or of agricultural terrain and of plants growing on it (Mt 13, 24 – 30; L 13, 6 – 9; J 15, 1 – 2), a potter (cf. chap. 1. III. 5), a consuming fire (Is 33, 14) – and in the end, he is unlike anybody or anything else (cf. the footnote 66). I would strongly doubt model of parental love that could be as such applied to the relationship that the farmer has vis-à-vis the weeds he has ordered to be pulled out and burnt.

<sup>1751</sup> Cf. HEIDEGGER (1969), p. 72.

<sup>1752</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3, co. and *STh.*, I, q. 67.

human).<sup>1753</sup> The light is the most fundamental active quality of celestial bodies (in the way heat is supposed to be the fundamental quality of fire) and all the “marvelous influences” that Aquinas credits to them<sup>1754</sup> in relation to the sublunar sphere are supposed to be realised through it. That includes the ability of whichever medium to transmit whichever sensible quality to a sensory organ: in this sense, it is the light that permits smelling or hearing. As a transmitter of the *intentiones* of celestial bodies’ perfections it is also essential for all the other activities that according to Aquinas’s opinion require these *intentiones* (like the reproduction of perishable species or the harmonisation of antagonist elements in a functional whole, cf. chap. 3. III. 1. 4. 2 – 3. and III. 2. 4 – 5.);<sup>1755</sup> it is at the beginning of any terrestrial alteration. Simply said, it is through it that the first corporeal mover (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 7.) realises its moving of the terrestrial reality. Note that according to this conception, the illuminated object is in the analogical state as is sensible reality that became a sacrament – Aquinas uses the same model to explain the functionality of both (cf. chap. 3. III. 2. 4.).

More mature Aquinas considers the broader application of the terms “light” and “seeing” to the domain of manifestation in general as their standard, although not original, use: he is convinced that compared to their strictly optical application, it is rather this broader sense which can be commonly encountered. Saying this, he is principally concerned with the intellectual knowledge (e.g., “to consider something in the light of argumentation”, “to see what the notion implies”, “to see God”), yet he considers also the ways of speaking connecting the “seeing” (and therefore supposedly also the “light”?) with other sensory perceptions too (“Look how it smells!”).<sup>1756</sup> This conviction allows him to state that the reality called “light” according to the common way of speaking is realised in more proper way in the immaterial sphere of reality than in the corporeal world: be it the light of intellect and

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<sup>1753</sup> “*nulla actio est a corporibus superioribus in inferiora, nisi mediante luce, ... Et quia caelum est primum alterans, inde sequitur quod omnis alteratio quae est in inferioribus, perficiatur per virtutem luminis, sive sit alteratio secundum esse naturale, sive secundum sensum: et ex hoc habet lux quod omnibus corporibus generationem conferat, ... ex hoc etiam est quod coloribus esse spirituale confert, secundum quod esse recipiunt in medio et in organo; unde et ipsum lumen virtutem spiritualem habet; et inde est etiam quod ... lumen est medium in omni sensu, sed in visu primo et immediate..., sed aliorum sensuum mediantibus aliis qualitatibus.*” *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3, co.

<sup>1754</sup> Cf. LONERGAN (2000), p. 91 – 92.

<sup>1755</sup> As I have already mentioned, Aquinas is not consistent about whether the light itself is received in the diaphanous object in the way of *intentio*, cf. my footnote 988.

<sup>1756</sup> “*de aliquo nomine dupliciter convenit loqui, uno modo, secundum primam eius impositionem; alio modo, secundum usum nominis. Sicut patet in nomine visionis, quod primo impositum est ad significandum actum sensus visus; sed propter dignitatem et certitudinem huius sensus, extensum est hoc nomen, secundum usum loquentium, ad omnem cognitionem aliorum sensuum (dicimus enim, vide quomodo sapit, vel quomodo redolet, vel quomodo est calidum); et ulterius etiam ad cognitionem intellectus... Et similiter dicendum est de nomine lucis. Nam primo quidem est institutum ad significandum id quod facit manifestationem in sensu visus, postmodum autem extensum est ad significandum omne illud quod facit manifestationem secundum quamcumque cognitionem.*” *STh.*, I, q. 67, a. 1, co.; “*omnis enim redargutio manifestatio quaedam est; sed omnis manifestatio fit per lumen, vos autem estis lux; ergo decet vos arguere et eos manifestare.*” *Super Eph.*, cap. 5, l. 5.

its acts, the light created on the first day of creation (aka Angels or at least their divinised state)<sup>1757</sup> and obviously the eternal Light itself, all of them effortlessly outcompete the manifestative character of the physical light.

This conception allows to bind the notion of light with the notion of actual beingness too: given the fact that the difference between beingness and intelligibility is only conceptual,<sup>1758</sup> the measure of both corresponds and the same is therefore true about the intrinsic luminosity of their bearers.<sup>1759</sup> Aquinas believed that this is reflected also in the case of bodily reality: the shining of some bodies is due to their superior ontological perfection, the ability to receive light as the diaphanous objects do reveals its lower grade;<sup>1760</sup> even the colours of opaque bodies are a participation in the nature of light. But the parallel with what Aquinas believed about celestial bodies goes much further. As in them, the manifestative, intelligibility bound aspect of the light is connected with sharing of shining entity's own perfections to others: in fact, it is just different side of the same coin, given the connection between beingness and goodness conceived as attractive, therefore self-propagating and therefore self-giving (cf. chap. 1. II. 2. and chap. 6. II. 2.). The "marvelous influences" of stars are just shadows of the impact of the shining of the immaterial lights into the material world (including into the stars themselves) and the shining of the Light itself into the created reality as such (cf. cf. chap. 3. III. 1. 4. 2 – 3. and III. 2. 4 – 5). According to Aquinas, the object illuminated by a physical light was in a state analogical to the sacraments: here, the sacraments themselves are just a special case of universal instrumentality of any agent at all vis-à-vis the Light. Any active entity is in its way like the baptismal water applied in the name of Father and Son and Holy Ghost: it is the manifestation, the reflection of the Light ("the sign"), in the measure of its being a manifestation, it causes ("efficient") and contains an unmerited participation on the divine life ("the grace") which is beyond the limits of its proper autonomous causal

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<sup>1757</sup> Cf. for ex. *STh.*, I, q. 67, a. 4, co.

<sup>1758</sup> Cf. p. 174.

<sup>1759</sup> *Unumquodque autem cognoscitur per suam formam, et secundum quod est actu. Unde quantum habet de forma et actu, tantum habet de luce. Res ergo, quae sunt actus quidam, sed non purus, lucentia sunt, sed non lux. Sed divina essentia, quae est actus purus, est ipsa lux.*" *Super I Tim.*, cap. 6, l. 3 ; "per lumen corporale visibilia sensibilibiter cognoscuntur, unde illud per quod aliquid cognoscitur, per similitudinem lumen dici potest; probat autem philosophus in IX metaphysicae quod unumquodque cognoscitur per id quod est in actu; et ideo ipsa actualitas rei est quoddam lumen ipsius et, quia effectus habet quod sit in actu per suam causam, inde est quod illuminatur et cognoscitur per suam causam. Causa autem prima est actus purus, nihil habens potentialitatis adiunctum; et ideo ipsa est lumen purum a quo omnia alia illuminantur et cognoscibilia redduntur." *Super De causis*, l. 6.

<sup>1760</sup> "cum lux sit qualitas primi alterantis, quod est maxime perfectum et formale in corporibus, illa corpora quae sunt maxime formalia et mobilia sunt lucida actu; quae autem sunt propinqua his, sunt receptiva luminis sicut diaphana; quae autem sunt maxime materialia, neque habent lumen in sui natura, neque sunt luminis receptiva, sed sunt opaca." *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 2, l. 14, n. 24.

powers.<sup>1761</sup> Now, the connection of goodness and manifestness implies the property that Aquinas usually dismisses in his list of transcendent names, although he considers it coextensive with them: the Light is Beautiful and all its reflections reveal its beauty.<sup>1762</sup>

You might consider this analogy impersonal: yet consider that even according to our contemporary natural science, except for the instances of absolute blackness, pretty much everything that you have ever perceived with your sense of vision were just different variations of light. All the visages, all the meaningful facial expressions and other visible manifestations of personal character were the manifestation of the potentialities of what the *physical* light can be: if you put its rays out of the picture, you would see just absolute and absolutely impersonal darkness (or nothing, depending on your conceptualisation of it). Now, if you use Aquinas's notions, this implication of light in your experience with persons gets literally immense: all that you have ever heard, felt, smelled, tasted, all that you have ever known or could imagine as *the most personal aspect* of anybody – is just a minuscule glint of what light can be – and what the Light is. If the Light is not personal, then nothing (and nobody) is personal.

Now, choose all that can inspire you: the morning sunlight, starry sky, face of your beloved, exciting music, fragrance of flowers, nobility and truth of a moral principle... Make it into one powerful impulse that will make your capacities flourish, the wave of energy that makes you achieve the best things you have ever achieved – you have your image of the Light as a “natural mover” of your being (cf. chap. 3. III. 1. 3. 3 – 4.). Then, make it make you get over some of your innate limits – to make you fly like an eagle, run with cheetahs or finish your

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<sup>1761</sup> “The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, ..., by which divine life is dispensed to us.” *Catechism of Catholic Church*, n. 1131. “Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become ... partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.” *Ibid.*, n. 1996. “This vocation to eternal life ... depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, .... It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature.” *Ibid.*, n. 1998.

<sup>1762</sup> Cf. *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, l. 5: “...unumquodque dicitur pulchrum, secundum quod habet claritatem sui generis vel spiritualem vel corporalem et secundum quod est in debita proportione constitutum ... ex pulchro isto [divino] provenit esse omnibus existentibus: claritas enim est de consideratione pulchritudinis, ... omnis autem forma, per quam res habet esse, est participatio quaedam divinae claritatis; ... unde patet quod ex divina pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur ... agentis perfecti est ut agat per amorem eius quod habet et propter hoc subdit quod pulchrum, quod est Deus, est causa effectiva et motiva et continens, amore propriae pulchritudinis. Quia enim propriam pulchritudinem habet, vult eam multiplicare, sicut possibile est, scilicet per communicationem suae similitudinis... quia tot modis pulchrum est causa omnium, inde est quod bonum et pulchrum sunt idem, quia omnia desiderant pulchrum et bonum, sicut causam omnibus modis; et quia nihil est quod non participet pulchro et bono, cum unumquodque sit pulchrum et bonum secundum propriam formam; et ulterius, etiam, audacter hoc dicere poterimus quod non-existens, idest materia prima participat pulchro et bono, cum ens primum non-existens habeat quamdam similitudinem cum pulchro et bono divino: quoniam pulchrum et bonum laudatur in Deo per omnium ablationem; sed in materia prima, consideratur ablatio per defectum, in Deo autem per excessum... Quamvis autem pulchrum et bonum sint idem subiecto, quia tam claritas quam consonantia sub ratione boni continentur, tamen ratione differunt: nam pulchrum addit supra bonum, ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam illud esse huiusmodi.”

dissertation thesis in advance – and in addition to participate on the creation of something bigger than you, like the Glory or the Redemption of the Universe. You have your image what your “natural instrumentality” vis-à-vis the Light means (cf. chap. 3. III. 1. 4.). Consider that all that you and any other entity in the universe is, has and makes is an effect of the Self-giving that characterises the Light as Light, reflecting the Light by making you all luminous in this or that way. Add that the Light never fails, that everything was given to you by a choice that is both supremely unconditional, free and penetrating the deepest identity of the Light: you have what the divine determinism means. Consider that nothing that you have ever actually experienced as the property of your free decisions is lost in this picture.<sup>1763</sup> you have your compatibilist account.

What about the dark side, you may ask? Yes, it is the Light that you see in the most loving and most beloved face; yet the light is what manifests and is manifested by the mean, shameful, disgusting and terrible things, too. It can show you the face of your worst personal enemy or the faceless cruelty of impersonal factors. The blinding ability of the limitless Light is the same as that of limitless darkness, and worse – it can be painful and definitively mutilating. Saying that, consequently, the Light also shines through all the darkness, may have an ambiguous impact concerning the evaluation of the Light then. You can doubt about the measure in which your experiencing the light through personal and other beauty is truly representative of the Limitless Light, if compared with your experiencing it through its opposites – most notably if the opposite must be accounted in terms of the Light’s determinist influence and not its failure or waiver of control.

In Martin Luther, the predestinarian teaching actually led to the assertion of fundamental divergence between the luminous image of God proclaimed by the Gospel, and the reality of the hidden God:<sup>1764</sup> behind the bright message of salvation dwells more sombre (or more likely just more blinding), even if not less impressive and fascinating ruler of the universe whose transcendence includes the negation of one of the most loveable features of that Message – the unconditional will to share salvation to any human, whoever it is. The reality of damnation proves that the hidden God is ultimately More and Other than any of his created

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<sup>1763</sup> If a libertarian believes to *experience* the indetermination of her will in relation to divine causality, the fulfilling of this last suggestion is unattainable for him (as long as she keeps this belief). As for me, not only I have never had such an experience, but I can hardly conceive its possibility (cf. chap. 2. I. 2.), even on the supposition that the will is actually indeterminated – obviously except for the individuals gifted by some mystical phenomena.

<sup>1764</sup> Cf. LUTHER, MARTIN, *Bondage of the Will*, part III, sec. XXVIII quoted in the beginning of this chapter (p. 415).



and therefore deficient positive representations, be it the inspired verses of the New Testament.

Aquinas's more nuanced deterministic views allow to see the things substantially differently. It is the reality of damnation (and of sin in general) which is the deficient representation of God in the first place: it is the message about the will to save all the humans that shows more closely God *quantum est de se*, the naked divine appetite, the transcendent Light behind all the shadows that are created by its illuminating something that is not pure light. It is ultimately a loving face thirsting to give you more than you are actually receiving, which looks at you, speaks to you, touches you through anything that you encounter. A powerful, tremble-making and often troublemaking, even very dangerous face ("turn your eyes from me, for they torment me..."<sup>1765</sup>), a face that "comes forth like the dawn, as beautiful as the moon, as resplendent as the sun, as awe-inspiring as bannered troops"<sup>1766</sup> – yet still the loving face you desire to illuminate your own eyes and be reflected in them; and for this desire, and for this love, nothing, not even the Cross, is too much to make it happen. "The whole order of the universe exists for the first mover, namely to express in the ordained universe the content of the intellect and the will of the first mover."<sup>1767</sup> Voila, the first mover, his intellect and his will. You can understand Aquinas's attitude to the relation between God and unattractive features of this world now. As we have seen it in the beginning of this book, in Mandonnet's edition of Aquinas's discussion of Abraham's sacrifice (cf. chap. 1. II. 1 and 1. II. 8. 7.), God has no need to look for any further justification of his causing or permitting these features. He is himself their justification, they are justified because they serve him, that is because they manifest the unconditioned self-sharing Light which has chosen to share itself to them, despite their limitations and even badness. Each tunnel, be it the horror of the sacrifice of the only beloved son, has this Light on both its ends. For the good ones, this is good enough – because the Good is enough.

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<sup>1765</sup> Song 6, 5.

<sup>1766</sup> Song 6, 10.

<sup>1767</sup> "*Totus enim ordo universi est propter primum moventem, ut scilicet explicatur in universo ordinato id quod est in intellectu et voluntate primi moventis.*" *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 12, l. 12, n. 5.

## General summary

Aquinas's universe contains no trace of libertarian freedom, neither on the creaturely level nor on the level of the divine. Some of its fundamental principles exclude it, but what is more important, Aquinas has no need for it. His diversified modal discourse knows no contingency that would be incompatible with the necessity from *any* thinkable viewpoint: the object of the controversy between compatibilists and incompatibilists – the modality of the relation to the ultimate causal source of free choices – is far beyond the horizon that, in his view, defines the daily-life modal notions. His insistence on fidelity to this primordial understanding of the “necessary” and “possible” against its silent replacement by more requiring (and, according to his premisses, often ultimately impossible) notions is one of the key elements of his defence of the assertion of freedom of choice in the universe which is ruled by infallible divine consequent will – and which is filled by indefinite number of factors that an agent cannot successfully resist without an exterior causal support. The other element consists in distinguishing of a specific causal structure of voluntary activity, emphasizing its immanent positive features and showing that it performs a causality that is both richer and more strongly qualifying its subject than the causality of involuntary (or imperfectly voluntary) agents. For one thing, this reflection is rooted in his more general understanding of different types of freedom as different types of relative *causa-sui-ness*, for another in the distinction between the violent and non-violent motion, presupposing the natural openness of the agent to the stimuli of some another agent.

Aquinas knows no agent that can *ceteris paribus* both perform and not perform the same act: for him, causal contingency means always the possibility of failure of the (more or less inner) orientation of the agent under the influence of some impeding factor. The contingency *ad utrumque* defining the freedom of choice is limited to the natural relation of the will to (many of) its objects, it does not concern the concrete situation of the particular will under the particular causal influences (notably from the side of efficient movers). As any other agent, the voluntary agent can act differently only because she can be stimulated differently. Aquinas's reception of this Aristotelian/Avicennian/Averroist conception of causality, combined with the Christian metaphysic of creation, allows him a very strong assertion of the Pauline view of grace – “What do you possess that you have not received?”<sup>1768</sup> – without conceding all the undersides that were connected to it in the radicalised forms of Augustinian tradition, such as Luther's. The creature has nothing that she has not received from God: this

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<sup>1768</sup> 1 Cor 4, 7.

natural nothingness is precisely the ultimate source of its resistance against God's causation, the resistance which, in the case of voluntary agents, implies moral failure, if God allows it. Aquinas's analysis of deficient causality shows that, unlike the sinner's will, God's permission of sin does not meet the conditions that are typically required for an agent to be considered the cause of a defect; nevertheless, in his account, God's role is similar enough to such a cause to permit a very plausible reading of Scriptural statements that speak about God's involvement in morally bad voluntary states. The strong conception of individual predestination does not result in the reduction of universal salvific will of God to the propriety of his revealed manifestation, as in Luther's view. On the contrary, this will is situated on the level of the innermost tendency of God, limited in its expression in the created reality by the limited possibilities of the latter. Thus, the precise measure of God's sharing of his infinite goodness to creatures (including the successful reception of this goodness by creatures) is a matter of God's sovereign choice, but it is the natural nothingness of the created reality that is responsible for the impossibility of the limitlessness of this sharing: the thirsty crucified God and the sovereign Lord Potter are elegantly reconciled. The application of Aquinas's compatibilist conception of free choice permits effortless reconciliation of divine simplicity/necessity and freedom too, or, if you want, his independence vis-à-vis his chosen ones and the significance that these chosen ones have for the very divine being: God's free choice of them is not an accident or even an external denomination of God, it is identical with his very essence. Not only Jerusalem, but all the created reality is both immutably, necessarily and freely "engraved on the palms of God's hands".<sup>1769</sup>

Notwithstanding its limits, all the created reality, including its most disgusting elements, is meaningful inasmuch as it is the expression of this ultimate Reality, the relation to which is the ultimate basis for the very possibility of any meaningfulness. In the ultimate analysis, there is no place for any objective rivalry between the interests of any creature and God's doings: God's will and the deepest interest of any creature are strictly the same. While, subjectively, I can voluntarily do not endorse this view (which attitude, if fixed, constitutes the principal reason of my eventual damnation), my ultimate motivation for any volition that I could possibly perform is nonetheless the very thing that I have not accepted (which is the principal reason why the damnation is going to bother me). But even if I finish unable to see my existence as meaningful anymore, God and his lovers will not share this view, for no matter the measure of my badness, God is still able to work it out. Here, Aquinas's viewpoint is etymologically aristocratic – "relating to *the rule of the best*": The Best One, the Good,

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<sup>1769</sup> Cf. Is 49, 16.

rules his reflection and his perception of the reality. The pain, the immorality and any other evil bother him not because they are evil, but because they are bad; but in the aristocratic viewpoint, there is no badness whose repulsion could compete with the attractiveness of the Good.

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Even within the Leonina edition, Aquinas's name is not always rendered in the same way. For the sake of avoiding the interference of this fact, I have skipped author's name in the following list of the Latin editions of Aquinas's works that I have used during my work on this book. As for those translations of them that I have used too, they are listed in the next section together with the secondary literature and the other texts that were not written by Aquinas. In this second section, also for the clarity's sake, all the names of premodern authors are rendered in their traditional English version, independently of their form in the language of the edition that I have used. The websites used are listed in the third section.

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