

Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas

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In a previous paper I argued that creation was the key to understanding Aquinas's view of the relationship between eternity and time.¹ Such an approach has a strategic advantage insofar as it allows for a comprehensive account of divine omniscience: because God's creative causation is all-pervasive, so too is God's knowledge. Yet a causal-practical view of God's knowledge immediately raises the troubling specter of divine determinism: if God knows our actions by in some sense causing them, then how can we truly be free? For many it is axiomatic that a causal account of divine knowledge entails a denial of human freedom because it is usually assumed that human freedom requires causal independence from God; any kind of divine causation of human action is automatically coercive and determinative. Even in the eyes of those willing at least to entertain the possibility that some form of divine causation is compatible with human freedom (for example, contemporary Molinists like William L. Craig), Aquinas's view of divine causation simply goes too far in the direction of divine determinism;² this is especially so for those who identify the Bañezian *praemotio physica* with Aquinas's position.

In the face of these *prima facie* powerful and plausible criticisms, it probably comes as a bit of a surprise to a contemporary reader to find that

¹"Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1997): 197-224.

²See his account of Aquinas in *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 99-126. His concluding sentence is: "In maintaining that God's knowledge is the cause of everything God knows, Thomas transforms the universe into a nexus which, though freely chosen by God, is causally determined from above, thus eliminating human freedom."

Aquinas is quite confident that his position does not entail divine determinism. Aquinas squarely faces the problem in numerous contexts and always concludes that there is no incompatibility between divine causation and human freedom. When Aquinas's confidence on this point is contrasted with the corresponding confidence of his critics, it becomes clear that each side brings a quite different set of assumptions to bear upon its assessment of the issue. What this reveals is that ultimately it is the background understanding of the metaphysical relationship between God and the world that determines how the issue of divine determinism is resolved.

It is the aim of this paper to explain Aquinas's confidence about the compatibility of divine causation with human freedom by elucidating the background assumptions about God and God's relationship to the world that underlie Aquinas's position. Specifically, it will be argued that once again Aquinas's view of God as Creator is the key to his treatment. As Creator, God utterly and uniquely transcends the categorical order of mundane causes (for example, necessary and contingent) so as to be no threat to created causes but rather their enabling origin. The same God who transcends the created order is also intimately and immanently present within that order as upholding all causes in their causing, including the human will. The Creator God is not a rival in danger of overpowering human agency, but rather the one who generously creates us to be genuinely free in imitation of God's own freedom.

The first step in getting Aquinas's picture into focus is to set his account of God's causal relationship with the human will within the larger context of his understanding of God's causal activity in the being of all beings and the causing of all causes. It is vital to see Aquinas's treatment of God's causal influence on the human will as a corollary to his treatment of God's causal influence on *all* created causes. Aquinas's assertions about God's causal influence on the human will are not meant to account for some peculiar feature in human action and, most importantly, must not be construed as an attempt to account for something in the psychology of human action. It is rather that Aquinas's metaphysical understanding of God as Creator and unique *causa esse* requires that God be actively present in the causing of all causes, including human agents. Hence this paper will begin with an overview of Aquinas's general account of God's operation in all created causes as the necessary background to God's operation in the human will. What will emerge from this is a proper understanding of the relationship between God's primary causation and created secondary

causation such that the latter's dependence upon the former does not compromise its genuine efficacy. With this background in place, it can be shown how Aquinas understands the relationship between divine causation and the human will. It will then be possible to turn to the specific context of divine providence wherein the divine will is not a threat to human freedom but rather its originative and enabling ground. We are free *because* of God, not *despite* God.

It will be vital throughout to attend carefully to Aquinas's texts and terminology in order to distinguish his position from that of his subsequent interpreters. For as Freddoso has noted, "both Bañezianism and Molinism are probably best regarded as alternative attempts to compensate for what many Catholic thinkers, especially in the light of the Reformers' influential writings on these very matters, took to be a lacuna or at least a lack of explicitness in St. Thomas's work."³ It is not my intention here to rehearse the old debates between Bañezians and Molinists; although my sympathies lie with the former, I cannot endorse the traditional "Thomist" position for reasons which will become clear in the course of this paper. Rather than take up the post-Reformation scholastic challenge to fill in the gaps and so provide an exhaustive account of the mechanics of divine causation, I shall argue instead that Aquinas's refusal to say more than he does is not a weakness in his position but rather a strength. Like Wittgenstein, Aquinas knew that we must not presume to speak about what lies beyond our ken: "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen."⁴ To go any further than Aquinas does in trying to explain divine creative causation, as the Bañezians do, is inevitably to lose sight of its transcendence. And to do that is to betray the central premise of Aquinas's resolution of the apparent conflict between divine causation and human freedom.

I.

God the Creator of Causes: Aquinas works out his account of the relationship between divine causation and created causation in response to various theological and philosophical currents either denying or severely

³"Introduction" to Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge (Part IV of the Concordia)*, trans. Alfred Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 8.

⁴*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 7.

restricting the reality of any genuine causation apart from God.⁵ In contrast to any form of occasionalism, Aquinas does not believe that the universal scope and absolute primacy of divine causation require that God do all the causing, but rather only that God do all the creating. Aquinas safeguards God's causal primacy by reserving the production of *esse* to God alone as its proper cause.⁶ Apart from creation, it is not necessary that God do all the causing but rather only that God cause all the causing. Indeed Aquinas argues that a created world with genuine secondary causation does not derogate from God's power but rather displays it more fully than would a universe of impotent beings. God is not a niggardly sovereign jealously guarding the prerogatives of causal power, but rather a generous Creator who graciously bestows the gift of action along with the gift of being.⁷

When Aquinas turns to an explicit articulation of the ways in which God causes the causing of causes, it is readily apparent that the foundation is his view of God as Creator. Yet before moving on to the specifics of his position, it is first necessary to recall the way in which the very context of creation influences any attempt to conceive the relationship between divine

⁵Aquinas's main treatments of this question are in *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG) 3.67-70; *De potentia* (DP) 3,7; and *Summa Theologiae* (ST) 1.105.5. In DP 3,7, he criticizes the views of (1) the Muslim theologians (*Mutakallimum*) who denied genuine secondary causation by denying substantial natures and (2) Avicbron's denial that material substances have any active power. For an overview of Islamic occasionalism and Aquinas's reaction to it, see Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958). For a comparison with Maimonides, whose *Guide for the Perplexed* is the source for Aquinas's knowledge of Islamic occasionalism, see William Dunphy, "Maimonides, Aquinas and Theologism," ed. Paul Lockey, *Studies in Thomistic Philosophical Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 113-34. For an interesting philosophical analysis of occasionalism and medieval Aristotelian reactions to it, see Alfred Freddoso, "Medieval Aristotelianism and the Case against Secondary Causation in Nature," in *Divine and Human Action*, ed. Thomas Morris (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 74-118.

⁶ST 1.104.1 and the commentary by T.C. O'Brien: "Esse, The Proper Effect of God Alone," in *Summa Theologiae*, Volume 14, trans. O'Brien (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975), 169-75.

⁷"Si igitur [Deus] communicavit aliis similitudinem suam quantum ad esse, in quantum res in esse produxit, consequens est quod communicaverit eis similitudinem suam quantum ad agere, ut etiam res creatae habeant proprias actiones." SCG 3.69; I am citing the *Editio Leoninis manualis* (Rome, 1934). Aquinas's arguments for the appropriateness of God's creation of real secondary causes are presented most extensively in this text. See also the evaluation by Freddoso in "Medieval Aristotelianism," 99-111.

and human agency. For, as articulated by Robert Sokolowski, the Christian doctrine of creation entails that God is radically transcendent and distinct from creation in such a way that God and creatures cannot be thought of as coordinate parts of a larger whole or context.⁸ God is not part of a larger whole comprised of God plus the world, but rather transcends the created order whose existence is a gratuitous gift. The “Christian distinction” cashes out here to mean that God and creatures cannot be conceived as rival causes vying for primacy or dominance in the same metaphysical space (in the way that occasionalists seem to fear). Nor can God and creatures cooperate in the same metaphysical space as co-causes (in the way that Molinists like to imagine). It is rather that God the Creator must act in created causes in a way that utterly transcends any mundane model and therefore any hint of either rivalry or cooperation. This transcendence must be kept in mind during the analysis to follow, lest such causal categories as primary/ secondary or principal/instrumental be too literally construed and so end up distorting the unique relationship of the Creator to His creatures.

The two most important texts for Aquinas’s understanding of God’s causal immanence in all causing are DP 3,7 and *ST* 1.105.5; these roughly contemporaneous treatments articulate basically the same doctrine but with some variations of emphasis and order.⁹ The foundation of God’s causal involvement is in God’s creation and conservation of beings with their own dynamic natures and active powers.¹⁰ God, however, does not simply posit

⁸This is the dominant theme of Sokolowski’s *The God of Faith and Reason* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982). David B. Burrell, C.S.C., has done a fine job of showing the implications of this understanding of creation for the problem of human freedom in his *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). Burrell’s treatment of Aquinas is particularly important and parallels many of the themes of this paper. For a more explicitly theological approach, see Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

⁹The two texts are insightfully compared and contrasted by Cornelio Fabro in *Participation et causalité*, 397-409. In what follows it will be evident that I am indebted to Fabro’s analysis. Fabro argues that, while the *Summa* text is more magisterial and confident, the *De potentia* follows a more natural order of exposition. I will therefore follow that order, although I will add in the remarks from *ST* about God’s final causation as a supplement to the *De potentia*.

¹⁰“Sciendum namque est, quod actionis alicuius rei res alia potest dici causa multipliciter. Uno modo quia tribuit ei virtutem operandi; sicut dicitur in *IV Physic.* quod generans movet grave et leve, inquantum dat virtutem per quam consequitur talis motus: et hoc modo Deus agit omnes actiones naturae, quia dedit rebus naturalibus virtutes per quas

and preserve created natures as if they were then capable of independent causal activity, but rather God also causes their activities by moving and applying all beings to their actions as the *primum movens non motum*.¹¹ All such operations also have God as their final cause, since every operation aims at some good, and God is the ultimate source of all goodness.¹² Thus God operates in every created being, acting as the ultimate source of all final, agent (efficient), and formal causation.¹³

This final-agent-formal schema does not yet lay bare the deepest level and the ultimate explanatory principle of the relationship between divine causation and created causation: God as the cause of *esse*.¹⁴ The primacy of divine causation is expressed in the claim that God alone is the proper and immediate cause of *esse*, the intensive act that is the root perfection of being. Every element of every created being—its substance, accidents, and activities—is only because of the fundamental actuality of *esse*. God's radical ubiquity and interiority¹⁵ to all created being and acting is a function

agere possunt, non solum sicut generans virtutem tribuit gravi et levi, et eam ulterius non conservat, sed sicut continue tenens virtutem in esse, quia est causa virtutis collatae, non solum quantum ad fieri sicut generans, sed etiam quantum ad esse, ut sic possit dici Deus causa actionis in quantum causat et conservat virtutem naturalem in esse. Nam etiam alio modo conservans virtutem dicitur facere actionem, sicut dicitur quod medicinae conservantes visum, faciunt videre. Sed quia nulla res per se ipsam movet vel agit nisi sit movens non motum." DP 3,7; I am citing the text from *Quaestiones disputatae*, Vol. 2, ed. P. Bazzi et al. (Rome: Marietti, 1953).

¹¹"Tertio modo dicitur una res esse causa actionis alterius in quantum movet eam ad agendum; in quo non intelligitur collatio aut conservatio virtutis activae, sed applicatio virtutis ad actionem; sicut homo est causa incisionis cultelli ex hoc ipso quod applicat acumen cultelli ad incidendum movendo ipsum. Et quia natura inferior agens non agit nisi mota, eo quod huiusmodi corpora inferiora sunt alternantia alterata; caelum autem est alterans non alteratum, et tamen non est movens nisi motum, et hoc non cessat quousque perveniatur ad Deum: sequitur de necessitate quod Deus sit causa actionis cuiuslibet rei naturalis ut movens et applicans virtutem ad agendum." Ibid.

¹²"Cum enim omnis operatio sit propter aliquod bonum verum vel apparens; nihil autem est vel apparet bonum, nisi secundum quod participat aliquam similitudinem summi boni, quod est Deus; sequitur quod ipse Deus sit cuiuslibet operationis causa ut finis." *ST* 1.105.5; I am citing the Ottawa edition (1941-45).

¹³The advantage of *ST* 1.105.5 over DP 3,7 is that it articulates God's universal operation according to the order of final, efficient, and formal causation.

¹⁴In both DP 3,7 and *ST* 1.105.5, it is the causation of *esse* that crowns the discussion of God's causal immanence.

¹⁵Aquinas stresses the interiority and immanence of God as the cause of *esse*: "Et quia forma rei est intra rem, et tanto magis quanto consideretur ut prior et universalior; et ipse Deus est proprie causa ipsius esse universalis in rebus omnibus, quod inter omnia est magis

of the divine causation of *esse*. As Fabro notes, although Aquinas's original philosophical inspiration regarding the ubiquity and primacy of divine causation is rooted in the Neoplatonic doctrines of the *Liber de causis*,¹⁶ his own metaphysical understanding of *esse* enabled him to give a deeper and more penetrating account of the totality and intimacy of divine causation than had hitherto been possible.¹⁷ When conceived primarily in terms of the creative causation of *esse*, the divine motion is not an exterior manipulation of created agents determining them to act one way or another. For just as creation is not a change, so too the divine motion is not the effecting of a change in something with independent existence; divine efficient causation is only a *motio* in an analogous sense. The primary mode of divine causation is creative and constitutive, not controlling and compelling. God is not rival or auxiliary to created causes, but rather the One who makes all causes *be* causes. Aquinas himself explains the unique creative interiority of God's causation with the following:

The divine Word acts and operates in all things in a completely different way from all other agents. For other agents act extrinsically, because they can only act by in some way moving and altering things that exist independently of them; but God works in all things interiorly because God acts by creating. But to create is to give *esse* to a created thing. Therefore since *esse* is

intimum rebus; sequitur quod Deus in omnibus intime operetur." *ST* 1.105.5.

¹⁶The *Liber de causis* figures prominently in DP 3,7: "Ipsium 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 lib. *de Causis* [prop.9], 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. Sic ergo si consideremus supposita agentia, quodlibet agens particulare est immediatum ad suum effectum. 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 lib. *de Causis* [prop.1], quod virtus causae primae prius agit in causatum, et vehementius ingrediatur in ipsum." Aquinas's *In Librum de Causis expositio*, especially *lectio* 1, is necessary background reading. On Aquinas's use of the *Liber de Causis* to elucidate God's causing of causes, see Louise-Marie Antoniotti, O.P., "La prémotion divine: saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'auteur du *Liber de Causis*," in *Studi Tomistici*, v. 17 (Vatican, 1982), 60-70.

¹⁷See *Participation et causalité*, 408.

what is deepest in any thing, God, who works by giving *esse*, works in all things as an agent at the most intimate level.¹⁸

It is in the light of this sense of the transcendent creative causation of God that Aquinas's attempts to give a fuller account of the relationship between divine and created causation must be read. This is especially true when considering Aquinas's use of the category of instrumental causation to describe the relationship of created agents to God.¹⁹ There are a number of problems with the application of instrumental causation to the case of divine-created causation. The most important of these is that by definition an instrumental cause does not produce its effect by virtue of its own inherent causal power, but rather by virtue of the superior causal power of the principal cause to which it is subordinate; what is produced by the principal cause through the instrumental cause is beyond the natural causal capability of the latter. Thus the use of this term to categorize the activity of all created causes seems to run the risk of impugning their genuine causal capacity because an instrumental cause is not the proper cause of the effect produced. Moreover instrumental causes normally have their own proper activity that is independent of the principal cause and is precisely what is needed by the principal cause in order to accomplish the effect; the principal cause is thereby not the immediate cause of the effect, since the effect is achieved through the medium of the instrumental cause. All these

¹⁸"Sed tamen aliter est de Verbo agente et causante omnia, et aliter de aliis agentibus.

Nam alia agentia operantur ut extrinsecus existentia; cum enim non agant nisi movendo et alterando aliquo modo ea quae sunt extrinseca rei, ut extrinseca operantur. Deus vero operatur in omnibus ut interius agens, quia agit creando. Creare autem est dare esse rei creatae. Cum ergo esse sit intimum cuilibet rei, Deus, qui operando dat esse, operatur in rebus ut intimus agens." *Super Evangelium s. Ioannis lectura*, ed. Raphaelis Cai, O.P., c.1, l.5, n.133 (Rome: Marietti, 1953). All translations of Aquinas in this paper are my own.

¹⁹"Sed ulterius invenimus, secundum ordinem causarum, esse ordinem effectuum, quod necesse est propter similitudinem effectus ad causae. Nec per causa secunda potest in effectum causae primae per virtutem propriam, quamvis sit instrumentum causae primae respectu illius effectus. Instrumentum enim est causa quodammodo effectus principalis causae, non per formam vel virtutem propriam, sed in quantum participat aliquid de virtute principalis causae per modum eius, sicut dolabra non est causa rei artificiatæ per formam vel virtutem propriam, sed per virtutem artificis a quo movetur et eam quoquomodo participat. Unde quarto modo unum est causa actionis alterius, sicut principale agens est causa instrumenti; et hoc modo etiam oportet dicere, quod Deus est causa omnis actionis rei naturalis." DP 3,7. Notice the way in which Aquinas typically switches back and forth between the categories of primary-secondary causation and principal-instrumental causation.

elements must be denied in the case of divine principal causation and created instrumental causation: the causation of the instrument is totally dependent upon God; God does not absolutely need the instrument in order to accomplish the effect; and God is the immediate cause of the effect.²⁰

Aquinas is well aware of the limits of the category of instrumental causation and uses it as an analogous rather than univocal notion, especially when it comes to the case of the human will.²¹ Even with these qualifications in mind, however, the potential for misunderstanding is so great that the category of instrumental causation must be used with caution. It is evident from Aquinas's texts that he understands the category to apply primarily to the causation of *esse*. Although God is the immediate and proper cause of *esse*, Aquinas does allow that creatures participate in the causation of *esse* as instruments of God.²² It therefore would seem best to restrict the category of instrumental causation to the case of *esse*, where it is best suited, and find some different conceptual tool to express the other modalities of divine-created causation.²³

Fortunately there is a better schema for the relationship between divine agency and created agency ready-to-hand in Aquinas, one that he alternately uses throughout his career: God as primary cause and creatures

²⁰See the reservations on instrumental causation in De Finance in *Etre et agir* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1945), 227, and the discussion of the relative merits of the primary-secondary and principal-instrumental categorizations in André de Muralt, *L'enjeu de la philosophie médiévale* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 321-23.

²¹"Ad quintum dicendum quod 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, et tale instrumentum omnino est expers libertatis; alio modo dicitur instrumentum magis communiter quicquid est movens ab alio motum, sive sit in ipso principium sui motus sive non; et sic ab instrumento non oportet quod omnino excludatur ratio libertatis quia aliquid potest esse ab alio motum quod tamen se ipsum movet, et ita est de mente humana." *De veritate* (DV) 24,1 ad5; I am citing the Leonine edition, *Opera omnia*, Vol. 22 (Rome, 1970).

²²This is so in DP 3,7, where it is clear that the category of instrumentality is meant to apply to the causation of *esse*. It must be noted, however, that Aquinas categorically denies that God uses any instrumental cause in creation; see SCG II. 20-21; DP 3,4; and *ST* 1.45.5.

²³For a different view, see the defense of instrumental causation offered by Robert Moore in "Motion divine chez Saint-Thomas d'Aquin," *Studia Montis Regii* 1 (1958): 93-137. As will be noted shortly, Bañezians have an affinity for the category of instrumental causation.

as secondary causes.²⁴ One advantage of this kind of language is its abstractness, since it does not bring mundane examples to mind in the same way that instrumental language does (for example, the artist with his tools). We are less likely to think misleadingly that we are saying something informative or descriptive when we use the language of primary-secondary causation; it is meant to describe some metaphysical relationship.²⁵ The primary-secondary couplet helps make it clear that the causalities operate at different metaphysical levels.²⁶ A secondary cause is a real cause acting through its own intrinsic power to produce a commensurate effect, but only insofar as it acts in dependence upon the primary cause (*in virtute primi agentis*). A secondary cause is no less genuine a cause because of its dependence upon the primary cause, for the latter's causation is precisely what constitutes the former's causation; the primary cause is a cause of causing. It is not a case of partial or co-causes with each contributing a separate element to the effect. Aquinas insists that the differing metaphysical levels of primary and secondary causation require us to say that any created effect comes totally and immediately from God as the transcendent primary cause and totally and immediately from the creature as a secondary cause; it is impossible to separate what comes from God and what comes from the creature, either in the realm of nature or of grace.²⁷ A common error in this regard is the idea that God provides *esse* in a kind of *motio indifferens* which is then determined by the

²⁴This is the language used in *ST* 1.105.5: "Similiter considerandum est quod si sint multa agentia ordinata, semper secundum agens agit in virtute primi; nam primum agens movet secundum ad agendum. Et secundum hoc, omnia agunt in virtute ipsius Dei; et ita ipsa est causa omnium actionum agentium."

²⁵I have profited from the illuminating discussion of the advantages of the primary-secondary schema by David Burrell in *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions*, 97.

²⁶"Dicendum quod una actio non procedit a duobus agentibus unius ordinis, sed nihil prohibet quin una et eadem actio procedat a primo et secundo agente." *ST* 1.105.5 ad3.

²⁷SCG 3.70 explains how the same effect can be from God and a natural agent and concludes: "Patet etiam quod non sic idem effectus causae naturali et divinae virtuti attribuitur quasi partim a Deo, et partim a naturali agente fiat, sed totum ab utroque secundum aliam modum: sicut idem effectus totus attribuitur instrumento, et principali agenti etiam totus." The discussion of predestination in *ST* 1.23.5 reads: "Non est autem distinctum quod est ex libero arbitrio et ex praedestinatione; sicut nec est distinctum quod est ex causa secunda et causa prima; divina enim providentia producit effectus per operationes causarum secundarum, ut supra dictum est. Unde et id quod est per liberum arbitrium, est ex praedestinatione." See the remarks by de Murali on the idea of a total cause in *L'enjeu de la philosophie médiévale*, 334-37.

secondary cause to a particular modality by its own proper causation.²⁸ While it is true that Aquinas does ascribe to the secondary cause the origin of the particular formal determining features of the effect (*esse tale*),²⁹ it must always be remembered that the divine causation of *esse* is ultimately constitutive of every formal perfection in the secondary cause, its causing, and its effect.

The *crux interpretum* and key point for what follows lies in Aquinas's spare account of divine causation as moving and applying secondary causes to their actions in the line of efficient causation (*ut movens et applicans virtutem ad agendum*). Aquinas argues that all finite secondary causes are moved movers, and therefore dependent upon the *primum movens non motum*, because nothing moves from potency to act except under the influence of what is already in act. Every created agent, material or spiritual, requires the prior actuality of God as *primum movens* in order to actualize its potentiality to its own proper operations.³⁰ But beyond this basic metaphysical claim, so central to his arguments for the existence of God, Aquinas does not have much to say about the nature of this divine motion undergirding all created motion. Some of Aquinas's interpreters have attempted to fill in the gaps in this account by arguing that every exercise of secondary causation, every movement of a causal power from potency to act, requires a metaphysically prior (not temporally because of

²⁸See the critique of this Neo-Molinist thesis by De Finance in *Etre et agir*, 228-29.

²⁹"Secundum autem ordinem causarum est ordo effectuum. Primum autem in omnibus effectibus est esse: nam omnia alia sunt quaedam determinationes ipsius. Igitur esse est proprius effectus primi agentis, et omnia alia agunt ipsum in quantum agunt in virtute primi agentis. Secunda autem agentia, quae sunt quasi particulantes et determinantes actionem primi agentis, agunt sicut proprios effectus alias perfectiones, quae determinant esse." SCG 3.66. See the discussion of this text by Fabro in *Participation et causalité*, 502 and his general treatment of this question in 501-03.

³⁰"Sed omnis applicatio virtutis ad operationem est principaliter et primo a Deo. Applicantur enim virtutes operativae ad proprias operationes per aliquem motum vel corporis, vel animae. Primum autem principium utriusque motus est Deus. Est enim primum movens omnino immobile, ut supra [I,13] ostensum est. Similiter etiam omnis motus voluntatis quo applicantur aliquae virtutes ad operandum, reducit in Deum sicut in primum appetibile et in primum volentem. Omnis enim operatio debet attribui Deo sicut in primo et principali agenti" SCG 3.67. SCG 1.13 is necessary background reading because it is Aquinas's most extensive attempt to explain how all moved movers require the prior actuality of an unmoved mover. See also *ST* 1-2.109.1, where Aquinas makes a similar claim that "omnes motus tam corporales quam spirituales reducuntur in primum movens simpliciter, quod est Deus."

divine eternity) and determinate divine motion (a *praemotio*) that is communicated as a transitory active force (*ens viale, intentio, virtus*) that is passively received in the secondary agent as distinct from its causal power and its actual exercise of that power.³¹ This general reasoning is what leads to the postulation of a divine *praemotio physica* as necessary to explain the movement of the human will.³²

Quite apart from the troubling implications of *praemotio* for human freedom and its lack of textual warrant,³³ other interpreters of Aquinas argue that the doctrine is not only unnecessary but also at odds with Aquinas's basic attempt to uphold the reality of secondary causation. For if every exercise of secondary causation requires a specific divine push or pre-motion that is passively received by the created power, then the secondary cause is not really an active agent.³⁴ To view secondary causes as in constant need of a transitory *intentio* in order to exercise their

³¹The classic textual warrant for this position, which clearly fits in with the view that all created causation is instrumental in the strong sense, is DP 3,7ad7: "Ad septimum dicendum, quod 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 aëre, 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 primum causae; nisi daretur ei quod esset universale essendi principium: nec iterum virtuti naturali conferri potuit ut moveret se ipsam, nec ut conservet se in esse: unde sicut patet quod instrumento artificis conferri non oportuit quod operaretur absque motu artis; ita rei naturali conferri non potuit quod operaretur absque operatione divina." I do not believe that this lone text provides the warrant to assert that there is a need for a transitory *intentio* in order to account for every motion of every created power. It seems to me that what Aquinas really has in mind here is the causation of *esse* as the proper and incommunicable power of God alone. No creature can have a *virtus propria* to communicate *esse*, but rather acts as the instrument of God's own causation. With respect to those actions for which the creature does have a *virtus propria*, then there is no need for some transitory *intentio*.

³²A succinct presentation of the reasoning for *praemotio physica* can be found in the entry under "Premotion, Physical" by T.C. O'Brien in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 11, (Washington, D.C.: 1967), 741-43.

³³Everyone concedes that the terminology of *praemotio physica* is not found in Aquinas. The issue is whether or not the doctrine constitutes an articulation of what is implicit and indeed metaphysically necessary in Aquinas's position.

³⁴This point is made by De Finance in *Etre et agir*, 230, and Braine in *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 203-07.

causation is to deny that they are genuine causes in their own right. Rather than constantly pushing and moving secondary causes to their actions, God instead creates secondary causes as dynamic sources of action who nevertheless remain intimately dependent upon God as the ultimate causal source of their being and their action. This alternative account of Aquinas is not as metaphysically satisfying as the *praemotio* account because it leaves the mode of divine motion somewhat obscure. Yet, as argued earlier, this is paradoxically an advantage, since it is hard to see how the gaps can be filled in without compromising divine transcendence, the reality of secondary causation, and human freedom.

II.

*Divine Causation and the Will:*³⁵ Aquinas begins and concludes his general account of God's activity in all secondary causes by specifically including voluntary causes within the latter group,³⁶ and he logically applies the foregoing general account to the human will. First, God can be said to cause the acts of the will insofar as God creates and conserves in being the human person with his will. Secondly, the human will is created by God with a natural dynamism to the universal good (*bonum universale*) such that God alone can perfectly satisfy and move the will as its ultimate object and final cause. This natural inclination of the will to the universal good, that God alone can impart as the universal good, is the ultimate foundation of human freedom: because the dynamism of the human will

³⁵My focus on the relationship between divine causation and the will as the primary and classical locus for the problem of divine determinism ought not to be construed as slighting the role of the intellect in constituting human freedom. Although Aquinas ascribes to the will the ultimate determination of which alternative is pursued in the act of choice, his overall account of human action involves a complex interplay of reciprocal causality between intellect and will whose precise nature has long been the subject of dispute among his interpreters. See David Gallagher, "Free Choice and Free Judgment in Aquinas," *Archiv für geschichte der philosophie* 76 (1994): 247-77; Daniel Westburg, "Did Aquinas Change his Mind about the Will?" *The Thomist* 58 (1994): 41-60; Mark Jordan, "The Transcendentality of Goodness and the Human Will," in *Being and Goodness*, ed. Scott MacDonald (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 129-50. For an overview of the Neo-Scholastic debates on the matter, see John M. McDermott, S.J., "The Neo-Scholastic Analysis of Freedom," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1994): 149-65.

³⁶"Dicendum quod simpliciter concedendum est Deum operari in natura et voluntate operantibus.... sequetur quod ipse [Deus] in quolibet operante immediate operetur, non exclusa operatione voluntatis et naturae" DP 3,7.

for the infinite good cannot be satisfied this side of the beatific vision, we are therefore free with respect to every particular good and every particular choice.³⁷ As the source and summit of goodness, God is the implicit final cause of all will acts regarding particular goods and the only ultimate object capable of satisfying the will's capacities. Thirdly, and most importantly, God moves the will efficiently by inclining it interiorly.³⁸ How this can be so without violating human freedom is the key question.

Aquinas's basic argument for the will's need to be moved by God as an exterior efficient cause is really nothing other than an application to the created will of the general thesis that whatever is a moved mover must ultimately depend upon an unmoved mover in order to account for its transition from potency to act. Because the will begins actually to will something after not having previously willed something, thus moving from potency to act, the will requires an exterior efficient cause to account for its activity.³⁹ It is important to note the metaphysical character of Aquinas's treatment. He is not singling out the will as in special need of

³⁷See *De malo* (DM) 3,3; 6,1; and *ST* 1-2.10.2.

³⁸The text of *ST* 1.105.4 on how God moves a creature's will reads: "Dicendum quod sicut intellectus, ut dictum est [105,3], movetur ab obiecto, et ab eo qui dedit virtutem intelligendi; ita voluntas movetur ab obiecto, quod est bonum, et ab eo qui creat virtutem volendi. Potest autem voluntas moveri sicut ab obiecto, a quocumque bono; non autem sufficienter et efficaciter nisi a Deo. Non enim sufficienter aliquid potest movere aliquid mobile, nisi virtus activa moventis excedat, vel saltem adaequet virtutem passivam mobilis. Virtus autem passiva voluntatis se extendit ad bonum in universali; est enim eius obiectum bonum in universale, sicut et intellectus obiectum est ens universale. Quodlibet autem bonum creatum est quoddam particulare bonum; solus autem Deus est bonum universale. Unde ipse solus implet voluntatem, et sufficienter eam movet ut obiectum. Similiter autem et virtus volendi a solo Deo causatur. Velle autem nihil aliud est quam inclinatio quaedam in obiectum voluntatis, quod est bonum universale. Inclinare autem in bonum universale est primi moventis, cui proportionatur ultimus finis; sicut in rebus humanis dirigere ad bonum commune est eius qui praeest multitudini. Unde utroque modo proprium est Dei movere voluntatem; *sed maxime secundo modo, interius eam inclinando.*" The emphasis is mine.

³⁹"Dicendum quod secundum quod voluntas movetur ab obiecto, manifestum est quod moveri potest ab aliquo exteriori. Sed eo modo quo movetur quantum ad exercitum actus, adhuc necesse est ponere voluntatem ab aliquo principio exteriori moveri. Omne enim quod quandoque est agens in actu et quandoque in potentia, indiget moveri ab aliquo movente. Manifestum est autem quod voluntas incipit velle aliquid, cum hoc prius non vellet. Necesse est ergo quod ab aliquo moveatur ad volendum" *ST* 1-2. 9.4. Cf., DM 6,1 ad17. Aquinas is quite explicit that God's causation extends to all the operations of the will and not just to its power of willing; see SCG III.89.

divine motion, nor is he trying to account for a particular psychological datum. Rather, he is arguing that as a created potency to the *bonum universale*, the will can only move itself actually to will something (*ex parte exercitii actus*) in dependence upon God as First Mover. As a result of his reading of the part of Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* found in the *Liber de bona fortuna*, Aquinas's later accounts (SCG III.9 onwards) of God's influence on the will link the foregoing vertical argument with a horizontal argument that in order to avoid an infinite regress of deliberation and volition it is necessary to hold that a cause transcending intellect and will—God—gives the will its first motion as a kind of instinct or impulse to the good.⁴⁰

Although Aquinas describes God as an "exterior" moving cause of the will, he makes it clear that God alone is able to move the will because God is intimately present to the will as its creator and that it is precisely this creative interiority that explains why the divine motion is not coercive. In SCG III.88,⁴¹ Aquinas explains that only the very cause of an intellectual nature can incline the will from within as a moving cause. Any other kind of moving cause acting on the will would violate its nature and freedom because it would coerce it extrinsically. Only God, as the immediate creator and sustainer of the spiritual soul's existence and its power of willing, is able to move the will without doing it violence. God's motion

⁴⁰The reply in *ST* 1-2. 9.4 continues as follows: "Et quidem, sicut dictum est [9,3], ipsa [voluntas] movet seipsum, in quantum per hoc quod vult finem, reducit seipsum ad volendum ea quae sunt ad finem. Hoc autem non potest facere nisi consilio mediante; cum enim aliquis vult sanari, incipit cogitare quomodo hoc consequi possit, et per talem cogitationem pervenit ad hoc quod potest sanari per medicum, et hoc vult. Sed quia non semper sanitatem actu voluit, necesse est quod inciperet velle sanari ab aliquo movente. Et si quidem ipsa moveret seipsam ad volendum, oportuisset quod mediante consilio hoc ageret, ex aliqua voluntate praesupposita. Hoc autem non est procedere in infinitum. Unde necesse est ponere quod in primum motum voluntatis voluntas prodeat ex instinctu alicuius exterioris moventis, ut Aristoteles concludit in quodam capitulo *Eth. Eudem* [VII,14]." See Thomas Deman, "Le *Liber de bona fortuna* dans la théologie de s. Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 17 (1928): 38-58 for an overview. See also Cornelio Fabro, "Le *Liber de bona fortuna* de l'*Ethique à Eudème* d'Aristote et la dialectique de la Providence divine chez saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 88 (1988): 556-72 with respect to the problem at issue here.

⁴¹Fabro has a nice analysis of this text in *Participation et causalité*, 504-05.

is not an enemy to the will's freedom as a *causa cogens*, but rather constitutive of that freedom as the will's *causa essendi*.⁴²

Aquinas consistently asserts that the divine motion does not causally determine the will to any particular good and he studiously avoids the term *praedeterminatio* precisely because of its undesirable overtones of divine determinism.⁴³ It is rather that God moves the will so that it acts in accord with its own nature as a self-determining power:

It ought to be noted that, as Dionysius says, it does not pertain to providence to destroy the nature of things but rather to preserve them. Hence providence moves all things in accord with their natures in such a way that by the divine motion necessary effects follow from necessary causes and contingent effects follow from contingent causes. Accordingly, because the will is an active principle not determined to one thing but rather related non-determinately to many things, God so moves the will that it is not determined to one thing but rather its motion remains contingent

⁴²Amplius. Violentum, ut dicitur in III *Ethic.* [I,12,1110b], est cuius principium est extra nil conferente vim passo. Si igitur voluntas moveatur ab aliquo exteriori principio, erit violentus motus: dico autem moveri a principio extrinseco quod moveat 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. 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. . . . Illud autem 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, ut in Secundo ostensum est [c.87]. Solus igitur Deus potest movere voluntatem, per modum agentis, absque violentia." SCG 3.88. Cf., also DM 3,3.

⁴³See M.-J. Congar, "*Praedeterminare et praedeterminatio* chez S. Thomas," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 23 (1934): 363-71. He concludes his examination of all the texts where the terms appear: "Une chose apparaît avec évidence: l'expression 'prédetermination' n'est pas une catégorie du vocabulaire de saint Thomas. Il n'en aurait aimé ni le préfixe *prae*—car le mode de la science divine, comme celui de la causalité divine, est l'éternité, le présent de l'éternité—ni le mot *determinatio*, du moins en ce qui concerne les actes libres—car le mot est étranger à l'ordre de la liberté et relève bien plutôt du cycle des réalités de nature." (370)

and not necessary, except for those things to which it is moved by its own nature.⁴⁴

The nature of this non-determinative *motio* whereby God causes the will to be *causa sui* and self-determinative remains opaque. The metaphysical datum is that the potency of the will demands that it be moved by God as First Mover. Aquinas explains that this motion is interior, non-coercive, and non-determining (Aquinas equates determination with necessitation) because the Creator acts in what is created so as to preserve its nature. Rather like Aquinas's doctrine of God in general, his description of this divine motion follows the *via negativa*: it is not at all like any other motion and it is easier to say what it is not than to explain what it is. It is a *sui generis* kind of causation for which we have no obvious analogue.

The proponents of *praemotio physica*⁴⁵ try to fill in the gaps by drawing the rigorous metaphysical consequences of the normal workings of efficient causation. As coined in the heat of scholastic debate, the pleonastic term

⁴⁴“Dicendum quod, sicut Dionysius dicit, IV cap *De Div. Nom.* [§33]: *Ad providentiam divinam non pertinet naturam rerum corrumpere, sed servare.* Unde omnia movet secundum eorum conditionem; ita quod ex causis necessariis per motionem divinam consequuntur effectus ex necessitate, ex causis autem contingentibus sequuntur effectus contingenter. Quia igitur voluntas est activum principium non determinatum ad unum, sed indifferenter se habens ad multa, sic Deus ipsam movet, quod non ex necessitate ad unum determinat, sed remanet motus eius contingens et non necessarius, nisi ad his ad quae naturaliter movetur.” *ST* 1-2.10.4. There are numerous other texts where Aquinas makes it clear that God's causation does not determine the will's choice but that rather the will is self-determinative: for example, *DP* 3,7 ad13; *II Sent.* 39,1,1; *SCG* I.68, and *DV* 22,6 ad1. A controversial text along these lines is *ST* 1-2.9.6ad3: “Dicendum quod Deus movet voluntatem hominis, sicut universalis motor, ad universale obiectum voluntatis quod est bonum. Et sine hac universale 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 [109,2].” For an interesting interpretation of Aquinas and a discussion of this text, see Humbertus Degl'Innocenti, O.P., “De actione Dei in causas secundas liberis iuxta s. Thomam,” *Aquinas* 4 (1961): 28-56. Degl'Innocenti argues that the divine *praemotio* is to the *finis* only and that there is no specific *praemotio* with respect to what is chosen by the will as a means to the end.

⁴⁵An accessible, full-blown exposition and defense of the *praemotio physica* position is found in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, trans. Dom Bede Rose (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1953), 240-323.

is meant to signal the metaphysical priority and reality of God's causation in a real efficient fashion (as opposed to a mere moral or final causation); in this general sense it is unobjectionable and clearly in line with Aquinas's position. But insofar as the attendant causal apparatus purports to define in great detail the mechanism whereby God moves the will, and especially in its introduction of an intermediate and determinate created term (*intentio*) between the will and its own act, it compromises both the transcendence of God's causation and the self-determining power of the will. Divine transcendence is compromised because the causal mechanism brings God's motion within the categories of created realities by positing a real term (*intentio*) which does the moving. Human freedom seems compromised because it is hard to see how a divine causal predetermination that moves the will infallibly and efficaciously to perform a particular good act⁴⁶ leaves freedom intact, especially when Aquinas himself is adamant in denying that God's motion is causally predetermining in any way. There is not a single text in Aquinas where he asserts that there is any kind of divinely-caused, predetermining *intentio* in the human will. Aquinas's silence about exactly how it all works is not an oversight or a failure of nerve, but rather an acknowledgement of the limitations of human thought in the face of divine transcendence. Any attempt to say much more than Aquinas said compromises the transcendence of divine creative causation that is essential for divine causation and human freedom to be held together.

It is precisely in virtue of this sense of God's transcendent causation that Aquinas's notion of human freedom goes sharply against the modern grain, for it shows that he does not think that causal independence from God is a necessary condition for human freedom. Freedom does require causal independence from any other creature, but not from the Creator. To be *causa sui* does not require that one be *causa prima*, because God is not a rival agent threatening the integrity of human freedom, but rather the transcendent Creator who makes human beings to be and to act freely:

It should be said that freedom of choice is the cause of its own motion because a person moves himself into action by freedom of

⁴⁶The *praemotio* position runs into serious problems in trying to account for divine involvement with evil. For a taste of this, see Jacques Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1966).

choice. But it is not necessary for freedom that what is free be its own first cause, just as it is not required that whatever causes another be its first cause. Accordingly, God is the first cause moving both natural and voluntary causes. And just as in moving natural causes God does not destroy their natural abilities, so by moving voluntary causes God does not destroy their voluntary actions *but rather makes them to be such*. For God works in each thing in accord with its own nature.⁴⁷

III.

Divine Providence and Human Freedom: That God works in each thing according to its own nature is one of the major themes in Aquinas's treatment of divine providence. Aquinas argues that the temporal execution of God's eternal plan is accomplished through the mediation of genuine secondary causation.⁴⁸ God's providence does not ride roughshod over secondary causes, but rather works through them. This means that divine providence does not squeeze contingency out of the universe but rather provides for contingent causes as the means by which the divine plan is accomplished. God's providence pertains not just to outcomes, but also to the ordering of means; God decides what comes about and how it comes about.⁴⁹ God provides that some things come about necessarily through necessary causes and that some things come about contingently through contingent causes. Aquinas emphasizes that the divine will is the ultimate cause of why things happen in the way that they do. Rejecting the

⁴⁷"Dicendum quod 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. Deus igitur est prima causa movens et naturales causas et voluntarias. Et sicut naturalibus causis, movendo eas, non aufert quin actus earum sint naturales; ita movendo causas voluntarias, non aufert quin actiones earum sint voluntariae, *sed potius hoc in eis facit*; operatur enim in unoquoque secundum eius proprietatem." *ST* 1.83.1 ad3. Emphasis added.

⁴⁸"Quantum ad secundum [the execution of the eternal plan], sunt aliqua media divinae providentiae. Quia inferiora gubernantur per superiora, non propter defectum suae virtutis, sed propter abundantiam suae bonitatis, ut dignitatem causalitatis etiam creaturis communicet." *ST* 1.22.3.

⁴⁹"Efficacia autem divinae voluntatis exigit ut non solum sit quod Deus vult esse, sed etiam ut hoc modo sit quod Deus vult illud esse." *SCG* 1.85.

suggestion that the root of necessity and contingency lies in secondary causation, Aquinas explains:

How necessary and contingent things occur is better explained by the efficacy of the divine will. For when an efficacious cause is put to work, the effect follows not only as to the fact that it happens, but also as to the mode of its happening and being.... Since the divine will is the most efficacious cause, it follows not just that those things come about that God wants to come about, but also that they come about in the manner that God wills. God wills that some things come about necessarily and some others contingently, so that the order of things might fill out the universe. Accordingly God provides that some things come about by necessary causes that cannot fail, from which effects result necessarily, while for other things God provides defectible contingent causes, from which effects result contingently. Hence what is willed by God to happen contingently is not contingent on the basis of the proximate cause, but because God has willed that it happen contingently and so has provided contingent causes to accomplish this.⁵⁰

⁵⁰“Et ideo melius dicendum est quod hoc contingit [the distinction of necessary and contingent causes] propter efficaciam divinae voluntatis. Cum enim aliqua causa efficax fuerit ad agendum, effectus consequitur causam non tantum secundum id quod fit, sed etiam secundum modum fieri vel essendi; ex debilitate virtutis activae in semine contingit quod filius nascitur dissimilis patri in accidentibus, quae pertinent ad modum essendi. Cum igitur voluntas divina sit efficacissima, non solum sequitur quod fiant ea quae Deus vult fieri; sed quod eo modo fiant, quo Deus ea fieri vult. Vult autem quaedam fieri Deus necessario, quaedam contingenter, ut sit ordo in rebus, ad complementum universi. Et ideo quibusdam effectibus aptavit causas necessarias, quae deficere non possunt, ex quibus effectus de necessitate proveniunt; quibusdam autem aptavit causas contingentes defectibiles, ex quibus effectus contingenter eveniunt. Non igitur propterea effectus voliti a Deo eveniunt contingenter, quia causae proximae sunt contingentes; sed propterea quia Deus voluit eos contingenter evenire, contingentes causas ad eos praeparavit.” *ST* 1.19.8. On God as the ultimate origin of necessity and contingency, see also *In Metaphysicorum* VI, 1.3. Following his mentor Bernard Lonergan, Bernard McGinn has argued that there is a development in Aquinas on the question of whether or not God is the ultimate causal source for contingency and necessity in things. McGinn claims that there are some early texts which indicate that divine providence does not involve a causal certainty but rather only a cognitive certainty; God knows what will happen because of divine eternity but does not determine the entire causal order by which things come about contingently because of the defectibility of secondary causes. He argues that it takes some time for Thomas to adopt the position on the

Aquinas acknowledges that it is hard for us to conceive how the causation of the divine will can be non-coercive. He argues that this is due to our failure to recognize the utterly transcendent character of the divine will. God's will is not the coercive will of a tyrant jealous of his power, but rather of the Creator who transcends the order of necessary and contingent causes that bring about the divine purposes. In Aquinas's last and most penetrating major treatment of the problem of divine foreknowledge and future contingents, *Expositio libri Peryermenias* I,14, he explains that the apparent conflict is due to an anthropomorphic conception of God's knowledge and will. With respect to the divine will he says:

Similar differences are to be noted with respect to the divine will. For the divine will is to be understood as existing outside the order of existing beings, as the cause producing every being and all their differences. The distinction in being between what is necessary and what is possible, rooted in the nature of the proximate cause, originates from the divine will. For the effects God wills to be necessary God provides necessary causes, while for the effects that God wills to be contingent, God provides contingent agents who can fail. It is according to the condition of these causes that effects are said to be necessary or contingent, but they all depend upon the divine will as the first cause that transcends the order of necessity and contingency. This cannot be said of any human will or any other cause, because every other cause falls under the categories of necessity or contingency and hence it must be that either the cause itself can fail or that its effect not be contingent but necessary.

transcendence of the divine will articulated in *ST* 1.19.8. See his "The Development of the Thought of Thomas Aquinas on the Reconciliation of Divine Providence and Contingent Action," *The Thomist* 39 (1975): 741-52. For a different reading of the earlier texts, see P. Meinrad Benz "Das göttliche Vorherwissen des freien Willensakte der Geschöpfe bei Thomas von Aquin *In I Sent* d.38,q.1,a.1," *Divus Thomas* (Freib.) 14 (1936): 255-73 and 15 (1937): 415-32. Aquinas does come to a deeper appreciation and articulation of the transcendence of the divine will in his later treatments, but both McGinn and Lonergan overstate the case for development.

While the will of God is unfailing, nevertheless not all its effects are necessary, but rather some are contingent.⁵¹

Once again it is clear that Aquinas's major argument for the compatibility of divine causation and genuine contingency is the transcendent nature of the former. Only a cause that transcends and indeed creates contingency and necessity as modes of created being can work through them without violating or rivaling them. It is precisely in order to safeguard this transcendence that the mechanism of *praemotio physica* must be rejected. Once a created medium between God and the act of the will is posited, it is hard to see how its causation could fail to escape the necessity-contingency dichotomy. If the *praemotio physica* is necessary, then there is no human freedom; if it is contingent, then it is hard to see how it efficaciously and infallibly induces a particular determinate movement of the will. With this dichotomy in mind, it is better simply to affirm divine transcendence and to deny the applicability of any created model of causation; such models tend inevitably to an overly physical conception of causation that cannot do justice to the action of Spirit upon spirit.⁵²

Behind the failures of both Bañez and Molina (and their respective adherents) to articulate a satisfactory account of the causal relationship between God and human action, is a diminished sense of the transcendence

⁵¹"Similiter etiam ex parte uoluntatis diuine differencia est attendenda. Nam uoluntas diuina est intelligenda ut extra ordinem entium existens, uelut causa quedam profundens totum ens et omnes eius differencias; sunt autem differencie entis possibile et necessarium, et ideo ex ipsa uoluntate diuina originatur necessitas et contingencia in rebus, et distinctio utriusque secundum rationem proximarum causarum; ad effectus autem quos uoluit necessarios esse disposuit causas necessarias, ad effectus autem quos uoluit esse contingenter, ordinauit causas contingenter agentes, <id est> potentes deficere; et secundum harum condicionem causarum, effectus dicuntur uel necessarii uel contingentes, quamuis omnes dependant a uoluntate diuina sicut a prima causa que transcendit ordinem necessitatis et contingencie. Hoc autem non potest dici de uoluntate humana nec de aliqua alia causa, quia omnis alia causa cadit iam sub ordine necessitatis uel contingencie, et ideo oportet quod uel ipsa causa possit deficere, uel quod effectus eius non sit contingens, set necessarius. Voluntas autem diuina indeficiens est, tamen non omnes effectus eius sunt necessarii, set quidam contingentes." *Expositio libri Peryermenias* I,14; 78-79, ll.437-461, ed. R.-A. Gauthier, *Opera omnia*, Vol. I-1 (Rome, 1989). On this passage see Charles Boyer, "Providence et liberté dans un texte de Saint Thomas," *Gregorianum* 19 (1938): 194-209. See also DM 16,7ad15 and *Quodlibet* XII, 3.

⁵²I owe this idea to Kenneth Schmitz.

of the Creator. It is not enough to read the traditional Bañezianism-Molinism struggle simply as divergent attempts to fill the gaps in Aquinas's account in the altered climate of the Post-Reformation problematic; for what counts as a gap to be filled in depends upon still deeper assumptions. It is rather that Bañez and Molina are separated from Aquinas by a fundamental change in background understanding. They are much more confident that mundane causal categories can be used to explain the relationship between God and human freedom and they seem consequently to assume that there is an inherent antagonism between God and the human will which must be resolved in favor of one of the contending parties; both of these assumptions are foreign to Aquinas because both compromise divine transcendence. None other than Jean-Luc Marion has argued recently that Aquinas is separated from the subsequent scholastic and modern onto-theological tradition by a deeper sense of divine transcendence that is rooted in creation and is reflected in a different sense of divine causation.⁵³ God does not cause as the supreme or most powerful Being among beings; God cannot be encompassed by an *a priori* concept of being or an *a priori* concept of causation. Aquinas's God is not a Cartesian *causa totalis et efficiens* moving other beings according to the modern mode of efficient-productive causation. It is rather that God as the creative *causa essendi* originates beings in a way that transcends any mode of mundane moving and so lies beyond our conceptual ken.

For Aquinas, God is not a rival to human freedom like some Homeric deity or the modern idol that Nietzsche rightfully saw as a threat to human freedom. Instead, the radical transcendence and distinction of the Creator God from the created world means that God empowers rather than overpowers creaturely freedom. God generously allows created beings to share in divine providence as bearing the dignity of causes in their own right. This is especially true of the human person, who falls under divine providence as a secondary cause of a peculiar kind because it belongs to him to reflect the Creator's own mode of causation through his free,

⁵³"Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théologie," *Revue Thomiste* 95 (1995): 31-65. This is a contribution to a special issue devoted to a Colloquium on the topic. I discuss Marion's remarkable *retractatio* of his earlier views on Aquinas and related issues in "St. Thomas, Onto-Theology, and Marion," *The Thomist* 60 (1996): 617-25.

rational, provident, and self-determining actions.⁵⁴ In this way human beings reflect the divine image⁵⁵ and reveal something of the nature of the free divine creativity that originates free human creativity. This leads Herbert McCabe to assert that free human activity is paradoxically more immediately and directly caused by God than other actions precisely because it is a sharing in God's own creative freedom.⁵⁶ This paradox separates Aquinas sharply from those who come after him, and suggests a paradoxical strategy for being post-modern.

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⁵⁴“Dicendum quod in hoc quod dicitur Deum hominem sibi reliquisse, non excluditur homo a divina providentia; sed ostenditur quod non praefigitur ei virtus operativa determinata ad unum, sicut rebus naturalibus; quae aguntur tantum, quasi ab altero directae in finem, non autem seipsa agunt, quasi se dirigentia in finem, ut creaturae rationales per liberum arbitrium, quo consiliantur et eligunt. Unde signanter dicit: *In manu consilii sui*. Sed quia ipse actus liberi arbitrii reducitur in Deum sicut in causam, necesse est ut ea quae ex libero arbitrio fiunt, divinae providentiae subdantur; providentia enim hominis continetur sub providentia Dei, sicut causa particularis sub causa universali.” *ST* 1.22.2ad4.

⁵⁵The prologue to *ST* 1-2 reads: “Quia, sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur, secundum quod per imaginem significatur intellectualem et arbitrium liberum et per se potestativum. . . restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, id est de homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem.”

⁵⁶“God brings about my free action, however, not by causing others things to cause it, he brings it about *directly*. The creative act of God is there immediately in my freedom. My freedom is, so to say, a window of God's creating; the creativity of God is not masked by intermediate causes. In human freedom we have the nearest thing to a direct look at the creative act of God (apart, says the Christian, from Christ himself, who *is* the act of God).” *God Matters* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 14.