

Efficacious Grace and Free Will: Taking Aquinas at His Word

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Professor Steven Jensen, in his *Nova et Vetera* article “Efficacious Grace and Free Will: Six Inadequate Arguments,” identifies arguments that he argues to be insufficient to show the compatibility of efficacious grace with free will.¹ With respect to his analysis, I wish here to address only four conspicuous points: (1) whether in the discussion of efficacious grace “everyone” agrees that the will is not determined by efficacious grace; (2) whether the fact that non-rational creatures are also contingent agents makes the specific contingency of choice that flows from the relation of the finite objects of the will to the intellectually specified formal object of the will (universal good) to be insufficient to constitute the nature of rational free choice; (3) whether Thomas’s texts regarding the infallibility of divine premotion are “equivocal”; (4) whether the arguments being considered are properly identified principally as those of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Taylor O’Neill, and Steven Long or are not better first identified in historico-dogmatical terms as the teaching of Aquinas, and second, of several centuries of renowned theologians and philosophers prior in time and in dignity to the aforementioned authors—so that principally identifying these arguments with them, is rather like crediting them with the real distinction of essence and existence?²

¹ Steven J. Jensen, “Efficacious Grace and Free Will: Six Inadequate Arguments,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 21, no. 1 (2023): 115–46. This article may be referenced in main text by page numbers at times.

² This is perhaps as good a place as any to comment that I have placed notes to some of

I. "Everyone" Agrees That the Will Is Not Determined by Efficacious Grace?

As to the nature of Thomas's teaching—or even of the account identified historically by the Holy See as "Thomist" with respect to the *Congregatio de Auxiliis* and held since by a very great many Thomistic authors—Prof. Jensen seems somewhat to miscast the nature of the propositions under consideration.³ He argues on 119 that, "In any case, everyone involved seems to be in agreement that the will should not be determined by efficacious grace." But this is not the case. What there is agreement about is that the will is not determined by efficacious grace in such a way that it is not also and simultaneously freely determined by the will itself. Manifestly this is a contradiction in terms if we define freedom as including a liberty of indeterminism with respect to divine providential causality. But Thomas does not do this, and there is no good reason why one should.⁴ Thus Thomas in *De malo*, q. 3, a. 2, ad 4:

Thomas's texts in this article. It is, perhaps, too much. Yet it also is not enough, because the sheer proliferation of clear texts affirming efficacious grace (and indeed, efficacious pre-motion both natural and graced) and free will is quite arresting. Yet the matter today often is viewed through a voluntarist haze and the multitude of Thomas's texts on this matter are not often consulted. For this reason, some effort to point to at least a few of the many texts bearing on the subject seems reasonable.

³ One notes the words of Benedict XIV referring to the Thomist position from the *Congregatio de Auxiliis*, and not merely to a subset of Thomists engaging Jansenius and interpreted as though "toward" and "to" always mean the same thing: "The Thomists are defamed as destroyers of liberty and as followers not only of Jansen but also of Calvin; but since they answer the objections in a most excellent manner, and their opinion has never been condemned by the Apostolic See, the Thomists remain unscathed in this, and in the present state of things, it is not permitted for any ecclesiastical superior to deprive them of their opinion" (Denzinger-Hünermann [DH] no. 2564). "Thomist" is here an ecclesial term of art whose provenance derives largely from its use at the *Congregatio*. It would be odd for the Church—without any sufficient criteria being given nor any indication provided that a change in its use had been introduced—suddenly to use the term derived from the Dominican argument from the *Congregatio de Auxiliis* to designate a radically divergent school. One notes the proposition "never been condemned." That refers, not merely to those Thomists whom contemporary revisionists suppose far enough from Bañez to be countenanced (and this is not the place to argue that I believe they are preponderantly misread), but to the doctrine defended by the Dominicans at the *Congregatio*.

⁴ It would be wrong not to note that it may be tempting for some to construe the pre-motion bestowed by God as "indifferent" (a general motion whose specific further created actuation in choice is construed as *outside* the efficacy of the divine pre-motion) rather than as God moving the will without violence to its own free self-motion (a divine

Now it is manifest that when something moves something else, it is not from the fact that it is moving said to be the first mover; wherefore it is not excluded that it be moved by another, from which likewise it has this very thing, that it moves. In the same way, when something moves itself, it is not excluded from being moved by another, from which it has this very thing that it moves itself: and thus it is not inconsistent with freedom that God is the cause of the act of free will.⁵

motion that is not indeterminate or general but specified by the actual nature of the free act). The semantics of the question can make this even more complicated. One perhaps sees this difficulty in the insightful and quite profound analysis of Fr. Pachomius Walker, O.P., in his essay “The *De Auxiliis* Controversy, Molinism, and Physical Premotion: the Christological Implications,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 21, no. 2 (2023): 638: “Further, the use of ‘physical’ to describe physical premotion has interesting parallels with anti-Nestorian language. Diego Alvarez (1558–1635) explains that ‘physical’ is able to be taken in two ways. It can either mean that God physically predetermines the *liberum arbitrium* to its operation, a proposal which no Catholic holds, since this would remove freedom. Or, on the other hand, ‘physical’ can be understood as distinct from ‘moral’ determination, which is ‘only through persuasion and by the proposing of a fitting object, be it interior or exterior.’” But the term “predetermines” could (incorrectly) be understood either as a “short-circuiting” or direct effectuating of the free act (i.e., in a quasi-occasionalist manner), or rather be understood as the bringing about of the determinate actuality of the very act that is the will’s own self-motion. These two senses are not the same, and divine premotion in the second and correct sense is indeed specified by the determinate free act to which the agent is moved. Fr. Walker (as, I would argue, Alvarez) seems to see this, articulating it in the passage directly prior to the quoted passage above: “In the case of Christ specifically, Thomas explains in *ST* III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1, that God moves the human will of Christ as he moves the will of the saints; God moves the will *ad nutum* or ‘at his nod.’ Since God is unchanging, a *nutus* from him does not imply a change in him. Rather, there is a change in the creature. This change is specified later in the passage to be an *internal* movement in the creature’s will from God: ‘For although the will is not able to be moved interiorly by another creature, nevertheless it is moved interiorly by God.’” Walker continues, “God’s action in the life of Christ clarifies the meaning of ‘physical premotion.’ When God acts through an inward movement, he is not merely exciting or disposing the will, but he moves the will interiorly toward a specific end.” I.e., the will is moved—not indeterminately as motion is specified by its end—to its own self-determination in freedom. Of course, the act is free owing to the specific objective contingency of the will in relation to its proportionate objects owing to the transcendence of the intellect’s specification of the formal object of the will. Hence the later objection brought by Prof. Jensen on this score is an important one (not without precedent as will be noted) to which I make reply below.

⁵ *De malo*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 4: “Manifestum est autem quod cum aliquid movet alterum, non ex hoc ipso quod est movens, ponitur quod est primum movens; unde non excluditur quin ab altero moveatur, et ab altero habeat similiter hoc ipsum quod movet: similiter cum aliquid movet se ipsum, non excluditur quin ab alio moveatur, a quo habet hoc ipsum quod se ipsum movet; et sic non repugnat libertati quod Deus est causa actus

In the Oesterle translation of *De malo*—a wonderful translation—nonetheless this passage is erroneously rendered (betimes even Homer nods) as “hence it is not precluded that it is moved by another and from that other has the very ability to move.”⁶ But the passage refers to God as cause of the very *act* of free will, not merely of the “ability”: “et sic non repugnat libertati quod Deus est causa actus liberi arbitrii.” When something moves itself, this does not imply that the thing is not moved by another “from which it has *this very thing* that it moves itself.” And “thus it is not inconsistent with freedom that God is the cause of the act of free will.” That is, God causes the free self-determination of the human will (even at the level of nature, prior to the consideration of grace), by moving the will from potency to act with respect to its own self-motion. Whether at the level of nature or at the level of grace, God moves the will with respect to its own self-determination in freedom, and this motion is not “indeterminate” on pain of being *no motion at all*. Indeed, Fr. Labourdette made this point quite penetratingly in his engagement with the thought of Maritain.⁷ The divine motion is prior by

liberi arbitrii.” See also *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3: “Ad tertium 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 unoquoque secundum eius proprietatem.”—“To the third it should be said that free choice is the cause of its own movement, because by his free choice man moves himself to act. But it does not of necessity belong to liberty that what is free should be the first cause of itself, as neither for one thing to be cause of another need it be the first cause. God, therefore, is the first cause, Who moves causes both natural and voluntary. And just as by moving natural causes He does not prevent their actions from being natural, so by moving voluntary causes He does not deprive their actions of being voluntary: *but rather He is the cause of this very thing in them*, for He operates in each thing according to its own nature” (emphasis added).

⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, trans. John and Jean Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 111.

⁷ See Michel Labourdette, O.P., *Cours de Theologie Morale*, vol. 7, *De la Grace* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 1999), 52, responding to the argument of Maritain regarding “shatterable” or “negateable” motions: “Je ne suis pas sûr que la pensée de Maritain soit entièrement mûrie, du moins quand il a rédigé le *Court Traité*; et il y a au moins une difficulté dont je ne vois pas qu’il soit efficacement sorti. Qu’est-ce que c’est que cette motion brisée? Qu’est-elle dans la créature? Qu’est-ce qu’elle a fait? Elle acte un acte bon qui n’a pas lieu. . . . Ne disons pas qu’elle ‘s’arrête en chemin,’ car cette actuation de l’acte libre est instantanée. Or, nous l’avons vu et répété: s’il n’y a pas de mouvement

nature, but not by time, to the self-motion of the created will. This is of course quite clear also in the observation of St. Thomas in *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] III, ch. 89:

Some, however, not understanding how God can cause a movement of the will in us without prejudicing the freedom of the will, were forced to explain these authorities [i.e., certain texts of Scripture] badly. They would claim that God causes willing and accomplishing in us because he causes in us the power to will but not because he causes us to will this or that; as Origen explains in his *Principles*, III, defending free will against the aforesaid authorities.⁸

This description covers a great many authors who claim to be expositing Thomas's teaching today, who like Origen do not understand "how God can cause a movement of the will in us without prejudicing the freedom of the will" and so claim that "God causes willing and accomplishing in us because he causes the power to will but not because he causes us to will this or that." Implicitly the definition of "freedom of the will" assumed by such authors is that of an absolute liberty of indeterminacy with respect to divine causality.

But what is contrary to the will's free self-determination *is not* God

dans la créature, il n'y a pas de motion du tout."—"I am not sure that the thought of Maritain is fully matured, at least in what he has set out in this Brief Treatise [ref. to the French title *Court Traité de l'existence et de l'existant*]; and there is at least one difficulty that I do not see is effectively removed. What is this broken motion? What's in the creature? What did it do? It actuates a good act that does not take place. . . . Let's not say that it 'stops on the way,' because this action of the free act is instantaneous. Now, we have observed and insisted: if there is no movement in the creature, there is no motion at all." Of course, later, Maritain thought he had solved this problem by observing that the motion could be "but a nudge." But even were this possible (because as a spiritual immutation there is, or is not, a real volition), it would not help: because, if the "nudge" is all that is given, then the nudge is all that there is. Maritain sought to address this with the device of the "non-negation" of motion giving way to efficacious motion. But as negation of negation in a real subject is positive, this is simply to say that God bestows the motion. Labourdette never surrendered the intelligibility of the tradition on these points. It is not clear that very many of those who address this subject today pause to think about what the divine immutability and simplicity imply for divine causality as such, and for God's causality of grace in particular.

⁸ *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] III, Ch. 89 : "Quidam vero, non intelligentes qualiter motum voluntatis Deus in nobis causare possit absque praeiudicio libertatis voluntatis, coacti sunt has auctoritates male exponere: ut scilicet dicerent quod Deus causat in nobis velle et perficere, inquantum causat nobis virtutem volendi, non autem sic quod faciat nos velle hoc vel illud; sicut Origenes exponit in III periarchon, liberum arbitrium defendens contra auctoritates praedictas."

determining the will freely to determine itself; what is contrary to the will's free self-determination is *the will not freely determining itself*. What those who affirm efficacious premotion *reject* is only this, namely, any determination of the will by God which is not *pari passu* and simultaneously the will freely determining itself. God alone can move the will in this way.⁹ Freedom is not defined merely by the will's relation to God but rather by the very nature of the will itself as an intellective power. As none of its connatural objects suffice to compel the created will, and as the will is not its own agency any more than it is its own *esse*, it must be moved from potency to act by God with respect to its own free self-determination. That which is most its own, is simultaneously most a gift.

It should be noted that this goes directly to the freedom of the will to exercise itself or not that is addressed by Jensen:¹⁰ for this is a freedom that can itself be taken either in the composite or divided senses, since the will's self-motion is according to Aquinas the secondary cause, and God the primary cause, of this application of the power of the will itself.¹¹ As St. Thomas affirms in *SCG* III, ch. 67, God is the first and principal cause of the application of every power to act,¹² (something articulated vis-à-vis the will in the text from *De malo* above, that the will has "this very thing," i.e., "that it moves itself"—the very act of the will—from God as "the cause of the act of free will"¹³). As the *act* of free will is an *effect* of divine causality according to Thomas, its liberty of exercise is a function of its intellective nature in relation to its created objects (no created object can subjugate or command its act). That the will, for Thomas, is a created and hence subordinated and secondary cause, is beyond peradventure of doubt.¹⁴

Only the acceptance of a definition of liberty at variance with the metaphysical evidence makes the two parts of this formulation—"God

⁹ Cf. *SCG* III, ch. 88: "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, ut in secundo ostensum est. Solus igitur Deus potest movere voluntatem, per modum agentis, absque violentia."—"Thus the only agent that can cause a movement of the will, without violence, is that which causes an intrinsic principle of this movement, and such a principle is the very power of the will. Now, this agent is God, Who alone creates a soul, as we showed in Book Two. Therefore, God alone can move the will in the fashion of an agent, without violence."

¹⁰ Jensen, "Efficacious Grace and Free Will," 126.

¹¹ See note 20.

¹² Cf. note 16.

¹³ Cf. note 5.

¹⁴ See notes 16 and 17.

determining the will freely to determine itself”—seem to be contradictory. They are taken as contradictory because a liberty of indifference to divine causality is often placed within the definition of freedom: but this is something not to be found in Thomas’s teaching, and the reason is that no creature exists or acts outside of the divine motion, and that everything that at one time is in potency, and at another, in act, needs to be moved by a mover. Hence, when Jensen states regarding efficacious grace that, “Finally, when Jerry is moved by this grace, he will of necessity (or infallibly) choose to help Jane,” more also yet needs to be stated to explain the doctrine of efficacious grace. The reason is that necessity is either absolute, or hypothetical. At the very instant when Jerry is moved freely to choose to help Jane, he retains the power to act otherwise: and so it is not with absolute necessity that he freely chooses to help Jane, but with hypothetical necessity (i.e., insofar as God has moved the will to its own self-motion). Insofar as he is moved freely to act, he is not *not* moved freely to act. But his freedom has not been “suppressed,” but rather actuated and perfected by the divine aid.¹⁵

¹⁵ See here T. C. O’Brien’s article, “Promotion, Physical,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2003), 669–72, at 670: “Simply from the viewpoint of the will’s need for physical premotion, there is no conflict with freedom. The will itself is truly the cause of its own act in choosing. Its acceptance of the decision of reason as final, and thus its causality of its own act, does not make this act necessary; it remains a choice. The object and the choice itself appeal to the will’s thrust toward human fulfillment; *they do not exhaust it, since they are concrete particular goods*. When the will is actually engaged by its choice, its dominance over object and act is actualized. Thus the will, when choosing to act, is not acting under necessity but is exercising its freedom. Since, then, physical premotion does bring about the will’s exercise of its own act, such premotion is not opposed to freedom. On the contrary, premotion brings this freedom to fruition in the act of choice that it causes the will to cause” (emphasis added). I do not know whether O’Brien, like some prominent authors, shifted his views of this matter. But I consider this statement of the matter to be a fairly clear statement of the tradition, with perhaps minor reservations. First, I would add that there *is* hypothetical, but not absolute, necessity, since the will as moved to move itself is not *not* moved, and what it is moved to is an act of its very nature free. And second, I would offer caveats regarding the author’s further observation in the article: “The premotion does not anticipate the will’s act; it makes possible the act’s exercise” (671). If “does not anticipate” means “does not replace” or “does not itself perform the act of,” it is true; but if it means “does not hypothetically necessitate,” then it is false, as this would seem to drift toward what is known as “general” or “indifferent” premotion, and confuse contingent determination with indetermination. But Thomas makes clear that the will has “this very thing”—that it moves itself—from divine causality, and this is not a general or abstract or indifferent motion, but is the very self-motion of the will in choice itself. So it is the very act of freedom itself, in all its determinacy, which is itself simultaneously and entirely both of the first agent and of the secondary agent. In this

I deliberately put the object in such a manner—"God determining the will freely to determine itself"—so as to cause every standard neo-Molinist alarm to sound. The alarm sounds, insofar as the view is held that one is free only when, all things remaining the same, one could do otherwise. But insofar as God is the first and principal cause of the application of every power to act,¹⁶ and no agent can proceed to its act unless it first be moved by God,¹⁷

sense—perhaps contra O'Brien, perhaps not—premotion does "anticipate" the will's act. I.e., it does not merely make it possible. Here too we see the problem that occurred with the Oesterle translation. The will is not its own act, and is really distinct from its own act, as potency to act; moreover, the finite object of choice cannot of itself bring about this act. Premotion is thus absolutely required, and only God—who is the first and principal cause of the application of every power to act, and who alone as the author of the natural motion of the will does not violate the will by moving it (see *SCG* III, ch. 88)—can move the will from potency to act with respect to its own free self-determination.

¹⁶ *SCG* III, ch. 67: "Quicquid applicat virtutem activam ad agendum, dicitur esse causa illius actionis: artifex enim applicans virtutem rei naturalis ad aliquam actionem, dicitur esse causa illius actionis, sicut coquus decoctionis, quae est per ignem. 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 ostensum est. Similiter etiam omnis motus voluntatis quo applicantur aliquae virtutes ad operandum, reducitur in Deum sicut in primum appetibile et in primum volentem. Omnis igitur operatio debet attribui Deo sicut primo et principali agenti."—"Whatsoever agent applies active power to the doing of something, it is said to be the cause of that action. Thus, an artisan who applies the power of a natural thing to some action is said to be the cause of the action; for instance, a cook of the cooking which is done by means of fire. But every application of power to operation is first and principally made by God. For operative powers are applied to their proper operations by some movement of body or of soul. Now, the first principle of both types of movement is God. Indeed, He is the first mover and is altogether incapable of being moved, as we shown above. Similarly, also, every movement of a will whereby powers are applied to operation is reduced to God, as first object of appetite and first agent of willing. Therefore, every operation should be attributed to God, as to a first and principal agent."

¹⁷ See *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 1, resp.: "Manifestum est autem quod sicut motus omnes corporales reducuntur in motum caelestis corporis sicut in primum movens corporale; ita omnes motus tam corporales quam spirituales reducuntur in primum movens simpliciter, quod est Deus. Et ideo quantumcumque natura aliqua corporalis vel spiritualis ponatur perfecta, non potest in suum actum procedere nisi moveatur a Deo. Quae quidem motio est secundum suae providentiae rationem; non secundum necessitatem naturae, sicut motio corporis caelestis. Non solum autem a Deo est omnis motio sicut a primo movente, sed etiam ab ipso est omnis formalis perfectio sicut a primo actu. Sic igitur actio intellectus et cuiuscumque entis creati dependet a Deo in quantum ad duo: uno modo, in quantum ab ipso habet perfectionem sine formam per quam agit;

and that which God simply wills, is,¹⁸ so that if God wills any creature to move, it is impossible with this that the creature not be moved,¹⁹ it is not possible that voluntary motion lie outside of divine causal providence.

alio modo, inquantum ab ipso movetur ad agendum.”—“But it is clear that, just as all corporeal movements are reduced to the motion of the body of the heavens as to the first corporeal mover, so all movements, both corporeal and spiritual, are reduced to the absolutely First Mover, Who is God. And hence no matter how perfect a corporeal or spiritual nature is supposed to be, it cannot proceed to its act unless it be moved by God. Now this motion is according to the plan of his providence, and not by a necessity of nature, as the motion of the body of the heavens. But not only is every motion from God as from the First Mover, but all formal perfection is from Him as from the First Act. Hence the action of the intellect, or of any created being whatsoever, depends upon God in two ways: first, inasmuch as it is from Him that it has the form whereby it acts; secondly, inasmuch as it is moved by Him to act.” Both the rational agent who does not choose, and the rational agent who does choose, enjoy the natural motion of the will—aboriginally bestowed by God from creation—whereby the will is ordained to universal good, and toward happiness. But no agent whether spiritual or corporeal, however perfect it may be, *can proceed to its act unless it first be moved from God*. Thus the creature that is in potency with respect to its own free self-motion must be moved from potency to act with respect to this self-motion. See also q. 109, a. 2, ad 1: “Dicendum quod homo est dominus suorum actuum, et volendi et non volendi, propter deliberationem rationis, quae potest flecti ad unam partem vel ad aliam. Sed quod deliberet vel non deliberet, et si huiusmodi etiam sit dominus, oportet quod hoc sit per deliberationem praecedentem. Et cum hoc non procedat in infinitum, oportet quod finaliter deveniatur ad hoc quod liberum arbitrium hominis moveatur ab aliquo exteriori principio quod est supra mentem humanam, scilicet a Deo; ut etiam Philosophus probat in cap. *De Bona Fortuna*.”—“Man is master of his acts, both of his willing and not willing, because of the deliberation of reason, which can be bent to one side or another. And although he is master of his deliberating or not deliberating, yet this can only be by a previous deliberation; and since this cannot go on to infinity, we must come at length to this, that man’s free choice is moved by an extrinsic principle, which is above the human mind, namely, by God, as the Philosopher proves in the chapter on *Good Fortune*.” NB: in “man’s free choice is moved by an extrinsic principle,” “moved” means: “reduced from potency to act.” Any teaching claiming that for Thomas the will is not caused by God to move from potency to act with respect to its own free determination in choice is simply not Thomas’s teaching. The will is not an agent *a se*: it acts within the divine providence, not without.

¹⁸ ST I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1: “Et sic patet quod quidquid Deus simpliciter vult, fit; licet illud quod antecederet vult, non fiat.”—“And thus it is clear that whatsoever God simply wills comes to be; but that which He wills antecedently may not.”

¹⁹ ST I-II, q. 10, a. 4, ad 3: “Ad tertium dicendum quod, 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.”—“If God moves the will to anything, it is impossible with this supposition, that the will be not moved thereto. But it is not impossible simply. Consequently it does not follow that the will is moved by God necessarily.”

Whereas to those accustomed to view such matters in terms of the determinist–free will controversies about terrestrial causality the term “determine” connotes the loss of freedom, for St. Thomas the perfection of the freedom of the will occurs through its free self-determination: and this free self-determination lies within, and not without, divine causal providence. The first cause of every voluntary perfection—as of every other perfection in created being—is God. Likewise, the first cause of the application of every voluntary power to act—as of the application of every other power to act in created being—is God. Hence when I do something well, I can thank God for upholding me from my own defectibility and moving me to act well, and when tempted I can ask God to move my will away from sin and toward Himself, to preserve me from evil. Not only can I ask these things and offer thanks to God for them, but God can actually do these things.

II. Contingent Agency—and Contingency in General— in Non-Intellectual and Intellectual Beings

The second significant point I wish to engage is Jensen’s observation regarding St. Thomas’s explanation of free will in terms of the relation of connatural objects of choice to the intellectually specified formal object of the will, that is, the universal good. Because the formal object of the will is universal good, and all the connatural objects of the will fall short of being universally good, the will cannot be commanded by them. Yet nonetheless, the least motion of the will from potency to act requires divine premotion, which does not deprive the agent of its natural freedom with respect to the contingent objects of the will. This is understood in terms of the famed distinction of the divided and composite senses of freedom.²⁰ The will being naturally beyond

²⁰ See *ST* I, ch. 67: “Praeterea, si unumquodque a Deo cognoscitur sicut praesentialiter visum, sic necessarium erit esse quod Deus cognoscit, sicut necessarium est Socratem sedere ex hoc quod sedere videtur. Hoc autem non necessarium est absolute, vel, ut a quibusdam dicitur, necessitate consequentis: sed sub conditione, vel necessitate consequentiae. Haec enim conditionalis est necessaria: si videtur sedere, sedet. Unde et, si conditionalis in categoricam transferatur, ut dicatur, quod videtur sedere, necesse est sedere, patet eam de dicto intellectam, et compositam, esse veram; de re vero intellectam, et divisam, esse falsam. Et sic in his, et in omnibus similibus quae Dei scientiam circa contingentia oppugnantes argumentantur, secundum compositionem et divisionem falluntur.” —“There is more. If each thing is known by God as seen by Him in the present, what is known by God will then have to be. Thus, it is necessary that Socrates be seated from the fact that he is seen seated. But this is not absolutely necessary or, as some say, with the necessity of the consequent; it is necessary conditionally, or with the necessity of the consequence. For this is a necessary conditional proposition: if he is

the command of any of its connatural objects, it is free with respect to them, and even when and insofar as actually willing something the will retains a power in what is called “the divided sense” to act otherwise. That is, the will has a power to act otherwise than it is now acting, “divided” from the way it is now acting, a power that could be activated differently at another time. However, insofar as the power is in act, it is not merely in potency, so that, insofar as the agent is moved freely to act, the agent is not not-moved, and is in this “composite sense” incapable of doing otherwise. This is simply a version of “insofar as Socrates is sitting, he is necessarily sitting,” that is, it is hypothetical necessity.

At last we reach Prof. Jensen’s objection. He considers this treatment of the will’s choice of connatural objects in terms of its contingency vis-à-vis the universal good, and in terms of the distinction between the divided and composite senses, to be insufficient to account for free will. After all, even non-rational creatures may be contingent causes, and so mere generic contingent agency would not seem to be sufficient for the account of free will. His example is the chess piece, which is only contingently on the square where it may reside in some game of chess, which yet can hardly be said to be “free.”

Speaking of the distinction between the divided and composite senses he writes:

The distinction is indeed valid, and it does apply to divine movement and free will. Nevertheless, the argument is insufficient to defend the Consistency Thesis. It can be applied with equal validity to all contingent events, even those that are not free. The sun shines of necessity, but a castle (in chess) does not rest on the space E4 of necessity. By its nature, the castle can be on any space, or off the chess board entirely. Nevertheless, if the castle is on E4, then necessarily the castle is on E4. The castle, however, is not free.²¹

Yet Thomas in speaking of necessary and contingent is not speaking merely of a genus, but of analogical modes of being proportionately specified by their subjects, and he quite expressly holds that human freedom is a

seen sitting, he is sitting. Hence, although the conditional proposition may be changed to a categorical one, to read what is seen sitting must necessarily be sitting, it is clear that the proposition is true if understood of what is said, and compositely; but it is false if understood of what is meant, and dividedly. Thus, in these and all similar arguments used by those who oppose God’s knowledge of contingents, the fallacy of composition and division takes place.”

²¹ Jensen, “Efficacious Grace and Free Will,” 121.

function of the contingency of the connatural objects of the will in relation to the intellective specification of the formal object of the will. First we will look to the specific character of the voluntary as intellectually specified, and second, return to the difference between proportionate analogical and specific identity that is wholly lost in anything like the “chess piece” argument.

As for the specific character of the will, Thomas does not entertain the voluntarist tendency to make of the will a power that can be or be defined apart from the intellect.

Thus the following observations of St. Thomas in *ST* I, q. 83, a. 1, resp.:

But because this judgment, in the case of some particular act, is not from a natural instinct, but from some act of comparison in the reason, therefore he acts from free judgment with power toward different things. For reason in contingent matters may follow opposite courses, as we see in dialectic syllogisms and rhetorical arguments. But particular operations are contingent, and thus the judgment of reason may be diversely related to them and is not determinate to one. And so forasmuch as man is rational it is necessary that man have free will, from this very thing that he is rational.²²

Clearly in this passage what is being pointed out is that in contingent matters reason may follow opposite courses, which is a reason why the will as an intellective power is free in relation to contingent objects of choice. The will as a rational power follows upon reason, and reason may follow diverse paths with respect to contingent particular operations. The will’s act follows upon intellectual apprehension. Thomas makes this clear in *ST* I, q. 84, a. 4, ad 3, stating that while intellectual apprehension can occur without a prior willing, willing cannot occur without prior intellectual apprehension, affirming that intellectual apprehension both by nature and temporally is absolutely prior to volition. Of course, he also affirms in that article that the will taken in its universal object (good) is nobler than the intellect taken as a particular power, and in this way can move the intellect. But this motion will always have prior intellective specification.

²² *ST* I, q. 83, a. 1, resp.: “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. Ratio enim circa contingentia habet viam ad opposita; ut patet in dialecticis syllogismis, et rhetoricis persuasionibus. Particularia autem operabilia sunt quaedam contingentia, et ideo circa ea iudicium rationis ad diversa se habet, et non est determinatum ad unum. Et pro tanto necesse est quod homo sit liberi arbitrii, ex hoc ipso quod rationalis est.”

Thomas's teaching that the freedom of the will is a function of the contingency of the objects of choice in relation to reason should be read most formally in the light of an earlier passage, *ST* I, q. 82, a. 2, ad 2:

To the second it should be said that the mover, then, of necessity causes movement in the thing movable, when the power of the mover exceeds the thing movable, so that its entire possibility of moving is subjected [to the mover]. But as the possibility of the will regards the universal and perfect good, its entire possibility [of moving] is not subjected to any individual good. And therefore it is not of necessity moved by it.²³

Why does the capacity of the will regard the universal good? It resides in the transcendence of the intellective specification of the will. The reason why the will has free choice is the relation between the intellective specification of the formal object of the will—universal good—and contingent objects of choice, none of which is universally good, so that none may necessitate the will (rendering the will objectively free with respect to them). This is the *ratio* forwarded by Thomas for the freedom of the will in choice, and the divided and composite senses apply proportionate to it. *It is quite different from the ground of contingency in non-rational creatures.* The will is by its nature free in choosing particular objects because the formal object of the will as specified by the intellect is universal good, whereas any connatural object of will is not universally good. As such, no connatural object of the will can subject the will: rendering the will formally free with respect to these goods.

To return, then, to the problem with anything like the “chess piece” argument: Molina's objection (which *is* in substance Jensen's) is correct with respect to the claim that the divided and composite senses may extend to the contingency of non-intellective agents (although Jensen's chess pieces are not properly “agents,” their “actual position” is, as he notes, contingent).²⁴ But

²³ *ST* I, q. 82, a. 2, ad 2: “Ad secundum dicendum quod movens tunc ex necessitate causat motum in mobili, quando potestas moventis excedit mobile, ita quod tota eius possibilitas moventi subdatur. Cum autem possibilitas voluntatis sit respectu boni universalis et perfecti, non subiicitur eius possibilitas tota alicui particulari bono. Et ideo non ex necessitate movetur ab illo.” See also *ST* I, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3 (see note 5 above).

²⁴ Speaking expressly of the application of the divided and composite senses (“Neque talis sensus divisus et compositus libertatem defendit in arbitrio ipso creato . . .” —“Nor does a divided and composed sense of this sort preserve freedom in the created faculty of choice itself”) and arguing its insufficiency because this distinction applies even to non-rational animals, Molina puts it concisely: “Quod si id ad arbitrii libertatem esset satis, profecto in brutis esset arbitrii libertas, quoniam indifferenter potest Deus

because contingency and necessity are *modes of universal being*, and God is the *cause* of universal being,²⁵ this objection—namely that non-rational creatures are also in various respects contingent causes—*does not suffice to show that the account of the contingency in question is specifically the same in each case and so cannot as is claimed show that this account is incapable of articulating the specific ratio of human free will*. Analogy provides for likeness between things that are simply and specifically diverse: for example, as potentially

conferre illis et non conferre concursum efficacem ad suos spontaneos actus; et quando eis confert, et eliciunt actum, similiter in sensu diviso, si illum eis non conferret, possent non elicere talem actum; et quando eis illum non confert, actumque non eliciunt, in sensu similiter diviso possent actum elicere si ad eum eliciendum concursum efficacem eis conferret” — “But if this were sufficient for freedom of choice, then there would truly be freedom of choice in brute animals, since God is equally able to confer or not to confer efficacious concurrence on them with respect to their spontaneous acts” (Latin from *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis* [Paris: Lethielleux, 1876], 352; English from the splendid translation [with introduction and notes] done by Alfred Freddoso in *On Divine Foreknowledge, Part IV of the Concordia*, disp. 53, pt. 2, no. 19 [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988], 227). The move to the non-intellective as alike subject to consideration in terms of composite and divided senses is the same. And indeed, Molina’s illustration is better, in that the spontaneity of animals is closer to intellectually specified liberty than is the contingency of spatial position of a chess piece. Hence I prefer to treat Molina’s consideration, since at least it rises to agency. Yet both are insufficient as objections, for reasons articulated later in my text. Prof. Freddoso’s translation of Molina’s work is splendid, and his introduction provides very clear and articulate analysis and argument for Molina’s account. While I consider the Molinist account impossible finally to reconcile with the divine universal causality and simplicity, I can think of no more refined and logically acute an introduction in English to the entire controversy from the Molinist vantage point. However, Molina famously expressed a judgment regarding the application of the distinction of the composite and divided senses to human liberty: “Hoc vero non satis intelligo.” — “But I do not understand this very well” (*Concordia* IV, disp. 50, q. 14, a. 13; Lethielleux ed., 300; Freddoso ed., 135 [no. 9]). I must confess that with this particular judgment of Molina, I strongly concur. I do not think he understood well the profundity of Thomas’s treatment of the specific character of human freedom as a function of the relation of the connatural objects of human choice to the transcendence of the intellectually specified formal object of the will—and the application of the divided and composite senses— for the same reasons that seem to pertain here to Prof. Jensen’s analysis.

²⁵ See *ST* I, q. 22, a. 4, ad 3: “Et considerandum est quod necessarium et contingens proprie consequuntur ens, in quantum huiusmodi. Unde modus contingentiae et necessitatis cadit sub provisione Dei, qui est universalis provisor totius entis, non autem sub provisione aliquorum particularium provisorum” — “We must remember that, properly speaking, *necessary* and *contingent* are consequent upon being as such. Hence the mode both of necessity and of contingency falls under the foresight of God, who provides universally for all being; not under the foresight of causes that provide only for some particular order of things.”

loving is to actually loving, so is potentially singing to actually singing, but loving isn't singing; or as form is to a human being, so is form to a tree (but they remain diverse: specific difference where it exists is not annulled). It is the specific freedom of the will in relation to its connatural objects owing to its intellectually specified formal object that St. Thomas explicates as the root of freedom. Nor of course does the objection predicated on contingency in non-intellective agents answer to the very clear proposition of Thomas that God is the cause of universal being. It is these two, together—God as cause of universal being, and the objective freedom of choice by virtue of the transcendence of the intellectual specification of the will in relation to the connatural finite objects of will—that give us God as moving the creature according to its nature, freely, but infallibly.

In other words, this objection takes the whole treatment of premotion out of its proper metaphysical context. The contingency in question in this case is precisely with respect to the rational will in choice owing to the intellectual specification of the will's formal object: *something that does not obtain for non-rational creatures and that defines the nature of will*. That some non-rational creatures are in different ways and for different reasons also proportionally contingent either in agency or in some other respect is irrelevant. *They are also beings*: but we do not err in affirming *esse* proportionate to the subject and nature of both rational and non-rational beings. Since contingent and necessary are expressly said by Thomas to be modes of universal being, there is no reason why they would not pertain in different ways, according to the likeness of diverse proportions, to angels, human persons, and non-rational animals.²⁶ As their application to angels as well as men does not make men angels or vice versa, so their application to men as well as subrational creatures does not fail to be proportionable to the articulation of the specific nature of human freedom of will in men, as distinct from accounting for contingent motions at a lower level of being. Likewise, one might think that trees, animals, men, and angels all exhibit the principle of form: but to reason from the implications of form in any of these will yield conclusions proportionate to the nature and subject considered, *and these proportions are quite different*. We cannot, or at least should not, argue that what is formally implied by the immateriality of the rational soul as substantial form cannot be definitive because—after all—even subrational creatures have substantial forms.

Analogical or proportional identity is not the same as identical proportions, or identical species, and does not suppress the latter: and it is such

²⁶ See note 25.

suppression that would be required to obviate Thomas's treatment of the specific nature of choice as free in relation to the intellectually specified formal object of the will. Non-rational creatures do not have free will, voluntary liberty. Lacking the principle of intellect, they do not possess the power of will. But what is in question is precisely the contingency of the will as an intellectually specified power vis-à-vis its connatural objects. Unsurprisingly, Thomas's conclusions about human will pertain specifically to it and not to chess pieces, bits of wood in the sand, or woodchucks in the wild. That is, when Thomas refers to a specific kind of contingency, it does not obviate the adequacy of his argument regarding this species of contingency to refer to different types of contingency. Thomas is explaining the liberty of the will in terms of the relation of its connatural objects to the will's intellectually specified formal object. Chess pieces pertain to an intellectually challenging enterprise, but they themselves lack intellect, have no volition, and never choose. Accordingly, the composite and divided sense do not pertain to the capacity of chess pieces as intellective beings to be moved to freely and interiorly move themselves because (1) they are not intellective beings and (2) they lack the interiority of intellective beings, and (3) they thus lack will, which is appetite consequent on intellect, and (4) thus they cannot be moved freely to move themselves. Things proportionately identical are indeed quite frequently distinct in their species, and the analogy of proper proportionality is a likeness of *diverse* proportions. Thomas explains free will in terms of the specifically voluntary contingency of the will in choice vis-à-vis its connatural objects owing to the will's nature as an intellectually specified power.

Thomas's analysis engages *the very nature of the will as an intellective power*, and so *this* account of freedom is not in terms of the relation of the will to God, but in terms of *the very rational nature of the will itself*.²⁷ It is the contingency of choice in relation to the intellective specification of the formal object of the will that accounts for the *natural* freedom of the will

²⁷ *De malo*, q. 16, a. 7, ad 15: "Et ideo necessitas et contingentia in rebus distinguuntur non per habitudinem ad voluntatem divinam, quae est causa communis, sed per comparisonem ad causas creatas, quas proportionaliter divina voluntas ad effectus ordinavit; ut scilicet necessariorum effectuum sint causae intransmutabiles, contingentium autem transmutabiles."—"And therefore necessity and contingency in things are distinguished not in relation to the divine will, which is a universal cause, but in relation to created causes which the divine will has ordered proportionately to the effects, namely in such a way that the causes of necessary effects are unchangeable, and of contingent effects changeable." Of course, it should be noted that the position of the chess piece *is* contingent (its nature does not require it to be only in one square); but it is the intellectually specified contingency of the will in free choice that Thomas explicates, not the contingency of the position of a chess piece.

with respect to any finite good. This, to repeat, is Thomas's *formal* account of the will, which he explains in terms of its specific contingency vis-à-vis its connatural objects. Of course, Thomas teaches that there are voluntary acts that are not free—the willing of the good in general, and of happiness.²⁸ And (of course) the natural or necessary acts of will with respect to its end and formal object themselves exist because of the divine causing of the natural motion of the will.²⁹ Choice is naturally and objectively free. Nonetheless the least motion of the will from potency to act presupposes prior divine motion, since the will as a self-mover is not always moving itself and is in potency to moving itself (and, as Thomas expressly teaches, whatever at one moment is in potency and at another in act needs to be moved by a mover;³⁰ and Thomas says in a great many places that God moves the will³¹). As Thomas puts it, contingency and necessity are modes of universal being, and so God causes contingent things contingently, and necessary things, necessarily.³² But this is a quite determinate causation: to suppress the free effect is simply to deny the divine causality (and there would *be* no free act).

Because Thomas provides an analysis of freedom that is metaphysical and not centered on any putative necessity for an absolute liberty of indifference

²⁸ See *ST* I, q. 83, a. 5, ad 5; I-II, q. 10, a. 2, resp.

²⁹ *ST* I, q. 105, a. 4, ad 1; *SCG* III, ch. 88.

³⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 4: “Omne enim quod quandoque est agens in actu et quandoque in potentia, indiget moveri ab aliquo movente.”

³¹ *ST* I, q. 105, a. 4, see particularly also ad 2 and ad 3.

³² *ST* I, q. 22, a. 4, ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod effectus divinae providentiae non solum est aliquid evenire quocumque modo; sed aliquid evenire vel contingenter vel necessario. Et ideo evenit infallibiliter et necessario, quod divina providentia disponit evenire infallibiliter et necessario, et evenit contingenter, quod divinae providentiae ratio habet ut contingenter eveniat.” —“To the first it should be said that the effect of divine providence is not only that something happen in some way, but that it happen either necessarily or contingently. And thus that happens infallibly and of necessity which divine providence ordains to happen infallibly and of necessity, and that happens contingently that divine providence conceives as happening contingently.” I.e., what God ordains to be necessarily occurs necessarily, and that which God ordains to occur contingently occurs contingently. Note that this makes unequivocally clear the efficacy of the simple divine will. See also *De malo*, q. 16, a. 7, ad 15: “Et ideo necessitas et contingentia in rebus distinguuntur non per habitudinem ad voluntatem divinam, quae est causa communis, sed per comparisonem ad causas creatas, quas proportionaliter divina voluntas ad effectus ordinavit; ut scilicet necessariorum effectuum sint causae intransmutabiles, contingentium autem transmutabiles.” —“And therefore necessity and contingency in things are distinguished not in relation to the divine will, which is a universal cause, but in relation to created causes which the divine will has ordered proportionately to the effects, namely in such a way that the causes of necessary effects are unchangeable, and of contingent effects changeable.”

on the part of the human will to divine causality; because there is not a “more” to Thomas’s account of the will that exempts it from the proposition *quod movetur ab alio movetur* or implies that the will does not stand in need of divine fecundation to be applied to its act, some simply refuse to see that Thomas’s express account of the will *is* his account of the will. If one defines the created will as an agent *a se* that does not need to be moved from potency to act and that is the absolute first cause and origination of its volitions, bringing them forth *ex nihilo*—or alternately, if one supposes that finite goods can simply and efficaciously compel the motion of the will from potency to act by themselves, so that the will is not contingent with respect to these goods—one will have no need to refer to divine premotion. But the will is not identical with its own operation and stands in potency to it; and no finite good can command the will.

Thomas does not share the *ultra vires* view of the will as other than an intellectually specified power. Nor should he. And that someone might wish there to be “more” to freedom does not suffice to show either (1) that this is so or (2) that Thomas thought it was so. Human choice is free because its connatural objects, as finite, cannot wholly actuate the will whose formal object as intellectually specified is *universal* good. Because no finite good is universal good, no finite good can compel the will. But Thomas does not affirm that any created principle—the will included—can act outside the divine motion, or is sufficient *to apply itself to act* outside of the divine *applicatio* which Thomas holds to be universally and absolutely first. And these free acts rise above the entire lower creation by virtue of their intrinsic positive immateriality, their superior interiority, and their natural liberty vis-à-vis all their connatural objects. As specified by intellect, voluntary acts participate the *imago Dei*, which as St. Thomas reminds us in the human creature pertains solely to the intellectual nature, everything else pertaining to *trace*.³³ But voluntary acts are not set apart by a spurious demiurgic aseity of will, nor by any native capacity of finite objects to command the will. The transcendence of the intellectually specified formal object of the will—universal good—owing to which the will cannot be commanded or subdued by any finite good, makes possible in nature and is the material occasion in

³³ See *ST* I, q. 93, a. 6, resp.: “Unde relinquitur quod nec in ipsa rationali creatura invenitur Dei imago, nisi secundum mentem. In aliis vero partibus, si quas habet rationalis creatura, invenitur similitudo vestigii; sicut et in ceteris rebus quibus secundum partes huiusmodi assimilatur.”—“Thus this image of God is not able to be found even in the rational creature except in the mind. But in the other parts which the rational creature may possess we find the likeness of a ‘trace,’ as in other things according to which parts, the rational creature can be likened.”

grace of the susceptibility of the free agency of the creature to the spiritual inspirations of God (for inspiration denotes: movement from without,³⁴ and as Thomas points out, the *imago Dei* in the human creature signifies principally the intellectual nature³⁵).

III. Are Thomas's Texts Equivocal as to Whether Divine Premonition Moves Infallibly?

The third point I wish to make must do service for many others that might be made. It regards what Prof. Jensen identifies as the fourth "insufficient argument" for the consistency of efficacious grace with human liberty: that is, the claim that Thomas affirms both (1) efficacious grace and (2) human freedom, and so clearly thought these were compatible. Now, even here the claim is whittled down—what is at issue is not whether it is true, but rather whether Thomas himself thought these were compatible. But, as to the latter, I am concerned with Jensen's claim about this fourth argument that:

It relies upon few texts of Aquinas. This alone would be no mark against the argument, if the texts themselves were unequivocal. As it is, they do not say what the argument claims. Those already convinced that God's physical pre-motions move infallibly may see this claim within the texts. Nevertheless, the texts do not make this claim. This paper, for its purposes, need not show that these texts have been interpreted incorrectly. It requires only a weaker claim, namely that these texts are reasonably open to alternate interpretations. One such alternative, reasonable within the context of Aquinas's thought, will be offered below. This interpretation does not deny that God moves

³⁴ See *ST* I, q. 68, a. 1, resp: "Inspiratio autem significat quamdam motionem ab exteriori. Est enim considerandum quod in homine est duplex principium movens, unum quidem interius, quod est ratio; aliud autem exterius, quod est Deus, ut supra dictum est; et etiam philosophus hoc dicit, in cap. de bona fortuna."—"Now inspiration denotes motion from without. For it must be noted that in man there is a twofold principle of movement, one within him, which is the reason; the other extrinsic to him, which is God, as stated above; moreover the Philosopher says this in the chapter On Good Fortune." And there is of course *ST* II-II, q. 52, a. 2, ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum quod movens motum ex hoc quod movetur movet. Unde mens humana ex hoc ipso quod dirigitur a spiritu sancto, fit potens dirigere se et alios."—"To the third it should be said that the mover that is moved moves by being moved. Thus the human mind from this very thing that it is directed by the Holy Spirit, is able to direct itself and others."

³⁵ See note 30.

by way of physical pre-motions; it simply maintains that some of these pre-motions are not infallible. Indeed, in much of what follows the point of contention concerns the fallible or infallible nature of God's movements.

By way of brief observation, one notes Thomas's clear proposition in *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 4, ad 3: "If God moves the will to anything, it is incompatible with this supposition, that the will be not moved thereto. But it is not impossible simply. Consequently it does not follow that the will is moved by God necessarily."³⁶ Of course, it is not impossible simply, because the will is a power able to act differently, although insofar as the will is moved to its free act it is not *not* moved. Thus the truth of the proposition that, if God moves the will to anything, it is incompatible with this that the will not be moved to it. A single text: brief, but unequivocal. It concerns premotion in general, whether in the order of nature or of grace. One might note that it is also implied by the divine simplicity. But it is unequivocal: if God moves the will to anything, this is incompatible with the will not being moved to that to which God is moving it. In the order of grace, that is efficacious grace. If anyone wishes citations to all the propositions of Aquinas affirming that God moves the will to things in both the natural and in the supernatural order, the proliferation of citations would not permit this paper to proceed further. There is also Thomas from the *SCG* III, ch. 92:

Now, since a disposition which results from a quality of the body, or from an intellectual persuasion, does not bring necessity to the act of choice, a man does not always choose what his guardian angel intends, or that toward which a celestial body gives inclination. But a man does choose in all cases the object in accord with God's operation within his will.³⁷

This too does not sound equivocal. There are dozens of similar passages. *ST* I, q. 19, a. 6, is famous, for example, for the beginning of the *respondeo*, "It should be said that it is necessary that the divine will always be fulfilled," and further that, "Since, then, the will of God is the universal cause of all

³⁶ See note 18.

³⁷ *SCG* III, ch. 92 : "Cum autem dispositio quae est ex corporis qualitate, vel intellectus persuasione, necessitatem ad eligendum non inducat, non semper homo eligit illud quod Angelus custodiens intendit, neque illud ad quod corpus caeleste inclinatur. Semper tamen hoc homo eligit secundum quod Deus operatur in eius voluntate."

things, it is impossible that the divine will should not produce its effect.”³⁸ Or one may look to *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 3, resp., where Thomas affirms that the preparation for grace, insofar as from God moving, has a necessity “not of coercion, but of infallibility,” and that “Hence if God intends, while moving, that the one whose heart He moves should attain to grace, he will infallibly attain to it, according to John 6:45: ‘Every one that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to Me.’”³⁹ But this is simply one of the most exalted illustrations of the truth that the divine intention in moving is always realized. Or:

But God does not act on the will in the manner of one necessitating; for He does not force the will but merely moves it, without taking away its own proper mode, which consists in being free with respect to opposites. Consequently, even though nothing can resist the divine will, our will, like everything else, carries out the divine will according

³⁸ *ST* I, q. 19, a. 6, resp.: “Respondeo dicendum quod necesse est voluntatem Dei semper impleri”; “Cum igitur voluntas Dei sit universalis causa omnium rerum, impossibile est quod divina voluntas suum effectum non consequatur.”

³⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 3, resp.: “Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, praeparatio ad hominis gratiam est a Deo sicut a movente, a libero autem arbitrio sicut a moto. 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; secundum illud Ioan. VI, omnis qui audit a patre et didicit, venit ad me.” — “I respond that it should be said, that as said above, man’s preparation for grace is from God, as moving, and from the free-will, as moved/in motion. Thus the preparation may be considered in two ways: in one way according as it is from free-will, and according to this there is no necessity that it should obtain grace, since the gift of grace exceeds every preparation of human power. *In another way it may be considered according as it is moved by God, and thus it has a necessity—not indeed of coercion, but of infallibility—as regards what it is ordained to by God, since God’s intention cannot fail, according to the saying of Augustine in his book on the Predestination of the Saints (De Dono Persev. xiv) that “by God’s good gifts whoever is liberated, is most certainly liberated.” Hence if God intends, while moving, that the one whose heart He moves should attain to grace, he will infallibly attain to it, according to John 6:45: “Every one that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to Me” (emphasis mine).* It seems to require virtually “Star Wars Jedi-like” intensity of Molinist disposition to reach the conclusion that “these aren’t the texts you’re looking for.”

to its own proper mode. Indeed, the divine will has given things their mode of being in order that His will be fulfilled. Therefore, some things fulfill the divine will necessarily, other things, contingently; but that which God wills always takes place.⁴⁰

Indeed: "That which God wills always takes place." One notes that for the will to act contingently is not for it to act indeterminately, as Thomas observes:

The effect of divine providence is not only that things should happen somehow; but that they should happen either by necessity or by contingency. Therefore whatsoever divine providence ordains to happen infallibly and of necessity happens infallibly and of necessity; and that happens from contingency, which the plan of divine providence conceives to happen from contingency.⁴¹

What God wills—with respect to the created will itself—happens. He brings about necessary things necessarily, and contingent things contingently. One may labor to make these (and very many more) texts equivocal: but they are not.

It is also true that, by virtue of the divine simplicity, everything that is said of God is said by way of identity with His simple substance, and that God is immutable. Thomas's teaching of the immutability of God is not equivocal. But as there is no change in God, if the divine bestowal of grace occurs, this specifies a real effect: suppress the real effect, and there is no difference between God bestowing and God not bestowing motion (whether natural or supernatural). The sole difference between God willing something *ad*

⁴⁰ *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, ad 3: "Ad tertium dicendum, quod corpus caeleste agit in haec inferiora necessitatem quasi inducens, quantum est de se; et ideo effectus eius necessario provenit, nisi sit aliquid resistens. Sed Deus agit in voluntate non per modum necessitatis, quia voluntatem non cogit, sed movet eam non auferendo ei modum suum, qui in libertate ad utrumlibet consistit: et ideo, 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 impleteretur; et ideo quaedam explent divinam voluntatem necessario, quaedam vero contingenter, quamvis illud quod Deus vult, semper fiat."

⁴¹ *ST I*, q. 22, a. 4, ad 1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod effectus divinae providentiae non solum est aliquid evenire quocumque modo; sed aliquid evenire vel contingenter vel necessario. Et ideo evenit infallibiliter et necessario, quod divina providentia disponit evenire infallibiliter et necessario, et evenit contingenter, quod divinae providentiae ratio habet ut contingenter eveniat."

extra and God not willing something *ad extra* is not a change in God, but is the reality of the effect. For this very reason, every grace is willed simply/ consequently and is efficacious for something, and is with respect to other things that are as yet unattained further perfections willed antecedently.

Indeed, Thomas affirms that the “simple” divine will—what he also calls the “consequent” will—is that which God *actually causes to be*, as distinct from something that is willed in certain of its causes but that is not assured by antecedent graces alone actually to come to be. Thomas argues that in God there is no antecedent and consequent—no “before” and “after”—and that the distinction between antecedent and consequent/simple divine will refers *to the things willed*.⁴² That is, a grace may be said to be willed as something that also may be ordered to some further effect beyond what it efficaciously achieves of itself: and this (with respect to the further effect) signifies willing of an antecedent, that is, it signifies the willing of some effect *in its antecedents* apart from the simple willing of that thing itself. Every grace brings something about efficaciously (because there is no change or potency in God, “divine causing” signifies solely by divine effects: so grace always effects *something*) but may also move one closer to further perfections. Thus, insofar as God simply wills a grace of remorse, this may also be an occasion for seeking out confession and absolution, and so one may say that God simply or consequently wills the grace of remorse, and that God antecedently wills the seeking out of confession and absolution, that is, *wills these—confession and absolution—in their antecedents*. In this way, by the divine simple will, I may walk *to* a door, open it, and enter; and by the divine antecedent will, I may walk *toward* opening the door (but this in itself is not simply to open the door and enter) which is an antecedent to opening it and entering. This last (walking merely *toward* opening the door) would be for God to will the opening of the door *in its antecedents*, to will it “antecedently.” The “antecedent will” is a “willing of that which is antecedent to something else.” *The antecedent may, or may not, lead to the consequent/simple*.⁴³ What God simply wills, *is, actually exists*, but what God wills antecedently may or may not be (remorse may or may not lead to confession, but it clearly has an

⁴² ST I, q. 19, art. 6, ad 1, referring to the words “God will have all men to be saved”: “Tertio, secundum Damascenum, intelligitur de voluntate antecedente, non de voluntate consequente. Quae quidem distinctio non accipitur ex parte ipsius voluntatis divinae, in qua nihil est prius vel posterius; sed ex parte volitorum.” —“Third, according to Damascene, they are understood about the antecedent will, not about the consequent will. This distinction is not taken from the part of the divine will itself, in which there is nothing before or after, but on the part of the things willed.”

⁴³ ST I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1.

order with respect to it, is an antecedent in respect to it). Grace is simple and efficacious in bringing forth something actual, and is antecedent with respect to other perfections. So, *is* there anything real? Insofar as the answer is “yes,” it is simply willed. Thomas’s teaching of the efficacy of the simple divine will is textually incontrovertible. This is also why evil must be permitted by God if it is to occur, which is not for God to will the evil as such, nor to will that it not be, but for God to permit a defectible creature to defect.

IV. Should These Arguments Be Principally Associated with Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Taylor O’Neill, and Steven Long?

My final observation regards the honor Prof. Jensen affords Garrigou-Lagrange, O’Neill, and Long as articulators of the arguments he criticizes. Surely a scholar of his rank and insight realizes that the texts of Aquinas, but also of Bañez, Alvarez, Lemos, Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, Billuart, the Salmanticenses, Labourdette, (Jean-Herve) Nicolas, Dummermuth, Gardeil, Del Prado, Phillips, David S. Oderberg, Joseph Trabbic, Thomas Osborne, Fr. Serge-Thomas Bonino, and many others—spanning hundreds of years—articulate accounts of the compatibility of efficacious grace and freedom of will. As a matter of record, the analysis derives from Aquinas. It is only because Molina argued for merely divine moral suasion rather than divine efficacy in the perfecting of the human will that Bañez introduced the terminology of “physical premotion”—which means merely real, or ontological, motion naturally prior to the free act of the will, the motion of the created will from potency to act with respect to performance of its own act of self-determination in freedom. I have been particularly struck by the arguments both of Labourdette and Nicholas (before the latter renounced his position under the suasion of Journet and Maritain—although of course Nicolas persisted in holding that no resolution seemed possible for the question apart from the general analysis of the Thomistic *status quo ante*). It would be a shame for readers of *Nova et Vetera* to suppose that the tradition in question is adequately summed up in O’Neill, or Long, or even in the work of so profound a theologian and philosopher as the dissertation director of Karol Wojtyła, Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange (although the latter offers copious reasoned defenses of the tradition, and O’Neill’s work is a masterful consideration of the context of the entire question).

I am of course grateful for Prof. Jensen mentioning me in such lofty company. Nonetheless, for Garrigou-Lagrange, or O’Neill, or Long, to be principally brought forth in relation to the arguments that are considered in Prof. Jensen’s essay is somewhat similar to hearing our names principally

associated with the argument from motion for the existence of God. We all concur. But the argument is clearly not originatively and distinctively, much less solitarily, our own. It is Thomas's, and not only has been held, but is contemporaneously held, by theologians and philosophers of note. This is simply true of the tradition of physical premotion and the classical Thomist analysis of efficacious grace. Not even Garrigou-Lagrange is the font of that (as of course he constantly pointed out). St. Thomas clearly is.

Conclusion

Phenomenological/existential, linguistic, and analytic preoccupations all have made it more challenging for contemporaries to approach Thomas's metaphysical account of the will. A certain mystagogy of voluntarist sufficiency bordering on aseity in relation to God is taken as a first premise: as though any creature could be a mere spectator to divine causal providence rather than intimately embraced by and subject to the universal divine causality of all motions whether physical or spiritual. This obscuration renders many Catholics far closer to the limited intuitions of freedom or grace functioning in a metaphysical void—something that diversely characterizes both semi-Pelagian and Calvinist teaching—and also closer to fideistic theologies (for which the mere intellectual consideration of such matters becomes “rationalism”), than to the thought of the Common Doctor of the Church.

Thomas's understanding of the will is refused acknowledgement as an account of the will—is not considered to be an understanding of the will properly speaking—because it is a metaphysical account. But the metaphysical character of the analysis is necessary and appropriate, since it pertains to the relation of creator and creature, since the will is an immaterial power formally specified by intellect, and since the middle term of such theological considerations is the effects of nature and grace and the principal such effect—without which there is none other—is as Thomas expressly teaches *esse absolute*, the most formal principle of *ens*.⁴⁴ The will is a power specified by intellect, *appetitus sequens formam intellectam*.⁴⁵ The non-necessitation of the will in relation to its connatural objects of choice, none of which can command or simply actuate the will owing to the intellectual specification of the formal object of the will as *universal good*, accounts for the *nature* of human free will.

⁴⁴ ST I, q. 45, a. 5, resp.

⁴⁵ See *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* VI, q. 2, a. 2: “motus voluntatis est inclinatio sequens formam intellectam.” Likewise see *SCG* III, ch. 26: “Motus voluntatis est inclinatio sequens formam intellectam” (Leonine ed.).

The Molinist criticism that non-rational beings are also contingent agents does nothing to alter the specific ontological richness and density of the nature of will that flows from its formal object's intellective specification. And it is the contingency of the connatural objects of choice in relation to that formal intellective specification that Thomas teaches to account for freedom of choice. The contingency of animal agency is not properly a contingency of rational choice. *The error of the objection is that it regards an intrinsically analogical object as a univocal genus.* Modes of universal being are realized proportionate to their subjects and natures, and these proportions are and remain specifically diverse. The higher mode of the motion of the intellective creature to God is wholly distinct from that of lower non-intellective creatures even when these are contingent agents, and the freedom of creatures who bear the *imago Dei* is an intellective, spiritual freedom from servitude to any created good. In the sense necessary to the objection, "contingency" is no more properly speaking a mere genus than is "form" or "nature" or "being."

Yet, even were we to view the matter *not* in terms of the analogical division of universal being, but simply generically, *even so* there is the question of the analogy of inequality in the case where the same logical concept is in play: as, for example, with the objectively nobler character of human animality whose definition is nonetheless univocal with that of non-intellective creatures. For example, on such an analysis, in the case of the human body the specific distinction allows for the sensible conveyance of spiritual intentions: so, the genus may be found with markedly differing degrees of specific perfection. Thus there is no reason why "contingency" should not be generically susceptible of nobler and inferior illustrations or precluded from constituting the essence of free choice vis-à-vis the intellective specification of the will as St. Thomas Aquinas taught. Although I do not think this treatment of the matter is as adequate to Thomas's teaching as a more fully analogical analysis, it does show another route to setting aside the error of the objection forwarded initially by Molina, and by others, up to the present formulation offered by Prof. Jensen. If it be said that, on this account, in a certain respect we are like chess pieces, I will assent to this only insofar as like chess pieces we are creatures and thus receive our motion from God: but we receive it in a higher mode, spiritually, and as the principle of our own genuinely free self-motion.

Whether the formal error of the objection resides in regarding an analogical object as a univocal genus (as I am inclined to think) or the error consists in suppressing analogy of inequality within a genus, the *reason* for this error seems to be the wish to affirm that human freedom is something

“more” than that contingency of choice that flows from the transcendence of the intellective specification of the will’s formal object. By this “more,” what seems always to be meant is an absolute liberty of indifference of the will to divine causality, that is, the creature’s putative absolute first causality of its own volitional agency (of which it is in reality the second cause).⁴⁶ This desideratum makes God not to be the primary cause of voluntary perfection; it implies that human voluntary perfection is *a se* rather than created; and it renders the human person a spectator without, rather than an agent within, the divine providence.

The metaphysically oriented account of intellect and will in relation to grace characteristic of St. Thomas Aquinas and, historically, of the Thomist tradition should receive renewed consideration. While it does not offer the topical gratifications of untrammelled immediacy that ensue upon strong perceptions of the absolutivity of human freedom or of grace (it is neither semi-Pelagian for holding all choice to be of its very nature free, nor Calvinist for holding that God moves everything according to its nature), and proceeds not alone from revelation but from metaphysics,⁴⁷ it is invaluable for *sacra doctrina*. In this light, I would like to cite the final words of Fr. Serge-Thomas Bonino from his essay “The Thomist Tradition,” with one eye cast over my shoulder at the scope of the doctrinal tradition on this matter:

In his celebrated *Concordantia*, Luis Molina (†1600) elaborated a general system of relations between divine causality and human liberty. He consistently made the efficacy of divine grace depend on the prior consent of human liberty. In the face of this subversion,

⁴⁶ Of course, all the difficult questions regarding the divine permission of evil enter precisely here. They are difficult questions for any account whatsoever. An account that retains the divine transcendence is, one might think, most necessary precisely here, where our vision is insufficient. But that God, in moving things according to their natures, permits defectible agents at times to defect, while sustaining the common good of an order containing creatures such as ourselves, is not unintelligible. For a consideration taking up how, in causing the entity of the evil act, God does not cause it precisely as evil, see Thomas Osborne’s instructive essay “How Sin Escapes Premotion: The Development of Thomas Aquinas’s Thought by Spanish Thomists,” in *Thomism and Predestination: Principles and Disputations*, ed. Steven Long, Roger Nutt, and Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2016), 192–213.

⁴⁷ True metaphysical judgments regarding God are in an important sense by their very nature *revelabilia*—for in the beatific vision we will see in God, and understand fully, those truths about God that now we may possess only as necessary conclusions from finite evidence. Such conclusions we know must pertain to God, but the manner of their obtaining cannot be reduced to vision for us in this life.

Thomists such as Peter of Ledesma (†1616), Diego Alvarez (†1635), Thomas of Lemos (†1629), and especially the great Domingo Bañez (†1604) made themselves the champions of the primacy of grace, of a grace efficacious by itself and not in virtue of the prior consent of human liberty. The free consent to grace already appeared to them as an effect of grace. The human being and God are not in competition, simply because the first and the second cause are not on the same plane. Furthermore, it is God himself who gives the free choice of the creature all of its (determined) reality. Confronted with the immense mystery of predestination and the unequal distribution of grace, one ought not to propose a “solution,” but to situate the mystery in its proper place: in the fathomless liberty, goodness, and wisdom of God, and not in the “no God’s land” of a human liberty improperly raised to the rank of a secondary divinity. Henceforth, Bañezianism—and the thesis of physical premotion—became the official doctrine of the Dominican Order.⁴⁸

I add only: it is called Bañezianism because it was Bañez who adapted the terminology to make clear the absolute novelty of “a human liberty improperly raised to the rank of a secondary divinity.” But manifestly—indeed unequivocally—the doctrine is St. Thomas’s.⁴⁹ N·V

⁴⁸ *Nova et Vetera* (English) 8, no. 4 (2010): 869–81, at 881.

⁴⁹ One thinks of Thomas’s anticipation of Molina, and also of congruist Molinism, in the following passage from his commentary on the Gospel of John: “Alii autem dicunt quod verum est quod merita in actu existentia non sunt causa praedestinationis, sed praexistentia in praescientia Dei; dicentes quod quia Deus scivit aliquos bonos futuros et bene usuros gratia, ideo proposuit eis gratiam se daturum. Sed si hoc esset, sequeretur quod ideo elegit nos, quia praescivit nos ipsum electuros. Et sic electio nostra praevia esset electioni divinae, quod est contra sententiam Domini”—“Others say that it is true that our actually existing merits are not the cause of our predestination, but those merits preexisting in the foreknowledge of God are. Thus they say that because God knew that certain persons would be good and make good use of grace, he decided to give them grace. But if this were so, it would follow that the reason he chose us was because he foreknew we would choose him. And so our choice would be prior to the divine choice; which is contrary to our Lord’s statement” (*Super Ioan* 15, lec. 3, no. 2023 [commenting on John 15:14–17]). The real problem is of course that of the permission of evil. Here one must note Thomas’s insistence that permission is neither God willing sin to occur, nor God willing it not to occur, but permitting it to occur, which is a good (*ST* I, q. 19, a. 9, ad 3: “Deus igitur neque vult mala fieri, neque vult mala non fieri, sed vult permittere mala fieri. Et hoc est bonum.”—“God neither wills evil to be, nor wills evil not to be, but wills to permit evil to be. And this is good.”). Indeed, Thomas says in *ST* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3, that the reason both for predestination and reprobation is finally the

divine goodness: “Ad tertium dicendum quod ex ipsa bonitate divina ratio sumi potest praedestinationis aliquorum, et reprobationis aliorum.” — “To the third it should be said the reason for the predestination of some, and the reprobation of others, is from the very goodness of God.” I.e., the providential elevation of defectible creatures to the highest good, without obviating or removing the hazard, involves the willing of an order which is a common good, and God does not subordinate that common good to defect, but provides more aid to each than is or could be merited by any, and less punishment to the guilty than is strictly merited, while inestimably elevating the order both in its end (supernatural beatitude) and immanently (through the presence of the Incarnate Word and the Blessed Virgin Mary, who alone of all creatures is by divine decree in a certain limited and divinely bestowed respect a principle in the hypostatic order whose spiritual assent to the Incarnation embraces not only the divine maternity but the entire order of grace in and from Christ). That common good—the *sine qua non* for creatures such as ourselves—is not subordinated to any individual, and the very elevation of the order in grace, and its terminus in the *visio*, renders it transcendently and infinitely good.