

Toward a Consensus in the *De Auxiliis* Debate

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The Landscape of the Debate as it Relates to the New Proposal

THE DOMINANT POSITION among Thomists on the issue of predestination and grace¹ in the (largely Dominican) commentator tradition seems to have been fundamentally Bañezian until the twentieth century, when the tide began to turn with Francisco Marín-Sola.²

¹ The topic of grace is, of course, vast and multi-faceted; similarly, the topic of predestination stretches out into the complex realm of divine foreknowledge. The range of questions presentable here involves enormous theological resourcefulness, as well as philosophical acumen. Therefore, I am choosing to zero in on the most relevant aspect of the *de auxiliis* controversy—namely the question of the manner in which God permits evil—and approach the debate primarily from a metaphysical perspective (although informed by revelation). The far-reaching implications of the growing consensus regarding the solution to this aspect of the controversy are yet to be explored in much detail. For example, it seems a consensus on this question would constitute at least a significant portion of the foundation necessary for any substantial union with the more Augustinian-inclined Protestant denominations on the question of the precise manner in which grace is transformative of human nature. My goal here is simply to signal the impending emergence of a consensus (within Catholic Thomistic circles) on the controversy.

² See Francisco Marín-Sola, “El sistema tomista sobre la moción divina,” *Ciencia Tomista* 32 (1925): 5–52; Marín-Sola, “Respuesta a algunas objeciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina,” *Ciencia Tomista* 33 (1926): 5–74; and Marín-Sola, “Nuevas observaciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina,” *Ciencia Tomista* 33 (1926): 321–97. See also Michael Torre’s *Do Not Resist the Spirit’s Call: Francisco Marín-Sola on Sufficient Grace* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013) and *God’s Permission of Sin:*

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, called by some “the sacred monster of Thomism,”³ is the foremost representative in the last century of this approach to the question. According to him, the universal causality of God is of such a nature that his eternal wisdom and love decides without any reason outside his own sovereign will to provide only some men (“the elect”) with the efficacious graces necessary for meriting salvation.⁴ In Garrigou-Lagrange’s conception of grace as either “efficacious” or “sufficient,” sufficient graces are those that are intrinsically efficacious (as all grace must be, contrary to Molinism) but predetermined not to come to fruition, not to be extrinsically efficacious (or actually effective). One way in which he distinguishes the Thomist position from the Augustinian is to base the refusal of efficacious grace on God’s part not upon the deficiency proper to fallen human nature,⁵ but upon a prior resistance to the intrinsic efficacy of the sufficient grace offered to all,⁶ a resistance that is infallibly ensured to take place by a physical premotion determined by an antecedent divine decree to permit sin (hence the concept of “infallible permissive decrees,” shortened occasionally to “infallible permissions”).⁷ The purpose for

Negative or Conditioned Decree? A Defense Of The Doctrine Of Francisco Marín-Sola, O.P. Based On The Principles Of Thomas Aquinas (Fribourg, CH: Academic, 2009).

³ This title is taken from Richard Peddicord, *Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press, 2004).

⁴ For Garrigou-Lagrange’s doctrine of predestination and grace, see his *Predestination: The Meaning of Predestination in Scripture and the Church* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1998); *God: His Existence and His Nature*, vol. 2 (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Company, 1955), nos. 64–65, Appendix 4, and the Epilogue; *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas’ Theological Summa* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Company, 1954), chs. 19 and 22–23; and *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109–14* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Company, 1952).

⁵ See, for example, *The One God*, 709.

⁶ See, for example, *Predestination*, 207ff.

⁷ There is inherent in this type of position a tendency toward the Protestant (and Jansenist) conception of human nature as essentially corrupt. Accordingly, sins are infallibly permitted wherever God does not provide an infallibly efficacious influx of grace or a physical premotion to perform the good; hence, human nature is viewed as inevitably tending toward sin (absent infallibly efficacious grace) by virtue of its radical ontological dependence on God (or “defectability”). Francisco Marín-Sola argues at length for the Thomist (indeed, Catholic) conception of human nature as wounded, not corrupted, and therefore capable of performing good acts that are easy but incapable of performing good acts that are difficult and of persevering in the good indef-

infallibly permitting such deficient creatures to bring about their own moral self-destruction, inevitable wherever efficacious grace is absent, is to manifest the glory proper to divine justice—that is, if the damnation of some were not ensured, only his mercy would be manifest, which would not indicate the full measure of his glory.⁸ In the early- to mid-twentieth century, diverse Thomists proposed from slightly different angles essentially the same revision of the Thomist position in opposition to the doctrine of infallible permissive decrees.⁹ Although Garrigou-Lagrange did attempt to dulcify the Bañezian discourse on negative reprobation,¹⁰ in the course of argumentation with Francisco

initely. See especially his “Nuevas observaciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina,” 324–29, 353–57, 366–67, and 380–83.

⁸ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, pt. 1, chs. 3 and 5; pt. 2, sect. 1, ch. 2; pt. 2, Synthesis; and pt. 3, ch. 1.

⁹ For Jacques Maritain’s most developed formulation of the position, see his *Dieu et la permission du mal* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1963)—published in English as *God and the Permission of Evil* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1966)—which is in some ways anticipated by his lecture *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee, WI: The Aquinas Lectures, 1942), published originally in English but made available in French translation as chapter 7 of *De Bergson a Thomas d’Aquin* (New York: Edition de la Maison Francaise, 1944) and as chapter 4 of *Court traite de l’existence et de l’existant* (Paris: Paul Hartmann, 1947), the latter published in English as *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948). Published in the same year and arguing for the same fundamental position is Guilielmo G. Most, *Novum tentamen ad solutionem de Gratia et Praedestinatione* (Rome: Editones Paulinae, 1963; English Title: *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God*; hereafter, *GPSWG*). Most notes the essential agreement between himself and Maritain in *GPSWG*, 485, mentioning also Philippe de la Trinite (484, cf. 391–92), Dom Mark Pontifex (484, cf. 392), and Charles Journet (485, cf. 392). He also mentions Francisco Muniz (384ff. and 451) in conjunction with Francisco Marín-Sola, but he never mentions Bernard Lonergan. Charles Journet adopts Maritain’s formulation, but from a more theological perspective, in *The Meaning of Grace* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1960). Regarding Journet’s correspondence with Maritain and Marín-Sola, see Michael Torre, “Francisco Marín-Sola, OP, and the Origin of Jacques Maritain’s Doctrine on God’s Permission of Evil,” *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 55–94. Bernard Lonergan independently develops a very similar but unique formulation in his dissertation on *gratia operans*, which was originally published in the form of four 1941 articles in *Theological Studies*, then as *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. Patout Burns (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971), and finally as vol. 1 of *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas: Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., and Robert M. Doran, S.J. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000).

¹⁰ See, for example, his *Predestination*, 333–34. Thomas Joseph White cites *The*

Marin-Sola, O.P., he would not concede to the latter (as Jean-Hervé Nicolas did to Maritain after many decades of debate).¹¹

Garrigou-Lagrange's close personal friend, the great philosopher Jacques Maritain, had been working on the question (of the divine permission of evil and its metaphysical interplay with human freedom) since the 1920s, as his correspondence with Charles Journet on the work of Marin-Sola reveals.¹² While the core of the new

One God (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Publishing Company, 1943), 554–56 and 683–88, and *Predestination*, 175–77, as “self-consciously indebted to Rene Billuart . . . in contrast to the perspectives of commentators such as Bañez and John of St. Thomas”; see “Von Balthasar and Journet on the Universal Possibility of Salvation and the Twofold Will of God,” *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 663n71. Maritain says: “Father Garrigou-Lagrange caused the traditional doctrine to progress considerably. . . . The disciples of the great commentators, Father Garrigou-Lagrange for instance, endeavored to improve the theory of their masters on the permission of evil”; see *God and the Permission of Evil*, 19 (original French edition, 25). For an attack on Garrigou-Lagrange's effort here, see the recent Bañezian account of John Salza in *The Mystery of Predestination According to Scripture, the Church, and St. Thomas Aquinas* (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2010), 86–87. It is well-known that Bañez held a restrictive view of election, indebted to the late Augustine, which the Church rejected in the course of the Jansenist controversy.

¹¹ See Garrigou-Lagrange's response to Marín-Sola's *Ciencia Tomista* articles in his own article “La grace infailliblement efficace et les actes salutaires faciles,” *Revue Thomiste* 31 (1926): 160–73, and his pamphlet circulated at the Angelicum entitled *Principia Thomismi Cum Novissimo Congruismo Comparata: Thomismi Renovatio an Eversio?* (Rome: L'Angelicum, 1926). For J. H. Nicolas's retraction in the face of Maritain's argumentation, see the former's “La volonté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché,” *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992): 177–96. Thomas M. Osborne, Jr., neglects to mention such retraction when he curtly dismisses “the objection that the Thomist position [he means Bañezian] entails that God is responsible for evil actions” as “overwhelmingly refuted by J. H. Nicolas, ‘La permission du peche,’ *Revue Thomiste* 60 (1960). . . .”; see “Thomist Premotion and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion,” *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 607–31, at 614n17. Nicolas very clearly yields to Maritain's critique on this point, even if he expresses reservations in other regards. Osbourne also appears completely ignorant of Lonergan's dissertation, as he endeavors to critique (however briefly and inadequately) the points there argued with respect to premotion, mentioning only David Burrell and Brian Shanley as culprits (see 619 and 623ff.).

¹² For information on the debate between Garrigou-Lagrange and Marín-Sola and regarding the influence of the latter upon Maritain via correspondence with Charles Journet, see Torre, “Francisco Marín-Sola.” Torre also suggests that, despite some differences, Lonergan came down on the side of Marín-Sola because he was under the influence of his dissertation director (Charles Boyer), who had written an article defending many of Marín-Sola's points in

proposal may be traced to Marín-Sola (as Michael Torre has effectively displayed¹³), I will be concerned primarily with presenting the version of it in Maritain's treatment together with William Most's more comprehensive (albeit imperfect) analysis of the issue.¹⁴ Without entering into the minor discrepancies between these diverse accounts, I will depend upon the particularly complementary expressions of the solution to the *de auxiliis* controversy found in Maritain and Most (presupposing here the essential identity of their proposals) in portraying the coherence of the central proposal, a hypo-Augustinian Thomistic¹⁵ understanding of predestination (purged of the notion of the necessity for infallible permissive decrees),¹⁶ against the recent push-back expressed by contemporary defenders of the Bañezian position.¹⁷ Therefore, I will utilize the arguments presented

the dispute (see Torre, *Do Not Resist*, 237–38). While it is true that Lonergan and Marín-Sola are in essential agreement on divine permission of evil (i.e., divine innocence), the former's work on *gratia operans* is largely concerned with refuting the thesis of *praemotio physica*, which Marín-Sola takes for granted in his preoccupation with *gratia sufficiens*; the two are different but complementary paths of exonerating God of responsibility for moral evil or defending the divine innocence (to use Maritain's emphatic terms).

¹³ See especially his dissertation, *God's Permission of Sin*.

¹⁴ Most distinguishes his treatment more from Marín-Sola's position than from Maritain's, particularly on the points of whether there is divine foreknowledge of demerits prior to his predestinating will and of interpreting Thomas on the grace of final perseverance (see *GPSWG*, 385–91 and 451–52). With regard to Maritain, he notes the “considerable difference . . . [on] the point of entry for evil,” but he also concedes that “the broad lines of his solution are identical to ours” (485), which he does not accord Marín-Sola. I will not enter into these difficulties. I could have just as easily focused upon Marín-Sola's treatment in the *Ciencia Tomista* articles, but Torre has done a superb job of that already. The slight differences between all the players in this consensus will not be explored, but it is evident to the scholar that Most's treatment, while unique in its comprehensive approach and peculiar interpretation, is not up to par when it comes to textual analysis (i.e., proof-texts abound and the historical reasoning is imprecise).

¹⁵ The ‘hypo-’ here is meant to indicate a distinction from what is sometimes called the ‘hyper-Augustinianism’ of Calvinists, Jansenists, and the like, which designates a rigid predestinarian approach to the relationship between grace and freedom. It will become clearer in the course of this essay what precisely this contrast I wish to emphasize entails.

¹⁶ The debate concerning Thomas's definitive opinion on the question will be left aside.

¹⁷ Steven A. Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law,” *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 557–606, originally, “Providence, liberté, et loi naturelle,” *Revue Thomiste* 102 (2002): 355–406; Salza, *The Mystery of Predestination*; Osborne,

by both Most and Maritain against the Bañezian position to defend what they hold in common against the criticisms offered by Steven A. Long.¹⁸ But first it is necessary to summarize the primary theses of Most and Maritain in confrontation with Garrigou-Lagrange and “neo-Bañezianism,” respectively.¹⁹ Between Most and Maritain

“Thomist Premotion and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion.” Gilles Emery, without taking an explicit stand in favor of the Bañezian position, concludes his essay “The Question of Evil and the Mystery of God in Charles Journet,” *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 529–56, with doubts similar to Long’s, which Maritain himself had previously entertained (under the influence of Garrigou-Lagrange). For a brief rebuttal of their arguments against Maritain, see T. J. White, “Von Balthasar and Journet,” 662–63 (especially note 70).

¹⁸ In *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (New York: Oxford University, 2011), Matthew Levering cites the following explicit supporters of Maritain’s thesis (at 155n96): Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, trans. Michael Barry (New York: P. J. Kennedy, 1963); Jean-Pierre Arfeuil, “Le Dessein sauveur de Dieu: La doctrine de la predestination selon saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue Thomiste* 74 (1974): 591–641; Michał Paluch, *La Profondeur de l’amour divin: La predestination dans l’oeuvre de saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2004), 33–36 and 314–17; Jean-Pierre Torrell, “Préface” to Paluch, *La Profondeur*; John Saward, “The Grace of Christ in His Principal Members: St. Thomas Aquinas on the Pastoral Epistles,” in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to His Biblical Commentaries*, ed. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum (New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 197–221 (see 200–209). He also cites (at 156n101 and 178n2, respectively) implicit support of Maritain’s position in W. Matthews Grant, “Aquinas on How God Causes the Act of Sin without Causing Sin Itself,” *Thomist* 73 (2009): 455–96, and David Bentley Hart, “Providence and Causality: On Divine Innocence,” in *The Providence of God: Deus Habet Consilium*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (London: T & T Clark, 2009). Levering himself criticizes Maritain’s thesis as an attempt to understand what cannot be understood, opting instead to defend the apophatic tension, as exhibited in Catherine of Sienna and Francis de Sales, between two apparently irreconcilable affirmations of faith (namely, that God loves each free creature infinitely and that He permits free creatures to reject him definitively). Perhaps it is not incongruent with this double affirmation to opt for one speculative understanding of how it may be coherent over another.

¹⁹ I begin with Most’s treatment and proceed next to Maritain’s both because the first deals more extensively with the problems of the Bañezian position (as seen in Garrigou-Lagrange) and because it is the more neglected of the two, despite the fact that his very thorough proposal appeared in the same year as Maritain’s most developed (but still concise) work on the matter. Nevertheless, Maritain’s “Aquinas Lecture,” *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, is a profound interpretation of Thomas’s texts on the divine permission of evil that may be said to form the basis of what I am calling the “new proposal” or the “revised position” adopted by many in opposition to the most common position of

it will become clear that at the crux of a proper understanding of the interaction between infinite and finite freedom is the reality, as it were, of diverse species of nonbeing.²⁰ Hence, I will be focusing on the question primarily from the metaphysical perspective, which strikes at the heart of the debate, since each position is an abstract conceptualization of the data of revelation and none can claim authoritative status.

Most Confronts Garrigou-Lagrange on Infallible Permissive Decrees

Taking from divine revelation the model of God as loving father, Most thoroughly argues that the “traditional” (i.e., Bañezian) Thomist position is fundamentally opposed to the universal salvific will of God.²¹ Garrigou-Lagrange defends the position of the great commentators on the metaphysical grounds that it is impossible for God to foreknow anything (contingent) prior to his final predestinating will (or “consequent will”).²² According to this popular Dominican view, God has an antecedent will that does not discriminate between men and a conse-

the Thomistic commentator tradition (i.e., negative reprobation understood in terms of infallible permissive decrees).

²⁰ Simply put, since being admits of species even though being is not a genus (i.e., the species are related analogically), there must also be diverse species of nonbeing or diverse ways in which being is absent (e.g., privation is distinct from negation, evil is distinct from imperfection).

²¹ See Most, *GPSWG*, chs. 3 and 17. There may be a difference between the typical position of many commentators in the neo-scholastic period, or what I refer to as the Bañezian (Thomist) position, and the actual position of Domingo Bañez—there are diverse plausible interpretations of his writings that seem to have been exegeted only recently. For example, Robert J. Matava presents three possible interpretations of Bañez’s theory of physical premotion, utilizing texts of various periods (particularly those lesser known, published posthumously). Still, he argues in favor of one of those options; see Matava, *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Domingo Bañez and the Controversy ‘De Auxiliis’* (Boston: Brill), 55–70. He also ends up opposing Bañez’s understanding of the divine permission of evil (see 98–99), which goes hand-in-hand with the view that every created act must be (ontologically) preceded by a particular divine predetermination, even though he wants to blaze an altogether different trail from that of Marín-Sola and Maritain (see 37–39). At the same time, on at least one occasion (46n80), Matava seems to entertain a slightly different interpretation of Bañez that, if true, would exempt him from Marín-Sola’s critique concerning the woundedness of fallen human nature, who nevertheless directs his comments toward the modern Bañezians, not Bañez himself.

²² See, for example, *Predestination*, 341–45.

quent will that both infallibly permits the fall of man and randomly chooses a few who will be rescued from the inevitable destiny of the *massa damnata*.²³ The consequent will, therefore, is not consequent to any foreknowledge, but to creation and the natural defectability of man's creaturely being.²⁴ The divine intellect can foreknow the good and evil acts of each man only in or by the consequent will—that is, once he has willed to cause only these men to perform these meritorious acts. In response to such a claim, Most argues effectively that it need not be impossible for God to foreknow evil acts prior to his consequent will, addressing on metaphysical grounds every related objection proposed by Garrigou-Lagrange.²⁵ Most explains that, in fact, it is fitting that God's foreknowledge of evil acts be the *reason* that distinguishes his antecedent will (that all men do only what is good) from his consequent will,²⁶ wherein is contained, in some manner, everything that actually occurs.²⁷ According to this position, instead of randomly abandoning some men to their own devices, which will inevitably lead them to an evil destiny (since God alone is the source of good), God chooses to predestine those to beatitude whom he

²³ See, for example, *ibid.*, 80–84. This language of selecting a few out of a condemned mass derives from Augustine's *massa damnata* interpretation of Rom 9, which may be the origin of the Bañezian understanding of negative reprobation. Although Most argues that such a view was adopted because of the predominance of this interpretation, Garrigou-Lagrange clearly thinks that original sin is not the reason for the defectibility that causes resistance to sufficient grace and the consequent deprival of its efficacy. Rather, he says, the divine abstinence from predestining acceptance of grace is the indispensable condition that infallibly permits actual defection from the good (see *The One God*, 709). Garrigou-Lagrange also believes this to be the teaching of St. Thomas. Most argues convincingly that Thomas usually adopts Augustine's "massa damnata" theory and that this is the reason for his occasional teaching that sins occur infallibly by divine permission (see *GPSWG*, 305–07). I will not enter into questions concerning Thomas's texts.

²⁴ This points both to the problem in Garrigou-Lagrange of not sufficiently acknowledging the goodness of nature and to the point of difference in Garrigou-Lagrange with other Thomists—namely, the question of whether it is the consequent will per se or sin itself that is the primary reason for the inefficacy of the divine antecedent desire for universal salvation.

²⁵ For his replies to the previous line of argumentation, see Most, *GPSWG*, 609–12.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, 5ff.

²⁷ "So it is true that the will of God always accomplishes what it wills. But it does not will everything without any condition: the consequent will takes into consideration the condition of the creature . . . that is, after the absence of resistance" (*ibid.*, 202).

does not foreknow to be consistently willing evil for themselves. This implies that man does not inevitably commit every moral evil for which he does not have the “efficacious grace” to avoid, but that he can either propose resistance to grace or be metaphysically inactive by his own power with respect to any particular good.²⁸

Hence, after creating men and before predestining each to his own good acts, God foresees the particular evil acts desired by each man and, at least ordinarily, causes each man to perform freely the

²⁸ See *ibid.*, ch. 7. Most seems to use the term “efficacious grace” with reservations, but given such a framework, he defends the intrinsic efficacy of grace (see *ibid.*, 469). Assumption of the framework according to which sufficient and efficacious grace are distinguished as mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories of grace in the context of its relationship to freedom does not render it an adequate framework. A given linguistic-conceptual framework, even if inadequate to a particular conceptual task, need not be first replaced for the logical problems it may induce to be resolved—the mind can so stretch the terms involved that the limits need not always impede resolution. Nevertheless, the division of grace into “sufficient” and “efficacious” is deceiving. Most is not the only one, however, who does not unreservedly subscribe to the hard division of grace into “efficacious” and “sufficient,” as if sufficient grace is any less *intrinsically* efficacious and as if each grace must of necessity be predetermined by God to be either *extrinsically* inefficacious or efficacious. White says: “As Bernard Lonergan has shown in his doctoral thesis, the notion of grace as ‘sufficient’ and ‘efficient’ in Aquinas pertains not to two distinct *kinds* of grace, but to the same grace considered as sufficient for salvation and effective when it is not refused. See Lonergan, *Gratia Operans*, 333, 441. However, the notion of a distinct form of grace that can be refused versus a grace that is irresistible was developed in the post-Tridentine period by Thomists to oppose Jansenism and Protestantism on the one hand, and Molinism on the other” (“Von Balthasar and Journet,” 661n68). The former distinction presupposes grace in principle can be resisted, whereas the latter distinction implies that it either cannot be resisted or it need not be resisted in order to fail. Lonergan’s dissertation is also in part concerned with establishing a distinction between Thomas’s Aristotelian understanding of *praemotio physica* and the Bañezian understanding of this notion in Thomas. Levering, however, points to Matava’s PhD dissertation (University of St. Andrews, 2010), “Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Domingo Bañez and the Controversy *De Auxiliis*,” which argues that Lonergan’s proposal is deterministic (see Levering, *Predestination*, 157n106). In any case, on the topic of operative grace, Reinhard Hütter is correct when he says this work is “still to be the benchmark analysis of Aquinas’ profound treatment of this utterly complex topic”; see his “*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei—Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas*: Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold’s and John Milbank’s Recent Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God,” *Nova et Vetera* 5 (2007): 81–131, at 103n42.

good acts the man has not already willed to resist (albeit not yet by a positive decision against it).²⁹ Since God is the cause of everything that exists, even our free good acts are effects of God's predestinating will and performed freely precisely in virtue of this will, and yet the *reason* God does not predestine some to accept his (efficacious) grace may be that they have already chosen to resist it.³⁰ This does not mean that God gives efficacious grace to those who do good, but that he gives it to those who do not, so to speak, go on a "pre-emptive strike" in favor of evil.³¹ In other words, man is free because God simply causes his acts to be done with that created freedom that cannot lie outside the power of his providence. Nevertheless, since we know by revelation that God sincerely wills the salvation of every person (e.g., 1 Tim 2:4), it is fitting that the resistance proposed by each man be taken into consideration prior to his infallible causation of what actually occurs.³² This is the only Thomistic alternative to the doctrine of infallible permission.³³ What follows in this section is a virtual back-and-forth between Most and Garrigou-Lagrange on whether

²⁹ "For if a man can lack even one evil disposition without grace, then he is negatively disposed in regard to at least one grace that can come" (Most, *GPSWG*, 493).

³⁰ "It must be stated that God moves everything according to its manner. So divine motion is imparted to some things with necessity; however, it is imparted to the rational nature with liberty because the rational power is related to opposites. God so moves the human mind to the good, however, that a man can resist this motion. And so, that a man should prepare himself for grace is from God . . . *but that he should lack grace does not have its cause from God but from the man*, according to Hosea 13:9, 'Your ruin is from yourself, Israel; your help is only from me.'" (Aquinas, *Quodlibetale* I, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2; quoted in Most, *GPSWG*, 330; italics are mine).

³¹ For a detailed account of how this follows from what was said above, one would have to consult the whole of Most, *GPSWG*.

³² See, for example, *ibid.*, 166 and 202.

³³ Although Most (like Maritain) argues that infallible permissive decrees would make God the indirect cause of evil, an evident metaphysical impossibility, he also speaks of an "extraordinary providence" in which God provides the grace of positive non-resistance infustrably (see *ibid.*, 472–73). According to Most's schema, positive non-resistance is ordinarily willed in a frustrable manner, and therefore it is usually unbefitting of God to grant an infallibly efficacious (or infustrable) grace. Thus, Most says: "God can, when He so wills, move the hearts of men infustrably, so as to forestall or even cancel out resistance. But to do this belongs to extraordinary providence" (*ibid.*, 453). He thus distinguishes between primary and secondary freedom: the former corresponds to the freedom exercised under "ordinary" providence, the latter under "extraordinary" (see *ibid.*, 158–60).

infallible permissive decrees (and negative reprobation conceived accordingly) are metaphysically necessary or, rather, implicate God as the indirect cause of evil.

According to Most, the doctrine of infallible permissive decrees ends up making the divine will an indirect cause of evil acts,³⁴ even if such an implication is explicitly denied, as it is by Garrigou-Lagrange. The latter, nevertheless, justifies the theory of infallible permission in the following manner: “God is not bound, indeed, to conduct effectively all angels and men to the glory of heaven and to prevent a creature, of itself defectible, from sometimes failing. He can permit this evil of which he is by no means the cause, and he permits it in view of a greater good, as being a manifestation of his infinite justice.”³⁵ Most argues that this kind of approach coheres well with

³⁴ See *ibid.*, 431ff. It will be seen that Maritain holds the same.

³⁵ *Predestination*, 177. The question of whether willing that some inevitably condemn themselves for eternity truly manifests divine glory to a greater extent than would allowing for the possibility of universal salvation (even if conditionally willed) is another detail of the discussion treated at length by Most (see *GPSWG*, ch. 3), who, in my opinion, shows the former option to be opposed by the First Vatican Council (see *ibid.*, 46ff.). Nevertheless, Garrigou-Lagrange asserts (on the basis of *ST* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3): “We must say . . . that the motive for negative reprobation is that God willed to manifest his goodness not only by means of his mercy, but also by means of his justice, and that it belongs to Providence to permit certain defectible beings to fail and certain evils to happen, without which there would be no good things of a higher order” (*Predestination*, 206–07). Marín-Sola rebuts the argument for infallible permissive decrees from the perfection of creation in the following ingenious manner: “Así, por ejemplo, algunos novicios tomistas, al leer las frases de Santo Tomas en que dice claramente que el *unico* motive de la reprobacion negative es *el mayor bien del universo*, se figuran ya que la reprobación negativa no puede suponer la presciencia de los pecados actuales, cual si el ‘ser unicamente por el mayor bien del universo’ y el ‘suponer la presciencia de los pecados actuales’ fuesen cosas incompatibles, cuando, al contrario, son cosas que pueden estar unidas” (“Nuevas observaciones,” 370n1; emphasis original); English translation: “So, for example, some beginning Thomists, reading the phrases of St. Thomas in which he says clearly that the *only* motive of negative reprobation is *the greater good of the universe*, already figure that negative reprobation cannot suppose knowledge of actual sins, as if ‘to be only for the greater good of the universe’ and ‘to suppose knowledge of actual sins’ were incompatible things, when, on the contrary, they are things that can be united” (my own translation). “Negative reprobation” is a notion acceptable only if it does not entail infallible permissive decrees (for example, if it is posterior to prevision of demerit), as should become clear through the course of this essay.

the *massa damnata* theory of St. Augustine as an exegete.³⁶ Arguing against the position later espoused by Most, that predestination is consequent to foreknowledge of demerits, the true harshness of the Bañezian solution is put in near full relief in the following words of Garrigou-Lagrange:

The motive for negative reprobation, taken absolutely or in a general way, is not the foreseen evil of the reprobates; for this negative reprobation is nothing else but the divine permission of these demerits, and therefore it logically precedes rather than follows the foreseeing of them. Without this divine permission, these demerits would not happen in time, and from all eternity, they would remain unforeseen. . . . If we ask why God chose this person and not that other, there is . . . no reason for this but simply the divine will which is thus the motive both for individual predestination and the negative reprobation of this particular rather than that other.³⁷

Most outlines very well the maneuvers made by the traditional Thomists to justify such a position with respect to the efficacy of grace:

³⁶ See *GPSWG*, 278–302 for an exposition of two distinct theories in tension with each other throughout Augustine’s writings, the aforementioned theory being indebted to a particular reading of Rom 5–9 that claims very few adherents today. I have been investigating (for another publication) contemporary interpretation of Augustine’s exegesis of Romans and Most’s construal of his theory of predestination.

³⁷ *Predestination*, 206–07. Most thinks the precedence of negative reprobation over foreknowledge of demerits provides the prior rationale for the rest of the Bañezian schema: “All this is easy to understand when we recall that the Thomists insistently teach negative reprobation before foreseen demerits. They thereby implicitly teach that in no way can a man control whether or not he gets the application or efficacious grace. . . . *In other words, negative reprobation cannot be put into effect if man can control when and whether he gets efficacious grace.* We can easily see now why Thomists insist that man is totally incapable of ‘distinguishing himself’—in regard to doing evil or not doing evil” (*GPSWG*, 435–36; italics original). Michał Paluch argues that Thomas, in fact, in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, held something similar to Most’s position that reprobation is *post praevisa demerita* but *ante praevisa merita*, whereas in the *Summa Theologiae*, his position seems to be that reprobation is simultaneous to foreknowledge of demerits, which is distinct from the understanding of Garrigou-Lagrange and [early] J.-H. Nicolas that it is *ante praevisa demerita et merita*; see Paluch, *La Profondeur de l’amour divin*, 200–11, cited in Levering, *Predestination*, 81n67.

[I]n one place [followers of Garrigou-Lagrange] will say that God gives sufficient grace to all men. Then, if someone wishes to infer from this statement that it depends on each man whether or not he is reprobated, they add that sufficient grace does not suffice for salvation. Then, if someone objects that God will not refuse the means needed for salvation, they add that no one is deprived of efficacious grace except for having resisted a sufficient grace. But if someone from this wishes to deduce that God does not desert anyone before prevision of demerits, they add that man always resists unless God, by efficacious grace, impedes resistance. Further, they sometimes say that efficacious grace is given to those who have sufficient grace and pray. But if someone then infers that man can determine by this means whether he will or will not get efficacious grace, they point out that no one can pray so as to get efficacious grace unless he first has an efficacious grace to pray.³⁸

Despite Garrigou-Lagrange's evident attempt to temper the Bañezian position, the metaphysical confusion at the heart of the problem is also manifest in the following defense against the charge that a God who infallibly permits evil acts prior to foreknowledge of demerits would be an indirect cause of evil (and therefore unjust for punishing it):

[N]obody is deprived of an efficacious grace that is necessary for salvation except through his own fault, for God never commands what is impossible. . . . But this defect, because of which God refuses efficacious grace, would not happen without God's permission, which is not its cause but its indispensable condition. We must therefore distinguish between God's mere permission of sin, which is evidently prior to the sin permitted, and His refusal of efficacious grace because of his sin. This refusal is a punishment that presupposes the defect, whereas the defect presupposes the divine permission. God's permission of sin, which is good in view of the end (for a greater good), implies certainly the non-continuance of the created will in the performance of good at that particular time. This non-continuance, not being something real, is not a good. But neither is it an evil, for it is not the privation of a good that is due to one.

³⁸ GPSWG, 195–96.

It is merely the negation of a good that is not due to one. . . . He is not bound to maintain in the performance of good this will which by its nature is defectible. . . . God's withdrawal of efficacious grace is a punishment, and it is a punishment that presupposes at least a first defection.³⁹

It is unclear how such divine permission of evil acts can be called simply an "indispensable condition" and not an indirect cause if it is itself sufficient to guarantee the performance of such evil. And it is not clear how there would not be something lacking in the justice of a God who would punish men for, in effect, doing what was metaphysically impossible for them not to do (consequent to such divine infallible permission). Finally, it is unclear how God's will to permit this man and not that one to commit this evil act and not that evil act would not be completely arbitrary if it is said to precede all possible foreknowledge. If there is no foreknowledge of demerit prior to his final predestinating will, then there can be no reason for the latter besides divine whim. Even the translator (Bede Rose) of the English version of Garrigou-Lagrange's *The One God* is troubled enough by his positive formulation of the absolute gratuity of predestination to glory in the divine consequent will that he feels compelled to restate it negatively: he incorrectly asserts of this position that it does not "mean that God predestined certain persons to glory by a purely arbitrary act of His will."⁴⁰

Most explains how the application of the Bañezian theory of physical pre-motion to all acts indiscriminately makes God the indirect cause of evil:⁴¹

But in the system of the older Thomists . . . God is also the first cause of the evil specification or determination, since, before any decision on the part of the man, God alone initiates the process as a result of which this man, e.g., Mark, is moved from a state of indetermination as to the sin, into a process as a result

³⁹ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 208–09. Oddly enough, he says something else in this passage (i.e., in the second portion excised for clarity's sake) that could be construed in support of Most's idea of "negative non-resistance": "The non-continuance of our will in the performance of good is not an evil, either of sin or of punishment. It is a non-good" (209).

⁴⁰ *The One God*, 540n170.

⁴¹ Most does, nevertheless, admit physical pre-motion in some sense (see *GPSWG*, 470–72).

of which, by metaphysical necessity, in the full and adequate sense, the man *cannot do other* than commit that sin which God has determined, at the time determined by God, in the manner determined by God, and in the circumstances determined by God.⁴²

In other words, the Bañezian Thomist holds that God, from all eternity, overrides his own “initial” desire (i.e., the “divine antecedent will”) for all men to perform only good acts in order to choose which particular acts each man will perform, good and evil. Since, for the Bañezian, God can foreknow the evil acts of men only by knowing which good acts he does not cause them to perform, God ensures that evil act X is performed by choosing not to cause the opposite good act to be performed by the man in question. Assuming that the species of an evil act is entitative and therefore caused by God, the traditional Thomist concludes that every evil act performed by a creature is inevitably the “free” result of God’s eternal decision not to cause the opposite good act to be performed instead. Thus, the crux of the issue, from a metaphysical perspective (the primary perspective engaged by Garrigou-Lagrange), is whether evil specification originates (a) indirectly, yet necessarily, from divine causality of the particular species of a human act or (b) from man as deficient cause, indirectly determining the particular species of the human act caused by God. Opting for the latter (i.e., not attributing evil acts even indirectly to God’s predestinating will), Most propounds the corollary thesis that reprobation must be consequent to foreknowledge of demerits, even if predestination precedes foreknowledge of merits.⁴³

Turning to the metaphysical reasoning at the core of the Bañezian thesis, Most makes inroads toward one of the ways in which he effectively destroys it as a viable option:

As to the reason why a man always resists unless he has efficacious grace, these Thomists sometimes explain by saying that man’s fall comes from human defectibility. . . . The most basic reason because of which these Thomists say that it is metaphysically inconceivable for a man not to resist is a metaphysical reason. For they hold, as Garrigou-Lagrange says, that: “not to resist grace is already some good” (*De gratia*, p.190). Therefore,

⁴² Ibid., 432 (his italics).

⁴³ See, for example, *ibid.*, 498ff.

since in their system, non-resistance is a positive good, it is necessary to say that man, by sufficient grace, has the *ability* of non-resisting but he does not have the *application* of the ability of non-resisting. . . . The older Thomists have not found the distinction on the two kinds of non-resistance that we explained above, an essential distinction. If there were only one kind of non-resistance, the kind they speak of, they would be right in saying [sic] it is beyond man's unaided power.⁴⁴

The first way in which he responds to this Bañezian metaphysic is to draw a distinction between negative and positive non-resistance according to the following explanation:

It is possible to speak of omission of resistance to grace in two senses: Non-resistance can mean: 1) *A positive decision, a complete act, in which we formally decide not to resist or not to sin. . . .* It is obvious that such a decision is a salutary act, a positive good. Hence, it is not in man's unaided power. . . . 2) *The mere absence of an evil decision, in which the will does not move itself at all, in the first part of the process . . .* grace initiates the process by presenting a good to our mind, which God wishes to perform, and by moving our will to take pleasure in that good. . . . *The two effects can continue without any positive decision on our part. If we merely do nothing, they continue, for they are produced by grace and the grace does not withdraw unless we resist.*⁴⁵

Failing to distinguish between negative and positive non-resistance (to particular good acts willed by the divine antecedent will—i.e., in a conditional manner) inevitably leads to conceiving God as the ultimate source of the evil specification of free acts. If man cannot but resist every good influx from God unless God infallibly causes him to accept it, then every evil act is performed precisely because the created agent does not receive (from God) actualization of the potency to perform the opposite good act and is pre-moved therefore (by divine permissive decree) toward the particular evil performed, as his nature always inclines him to opt for evil over good, according to this hypothesis.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid., 433–34 (his italics).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 139–40 (his italics). Although he is referring in particular to the dynamic of grace and its free reception, there is no reason why the distinction itself could not apply equally to the divine causality of all free good acts.

⁴⁶ In terms of grace, for the Bañezian it is “absolutely” possible for sufficient

The second way in which Most responds to the insistence of the traditional Thomists that infallible permissive decrees are metaphysically necessary is to point to the Church's own assertion of the power of human freedom for the omission of evil (i.e., negative non-resistance).⁴⁷ In other words, he contests the opinion that men left to their own devices must will every evil act, since man, as the Second Council of Orange and the Council of Trent suppose,⁴⁸ has it within his power not only to do evil but also to do nothing. Certainly, it is true that, although man by nature has the power for good action, he cannot actualize such potency without receiving actualization from God. But this does not mean that, whenever someone performs an evil act, it is because God did not give him the actualization of the potency for doing the opposite good. Instead, it could mean that God did not effectively actualize such potency precisely because human deficiency had already resisted such actualization. Simply stated:

Man by himself, without grace, cannot do any positive salutary good. . . . Yet man can, by his own power, decide when and whether he will do evil. For, he can fail by his own power. And he can resist grace. . . . Man can also omit resistance to grace. . . . It is not we who make the beginning [of good work]: grace does that alone, and we do nothing. But in making the positive consent, as Trent teaches, we truly, actively cooperate.⁴⁹

Hence, as there is no necessity for man always to will such resistance, the potency for good is actualized precisely where such resistance is absent. In other words, whenever a man does not choose to do a particular evil act, God ordinarily infuses the opposite good action into the empty space, as it were, where the man has yet to do anything.

In sum, Most sees created being as the ultimate deficient source of the specification of every evil act, and he maintains the power of human freedom not to be automatically inclined toward every evil

grace to come to fruition in (extrinsically) efficacious grace, but such an "application" is not proximately possible if God has chosen not to provide it (and he has already predetermined from eternity which graces are to be merely intrinsically efficacious). Most argues against this in *GPSWG*, on 431ff. This kind of reasoning will be confronted throughout this essay, particularly in defense of Maritain against Long's arguments.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, ch. 7.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 150–55.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 452.

act. Bañezian Thomists must oppose the distinction between positive and negative non-resistance, as they assert that the only alternative to the deterministic thesis of Molina is that all foreknowledge is posterior to predestination.⁵⁰ Most's presentation is ultimately a confrontation with the argument that, if man could be metaphysically indifferent to resistance, uncertainty would be introduced into the divine intellect and God would be "determined" by finite agents.⁵¹ For the Bañezian Thomist, the difficulty explaining divine foreknowledge apart from predestination reinforces (and perhaps even gives rise to) the claim that man must resist every good act by nature (since he cannot actualize the potential for such acts), in which case God must choose which evil acts each man is to perform.⁵² In other words, man cannot even negatively determine the specification of an act before God predestines the entitative part of the act. On the contrary, according to Most's thesis, man (in the logical order) negatively specifies which act he wants to perform and God (usually) makes this logical moment into a metaphysical entity.⁵³ Of course, it must be true that what ultimately happens belongs to his final predestinating will. But before finally and infallibly willing the good acts that will be performed by men, he considers the evil proposed by each. His final predestinating or infallible will is *consequent* precisely to divine consideration of the particular resistances offered by men. Hence, the distinction between positive and negative non-resistance illuminates the possibility that

⁵⁰ See, for example, Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 148–50 and 251.

⁵¹ Since the present article does not concern the complex problem of divine foreknowledge, it will suffice to quote one relevant passage from the fourth part of Most's work, which is dedicated to this topic. He answers Garrigou-Lagrange's famous dilemma, "God determining or determined," which is found throughout the latter's works (e.g., see the last sentence of his *Predestination*), in the following manner: "[W]ithout the use of causality as a means of knowing, God is not passive because his divine intellect is transcendent and because, by the will of God, all things are conditioned through negatives (the evil specification in resistance, and non-resistance). . . . He is not determined by creatures, nor is He passive. But neither does God determine the negative conditions: He permits them to be determined by creatures. Hence, the dilemma rests on a question that is not well put, and on an incomplete disjunction: Neither does God determine the creature, nor does the creature determine God. Rather God permits the creature to make a negative determination, but God Himself *produces the truth and determines Himself* to move or not to move the creature to positive determination, according to the resistance or non-resistance of the creature" (*GPSWG*, 609–10).

⁵² See, for example, Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 248ff and 278ff.

⁵³ See, in addition to texts already cited in this regard, *GPSWG*, 600ff.

divine foreknowledge of evil can precede his consequent/efficacious will, even though his foreknowledge of good acts can only follow upon it.

Essential Convergence of Most and Maritain (on Nonbeing)

Most responds thoroughly to the Bañezian charge that, if divine foreknowledge of evil were to precede predestination, God would be passive to man's choice of resistance.⁵⁴ He points out that, when resistance is absent in man, there is no divine causality required because there is no human action to be caused—there is simply the absence of action. Therefore, “He is passive neither under the evil specification which is a mere privation and falling away, nor in the exercise of the act which He himself produces.”⁵⁵ A passage from Thomas that Most frequently invokes in support of the position that there is no contradiction in admitting man's power to omit resistance and attributing the positive choice of non-resistance to divine causality is the following:⁵⁶

Since . . . a man cannot be directed to his ultimate end except by the help of divine grace . . . it could seem to someone that a man should not be blamed if he lacks the aforementioned . . . since he is not able to merit the help of divine grace . . . for *no one is charged with that which depends on another*. . . . To solve this problem we must consider that although a man, by the movement of his free will, can neither merit nor obtain divine grace, yet he can impede himself from receiving it. . . . And *since this is in the power of free will to impede or not to impede the reception of divine grace*, not undeservingly is he charged with a fault who sets up an impediment to grace. For God, so far as He is concerned, is ready to give grace to all . . . but they only

⁵⁴ See *GPSWG*, 205–07, 487, and 492–93.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 206. However, some cite Thomas's *De Malo*, q. 3, a. 2, ad 2, to argue that the species of an evil act must be a positive entity if it is “a Deo causatur.” I do not think Most would disagree that the species of an evil act *qua* species is entitative, but what he means by “evil specification” here is the deficiency itself proper to the species of an evil act. Hence, when Thomas says, “*deformatas peccati non consequitur speciem actus secundum quod est in genere naturae; sic autem a Deo causatur*” (“the deformity of sin does not accompany the species of an act according to what is its nature in general; such, moreover, is caused by God”; my own translation from the Latin found at www.corpusthomicum.org), the antecedent of “sic” (“such”) is not “deformatas” (“deformity”), but “speciem” (“species”).

⁵⁶ See, for example, *GPSWG*, 156, 197, and 309.

are deprived of grace who set up an impediment to grace in themselves.⁵⁷

If man were to have the power of positive consent independent of God, then God would be made passive to such an act. But the power of omitting resistance, insofar as it is a non-act, belongs to finite freedom as such. As Most says:

These Thomists . . . say that the transcendence of the divine intellect cannot be invoked in solving the question of foreknowledge, since before God can know or foreknow anything, that thing must exist. . . . This argument does not hold. For the critical and decisive factors in human freedom are found in *non-beings*, that is, in non-resistance and in the evil specification in resistance. But, for non-beings, divine causality is not required . . . divine causality is also needed to begin a motion in them. . . . But once God has provided this much, the non-being factors can occur without the need of additional divine causality.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Summa contra gentiles* (hereafter, *SCG*) III, ch. 159 (Most, *GPSWG*, 197; the italics are Most's). The Latin is as follows: "Cum in finem ultimum aliquis dirigi non possit nisi auxilio divinae gratiae . . . potest alicui videri quod non sit homini imputandum si praedictis careat . . . cum auxilium divinae gratiae mereri non possit . . . nulli enim imputatur quod ab alio dependet . . . Ad huius dubitationis solutionem considerandum est quod, licet aliquis per motum liberi arbitrii divinam gratiam nec promereri nec advocari possit, potest tamen seipsum impedire ne eam recipiat . . . Et cum hoc sit in potestate liberi arbitrii, impedire divinae gratiae receptionem vel non impedire, non immerito in culpam imputatur ei qui impedimentum praestat gratiae receptioni. Deus enim, quantum in se est, paratus est omnibus gratiam dare . . . ed illi soli gratia privantur qui in seipsis gratiae impedimentum praestant" (found at www.corpusthomisticum.org).

⁵⁸ *GPSWG*, 498–99 (his italics). Most approaches the transcendence of the divine intellect as no less mysterious than the transcendence of the divine will, to which the Bañezian Thomists frequently appeal in explaining how predestination does not contradict human freedom (see *GPSWG*, 497–500). Most also says: "Negative determinations, since they are non-beings, do not have truth in them, nor do they convey truth to the intellect—not even to the human intellect, much less to the divine intellect. Because they do not have truth in themselves nor convey truth into the divine intellect, nor make the truth of negative propositions, it remains true that no truth is prior to the knowledge of God, just as it is also true that no thing or being is prior to the knowledge of God. Non-beings are no things" (604); see also 612. In a similar vein, Lonergan points to *ST* I, q. 17, a. 1, and makes the following precise comments: "The

Since created being has it within its power to “author” nonbeings, divine foreknowledge does not completely and utterly depend upon divine causality, as the former includes nonbeings and the latter only beings.⁵⁹

Maritain answers the same problem with the more explicitly Thomistic metaphysical distinction between *negatio* and *privatio*.⁶⁰ Just as Most distinguishes between two “logical moments” in the case of good action (namely, the absence of resistance and the good act divinely caused), Maritain describes two “instants of nature” that are not necessarily temporally distinct.⁶¹ The first is the non-consideration of the moral rule, which is a *mera negatio*, and the second is the *defectus* that is the cause of the evil act itself, the moral *privatio*.⁶² But the two instants of Maritain do not correspond directly with the two logical moments of Most. Maritain’s “non-consideration of the rule” is the nonbeing that causes the privation that is the evil act, whereas for Most negative non-resistance is the nonbeing that precedes positive non-resistance as an indispensable condition for good action to be effectively caused in the creature. Nevertheless, both say that the good acts willed by God for free creatures to perform actually occur when there is no obstacle posed by the creature (i.e., resistance or nihilation) and that, when there is no such obstacle, the influx of good from God is inevitably and freely performed (i.e., the good act is infallibly or infrustrably predestined).⁶³

Similar to Most, the point of departure for Maritain is to refute the Bañezian Thomist theory of infallible permissive decrees.⁶⁴ Although

positive truth that the sun shines is something that is positively and conforms to the divine design. The negative truth that the sun does not shine on us is something that is not positively and yet conforms to the divine design. But the objective falsity of *malum culpae* is something that is not positively and further does not conform to the *ordinatio divini intellectus*. It is obviously impossible for Bañez to speak of anything as withdrawing itself from the ordination of the divine intellect. St. Thomas not only speaks of it but cites scripture as his ground for doing so [namely, John 3]” (*Grace and Freedom*, 330n34).

⁵⁹ See GPSWG, 600ff.

⁶⁰ See the following section for the relevant citations of Thomas.

⁶¹ For similarities to Most in Maritain on the topic of negative non-resistance, see *Existence and the Existent*, 94 and 99n9–101n10 (original French edition, 155, 160–161n1, and 163–164n1).

⁶² See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 21 (French, 27).

⁶³ See, for example, *Existence and the Existent*, 94 (French, 155).

⁶⁴ See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 13 (French, 20).

Maritain refers in a friendly manner to Garrigou-Lagrange,⁶⁵ treading lightly upon his traditional stance,⁶⁶ he makes “neo-Bañezianism” his explicit target, which for him is primarily represented by Fr. Jean-Hervé Nicolas.⁶⁷ Maritain explains how the traditional school manages to forget the necessary dissymmetry between what he calls the “line of good” and the “line of evil.”⁶⁸ The principles of the good in relation to the first cause are that God is the universal cause and that his knowledge is the cause of things; the principles of evil in relation to the first cause are that the creature, rather than God, is the cause of evil and that God knows evil without in any way causing it. While Molina “disregarded the principle of the dissymmetry

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 19 (French, 25).

⁶⁶ The following text of Garrigou-Lagrange is evidence of Maritain’s contention that he worked to make the traditional Thomist position less harsh (even if he did not change it essentially): “It is not necessary that the first human defection precede the divine refusal of efficacious grace by priority of time; a priority of nature suffices. In this, we have an application of the principle of mutual relation between causes, which is verified in all cases where there is the intervention of the four causes; for, causes mutually interact, though in a different order. St. Thomas invokes this general principle to prove that in the justification of the sinner, which takes place in an indivisible instant, the remission of sin follows the infusion of grace in the formal and efficient order, whereas liberation from sin precedes the reception of sanctifying grace in the order of material causality. . . . Now if justification is thus explained by the mutual relation between causes, then it must be the same for the loss of grace, which is the reverse process; for the rule is the same for contraries. As John of St. Thomas shows, the moment man sins mortally and loses habitual grace, his deficiency, in the order of material causality, precedes the refusal of God’s actual efficacious grace and is the reason for this. From another point of view, however, even the first deficiency presupposes God’s permission of sin, and it would not result without such. However, in opposition to justification, sin as such is the work of the deficient creature and not of God. Therefore it is true to say that purely and simply . . . sin precedes God’s refusal of efficacious grace. In other words, ‘God forsakes not those who have been justified, unless He be first forsaken by them.’ (Denz., no. 804)” (*Predestination*, 333–34).

⁶⁷ Nicolas offered criticisms of Maritain’s thoughts concerning God’s permission of evil, arguing in favor of the position of Dominic Bañez’s interpretation of Thomas; see his four-part “La Permission du Péché,” *Revue Thomiste* LX (1960). Thomas Joseph White (“Von Balthasar and Journet,” 663n70) and Gilles Emery (“The Question of Evil,” 551–52) note that Nicolas eventually concedes to Maritain’s position in “La volonté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché,” *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992): 177–96. Steven Long later takes up arguments similar to Nicolas’s against Maritain.

⁶⁸ See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 14ff. (French, 21ff.). These expressions are borrowed from Marín-Sola (see especially “Nuevas observaciones,” 357).

between the line of good and the line of evil . . . to put the good act as well as the evil act under the dependence of a first initiative of the creature,”⁶⁹ Bañez, John of St. Thomas, the Carmelites of Salamanca, and other “rigid Thomists” attempted to explain everything from the perspective of being alone. “God thus seemed . . . the initiator of the evil which He punished. . . . [T]hese Thomists taught [the unthinkable thing] that one calls ‘negative reprobation,’ which *precedes any demerit*.”⁷⁰ The fault of such “hard Thomists” does not lie in lack of logical rigor, but in forgetting this dissymmetry and ignoring the perspective of nonbeing. In this way, Maritain also thinks that the Bañezians end up attributing evil, albeit indirectly, to God as universal cause via “antecedent permissive decrees.”⁷¹

Maritain’s Alternative to Bañez on Divine Permission of Evil

Contrary to the Bañezian claim that every finite will inevitably tends to a moral privation if God does not predestine the opposite, Maritain finds in St. Thomas the theory that the cause of moral evil in man is a failure that is not yet culpable,⁷² a voluntary non-consideration of the rule, but a “*mera negatio*.” In other words, for Thomas, the evil of an action is caused by the nonbeing of the free non-action of not considering the rule, whereas for the Bañezian, this non-consideration of the rule is already a privation, that is, a moral evil, which therefore cannot be the cause of moral evil in the free creature.⁷³ Maritain utilizes a twentieth-century scholastic manual to develop a Thomistic “real distinction”:

This *real distinction* between cause and effect is even found in the case of immanent activity, where an agent “moves itself”—it is under relations *really* distinct (and not distinct merely by a distinction of reason) that there is then causation and effect produced. “*Causa distinguitur ab effectu suo realiter: nam quod ab alio realiter dependet, realiter ab eo distinguitur*” (J. Gredt, *Elem.*

⁶⁹ *God and the Permission of Evil*, 15 (French, 22).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 14 (his italics) (French, 21).

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 17–18 (French, 24). Hence, a father who withdraws his hand from a child who is incapable of writing straight lines without his assistance is the indirect cause of the scribble that is directly caused by the child alone; see *ibid.*, 28–29 (French, 34).

⁷² He cites *In I sent.* d. 40, q. 4, a. 2; *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 1; and *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 3, ad 2; see *God and the Permission of Evil*, 6 (French, 13–14).

⁷³ See *ibid.*, 21–22 (French, 27–28).

Phil. Arist.-Thom., t. II, p.147). How does neo-Bañezianism come to forget such an evident axiom? "...There is not a real distinction," we are told, "but a *distinction of reason* between the *defectus voluntatis* which is the *cause* of the sin, and the *defectus actionis* which is *the sin itself*."74

Hence, the *defectus actionis* is itself (deficiently) caused only by the *defectus voluntatis*, while whatever being belongs to the evil act must be totally caused by God and subordinately by the free creature. What the "rigid Thomists" cannot see is that there is no contradiction involved in affirming, at the same time, (1) that God is the supreme *ratio* for the being that belongs to every act (good and evil) insofar as it is free and good, and (2) that the *privatio* proper to each evil act is first caused by the free creature and *therefore* only permitted by God. In other words, the nonbeing of an evil act is logically antecedent to the being of the evil act, and therefore the latter is willed in view of the former.⁷⁵

Therefore, Maritain's fundamental thesis is that God cannot be the original planner of any evil act because the free creature alone must be the first cause of his own evil acts. Even if God is not considered an indirect cause of moral evil, he must be conceived by the rigid Thomists as the "architect" of evil because his intellect ultimately determines which evil acts are to take place according to his plan for all things.⁷⁶ Maritain's alternative is to approach the question of the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 24n12 (French, 30n1; emphasis is Maritain's).

⁷⁵ Along the lines of both Maritain and Most, Lonergan says: "Third, the unintelligible can be related to the unintelligible: there is a certain explanation of sin in terms of other prior sin, but the reason for this is not any intelligibility in sin; it is simply due to the fact that sin is also evil, a privation of the good; *one privation leads to another, not because a privation does anything but because a deficient cause produces a deficient effect*. . . . [Reprobation] is not a cause because sin has no cause, but is unintelligible, inexplicable, and not to be related explanatorily to the intelligible [footnote: see *ST* I, q. 17, a. 1; q. 103, a. 8, ad 1]. But if it is antecedent [because it is a divine act] yet not a cause, and if there are three categories [of intelligibility] and not two, then how can it be infallible? *The answer to that lies in the theory of divine transcendence: God's knowledge is infallible*" (*Grace and Freedom*, 332–33; emphasis added). See also *Grace and Freedom* 340–42 for arguments corroborating Maritain's concerning the *causa defectus* as *ratio culpae* (against *Deus causa peccati*).

⁷⁶ "So, supposing (without conceding) that God is not, under the relation of efficiency, in withdrawing his hand the indirect cause of the failure which succeeds the antecedent permissive decree, the fact remains that on the side of the *plan* conceived by God, it is God who in his thought, his creative design, his eternal purposes, has first had the idea, the *idée-matrix*, the idea infallibly

origin of evil action from the perspective of the line of nonbeing, which is nevertheless an “existential reality.” Hence, he states the following:

[T]he first cause or the *inventor* of moral evil in the *existential reality of the world* is the liberty of the creature—I mean, this liberty in the line of non-being. All of this implies that at the very first origin of the evil act—and, above all, of the evil election . . .—there is not only the *fallibility* of the creature, but an *actual failure* of the creature, a created initiative which—since it is not caused by God—can only be an initiative of non-being, of deficiency in being, of lack, what I have called a nihilation.⁷⁷

The line of evil is the line of nonbeing because an evil act is an act “wounded by nothingness” and its metaphysical root must be a certain “withdrawal from being,” a free non-action, a “mere nothingness of consideration.”⁷⁸ Hence, even though an evil act is a being insofar as it is an act, the evil of the act is “the nothingness of a form of being *requisite* to a given being.”⁷⁹ Therefore, one must reason about the line of evil in a different way than one does with respect to the line of good because the terms of one’s thinking must relate directly to *nihil* rather than to *esse*.⁸⁰ Since the lack of considering the rule, which is not a privation, is the origin of the privation that

followed by effect, of the culpable failure in question. In permitting it in advance as integral part of the plan of which He alone is the author, without consideration of the nihilations of which the creature is the first cause . . . God first has the initiative, not causal but permissive, in virtue of which all the faults. . . . In the theory of the antecedent permissive decrees, God, under the relation of efficiency, is not the cause, not even (that which I do not at all concede) the indirect cause, of moral evil. But He is the one primarily responsible for its presence here on earth. It is He who has invented it in the drama or novel of which He is the author. He refuses efficacious grace to a creature because it has already failed culpably, but this culpable failure itself occurred only in virtue of the permissive decree which preceded it. God manages to be in nowise the cause of evil, while seeing to it that evil occurs infallibly”; see *God and the Permission of Evil*, 30–31 (French, 35–36).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 33 (French, 37–38; his italics).

⁷⁸ See Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, for Thomas’s teaching on these points.

⁷⁹ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 89 (French, 147). Here it is clear that the nonbeing of a nihilation is never characterized as absolute, but rather understood in a relative sense, which will be pertinent in the next section.

⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 89 (French, 148).

constitutes the evil act, one must then ask for the origin of the *negatio*. But St. Thomas is content with stopping at the freedom of the will as the limit beyond which one cannot trace the origin of the evil act any further, as such sufficiently accounts for the non-action of the will with respect to the rule.⁸¹ Thus, Maritain explains:

The first cause (which is not an acting or efficient cause, but is dis-acting and de-efficient), the first cause of the non-consideration of the rule, and consequently of the evil of the free act that will come forth from it, is purely and simply the liberty of the created existent [see Thomas's *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 2, ad 2 and *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 3, ad 2]. The latter possesses the free initiative of an absence (or "nothingness") of consideration, of a vacuum introduced into the warp and woof of being, of a *nihil*; and this time this free initiative is a *first* initiative because it does not consist in acting freely or allowing being to pass, but in freely not-acting and not-willing, in freely frustrating the passage of being.⁸²

Hence, recognizing the dissymmetry between the line of good as being and the line of evil as nonbeing alone allows one to "break the iron-collar of antinomies" produced by the principles that all good comes ultimately from God and the evil in any act must come from the creature alone.

It is evident then that, for Maritain (as for Most), the role of nonbeing in the origin of evil is crucial, and yet it is inevitably not entirely clear to finite intellects how such nonbeing can be properly understood. The *defectus* that is the origin of the evil act has been identified as a *mera negatio*,⁸³ but it is also called a "free failure" that is constituted by not considering the moral rule and is said to "cause" in some way the subsequent *privatio*. The *defectus* that causes a moral evil is "the *non-consideration of the rule*—which is not, note well, an *act*

⁸¹ See Thomas's *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, cited in *Existence and the Existent*, 91 (French, 151).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 91–92 (French, 150–52).

⁸³ A mere negation is "a mere withdrawal from being, a mere lack of a being or of a good *which is not due*: a mere absence which I introduce voluntarily into being"; see *God and the Permission of Evil*, 35 (French, 39; his italics). He cites in the footnote to this text the following passages from St. Thomas: *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, corp. and ad 13; *ST* I, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3; *ST* I-II, q. 75, a. 1, ad 3; and *SCG* III, ch. 10.

of non-consideration, but a *non-act* of consideration.”⁸⁴ Nevertheless, “this non-consideration of the rule is something *real*, since it is the *cause* of the sin; and it is something *free*. . . . Being the *cause* of the evil, it *precedes* the evil, at least by a priority of nature.”⁸⁵ Once the free creature brings this absence (which is nevertheless “real”) into act, it becomes a privation in the moral order, an action that deviates from a good that is *due*, and it is from this that Maritain derives his two “instants of nature.”

How can an absence be called a “real cause” of a fault freely chosen? It must be merely a logical entity that is ontologically nothing and can therefore constitute the ultimate *reason* for the existence of an ontological privation. Thus, it is one form of relative nonbeing yielding another form of relative nonbeing, which is called “real” or “existential” in the sense that it is experienced *as if* it were a form of being. Hence, Maritain says, “Now we know that our human intellect can conceive non-being, and therefore evil, only *ad instar entis*, after the fashion of being, and consequently by speaking of it as of *some thing*, as of a kind of so-called quality.”⁸⁶

Confronting the Opposition

With this kind of reasoning in mind, together with the approach Most adopted toward Garrigou-Lagrange’s objections, the recent objections presented by Steven A. Long against Maritain’s thesis are easily answered. The problem with Long’s critique is immediately evident in the thesis statement of his article and consequently persists throughout. He says, “I will argue that the metaphysical and theocentric conception of natural law . . . is impossible if human volitional activity is outside of the divine causality.”⁸⁷ His explicit target is Maritain’s doctrine on the

⁸⁴ *God and the Permission of Evil*, 35 (French, 39; his italics).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 35 (French, 40; his italics).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 36 (French, 40). He continues: “If in spite of this, *through* or *beyond* the auxiliary being of reason which we have thus constructed, we have seized non-being in its existential reality in the bosom of being rendered ‘lacking’ or ‘deprived’ by it—well then, in order to treat of evil in its existential reality itself, by disengaging it as much as possible from the being of reason which reifies it, we shall find it absolutely necessary to employ a language which does violence to our natural manner of thinking and does violence to words. We shall have to say that when the creature takes the free initiative not to consider the rule—*mera negation*, non-act, mere lack—it *dis-acts*, it *nihilises* or *nihilates*; and that moral evil, the evil of free action, is likewise, as such, a *nihilation*, which this time is a *privation*, privation of a *due* good” (36–37) (French, 40–41).

⁸⁷ Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law,” 558.

divine permission of evil, and it is a good thing, then, that the latter is clearly exempt from the foundation of Long's argument: Maritain's "nihilation" (as Most's "negative non-resistance") is expressly not an activity, but a non-activity, and of course evil is outside divine causality (except for whoever may confess God as indirect cause of evil). Evidently the latter assertion is precisely what Long wishes to contest, but without much force of argument. His primary approach is arguable exegesis of texts from St. Thomas, which I will pass over out of deference for the substance of the matter.

His second line of argument, appearing also in St. Thomas, has to do with the overall good of creation requiring the certain damnation of some.⁸⁸ The old argument goes as follows: (1) God's glory is more manifest if both his mercy and his vindictive justice are made eternally manifest; (2) without infallible permissive decrees, there is no guarantee that his vindictive justice will be manifest; and therefore, (3) infallible permissions are necessary to ensure that his glory is in fact manifest to the fullest degree.

Defending vindictive justice as a good quality of God that should be manifest in a really distinct manner from his mercy is one task, but the chief flaw in this argument is the failure to acknowledge that the reason God creates is not simply to communicate his goodness in whatever way imaginable (as if he were to "show off"), but to manifest it precisely by imparting it in the most fitting manner. Put another way, an act of communicating goodness that ensures the exclusion of some from truly enjoying it certainly would not be the most befitting of an infinitely good and glorious God. It belongs to the very essence of Christian revelation that the intimate identity of God's own inner life be precisely *caritas*. Thus, the only reason for the divine decision to create is to share his glorious being (i.e., goodness, truth, and beauty) *ad extra*. *Bonum est diffusivum sui*! If he were in fact the ultimate reason for each evil act and thus in some sense the architect of every such act, would he not, in such instances, be opposing the diffusion of goodness, whatever the end in view? It does not make sense to say that God wills to manifest his justice by infallibly permitting the ultimate moral destruction of some men whom he chose to create *for the purpose of communicating his own goodness*. Hence, a God who wills to allow his creatures to tend inevitably toward self-destruction would be incompatible with the idea of God as Creator in the Christian tradition.

⁸⁸ See *ibid.*, 573–76.

Long, rather, opts for a Creator who prefers a good story in which some are infallibly permitted condemnation, and he recruits a particular metaphysics in defense of it, rather than yielding to the mysteriousness of how the divine will and intellect relate, particularly with respect to the existence of moral evil.⁸⁹ Speaking of Maritain's thought (in a way that I think coheres well with Most's formulation),⁹⁰ Long states:

He wishes to assert that both the one who actually negates and the one who does not actually negate are equally *permitted* by God to negate (not to consider the rule of reason), and evidently he means this *in the composite sense*. . . . But for classical Thomism, such a one cannot, at the very instant of being freely moved to consider the rule, not freely consider the rule. In other words, all conditions being given, even the one who does not negate but considers the rule of reason is, on Maritain's account, able to negate at the very instant when he does not negate, and this person receives no more aid toward this effect of non-negation than the one who *does negate*. This is to say that God gives a motion that has no actual natural effect save insofar as the creature does not negate. This seems to one formed in classical Thomism to imply something absurd, namely that not to negate (the same non-negation upon which efficacious aid is predicated in this theory) calls for no more divine help than to negate.⁹¹

As Long hints, upholding the potential of finite freedom to negate even as it does not actually negate is no more contradictory than the Bañezian belief that, even in the case of a free creature that does not receive the "application" or actualization necessary for meritorious work (that is, when only "sufficient" grace is bestowed, not "efficacious" grace), absolutely speaking, the creature maintains the power to perform the act. But according to Maritain (and Most), God always conditionally

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, 577.

⁹⁰ Long mentions Most's proposal as essentially in agreement with Maritain's and confesses ignorance concerning its details (see *ibid.*, 578n24). He also briefly notes the convergence of their proposals concerning the nothingness of non-nihilation in Maritain's *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 29, and *Existence and the Existent*, 100n10 (French, 163n1); see Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 586, including n37.

⁹¹ Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 581.

(i.e., “frustrably”) moves man to consideration of the rule of reason, but negation may be initiated autonomously by the creature precisely because the movement is fallible (or frustrable). It is not exactly true to say that the person who does not negate receives no more divine aid than the person who does negate—it need only be denied that God “distinguishes” the two *prior to any consideration/foreknowledge* of the nonbeing present in either. In other words, the person who does not negate does so by divine predestination, but it is not the case that the one who does negate in fact negates simply or precisely because God decided beforehand not to predestine him to non-negation. Rather, without such permission, he would not have been able to negate, and yet such permission did not necessitate the negation. In this sense, one might say that the actual permission followed the negation, but that the negation was possible because every free good act is predestined precisely *on the condition* that it is not negated. “Divine motion or grace merely sufficient or breakable fructifies of itself into *unbreakable* divine motion or into grace efficacious by itself.”⁹²

Presupposing the logic of infallible permissive decrees and apparently reducing the notion of “conditional decrees” to that of “indifferent premotion,”⁹³ Long comes back again and again to the following disjunction: *negatio* is either something positive or something negative. If it is the former, then it must be caused by God; if it is the latter, then it must exist wherever God does not supply the contrary.⁹⁴ The reason he is faced with such a “dichotomy of being and lack of being” is that he does not discern the existence of *species of nonbeing*.⁹⁵ “The negation of ‘shatterable’ divine motion by the creature is (and must be if this negation is to occur) permitted by God”⁹⁶—yes, but not *infallibly*. “[T]he divine permission of evil must precede its realization, and this permission must certainly consist in not causing the contrary of that which is permitted”⁹⁷—or

⁹² Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 33.

⁹³ Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law,” 563.

⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, 582ff.

⁹⁵ For a detailed taxonomy of nonbeings, see Jesús Villagrasa Lasaga, *Realismo Metafísico e irrealidad. Estudio sobre la obra ‘Teoría del objeto puro’ de Antonio Millán-Puelles* (Madrid, ES: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2008). See Joshua Brotherton, “Phenomenology and Metaphysics in *Realismo Metafísico e Irrealidad* by Jesús Villagrasa,” *Información Filosófica* 5, no. 11 (November 2008): 219–37, for an English summary and analysis of this work.

⁹⁶ Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law,” 582.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

in not causing it *infrustrably*. “Negation must consist of act or lack of act—it cannot inhabit an ontological limbo peopled with beings of reason.”⁹⁸ The premise ought to be granted but qualified: there are species of act and, consequently, also of non-act! Combining Most and Maritain, one can recognize that the following two non-acts are distinct, one preceding the good act and the other the evil act: (1) negative non-resistance and (2) the *negatio* of not considering the rule of reason. Hence, positive non-resistance is an act frustrably willed by God, and the *privatio* of willing to contradict the rule of reason is fallibly permitted.

Here is the formulation of divine permission, obtained exegetically from a few texts of St. Thomas,⁹⁹ that is at the heart of his defense of the Bañezian position: “[N]egation is either permitted by God in the non-conserving of the creature from the lack of being in which this negation consists, or else (if negation were thought to be positive) . . . it is caused by God in the creating of that being in which it consists.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, because all good acts flow directly from divine causality, the only thing God has to do for evil to occur is withdraw that causality of good, and thus the withdrawal of such influx is itself the *sufficient condition* for an act to be evil. But consider this possibility instead: divine withdrawal of good is a *necessary condition* for an act to be evil, but evil is actually effected where there is also an initiative of evil from the creature, while divine causation of good is a sufficient condition for every good act, taking place only where the divine intellect does not “foreknow” *negatio* on the part of the free creature. In fact, God both permits negation (fallibly) and provides the being of non-negation *on the condition* that it is not negated/resisted. Long objects that non-negation must be an act originating only in divine causality, but we have seen that it is a non-act logically antecedent to the divinely caused act of non-negation (positive non-resistance),¹⁰¹ conditionally or “frustrably” willed (in the words

⁹⁸ Ibid., 583.

⁹⁹ See *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2; *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 4, ad 1; and *ST* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3.

¹⁰⁰ Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law,” 583.

¹⁰¹ In illustration of the sense of “logical antecedence” here, consider the fact that, even though the existence of a created world that is finite in duration does not imply a prior void, and even though time in fact began with the universe (as it is an aspect of the created world), there is still some sense in which there was nothing “before” there was something created, even in the case of an eternal creation. The only difference in the case of divine foreknowledge and

of Maritain) and consequent to divine foreknowledge of demerits (in the words of Most). In response to Long's second objection, that non-consideration of the rule of reason would inevitably follow where God does not efficaciously will its consideration,¹⁰² again I say that the fact that he does not cause consideration infallibly does not necessitate the "effect" of non-consideration, precisely because the working hypothesis (of those who reject infallible permissions) is that he can cause consideration (and every free good act) in a conditional manner. The burden of proof lies on the side of those who deny his power to will the good on the condition of the absence of obstacles proposed by free creatures.

Long reserves for a footnote the metaphysical argument on which he must rely to reject the insistence of Maritain and Most that non-resistance can be a non-act and thus a nonbeing:

[T]hat one not negate means an absence of a pure non-being, which in context means the positive act of consideration of the rule and hence God's actual causing of this consideration. Hence it seems to me Maritain correctly saw that non-negation had to be given formal priority over actual consideration of the rule if his account were to be upheld. . . . Yet this seems to be . . . a pure fallacy. . . . [William Most writes], 'causality is not required for non-beings, among which is the absence of resistance.' Since the absence of resistance is consistent with there being no subject and indeed no universe at all, this is true; but if we speak of the *absence of a particular negation in an existing being*, then we are necessarily speaking about something positive (if there is not pure non-being with respect to something, then in that same respect there must be being), and this must come from God.¹⁰³

It is strange that Long himself, rather than Most and Maritain, seems to be guilty of the very thing he attributes to them here: texts have already been quoted in which he speaks in the general terms of good act versus negation rather than specifying that every evil act in partic-

predestination is that we are considering this logical entity that is an ontological non-entity to be in some way determinative of the ontological entity consequently caused by God, but only because God so chooses to base his predestination upon such foreknowledge of nonentities.

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, 585.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 586–87n37.

ular is infallibly permitted (according to the Bañezian thesis). I think all Thomists agree that God wills antecedent to all foreknowledge every particular good act and everything that is good or ontologically positive in all acts—in other words, the divine antecedent will is the ultimate origin of whatever is entitative in evil acts (i.e., every act insofar as it is free, an act, and existent). Only the new proposal insists that man of himself does not necessarily always will evil.¹⁰⁴ With this in mind, it becomes clear that the central problem with the Bañezian mindset is to conceive, without reason, the being of an evil act to be determinative of its quality as an evil act. In other words, the real question is whether the “evil specification” of an act is entitative or non-entitative. The Bañezian says the species of an act determines whether it is this or that particular evil act, whereas the new proposals want to affirm that the species of an act, while determinative of whether it is this or that particular *act* (prescinding from its moral quality), is not necessarily determinative of whether or not the act is *evil*, as the evil in the act cannot simply result from what is good (or entitative) in the act. Addressing Long’s last statements directly, I say that the absence of resistance to a particular good act predestined by the divine antecedent will does not at all mean the absence of a subject or a universe—“the absence of a particular negation” (i.e., negative non-resistance) is not necessarily “something positive” when that designated as a “negation” is not total nonbeing, but a particular nonbeing that brings about the evil of a free act. The nonbeing that is the absence of resistance to a particular good act (or a particular grace) is distinct from the nonbeing that is the absence of consideration of the rule of reason precisely because the first is a negation with respect to the being of an evil act (insofar as it is a being) while the second is a negation with respect to the being peculiarly present in every good act (that is, the psychological “mechanics” involved).

Long again makes the odd argument that God cannot will that a free good act be performed *on the condition* that the creature does not obstruct such an influx because that would imply the non-existence of the universe:

It is *absolutely essential* to note that we may not say in the strict sense that God conditions the gift of efficacious help upon

¹⁰⁴ “For if a man can lack even one evil disposition without grace, then he is negatively disposed in regard to at least one grace that can come” (Most, *GPSWG*, 493).

“non-negation” *alone, simpliciter*, because the mere absence of negation as such *does not imply the existence of anything*. . . . God cannot condition the bestowal of efficacious help upon *non-being*, and thus the absence of negation here must be the presence of something else, caused by God. Thus it is not merely by *an absence of negation* that the rule of reason is actually considered by some creature, but by the positive substance of an act of consideration that owes its being to God.¹⁰⁵

First, nobody is arguing that God conditions efficacious help upon non-negation *simpliciter*. It is not simply absence that is indicated as the condition, but the absence of a particular act of nihilation (that is, of resistance to a particular good act). Second, to say God *cannot* do something should, at least, follow a more adequate understanding of the concepts involved—there is no reason why God cannot condition his efficacious help upon the relative nonbeing that is the absence of a particular act of nihilation/resistance. Therefore, the conclusion does not follow; in fact, the conclusion is based upon a set of assumed premises. He claims the “revisionist account” fails because, “whether the creature negates or nihilates or shatters the divine motion . . . this very negation itself *presupposes* that God has not efficaciously moved the creature to consider the rule. One cannot consider the rule of reason without being efficaciously moved to do so by God, and only if one is not efficaciously moved by God to consider the rule of reason does negation occur.”¹⁰⁶ It is true that nihilation would not be possible if God’s motion were infallibly efficacious, but whether such motion *must be* unshatterable is precisely the question. There is no necessity for man not to consider the rule if he is not *infallibly* caused to consider it. Hence, the problem is rather presupposing “total depravity”¹⁰⁷ or the inability of man without infallibly efficacious grace not to nihilate sufficient or resistible grace. To presuppose that man must always nihilate or not consider the rule in the absence of infallible causation is to assert precisely that all efficacious grace is irresistible—that is, that there are no resistible graces that are not in fact resisted.

Perhaps such rapprochements with Calvinism and Jansenism are explained by the Augustinian preoccupation with the overall good

¹⁰⁵ Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law,” 587 (his italics).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ I do not know what other label could be applied to the following assertion: “one is always negating consideration of the rule *unless* God [infallibly] causes the contrary” (ibid., 589).

of creation most appropriately manifesting the glory of God only if the ultimate effects of his mercy and justice are eternally distinct (i.e., in the salvation of some and the reprobation of others). So much is sacrificed for such an abstract ideal! Certainly there are other ways of allowing God's glory to shine forth to its fullest in all creation. Concerning the contemporary revision of Thomistic predestination, Long says:

[I]n the newer account, the good for the sake of which evil is permitted is not the infinitely transcendent God and the manifestation of his justice and his mercy. Rather, on the new account, the good for the sake of which evil is permitted is an accident extrinsically pertinent to our acts, which in no way defines the essential character of our acts as does true freedom, and which accident is merely the *ab extra* effect of a self-limiting ordinance of God.¹⁰⁸

While there is work to be done in the realm of mystical theology regarding the implications of the new proposal for the spiritual life,¹⁰⁹ it suffices to say here that, in reframing the divine means of manifesting his own glory in a way more befitting of God (and creation), the new proposal need not view every evil as an accident (as if unforeseen by God). It does, however, take more seriously the role of human freedom in the execution of moral evil, as well as the innocence of God in the course of human events.¹¹⁰ Thomas Joseph White objects to

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 591.

¹⁰⁹ It would be interesting to see to what extent the mystical theology of Garrigou-Lagrange in his *Providence: God's Loving Care for Men and the Need for Confidence in Almighty God* and especially in his three-volume *Three Ages of the Interior Life, Christian Perfection and Contemplation* necessarily depends upon the strict Augustinian-Thomistic view of grace and freedom that he utilizes in foundational fashion throughout those works.

¹¹⁰ The formulation of William Most seems better fit for understanding the way in which moral evil must be incorporated into divine providence than is that of Maritain. Most's speculations on providence may provide a way to address Levering's concerns with Maritain's nihilation doctrine. Levering says: "Regarding Maritain's metaphysical solution, nihilating consists in a non-advertence to the rule of reason. Does not this lack of advertence, from which follows the freely willed defect, require God's permission? If so, is God as 'first cause' entirely out of the picture, as Maritain supposes? As Steven Long puts it, 'One grants that the creature is defectible, but any actual defection presupposes the divine permission, since nothing pertinent to being in any way can occur unless it is at least permitted by God'" (*Predestination*, 176). Maritain might

Long's Bañezian approach on the basis that the metaphysical arguments recruited for it fail to distinguish sufficiently between the different kinds of evil.¹¹¹

Long's interpretation runs the risk of identifying moral evil with natural evil. . . . This lack, which inhabits sinful action, is the inevitable result of a tendency of the will toward privation, due to the natural "entropy" of created being which tends toward nothingness. . . . Because of this tendency, sin occurs necessarily in the wake of God's *inactivity* (that is, his permissive will to *not* aid the creature who will otherwise sin), rather than by a moral deformation resulting from the creature's *refusal* of the inspired movements of natural and supernatural goodness. In this case, the human act of sin is interpreted primarily as an act lacking the necessary stimulus from God such that sin would be avoidable. Both Maritain and Lonergan have argued cogently that this position seems to make God more a cause of moral deficiency than the creature itself, since God chooses to

respond by saying that non-acts need not be specifically permitted; in fact, he states that "shatterable motions" themselves include an "undifferentiated and conditional permission of evil" and that where the free creature takes the first initiative to nihilate there is sin "determinately permitted" by a permissive decree that is "consequent to the non-consideration of the rule"; see *God and the Permission of Evil*, 63 (original French edition, 64). But Most would add that every resistance offered by each free creature is first known as such and then either permitted or overridden (and thus actually non-existent), even if the latter option is rarely chosen. The universality of divine providence is better respected if we do not simply say God's desires are either resisted (nihilated) or not, but also affirm that they are efficacious according to God's "taking into consideration" the resistance posed to his (antecedent) will, which is "conditional" according to our manner of understanding its efficacy (see especially *GPSWG*, pt. 4).

¹¹¹ See especially Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 563: "[J]ust as the creature will fall into non-existence apart from divine conservation in being, so it will fail of good apart from divine conservation in the good. . . . 'To sin is nothing else than to fall from the good which belongs to any being according to its nature...' [ST I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2]." The alternative view is that God always supplies the good and man does not of necessity resist it, since he is of himself also capable of nonbeing that is not morally deficient (i.e., negative non-resistance or non-nihilation). Against Long's interpretation, White invokes Thomas's *SCG* III, chs. 159–61, in support of the position that grace is usually resistible and that man is capable of impeding grace (see "Von Balthasar and Journet," 661–62n68 and 664n72).

withhold resources from certain creatures *such* [sic] *they must necessarily* choose evil. . . . One may consider sin as a negation of being and goodness that comes from the creature *alone* as a “first cause” without this implying any ontological autonomy on the part of the creature. The reason for this is that sinful acts involve a form of negation that is parasitical upon created being. . . . For Aquinas, as I have noted above, this can occur even while the creature remains ontically dependent upon God for its being-in-action.¹¹²

Long, however, is not the most radical contemporary proponent of the Bañezian thesis.¹¹³ He accepts the modifications offered by Garrigou-Lagrange: “Of course, divine aid is only withheld because of prior resistance; but this prior resistance itself traces to defect and negation, and these must be permitted if they are to be (no other answer is consistent with the omnipotence of God).”¹¹⁴

Conclusion

It ought to be clear by now that, if one approaches created instrumentality as a participation in divine causation and yet formally distinct from it—that is, if one views the deficiency of human action as a dispositive “addition” to divine agency, itself entirely innocent—then the negative particularity of moral evils can be traced entirely to the instrument as origin without any *causal* relation to the transcendent source of such agency. While the nonbeing thus “contributed” by the free creature is logically prior to the entitative species of predestined acts, the being of the acts that are actually produced eminently contains such negative determination insofar as the latter has reality only in terms of the former. God is the ultimate reason why some men choose to do the good he wills for them, but he is not the ultimate reason why others choose to resist his antecedent will. Since man can do nothing without God, he cannot actualize his own potency for performing good acts without efficacious help. However, such does not imply that, any time

¹¹² White, “Von Balthasar and Journet,” 662–63n70 (his italics). He immediately adds: “A helpful theological reflection that criticizes the Bañezian position adopted by Long and entertained by Emery can be found in the essay of Jean-Hervé Nicolas, ‘La volonté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché,’ *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992): 177–96” (663n70).

¹¹³ See Salza, *The Mystery of Predestination*, for a more radical expression of the Bañezian position than that of Garrigou-Lagrange and Long.

¹¹⁴ Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law,” 599n46.

man chooses not to cooperate with grace, it is ultimately because God arbitrarily chooses not to provide the application of efficacious grace that he initially desires to impart.

The major purpose of this article has been, with the help of William Most, to rebut the attempt of Steven Long to refute the proposed revision of Thomistic predestination represented chiefly by Jacques Maritain (who is indebted to Francisco Marin-Sola). Nevertheless, there ought to be a greater appreciation for the efforts of Garrigou-Lagrange to temper the “traditional” Thomistic position in the *de auxiliis* controversy.¹¹⁵ If only Maritain could have more directly mediated the dispute on grace between Garrigou-Lagrange and Marin-Sola (not to mention other topics!), the divide among Thomists on the issue of predestination and grace with respect to human freedom might not have persisted with such vehemence. Certainly, a hypo-Augustinian Thomism is necessary to provide an eventual resolution to the *de auxiliis* debate. Most aptly displays in detail how negative reprobation (conceived in terms of infallible permission)¹¹⁶ contradicts the universal salvific will of God and intimates an alternative metaphysical framework (guided by revelation). Maritain explains in more philosophical terms why neo-Bañezianism is inadequate and lays out, with precision, a superior Thomistic metaphysic. Therefore, in response to critiques primarily of the latter, I have utilized both (but primarily the former) in order to help demonstrate that infallible permissive decrees (and negative reprobation so conceived) are by no means a metaphysical necessity, a thesis around which the Bañezian approach most evidently turns. N·V

¹¹⁵ Most fails to note the effort of Garrigou-Largange to distance himself in part from a pure Bañezianism (see *GPSWG*, 339–40).

¹¹⁶ It ought to be clear that both Most and Maritain believe it possible for God to infallibly cause a free good act. But while Maritain squarely opposes infallible permissive decrees altogether, Most focuses his criticism on the point at which infallible permissive decrees would serve as means of ensuring the damnation of free creatures (i.e., a particular Bañezian understanding of negative reprobation).