

Divine Causality and Created Freedom: A Thomistic Personalist View

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THOMAS AQUINAS ARGUES that God causes all beings other than himself and moves all of them to all their acts, including causing us and moving us to our free acts.¹ This claim is connected to the set of issues surrounding the relation between created freedom and divine providence, predestination, and grace. A strong defender of the freedom of created persons, such as a Thomistic personalist, might reject this aspect of Aquinas’s account and contend that to be free is to be “lord of one’s acts” (*dominus sui actus*).² By this, the personalist would understand that the created free person is the ultimate determinant³ of whether he or she acts (I refer to this, following the Thomistic tradition, as the “exercise” of the act) and of what he or she does in those acts (the “content” or “specification” of the act). Throughout this article, I shall refer to the last sentence as the “personalist thesis”

¹ Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermeneias* (hereafter, *In Ph*) I, lec. 14; *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* (hereafter, *DM*), q. 3, aa. 1–2; q. 6, a. un.; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei* (hereafter, *DP*), q. 3, aa. 5 and 7; *Summa contra gentiles* (hereafter, *SCG*) III, chs. 65 and 67; *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter, *ST*) I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2; q. 104, a. 1; q. 105, aa. 4–5; I-II, q. 9, a. 6; q. 79, a. 1. Citations from Aquinas are from www.corpusthomisticum.org; all translations are mine.

² Aquinas, *In I sent.* (*Scriptum super sententiis*) d. 17, q. 2, a. 3; *In II sent.* d. 7, q. 1, a. 2; *In III sent.* d. 18, q. 1, a. 2; *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* (hereafter, *DV*), q. 5, a. 10; *SCG* II, ch. 23; III, chs. 111–13 and 155; *ST* I-II, q. 6, a. 2, ad 2; II-II, q. 64, a. 5, ad 3, and q. 122, a. 1.

³ One being, *a*, determines itself or another, *b*, to some act, *c*, if and only if it is ultimately up to *a* whether *b* does *c* and what the content of *c* is, regardless of conditions external or internal to *a*.

and to any theory that holds this thesis as “personalist.”⁴ A Thomistic personalist would want to endorse as much Thomistic metaphysics as is consistent with this claim, and I shall refer to any theory based on such a desire as “Thomistic.” I here present a way of reconciling the personalist thesis with some central features of Thomistic metaphysics. Before presenting my view, I present a reading of Aquinas and of six interpretations of his thought on these issues. My view synthesizes features of these views and responds to problems in each. After presenting my reading of Aquinas and his interpreters, I outline and provide evidence for my Thomistic personalist view. Finally, I respond to two objections. I discuss only the natural side of this issue, not issues of the supernatural, predestination, or grace.

Aquinas’s Position

In this section, I present my reading of Aquinas’s views on God’s knowledge and will of creatures and on how these relate to the created will. I draw on the Thomistic tradition to interpret Aquinas when that tradition makes what I take to be the best sense of his texts. I do not argue that this reading is the right interpretation of Aquinas, but rather that it grounds the six interpretive views, which are the background to my view.

On Aquinas’s view, God understands all creatures practically, as an artist understands his artwork through his plan of that work and through knowing himself as cause of that work without being causally affected by it.⁵ By one act, which is really identical to himself, God directly understands himself and his ideas primarily and creatures

⁴ See these Thomistic personalists: W. Norris Clarke, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1993), 31–32 and 72–73; John Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press), 91–95 and 168; Kenneth Schmitz, “The Solidarity of Personalism and the Metaphysics of the Existential Act,” in *The Texture of Being* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 143–45; Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, trans. Kurt Reinhardt (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2002), 372 and 400–01; and Karol Wojtyła and Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht/Boston: Reidel, 1979), 100–01 and 115. See also non-Thomists who argue for a similar view in which freedom is given to us by God so that we are “other” than God: Georges Florovsky, “Creation and Creaturehood,” in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 3, *Creation and Redemption* (Belmont: Norland, 1976), 46, and Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 158.

⁵ *In I sent.* d. 38, q. 1, a. 1; *ST I*, q. 14, a. 8.

secondarily.⁶ God understands creatures through himself—that is, he is the “what” the later tradition called his “formal concepts,” that in himself by virtue of which he understands creatures. Our formal concepts are the intelligible species that we abstract from things, but God’s formal concepts are identical to himself. In us, understanding presupposes a causal process of reception of species, but God understands all beings through his essence without any causal process.⁷

God’s knowledge and will are the cause of creatures; they are really identical to God, though conceptually distinct from one another.⁸ (The statements made so far about God’s identity with his acts or his formal concepts might raise questions as to whether God would have been really and intrinsically different than he is had he willed to create other—or no—creatures. The Thomistic tradition is split on this question, though all agree that God cannot change what he wills and knows, given that he wills and knows something. I shall review some of the main positions on this question in the next section.) God’s acts of knowledge and will are both causally and explanatorily prior to creatures, but neither is causally prior to the other. But God wills things for reasons—that is, he wills one creature to be on account of another, following a reasonable order for one end, divine goodness.⁹ God’s knowledge of creatures is not explained by his will in the sense that his knowledge is reduced from potency to act by his will. Rather, God knows creatures because their formal concepts are in him by his nature and because these concepts, together with his will, are the cause or explanation of things.¹⁰ His knowledge of creatures is explained by his will in the sense that he would not know the creatures that exist had he not willed them to be.¹¹ If he causes

⁶ *In I sent.* d. 38, q. 1, a. 3; *DV*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 3–4; *SCG* I, chs. 65–67; *ST* I, q. 14, aa. 6–7 and 14; q. 15, a. 1.

⁷ *DV*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2, 6, and 10; a. 4, ad 2; a. 12, ad 11; *Sentencia libri de anima* (hereafter, *In DA*) III, lec. 9; *ST* I, q. 14, aa. 5, 13, and 16, ad 2. Cf. Francisco Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae* (hereafter, *DMet*), d. 2, s. 1, n. 1 (www.salvadorcastellote.com); Thomas de Vio Cajetan, *Expositio super sancti Thomae Aquinatis* (Rome: Leonine ed., 1888; hereafter, *In ST*) I, q. 85, a. 2, nos. 3 and 5 (vol. 5, p. 335).

⁸ We rightly understand God analogically through concepts drawn from creatures, though we do not understand directly the mode of existence that these contents have in God, where they are all identical to God.

⁹ *SCG* I, chs. 86–87; *ST* I, q. 19, a. 5, ad 1.

¹⁰ *SCG* I, chs. 47–50; *ST* I, q. 14, aa. 2 (especially ad 3), 5, and 6.

¹¹ Cf. Francis Sylvester of Ferrara, *Commentary on Summa contra gentiles* (Rome: Leonine ed., 1918–1926; hereafter *In SCG*) I, ch. 77, nos. 9 and 11 (vol. 13, pp. 94–95).

something, then he must be essentially present to it, since effects are immediately dependent on their causes.¹² But he need not be essentially or causally present to a creature to understand it¹³ because understanding is an intentional, not a causal, relation.

God also knows creatures speculatively and by “vision.” When an intelligent being has the formal concept of some being and is in the actual presence of that being, the intelligent being elicits an intentional act, the “knowledge of vision,” whereby it knows the being as it actually exists.¹⁴ This idea is somewhat unclear in Aquinas, but Thomists in the Dominican tradition make good sense of it. They refer to the knowledge of vision as “intuitive cognition.” John of St. Thomas explains this concept: to be in the actual or “physical” presence of a thing, which is a necessary condition for intuitively cognizing it, is to be in the same “now” as that thing.¹⁵

By virtue of willing to create each particular creature, God is eternally physically present to each creature and each time—that is, all creatures and times are really contained in his eternal “now,” though not all creatures and times are present in the same temporal “now.” Because of all this, God “sees” (or “intuitively cognizes”) all creatures as they are in their actual existence, not just as they are in his ideas. Intuitive cognition reaches out, as it were, and touches its objects intentionally: the intuitive gaze is “terminated” at the real things present to it. God is not thereby causally determined by creatures, since he intuits them by means of his formal concepts, to which he is identical, and by means of his one act of knowledge by which he eternally knows himself. However, he is, as some Thomists say, “objectively,” “terminatively, or “materially” determined by them—that is, in order to know them as actually existing objects, they must actually exist, and, when they exist, they immediately become an

¹² *ST* I, q. 8, a. 1, ad 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, ad 2.

¹⁴ *ST* I, q. 14, a. 16; q. 85, a. 2.

¹⁵ Cf. *In I sent.* d. 39, q. 1, aa. 2–3; *In III sent.* d. 14, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2; *DV*, q. 9, a. 2, ad 2; q. 3, a. 3, ad 8; *ST* I, q. 14, a. 3, ad 2; *DV*, q. 1, a. 2; John of St. Thomas, *Cursus philosophicus thomisticus* (Paris: Vives, 1883; hereafter, *CP*), *Logica*, pt. 2, q. 23, a. 1 (vol. 1, pp. 631–636) and a. 2 (1:642); *Cursus theologicus* (Cologne: Wilhelm Metternich, 1711; hereafter, *In ST*) I, q. 14, d. 18, a. 1 (vol. 1, p. 397); q. 14, d. 19, a. 4 (1:431); Jean-Baptiste Gonet, *Clypeus theologiae thomisticae* (Antwerp, BE: Fratrum de tournes, 1783), t. 3, d. 4, a. 7, s. 1, no. 211 (p. 235); a. 8, s. 2, no. 273 (p. 244); Ferrara, *In I SCG*, vol. 13, ch. 66, no. 15 (p. 189); Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus* (Paris: Victor Palme, 1877; hereafter, *In ST*) I, *De scientia Dei*, t. 3, d. 6, dub. 2, no. 20 (vol. 1, p. 465); t. 3, d. 7, dub. 3, s. 3, n. 39 (1:483).

object “terminating” his act of knowing.¹⁶ This is not causal determination and so does not violate divine impassibility, nor does it imply that God has real relations to creatures, since it is a purely intentional relation. God’s knowledge would involve a real relation to creatures only if he were causally determined by them or was of the same order of being as them or if they added a perfection to him.¹⁷ Some Thomists defend the claim that God intuitively cognizes creatures by arguing that it would be a defect in God if he did not know creatures in this way, since he would lack a perfection that some creatures have and he would not know creatures in themselves.¹⁸ Furthermore, since his intuitive cognition reaches objects themselves, God knows creaturely defects, including sins, not through his essence or causality, as he does their good features, but in the creatures themselves as he sees them intuitively.¹⁹

¹⁶ *DV*, q. 2, a. 12; *SCG* I, ch. 66; *ST* I, q. 14, aa. 9 and 13. Cf. Cajetan, *In I ST*, q. 14, a. 13, n. 14 (vol. 4, p. 189); Ferrara, *In I SCG*, ch. 49, no. 3.3 (vol. 13, p. 143); ch. 66, nos. 7–8 (13:187); ch. 67, n. 18 (13:197); John of St. Thomas, *In I ST*, q. 10, d. 9, a. 3 (p. 168); q. 14, d. 17, a. 2 (pp. 392–95). God’s act of knowing creatures is the same act as the act by which he knows himself. This one act is specified by its primary object and, then, can also take on further secondary objects. These do not add anything real to God but just add to him a relation of reason; cf. John of St. Thomas, *CP, Logica*, pt. 2, q. 23, a. 1 (vol. 1, pp. 635–36), and Suárez, *DMet*, d. 30, s. 14, nos. 21, 26, and 29. Jacques Maritain says that creatures are “constituted known” or “caused known” by God’s presence to them; see *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantieri and Gerald Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1948), 86–87, 105–06, and 112; and *God and the Permission of Evil* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1966), 71–72. This notion could be understood in a couple of ways. First, the notion of constituting something as known not by self-modification but by making it an intentional object is suggestive of the phenomenological notion of constitution whereby a thing becomes an intentional object and is contained within a certain sort of intentional act but does not thereby modify the intentional agent as such; to be conscious of an object involves constituting it as an intentional object. God, on this view, constitutes creatures as intentional objects without being modified himself. Second, it is also suggestive of the scholastic notion of “vital act,” in which a living being elicits an act, such as a cognitive act intending an object, rather than being given the act by an object; cf. John of St. Thomas, *CP, Phil. Nat.*, pt. 3, q. 5, a. 2 (vol. 3, p. 303). God’s act intending creatures would be an elicited vital act, not an act determined by another. This is similar to Stump’s notion of divine self-determination, considered below.

¹⁷ Cf. *DP*, q. 7, a. 10; *ST* I, q. 13, a. 7.

¹⁸ Cf. Gonet, *Clypeus*, t. 3, d. 4, a. 7, s. 1, nos. 211 and 235; a. 8, s. 2, nos. 244 and 273; Domingo Bañez, *Scholastica commentaria in primam partem* (hereafter, *In I ST*) (Salamanca, ES: Apud S. Stephanum, O.P., 1585), q. 14, a. 13 (p. 515B).

¹⁹ *In I sent.* d. 36, q. 1, a. 2; *ST* I, q. 14, a. 10, ad 2. Cf. Bañez, *In I ST*, q. 14, a. 10

God is also the transcendent and universal cause of created being, and of creatures being necessary, contingent, or free. The effects to which he moves these kinds of beings are, correspondingly, necessary, contingent, or free.²⁰ God's causality does not conflict with creaturely contingency. It does not follow, Aquinas says, from the necessity of the conditionals (where *x* is some creature, "if God wills *x*, then *x*," and "if God knows *x*, then *x*") that their consequents are necessary; they are necessary if and only if the secondary cause of *x* causes *x* necessarily. God is capable of willing contingent effects also because no creature has a necessary connection to the divine will; only God's own goodness is willed necessarily by him, since it alone is the proper and adequate object of his will. All other things are willed as extrinsic means to that object, and as they are not necessary for the attainment of that object, they are not willed necessarily by God considered in themselves. Rather, they are only willed necessarily by God in the sense of necessity of supposition—that is, if we suppose that he has eternally determined to will them, then necessarily they are willed by him, and if he eternally knows them, then necessarily they are as he knows them to be. But this necessity in God willing and knowing creatures does not make creatures necessitated in a problematic sense, since God wills and knows all things from eternity in their actuality and presence—that is, he knows and wills them exactly as they are in the moment that they are. He can do this because he is the source of all being in all of its modes; God's transcendent and eternal mode of causality, prior to all creaturely being, allows him to cause all kinds of creaturely being, and even necessitate them in the sense that he immutably wills all that he wills, without jeopardizing their contingency or freedom.²¹

In order to understand how God wills creatures, we must understand Aquinas's distinction between causing creatures and moving

(p. 507E–508B); John of St. Thomas, *In I ST*, q. 14, d. 18, a. 4 (p. 410); Salmon-ticensis, *In I ST, De scientia Dei*, t. 3, d. 6, dub. 2, s. 3, no. 17 (vol. 1, p. 464). Most Thomists make sense of all this by saying that God really has an act of intuitive cognition in himself whereby he really knows all creatures but that any relationality to creatures involved in this act is a relation of reason, not a real relation.

²⁰ *In PH I*, lec. 14; *DP*, q. 6, a. 1; *SCG III*, ch. 70; *ST I*, q. 19, a. 8; q. 44, a. 1. Cf. *ST I*, q. 22, a. 2, and *Super epistolam beati Pauli ad Romanos lectura* (hereafter, *In Rom*), ch. 9, lec. 2.

²¹ *DM*, q. 16, a. 7, ad 15; *DV*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 4 and ad 7; q. 23, a. 4; *ST I*, q. 14, a. 13; q. 19, a. 3; q. 22, a. 4.

them, which is founded on the distinction between the real principles of essence and the act of existence in the fundamental structure of created, finite being.²² The essence of a being is what the being is, all of its positive features insofar as it is able to exist. The act of existence of a being is the actuality of the whole being. Temporally, the act of existence and the essence of a being arise simultaneously. Act of existence is naturally prior to essence in that it is more fundamental to a being, since it actualizes the essence. But potentiality is prior to actuality in that every created actuality must be received and limited by a potentiality; potentiality explains why actuality is limited in the way that it is. There is a logical order in which the essence of some being is first caused and then that essence receives and limits an act of existence, and so an actually existing being comes to be.²³ Both substances and accidents have essences and acts of existence, though substances have them in themselves, while accidents have them insofar as they are apt to actualize substances.²⁴

We can now consider God's causing of creatures. God efficiently causes all beings by conferring acts of existence directly and immediately on them. Since acts of existence actualize essences, God causes the essence of each individual being to be, and so he causes beings both as beings and as the kinds of beings that they are. In nearly all cases, God also specifies the essence of the being as well when he efficiently causes the being. God exemplarily causes creatures in that they have their essence and act of existence by participation

²² Aquinas, *Expositio libri Boetii de hebdomadibus* (hereafter, *In de heb*), lec. 1; *In I sent.* d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; *De ente et essentia* (hereafter, *DEE*), ch. 4; *DP*, q. 1, a. 1; q. 7, a. 2; *DV*, q. 1, a. 1; *SCG II*, ch. 52; *ST I*, q. 3, a. 4.

²³ Cf. *In de heb*, lec. 2; *In II sent.* d. 1, q. 1, a. 4; *DP*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 9; *SCG I*, ch. 42; *SCG II*, ch. 52; *ST I*, q. 3, a. 4; q. 75, a. 5, ad 1; q. 104, a. 1, ad 1; Aquinas, *In IV met.*, lec. 2, no. 558; *Super librum de causis exposition* (hereafter, *In LDC*) lec. 1; *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, ch. 1, lec. 5, no. 134. See also Brian Shanley, "Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (hereafter, *ACPQ*) 72 (1998): 105–06. For important critiques of this view, see Suarez, *DMet*, d. 31, s. 6, no. 12, and William DeCarlo, *The Ultimate Reducibility of Essence to Existence in Existential Metaphysics* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

²⁴ *In I sent.* d. 17, q. un., a. 1, ad 2; d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; *In IV sent.* d. 12, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 3, ad 5; *DEE*, ch. 6; *DP*, q. 3, a. 11; q. 7, a. 4; *SCG I*, chs. 22 and 25; *SCG IV*, ch. 14; *ST I*, q. 45, a. 4; q. 90, a. 2. See Barry Brown, *Accidental Being* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 62–65, 99–100, and 148, and John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000) 259–65. This interpretation of Aquinas is, as Wippel notes, controversial.

in him. He finally causes creatures in that they are directed toward him to display his goodness.²⁵ Substances are the primary, direct objects of God's causality. Principles of substances and accidents are "co-created" by God, caused by God not primarily or directly, but as actualities or other principles of substances.²⁶ Creatures cause beings secondarily by causing essences that receive acts of existence.²⁷

In addition to causing beings, God also moves substances to perform acts. Moving presupposes an existing substance in potency to accidental act and reduces that substance to act. Nothing can be moved from potentiality to actuality except by something already in actuality.²⁸ To understand this, we must consider the distinction between *per se* and *per accidens* causes. *Per se* causes are directed by their nature to an effect. For example, fire is a *per se* cause of heat in a pot of water. In a chain of *per se* causes, the first cause is the primary cause of all effects in the chain. *Per accidens* causes are not directed by their nature to an effect. For example, a father *qua* father is a *per accidens* cause of heat in a pot of water, since it is not in the nature of fatherhood to cause heat. Chance events—when multiple causes bring about an event to which no cause was *per se* ordered—and moral evil, which is a privation of the order of a free act to its due good, have only *per accidens* causes, since no cause is *per se* ordered to these effects.²⁹ The actuality that first moves a substance to act cannot be the substance's essential or existential actuality, since the new act in a new perfection over and above these. Rather, God, who is Pure Act and the Unmoved Mover, acts in every agent by moving it to its act. God is the primary *per se* mover of all created powers by which substances are the secondary *per se* movers of their acts.³⁰ Through this *per se* motion, God directs all things to their ends and sustains them in acting well.³¹

Aquinas applies this analysis of God's causing and moving to the created will. God causes my free acts as accidental beings by bestowing on them an act of existence. He also moves my will from potency

²⁵ *In I sent.* d. 38, q. 1, a. 3; *ST I*, q. 4, a. 2; q. 44, aa. 1, 3, and 4; q. 47, a. 1.

²⁶ *In XII met.* lec. 1; *ST I*, q. 45, a. 4; q. 104, a. 4, ad 3. See also Brown, *Accidental Being*, 39–40.

²⁷ Cf. *ST I*, q. 2, a. 3; q. 44, a. 1; q. 45, a. 5; q. 103, a. 6; q. 104, aa. 1–2.

²⁸ *DP*, q. 3, a. 7.

²⁹ Aquinas, *De principiis naturae*, nos. 12 and 39; *SCG III*, ch. 74; *ST I*, q. 49, a. 1; q. 103, a. 7.

³⁰ Cf. *In LDC*, lecs. 2–3.

³¹ Cf. *SCG III*, ch. 17; *ST I*, q. 22, aa. 2–3; q. 103, aa. 2–4; and *ST I-II*, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2.

to act as its final cause, the universal Good, and as its efficient cause, moving my will toward this final cause.³² This does not impede my freedom, but rather gives me my freedom: divine motion is necessary for my will to move itself.³³ My will is free insofar as it is not necessitated by its nature or by any secondary cause to any particular good, but rather is open to the universal Good and can move itself to any particular good.³⁴

Aquinas elaborates a series of steps whereby a created person moves him or herself to some action. The full details of his account are beyond the scope of this paper,³⁵ but an understanding of some of these steps is important for understanding Aquinas, his interpreters, and my own view. On Aquinas's view, we are first moved to a simple volition of our last end, happiness. Unless our will were first efficiently reduced to act by something outside itself, we could never begin to will. In order for our will not to be coerced violently, it must be moved internally, in accord with its free nature, and this can only be done by the cause of the will, God. So God must move us first to the simple willing of our last end and so render us capable of moving our own wills.³⁶

Our wills are first moved to our last end considered absolutely in an act of simple volition. Aquinas sometimes calls this act the "natural act of the will," and it includes a willing to be, to live, and to be happy.³⁷ All other objects that we will are willed under the formality of willing this last end, and so all other acts of our wills include a tendency toward this last end. For this reason, some of Aquinas's commentators call this tendency, as it is included in any other act of the will, the "natural being" (*esse naturale*) of those acts.³⁸ Once we have a simple volition for the last end or an intention or volition for

³² *ST* I, q. 105, a. 4; *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 6. Cf. *SCG* III, ch. 92; *DP*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7.

³³ For a consideration of how this claim might conflict with calling Aquinas a "libertarian" and for a survey of those in the contemporary literature who call Aquinas a libertarian (e.g., Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump), see Brian Shanley, "Beyond Libertarianism and Compatibilism," in *Freedom and the Human Person*, ed. Richard Velkley (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

³⁴ *DP*, q. 3, a. 7; *DV*, q. 22, a. 5; *SCG* III, ch. 67; *ST* I, q. 83, a. 1; q. 105, a. 5; *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 2; q. 110, a. 2.

³⁵ A helpful summary is given in Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 289–90.

³⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 9, aa. 4 and 6; q. 15, a. 3.

³⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 1, ad 4; a. 2; q. 15, a. 3; *DM*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2.

³⁸ See note 40.

some other end previously chosen as a suitable means to our last end, we move ourselves to take counsel or deliberate rationally as to how to achieve that end. We ought, at that point, to perform a volitional act of using the moral law in our rational counsel. We then consent with our wills to some means to our end discovered through deliberation. Next, we choose one of the means to that end to which we have already consented, bringing together the act of consent to some means and the act of intention to achieve some end. Reason then commands our powers to act in the chosen way, and we will to use our bodily powers to execute the means chosen so that the end can be achieved and enjoyed.³⁹

In all of this, I determine my volitional acts of choice and external acts according to their “moral being” (*esse morale*), while God causes their “natural being” (*esse naturale*). An act’s moral being is the act insofar as it has been formed and directed by an object conceived by reason (in morally evil acts, it includes a privation of conformity to right reason). The object of an act is the act’s content, including its inherent teleological orientation and the intention of the free agent. One natural kind of act can vary in its kind of moral being; for example, two acts of sexual intercourse identical in natural being can differ in their kinds of moral being in that one is fornication and the other marital intercourse.⁴⁰

God does not determine what I will in such a way that he absolutely necessitates what I will, though this does not exclude the possibilities

³⁹ ST I-II, q. 13, aa. 1–3; q. 14, aa. 1–2; q. 15, aa. 1–3; q. 16, a. 4; q. 17, aa. 1–3; DM, q. 1, a. 3.

⁴⁰ Aquinas uses *esse morale* in this sense in DM, q. 2, a. 6, ad 3, and in *In II sent.* d. 18, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2, in both of which texts he contrasts an act according to its moral being (*actus secundum esse morale*) and an act according to its nature or natural species (*actus secundum suam naturam, actus secundum quod est in specie naturali*); Aquinas uses the phrase *esse naturale* at numerous points in his corpus, though never in direct contrast to *esse morale*. That terminological juxtaposition is made by Capreolus, *Defensiones theologiae divi Thomae Aquinatis* (Turin, IT: Cattier, 1900; hereafter, *In Sent*) II, d. 37, q. 1, a. 3, s. 1, ad 1 Aureoli (vol. 4, pp. 428–30) and ad 1 aliorum (4:432–33). On the same conceptual distinction, see: DM, q. 2, a. 2, ad 13; a. 3, ad 1–2; a. 6 (especially ad 3); ST I-II, q. 18, a. 5; SCG III, ch. 94; John of St. Thomas, *In I-II ST* (Lugundi: Borde, Arnaud, Borde, & Barbier, 1663), d. 9, a. 2, nos. 17–18 and 91; Cajetan, *In I-II ST*, vol. 7, q. 79, a. 2, nos. 4–5, ad 1–2 and ad 78; Salmanticenses, *In I ST, De voluntate Dei*, d. 10, dub. 7, s. 1, nos. 125–26 (vol. 2, pp. 198–99). See also Steven Long, *The Teleological Grammar of the Moral Act* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 7–18.

of him determining them in a non-necessitating way, necessitating them by necessity of supposition or by conditional necessity.⁴¹ He irresistibly brings about the universal end of all things, though I can frustrate the realization of some particular goods to which he moves me.⁴² Though he always moves me toward the universal good, if I fail to dispose my will properly to receive his motion, I imperfectly receive this divine motion and my act will be imperfect, though this imperfection is from me, not him.⁴³ God can move me directly to particular goods; he does this in the order of grace, and Aquinas does not exclude the possibility of this occurring in the natural order.⁴⁴

God guides all these beings and acts through his providence, the “type” of the order of the universe—that is, his idea of every creature as directed to its end. A “type” is an idea in God’s mind considered as an object of his knowledge, rather than considered as an “exemplar,” an idea considered as a principle of making something.⁴⁵ God is like a king who directs all that happens in his kingdom, but he realizes his providence through secondary causes, which are, in a sense, instruments.⁴⁶ While God’s will is one, it can be considered to have various expressions: everything that occurs is either a good or a natural evil willed by his “operative will” or a moral evil “permitted” by him.⁴⁷ A question answered by the six views considered in the next section, as well as by my own view, is how his providence and will can be realized in creatures, especially free creatures, such that they are still free.

Six Interpretations of Aquinas

Aquinas’s claims have given rise to at least six broad schools of interpretation. I survey these briefly here, considering each insofar as it is relevant to my project. I do not consider which, if any, best captures Aquinas’s view.

⁴¹ *DP*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 13; *DV*, q. 5, a. 5, ad 1; *ST* I, q. 23, a. 1, ad 1.

⁴² *DV*, q. 6, a. 3.

⁴³ *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 2.

⁴⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3.

⁴⁵ *ST* I, q. 22, a. 1. Cf. *ST* I, q. 15, a. 3.

⁴⁶ *DP*, q. 3, a. 7; *DV*, q. 24, a. 1, ad 5; *DM*, q. 3, a. 1; *In XII met.* lec. 12; *SCG* III, ch. 70; *ST* I, q. 22, a. 3; q. 23, ad 1; q. 23, a. 5; q. 105, a. 5; *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 1; q. 13, a. 1; q. 75, a. 2, ad 1; q. 79, a. 1. Cf. *ST* I, q. 22, a. 3, ad 1. See André de Muralt, *L'enjeu de la Philosophie Médiévale* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 322–23.

⁴⁷ *ST* I, q. 19, a. 12.

*View (1): Physical Premotion and Divine Decree of Each
Creaturely Act*

Many Dominican and Carmelite Thomists held the interpretation of Aquinas that has come to be called Bañezianism. On this view, God moves me to each of my acts of will through a “physical” premotion—a real, efficient motion—and not just through a “moral” motion produced by an object presented to the will as a final cause. This physical premotion is an accidental quality received by my will by which God sufficiently determines that I move myself to the act that he has decreed that I perform. If God directly moved me to my act, then the act would not be free, since it would not be self-moved. But since God predetermines my act by a premotion naturally, but not temporally, prior to my act, the act proceeds from a free, non-necessitated, self-moved will. My act is not necessitated because it proceeds from a power that is not determined by its own nature or by any creature to a particular good but is indifferently related to all particular goods. God first premoves my will toward the universal Good and so makes it actually free, able to will any particular good. Second, he premoves it toward a particular good. The nature of my will is such that, regardless of which particular good I am premoved to will, I still could have willed otherwise.⁴⁸ According to this view, God cannot be determined by creatures and must determine everything about creatures; he also must do this to be the moral governor of created persons.⁴⁹ God’s

⁴⁸ Bañez, *In I ST*, q. 105, a. 4 (p. 515); Bañez, *Comentarios inéditos a la prima secundae de Santo Tomás*, ed. Vincente Beltrán de heredia, vol. 2 (Matriti, ES: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1944; hereafter, *In I-II ST*), q. 79, nos. 20–25 and 48; q. 109, a. 1, no. 2; John of St. Thomas, *CP, Phil. Nat.*, 1, q. 25, a. 2 (vol. 2, pp. 418 and 425); *In I-II ST*, d. 5, a. 4, nos. 15 and 30 (pp. 245 and 249); Salmanticenses, *In I ST, De voluntate dei*, d. 10, dub. 4, s. 1 (vol. 2, pp. 175–76). See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, trans. Bede Rose (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1946), 256–65, 293–94, and 319–23; Joseph Gredt, *Elementa philosophiae*, vol. 2 (Fribourg, CH: Herder, 1961), 282–83; Steven Long, “Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law,” *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 559–66; Thomas Osborne, “Thomist Premotion and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion,” *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 608 and 611–12. Cf. Capreolus, *In I Sent*, d. 40, q. 1, a. 3, sC. 2, ad 1 and 2 Aureoli (vol. 2, p. 495). Long holds this to be a personalist view (“Providence,” 604). For the ascription of the premotion to the category of quality, see the texts from John of St. Thomas (*CP*, 2:425) and Gredt, as well as the first text cited here from Bañez, which calls the premotion a *virtus*, a kind of quality.

⁴⁹ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and Nature* (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1955), 546–47; Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 308–09; Long,

predetermination of our acts is compatible with our freedom because he is a transcendent cause.⁵⁰

God knows all creatures and all their privations intuitively through his “decrees” to cause or permit them, which decrees are the ideas he has willed to instantiate in creatures, through which his providence is realized infallibly in creatures. Since one cannot intuit what does not exist, God cannot intuit creatures until he has decreed them. Many of his decrees are conditional, of the form “If I will x, then x.” While these conditionals are necessary, their antecedents and consequents are not, and God freely affirms only some antecedents.⁵¹ Furthermore, God decrees to permit me to commit some sins. In those cases, he withholds the premotion I would need to consider the moral law and then causally decrees to premove me to the positive features of a sinful act, and so I commit the sin that God has decreed by permission that I will perform. He first knows my sin through his permissive decree and then knows the existing act through decreeing to effect it; he is the cause of all the positive entity of my act, while I, through my free will, am alone the cause of my falling away from right acting, since I alone, and not God, fall away. God does not counsel us to sin, nor does he formally determine our sinful acts such that they are sinful, but he does move us to all that is positive entitatively in them. The claim that his causal decree to effect my act is consequent upon his permissive decree to allow the sin is meant to safeguard his providential rule, created freedom, creaturely causal and moral responsibility for sin, and his lack of causal or moral responsibility for sin. The decree whereby God permissively predetermines me to the positive entity of my act of sin is needed, on this view, so that God may infallibly know my sin without his knowledge being received from something extrinsic to him.⁵²

“Providence,” 599–604.

⁵⁰ Salmanticenses, *In I-II ST, De voluntate Dei*, d. 6, dub. un., 97; d. 10, dub. 4, s. 2 (vol. 2, p. 177); Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 252.

⁵¹ Such talk of God and propositions is meant analogically; God’s knowledge is really non-propositional, being identical to himself.

⁵² Bañez, *In I ST*, q. 14, a. 13 (pp. 512–36); Bañez, *In I-II ST*, q. 79, dub. 1, no. 22 (pp. 211–12); dub. 2, no. 45–48 (pp. 224–30); no. 53 (pp. 232–33); no. 61 (p. 237); John of St. Thomas, *CP, Logica*, pt. 2, q. 23, a. 1 (vol. 1, p. 635); *In I ST*, q. 14, d. 19, a. 1, 420; Salmanticenses, *In I-II ST, De scientia Dei*, t. 3, d. 7, dub. 3, s. 2, n. 32 (vol. 1, p. 480); t. 3, d. 9, dub. 5, s. 2, n. 63 (1:594); *De voluntate Dei*, d. 10, dub. 7, ss. 1 and 3 (2:198 and 203); Gonet, *Clypeus*, d. 4, a. 6, s. 3 (vol. 1, p. 232); Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 267–68 and 272–73; Jean-Hervé Nicolas, “La permission du péché,” *Revue Thomiste* 60 (1960): 516; Gilles

The proponents of (1) hold that God's acts of knowing and willing creatures are identical to the one necessary pure act that he is. On (1), God knows and wills all creatures by the one act by which he knows and wills himself and this one act is terminated in a non-necessary fashion by creatures as the secondary, non-specifying objects of that act. His knowing and willing of particular creatures does not bring about any change in him, only in creatures. His acts whereby he knows creatures are really and entitatively in him, but had God willed other creatures than he did or no creatures at all, God would not be entitatively different than he is, though it would be right for us to describe his knowing and willing differently than we do now. The only difference between that reality and the actual reality would have been a difference in relations of reason between God and the creatures that he knows and wills whereby his act is terminated by creatures.⁵³

View (2): Universal Causality Without Physical Premotion or Decree

Another family of views seeks to emphasize the transcendence of God's causality more than (1). (2) is a more disparate set of views than (1), but those who hold versions of (2), including Bernard Lonergan and Brian Shanley, emphasize that God, as primary cause, causes in a *sui generis* manner transcendent to all modes of created causality without predetermining premotions. This view emphasizes the total and immediate dependence of all created beings, including our free acts, on their Creator in a way that tries to grant more to created freedom than (1). God causes my free acts directly and entirely in a way that is not entirely understandable to us, so that his providence is realized.⁵⁴ As

Emery, "God and Evil in Charles Journet," *Nova et Vetera* 3 (2006): 534–35; Osborne, "Premotion," 613–22.

⁵³ John Capreolus, *In I Sent*, d. 45, q. 1, sC. 2, ad 1 and 4 Aureoli (vol. 2, pp. 587–89); Bañez, *In I ST*, q. 19, a. 2–3, 10, 604, 607–08, and 644–46; John of St. Thomas, *CP, Logica*, q. 23, a. 1 (vol. 1, 635–36); *In I ST*, q. 19, d. 5, aa. 4–5 (pp. 117–29); Salmanticenses, *In I ST, De voluntate Dei*, d. 7, dub. 7, ss. 4–5 (vol. 2, pp. 119–23). The same criticisms can be raised against this view as can be raised against the view of (2), and they are summarized in note 59, below. Those who hold this view confess that it is a great mystery how God could will different things without change in himself, but that we must be content with this mystery.

⁵⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 79, 106, and 382; Brian Shanley, "Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas," *ACPQ* 72 (1998): 99–122. Thomas Cajetan expresses similar thoughts to the contem-

André de Muralt explains it, God's causality is identical to his effects in the mode in which they exist, whether free, contingent, or necessary.⁵⁵ God causes the entirety of my acts, including the positive (rather than privative, in the sense of sinful) content of my choices without predetermining them. God permits sin without determining creatures to sin by choice or permissive decree because he relates to the world in three ways: choosing to cause the beings that exist, choosing to not cause some beings, and neither choosing to cause nor choosing not to cause sins, but rather permitting them by an absence of choice.⁵⁶

Contrary to (1), proponents of (2) argue that a predetermining premotion would violate my freedom. Instead, God directly causes my free act as free, and this does not violate its freedom. Likewise, if God caused or knew through intermediary instruments like predetermining premotions or decrees, then he would be reduced to being a cause in the same sense as creaturely causes and he would be just one more stage in the process of creaturely causality, rather than the transcendent source of all creaturely causality. Rather, God causes genuine causes other than himself while also being the immediate source of their causality and their acts of causing. God knows creatures through his essence, through his knowledge of his own causality, and through his eternal presence to all things and times; he is not temporally prior to, simultaneously with, or posterior to those events. There cannot be any "competition" between God and his

porary proponents of (2) concerning God's transcendent mode of causality, but he understands how God's acts add to God in the manner of (3), and he understands how God moves the will in the manner of (6); see *In I ST*, vol. 4, q. 22, a. 4, n. 8–9, 270.

⁵⁵ De Muralt, *L'enjeu*, 317, citing John of St. Thomas, *CP*, *Nat. Phil.*, pt. 1, q. 25, a. 1 (vol. 2, pp. 414–17).

⁵⁶ Lonergan, *Grace*, 105, 111–16, 304–12, and 329–33, citing *ST I*, q. 17, a. 1; q. 19, a. 9. Cf. Matthew Levering, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 78–79. Another version of (2) is held by W. Matthews Grant in "Can a Libertarian Hold that Our Free Acts are Caused by God?" *Faith and Philosophy* 27 (2010): 22–44, and "Aquinas on How God Causes the Act of Sin without Causing Sin Itself," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 455–96, and a similar view is held by Robert Koons in "Dual Agency: A Thomistic Account of Providence and Human Freedom," *Philosophia Christi* 4 (2002): 397–410. On this version of (2), God's causing is identical to his effects plus their relation of dependence to him, such that God's causing of my free acts is not causally, naturally, or explanatorily prior to my free acts. Thus, a "libertarian" view of created will is compatible with God being a cause of my whole act. According to private correspondence with Grant, his view is meant to be understood as largely in accord with Lonergan and Shanley.

causality and creatures and their causality; the latter depend on and are explained by the former in all that they are and do.⁵⁷

Things other than God are applied to their acts by God as his instruments, as things that are both moved by him and moving others or themselves. God, as prime mover, applies all things to their actions through intellectually planning and volitionally willing the whole set of motions in the created order, which is his providential order. This view does not reject the notion of premotion as such, just the pre-determining physical premotion posited by (1). Rather, on view (2), a premotion is an application of a mover to something moved through a movement in one of them. God and creatures are essentially ordered causes of single created effects, where God is the primary and creating cause and creatures are the secondary and instrumental causes. God applies creatures to their acts entirely in accord with the mode of their nature and so infallibly produces his intended effects. Since these principles apply to the whole order of secondary causes, they apply to created free secondary causes.⁵⁸

A key feature of this view is its position on the question of what God's knowing or willing a creature adds to God. On this view, God is immutable; he would be no different had he not created or had he created differently than he did. Every change that he brings about is in a creature, not in himself. His knowledge and will of creatures add to him only a relation of reason or a predication by extrinsic

⁵⁷ Cajetan, *In I ST*, q. 22, a. 3, n. 3 (p. 268); Grant, "Aquinas," 494–95; Lonergan, *Grace*, 100–08, 323–26, and 370–71; Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 14, cited in Shanley, "Divine Causation," 122 (but see also 109–11 and 120–21); Shanley, "Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas," 205–221. See also Levering, *Predestination*, 78.

⁵⁸ Lonergan, *Grace*, 277–81, 285–89, 303–13, and 334–39; Shanley, "Divine Causation," 109. Shanley warns that we must keep in mind what he, following Robert Sokolowski, calls the "Christian distinction": that God is radically transcendent to the world such that he and the world are not parts of a larger whole, and that there can, for this reason, be no competition between him and creaturely causality, but rather God is the source of all creaturely causality ("Divine Causation," 103). For these reasons we must remember that all "models" of the relation between divine and creaturely causality, such as the primary-secondary causality model or the artist-instrument model, are just models and do not capture the radical difference and unique relation between the divine and creaturely orders. One could object that, on this model of God's transcendence, God's personal relations to the world are lost; God must be understood on both the Christian view and on a proper metaphysical view, one might contend, as *both* the transcendent source of all causality *and* as a particular, personal agent relating in particular ways to different creatures.

denomination. If some creature actually exists, then God is rightly said to know it and will it, but this does not add anything real to God, for nothing can be added to God, since he is the fullness of all being. God explains the created world, but he and his “relations” to the world do not need to be explained.⁵⁹

View (3): Divine Responsiveness to Free Creatures

Another interpretation attributes less to divine causality, and perhaps more to human freedom, than (1), while trying to explain more about how God interacts with creatures than (2). Eleonore Stump, in a view that has antecedents in the work of Francis Sylvester of Ferrara, argues that my will is the efficient cause of its acts without any predetermining premotion to a particular good, though my power of will is efficiently caused by God. God can prompt us to particular good actions, but not so that this prompting is sufficient for the occurrence of the action. God not only determines some creatures but also determines himself to respond to some creaturely acts without being determined by creatures. For example, he causes certain effects because we pray for them. This claim is also made by Hans Urs Von Balthasar, who argues that God, who knows all possible beings, knows in himself the types of all the ways that he could respond to any creaturely act and both knows and responds to creaturely acts in accord with these types, and so realizes his providence. Our cooperation with or resistance to God’s prompting is not determined by him. Rather, we choose either to resist God’s promptings or to allow the good that God wills to have its

⁵⁹ Lonergan, *Grace*, 105–06 and 328–33; Grant, “Libertarianism,” 26–33. Late medieval and early modern scholastic versions of this view of how God’s acts add to God are summarized in Suárez, *DMet*, d. 29, s. 9, nos. 4–6, and Salmanticenses, *In I ST, De voluntate Dei*, d. 7, dub. 5 (vol. 2, p. 111). Shanley emphasizes that Aquinas does not make claims about the mechanics of the divine motion (“Divine Causation,” 109), contrary to (1) and (5). This part of (2) seems to be in tension with the view of providence put forward by (2), for it now seems that God’s providence over this world consists of just relations of reason between God and this world without anything being in God that would not have been there had he not chosen to have providence over this world. One might object that such a God is less than personal and lacks the perfections of immanent acts of knowing and willing, contrary to Aquinas’s view that every perfection found in creatures is found in God in a more excellent way. Lonergan argues that we explain the world through God’s intellect but we do not and need not explain God’s intellect. However, I contend that we can and should try to give an analysis of God’s action above and beyond that provided by (2).

effect in us.⁶⁰ More than (2), (3) emphasizes God's responsiveness to and interpersonal relations with free creatures as a particular, personal agent.

This view is supported by a plausible reading of some of Aquinas's texts. Aquinas raises an objection to his view of grace that, if all acts of the will are moved by God, then it would be unjust to reward or punish the creature, since creaturely actions would be primarily God's. Aquinas responds that to impede or not to impede God's grace is within human power, though we cannot receive grace without his initiative.⁶¹ Likewise, Aquinas claims that, while God has established the order of things such that he only gives certain gifts to those who pray, it is up to us to persevere in prayer and so merit those things.⁶² If Aquinas held that we could persevere in prayer only if God precluded us to do so, as on view (1), or caused those acts, including their contents, as on view (2), or if he held that we could only resist or not resist by a prior decree from God, as on (1), then these texts would lose their coherence: the objection that rewards and punishments are unjust would return, and the value of persevering in prayer would be an illusion.

Contrary to (1) and (2), on view (3), God knows creatures not by his efficient causality, but by his exemplary causality. God, by virtue of having the ideas of all things, "sees" all things. Stump thinks that such a view of God's knowledge of creatures is mysterious, and it seems to threaten divine impassibility. Still, on her view, it must be endorsed to save created freedom.⁶³ While this brings (3) closer to personalism, it opens the view to criticism from (1) and (2): God's ideas are not exemplars of creatures until God chooses to make those creatures, so either God's knowledge depends on his efficient causality or his knowledge is determined by creatures.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Stump, *Aquinas*, 118–22; Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 2, *Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 278. Ferrara holds that divine providence deals with all things according to their mode but the mode by which created freedom brings about its effects is to be open to many objects proposed by the intellect but not to be determined to them (*In III SCG*, ch. 73). This text is also compatible with (2); cf. Ferrara, *In I SCG*, ch. 50, no. 3 (vol. 13, p. 146), and ch. 68, no. 3 (13:199).

⁶¹ *SCG III*, ch. 159.

⁶² *ST II-II*, q. 83, a. 2.

⁶³ Stump, *Aquinas*, 182–87; Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity and God's Knowledge: A Reply to Shanley," *ACPQ* 72 (1998): 439–45.

⁶⁴ See J. L. A. West, "Simplicity, Divine Causality, and Human Freedom: A Critique of Eleonore Stump's *Aquinas*," *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 435–37.

Many proponents of (3) affirm that, since all perfections found in creatures are found in God in a more excellent way, and since immanent acts of knowing and willing particular creatures are perfections found in creatures, these must be found in God as well. God eternally but freely has certain intrinsic perfections that he would not have had he chosen to create other creatures or not to create at all; they are necessary in him by necessity of supposing that he has willed this creature, but they are not necessarily in him absolutely. These perfections are identical to him and exist in him in the manner of his simple actuality. God has no necessary relations to creatures, but he takes on these perfections freely; they exist in him eternally by necessity of supposition, not by absolute necessity. To say that God knows or wills some real, contingent creature is to ascribe an intrinsic perfection to him, not just to ascribe to him a relation of reason to that creature, as on (2). This is not to say that God has real relations to creatures or that he is causally determined or perfected by creatures, but to say that God is able to take on free perfections and to say, as Aquinas does, that God is both an agent and actions.⁶⁵

View (4): Physical Premotion with Possibility of Resistance

Another view, popular among some Thomists of the twentieth century, holds with (1) that I act only if God premoves me to some particular good. But I can resist or “shatter” God’s premotion by preferring a lower good to a higher good, in which case I fail to achieve the good effect to which he moves me and I sin. If I do not resist, the premo-

⁶⁵ Stump, *Aquinas*, 130. In the Thomistic tradition, this view is found most developed in Cajetan, *In I ST*, q. 19, aa. 2–3 (vol. 4, pp. 233–37), but versions of it are also found in Ferrara, *In I SCG*, ch. 75 (vol. 13: p. 216); ch. 81 (13:225–27); ch. 82 (13:229–30); ch. 83–84 (13:232). Cf. Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 19, a. 3, ad 5; q. 25, a. 1, ad 3; and *In II sent.* d. 34, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4. One could object that this would seem to make God both necessary and capable of being different than he is, an apparent contradiction (see Suárez, *DMet*, d. 29, s. 9, nos. 5–28). In *ST I*, q. 28, a. 3, ad 1, Aquinas provides, following Aristotle, a version of laws of identity that may overcome this objection. On this text, the law of transitivity of identity only holds if the things being identified are both really and logically identical. Since on Cajetan’s view, God and his free acts of will are really but not logically identical, it can be held without contradiction on an extension of this version of the law of transitivity of identity that the former is necessary but the latter is free. Furthermore, one could argue with Stump that, while we can understand God through concepts of necessary being and of free acting, neither captures what God is fully in himself and so no contradiction can be derived.

tion comes to fruition and I achieve the good effect. The premotion is sufficient to produce the good, provided I do not resist, and so all the good in my actions comes from God's premotion. God's intention in introducing a premotion is to give me a tendency towards a particular good, not to produce it irresistibly. Contrary to (1), God's decree permitting the creature to sin is explanatorily subsequent to the creature's resistance to divine premotion; (4) holds that on (1) God would be responsible for sin. On (4), God cannot determine us to sin, even permissively. But God still has providential rule over all things, since he non-determinatively allows sin only for the sake of greater goods.⁶⁶

On (4), God knows sinful acts not by a permissive decree but by intuition, through being present to all beings through his eternity. As Francisco Marin-Sola argues, eternity contains time not causally, but as a container contains its contents. By his eternity, God is present to all things, even if he does not cause them, and this does not entail that he is determined by creatures. (4) resolves Stump's problem of divine vision: God is present even to things that he does not efficiently cause and, so, intuitively knows them, but this presupposes that he does efficiently cause other things on which the things that he does not cause depend. God is still the first cause of all things on this view.⁶⁷ This opens the possibility, contrary to (1) and (2), of some positive aspects of our acts being caused by us, not by God. M. John Farrelly argues that, when a good act occurs, I complete God's premotion by

⁶⁶ See Francisco Marin-Sola, *Concordia tomista*, 839–40, cited in Michael Torre, *God's Permission of Sin: Negative or Conditioned Decree?* (Fribourg, CH: Academic Press, 2009), 110–13 and 319; Torre, "Francisco Marin-Sola, OP, and the Origin of Jacques Maritain's Doctrine on God's Permission of Evil," *Nova et Vetera* 4 (2006): 55–94; Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 87–89 and 92–105; Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, trans. Joseph Evans (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1966), 38–43, 56–57, 61–62; Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette, 1942), 33–34 and 37–38; M. John Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace, and Free Will* (Westminster: Newman, 1964), 224; William Most, *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God*, ch. 18, www.catholicculture.org. See also Emery, "God and Evil," 536–41, and Thomas Joseph White, "Von Balthasar and Journet on the Universal Possibility of Salvation and the Twofold Will of God," *Nova et Vetera* 3 (2006): 650–54 and 661–64, both citing numerous works of Charles Journet.

⁶⁷ Francisco Marin-Sola, "A Reply to Some Objections concerning the Thomist System regarding the Divine Motion," in Michael Torre, *Do Not Resist the Spirit's Call* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 90–94; Torre, *Permission*, 312–23 and 465–67; Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 86–87, 105–106, and 112; *God and the Permission of Evil*, 71–72; Most, *Grace*, ch. 23. See also Osborne, "Premotion," 622.

not resisting it, which is a positive aspect of the act, and God knows my non-resistance by his presence to it.⁶⁸ Those who hold (4) tend to agree with the view of (1) as to the way in which God's acts add to him.

This view has been criticized by proponents of (1) and (2). I consider two objections to (4) here that raise difficulties that my view must avoid. Some response to these objections is possible on the basis of the resources provided by (4) itself, but I think this response is inadequate. My own view, however, is meant to resolve these difficulties.

First, (4) seems not to preserve divine impassibility, since it seems to make God's permissive acts of will dependent on creaturely acts.⁶⁹ A response must insist on the claim that intuitive knowledge is an intentional, not a causal, act (and perhaps merely adds a relation of reason to God). This act attains its object, the real being it knows, without causally affecting it or being causally affected by it. Furthermore, the permissive decree of God subsequent to the resistance of the creature does not imply that God was affected by the creature's sin, nor that there was a covert permissive decree prior to the sin, but merely that God allows free creatures to resist his premotions at any time. As we saw Balthasar emphasize in considering view (3), God already knows, prior to any actual sin, how he would draw good out of any possible sin, and his allowance of sin is always for the sake of these conditionally predetermined goods.⁷⁰

Second, it has been argued that non-resistance, since it seems to be something positive, requires God's premotion if he is the source of all positive features of acts. Resistance must be either a positive act, in which case it would be premoved by God, or a privation, in which case it could only occur as a result of God omitting to move the creature to a positive act.⁷¹ Responses have tended to focus on showing how resistance can occur without God's determination and have conceded that all positive features of acts are due to God's premotion. Some have argued that God premoves us to our act simultaneously with our resistance to the moral law; since resistance is a privation,

⁶⁸ Farrelly, *Predestination*, 252–54.

⁶⁹ Emery, "God and Evil," 551–52.

⁷⁰ See the texts of Charles Journet quoted by Emery in "God and Evil."

⁷¹ Ibid., 551–54; Grant, "Aquinas," 478–80; Long, "Providence," 582–99; Levering, *Predestination*, 160–62; Nicholas, "Permission." For a critique of (1) and (4), see Nicolas, "La volonté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par la péché," *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992): 177–96.

it does not require a *per se* cause. God gives me less premotion if he sees my failure, and so my failure is a sort of “material cause” to God’s “formal” premotion.⁷² But this does not show how I can exercise this causality apart from his prior decrees.

View (5): Concurrent Partial Causality and Middle Knowledge

Many contemporary philosophers, as well as many post-Tridentine Jesuits, have held the Molinist or Congruist views, of which there are many forms and which followed Aquinas on many, but not all, points. On these views, God causes me to act in such a way that I can choose a number of different acts or not act at all. In this, (5) is closer to a personalist view than the foregoing views. In moving me, God offers me his concurrence, his causality necessary for any act to occur. Whenever I act, I and God are each partial, individually necessary and jointly sufficient causes of the act.⁷³ God has bound himself to concur with creatures according to their natures. If I will well, I will on the basis of God’s efficient but non-determining motion towards good, his offered concurrence, as well as external moral aids, such as good circumstances, that he gives. If I will badly, it is due to my own defects. To be free is to be able to act or not act, or to do one thing or another, even after God has premoved me.⁷⁴

God knows what I do by knowing conditionally and prior to his act of creation, by his “middle knowledge” of “conditionals of freedom,” what I would choose were I to be in some situation. He knows what I would do because he thoroughly knows everything about the character of the created wills that he creates, and he chooses which situations I will be in and, through decreeing these antecedents to conditionals of freedom, knows which conditionals are fulfilled and is present to my acts, and so intuitively knows them. These condi-

⁷² Mark Pontifex, *Freedom and Providence* (New York: Hawthorn, 1960), 74–80. See also Thomas Crean, “God and the Origin of Moral Evil” (unpublished), and Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 327.

⁷³ This is contrary to Aquinas, who holds that I and God are total, not partial, causes of free acts.

⁷⁴ Luis de Molina, *Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione, et reprobatione concordia* (Antwerp: Antuerpiae Ex officina typographica Ioachimi Troгнаesii, 1595), d. 2, 7–8; d. 26, 109–10; Suárez, *DMet*, d. 24, s. 1, nos. 6–19; s. 2, nos. 7–15; s. 4, nos. 3–8, 15, and 21; Suarez, *De concursu, motione, et auxilio Dei*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 11 (Paris: Vives, 1858), I, ch. 8, nos. 8–9 (p. 38); I, ch. 10, nos. 1–2 (p. 42); II, ch. 7, nos. 12 (pp. 143–44); III, ch. 8, nos. 2 (p. 183).

tionals do not necessitate me to act in some way. Through his use of conditionals, God both providentially rules all things and allows created persons to act freely without moving them to particular acts.⁷⁵

On the question of how God's acts intending creatures add to God, those who hold (5) are largely in agreement with the view of (1). Yet Suárez contends that, while God could have willed differently than he did without any intrinsic change to him, we must also affirm that God intends his creatures in his acts of willing and knowing in a way that is so eminent that we cannot fully understand it. We describe it as a relation of reason because that is the only category that we have for such a case. But God actually intends really existing creatures in a way higher than any relation of reason. In this, Suárez combines aspects of (1) and (3).⁷⁶

View (6): Premotion to Universal, not Particular Goods

Some, such as Etienne Gilson and Stephen Wang, have argued that God premoves me only toward the universal good, not toward particular goods, and this view has antecedents in Cajetan. This is the most personalist of the six schools of interpretations, and my own view will develop it. As on (5), the initial movement toward the universal good is indifferent to particular goods, and it allows me to move myself to specify the particular goods that I will. As Cajetan puts it, God moves me to my acts by being the universal goal of my acts and by giving me the power of the will. God is the cause of my acts, including my sins, insofar as they have natural *esse*, but not insofar as they have moral *esse*. On this view, similar to (2), God still causes all my acts according to their existence and knows my acts through his willing, thereby realizing his providence.⁷⁷ Aquinas holds that God applies the will to its act

⁷⁵ Molina, *Concordia*, dd. 48 (pp. 202–03) and 49 (pp. 206–08); Suárez, *DMet*, d. 22, s. 4, nos. 38–39; Suárez, *De scientia Dei futurorum contingentium*, in *Opera omnia* vol. 11, II, ch. 7, nos. 15–16 (pp. 369–70), and ch. 8, nos. 5–6 (pp. 372–73). See also Alfred Freddoso's "God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes," *ACPQ* 68 (1994): 131–56, and "Suarez on God's Causal Involvement in Sinful Acts," in *The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Elmar Kremer and Michael Latzer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 10–34. For contemporary versions of Molinism, see the essays in *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. Ken Perszyk (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁷⁶ Suárez, *DM*, d. 30, s. 9, nos. 35–44; s. 14, nos. 21, 26, and 29. This view is open to the same objections as were raised above to (1) and (2).

⁷⁷ Cajetan, *In I ST*, q. 105, a. 5, no. 2 (vol. 5, p. 475); *In I-II ST*, q. 9, a. 6 (vol. 6, p. 82); Etienne Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L. K. Shook (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 246;

through an *intentio*, like an artist applies his instrument, and that by a single disposition, the human person is directed to all things.⁷⁸ On (6), these texts are read as meaning that the person, by a single premotion, is directed toward the universal Good and that this disposition is the *intentio* whereby the will is applied to its act by God. But, on that basis, the human will can freely move itself to any particular good. God moves my will “according to its condition . . . as having itself indeterminately to many things.”⁷⁹ This phrase can be read along the lines of (1), but here it is interpreted as referring to God as the transcendent source of my willing who opens me to be able, as Wang says, to “have the possibility of creating a future that has not been predetermined.”⁸⁰ A problem with (6) is how to hold that I determine my choices but also that God causes them according to their existence without specifying them and knows them without being determined in his knowledge by them. This problem will be resolved by my view.

The Structure of Created Freedom According to Thomistic Personalism

I now turn to my own view. In this section, I outline my view not as a seventh interpretation of Aquinas, but as a model on which one can hold the personalist thesis in a Thomistic context. In the next section, I argue for its plausibility.

On my view, God causes all free creaturely actions by bestowing acts of existence upon them, but he does not determine all of them according to specification or exercise. He “permits” not only the sinful privation in morally evil acts, but also the contents of the free acts of consent, choice, and use and of some acts of intention performed by created persons, inasmuch as these have to do with particular goods. Permission is an act whereby God, knowing what the creature wills, actualizes that act of will by bestowing an act of existence upon it but does not determine its specification or exercise. This permission is directed toward the essences of our acts, which are positive principles of the being of the acts but not complete beings in themselves without acts of existence. While I agree with (2) that God

Stephen Wang, *Aquinas and Sartre* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 235–36; Humbertus Degl’Innocenti, “De actione Dei in causas secundas liberas iuxta S. Thomam,” *Aquinas* 4 (1961): 28–56.

⁷⁸ SCG III, ch. 92; DP, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7.

⁷⁹ DM, q. 6, a. un.

⁸⁰ Wang, *Aquinas and Sartre*, 236.

is the total cause of all creaturely beings and mover of all creaturely acts, more can be said than (2) says as to how God causes and moves essences.⁸¹

For many acts of the will, it is up to free creatures whether they exercise their will and how their will is specified; the essence of creaturely free acts proceeds just from the free creature. All motion depends on prior actuality, and so all motions, including the motion of the created will, must be initiated by God. The will, uniquely among created appetites, is oriented to and sufficiently moved by the universal Good alone. No particular good moves it of necessity, but it can direct itself toward any particular goods, each of which participates in the universal Good. God causes my power of will, which is one of my proper accidents, by causing my substance, from which my powers immediately arise, and by bestowing an act of existence upon it. But it is insufficient for my acting that God cause and conserve my will; he must also actualize this power. He does so, on my view, in accord with (1), by efficiently premoving it to a “primary act” of the will, a simple volition whereby it not only potentially but also actually intends the universal Good. This movement is given to the created will irresistibly.⁸²

As on (5) and (6) but unlike on (1), having given this primary act, there is no need for God then to move my will toward particular goods. God’s premotion to a primary act opens up the possibility of my willing any particular goods. The primary act of the will contains a “super-abundance” of actuality, for by it I really will all Good. On the basis of this actuality, I am capable of reducing myself to a “secondary act” of consent, choice, or use in relation to particular goods (or intention of a particular end other than my last end). In any

⁸¹ I focus on (2) here because the proponent of (2) might object that there is no motivation to reject (2) in favor of my view. I contend that this view, at least on Lonergan’s and Shanley’s version, is open to the charge of theological determinism: if God applies my will to its acts such that I cannot choose otherwise than as he applies my will, then I contend that I am not genuinely free on such a view. I affirm with (2) that God and his premotions are the basis of my existing and free acting and that God and I are not in “competition.” But we must be more precise about the relation of God and creatures, and (2) does not accomplish this precision in a way in accord with created freedom. With regard to Grant’s version of (2), my view elaborates what it leaves general, how God is the cause of my free acts without determining whether and what I will.

⁸² “Primary act” does not mean a “first act,” a habit from which proceeds particular acts of the will, but an act on the basis of which further acts can be performed.

of these secondary acts, God does not need to move me to its exercise or specification insofar as it is a consent to, choice of, or act of use in relation to some particular means to my last end. But he does move me to its specification and exercise insofar as any secondary act of the will necessarily includes the primary act of the will. Any act of willing a particular good is an act of will only by participation in and inclusion of the act of intending one's last end, the universal Good. This is because every particular good is a means to the latter and because the natural act of the will, the volition towards the universal Good and one's last end, is included formally in every other act of the will. The actuality of acts of willing particular goods is drawn from the actuality of the act of willing the universal Good and is less actual than the latter, since the actuality of willing some means includes and is drawn from the actuality of willing an end.⁸³ Given the primary act of the will, I have sufficient actuality to reduce myself to an act with less actuality.⁸⁴

One reason why (1) held that God must move me to each particular act of the will was that (1) held that each act was a new actuality (over the actualities already had by the person), and so I could not move myself to an act unless that actuality were given to me. But, even though I, not God, determine my secondary acts with respect to exercise and specification, all the actuality of that act comes from God through the primary act that, as a simple volition, precedes all secondary act and, as an intention, is included in each secondary act.⁸⁵

⁸³ Cf. John of St. Thomas, *In I-II ST*, d. 5, a. 2, nos. 20–22 (p. 236), and a. 3 (p. 239).

⁸⁴ Similar claims could be made regarding the created intellect. God gives the intellect a primary act of cognizing universal Being. On the basis of the actuality given in that primary act, the intellect can be reduced to secondary act by its own agent intellect, to knowing any particular being. Powers that involve transcendental openness to being or goodness, once actually open to universal being or goodness, can reduce themselves to act without further premotion from God, though the actuality is ultimately from God. See *ST* I, q. 79, a. 4, ad 5; q. 105, a. 3; *DV*, q. 1, a. 2.

⁸⁵ There are two variations of my view on which God would not even need to bestow an act of existence upon my secondary acts of will, but rather, the creature alone would be the cause of the whole act. First, some hold that accidents do not have their own act of existence but are just formal actualities of substances, participating in the substance's act of existence. On that variation, the creature would be the cause of the whole free secondary act without any direct causality from God (cf. *In XII Met* lec. 1; *DV*, q. 27, a. 1, ad 8; Brown, *Accidental Being*, 40; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 264). In the other variation, one could hold that the secondary act of the will is not a separate act from

Furthermore, since the will can move any power of the person to act by an act of use, which is a secondary act of the will on my view, I can reduce other powers, such as the locomotive powers, to act. Both secondary acts of the will and exterior acts of the person are under a created person's control with respect to exercise and specification. The evil of sinful acts is still a privation of the order that the act should have toward the moral law on this view. Unlike on (4), God does not normally premove me to particular goods, nor does every positive feature of my acts come directly from God, so problems with the notion of "shattering" premotions are avoided.

God is the total cause of my free acts and of their natural being by bestowing acts of existence on them and by giving me the essential actuality in the original act of simple volition towards the universal Good, on the basis of which I can reduce my will to secondary act. God causes in me an act that has a certain essence, since my act depends on God for its existence, but God does not completely specify that essence. Rather, I am the total cause of my acts and of their natural being by efficiently causing them insofar as they are consents to, choices of, or acts of use in relation to particular goods. This is my entitative "part" of the secondary acts of my will, while God's "part" is the act of existence and the primary act that is included in the secondary act. While, in an act of choice, the intention of the last end and the choice of means are really just one act, the two are in some sense separable insofar as we can have the former without the latter.⁸⁶ For this reason, God can be the cause the former while I cause the latter, though the two concur to make just one act, where the former is formal to the latter.⁸⁷

I alone cause my secondary acts' moral being, whether good or evil, insofar as I determine the proximate object of my act of will. But if I perform a morally good act, the goodness of the act is from God through the primary act of the will. If I perform a morally evil act, the evil is not from God. In both cases, every positive essential

the primary act, but a "mode" or "intensity" of that act, restricting the former to the act of willing a particular good (cf. Aquinas, *In II sent.* d. 26, q. 1, a. 2; *Quaestio disputata de virtutibus in communi*, a. 11; *ST* I q. 4, a. 3; II-II, q. 24, aa. 4–5; see Brown, *Accidental Being*, 168–70, 177–80, and 184–85).

⁸⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 4, *resp.* and ad 3. My view draws the ideas of different "parts" of free acts being ascribed to creatures and to God from (5), though my view is actually closer to (1) or (2) in this regard than (5) because, in causing these entitative parts of essence and act of existence, both God and creatures do in fact cause the whole act.

⁸⁷ Cf. *ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 1.

actuality of my act is received from God in the primary act of the will and the essence of my secondary act is a participation in God. Insofar as actuality must be received by potentiality, and so in that sense potentiality is prior to actuality, the essence of my act and the self-motion of my will are prior to God's bestowal of the act of existence. But God's bestowal of the act of existence still explains and causes my act in a more prior sense, since actuality is absolutely prior to potentiality. The essence-existence distinction allows us to say how God has transcendent causality, as insisted on by (2). God's transcendent, *sui generis* causality appears in that he is the cause of all beings of any kind by bestowing acts of existence on them, and in that this lets beings be in such a way that it does not specify their essence.

On this view, God intuitively understands creatures through his formal concepts of creatures and insofar as he is present by his eternity and efficient causality to all beings. As (4) argued, just by virtue of existing, beings "terminate" or "objectively determine" God's vision without this entailing that God determines their essences or that they causally determine him. As on (3), God's understanding of creatures is explained by his formal concepts, but also—as on (4)—by his decision to cause beings as existing. By being present to all beings, God understands them in every respect, including those respects he does not directly cause, not through prior conditional knowledge, contrary to (5), but directly and intuitively. His knowledge is simultaneous with the existence of the creature, which he bestows. As we have seen, understanding is an intentional, not a causal, relation. Contrary to (1), God's knowledge is not in every case causally or explanatorily prior to creatures, so he does not know all creatures through a decree that is causally or explanatorily prior to created beings. Nor is God's knowledge ever causally posterior to any creature. God simultaneously wills and knows all creatures, but his willing and knowing are terminated in different ways by different kinds of creatures.

God still providentially orders all creatures on this view. He eternally knows the type of the order of creatures as it actually is. He causes and moves temporally later creatures in response to earlier ones, and earlier ones to prepare for later ones. He retains his transcendent priority over creatures with respect to being eternal and the efficient cause of all creatures according to their existence, the exemplary cause of all creatures—including of those he does not specify—according to their essence and their final cause. My view

also allows for God moving the will morally by inspiring my reason to consider particular goods and presenting these goods as possible objects of consent or choice to my will and for God infusing habits and gifts into the will. It allows for God giving additional irresistible “primary” acts of the will in addition to the simple volition and intention towards universal Good; God could move my will irresistibly to desire other particular ends on the basis of which I could freely deliberate about means to those ends and consent to and choose or reject some of those means. In each of these ways, God providentially orders free creatures.

Still, my view rejects the notion that God has providentially planned out all events, or even all good events, “prior” to creation, if by this it is meant that God efficaciously and sufficiently determines by prior decree the essences of all creatures, including of all free acts. More will be said on my view of God’s providence in the final section of the paper. Some aspects of this view, especially the notion of God’s intuitive cognition and the revisions to the notion of providence, are perhaps *prima facie* implausible, especially to other Thomists. Still, on any version of Thomism (or on any plausible theism in general), claims are made about God that are *prima facie* implausible, mysterious, or difficult for creatures to understand, so the presence of such difficulties is not unique to my view. Despite conceptual difficulties, the view outlined here maintains the personalist thesis within a Thomistic metaphysics.

The Plausibility of My View of Created Freedom

Having seen the basic structure of my view, I here provide some reasons to adopt it, although nothing I say here should be taken to be a full-scale defense, since that is beyond the scope of this article. Regarding the interpretive views, I contend that (1), some versions of (2), (4), and (5) do not allow for genuine creaturely freedom, while my view does. Yet other versions of (2) are too general in their account of God’s causality and can plausibly be taken as not allowing for genuine creaturely freedom, while my view is more explanatory.⁸⁸ (3) and (6) leave problems unresolved that my view resolves. Some reasons for these claims have already been given, and further reasons will be presented in this section. I agree with (1), (2), (4), and (5) both that necessity of consequence does not entail necessity of consequent and that there is a sense in which it is true that I am free even when determined in

⁸⁸ On versions of (2) in relation to my view, see note 81, above.

my acts by God, even though all things are necessitated by necessity of supposition.

In this section, I first distinguish two senses of being able to will otherwise than one wills. I argue that I am free in the sense of my view if and only if I am able to will otherwise than I will in the second of these senses; if I am so able, then there is good reason to adopt my view over the other views.⁸⁹ I use the term “will” here to cover generically all the various acts of will. Freedom requires having genuine possibilities available to one’s will, and is dependent upon being able to will otherwise than one in fact wills, at least in one’s acts of choice, consent, and use. I conclude this section by offering some evidence that created persons are able to will otherwise than they will in the second sense.

In its first sense, “is able to will otherwise than one wills” is rightly said of a created person if and only if that person is not determined to exercise his or her will by his or her nature or by a creature other than the person and his or her act of will is not specified by his or her nature or by a creature other than the person.⁹⁰ In this sense, one is able to will otherwise than one wills even if one’s act is determined by God with regard to exercise or specification, if God’s willing is sufficient for the occurrence of the act, or if the act’s content is entailed by the antecedent of a conditional divine decree or of a conditional of freedom. The power of the will is “sufficient” by nature to move itself to act, since its nature is to be a power that moves itself to act, but not “efficacious” to move itself to any act without being moved by God.⁹¹ The power is, really, incapable on its own of moving itself to act. If we were free only in this sense, then God would determine

⁸⁹ A personalist might object that genuine freedom is much more than being able to will otherwise than one wills. More deeply, a personalist might contend, freedom is the quality of the will by which it is creative, self-determining, self-donative, and self-revealing in the service of the Good. See, e.g., Schmitz, “The Solidarity of Personalism,” 142. I do not deny this; indeed, creativity and self-donation are presented below as evidence for the truth of my view of created freedom. But being able to will otherwise than one wills is presented here as a necessary and sufficient condition for being free, rather than as the innermost essence of freedom.

⁹⁰ (2) would add a further necessary condition for a person being able to do otherwise: that the person is not determined to some act by conditions naturally or temporally prior to the act.

⁹¹ On the language of “sufficiency” and “efficacy,” see Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 330–35.

or specify all our acts. This is not enough for genuine freedom: non-determination and non-specification are also required, and these are provided in the second sense of the phrase. On my view, primary acts of the will are free in this first sense of the phrase.

In its second sense, “is able to will otherwise than one wills” is rightly said of a created person if and only if that person alone can, even given all other causes or conditions, move him or herself to some exercise of act of will and specify the content of that act. In this sense, one could not be said to be able to will otherwise than one wills if one’s act’s exercise or content is determined by God, whether by his prior or simultaneous willing or by his permission, where either is sufficient for determining the act. Nor could one be said to be able to will otherwise than one wills if a description of one’s act is entailed by the antecedent of a conditional divine decree or of a conditional of freedom. In such cases, the person alone does not determine the content of his or her act. If I am free in this sense, then there is nothing definite that I would do were I placed in some situation and my act cannot result from a prior or simultaneous specifying divine motion and still be free. But in this sense, a description of my act could be entailed by a proposition that states that God or someone else knows my act. This is compatible with my being able to will otherwise in this sense because this entailment does not indicate that my act results from God’s knowledge, whereas in the case of divine decrees or conditionals of freedom, the obtaining of something other than my willing suffices to bring about my act. The problem is not the entailment relation, but the way in which the act comes about.⁹² On my view, secondary acts of will are free in this second sense of the phrase.

In this second sense of the phrase, statements or divine decrees of the form “If God moves or premoves free agent A to secondary act C, then A freely does secondary act C” are always false—contrary to (1) and to some versions of (2) and (4). As we have seen, some versions of (2) contend that, since God is a transcendent cause, he can cause any creature of any sort, even free acts, without competition with that creature with respect to freedom. But I contend that this is so only in the sense that God causes a free act *qua* being (and *qua* including a primary act of the will), not in the sense of God causing a

⁹² Cf. William Lane Craig, *God’s Knowledge of Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 125. Craig only criticizes (1) and (2), not (5), which he endorses.

free act *qua* having the content of a secondary act of the will. If God causes the latter, then the creature is not free in the second sense of the phrase. In order for God to be able to cause free creatures, to be the transcendent cause of all creaturely beings, and not compromise genuinely creaturely freedom, it is plausible to hold that he relates to the essence and existence of free creaturely acts in the fine-grained way outlined by my view.

Likewise, in this second sense of the phrase, any conditional of the form “If agent A is in situation S, then agent A freely does act C” is false. Since, on view (5), conditionals of this form must be true and knowable prior to the creation of a world for God’s middle knowledge to work, and since, also on (5), being put in situation S ensures that agent A does C, this second sense of the phrase is incompatible with (5). In this (second) sense of the phrase, no situation is a sufficient condition for willing some secondary act.⁹³ This second sense of the phrase is compatible with being strongly influenced by one’s moral and cognitive states, by one’s situation, and by other persons including God. In this second sense of the phrase, the created will—by its nature—is, using the terminology of (1), “sufficient” but not “efficacious” to move itself to act. The primary act of the will renders my will both “sufficient” and “efficacious” to move itself to secondary act. The opening of the will to the transcendental Good given in the primary act of the will opens a “space” for acting on my own.⁹⁴

I now give three personalistic reasons for holding that we have this second sense of freedom.⁹⁵ These reasons do not rigorously demonstrate the claim that we have freedom in this sense, but they do motivate the claim by giving experiential or phenomenological evidence for it. Of course, one who denies that we are free in that sense can explain this evidence in other ways, but I contend that this evidence is most plausibly explained by positing that we are free in the second sense of the phrase.

First, if I can make a genuine gift of myself to others, then it is most plausible to hold that I am able, in the second sense, to will otherwise than I will.⁹⁶ My abilities to love, to make moral commitments, and

⁹³ Cf. Levering, *Predestination*, 116.

⁹⁴ Cf. Balthasar, *Dramatis Personae*, 273; Suárez, *DMet*, d. 22, s. 2, nos. 35–37; s. 4, nos. 10 and 13.

⁹⁵ For a denial that we have freedom in this sense, see Long, “Providence,” 591 and 601–03.

⁹⁶ The notion of self-gift is a major theme in the personalists, especially in Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II). For an expression of his view, see *Man and Woman*

to enter into communions with others, including into covenants and relations with God—in short, my abilities to perform those acts that most lead to personal flourishing—are evidence that it is plausible to hold that I am able to make a genuine gift of myself. If person A makes a gift of himself to person B because B has sufficiently determined that A will do so, then person A has not really made a gift of himself to B, for the making of the gift was not determined by A. For A to make a gift of himself to B requires that A is also genuinely able to not make that gift, regardless of what B does—that is, to make a gift of myself, I must be free in the second sense. The possibility of giving of myself as a gift and the existence of my acts of self-gifts are given to me by God, but it is up to me whether I exercise that possibility.

Second, the experience of freedom is closely related to the experience of creativity: to be a created person is to be, in the words of J.R.R. Tolkien, a “sub-creator,” one capable of taking the given material of the world and recombining its parts in new ways. This “sub-creativity” certainly presupposes prior gifts of God, such as the gift of oneself, of God’s prior providential ordering of the world, of one’s transcendental orientation to the Good, of the materials on which one exercises one’s creativity, and of natural inspiration. But, just as with other experiences of freedom, one experiences that creativity as exercisable on one’s own initiative.⁹⁷ If we did not have such creativity under our own control, but the content of all our creative acts and artworks was given by God, then the experience of creativity would be misleading: our apparent creativity and the artworks and artifacts whose essences we seem to create would in fact be God’s works, not ours. The experience of creativity is better explained by an account on which we are first given the power and

He Created Them (Boston: Pauline, 2006), 185–88, 197, and 200–02. Cf. Clarke, *Person*, 73–80; Crosby, *Selfhood*, 118–19; Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John Fitzgerald (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 39; Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 401; David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 118–19; and Kenneth Schmitz, “Created Receptivity and the Philosophy of the Concrete,” in *The Texture of Being*, 127 and 131.

⁹⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” in *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997). Cf. Marion Montgomery, *Making: The Proper Habit of Our Being* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2000), 119; and Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 117–18; Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 372.

actuality necessary to think and act and then, in the space opened by that actuality, are capable of exercising that power, rather than by an account on which we are given the whole contents of our creative acts. Furthermore, creativity reveals a possible gap between divine and human causality in its dependence on our ability to constitute beings of reason. The intellect can join together formal concepts such that, though them, the person experiences as an objective concept something that does not exist, at least in the manner that the intellect considers it. This is a thoroughly human cognitive act that God cannot do because it requires the ability to join and divide concepts: God cannot, Aquinas says, even know the enunciations of our mind as enunciated by us.⁹⁸ The ability to form beings of reason underlies both human creativity and our ability to sin, which involves considering an apparent good as if it were a real good.⁹⁹ For both good and evil, human creativity seems to involve specifying acts to some extent apart from the causality of others, including that of God.

Third, if God determined the content of every free action, then he either would be causally responsible for sin or would be unjust in punishing sin, or could not know sins—all of which are consequences any Thomist would want to avoid. Suppose that God specifies the content of sins through a permissive act, decree, or omission that is necessary and sufficient for the sin occurring. This does not entail that God caused the sin, for in this case, all God has done is omit giving the aid necessary and sufficient for the creature not to sin. One is only causally or morally responsible for the effects of one's omissions if one could have, but ought to have not, omitted these actions. Many might think there is nothing God ought to do with respect to creatures, such that God cannot be causally or morally responsible for creaturely sins, even though they are specified by his omissions. However, God not only specifies the sin by omission, but also subsequently punishes sin. But it seems plausible, on a straightforward understanding of justice as giving to each his or her due, that if agent A specifies that agent B performs evil action C such that agent B cannot do otherwise than C in the second sense of "is able to will otherwise than one wills," then A cannot justly punish B for

⁹⁸ Cf. *In I sent.* d. 38, q. 1, a. 3; *ST I*, q. 14, a. 14; *DP*, q. 1, a. 6; John of St. Thomas, *CP, Logica*, pt. 2, q. 2, a. 5, concl. 1 (vol. 1, pp. 237–38).

⁹⁹ Suárez, *DM*, d. 23, s. 6, n. 19; s. 8, nos. 7–10; John of St. Thomas, *CP, Logica*, pt. 2, q. 2, a. 1 (vol. 1, p. 217) and a. 4, ad 1 (1:295); *In I-II ST*, d. 8, a. 1, no. 46 (p. 321).

C. Even if all agent A did was omit giving B the help that B needed to avoid doing C, this is still the case if agent A's omission of help is sufficient for B doing C. Otherwise, it would be just to punish a person for something that they genuinely could not not do, and this is contrary to the very notion of justice. So God cannot both determine creatures to sin, even if only by omission or predetermining permission, and also punish them—unless he does not know what he is doing when he so omits, which is contrary to his omniscience. The same argument can be run, *mutatis mutandis*, for good acts and rewards, rather than evil acts and punishments.¹⁰⁰ A way to avoid these problems is to adopt the view that the creature specifies the content of his or her good and evil acts and that God knows these acts by intuitive cognition.

Objections and Replies

Now that we have seen a few reasons to adopt the personalist view, I shall further defend my view and flesh out its details by responding to two objections.

Objection 1

Some might object that, if God does not directly move me to my acts, then my acts fall outside the scope of his providence and government and are not subject to his law, for only those things that fall within the power of some mover are governed by that mover. On this objection, my view leads to a replacement of the view that the person is “theonomous,” ruled by God, with the possibly implicitly atheistic view that the person is “autonomous,” ruled only by him or herself. Similarly, it might be objected that, on my view, God's providence must, in a sense, “wait” for my action; unlike on other views, especially (1), (2), and (5), it is not clear how, on my view, God's providence is realized. God here seems to become one more cause like creaturely causes, rather than being a cause in an analogous, transcendent sense. If this is the case, my view would collapse into a sort of “open theism” (or “free will theism”) in which God does not know the future until it occurs and so is a being within time, capable of change through learning about creatures' new actions as time progresses, and so without providential sovereignty

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas holds that God governs us both by interior motion and by giving precepts and prohibitions, as well as promising rewards and punishments to induce us to right action (*ST* I, q. 103, a. 5, ad 2). My view maintains both, so long as the former is understood in the sense of the primary act of the will.

over all things. One might think this is especially the case since I deny the possibility of a “middle knowledge” whereby God could have providential control over all things without directly determining free creaturely acts.¹⁰¹

Reply to Objection 1

None of this follows from the claim that God does not directly move me to the exercise or specification of my free secondary acts. On my view, God is the ultimate source of the motion whereby I move myself to act and he is the cause of my substance and free will and the one who orients it towards its end, which is him. My free acts can take place only subsequent to God giving me motion and the moral law, and they only conduce to my fulfillment by conforming to that law,

¹⁰¹ Long, “Providence,” 599–605; Long, *Natura Pura* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 37–39. For a good explanation of open or free will theism, see William Hasker, “Providence and Evil: Three Theories,” *Religious Studies* 28 (1992): 91–105. Similarly, one might object that my view violates the Thomistic principle of predilection: that creatures have the degree of goodness that they have due to God’s degree of love for them; cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 265, drawing on *ST* I q. 20, a. 3; I-II, q. 9, a. 6; q. 10, a. 4; and *In Rom*, ch. 9, lec. 2. On this objection, if God does not directly move me to my act, then my goodness, including my acts of faith and charity, will be my own doing, not a result of God’s love for me; the greatest acts in all creation, salvific acts, will be mine, not God’s. One might then think that my view entails Pelagianism; cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 298–99. But this is not so: on my view, all goodness and possibility of good action are first given by God in the primary act of the will, as a result of his love. The possibility of willing the supernatural Good must likewise be given in a new primary act of the will as a result of his love, an actual grace, and my secondary act of the will can only either take that possibility and, on its strength, consent to it or, on my own strength, reject it. Furthermore, each of my secondary acts as existing is given by God. Cf. *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 6. Long objects that, if God did not move me to each of my acts, then I would create my acts *ex nihilo*, which is impossible (“Providence,” 562). But the consequent of his first premise does not follow from the antecedent. On my view, God does not move me to each of my acts, but is their cause. I do not cause my acts *ex nihilo*, but rather I draw them from the already existing potency of my will in virtue of the “primary act” by which my will is already in act, which is given to me by God. Furthermore, although there is a logical moment in the order of causing when I determine myself to act entirely on my own, every act of the will also relies, in a non-determining way, on prior orientations of the will. The will never acts without being attracted by some good. Furthermore, my fallen or graced state and my habits orient me towards different goods. I only move myself to act presupposing all of this, and so I never create my act *ex nihilo*.

which God has given me in the orientation of my powers and nature. While there is a sense in which I am “autonomous,” since I and I alone determine my secondary acts, this is only on the basis of a more fundamental “theonomy”: God governs my secondary acts through giving me my primary act and the moral law, by directing the conditions and effects of my acts, and by directing me and my acts toward my end. My freedom is a participation in God’s freedom, not entirely my own, though it is only freedom if I can exercise and specify it. On (1) and some versions of (2), it is unclear why laws are needed at all: on those views, God gives laws but whether I fulfill the law is not ultimately up to me, but rather requires God to give me the acts whereby I consider and fulfill the law. The law seems superfluous on those views, needed only so that God acts in me in accord with the nature he has given me and so, perhaps, is relieved of responsibility for my evil acts. Genuine freedom requires that I be able to consider the law that has been given to me and then either follow it or not on my own self-determination.

In response to the claim that, on my view, God’s providence must “wait” for creaturely actions, it must be insisted that God, because of his eternity, wills and knows all creatures at all times simultaneously with respect to the “now” of eternity. Aquinas argues that it is better to call God’s knowledge *providentia*, seeing all things as present to him in one intuitive glance, rather than *praevidentia*, seeing things in advance.¹⁰² Aquinas’s point is that nothing is future with respect to God, but the point can be expanded: everything that is is simultaneous with and contained by God in his eternal now.¹⁰³ God causes, intuitively cognizes, responds to, and orders all things and acts at all times “all at once,” without any temporal or explanatory “wait” or passivity on his part. All this ensures his transcendence and that he is not a cause in the same sense as creatures.

There is an order among creatures brought about by God, though some elements of this order, such as the essences of free secondary acts (inasmuch as they intend particular goods), are brought about by creatures, and others are brought about by God as a response to or a preparation for those acts. On my view, we should not think of providence as a plan, as it were, mapped out in advance and subsequently implemented. Rather, providence is God’s type of the order of creatures toward their end, as they actually are, considered in itself. This

¹⁰² *In I sent.*, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5; *DV*, a. 2, a. 12. Cf. Pontifex, *Freedom and Providence*, 68–69.

¹⁰³ Cf. *ST I*, q. 14, a. 7, ad 6.

idea includes the ideas of all the ways in which God could respond to any creaturely act—as Balthasar emphasized in (3)—and of God’s own actual responses to actual creaturely acts; it is better said to be “simultaneous” with the created order.

The following model is one way in which this notion of providence could be developed, though it is beyond the scope of this article to flesh out this development completely. God’s knowing and willing and his realization of providence could be thought of less on the model of practical knowledge and more on a model of knowledge based around love. Lovers, including God, are both appetitively and cognitively ecstatically in, and intimately present to, their beloved.¹⁰⁴ When a person loves another, the former intimately knows the latter, wills him or her all goods relevant to him or her and allows him or her to make a free response to that love while desiring that the beloved make this response and knowing what response the beloved makes. Acts of creaturely knowing and willing, along with being present to creatures, are united in such “acts of love.” On the model of such acts, God’s knowing existing creatures and willing their existence should not be separated conceptually, but rather should be considered as one “act of love.” Such an act would not causally determine all aspects of its objects, nor would it involve being causally affected by its objects at all, but would rather cause some features of its objects and just intentionally consider other features. On such a model, God would be intimately involved in and responsive to the world as it actually is, though still without being really related to it, and he still would be eternally and immutably identical to his act. His acts of love would furthermore involve directing all things to their ends in accord with their natures and bestowing acts of existence on all things. His providence would be the idea or type of things as they actually happen. While this is perhaps less formally appealing than other models, I think it makes up for this in its ability to avoid problems in those others.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ *ST* I, q. 20, a. 2, ad 1; I-II, q. 28, aa. 2–3.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ST* I-II, q. 28, aa. 2–3; q. 20, a. 2, ad 1. For models of knowing and loving in the philosophical literature along these lines, see: knowledge by connaturality as described by Aquinas in *ST* II-II, q. 45, a. 2; Eleonore Stump’s notion of “Franciscan knowledge” in her *Wandering In Darkness* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 40–62; the direct, “rustic,” “aesthetic” knowledge of things by direct involvement outlined by John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock in *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001), 12–16 (though I do not endorse their claim that Aquinas has this view of God’s knowledge); the

That this model does not entail “open theism” or any view appreciably similar to it, but instead preserves divine eternity, omniscience, and immutability, can be seen by considering my view in the light of the two main views discussed above regarding what God’s acts intending creatures add to God.¹⁰⁶ For my view to entail open theism, it would have to entail the denial of the claims that God is eternal, omniscient, and immutable. But my view preserves all these divine attributes, regardless of which view one adopts regarding what God’s acts add to him. Furthermore, for my view to avoid open theism, it need only avoid it on one of these views, since I take no position on which of these views is correct, and I think my view is compatible with either. If the reader thinks that one of these views of God’s acts is incompatible with my view, then the reader should reject that view of God’s acts.

On a first view, held in slightly different versions by (1), (2), (4), and (5), God’s acts regarding actual creatures only add to him a changeable relation of reason or extrinsic denomination, though the acts are entitatively identical to God; had God done otherwise than he did, he would be no different intrinsically than he is. Those who hold this view emphasize that it is a great mystery how God could have done otherwise and can know creatures as they are without any intrinsic difference to himself, but that some mystery must be accepted in discussing a simple, transcendent God. On these views, God’s providence does not involve any intrinsic difference to God from what his providence would be like had he created a different world; the only metaphysical difference is a difference in relations of reason between God and creatures. But God still has providence for the world, for, by his independence from and transcendence over the world, he can intend and guide things in the world without any alteration to himself.

model of divine presence and self-gift to creatures outlined by John Milbank in “Christianity and Platonism in East and West,” in *Divine Essence and Divine Energies*, ed. C. Athanosopolous and C. Schneider (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 2013), 169, 177, 184, and 199–200; and Gabriel Marcel’s view of love as involving one person interiorly transforming another, as a causally unanalyzable mystery, and as having a certain sort of necessity without being unfree or a matter of chance, in his “On the Ontological Mystery,” in *The Philosophy of Existentialism* (New York: Citadel, 1984), 20–22.

¹⁰⁶ That my view preserves divine eternity and immutability shows that my view does not include or entail the “simple foreknowledge” view, on which God is omniscient but cannot use his knowledge of future events until they have occurred.

On this first view, God's act of love toward these particular creatures is entitatively identical to the one immutable God and the only thing added to God is a relation of reason to these creatures. God causes and explains all creatures, on this view, but in different ways for different creatures. Given that God has willed this particular world, God eternally and necessarily has all the relations of reason that he has to the creatures of this world by necessity of supposition. No change in creatures, whether brought about by God directly or not, would involve a change in God or an event of learning in God. Rather, a creature is known by God even if he does not cause it, if and only if it exists, God intrinsically has its formal concept, and God is eternally present to it. A creature is willed by God if and only if it receives an act of existence from God and God is identical to an act of will. God providentially orders all things if and only if God has the type of the order of this world eternally in his mind and all actual creatures are dependent on God for their being and for their ordering towards their ends, and he has all the sorts of influence over creatures elaborated above. This providence does not involve God determining or causing the essences of the free secondary acts of created persons. Given what I have said here, there is no reason to think that God would need to cause those essences to retain providence over all things or to avoid open theism. God is an act of love, and that act is secondarily terminated by creatures through relations of reason in a variety of ways (since God is its primary object), including ways where God merely knows but does not directly will some features of some creaturely acts, but rather allows a free response. None of this entails that God is not eternal, is not omniscient, is mutable, or lacks providence over all things. On the contrary, this view depends on God being eternal and immutable and entails that God is omniscient and has providence over all things in all the ways described above. This model of God's acts as acts of love, on this first view of how his acts add to him, does not entail open theism.¹⁰⁷

On a second view, held by (3) and by some who hold (6), God's acts regarding creatures are free intrinsic perfections of God. They do

¹⁰⁷ Some who hold this view hold that one kind of relation of reason is an intentional relation or relations of consciousness such that God can intend creatures, and so be genuinely conscious of them, without any intrinsic change to himself. See, e.g., Norris Clarke, "A New Look at the Immutability of God," in *Explorations in Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1995), 194–46.

not add to him just relations of reason, though when God takes on these free perfections, he also takes on relations of reason to creatures. Free perfections exist in him only by necessity of supposition, not by absolute necessity, and so, despite their identity with God, they could be otherwise than they are.

On this second view, God can freely but eternally and immutably take on the acts of love that he does by necessity of supposition. As Eleonore Stump argues, God can eternally determine himself to respond to particular creatures without being determined by creatures or determining them. This occurs, on this view, by eternally being in the right intentional (rather than real) relations of presence and intuitive cognition to all creatures and freely determining himself to take on an act of love toward each creature. God's providence, on this view, consists of all the acts of love that he has eternally and freely determined himself to have toward particular creatures, along with their creaturely effects. Just as on the first view of God's acts, so on this view too God's providence does not require him to have specifying or determinative control over creatures' secondary acts. None of this entails the denial of divine eternity, omniscience, immutability, or providence over all things.¹⁰⁸ So, on neither this view nor the previous view of God's acts does my view entail open theism or any theory similar to it.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ I deny that my view involves or entails God having real relations to or real dependence on creatures in any way. But even if my view did involve or entail either of these, that would not entail a denial of these divine attributes or an affirmation of open theism. Rather, God could freely, eternally, and immutably (by necessity of supposition, not absolute necessity) take on these relations, and these relations could be part of God's providential rule over creatures. On both views of God's acts, God has the fullness of being, perfection, and goodness apart from his acts that regard creatures. So even if God were really related to creatures through knowing, willing, or loving them, he would still have all the divine attributes denied by open theism and would not learn about the future as it unfolds, due to his eternity.

¹⁰⁹ If my view were to entail open theism, then so would any view on which God does not predetermine or specify my sinful acts, such as some versions of (2), as well as (3) through (6). If this is right, then one must choose between open theism and a view on which God determines or specifies sin and, therefore, according to the argument given above, either causes it, is unjustified in punishing it, or is ignorant of it. However, I contend that neither my view nor these other views entail open theism, and so this unhappy choice is avoided.

Objection 2

One might object that, if God did not premove free creatures to their acts, then the order of the universe would be due to chance. But this is impossible, so God must *per se* move creatures to all their acts so that the order of the universe will infallibly emerge.¹¹⁰

Reply to Objection 2

My reply to objection 1 might be an adequate response to this objection as well. Even though God does not premove free creatures to their free acts, he still orders all things toward the Good and thereby causes the order of the universe. But a further, more explanatory response can be given, though one that requires some revision of the Thomistic view of causality and providence. However, this revision should not be thought of as an integral part of my Thomistic personalist view; one could accept everything said so far in this article while rejecting this revision. This revisionary response to the objection is that neither *per se* nor *per accidens* causality adequately describes the case of created freedom. Some modern philosophers, including some personalists, have recognized that many communions and relationships among persons emerge neither as the result of direct planning—that is, through *per se* causality—nor *per accidens* through the chance confluence of *per se* free causes. Rather, they arise, as it were, organically, through the contributions of many free actions, resulting in a set of relationships that is not directly planned by any of the members in the sense of a top-down guidance to a predetermined end but that is not a matter of chance.¹¹¹ To bring about a communion, the participants in the communion must make a gift of themselves to the others, making themselves available to those others for the sake of a further order.

An example of this can be seen in the case of a serious conversation, which displays a marvelous order, which is not directly *per*

¹¹⁰ Cf. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Providence*, trans. Dom Bede Rose (St Louis: Herder), 21–22.

¹¹¹ Crosby, *Selfhood*, 120–23; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. John Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 375–77, 386, and 401–05; F. A. Hayek, “The Results of Human Action but Not of Human Design,” in *Studies in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 96–105; Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, 7th ed. (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1985), 30–39; Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, trans. Manfred Frings and Roger Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 533–51; Wojtyła, *Acting Person*, 261–71, 279–87, and 294–95.

se willed by any of the parties to the conversation, but which arises as a result of their free cooperation and dialogue. Likewise, a covenantal agreement among free parties is a result of free cooperation of several wills coming together in harmony neither through chance nor through a single party's plan. The order of these communions arises through what we might call "*per communionem* causality." This is like *per se* causality in that those who bring about a community will that such a community come about, but it is unlike *per se* causality in that no party can directly will the exact shape of the community. It is like *per accidens* causality in that it acts through the confluence of many *per se* causes, but it is unlike *per accidens* causality in that the confluence is something willed by all of the *per se* causes. It is also unlike *per accidens* causality in that, in the latter, the confluence of causes can be directed *per se* by a higher cause, as when God directs chance events to the perfection of the universe. *Per communionem* causality, by contrast, can only occur through the free self-gift of the participants, which requires that each is able to will otherwise than he or she wills, in the second sense discussed in the previous section ("The Plausibility of My View of Created Freedom"). Finally, *per communionem* causality is not mere concurrence of two partial causes, as when two people together row a boat, since in concurrence, each *per se* wills the effect and its content.¹¹²

The relation between divine and created freedoms is best understood according to this sort of causality. God causes the power and primary act of the human will, but the effect of this is to open a transcendental space for created freedom to act *per se*. There is a break in the transitivity of the chain of *per se* causality here: God is not the direct *per se* cause of the content of the free act. Rather, in opening the space for created freedom, God sets up the conditions for *per communionem* causality: the created person can then either cooperate or refuse to cooperate with the goodness that God has bestowed on that free will in the primary act. But God binds himself covenantally, as it were, to actualize (and so cause *per se*) whatever free act the essence of which is caused *per se* by the created person; each free act is produced through *per communionem* causality.¹¹³ Together, in each

¹¹² Cf. Molina, *Concordia*, q. 14, a. 13, d. 26. See also Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 245 and 281.

¹¹³ This "binding" could be understood according to either of the two views of what God's acts that intend creatures add to God. On the first view, God eternally and absolutely necessarily has what we might call an act of free

free act and in further covenantal orders, God and free creatures bring about a communion among themselves. God still ultimately directs the universe and each creature's life to its Good, and so has *per se* providential rule over the universe and over each individual creature. He is the primary cause of all things according to their existence, and creatures are his instrumental causes insofar as they always contribute to his goals. But if God did not create free agents capable of acting on their own and making a gift of themselves, then the good of communions would be lacking to the universe.¹¹⁴ Of course, even if no creature cooperates with God, God can and will bring about the order and good of the universe. But, if my view is correct, he has set up the metaphysical conditions for the order of the universe coming about not just through his *per se* causality, but also through cooperation with free created causes.¹¹⁵ My attitude toward divine providence must be one of active acceptance, action, and participation in governing the world: if created persons are genuinely free, then they are partly responsible for the order of the universe. All of this should be understood in light of the arguments against the claim that my view entails open theism, which was presented in the reply to the first objection.

I have outlined here a way in which one can hold both the personalist thesis and most of Thomistic metaphysics. This was possible in large part because of the Thomistic essence-existence distinction. In holding this synthesis, it is also possible to accept parts of the six historical interpretations of Aquinas. I do not claim to have completely defended this synthesis, but I have provided a number of pieces of evidence for it. My view can rightly be called Thomistic (broadly speaking), I think, despite its departure from Aquinas's views on causality and providence, inasmuch as my view relies upon the Thomistic metaphysics of essence and existence, the Thomistic

commitment toward himself primarily, which can also, by God's free decision, be terminated by free creatures, though this just adds to God a relation of reason. On the second view, God's act of self-binding toward free creatures is a free perfection intrinsically found in God, which is necessary by supposition. Likewise, everything else said here about God's relations to free creatures can be understood according to either view of God's acts.

¹¹⁴ See *ST* I, q. 20, a. 2, ad 3.

¹¹⁵ See Norris Clarke, "System: A New Category of Being?" in *The Creative Retrieval of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 39–47. This notion of *per communionem* causality is meant to be similar to the notion of *synergy* found in some of the Greek Fathers.

account of the structure of human acts, and the Thomistic view of the divine attributes and situates itself in relation to the various Thomistic traditions of interpretation. My view can rightly be called personalistic inasmuch as it preserves the fundamental personalist thesis about created freedom. It is my hope that the view outlined in this article will spur further reflection on the nature of created freedom and on theological topics like the nature of grace and predestination in a Thomistic personalist context.¹¹⁶ **N&V**

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