

God and the Permission of Evil

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Introduction

In prior writings I have addressed the work of Jacques Maritain with respect to divine providential government and human liberty,¹ and subsequently criticized the teaching of Francisco Marín-Sola and his gifted translator and defender Professor Michael Torre.² In this essay I wish to attempt two things, the second of even greater significance than is the first. As for the first, recently Professor Torre has responded in the pages of *Revue thomiste*³ to my criticisms of Marín-Sola. He forwards a central criticism of the understanding of Saint Thomas's teaching common to the Dominicans from the *Congregatio de Auxiliis*, and rightly associated with Domingo Bañez. This central criticism is the charge that permission of sin as a non-upholding in good makes God to be an accidental cause of moral evil, making God too complicit with evil to be an acceptable position for a Roman Catholic thinker to hold. Torre also considers that Thomas did not hold the position that sin follows upon an antecedent permissive decree that is a non-upholding in good. I do not consider these claims adequate to the teaching of Aquinas and of Bañez, and wish briefly to state why.

¹ Steven A. Long, "Providence, Liberté et Loi Naturelle," *Revue thomiste* 102 (2002): 355–406.

² See Steven A. Long, "Petite réflexion sur Marin-Sola et Torre à propos de la grâce et la liberté," *Revue thomiste* 115 (2015): 469–80, and Michael Torre, *Do Not Resist the Spirit's Call: Francisco Marín-Sola on Sufficient Grace* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

³ Michael Torre, "À propos de Marin-Sola sur la grâce suffisante," *Revue thomiste* 118 (2018): 293–312.

Second and more centrally, in addition to offering brief response to this argument, it seems to this author of crucial importance that essential elements from the prior discussion of these matters be given sufficient attention. And so I also argue that the criticisms made by Michel Labourdette and Jean-Hervé Nicolas of Maritain's analysis were never sufficiently understood and answered by the proponents of "breakable" divine motion. Even more importantly, I wish to point out what seems to me to be a critical misreading of the text of Aquinas which influenced Nicolas toward the disavowal of his earlier analysis, an earlier analysis for which afterward (with good reason!) he could find no adequate substitute. These considerations from prior doctrinal expositions are of great objective importance, not least because some of these have not to the present day adequately been understood by those to whom they were directed, but also because in the case of Nicolas he abandoned his own prior brilliant analysis—which itself has never sufficiently been answered—on the force of what appears to be a (widely shared) misinterpretation of a text of Aquinas.

Thus, this work is aimed not simply at response to Professor Torre's defense of Marín-Sola, but even more principally seeks to pursue two major considerations: (1) the pivotal analysis to be found in prior speculative engagement of this subject, especially in the work of Labourdette and Nicolas, and (2) what I will argue was a deficient analysis of a text of Aquinas that moved Nicolas to abandon what he himself nonetheless realized was the only hope of a truly systematic response to the question of divine causality and evil.

Is Bañez Correct That Divine Non-Upholding in Good Does Not Make God an Accidental Cause of Moral Evil?

Regarding the divine permission of sin according to Bañez, Professor Torre argues as follows:

I have already mentioned one of these difficulties. The position of Bañez seems to imply the following reasoning:

MAJOR: The non-conservation in being is the *per accidens* cause of a negation or deficiency.

MINOR: The permission of sin by God is a non-conservation in being.

CONCLUSION: The permission of sin by God is the *per accidens* cause of a negation or deficiency.

From which it follows that:

MAJOR: Sin is an act endowed with a moral deficiency (it is a defective act).

MINOR: God is the primary cause of both (a) the act of sin and (b) its deficiency.

CONCLUSION: God is the root cause of sin as sin.⁴

However, the analysis of Thomas's text provided by Bañez is not considered in his treatment. I quote from his commentary on *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 19, art. 9, ad 3:

Along with this, however, is the status in truth, that sins are done, but not that God wills them to be done, nor that he wills them not to be done because this will would impede every sin. In brief, it is to be noted here, about the permission of sin, first, that [this permission] is good and willed by God, who orders it to a greater good that is the good that takes away sin. Second, it should be noted, that God permits sin, not that he is said to cause sin, directly, nor indirectly, nor by accident. Indeed, directly, it is manifest: because sin insofar as sin, does not have the nature [*rationem*] of the good, and thus is not [as such] able to be willed. Indirectly, however, He is not the cause of sin: because however He may impede and not impede, He is not bound because He is not required indirectly to achieve or will some special effect as some cause is said to be. Nor finally is He an accidental cause, because the act of the divine will permitting sin does not reach to the very sin as to an effect efficaciously flowing

⁴ Torre, "À propos de Marin-Sola," 308: "J'ai déjà évoqué l'une de ces difficultés. La position de Bânez semble impliquer le raisonnement suivant:

MAJEURE: la non-conservation dans l'être est la cause *per accidens* d'une négation ou déficience.

MINEURE: la permission de Dieu du péché est une non-conservation de l'être.

CONCLUSION: la permission du péché par Dieu est la cause *per accidens* d'une négation ou déficience.

D'où il résulte que:

MAJEURE: le péché est un acte doté d'une déficience morale (c'est un acte défectueux).

MINEURE: Dieu est la cause première à la fois de (a) l'acte de péché et (b) de sa déficience.

CONCLUSION: Dieu est la cause première du péché en tant que péché."

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own, although occasionally consulting published translations if available.

from it. That which is required for this, is that some cause is said accidentally to bring about some effect: as for example, if Peter is digging a grave, and discovers a treasure, this is said to be an accidental cause of the discovery of the treasure; because the very act of digging really achieves the discovery of the treasure, although this is not the intent. But still, if the treasure is discovered, and a thief comes and takes it, it will not be said that Peter is by accident the cause of the robbery.”⁵

It seems to this author that the argument of Bañez is unshakeable on this point, for two reasons. To take a moment to observe this argument, one observes his words that: “Second, it should be noted, that God permits sin, not that he is said to cause sin, directly, nor indirectly, nor by accident” (“*Secundo* advertendum est, quod, licet Deus permittat peccatum, non tamen potest dici causi peccati, directe, neque indirecte, neque per accidens.”). Clearly he does not think it possible, nor does he intend to argue for any accidental causality of sin by God. But what is his argument? Bañez reasons that God cannot be an accidental cause of sin precisely because “the act of the divine will permitting sin does not reach to the very sin as to an effect efficaciously flowing from it” (“quia actio divinae voluntatis permittendi peccatum non attingit ad ipsum peccatum tanquam ad effectum efficaciter procedentem ab illa”). The account given by Bañez of the nature of accidental causality—the reason that God is not an accidental

⁵ “Cum hoc tamen stat in veritate, quod fiant peccata, non tamen quod Deus velit fieri, neque quod velit non fieri: quoniam haec voluntas omnino impediret omnia peccata. Denique, advertendum est hic, circa permissionem peccati, *primo*, quod illa est bona et volita a Deo, ordinante illam ad majus bonum, quam sit bonum quo privat peccatum. *Secundo* advertendum est, quod, licet Deus permittat peccatum, non tamen potest dici causi peccati, directe, neque indirecte, neque per accidens. Directe quidem, manifestum est: quia peccatum inquantum peccatum, non habet rationem boni, et ita non potest appeti. Indirecte vero, non est causa peccati: quia quamvis possit impedire et non impediat, non tenetur, quod requiritur ut aliqua causa dicatur indirecte efficere aliquem effectum, aut velle. Neque tandem est causa per accidens: quia actio divinae voluntatis permittendi peccatum non attingit ad ipsum peccatum tanquam ad effectum efficaciter procedentem ab illa. Quod quidem requiritur ad hoc, quod aliqua causa dicatur per accidens efficere aliquem effectum: ut v. g. si petrus fodiens sepulchrum, forte invenit thesaurum, dicitur causa per accidens inventionis thesauri; quia actio ipsius fodientis terram attingit revera ad inventionem thesauri quamvis hoc non fuerit intentum. Sed tamen, si invento thesauro, affuit latro, et rapuit illum, tunc non dicitur Petrus causa per accidens rapinae” (Bañez, *Scholastica Commentaria in Primam Partem Summae Theologiae S. Thomas Aquinatis*, ed. Luis Urbano [Madrid-Valencia: Ed. F.E.D.A., 1934], 437).

cause of sin—is quite clear in his text: “What is required for this, is that some cause is said accidentally to bring about some effect: as for example, if Peter is digging a grave, and discovers a treasure, this is said to be an accidental cause of the discovery of the treasure; because the very act of digging really achieves the discovery of the treasure, although this is not the intent. But still, if the treasure is discovered, and a thief comes and takes it, it will not be said that Peter is by accident the cause of the robbery.”

Peter discovering the treasure is a condition of its being robbed, but it is not the *cause* of its being robbed. Of course, if the treasure is not discovered, it cannot be robbed, and Peter makes this discovery to occur. Also it is true that Peter does not stop the robbery, but this need not imply that Peter either essentially or accidentally aids the robbery in any way. Likewise, if Peter did not discover the treasure, Peter would not owing to this become the accidental cause of it being hidden: because Peter did not hide it or do anything *causing* it to be hidden. God’s causality extends to all being, true, and good, and nothing God causes in itself necessitates evil. But if nothing God causes extends to the effect *qua* evil, we cannot say that the divine permission is the same as divine accidental causation of evil.

This argument of Bañez reposes principally on the convertibility of being with good. The divine causality in being and good in no way causes moral evil, even though this causality is a *condition* that is required for evil insofar as God is the author of every actual entity and good. We may call this the “anti-Manichaeic” aspect of the argument of Bañez. God cannot even accidentally cause moral evil as such, because his causality never brings about evil, but only being, good, and true. Just as the gravedigger discovering the treasure does not make him an accidental cause of its robbery, so God causing the being, true, and good of defectible things does not make actual defect a divine effect, as that defection is a deprivation. That one not uphold from defect does not make one either the *per se* or the *per accidens* cause of such a defect, just as Peter not stopping the robber’s theft does not make him an accidental cause of theft.

Yet it might be argued that one who can uphold ought to uphold, and this seems to be the gravamen of Torre’s argument. Likewise was it Maritain’s, expressed in the image of the parents guiding the hand of a child writing: if the parents withdraw their support, the handwriting fails, and for this, Maritain says, the parent is responsible. Thus he writes:

And to allow a thing to be done by withdrawing one’s hand, is this not to cause it indirectly? A child can write straightly only if I hold the pen with it; if I withdraw my hand, the child’s hand makes only

a scribble. It is clearly the cause of the scribble, and the sole direct cause. But have I not been the indirect cause by withdrawing my hand?

For my part, I answer “yes.” This seems obvious to me. But at bottom this does not matter to me essentially. Even if it would be true that thanks to the resources of logic and of skillfully elaborated definitions and distinctions one succeeded in completely eliminating the concept and the word “cause,” even indirect (I mean of cause considered under the relation of efficiency), a second question remains, and this is of capital importance.

Supposed, but not conceded, that God is not, in withdrawing His hand, the indirect cause of the culpable failure of the creature, it in any case remains that He Himself has first willed, with a will not causative but permissive, that this failure occur in the world. For it is on Him alone and on His sole first initiative, the neo-Bañezians clearly point out, that depended the *first moment*, the moment of the *permissive decree* itself, which has a priority of nature over the failure of the creature.⁶

One must observe, firstly, that Maritain’s reasoning—not on specious but on solid grounds—is inadmissible, because the withdrawing of the parent’s hand is not in the least a cause of the child writing. Let us presume that when the parental hand is withdrawn the child ceases writing; but then there is no “scribble.” Without the disposition to continue to write when the conditions of good writing do not exist—of course “defective” solely in relation to good writing, to be sure, and perhaps there is a reason to *let* the child scribble!—no scribble occurs. It will be observed that this “defective disposition” (solely in relation to good writing) is not something that exists solely because a parent “permits” it. After all, the parent is not God. But the permission of such defect is not the causing of defect, even though if one knows the first, one knows the second. Likewise, we know that if Peter after accidentally discovering treasure does not stop thieves from taking it (assuming no other preventing agency is proximate), it will be stolen: but this does not make Peter even accidentally to have caused its theft. It may be said that God not upholding the creature in good renders the defection of the creature “necessary.” But this necessity is hypothetical, that is, it denies nothing of the *power* of the creature, but only denies

⁶ Jacques Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, trans. Joseph Owens (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1966), 29.

a special upholding from something to which the creature is naturally *susceptible* albeit not naturally and necessarily *subject*. Further, contingency and necessity are according to Saint Thomas Aquinas *not* discriminated in relation to God but in relation to the proximate cause:⁷ and the proximate cause which is the human will is in all else but the willing of the end of happiness a *contingent cause*.⁸ On all these grounds, Maritain's argument is insufficient.

Yet there is a point to Maritain's observation that goes to the very character of the given created order and its goodness as such. Granted that God by not upholding the creature in good does not even accidentally *cause* evil, clearly God by creating defectible creatures, and by permitting defect, is a *condition* for evil. Further, if divine permission of evil as a "non-upholding in good" is thought to be responsible for the sins of creatures supposed to have been unjustly and arbitrarily subject to voluntary defect because of the antecedent divine permission of evil, clearly God's direct role in *sustaining in being* the morally evil creatures that *do evil* is even greater. Why was Hitler not annihilated, or Stalin—or, not annihilated, but simply *moved to hell*—the very instant the defect of malice was divinely permitted to take root in Hitler or Stalin? What is more, on Maritain's own view—and that of Marín-Sola, Father William Most, and many others—God retains the power simply to move the creature freely to assent. Is withholding that motion not likewise subject to Maritain's critique? We may sum all this up with two questions: (1) Is God wrong, and unjust, in not upholding creatures that are by their natures *not defective* but *defectible*, from all possible

⁷ *De malo*, q. 16, a. 7, ad 15: "Et ideo necessitas et contingentia in rebus distinguuntur non per habitudinem ad voluntatem divinam, quae est causa communis, sed per comparisonem ad causas creatas, quas proportionaliter divina voluntas ad effectus ordinavit; ut scilicet necessariorum effectuum sint causae intransmutabiles, contingentium autem transmutabiles."—"And therefore necessity and contingency in things are distinguished not in relation to the divine will, which is a universal cause, but in relation to created causes which the divine will has ordered proportionately to the effects, namely in such a way that the causes of necessary effects are unchangeable, and of contingent effects changeable."

⁸ See *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 10, a. 2, resp., where Thomas speaks of the will in terms of exercise and of specification. He says that nothing (speaking of natural willing) moves the will necessarily with respect to exercise; but with respect to specification: "Et quia defectus cuiuscumque boni habet rationem non boni, ideo illud solum bonum quod est perfectum et cui nihil deficit, est tale bonum quod voluntas non potest non velle, quod est beatitudo."—"And because the lack of whatsoever good has the nature of not-good, thus only that good that is perfect and which is lacking in nothing, is the good that the will can not not-will, which is happiness."

defect? (2) If we deny that divine non-upholding in good is required for evil to occur, are we not faced with precisely the same problem in God *continuing to cause* the being of those who are *defective agents*, something even more directly necessary for evil than the permissive will since non-existent agents do not cause anything? On an analogous analysis to that of Maritain's, is not even a Maritainian, or a proponent of Marín-Sola's views, or of Father Most's, not required to say: for God to continue to give being to Stalin is for God to be complicit in Stalin's crimes, since if Stalin does not continue to exist he cannot be the source of further defective action? But all this falls under the same anti-Manichaeic response. The divine causality of the being, true, and good of Stalin, Hitler, and Pol Pot does not account of itself for deprivation of being, true, and good in Stalin, Hitler, and Pol Pot. If no defectible creature exists, or if God does not permit it to defect, it cannot suffer defect. Nonetheless, Bañez is correct to argue that God is neither an essential, nor an indirect, nor an accidental cause of sin. God as causing the being, good, and true of some subject, does not cause evil.

Yet the wider question about the goodness of the providential order remains. I wish to observe that a misreading of the text of Saint Thomas has entered into this discussion in a way that begs remedy, and has exerted distortive effects on the thought of Nicolas, and, I would argue, of Torre, Marín-Sola, Maritain, and others.

Preface to a Pivotal Text of Saint Thomas: The Defectibility of Human Nature

The human creature is by reason of its experimental and discursive reason, and owing to the composite character of human nature which involves the appetites, a defectible agent even with respect to the proportionate natural good. This is prior to any actual defect or sin whatsoever, representing the potential for these. For the human agent to be defectible in this way is simply for it to be *potentially* subject to defect. This is not yet moral defect, but is the *conditio sine qua non* for it, and did this not obtain it would not be so much as *possible* for human nature to suffer defect. Thus, for example, on at least many readings of Saint Thomas with which I myself have sympathy, the angels are not defectible agents with respect to their proportionate natural good (because they receive perfectly adequate infused species from God and suffer no appetite that may introduce discrepancy with willing natural good) while yet they are defectible with respect to revelation

(which exceeds all proportion to any and every creature).⁹ In the case of the angels, they no more than any other creature may connaturally know the hidden things of God, but require grace for this, and so they may err regarding revelation. In the case of the human creature, there is by nature the possibility for bodily corruption, but also for inward distraction of appetite, *de facto* initial ignorance of many things, and the slow, discursive, and experimental character of human knowledge that likewise render us susceptible to error.

Thus human nature is defectible not merely “physically” but also intellectually and morally. But defectibility is “ontological” or “real,” that

⁹ See *ST* I, q. 62, a. 1: “Respondeo dicendum quod nomine beatitudinis intelligitur ultima perfectio rationalis seu intellectualis naturae, et inde est quod naturaliter desideratur, quia unumquodque naturaliter desiderat suam ultimam perfectionem. Ultima autem perfectio rationalis seu intellectualis naturae est duplex. Una quidem, quam potest assequi virtute suae naturae, et haec quodammodo beatitudo vel felicitas dicitur. Unde et Aristoteles perfectissimam hominis contemplationem, qua optimum intelligibile, quod est Deus, contemplari potest in hac vita, dicit esse ultimam hominis felicitatem. Sed super hanc felicitatem est alia felicitas, quam in futuro expectamus, qua videbimus Deum sicuti est. Quod quidem est supra cuiuslibet intellectus creati naturam, ut supra ostensum est. Sic igitur dicendum est quod, quantum ad primam beatitudinem, quam Angelus assequi virtute suae naturae potuit, fuit creatus beatus. Quia perfectionem huiusmodi Angelus non acquirit per aliquem motum discursivum, sicut homo, sed statim ei adest propter suae naturae dignitatem, ut supra dictum est. Sed ultimam beatitudinem, quae facultatem naturae excedit, Angeli non statim in principio suae creationis habuerunt, quia haec beatitudo non est aliquid naturae, sed naturae finis; et ideo non statim eam a principio debuerunt habere.” — “It should be said that by beatitude is understood the ultimate perfection of rational or intellectual nature, and hence it is that it is naturally desired, since everything naturally desires its ultimate perfection. But the ultimate perfection of rational or intellectual nature is twofold. One which may be secured by the power of its nature, and this in a certain way [*quodammodo*] is said to be beatitude or happiness. Thus for Aristotle the most perfect contemplation of man whereby the highest intelligible, which is God, is able to be contemplated is in this life said to be the ultimate happiness. But above this happiness there is another happiness, to which we look forward in the future, whereby we shall see God as He is. But this is beyond any created nature, as is shown above. Thus it should be said that as regards the first beatitude, which the angel secures by virtue of its natural power, he was created already blessed, because the angel does not acquire this kind of perfection by any progressive/discursive motion, as does man, but rather possesses it straightway, according to the dignity of its nature, as observed above [q. 58, aa. 3–4]. But the angel did not have from the beginning of its creation the ultimate beatitude which exceeds the faculty of nature, because this beatitude is not something of nature but the end of nature; and thus this has not been due to them straightway from the beginning.”

is, it pertains analogically to the natural susceptibility of the creature to non-being, to other defects of nature (illness, harm), to intellectual error, and to defective intention, choice, or action, including sin. And this natural defectibility pertains even to the proportionate natural good (arguably unlike the case of the angels, who are created with perfect infused species leaving no room for error regarding their natural good). Not merely with respect to the material order, but intellectually and morally, the human person is naturally *susceptible* to defect, without being naturally defective.

A Pivotal Text of Saint Thomas

Human judgment—both speculative and practical—is naturally susceptible to possible defect.¹⁰ It is here that we come to a pivotal interpretation of the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas that Marín-Sola and Torre share with the essay of Nicolas in which he disavowed his earlier analysis of the divine permission of evil. Clearly an understanding of the defectible character of human nature strongly impacts our understanding of the words of Saint Thomas regarding the divine non-upholding of the creature in good in the case of sin. To quote Saint Thomas:

To sin is nothing else than to fall from the good which belongs to any being according to its nature. Now as every created thing has no being unless from another, and considered in itself is nothing, so does it need to be conserved by another in the good which pertains to its nature. For it can of itself fall from good, just as of itself it can fall into nonbeing, unless it is conserved by God.¹¹

Torre—and Nicolas, too, in his essay disavowing the traditional account¹²—consider that the understanding of Thomas's teaching forwarded by Bañez (and, of course, many others), indicates an error of

¹⁰ Not, of course, in every respect—regarding their *per se* objects, the powers are not in error—but with regard to reasoning and judging, in certain respects in relation to perception (which itself may suffer some defects), and *vis-a-vis* ordinacy of appetite.

¹¹ *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2: “Dicendum quod peccare nihil aliud est quam deficere a bono quod convenit alicui secundum suam naturam. Unaquaeque autem res creata, sicut esse non habet nisi ab alio, et in se considerata nihil est, ita indiget conservari in bono suae naturae convenienti ab alio. Potest enim per seipsam deficere a bono, sicut et per seipsam potest deficere in non esse, nisi divinitus conservaretur.”

¹² See Jean-Hervé Nicolas, “La volont’salvigique de Dieu contarié par le péché,” *Revue thomiste* 92 (1992): 177–96. It would be an entirely further essay to point

thinking that “all natural failure in being (*esse*) derives from not being upheld by an extrinsic cause.”¹³ Nicolas argued that “if the non-conservation of the creature in being, which would be the annihilation of a creature, is contrary to the wisdom and goodness of God, how much more would be its non-conservation in the good that would make it evil!”¹⁴ Here, Thomas’s lines from *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2, clearly are taken to refer to the withholding of being in the sense of the *annihilation* of the creature, and so one is encouraged to view the reference to non-upholding in good as likewise a simple reference to annihilation of good.

It is true that the creature of itself is nothing, or in other words, it is true that what the creature possesses exclusively of itself rather than *from* God, is only that which Thomas in the *Scriptum on the Sentences* calls an “order to a pre-existing nothingness.”¹⁵ And it does lie within the simple power of God to annihilate creatures, although this appears contrary to fittingness and the divine wisdom, as it could occur neither by nature nor by miracle.¹⁶ But this does not seem to be the principal reference of *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2, because quite apart from annihilation, the creature that loses *esse*, ceases as such to exist. Thus, even with respect to the person as integral totality after death, Thomas will say that “My soul may be in heaven but I am not.”¹⁷ While clearly the divine causality in being implies the divine power

out what seem to me to be errors of detail in Torre’s treatment of prominent Dominican Thomistic commentators regarding this point.

¹³ Torre, *Do Not Resist*, 245.

¹⁴ Nicolas, “La volonté salvifique,” 186: “Si la non-conservation dans l’être que serait l’anéantissement d’une créature est contraire à la sagesse et à la bonté de Dieu, combien plus le serait sa non-à la sagesse et à la bonté de Dieu, combien plus le serait sa non-conservation dans le bien qui la ferait mauvaise!”

¹⁵ *In II sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, resp.: “Tum ita quod remaneat ordo creationis ad nihil praeeexistens, ut affirmatus; ut dicatur creatio esse ex nihilo, quia res creata naturaliter prius habet non esse quam esse.” — “Still there remains the order of creation to a pre-existing nothingness, as affirmed; as creation is said to be from nothing, because the created thing naturally has non-being prior to being.”

¹⁶ In *ST* I, q. 104, a. 3, Thomas argues that God possesses the *power* to annihilate any creature; but in q. 104, a. 4, Thomas argues that insofar as God acts in accord with nature this does not occur, and that it does not pertain to God acting miraculously or to God as giving grace that he annihilate, so that no creature is annihilated.

¹⁷ See Thomas’s commentary on 1 Cor 15: 12–19: “Impossibile autem est quod illud quod est naturale et per se, sit finitum et quasi nihil; et illud quod est contra naturam et per accidens, sit infinitum, si anima semper duret sine corpore. Et ideo Platonici ponentes immortalitatem, posuerunt reincorporationem, licet hoc sit haeticum: et ideo si mortui non resurgunt, solum in hac vita confidentes erimus. Alio modo quia constat quod homo naturaliter desiderat salutem sui

to annihilate, there is no constraint to suppose that by referring to “falling from being” Thomas is referring specifically and exclusively to the case of divine *annihilation*. To the contrary, *things fall from being every day that are not annihilated*, that is, they cease to enjoy actual being.¹⁸ It would be odd to say that creatures that have been destroyed have nonetheless been “upheld in being” by God merely because they were not *annihilated*, that is, merely because not *nothing* but rather some *material residue* remained following their destruction: because the integral *being of the creature* is not the same as some *material residue of the creature consequent on its destruction*. That God has the *power* to withhold being *simpliciter* is true; but the ordinary mode in which human persons lose being is by physically perishing; the one who physically perishes is not, at the instant of perishing, being upheld in physical being by God; and physically perishing is not being annihilated. Similarly, the ordinary way in which a creature is permitted to fall, is not “annihilation” of moral good, but through non-upholding of the creature from its own *defectibility* with respect to good.

ipsius, anima autem cum sit pars corporis hominis, non est totus homo, et anima mea non est ego; unde licet anima consequatur salutem in alia vita, non tamen ego vel quilibet homo. Et praeterea cum homo naturaliter desideret salutem, etiam corporis, frustraretur naturale desiderium.”— “But it is impossible that what is natural and *per se* be finite and, as it were, nothing; and that which is against nature and *per accidens* be infinite, if the soul endures without the body. And so, the Platonists positing immortality, posited re-incorporation, although this is heretical. Therefore, if the dead do not rise, we will be confident only in this life. In another way, because it is clear that man naturally desires his own salvation; but the soul, since it is part of man’s body, is not an entire man, and my soul is not I; hence, although the soul obtains salvation in another life, nevertheless, not I or any man. Furthermore, since man naturally desires salvation even of the body, a natural desire would be frustrated” (*Super I Cor* 15, lec. 2). Of course, the argument from natural desire regards fittingness rather than impossibility, as Thomas notes elsewhere (in the *Scriptum on the Sentences*) that natural desire is insusceptible of frustration only when it is for something proportionate to human nature.

¹⁸ Cf. Thomas’s *In II sent.*, d. 1, a. 2, resp.: “Tum ita quod remaneat ordo creationis ad nihil praexistens, ut affirmatus; ut dicatur creatio esse ex nihilo, quia res creata naturaliter prius habet non esse quam esse; et si haec duo sufficiant ad rationem creationis, sic creatio potest demonstrari, et sic philosophi creationem posuerunt.”— “The order of creation then remains to a pre-existing nothing, as affirmed; as creation is said to be affirmed to be from nothing because the created thing naturally has non-being prior to being ...” The remainder of the passage carries on referring to a prior point, that creation is not from some antecedent thing, then stating “and if these two are sufficient for the meaning of creation, thus creation is said to be demonstrable, and thus philosophers have held creation.”

Of course the case of the immortal rational soul is different: but even here, the immortal soul *is not* complete in its species and *is not* simply by itself the composite being, howsoever much the *esse* in which it subsists is numerically identical with the *esse* of the composite. If the human person falls from being, the person as such—as *the perfection of integral totality*, as *the “that which” once had being*—no longer exists. The immortally subsisting rational soul is *personal*: it subsists with the numerically identical *esse* of the composite, but it *is not* this composite but only an incomplete substance containing the (admittedly personal) *principle* and formal *germinus* of that composite. It might be said by analogy to be a person *in virtute*, but it is not the integral totality of the person. In any case, the more proximate sense of Thomas’s passage refers to a creature’s susceptibility to non-being if it not be upheld, and this point analogically extends to the upholding of the creature in its good.

It is true that if God does not uphold a creature in good, it will not be upheld, because God is the first cause of every being, form, and motion¹⁹ (and being is convertible with good, so if the creature is not upheld in that degree of act requisite for some good, it will not be upheld in the good). But for God not to uphold a thing in being, it is not necessary for God to annihilate it: it is enough that through the permission of material corruption *esse* is withdrawn. Every time a composite being is corrupted, that very thing that existed is no more, and that thing has not been upheld in its being. It is within the divine power to uphold a peach from all corruption and were God to do so, this would be the “peachiest” peach in history. But God does not owe the peach that it be upheld from all defect of corruption, and for the peach to be created with a principle of matter rendering it susceptible to the defect of corruption does not make its creation evil or defective.

Of course, were God to uphold it, it would not be corrupted. Yet it has of itself its susceptibility to the defect of bodily corruption.

The peach will, at any time, if God permits, suffer corruption. This is not annihilation, but rather the ordinary non-conservation in being of creatures that include matter in their substantial natures. It is true for the human person too: God does not by nature *owe* man bodily incorruption, and if God does not uphold man in being, man will suffer corruption and will “fall into nonbeing.” For the *integral totality* of the *person* ends with death—has fallen into non-being, which is to say, the *person* of Socrates as integral totality no longer exists, although the rational soul (which is *personal*, because the *esse* of the soul is numerically identical with that of

¹⁹ See *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 1, resp.

the composite²⁰) *endures*. Again, this is not to deny that annihilation lies within the divine power, but that is not the sense of falling from being that is in question here, and its specter is raised by Thomas's words solely for the purpose of indicating that the entirety of created being and good is a divine effect.

This point regarding defectibility pertains analogically to the nature and powers of the human creature, which are not by nature *defective*, but which are in certain particular respects *defectible*. Accordingly, this observation pertains both to the physical and to the moral order, since what is involved is the perfection of the creature through its actuations in nature and grace. The human creature can of itself fall from being—it has an intrinsic principle susceptible of corruption, *matter*, which Thomas clearly teaches makes the person by nature corruptible²¹—although it may be upheld from corruption (as happened through the praeternatural gift of bodily incorruptibility, happens for a time during bodily life owing to the providential sustenance in *esse* through the concatenation of natural causes, and is wholly transcended in the elevated mode of the glorified body at the resurrection). Likewise, the creature can of itself fall from the good pertaining to its nature if it not be upheld in this good by God. We are ordered to many goods, but we are defectible with respect to attaining, and habitually enjoying, these goods. As Saint Thomas argues in *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, ad 3, “the fact that the will is able to be bent to evil, it has not according as it is from God, but according as it is from nothing.”²²

²⁰ *ST I*, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5: “Ad quantum dicendum quod anima illud esse in quo ipsa subsistit, communicat materiae corporali, ex qua et anima intellectiva fit unum, ita quod illud esse quod est totius compositi, est etiam ipsius animae. Quod non accidit in aliis formis, quae non sunt subsistentes. Et propter hoc anima humana remanet in suo esse, destructo corpore, non autem aliae formae.”— “To the fifth it should be said that the soul communicates that existence in which it subsists to the corporeal matter, out of which with the intellective soul results one existence, such that the existence of the whole composite is that of the soul.”

²¹ *De malo*, q. 5 a. 5 resp.: “Sic ergo mors et corruptio naturalis est homini secundum necessitatem materiae; sed secundum rationem formae esset ei conveniens immortalitas; ad quam tamen praestandam naturae principia non sufficiunt; sed aptitudo quaedam naturalis ad eam convenit homini secundum animam; complementum autem eius est ex supernaturali virtute.”— “Therefore death and corruption pertains to man's nature according to the necessity of matter; but according to the nature of his form immortality would have befitted him for which natural principles are insufficient. But a certain aptitude of nature with respect to it befits man according to his soul, while the fulfillment of it is from supernatural power.”

²² *De veritate*, q. 22: “quod voluntas sit flexibilis ad malum, non habet secundum

Further, God does not owe the defectible creature that it be upheld from all defect. It is precisely for this reason that Saint Thomas writes of God, in *ST I-II*, q. 79, a. 1, resp., that “if someone sin it is not imputable to Him as though He were the cause of that sin; even as a pilot is not said to cause the wrecking of the ship, through not steering the ship, unless he cease to steer while able and bound to steer. It is therefore evident that God is nowise a cause of sin.”²³ God is not bound to uphold the defectible creature from all defect. Thomas expressly considers whether it would not have been better had God created man in immutable possession of the ultimate good in the *beatific vision*, and rejects this because it is unfitting that one enjoy the absolutely transcendent good with no effort or trial.²⁴ In permitting

quod est a Deo, sed secundum quod est de nihilo.”

²³ *ST I-II*, q. 79, a. 1, resp.: “Contingit enim quod Deus aliquibus non praebebat auxilium ad vitandum peccata, quod si praeberet, non peccarent. Sed hoc totum facit secundum ordinem suae sapientiae et iustitiae, cum ipse sit sapientia et iustitia. Unde non imputatur ei quod alius peccat, sicut causae peccati, sicut gubernator non dicitur causa submersionis navis ex hoc quod non gubernat navem, nisi quando subtrahit gubernationem potens et debens gubernare. Et sic patet quod Deus nullo modo est causa peccati.” — “For it happens that God does not give some the assistance, whereby they may avoid sin, which assistance were He to give, they would not sin. But He does all this according to the order of His wisdom and justice, since He Himself is Wisdom and Justice: so that if someone sin it is not imputable to Him as though He were the cause of that sin; even as a pilot is not said to cause the wrecking of the ship, through not steering the ship, unless he cease to steer while able and bound to steer. It is therefore evident that God is nowise a cause of sin.”

²⁴ *ST I-II*, q. 5, a. 7, resp. Thomas first acknowledges that the right order of the will to the end is necessary for happiness, and then states: “Sed ex hoc non ostenditur quod aliqua operatio hominis debeat praecedere eius beatitudinem, posset enim Deus simul facere voluntatem recte tendentem in finem, et finem consequentem; sicut quandoque simul materiam disponit, et inducit formam. Sed ordo divinae sapientiae exigit ne hoc fiat, ut enim dicitur in *II De caelo*, eorum quae nata sunt habere bonum perfectum, aliquid habet ipsum sine motu, aliquid uno motu, aliquid pluribus. Habere autem perfectum bonum sine motu, convenit ei quod naturaliter habet illud. Habere autem beatitudinem naturaliter est solius Dei. Unde solius Dei proprium est quod ad beatitudinem non moveatur per aliquam operationem praecedentem. Cum autem beatitudo excedat omnem naturam creatam, nulla pura creatura convenienter beatitudinem consequitur absque motu operationis, per quam tendit in ipsam.” — “But this does not show that any work of man needs to precede his happiness, for God could simultaneously make the will to tend rightly toward the end and to attain the end: Thus at times God disposes the matter and simultaneously induces the form. But the order of divine wisdom necessitates that this not be, for as is said in *II De caelo*, of those things that have perfect good, some have it without motion, some with by one motion, and others by many motions. But to have perfect good without motion belongs to

the defectible creature to suffer defect, God simply withholds special aid which is not in justice due, while nonetheless giving to all help *far surpassing what is due* (for no person lacks sufficient grace for salvation). God, in not upholding the creature who sins, does not cause this sin, any more than God, who does not uphold the peach in its freshness, *causes* its ensuing defect of corruption. The peach is not evil or “corrupt” by nature owing to its susceptibility to corruption. Nor is man morally evil by nature owing to defectibility—*susceptibility* to defect—with respect to the moral good. The defectibility of human nature analogically pertains to, and passes through, human reason, will, appetite, operations, and organic bodily perfections and dispositions (although manifestly not *every act* of a natural power is defectible).²⁵

God moves things according to their natures, and so he permits among rational creatures the suffering of some physical, some intellectual, and some moral, defect, while providing more aid to each than is due to any or even all compositely. As God cannot *not know* what the implications of such defect are, he is said to “reprobate” in not upholding the creature in the case where the defect of the creature is final impenitence. While we do not know the extent of such divine permission of final failure to persevere in grace, we do know that the root of such failure is the defectibility of the creature. We also know the truth that for a creature that is defectible even regarding its proportionate *natural* good, God does not owe certain

that which naturally possesses it. But to have happiness naturally belongs solely to God. Wherefore it is proper to God alone that he not be moved to happiness by any preceding operation. For happiness exceeds every created nature, and no pure creature can fittingly achieve happiness without the motion of operation whereby it tends toward it.”

- ²⁵ Manifestly nature is not in *every* respect defectible, since in regard to the proper objects of the human powers, these powers do not err. See *ST* I, q. 85, a. 6: “Quia ad proprium obiectum unaquaeque potentia per se ordinatur, secundum quod ipsa. Quae autem sunt huiusmodi, semper eodem modo se habent. Unde manente potentia, non deficit eius iudicium circa proprium obiectum.—Obiectum autem proprium intellectus est quidditas rei. Unde circa quidditatem rei, per se loquendo, intellectus non fallitur. Sed circa ea quae circumstant rei essentiam vel quidditatem, intellectus potest falli, dum unum ordinat ad aliud, vel componendo vel dividendo vel etiam ratiocinando.”—“Because every faculty, as such, is *per se* ordered to its proper object. But things of this kind are always the same. Thus, as long as the faculty exists, its judgment concerning its own proper object does not fail.—But the proper object of the intellect is the ‘quiddity’ of a thing. Wherefore, properly speaking, about the quiddity of the thing the intellect does not fail. But about that which surrounds the essence or quiddity of the thing, the intellect is able to fail, as also about the order of one to another, or about composition or division, or in reasoning.”

preservation from all defect with respect to the infinitely transcendent *supernatural good*. Such upholding is a gift which the permitted defect of some impedes. It befits creation of an order containing defectible free creatures that some measure of defect be permitted, and that in some case this may imply the defect of final impenitence is not a singular willing of evil to some creature, but a permission following upon the willing of an order that contains creatures such as ourselves, an order willed as the *conditio sine qua non* for creatures such as ourselves. In the permission of defect God—who does not owe the defectible creature to uphold it from all defect—cannot fail to know what this implies with respect to man’s relation to grace, while yet nonetheless this divine permission regards what is befitting to the order he has chosen to create and is not a positive and absolute will to harm any creature. That God cannot “not know” that this involves loss, does not render the loss to be either directly or accidentally caused by God, while yet the order caused by God—containing defectible creatures—is the *condition* of any such defect. Of course, nothing in this addresses the question of the extension of actual final impenitence, which apart from positive revelation is unknowable.

Review of Question and Diagnosis of the Common Error of Maritain and Marín-Sola

To review the question, why is divine non-upholding in good not equivalent to God at least accidentally “causing” the creature “necessarily to sin”? We have already observed, with Bañez, that for God not specially to uphold the defectible creature is not properly the *cause* of its defection: obviously not the *per se* cause (because evil as such has no *per se* cause) but not even accidental, because nothing in the agency of God reaches to the sin as such. God does not *cause* such defect, any more than one who does not provide a beggar special aid *causes* his poverty.

We have also seen that Thomas rightly teaches that acts ought to be deemed necessary and contingent according to their *proximate cause* and *not* according to their relation to God.²⁶ The creature’s actions are *free*

²⁶ *De malo*, q. 16, a. 7, ad 15: “Et ideo necessitas et contingentia in rebus distinguuntur non per habitudinem ad voluntatem divinam, quae est causa communis, sed per comparisonem ad causas creatas, quas proportionaliter divina voluntas ad effectus ordinavit; ut scilicet necessariorum effectuum sint causae intransmutabiles, contingentium autem transmutabiles.”— “And therefore necessity and contingency in things are distinguished not in relation to the divine will, which is a universal cause, but in relation to created causes which the divine will has ordered proportionately to the effects, namely in such a way that the causes of necessary effects are unchangeable, and of contingent effects changeable.”

contingent acts which are deemed so because they derive from a rational principle that cannot be compelled by any finite object and that bring forth a great variety of effects (and yet the will cannot even proceed to its act without prior divine motion, thus rightly called by many “divine premotion” in response to those who denied this was an ontologically prior motion bestowed by God, a *motio realis*).²⁷ Necessity and contingency are discriminated in relation to the proximate cause, not in relation to God. That God permits the defectible creature to undergo some defect does not make the creature’s defective action un-free, lacking in responsibility, or non-culpable (any more than a peach that God permits to begin to decay was therefore “never truly a peach”). The creature has the power to act otherwise, but it is not naturally indefectible. For God to create naturally indefectible creatures with respect to their natural good is possible (the angels), but for him to create creatures naturally indefectible with respect to their supernatural end is impossible (even the angels are not such). Indefectibility with respect to the supernatural good is achievable only if free creatures are created in the beatific vision. God may contingently uphold even a naturally defectible creature in natural or supernatural good, but this, too, is not *due* to it (whereas, to a creature in the beatific vision it is properly *due* that it be immutably fixed in good).

Contrary to Nicolas’ disavowal of his earlier account, and to Torre, Marín-Sola, Maritain, Most, Dom Pontifex, and others, the divine permission of moral evil understood as a non-upholding in good is the withholding of a special divine preservation (whether in the order of nature or of grace) that is not in justice owed to the defectible creature, and which plays a role both in the divine tutoring of man, and in the manifestation of the profundity and merciful goodness of God who gives to each more than in strict justice is due to any.

The rejection of this account by Maritain and Marín-Sola is rendered easier by their seemingly unintentional but real rejection of the systematic implications of the divine transcendence and simplicity. God either causes some determinate effect or not, and the creature cannot absolutely speaking “add to” what God brings about as though the creature were “outside” the zone of the created divine effect: not even “in slight matters” (although not every upholding is that of grace, there is also natural premotion with

²⁷ Yet, the least motion of the creature requires prior divine motion, for as Thomas notes in *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 1, no creature whatsoever can so much as proceed to its act unless it first be moved by God. The creature is not its own operation and must be divinely moved to achieve the dignity of agency, even when this agency is that of self-motion.

respect to the application of every power to act). Rather, the creature and its free actions lie within rather than without the zone of the effect of divine causality.

Labourdette famously criticized Maritain's account, on the ground that the "breakable motion," not achieving its terminus, would be no motion at all, precisely because it did not achieve its terminus (something impossible with respect to any motion simply willed by God).

I am not sure that the thought of Maritain is fully matured, at least in what he has set out in this Brief Treatise [referring to the French title, *Court traité de l'existence et de l'existant*]; and there is at least one difficulty that I do not see is effectively removed. What is this broken motion? What is in the creature? What did it do? It actuates a good act that does not take place. . . . Let us not say that it "stops on the way," because this action of the free act is instantaneous. Now, we have observed and insisted: if there is no movement in the creature, there is no motion at all.

To this objection Maritain replied in a note in which he proposes to say that this motion, breakable as to the specification, always leads to the exercise of an act, either the good one or the bad one. . . . I misunderstood this distinction, which seems to return to an indifferent motion; there is no motion, and therefore no definite motion, specified by its term. But moreover, and, happily, it is not very coherent with what else he maintains very precisely in his text: if the breakable motion is indeed broken, there is another unbreakable motion, which ensures that there is (something) positive and real in the bad act. If it is really another motion, the first does not even reach the exercise of the only act which is actually done and which is bad; it did not do anything in the creature; so to speak: it had no reality, there was no motion at all. Let us repeat it again: it is repugnant that God moves and the creature is not moved, it is repugnant that God is acting in the creature and there is no act in the creature. It is repugnant that this movement exists without being specified by its term. On the other hand, if it is admitted that it is the same motion, first ordered to the good, which, once broken, gives the wrong act, supposing that one can distinguish these stages thus, one no longer escapes from the indifferent motion

of Molinism, a motion for our purposes that we make efficacious through our will.²⁸

Maritain taught, in his formal response to Labourdette's criticisms, that *God can move something toward one determinate effect, but that this motion may be made further actually determinate in another and distinct respect by the human agent by virtue of a "non-shattering" or "non-negation" that of itself requires no additional divine motion or causality for the agent to achieve* (i.e., if the creature does not "shatter" or "negate" or "nihilate" the motion, then efficacious motion is given, but the "non-shattering" requires *no more aid* than is given to the one who actually "shatters" the divine motion). The infallibly realized initial effect of the simple divine will would then according to Maritain be merely some motion of attraction or perhaps even merely some consideration of good by the agent, which if not negated or shattered God would then perfect with an efficacious motion.²⁹

²⁸ Michel Labourdette, O.P., *Cours de Theologie Morale*, 7, *De la Grace*, p. 52: "Je ne suis pas sûr que la pensée de Maritain soit entièrement mûrie, du moins quand il a r'sif'le Court Traité; et il y a au moins une difficulté dont je ne vois pas qu'il soit efficacement sorti. Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette motion brisée? Qu'est-elle dans la créature? Qu'est-ce qu'elle a fait? Elle actue un acte bon qui n'a pas lieu... Ne disons pas qu'elle "s'arrête en chemin", car cette actualisation de l'acte libre est instantanée. Or, nous l'avons vu et répète': s'il n'y a pas de mouvement dans la créature, il n'y a pas de motion du tout.

A cette objection Maritain a répondu dans une note où il propose de dire que cette motion, brisable quant à la spécification, aboutit toujours à l'exercice d'un acte, soit le bon, soit le mauvais... Je saisis mal cette distinction, qui paraît revenir à une motion indifférente; il n'y a de mouvement et donc de motion que déterminé, spécifié par son terme. Mais en outre, et hereusement, ce n'est plu très cohérent avec ce que par ailleurs il maintient très justement dans son texte: si la motion brisable est effectivement brisée, c'est une autre motion imbrisable celle-là, qui assure ce qu'il y a de positif et de réel dans l'acte mauvais. Si c'est vraiment une autre motion, la première n'atteint même pas l'exercice du seul acte qui soit effectivement posé at qui est mauvais; elle n'a donc rien fait dans la créature; autant dire: elle n'a pas eu de réalité, il n'y a pas eu de motion du tout. Répétons-le encore: il répugne que Dieu meuve et que la créature ne soit pas mue, il répugne que Dieu actue la créature et qu'il n'y ait pas d'acte dans la créature. Il répugne que ce mouvement existe sans être spécifié par son terme. Si, par contre, on admet que c'est la même motion, d'abord ordonnée au bien, qui, une fois brisée, donne l'acte mauvais, à supposer qu'on puisse distinguer ainsi ces étapes, on n'échappe plus à la motion indifférente du molinisme, motion que nous raisonnons efficace per notre vouloir."

²⁹ Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, 56–57, esp. 57: "And the *movement or tendency in question toward the good (and at the same stroke toward the consideration of the rule)* which the action of God causes to be born in us from any one

One might think that Labourdette could have ceded even more than he did and still sustain his criticism of Maritain: because even if what God causes is merely the least attraction, God's granting of further efficacious aid whereby the creature is actually moved to the due good is required for motion to the due good.

Of course, the problem is that this is strictly a voluntary motion which either occurs or does not, being a spiritual and instantaneous motion: so that God cannot be said to grant a motion toward something without positing this very motion (unless we deny the divine simplicity and define motion as being in God and not solely in the creature). *But even this point that voluntary motion as a spiritual immutation either occurs or does not, and that so it is not "partial," may be ceded away for purposes of argument.* It is sufficient to observe that that which God simply wills occurs, and that if divine motion is given only for a "partial motion" then this is all that will occur apart from any further efficacious divine motion. Further, such motion is not predicated on prior "non-negation" or "non-shattering" of a "shatterable" motion, *precisely because in a real subject the negation of negation must necessarily be something positive of which God is the first cause.* Thus, for the creature "not to negate" is no different than for the creature to be actually moved by God, and so one divine motion has been eternally ordained by God through another, *each of which is simply efficacious* with respect to whatever it is ordained to effectuate.

Thus, howsoever much or little aid is bestowed to the creature, this—and no other—will be the degree of the creature's actuation. That an effect of the simple divine will may or may not be realized—as though universal causality were inferior to particular causality—is contrary to the divine simplicity and transcendence. Of course, as already observed, inasmuch as the spiritual motion of the will is a simple immutation, the divine motion

of the above mentioned occurrences—this is the *effect* produced in the soul by the shatterable motion: an effect which will itself be shattered if and when this motion from which it proceeds is shattered." But the "shattering" is a negation, and in a real subject negation of negation is something positive which is caused by God. Maritain does not deny it is caused by God, but seems to think that the creature can itself "add" to the shatterable motion that *by which* it is not shattered: but that *by which* it is not shattered, is that further increment of actuality bestowed by God. The same motion does not indifferently achieve or not achieve the effect. And insofar as the efficacy of God is solely toward X, then X is what is, and not X *plus* this further blossom of act which if it comes to be—if it *is*—must be actually and determinately achieved through the divine aid. Put differently: whatever accounts for the agent's further act, is determinately a divine gift. This objection pertains also to all accounts of this species, e.g., those of Marín-Sola, Most, et al.

must achieve some voluntary effect. But even if we allow the idea of a “partial” motion, this would be some degree of act dependent on God, and no further actuation could occur apart from further divine aid.

Marín-Sola seems to proceed even further than Maritain, and to argue that the motion sufficient for one effect can simply be applied by the agent to another effect without further divine aid, at least in cases of only “slight” resistance.³⁰ But this is to say that in “slight” matters an agent can bring something from nothing, that an agent in potency does not need prior divine motion in order to proceed to act. Thus this argument appears even less defensible in itself, and less compatible with the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas, than is Maritain’s account.

Nicolas offered similar criticism to that of Labourdette, predicated likewise on the proposition that a divine motion must achieve some effect in order *to be* a motion, and *with respect to whatever that effect is, the motion is necessarily efficacious*. Thus Nicolas wrote of the “shatterable” motion:

On the other hand, what makes a new and to my mind insoluble difficulty, is the very notion of a motion that is not effective by itself: or, more exactly, though it finally comes down to the same thing, the notion of a prevented motion. Such a motion in effect would be devoid of any reality: it would not exist in the creature, who by hypothesis would not be moved, nor in God who is immutable and in whom I cannot discern a motion intelligibly except by reference to a modification of the created: *Tota mutatio se tenet ex parte creaturae*. What is it that God sends when He is said to send a motion that is prevented from moving the creature to the act at which it was aimed?³¹

Nicolas continues a bit further (referring to Francisco Muñiz, who defended the idea of God bringing forth a motion without the term defining it as the motion it is):

³⁰ Torre, *Do Not Resist*, 120n34.

³¹ Nicolas, “La permission du péché,” *Revue thomiste* 60, no. 1 (1960): 5–37, at 33: “Ce qui fait par contre une difficulté nouvelle, et à mon sens insoluble, c’est la notion même d’une motion non efficace par elle-même: ou, plus exactement, mais cela finalement revient au même, la notion d’une motion empêchée. Une telle motion en effect serait dépourvue de toute réalité: elle n’existerait pas dans la créature, qui par hypothèse ne serait pas mue, ni en Dieu qui est immuable et en qui je ne puis disigner une motion de manière intelligible que par référence à une modification du créé: *Tota mutatio se tenet ex parte creaturae*. Qu’est-ce donc que Dieu envoie quand il est dit envoyer une motion qui est empêchée de conduire la créature à l’acte qu’elle visait?”

To say that the reality of this motion consists in this, that this election is really begun by the application of the soul to the final end is to say nothing for these contradict each other. It is to say nothing, for this concerns a motion determined to this act of election, and it cannot be found save in the will really moved to elicit it, and thus in the will eliciting. Or it is self-contradictory, admitting that the motion, allegedly determined, is in reality an undifferentiated motion toward the good in general, and this alleged determined election, as far as it is understood, resides with a crowd of others equally possible in the general will of the good. Here again, it suffices to exclude this explanation to return to Father Muñiz himself, who has so masterfully established the necessity of admitting for every created act a physical, determined, divine premotion.³²

Here again Nicolas could have conceded more for purposes of argument and still sustained his criticism (which is not to say that I think his argument above to be faulty). That is to say, that whatsoever effect God simply wills—even if it be but Maritain’s “passing attraction” or “nudge” toward the good—will infallibly and certainly be achieved. Further, aid given beyond this is not *conditioned* on “non-negation” for the reason we have seen above (namely, that the non-negation in question is in fact some positive actuation received from God because in a real subject negation of negation must be something positive of which God accordingly is the first cause). Even if from all eternity the “sufficient” (in relation to something else) grace is meant only to bring about a “passing attraction” it must efficaciously achieve such an effect, and on the basis of this aid alone, this is what will occur, *neither more nor less*. Here, for purpose of argument one concedes that not the *per se* end, but merely some degree of actuality with even the greatest degree of remoteness from a full positive act (provided it is a determinate degree of act) could answer to this

³² Nicolas, “La permission du péché,” 34: “Dire que la réalité de cette motion consiste en ceci que cette élection est réellement comencée par l’application de l’âme à la fin dernière, c’est ne rien dire ou se contredire. Ne rien dire, car il s’agit de la motion déterminée à cet acte d’élection, et elle ne peut se trouver que dans la volonté réellement mue à l’éluciter, donc dans la volonté l’élucitant. Ou c’est se contredire, en admettant que la motion, dite déterminée, est en réalité une motion indifférenciée, au bien en général, et à cette élection déterminée, en tant qu’elle est comprise, avec une foule d’autres également possible, dans le vouloir général du bien. Là encore, il suffit de renvoyer au P. Muñiz lui-même, qui a si magistralement établi la nécessité d’admettre pour tout acte créé une prémotion divine physique, déterminée, pour exclure cette explication.”

need.³³ Even so, the situation is not improved for the analysis of either Maritain or Marín-Sola. Allow me to quote Torre, this time from his PhD dissertation directly addressing this very objection of Nicolas:

The simplest way to answer this question is to proceed in two parts. First, an impidable motion not only is intelligible but obvious. Second, the notion of such a motion can be analogously applied to the activity of intellect and will in free choice. That being done, the objection is met.³⁴

Sed contra. Of course an impeded motion is conceivable, and one readily cedes that the world is filled with impeded motions (taken in relation to their finite causes). And, of course this analogously may apply to the activity of the intellect and will in free choice, precisely because every grace taken as an object of choice is finite and thus cannot compel the will. Further, if one considers grace *either* as object of choice, or if one *prescinds from, brackets out*, the principal causality of God, and considers grace merely as created *motio*, *thus taken in and of itself as created effect it is impidable. But this does not matter in the least to the question at hand.* It is true that grace taken as an *object of choice* can never compel the will, which always remains objectively free. And grace taken apart from its divine principal cause, simply as *created motio*, might as such and apart from God be impeded. *But grace taken as a motion precisely in relation to its divine principal cause (which is the very source of its denomination as grace!) must bring about a determinate effect, and is infallibly efficacious in bringing about this determinate effect.* The reason is the divine simplicity: it is impossible that God cause and that there be *no effect*, because God as universal and first cause, is *as cause* universally efficacious. Thus, if God causes, there is an actual determinate effect, and *beyond this determinate effect any further degree of actuation requires a further divine ad extra effect. Most crucially, this motion is not “conditioned” by “non-negation” just as a person actually*

³³ It might be argued that only the *per se* effect would constitute sufficient act, but for purposes of argument one might even cede that it may be reasonable to speak of God causing the determinate actuality of “part” of a motion. The decisive point is that if this is allowed, it is only that part that is realized, and no other part can be realized without further divine aid which is either given or not.

³⁴ Torre, *God’s Permission of Sin: Negative or Conditioned Decree? A Defense of the Doctrine of F. Marín-Sola, O.P., Based on the Principles of Thomas Aquinas*, bk. 2 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1983), 443.

having a nose is not “conditioned” upon “not not-having a nose.”³⁵ Our “not negating” is comprised in the positive effect of grace itself, which is either divinely bestowed or not.

Motion is “nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality.”³⁶ God moves the creature to its act, and that which is not included in the divine motion is not that to which God actually moves the creature, although what God achieves may make the creature proximate to some further act (whose actual accomplishment requires still further divine aid). *That God gives us an indeterminate push toward achieving one thing, which we can of ourselves make into a motion toward another thing apart from the divine aid of further motion, is a metaphysical impossibility even in “slight” matters.* The key to and principle of the later shift in Thomas’s teaching toward a stronger doctrine of premotion is seen in the text of *De veritate* (prior to his even stronger account of *applicatio* which is manifest in the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa theologiae*)

³⁵ See *De veritate*, III, 28, resp.: “Quaedam vero opposita sunt quorum alterum tantum est natura quaedam, reliquum vero non est nisi remotio vel negatio ipsius, sicut patet in oppositis secundum affirmationem et negationem, vel secundum privationem et habitum; et in talibus negatio oppositi quod ponit naturam aliquam, est realis quia est alicuius rei, negatio vero alterius oppositi non est realis, quia non est alicuius rei, est enim negatio negationis; et ideo haec negatio negationis quae est negatio alterius oppositi, nihil differt secundum rem a positione alterius; unde secundum rem idem est generatio albi et corruptio non albi. Sed quia negatio, quamvis non sit res naturae, est tamen res rationis, ideo negatio negationis secundum rationem sive secundum modum intelligendi est aliud a positione affirmationis; et sic corruptio non albi secundum modum intelligendi est aliud quam generatio albi.” — “There are other opposites of which only one of the two terms is a natural being, and the other is only its removal or negation. This appears, for instance, in opposites based upon affirmation and negation or upon privation and possession. In such cases the negation of an opposite which posits a natural being is real, because it is the negation of a real being; but the negation of the other opposite is not real, because it is not the negation of any real being. It is the negation of a negation. Consequently, this negation of a negation, which is the negation of the second opposite, in no way differs in reality from the positing of the other. In reality, then, the coming to be of white and the destruction of not-white are the same. But because a negation, though not a real being, is nevertheless a conceptual being, the negation of the negation is distinct conceptually or in our manner of understanding from the positing of the affirmation. Thus in the manner of understanding it the destruction of not-white is distinct from the coming to be of white” (emphasis mine).

³⁶ *ST I*, q. 2, a. 3, resp.: “Movere enim nihil aliud est quam educere aliquid de potentia in actum . . .” — “For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality.”

wherein he distinguishes between an effect in itself, and an effect taken precisely in relation to the divine power:

A thing can be said to be possible in two ways. First, we may consider the potency that exists in the thing itself, as when we say that a stone can be moved downwards. Or we may consider the potency that exists in another thing, as when we say that a stone can be moved upwards, not by a potency existing in the stone, but by a potency existing in the one who hurls it.

Consequently, when we say: "That predestined person can possibly die in sin," the statement is true if we consider only the potency that exists in him. But, if we are speaking of this predestined person according to the ordering which he has to another, namely, to God, who is predestining him, that event is incompatible with this ordering, even though it is compatible with the person's own power. Hence, we can use the distinction given above; that is, we can consider the subject with this form or without it.³⁷

Likewise the peach in itself is corruptible, but if God wills simply to uphold it, it will be upheld. The will in choice and in every intention other than the natural willing of happiness in general is free by its nature with respect to its connatural objects, while yet the least degree of its activation or application presupposes the fecundation of prior divine motion. Or, as Thomas writes in *ST I-II*, q. 112, a. 3, resp.:

As stated above [article 2], man's preparation for grace is from God, as Mover, and from the free-will, as moved. Thus the preparation may be considered in two ways: first, as it is from free-will, and thus there is no necessity that it obtain grace, since the gift of grace exceeds every preparation of human power. But in another way it is able to be considered, according as it is from God the

³⁷ *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3, ad 7: "Ad septimum dicendum, quod aliquid potest dici posse dupliciter. Uno modo considerando potentiam quae in ipso est, sicut dicitur quod lapis potest moveri deorsum. Alio modo considerando id quod ex parte alterius est, sicut si dicerem, quod lapis potest moveri sursum, non per potentiam quae in ipso sit, sed per potentiam proicientis.

Cum ergo dicitur: praedestinatus iste potest in peccato mori; si consideretur potentia ipsius, verum est; si autem loquamur de praedestino secundum ordinem quem habet ad aliud, scilicet ad Deum praedestinantem, sic ordo ille non compatitur secum istum eventum, quamvis compatiatur secum istam potentiam. Et ideo potest distinguere secundum distinctionem prius inductam, scilicet cum forma, vel sine forma consideratio subiecti."

Mover. And thus it has a necessity—not indeed of coercion, but of infallibility—with respect to that which it is ordained to by God, since God’s intention cannot fail, according to the saying of Augustine in his book on the Predestination of the Saints [*De dono perseverantiae* 15] that “by God’s good gifts whoever is liberated, is most certainly liberated.”³⁸

“God’s intention cannot fail.” Or, as Thomas writes elsewhere: “If God moves the will to anything, it is impossible with this supposition, that the will be not moved thereto. But it is not impossible simply. Wherefore it does not follow that the will is moved by God necessarily.”³⁹ This certainly sounds as though (1) a “frustrable” motion is *ruled out* by Saint Thomas, and (2) if a “partial” *volitional* motion—a “partial” spiritual immutation—were to be possible and to be received from God, that *nothing more* could occur *without further divine motion*, a further motion which would *be* our “non-negation” (for in a real subject this must be ontologically positive, and so bestowed from God).

³⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 3, resp.: “Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, praeparatio ad hominis gratiam est a Deo sicut a movente, a libero autem arbitrio sicut a moto. Potest igitur praeparatio dupliciter considerari. Uno quidem modo, secundum quod est a libero arbitrio. Et secundum hoc, nullam necessitatem habet ad gratiae consecutionem, quia donum gratiae excedit omnem praeparationem virtutis humanae. Alio modo potest considerari secundum quod est a Deo movente. Et tunc habet necessitatem ad id ad quod ordinatur a Deo, non quidem coactionis, sed infallibilitatis, quia intentio Dei deficere non potest; secundum quod et Augustinus dicit, in libro de Praedest. Sanct., quod per beneficia Dei certissime liberantur quicumque liberantur. Unde si ex intentione Dei moventis est quod homo cuius cor movet, gratiam consequatur, infallibiliter ipsam consequitur; secundum illud Ioan. VI, omnis qui audit a patre et didicit, venit ad me.”

³⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 4, ad 3: “Ad tertium dicendum quod, si Deus movet voluntatem ad aliquid, impossibile est huic positioni quod voluntas ad illud non moveatur. Non tamen est impossibile simpliciter. Unde non sequitur quod voluntas a Deo ex necessitate moveatur.” Of course, there is also Thomas’s teaching that the divine consequent will is the will of that which *is consequent*, since there is no antecedent or consequent in *God*. And thus, what is willed simply (which Thomas uses interchangeably with “consequently”) by God, is what *is*; and that which is willed *antecedently* is precisely something that in relation to something further is an antecedent. Of course, as Thomas teaches, the antecedent may be willed without God willing the consequent. But this is the very teaching which the accounts of Maritain and of Marín-Sola were authored to escape. See *ST* I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1.

Conclusion

It is the divine will of an order containing creatures such as ourselves that are defectible (in our case, even with respect to their proximate good, while all creatures are defectible vis-à-vis the supernatural good) which is the root of the antecedent divine permission of actual defect. For such an order containing defectible creatures, some antecedent permission of actual defect is consistent with God moving things according to their defectible natures.

In willing to create such creatures, God wills to move them according to their defectible natures, and so permits some measure of defect in and from themselves and/or others. This is a permission which may include a non-upholding in a special good which is not strictly owed to the creature by God, while yet each is given more aid than is due to all (for no mere creature simply of itself can, absolutely speaking, merit grace). In some cases this permission or non-upholding may include the permission of final impenitence. Thus, as Thomas says, insofar as God does not will the good of final perseverance to all, those for whom this good is not willed owing to the fitting permission of this defect—whose number we do not know—are said to be reprobated: a reprobation that takes nothing away from their power, freedom, or responsibility. Yet in this life God gives to all persons more help than is their due, as even the reprobate have received divine aid far exceeding their just desserts. Moreover, actual defect is not *caused* by God; it is *permitted*. The good of the entire order containing defectible creatures entails creatures being moved according to their natures, which are defectible. So, for God to create *me* in such an order is arguably for God to permit the incidence of defect in *me*⁴⁰ that ultimately could include the permission of final impenitence: not because of a “hatred” for me,⁴¹

⁴⁰ Such defect may embrace both “indispositions” of a natural sort that may bear on action and venial faults that lack the full nature of sin, as well of course as the acquired moral defects and indispositions of a lifetime; but also includes as well permission of genuine and full-blown moral defect. Most often (but not always) the latter has its precedent source in the former: but not always. Hence unceasing prayer is everywhere admonished in the tradition.

⁴¹ There is of course the line of St. Thomas in *ST I*, q. 23, a. 3, ad 1, that “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod Deus omnes homines diligit, et etiam omnes creaturas, in quantum omnibus vult aliquod bonum, non tamen quodcumque bonum vult omnibus. In quantum igitur quibusdam non vult hoc bonum quod est vita aeterna, dicitur eos habere odio, vel reprobare.” — “To the first therefore it should be said that God loves all men and all creatures, inasmuch as He wishes them all some good; but He does not wish every good to them all. So far, therefore, as He does not wish this particular good—namely, eternal life—He is said to hate or reprobate them.” But Thomas writes “He is said.” That is, the *ratio* is stated

but because of what is due to the integrity of the order of creation and of the economy of grace. Frequently enough persons are upheld at the very moment when their prior defects would, absent further aid, lead to disaster, or converted through extraordinary graces from lifelong immersion in sin. But God does not owe this to any creature, and the abundance of such grace is a sign of the overflowing divine mercy and love whose full

in the body of the article: “Unde, cum per divinam providentiam homines in vitam aeternam ordinantur, pertinet etiam ad divinam providentiam, ut permittat aliquos ab isto fine deficere. Et hoc dicitur reprobare.”— “Thus, as men are ordained to eternal life through the providence of God, it likewise is part of that providence to permit some to fall away from that end; this is called reprobation.” But why is it “part of that providence” to “permit some to fall away”? As God is infinitely good, the *ratio* is not a “hate” prior to creation (which would be identical with the divine essence and an absurdity). It is, rather, the love for the essential goodness of the order containing defectible creatures and of what is owed in justice to that order, which order is the precondition for there being creatures such as ourselves. What is due to the goodness of that order is due to the principle of that order, God himself. And so, when the permission of defect (the moving of defectible creatures according to their defectible natures which in this given order includes defect) in the defectible creature implies in some case what God cannot as the Cause of that order not know—the defect of final impenitence—God does not simply unravel the order as such. In permitting the impenitent creature to “fall away” he refuses to “unsay” what he has said, because the word of creation is good. A creation that is elevated in the divine love even amidst circumambient defectibility is preferred to an order with none of the implications of possible or real failure implied by and proportionate to such defectibility. And so “He is said” to hate or reprobate that creature who is permitted to “fall away,” because even in the giving of gratuitous aid, mercy, and love, the proportion of the good of the creation as a whole, and of the creature, is honored: the common good of the interlocking orders of creation and redemption is preferred to the good of any individual whatsoever and is not simply “set aside” (this is also in a different way the *ratio* in the penitent for the temporal penalty due to sin). The leaving of some in defect which they honor beyond God cannot remove the imperishable crown of the saints whose sins are goads to repentance, humility and penitence, for the sake of whom (proximately) the order exists. God is honored both in mercy and in justice, and the latter serves greatly to accentuate the former, and to vindicate the integrity of good even in the midst of wickedness. It is also medicinal in that it manifests the truth that only God can uphold the soul, and that worldly pleasures and powers are nothing by comparison with the divine friendship, and manifests this in such a manner that those “falling away” involuntarily serve the redemption of those who are upheld. Indeed, not all intelligent creatures start “even” at the same starting line: Mary is created as upheld from original sin by virtue of the inestimable privilege of the divine Maternity. To St. Joseph were confided the care and governance of the Blessed Mother and the Christ Child himself. The ultimate *ratio* is the divine Good himself in supernatural glory.

extension we cannot apodictically know. Indeed, evil as such is permitted only as the condition for the overflowing of grace in the Incarnation of and Redemption wrought by the Eternal Word, who is predestined in passable flesh and with human faculties susceptible of suffering. The question may be asked whether an order containing creatures like ourselves, moved by God in the higher order of grace, is in principle evil or unjust to the degree that God does not *necessarily* specially uphold every creature to the infinitely transcendent supernatural beatitude beyond what is due to it and with no possibility or incidence of final defection. But the answer is: no. The least good or seeking of good in the creature is outdone by the infinite generosity of God.

In the face of the neuralgic need to enjoy pre-emptive and certain knowledge of divine upholding in salvation, two speculative errors present themselves: either to insist that God must finally and certainly uphold all (apocatastasis); or to diminish the divine transcendence and simplicity, by virtue of which what God simply wills *is*, and by virtue of which every positive being and good, the determinate entitative reality of every operation (even sinful ones), has God as its first agent cause. It is this second path that was—obscurely—taken by Marín-Sola, the later Maritain, and many others. Maritain's error here is particularly manifest, but it is the same as Marín-Sola's: for Maritain, God can give a small motion to the creature, and then the creature's "non-negation" determines whether there is further divine aid. But the *same* divine motion does not indifferently cause disparate effects; the causality of the creature lies *within* the divine first agency, and not *without*; and God either causes or does not. Non-negation in the really existing creature is something positive which is a gift efficaciously bestowed by God.

It is conspicuous that the incisive and principled criticisms of Labourdette and Nicolas have yet to be sufficiently understood, much less answered: for every motion of the creature in nature and in grace requires divine premotion. To hold otherwise is to permit a deep insecurity regarding the divine goodness—the radiant cause of each and every good of whatsoever order—to cause one to surrender the intelligibility of the doctrine of God, and to abandon the divine simplicity and transcendence.⁴² Grace is "sufficient" only in relation to *some further good*, but is

⁴² Or, if the point is rejection of the need for premotion, one courts either occasionalism or the denial of Thomas's teaching that the creature (which is not its own agency) must truly be moved by God in order to achieve the dignity of agency: that God is the first and principal cause of the application of every power to act. See *Summa contra* III, ch. 67 ("Sed omnis applicatio virtutis ad operationem est

always of itself “efficacious” with respect to *some effect*. In regard to that for which a grace is “sufficient” it is simply a proximate potency that awaits further divine aid. The creature cannot *add* to the effect of grace, since the creature’s own free act is comprised *within* the divine effect of grace itself.⁴³

Nicolas himself even after being moved by an erroneous confusion of the ordinary falling from being and good with *annihilation* to disavow his earlier teaching, seems to have known that no other solution is possible. As Torre notes in his book, “Nicolas still remained unpersuaded by Maritain’s own account. He thus remained perplexed, believing that the right account had yet to be given properly.”⁴⁴ Indeed. Were God’s causality not of itself efficacious, hope would be unreasonable. Because the actions of all creatures and the good of each voluntary act lie within the divine providence which is the first agent of every willing, we are right to place all confidence in God *not* in our own defectible natures:

principaliter et primo a Deo”—“But every application of power to operation is principally and first from God”).

⁴³ Thus, for example, *ST I-II*, q. 112, a. 2 resp., and especially a. 3, resp.: “Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, praeparatio ad hominis gratiam est a Deo sicut a movente, a libero autem arbitrio sicut a moto. Potest igitur praeparatio dupliciter considerari. Uno quidem modo, secundum quod est a libero arbitrio. Et secundum hoc, nullam necessitatem habet ad gratiae consecutionem, quia donum gratiae excedit omnem praeparationem virtutis humanae. Alio modo potest considerari secundum quod est a Deo movente. Et tunc habet necessitatem ad id ad quod ordinatur a Deo, non quidem coactionis, sed infallibilitatis, quia intentio Dei deficere non potest; secundum quod et Augustinus dicit, in libro de Praedest. Sanct., quod per beneficia Dei certissime liberantur quicumque liberantur. Unde si ex intentione Dei moventis est quod homo cuius cor movet, gratiam consequatur, infallibiliter ipsam consequitur; secundum illud Ioan. VI, omnis qui audivit a patre et didicit, venit ad me.”—“As stated above, man’s preparation for grace is from God, as Mover, and from the free-will, as moved. Hence the preparation may be looked at in two ways: first, as it is from free-will, and thus there is no necessity that it should obtain grace, since the gift of grace exceeds every preparation of human power. But it may be considered, secondly, as it is from God the Mover, and thus it has a necessity—not indeed of coercion, but of infallibility—as regards what it is ordained to by God, since God’s intention cannot fail, according to the saying of Augustine in his book on the Predestination of the Saints that by God’s good gifts whoever is liberated, is most certainly liberated. Thus if God intends, while moving, that the one whose heart He moves should attain to grace, he will infallibly attain to it, according to John 6:45: ‘Every one that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to Me.’” The divine simplicity and transcendence are powerfully asserted: the divine intention cannot fail.

⁴⁴ Torre, *Do Not Resist*, 245n83.

in God who alone can uphold us in good or rectify us to it, and in the promises of Christ.⁴⁵ N.V

⁴⁵ I have not in this essay addressed the position of Marín-Sola and of Torre that the distinction of the divided and composite senses of liberty is of rare application, but have done so elsewhere. Indeed, it applies everywhere, since we may always distinguish between the power of a thing in itself, and the power of a thing in relation to God. In the divided sense the will as a rational power is always capable of doing or not doing; but in the composite sense (in relation to the divine simple will) this is not true, because premotion is required for the self-motion of the creature. Thus, Mary retained the power to do otherwise (in the divided sense) when infallibly and efficaciously moved in grace freely to assent to the Incarnation. Her act is free by virtue of the nature of the rational power; but insofar as she is moved freely and rationally to assent, she is not not-moved (and so in the composite sense there is hypothetical necessity). Freedom of choice is not an exemption from the principle of non-contradiction.