



Determinism Thomas Aquinas

It seems that the will is moved under necessity by God. For every agent which it is impossible to resist moves things under necessity. But it is impossible to resist God, since his power is infinite; whence it is said: “Who resists his will?” (Rom. ix. 19).

Besides, the will is moved under necessity towards those things which it is its nature to will. But to each thing is natural what God works in it. Therefore the will, under necessity, wills everything to which it is moved by God.

Further, the possible never results in the impossible. But the impossible results from the assumption that the will may not will that to which God moves it: for, in this way, the action of God would fail of its effect. Hence it is not possible that the will should not will that to which God moves it. Therefore, the will is under necessity to will it.

But, on the contrary, Ecclesiasticus (xv. 14) 2 says: “God in the beginning established man and left him in the hand of his own counsel.” Therefore he does not move the will under necessity.

I reply it must be said that (as Denis says) it is not the way of divine providence to destroy but to preserve the nature of things. Whence he moves all things according to their several natures; so that from necessary causes, by the divine action, there should proceed effects under necessity, but from contingent causes effects contingent should result.

Since, therefore, the will is an active principle not determined to one thing, but unrestrictedly regarding many, God moves it in such a way that he does not determine it to one thing under necessity, but its movement remains contingent and not necessary, except in those things to which its nature moves it.

To the first objection, therefore, it must be said that the divine will not only contrives that on a time there should happen something through the thing which it moves, but also that it should fall out in the manner which is in keeping with its nature. And hence it would be more unthinkable, in the divine motion, if the will should be moved under necessity, which is not natural to it, than if it should be moved freely, which is after its own nature.

To the second: that is natural to a thing which God works in it, for things are congruous one to another for as much as God wills them so to be. Not that he wills that whatever he should work in things should be natural to them, e.g., the resurrection of the dead; but this he wills that it should be natural to everything to be subject to the divine power.

To the third: if God moves the will to anything, it is incompatible with this (fact) that the will should not be moved to that thing, but it is not impossible simply. Whence it does not follow that the will is moved by God under necessity.

Summa Theologica I-II, Q. 10, art. 14.

Whether God Operates in Nature's Operation

It seems he does not. For nature neither falls short in necessary things nor abounds in the superfluous. But for

natural action, the active power on the part of the agent and the passive on the part of the recipient are sufficient. Hence there is no need of the divine power operating in things,

9. Besides, things which are quite unlike can be separated from each other. But the action of God and that of nature are completely unlike; since God acts voluntarily, but nature of necessity. Hence the action of God can be separated from the action of nature: and so it is not necessary that God should work in nature that is acting.

12. Besides, in Ecclesiasticus it is said that "God made man and left him in the hand of his own counsel" (xv. 14). But he would not have left him if he had always operated in his will. Therefore he does not work in the will's act.

13. Besides, the will is master of its own act. But this would not be if it could not act without God working in it; since our will is not master of the divine operation. God then does not work in our will's operation.

14. Again, that is free which is its own cause, as the philosopher says. What then cannot operate except by a cause acting in it, is not free in acting. But our will is free in acting. Hence it can act, without any other cause working in it; and hence the same conclusion follows.

15. Moreover, the first cause bears more upon the thing caused than the second cause. If therefore God works in the will, and nature, as first cause on the second, it would follow that the defects which happen in the operation of the will, and nature, are rather to be attributed to God than to nature or the will, which is not seemly.

But on the other side is that which is said in Isaias (xxvi. 12): "You have wrought all our works in us, Lord."

Moreover, just as art presupposes nature, so nature presupposes God. But in the working of art nature operates: for without the operation of nature the operation of art is not effective, as iron is made soft by fire, that it may be stretched about by the smith. Hence also God works in nature's operation.

Besides, nothing can operate unless it is entity. But nature cannot be unless God operates: for it would fade into nothingness, unless by the action of the divine power it were preserved in being, as is clear from Augustine. Hence nature cannot act unless by God's action.

Again, the power of God is in every natural thing: since God is said to be in all things by essence, power, and presence. But it must not be said that the divine power, as it is in things, is idle. Therefore, in so far as it is in nature, it operates. Nor can it be said that anything other than nature works, since there results but one operation. Therefore in every operation of nature God works.

I reply that it must be said that, without any reservation, it must be granted that God works in nature, and the will's operation. But some, not understanding this, fell into error, attributing to God in this way every operation of nature, that a natural thing inwardly brings forth of its own power: and to holding this they were moved by divers reasons. For certain men speaking in the law of the Moors, as the Rabbi Moses tells, said that all natural forms of this sort were accidents: and since an accident cannot pass to another subject, they held it impossible for a natural thing by its own form in some way to induce a similar form in that subject: whence they said that fire does not warm, but God creates heat in the warmed thing. But if it were objected against them that, by applying fire to the warmable thing, a warming always follows, except accidentally there should be an impediment to the fire, which shows that fire is the cause of heat, of itself: they said that God had so ordered it that that course should be kept in things, that

he would never cause heat unless when fire was applied; not that the applied fire contributed anything to the warming.

But this position is clearly repugnant to the manner of the senses: for since sense does not feel, except through what it suffers from the thing, that appeals to sense (which, although in seeing is doubtful for there are those who say that sight has a subjective element, in touch and in the other senses is manifest), it follows that man does not feel the heat of fire, if through fire acting there is not the likeness of the fire's heat in the organ of sense. For if those signs of heat should happen in the organ from some other agent, touch, although it felt the heat, still would not feel the heat of fire, nor would it feel that fire is warm; but since sense makes this judgment, its judgment in its proper sense object does not go astray. It is repugnant also to reason, by which it is shown that in natural things nothing is worked in vain. But unless natural things did achieve something, to no purpose would they possess forms, and the natural virtues conferred upon them; just as if a knife did not cut, in vain would it possess sharpness. To no purpose also would be the application of fire to wood, if God burn the wood without fire.

It is inconsistent also with the divine goodness, which is communicative of itself: from which it falls out that things are like to God not only in being, but also in acting. But the reason they bring forward on their own behalf is altogether frivolous. For when it is said that accident does not pass from one subject to another, it is understood of the same accident as to number, not that a similar accident may be induced in another subject in virtue of the accident that in a certain natural subject inheres. And it is necessary for this to happen in every natural action. It is false, also, what they suppose, that all forms are accidents: for so there would be no substantial being in things, the principle of which cannot be an accidental form, but a substantial only. Generation and corruption also would perish, and many other difficulties would follow.

Now it must be known that one thing can be called the cause of the action of another in many ways. Firstly, because it grants to the other thing the power to work; as it is said in the eighth book of the "Physics" that the generator moves the heavy and light, inasmuch as it gives the power by which they achieve such motion: and in this way God works all the actions of nature: since he gives to natural things the powers by which they can act, not only as the generating thing grants power to the heavy and light, and does not preserve them further, but as continually preserving their power in being: since he is the cause of the power conferred upon them, not only as to its becoming, as one who generates, but also as to its being: that so it may be said that God is the cause of an action in so far as he causes and preserves the natural power in being. For in another fashion also, he that preserves the power is said to perform the action, as it is said that drugs which preserve sight make to see. But since nothing moves or acts of itself, unless it be the mover that is not moved, in a third way one thing is said to be the cause of another's act, in so far as it moves it to act: in which is not meant a conferring or a preserving of active power, but the application of the power to the action; as man is the cause of the blade's incision because he applies the sharpness of the blade by moving it to cut. And, because lower natural agents do not act unless they are moved, since such lower bodies change and are changed — the heavens, however, change and are not changed, and yet do not move unless they are moved, and this does not cease until we come to God — it follows of necessity that God is the cause of the action of every natural thing as moving and applying its power to act.

But, further, we find that the order of effects follows the order of causes: which is necessary from the likeness of effect and cause. Nor can the second cause produce the effect of the first by its own power, although it is the instrument of the first cause with respect to that effect. For the instrument is the cause in a certain fashion of the effect of the principal cause not by its form, or by its own power, but in so far as it shares something of the power of the principal cause through its motion; as an axe is not the cause of the contrived thing by its form, or by its own

power, but through the power of the craftsman, by whom it is moved, and this it shares in a sense. Whence in a fourth sense one thing is the cause of another's action, as the principal agent is the cause of the action of the instrument: and in this way also it is necessary to say that God is the cause of every action of a natural thing. For the higher the cause, the more universal and efficacious it is; and the more efficacious, the more profoundly does it enter into the effect, and from a more remote power reduce it to act.

And, therefore, it may be said that God works in everything, in so far as everything has need of his power that it may act. So, then, God is the cause of every action in so far as he gives the power to act, preserves it, and applies it to the action, and in so far as by his power every other power acts. And when we have added to this that God is his power and that he is within everything, not as a part of its essence but as holding the thing in being, it follows that he immediately works in every agent, not excluding the operation of the will, and of nature.

To the first objection it must be said that the active and passive power of a natural thing are sufficient to act in their own order; yet the divine power is required for the reason given above.

To the ninth, although nature and the will are, as to their being, dissimilar, yet in acting there is a certain order in them. For just as the action of nature precedes the action of our will, in virtue of which reason, in works of art, which are from the will, the operation of nature is needed; so the will of God, which is the origin of all natural motion, precedes the operation of nature: whence also his operation is required in every operation of nature.

To the twelfth, God is not said to have left man in the hand of his own counsel, so that he does not work in the will; but because he gave to man's will the dominion over its act, so that it should not be under necessity to either side of a contradiction: and he did not give this dominion to nature, since by its form it is determined to one.

To the thirteenth, the will is said to have dominion over its act not to the exclusion of the first cause, but because the first cause does not act in the will in such a manner as to determine it of necessity to one, as he determines nature: and hence the determination of the act is left in the power of the reason and the will.

To the fourteenth, not every cause excludes liberty, but only a constraining cause: but God is not the cause of our operation in this way.

To the fifteenth, since the first cause bears upon the effect more than the second, it follows that whatever of perfection there is in the effect is reducible principally to the first cause; but whatever of defect is to be reduced to the second cause, which does not work as efficaciously as the first cause.

On the Power of God, Q. 3, art. 7

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