

Obstinacy in Suárez's Demonology

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Introduction

After their fall, demons were seen by medieval theologians as incapable of turning away from the evil they had originally embraced. This inability to refrain from doing evil is called «obstinacy» (*obstinatio*). From this perspective, obstinacy is a form of necessarily wanting evil, that is, a form of impotence to do the good. The demons are so corrupt that they can tend only toward evil. Hence, they are said to be «obstinate in evil» (*obstinati in malo*)¹.

In several of her works, Tiziana Suarez-Nani has shown that, in medieval scholastic vocabulary, obstinacy generally characterizes «the idea of hardness of the heart and narrowness of the mind». When applied to the more specific case of the rebellious angels, obstinacy refers «to an irredeemably evil will, blinded and incapa-

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1. The medieval thinkers produced many theories to explain obstinacy. For this rich and complex debate, I refer to T. SUAREZ-NANI, *Obstinatio. De Thomas d'Aquin à Guillaume d'Ockham*, in I. ATUCHA, D. CALMA, C. KÖNIG-PRALONG, I. ZAVATTERO (éds.), *Mots médiévaux offerts à Ruedi Imbach*, Brepols, Porto 2011, pp. 485-493, T. SUAREZ-NANI, *La matière et l'esprit. Études sur François de la Marche*, Cerf – Academic Press Fribourg, Paris-Fribourg 2015, pp. 275-300, T. HOFFMANN, *Theories of Angelic Sin from Aquinas to Ockham*, in T. HOFFMANN (ed.), *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2012, pp. 283-316, T. HOFFMANN, *Free Will and the Rebel Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2021, pp. 243-266 et I. COSTA, *Les démons pêchent-ils toujours? Débats sur l'obstination entre Thomas d'Aquin et Guillaume d'Ockham*, «Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques» 104/3 (2020), pp 441-463.

ble of choosing the good». Such a will, Suarez-Nani claims, «constitutes the distinctive feature of demons»².

When he addresses the question of the demons' obstinacy in the last books of his massive *Tractatus de angelis*, Suárez closely follows the structure of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. In *Quaestio* 64 of the *Prima pars*, entitled *De poena daemonum*, Aquinas presents obstinacy not primarily as a choice of the demonic will – as if demons had freely decided to be obstinate in evil – but as a divine punishment, a penalty inflicted on them on account of an original act, namely holding God in contempt and freely embracing their own good, contrary to the order determined by the divine will³. Therefore, while there is indeed a free choice of sin *before* and at the origin of the punishment, this choice occurs only once. Obstinacy is not the perpetual reiteration of a free decision to embrace evil, but

2. SUAREZ-NANI, *Obstinatio*. pp. 485-486 (my translation). Here is the original text: «Au travers de ces différentes connotations, un noyau de signification émerge et se cristallise autour de l'idée de dureté du cœur et de fermeture de l'esprit [...]. Dans la plupart des textes, l'obstination renvoie à une volonté irrémédiablement mauvaise, aveuglée et incapable de choisir le bien [...]: une telle volonté existe bel et bien; elle constitue la caractéristique essentielle des démons». See also T. SUAREZ-NANI, *L'ostinazione dei demoni. Gli elementi di un confronto*, in G. ALLINEY (éd.), *Medieval Theories of the Will*, Macerata 2012, pp. 151-176, and T. SUAREZ-NANI, *Raimondo Lullo, i demoni e gli averroisti*, in D. PERLER (ed.), *Filosofare in lingua volgare*, «Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie» 59 (2012), pp. 360-375.

3. «Et hoc modo Angelus peccavit, convertendo se per liberum arbitrium ad proprium bonum, absque ordine ad regulam divinae voluntatis» (THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae*, in *Opera omnia iussu impensaque Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, Ex Typographia Polyglotta, S. C. de Propaganda Fide, vol. V, Romae 1889, I, q. 63, a. 1, ad. 4, p. 122). Tobias Hoffmann explains that Aquinas's position on obstinacy evolved. In his commentary on the *Sentences*, he adopts a «theological» approach, illustrating the external causes of the demon's obstinacy. From the *Summa theologiae* onwards, he proposes a «psychological» explanation. As Hoffmann points out, it is in his last attempt, the *De malo*, that we find «Aquinas's most mature account» (HOFFMANN, *Free Will and the Rebel Angels*, p. 247), where «he combines internal determinism with an external cause of the obstinacy, which consists in God not granting the grace of conversion» (HOFFMANN, *Theories of Angelic Sin*, p. 306). Although Suárez was familiar with all these texts, he strategically followed the *De malo*, reconciling the theological and psychological approaches.

rather a consequence of it. As Suarez-Nani explains it, for Aquinas, the angels' will «adheres in a definitive and immutable way to the object of its choice, such that, once made, this choice determines their will in good or in evil forever»⁴.

Aquinas's *Questio* 64 is divided into two main parts: The first deals with the «mental» punishment of the demons, insofar as it strikes their intellect and will. The second part deals with the «sensible» punishment (*poena sensibilis*), namely the infliction of sorrow (*dolor*). The sensible punishment, which I will not discuss here, corresponds to the fires in which the demons will eternally burn. The mental punishment, by contrast, involves both «obtenebration» (*obtenebratio*), i.e., the darkening of the intellect, and «obstinacy» (*obstinatio*), i.e., the perseverance of the will in evil. In the first article of *Quaestio* 64, Aquinas deals with obtenebration, which he defines as the «deprivation of knowledge» (*privatio veritatis*), a form of «diminution» or «ablation» of the demonic intellect. In the second article, he deals with obstinacy, which he defines as «the eternal adherence of the demonic will to evil» (*immobiliter malo adhaerentes*), an adherence that occurs *after* the initial choice of evil⁵.

In his treatment of the topic, Suárez takes up this scheme. Obstinacy appears in his works as a divine punishment that accompanies the obtenebration and precedes the «sensible» punishment of eternal fire. This question forms part of the long discussion of evil angels that closes the *De angelis*. After showing what their fall and fault (*lapsus* and *culpa*) consist of, Suárez addresses the nature of the punishment (*poena*) inflicted on the demons.

In his specific explanation of obstinacy, Suárez proceeds in three steps: First, he discusses the *perpetuity* of obstinacy, i.e., its definitive and irremissible character. Then, he considers the *consequences* of obstinacy on the demonic will, questioning the extent of the demonic will's freedom, especially with regard to good and evil: Does their

4. SUAREZ-NANI, *Obstinatio*, p. 487: «leur volonté adhère de manière définitive et immuable à l'objet de leur choix, si bien qu'une fois posé, ce choix détermine à jamais leur volonté dans le bien ou dans le mal».

5. For Aquinas's text, see *Summa theologiae*, I, qq. 63-64, pp. 121-147. For the quotation, see q. 64, a. 2, *resp.*, p. 141.

obstinacy make demons fundamentally and universally incapable of honest and morally praiseworthy actions? Finally, Suárez addresses the *cause* of obstinacy. In this paper, I will focus only on the first two points, namely the perpetuity and the consequences of obstinacy.

The Perpetuity of Obstinacy

The debate on the perpetuity of obstinacy goes back to the time of the «Origenist controversy»⁶, and in particular to the writings of Augustine and Jerome, who both opposed what they called «the Origenistic heresy» (*Origenis haeresis*)⁷. Indeed, Origen is renowned for defending the remission of all sins and, consequently, the forgiveness of the demons' disobedience⁸. Now, if their fault is forgiven and their innocence restored, the punishment of which obstinacy is part is no longer necessary and will cease to be inflicted on them. Therefore, on this reading of Origen, the punishment of demons is not perpetual, and hence neither is their obstinacy.

Suárez does not seem to have had direct access to the relevant text by Origen, namely the treatise *On the First Principles*. Instead, he bases his reflection on several writings of the Church Fathers, in particular Augustine's *City of God* and Jerome's *Letter to Avitus*. According to Augustine, Origen belongs to those «who decline to believe that any [...] shall suffer eternally»⁹. Augustine particularly

6. I use Elizabeth Clark's expression. See E.A. CLARK, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1992.

7. See for instance HIERONYMUS STRIDONIUS, *Letter XCII. The Synodical Letter of Theophilus to the Bishops of Palestine and of Cyprus*, trans. M.A. Freemantle, W.H. The Hon, in P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Volume VI: *Jerome. Letters and Select Works*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Grand Rapids (MI) 2016, p. 450. For the Latin version, see HIERONYMUS STRIDONIUS, *Lettres*, trad. J. Labourt, Les Belles Lettres, vol. IV, Paris 1954, p. 148.

8. For an exposition of Origen's position, see H. CROUZEL, *Le démoniaque dans l'œuvre d'Origène*, in M. LAGRÉE et alii (eds.), *Figures du démoniaque, hier et aujourd'hui*, Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, Bruxelles 1992, pp. 31-61.

9. AUGUSTINUS HIPPONENSIS, *The City of God*, trans. M. Dods, Roman Roads Media, Moscow (Idaho) 2015, XXI, 17, p. 743. For the Latin version, see AUGUSTINUS

objects to Origen's claim that all sinners, including the rebellious angels, will be «set free»¹⁰. Indeed, he says Origen «believed that even the devil himself and his angels [...] should be delivered from their torments, and associated with the holy angels»¹¹, a belief he vehemently repudiates.

From Augustine's perspective, Origen's main fault is that he clearly contradicts the Scriptures. In chapter 23 of *The City of God*, Augustine refers to two passages from the New Testament attesting to the demons' eternal punishment, which are regularly mentioned in scholastic debates. The first is from the Gospel of Matthew, where we read: «depart from me you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels»¹². The second is taken from Revelation: «And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstones where the beasts and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever»¹³. Although an exegesis of these passages is necessary if we are to understand them completely, it is sufficient for present purposes to note that, according to Augustine, they provide clear proof that the punishment inflicted on the devil and his demons is eternal¹⁴.

HIPPONENSIS, *La cité de Dieu. Livres XIX-XXII*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1960, p. 450: «quibusdam eorum nolunt credere poenam sempiternam futuram».

10. Id., *The City of God* XXI, 17, p. 743. «Longe autem aliter istorum misericordia humano errat affectu, qui hominum illo iudicio damnatorum miserias temporales, omnium vero qui vel citius vel tardius liberantur aeternam felicitatem putant» (*La cité*, p. 450).

11. Id., *The City of God* XXI, 17, p. 743. «Qua in re misericordior profecto fuit Origenes, qui et ipsum diabolum atque angelos eius post graviora pro meritis et diuturniora supplicia ex illis cruciatibus eruendos et sociandos sanctis angelis credidit» (*La cité*, p. 450).

12. *Matthew* 25:41, in H.G. MAY, B.M. METZGER (eds.), *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha. Revised Standard Version*, Oxford University Press, New York 1965, p. 1206.

13. *Revelation* 20:9-10, in MAY, METZGER (eds.), *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, p. 1509.

14. Indeed, just after quoting the two excerpts presented above, Augustine adds: «And therefore no other reason, no reason more obvious and just, can be found for holding it as the fixed and immovable belief of the truest piety, that the devil and his angels shall never return to the justice and life of the saints, than that Scripture, which deceives no man, says that God spared them not, and that

Jerome makes a similar observation. In his *Letter to Avitus*, he declares that Pammachius asked him to translate Origen's *On the First Principles* to bring out «the true sense of the Greek» in Latin¹⁵. After receiving Jerome's translation, Pammachius was so shocked that he decided to keep it for himself and not have it copied. However, he imprudently lent it to a monk who was excessively curious. The latter then circulated several copies of the translation, which, to Jerome's great displeasure, were of poor quality: «order and sense were sacrificed in several passages»¹⁶. This story provides an opportunity for Jerome to publicly denounce Origen's errors. Among these, Jerome mentions the possibility that demons can expiate their fault by becoming human. After their earthly life and the lot of misfortunes that it brings with it, the demons, purged of their guilt, can find their way back to their original status, namely that of angels deprived of any sin. Here is what Jerome has to say about Origen's doctrine:

Moreover, the very demons and rulers of darkness in any world or worlds, if they are willing to turn to better things, may become human beings and so come back to their first beginning. That is to say, after they have borne the discipline of punishment and torture for a longer or a shorter time in human bodies, they may again reach the angelic pinnacles from which they have fallen¹⁷.

they were condemned beforehand by Him, and cast into prisons of darkness in hell, being reserved for the judgment of the last day, when eternal fire shall receive them, in which they shall be tormented world without end», AUGUSTINUS HIPONENSIS, *The City of God* XXI, 23, p. 749. «Quam ob rem prorsus nec alia causa nec iustior atque manifestior inveniri potest, cur verissima pietate teneatur fixum et immobile nullum regressum ad iustitiam vitamque sanctorum diabolium et angelos eius habituros, nisi quia scriptura, quae neminem fallit, dicit eis Deum non pepercisse, et sic ab illo esse interim praedamnatos, ut carceribus caliginis inferi retrusi traderentur servandi atque ultimo iudicio puniendi, quando eos aeternus ignis accipiet, ubi cruciabuntur in saecula saeculorum», *La cité*, pp. 464-466.

15. HIERONYMUS STRIDONIUS, *Letter CXXIV. To Avitus*, in *Jerome. Letters and Select Works*, §1, p. 574. For the Latin version, see *Lettres*, vol. VII, Paris 1961, p. 95: «ut Graecam veritatem servaret Latina translatio».

16. *Id.*, *To Avitus*, §1, p. 574. «Ita in illis confusa sunt omnia, ut et in ordine in plerisque, et sensu careant» (*Lettres*, p. 95).

17. *Id.*, *To Avitus*, §3, p. 576. «Ipsosque daemones ac rectores tenebrarum in aliquo mundo, vel mundis, si voluerint ad meliora converti, fieri homines, et sic ad

Following not only the authority of the Church Fathers, but also that of Aquinas, who likewise refers to «Origen's position»¹⁸, Suárez affirms that the perpetuity of damnation, in this case, the perpetuity of the obstinacy that afflicts the demons, is a «Catholic truth»¹⁹. This is, he says following Augustine, the meaning of Matthew 25:41, where the Apostle affirms that eternal fire has been prepared for the Devil and his angels. Suárez concludes that the blessed will receive eternal life on the day of the Last Judgment, while the damned will be relegated to eternal punishment²⁰.

This truth is not, however, only proven by authorities. According to Suárez, it is also proven «by reason» (*probatur ratione*). To understand his reasoning, we must consider his definition of obstinacy. In Suárez's demonology, obstinacy represents a disorder that strikes the will as a result of intellectual blindness (*post mentis excaecationem*)²¹. For Suárez, obstinacy is of two types: The first is that of the will fixed on a *past evil*, the second that of the will fixed on a *future evil*. In the first case, obstinacy refers to the delight that the demons take in the evil deeds they have committed. In the second, obstinacy refers to the mental state in which demons can only act evilly²².

In addressing the perpetuity of obstinacy, Suárez has the first meaning of the term in mind: Obstinacy is the demons' unwavering adherence to the sins they have already committed. It is worth re-

antiquum redire principium: ita dumtaxat, ut per supplicia atque tormenta, quae vel multo vel brevi tempore sustinuerint, in hominum eruditi corporibus, rursum veniant ad angelorum fastigia» (*Lettres*, p. 98).

18. THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 64, a. 2, p. 141.

19. SUÁREZ, *Tractatus de angelis* (henceforth *De ang.*), in *Opera omnia*, Editio nova a Carolo Berton, Apud Ludovicum Vivès, vol. II, Parisiis 1856, VIII, 7, 3, p. 983b: «Veritas ergo catholica est, malos Angelos ad poenas perpetuas damnatos esse».

20. See SUÁREZ, *De ang.*, VIII, 7, 3, pp. 983b-984a: «Haec veritas habetur expresse in Scriptura, Matth. 25 [41 and 46]: *Ite in ignem aeternum, qui paratus est diabolo et Angelis ejus*. Et infra: *Ibunt hi in supplicium aeternum*».

21. This blindness corresponds to the «obtenebration» mentioned above.

22. See *ibidem*, VIII, 7, 1, p. 983a: «Una est, circa malum semel commissum, ita adhaerendo, et complacendo in illo, ut illum affectum daemon mutare non possit. Alia est, circa malum futurum, seu in ipsomet statu damnationis committendum, et sic proprie dicitur illa voluntas obstinata in malo, quae non potest nisi male operari».

calling here that, according to Suárez, obstinacy is a form of punishment, a *damnatio* resulting from a *culpa*. As he goes on to explain, the *culpa* corresponds to the state in which a free and rational agent finds himself *after* violating a law. Consequently, like any punishment, the demon's obstinacy is a sanction for the violation of a law. In our case, the violation of God's law (*lex Dei*). Now, the violation of God's law, a law whose validity is eternal, necessarily entails an eternal punishment (*aeterna poena*). Indeed, the fault, or the «stain» (*macula*) it engenders remains eternally in the sinner's soul, at least in a «habitual» way. This means that the *reason* for obstinacy as divine punishment is eternal:

Since the perpetual duration of the punishment depends, in its execution (so to speak), on the perpetual duration of the habitual fault or stain (for, if the fault is forgiven, the accountability for an eternal punishment ceases at the same time), from this principle of faith, according to which the demons' punishment will last for eternity, one concludes in an obvious way and with the same certainty that the demons' sin, from the point of view of the fault and the stain, will last eternally²³.

In support of this point, Suárez refers to his *Tractatus de vitiis et peccatis*, in which he asserts that a mortal sin must be sanctioned with eternal punishment. It is a principle of vindictive justice that the punishment be «commensurate with the fault» (*commensurata culpae*)²⁴. Thus, to determine whether obstinacy is perpetual, i.e., whether it represents an eternal punishment or not, it is necessary to establish the type of fault for which it is a sanction. According to Suárez, the demons' sin is evidently «the most serious» sin (*gravissimum*), the one which distances the creature most from its

23. *Ibidem*, VIII, 7, 4, p. 984a (my translation): «Quia vero perpetua duratio hujus poenae pendet in executione (ut sic dicam) ex perpetua duratione culpae habitualis, seu maculae (quia si culpa remittatur, eo ipso reatus poenae aeternae tollitur), ideo ex illo principio fidei, quod poena daemonum in aeternum durabit, evidenter, et cum eadem certitudine concluditur, peccatum daemonum quoad culpam et maculam in aeternum esse duraturum».

24. SUÁREZ, *Tractatus de vitiis et peccatis*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. IV, Parisiis 1856, VII, 3, p. 585b.

Creator. It entails a «habitual fault» (*culpa habitualis*) which sullies the demons' spirit from all eternity. Therefore, the sanction used to punish this fault is also necessarily eternal. Suárez concludes that obstinacy is perpetual, that it corresponds to a state of guilt from which the demons will never be able to extract themselves, and that, in the same way as the torments of hell, it will afflict them eternally²⁵.

The Consequences of Obstinacy

Suárez considers that obstinacy has two main consequences: The first one consists of the incapacity to do penance, an inability that he calls «impotentia poenitendi»²⁶. The demons' obstinacy causes a kind of impotence, which prevents them from attaining redemption. Indeed, if they had the power to recant and do penance by themselves, God would grant them forgiveness, according to «a certain rule of divine mercy» (*regula certa divinae misericordiae*). In this case, however, they would not be obstinate in the proper sense, since obstinacy consists precisely of perseverance in evil, which makes any penance impossible. Therefore, it follows that the *impotentia poenitendi* is a consequence of obstinacy; Suárez says that it is identical to obstinacy as delight in a past sin²⁷. The second consequence consists of the demons' incapacity to act in an upright way and corresponds to obstinacy as delight in future evil. The present section is devoted to the explanation of this consequence.

Given what has been shown so far, it may seem superfluous to demonstrate that demons are incapable of acting in a morally good way, i.e., that they are incapable of striving for a future good. Indeed, obstinacy in evil is defined by the inability to will the good. In

25. «Ergo eadem certitudine tenendum est daemones esse hoc modo in peccato in via commisso obstinatos» (*De ang.*, VIII, 7, 5, p. 984b).

26. *Ibidem*, VIII, 7, 6, p. 984b.

27. «Haec autem impotentia est obstinatio in peccato, de qua nunc tractamus», *ibidem*, VIII, 7, 5, p. 984b. Suárez affirmed a little before: «regula certa divinae misericordiae est, ut vere poenitentibus veniam non neget: ergo si daemones nunquam sunt remissionem peccati consecuturi, nec etiam sunt veram poenitentiam acturi» (*ibidem*, VIII, 7, 4-5, p. 984a-b).

this sense, it is simply a truism that obstinate demons are unable to do good. Nevertheless, Suárez undertakes to show that demons are incapable of acting in an upright way, because such an incapacity has, it seems, been denied by «some theologians», among whom he mentions John Duns Scotus and Durand of Saint-Pourçain, who «have defended the idea that demons, no matter how obstinate in their sin, are not always determined to sin or perform an evil act»²⁸.

According to Suárez's reading, Scotus and Durand consider that the demons' will is free «by its very nature» (*ex natura sua*), from the point of view both of freedom of exercise (*libertas quoad exercitium*) and of freedom of specification (*libertas quoad specificationem*). According to Scotus, Suárez continues, the demons' will remains «integral and perfect» (*integra et perfecta*) after the fall²⁹. Even if the demons persevere in evil «because of a vehement malice» (*propter vehementem malitiam*) which prevents them from striving for the good, they still bear in them an «indifference of specification» (*indifferentia quoad specificationem*)³⁰. In other words, according to Suárez, Scotus considers that the demons' will is free not only to will evil or

28. *Ibidem*, VIII, 8, 1 p. 988b: «Aliquorum theologorum sententia fuit, daemones quantumcumque obstinati in suo peccato sint, non esse determinatos ad semper peccandum, seu ad efficiendum actum malum». For the positions of Duns Scotus and Durand, see IOHANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio in Opera omnia*, C. Balic et alii (edd.), vol. VIII, Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, Civitas vaticana 2001, II, d. 7, quaest. unica, pp. 69-119, and DURANDUS DE SANCTO PORCIANO, *In quatuor libros sententiarum resolutiones*, Paris 1508, II, d. 7, q. 2, ff. 163rb-164vb. For an account of these positions (and their differences), see HOFFMANN, *Free Will and the Rebel Angels*, pp. 252-257 and G. ALLINEY, *Angeli mali: Ostinazione al male e libertà del bene secondo Duns Scoto*, «Quaestio» 22 (2022), pp. 383-406.

29. Suárez explains Scotus' arguments concerning these two types of freedom: «voluntas Angeli ex natura sua est libera, quoad exercitium in actibus ordinis naturalis, non tantum quoad singulos actus, sed etiam quoad totam eorum collectionem, quia nulla est causa necessitatem illi imponens [...]; ergo hanc libertatem retinet daemon». He adds in the following paragraph: «Angelus ex natura sua est liber, vel in omnibus, vel fere in omnibus actibus suis quoad specificationem, seu determinationem inter bonum et malum, ut est certissimum de Angelo in pura natura spectato: sed in daemone manet voluntas naturalis integra et perfecta, quia non est laesus in naturalibus, juxta commune axioma Dionysii et theologorum; ergo retinet eandem libertatem» (*ibidem*, VIII, 8, 2-3, pp. 988b-989a).

30. *Ibidem*, VIII, 8, 3, p. 989a.

cease to will it, which corresponds to the *libertas quoad exercitium*, but also to will evil or good, which corresponds to the *libertas quoad specificationem*. Despite their obstinacy in evil, demons essentially retain the freedom to do the good: «Scotus, therefore, concludes that the power to act in an upright way is not lacking in demons»³¹.

According to Suárez, Scotus's position is untenable for two reasons: First, it is opposed to the «common opinion of theologians» (*communis opinio theologorum*), and in particular to that of Aquinas³². Second, and more importantly, Scotus's position is inconsistent. He admits that freedom to do the good and obstinacy in evil are compatible, meaning that the demons are simultaneously incapable of wanting the good and free to do it. That is, they cannot embrace the good because of their obstinacy, while still remaining free to act in a good way because of the intrinsic indifference of their will. According to Suárez, these two statements are contradictory. The obstinacy of the demons refers to the necessary orientation of their will towards evil, which makes it impossible to choose the good. This necessity therefore corresponds to the deprivation of freedom of specification, with the result that the demons are free neither to will nor to do the good.

Against Scotus, Suárez argues that the demons necessarily embrace evil and have absolutely no possibility of embracing the good. Even in the acts they commit «freely», i.e., after deliberating about the different evils they can achieve, they are incapable of wanting the good. Hence, they do not have the ability, by themselves and without divine intervention, to turn to the good that they at one point abandoned. Suárez expresses this thesis through two propositions that he formulates as follows: 1) «the demons act evilly in all actions that they freely choose to perform» (*in omnibus actibus, quos libere exercet, male moraliter operari*); 2) «the demons never cease to sin in act» (*nunquam cessare ab omni actuali peccato*)³³.

31. *Ibidem*, VIII, 8, 3, p. 989a: «Concludit ergo Scotus, in daemonibus non deesse potestatem bene operandi moraliter».

32. See in particular THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, in *Opera omnia*, Commissio Leonina – Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, Rome-Paris 1982, q. 16, a. 5, pp. 302-307.

33. SUÁREZ, *De ang.*, VIII, 8, 4, p. 989a-b.

To prove his point, Suárez relies on several authorities, and particularly on Saint Fulgentius. He refers to an excerpt from the *Letter to Peter on the Faith* to show that demons are condemned to have an evil will and are incapable of doing good. Here is Fulgentius's text:

Because, just as they who will reign with Christ will have in themselves no vestiges of an evil will (*reliquias malae voluntatis*), so they who, relegated to the punishment of eternal fire with the Devil and his angels, just as they will never again have rest, will in no way be able to have a good will (*bona voluntas*)³⁴.

On the basis of this passage, Suárez establishes a parallel between the state of confirmation of the blessed angels in the good and the state of prevarication of the bad angels, obstinate in evil³⁵. It is important to emphasize that, in the case of the angels, as in the case of the demons, the will is wholly necessitated by its object: the good in the case of the blessed angels, evil in the case of the demons. However, it is not necessitated in the same way: The good angels' will is necessitated by the infinite goodness of its object (God is too good not to be willed)³⁶, whereas the evil angels' will is necessitated by its own fragility and their miserable condition of existence (*ex misera conditione et fragilitate voluntatis creatae*)³⁷. In

34. FULGENTIUS RUSPENSIS, *Letter to Peter on the Faith*, in *Selected Works*, trans. R.B. Eno, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1997, III, §38, p. 84. The original can be consulted in the *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 65, col. 689. The Latin given by Suárez differs slightly from that of the PL. Still, the idea remains the same: «Sicut beati nullas in se reliquias malae voluntatis habebunt, sic damnati nullam bonam habere poterunt voluntatem» (SUÁREZ, *De ang.*, VIII, 8, 5, p. 989b).

35. This parallel is commonplace in medieval scholasticism. Here, Suárez repeats Aquinas's famous assertion: «tenendum est firmiter, secundum fidem Catholicam, quod et voluntas bonorum Angelorum confirmata est in bono, et voluntas Daemonum obstinata est in malo» (THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 64, a. 2, *resp.*).

36. «Necessitas amoris provenit ab objecto, quod revera est infinitum bonum, et ipsa bonitas per essentiam clare visa» (SUÁREZ, *De ang.*, VIII, 9, 15, p. 1007b).

37. «Dico breviter in hoc puncto, obstinationem daemonum, et damnatorum omnium oriri ex misera conditione status, juncta naturali conditione, et fragilitate voluntatis creatae, suis tantum viribus relictae» (*ibidem*, VIII, 9, 2, p. 1003a).

any case, the freedom of specification, defined as the possibility to choose between good and evil, as Scotus would have it, no longer exists after the justification of the good angels and the damnation of the demons. The good angels enjoy the perfect Anselmian freedom, *libertas a peccato*, whereas the demons, deprived of the latter, only have the freedom to choose between particular evil actions³⁸.

In order to clarify the antinomic relationship of the demonic will to the good, Suárez gives further details about the notion of a «morally good act» (*actum moraliter bonum*). A morally good act, he tells us, does not consist solely of the will to do a righteous deed (*velle honestum opus facere*), but more specifically of the will to do a righteous deed *because it is righteous*. Whoever wants to do an honest deed wants it precisely because of its honesty, of its conformity to right reason (*quia honestum est, et rectae rationi conforme*)³⁹. Suárez immediately goes on to add that «according to the true principles of morality, it is the essence of honest acts that they proceed formally (*formaliter*) from an honest motive (*ex motivo honesto*)»⁴⁰. Obviously, none of the acts of which demons are capable can proceed from such a motive.

Demons cannot act on the basis of a will to do the good precisely because such an action requires that it be done out of a concern for honesty. They want what they want out of love for themselves, not out of love for God or honesty. This is what Suárez expresses when he says that «the devil's will always adheres, as it were, formally (*quasi formaliter*) to the depraved end of his»⁴¹. In other words, whatever acts demons may commit, they are necessarily evil, because they are always subordinated to an evil end. As we have seen above, the demons' will, after sinning, is *irremediably* directed towards evil. Therefore, they cannot act in order to achieve a

38. I have tried to expose Suárez's conception of the blessed angels' freedom in V. BRAEKMAN, *La liberté de la volonté dans la vision béatifique. Suárez critique d'Ockham*, «Lo sguardo. Rivista di Filosofia» 33 (2021/II), pp. 227-245.

39. See SUÁREZ, *De ang.*, VIII, 8, 7, p. 990a.

40. *Ibidem*, VIII, 8, 7, p. 990a: «secundum vera principia moralia de ratione operis honesti est, ut ex motivo honesto formaliter fiat».

41. *Ibidem*, VIII, 8, 7, p. 990b: «daemon semper habet suam voluntatem quasi formaliter adhaerentem pravo fini suo».

morally good end. To admit the opposite, i.e., that the demons can act for the love of God, or do the good out of honesty, is «absurd», Suárez claims⁴². Demons are fundamentally incapable of acting in an upright way.

Suárez's conclusion is unambiguous: After their fall, demons can no longer will the good, whether from the point of view of the liberty of exercise or from that of the liberty of specification. When Suárez states that demons never cease to sin in act (this is the second proposition listed above), he implies that they are deprived of the freedom of exercise in the sense that they can never stop acting in an evil way. This does not mean that they are not free to choose this or that evil in particular, for that is the last freedom they have left, but they are constantly willing to offend against God, even if the evil they do can be realized through a variety of singular acts. The demons' actions are perpetually sinful, no matter what they «freely» choose to do.

Similarly, when Suárez states that demons do evil in whatever acts they choose (the first proposition listed above), he means that whatever they decide to do, their act will necessarily be evil. Since the demons will whatever they will for an evil end, they can only will evil and are never free to will the good. Hence, the demons have no freedom of specification and are eternally condemned to will evil in their every act. They are struck, says Suárez, by a «necessitas male operandi», or «impossibilitas bene operandi»⁴³ that he describes in the following terms:

I say, however, that this moral impossibility is sufficient for true obstinacy (*obstinatio simpliciter*), for it is such that its opposite, that is, the damned acting in an absolutely morally good way, never occurs, not even rarely⁴⁴.

42. *Ibidem*, VIII, 8, 7, p. 99ob: «Absurdum autem esset haec similia in damnatis admittere».

43. *Ibidem*, VIII, 9, 1, p. 99ob.

44. «Dico tamen, hanc moralem impossibilitatem sufficere ad obstinationem simpliciter: quia tanta est ut infallibiliter nunquam, nec etiam raro contingat oppositum evenire, id est, ut damnatus bene simpliciter operetur» (*ibidem*, VIII, 11, 23, p. 1009b).

In other words, because of a «necessity» or a «moral impossibility» (Suárez sometimes speaks of a *necessitas moralis* and sometimes of an *impossibilitas moralis*)⁴⁵, the demons cannot cease to will and do evil, and whatever they will and do is necessarily evil. Thus, the main consequence of obstinacy is the loss of the freedom to want the good and act in an upright way.

Conclusion

For Suárez, the demons' obstinacy is a divine punishment. It is the result of the free and awful choice to turn away from God that the demons have decided to make, the main consequence of which is the loss of the freedom to will and to do the good. Taking up Aquinas's conception, Suárez considers that the demonic nature is irredeemably corrupt and obstinate in evil. Demons are provided only with a miserable freedom, consisting of the possibility to choose between different evils. Perpetually sinful and eternally constrained to remain so, they are condemned to wretchedness, to complacency in evil, and to the unremitting torments of hell.

In a way, even if Suárez does not put it in these terms, Scotus's position as he presents it constitutes, in his eyes, a reaffirmation of Origen's error. Indeed, Scotus acknowledges, at least theoretically, the possibility that the demons can return to the good they have forsaken on their own. Moreover, in defending the compatibility of obstinacy with freedom of specification, Scotus opposes not only reason, but also Aquinas and the authority of the Church Fathers, who defended the inability of demons to extricate themselves from their obstinacy without God's help. For this reason, Suárez unreservedly rejects Scotus's theory and those who endorse it.

45. *Ibidem*, VIII, 11, 18-23, pp. 1008a-1009b.