

Durand of Saint-Pourçain's Refutation of Concurrentism

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Abstract: The Dominican theologian Durand of Saint-Pourçain (ca. 1275–1334), breaking from the wide consensus, made a two-pronged attack on concurrentism (i.e., the theory according to which God does more than conserving creatures in existence and co-causes all their actions). On the one hand, he shows that the concurrentist position leads to the unacceptable consequence that God is the direct cause of man's evil actions. On the other hand, he attacks the metaphysical foundations of concurrentism, first in the version offered by Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome, and then in a more general way. Against Thomas and Giles, he challenges Neoplatonic assumptions about causality and being. More generally, he establishes that God's action and a creature's action can be neither identical nor different, and thus cannot both be direct causes of the same effect. Without claiming that Durand's series of objections are definitely unanswerable, we may at least observe that they have generally been underestimated (which earned him the lowly role of the mere foil of the concurrentist view in the history of philosophy) and are able to do considerable damage to concurrentism.

Keywords: concurrentism; God's general concurrence; instrumental causality; Thomas Aquinas; Giles of Rome; Durand of Saint-Pourçain; philosophical theology

1. Introduction

In medieval metaphysics, God's causal action can take place at three different levels: 1. the initial creation of the world, 2. the constant conservation of the world with all the beings that populate it, 3. the assistance he gives to all the actions of all the creatures. The creation thesis implies that there was originally nothing besides God and that any other existence results from God's action. This is the familiar picture of God making the world and the first creatures in it, simply by himself and "out of nothing", as according to the received interpretation of the Genesis narrative. However, for most medieval and modern (seventeenth-century) thinkers, it was not the case that God simply created the initial bulk of matter and shaped the first beings of each species, after which the creatures were sufficient causes for the perpetuation of the world and the unfolding of causal processes that lead to the apparition of new effects. The conservation thesis goes farther and claims that God remains constantly at work to preserve the existence of matter, of the universe as a whole, and of each individual being—not only of those that were first created and still subsist, such as the Earth and the heavens, but also of every single thing that has appeared since then and is presently existing. This conservation is sometimes presented as a continuous creation, as if God was constantly producing existences out of nothingness. Indeed, so it is said, if God were to stop doing this, everything would fall back into nothingness and vanish. That claim is already a strong one, but the third thesis, that of God's concurrence (*concursus*), adds an extra level of required divine activity as follows: God has to contribute to all the causal processes that involve created causes, whether these processes lead to accidental or substantial changes. Without this action that underlies that of the creatures, the latter would be unable to accomplish anything whatsoever.¹ Neither a burning fire could ignite a piece of paper, nor could two cats, male and female, engender kittens, without God's active



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and direct contribution to these specific processes. God must co-cause all the effects that created beings produce.

As counter-intuitive and radical the concurrence thesis is, it was (as well as creation and conservation by God) the object of broad consensus in the Middle Ages. According to Albert the Great, towards the middle of the thirteenth century, the opinion that creatures can, by themselves, produce effects without God's direct causal influence "has all but disappeared from the lecture hall and is regarded as heretical by many moderns".² Likewise, Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) reports that nearly all medieval thinkers regard the concurrence thesis as dogma.³

However, the Dominican theologian Durand of Saint-Pourçain (ca. 1275–1334) is famous for having departed from this consensus.⁴ He does accept the creation and the conservation theses, but he does not think that God has to contribute to the actions of the creatures once they exist; they are able to carry out by themselves whatever they do. He is therefore labelled a mere conservationist: divine action is limited to creating at the beginning of times, and to preserving the being of whatever exists at any subsequent moment. Durand acknowledges that, in a sense, God can be said to be the cause of the creatures' actions, but this is only inasmuch as God has endowed them with powers and maintains these powers and their ontological subjects, the created substances, into being. In doing so, he is only an indirect cause of their actions. On the contrary, concurrentism requires that God be a *per se* (i.e., non-accidental), necessary, and proximate co-cause of the effects of created causes. In fact, according to concurrentists, in all of their actions, creatures are the secondary causes and God is the principal cause. God is not only a remote First Cause from which every being, action, and event ultimately derive; he is a proximate agent, on which everything that takes place directly depends as a conjoined and main cause. In the 17th century, where both the conservation and concurrences theses still had currency, Durand remained known (probably through modern scholastics such as Suárez, who fought back against Durand's criticism of concurrentism)⁵ as the outlier who denied this part of God's activity.⁶

Given the lasting mark Durand left in these discussions, it surely is worthwhile to examine his reasons for supporting mere conservatism and, correlatively, his objections against concurrentism, which, as we will see, are directed against Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome.⁷

2. The Problem of Evil and Durand's Refutation of Concurrentism on a Moral Basis

The seduction of concurrentism across centuries is explicable by its impact on religious feelings: it certainly fosters a pious sentiment of dependency towards the Creator, who, in this view, is constantly and everywhere present and acting, not only sustaining existences, but directly helping the creatures in their different activities.

However, this conception has a downside, which triggered Durand's worries. An inescapable consequence seems to be that God also contributes to human actions that are evil, and is therefore co-responsible for them.

Indeed, authors who endorse the strongest version of concurrentism, like Thomas Aquinas, admit that the theory applies to all created causes, including human will; not a single volition is possible without God's co-action. God is not only the cause of the faculty of will, but also the conjoined cause of its acts.⁸ Thomas does not hesitate to affirm that this is true, even of our morally wrong choices and their consequences. Even a sinful thought or action falls into the realm of being, and as such, must have been co-produced by God, as everything else that is.⁹

Naturally, Aquinas finds a way to exculpate God from any participation in sin as such. Everything that is, even an evil action, is good *qua* existing, due to the convertibility of being and goodness. Its evilness, however, does not pertain to being, but is only a deficiency, a "privation" of righteousness. Therefore, what God contributes to the action is what is positive and good in it, namely its existence; but what is deficient, i.e., sinful, in it is imputable only to the secondary cause, that is, the human will.¹⁰ God is the concurring

cause of the act as an act, but not of what is defective in it. Analogically, the skill of an artisan may be perfect, but if there is a flaw in her instrument, the result is imperfect; or the muscular strength of an individual may be intact, but a defect in his shinbones will make him limp.¹¹ Such will be the defense of the concurrentists through the ages.¹² Thus, in his *Theodicy*, Leibniz similarly argues that, in an evil action, what God provides is perfect and good, but is diminished and skewed by the creature, which makes the result imperfect, that is, bad.¹³

However, Durand is not convinced by this kind of explanation and refutes it in distinction 37 of his commentary on book II of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.¹⁴ Avoiding to give even the mere appearance of involving God with sin is ultimately why, as Leibniz notes, Durand supports mere conservationism.¹⁵

Consider, Durand proposes,¹⁶ an act such as adultery. The "depravity" (deformatas) of sin is intrinsic to this action and cannot be separated from it. Consequently, if God were a direct cause of that action, he would be a direct cause of its depravity, just as he is of the action itself. Interestingly, Durand's objection is quite similar to a remark that the young Leibniz, long before adopting the classical position, made in his 1670/71 paper "Von der Allmacht und Allwissenheit Gottes und der Freiheit des Menschen": To assert that God is only the cause of the existence of creatures and of what is positive in them, and not of their imperfection, is like causing the existence of a triplet but pretending not to be the cause of the occurrence of an odd number. But, Leibniz says, a father who has sired three children cannot deny that he is also the cause of the fact that they cannot walk two by two holding hands¹⁷. In another early text, *The Author of Sin* (1673?), Leibniz likewise wrote the following: "To say that God is not the author of sin because he is not the author of privation, although he may be called the author of all that is real and positive in sin, is a manifest illusion".¹⁸ Otherwise, he adds, a painter could be the author of a bungled portrait without being the author of its imperfection.¹⁹

Durand further notes that the role ascribed to God by concurrentism would satisfy the three conditions that make an agent responsible for a morally evil act:

- (1) the act is defective because of the agent (not because of a material defect, as in Aquinas' claudication example);
- (2) the agent has the power to avoid the act;
- (3) the act is not the consequence of some invincible ignorance.

Indeed, God always acts as a free agent, capable of not doing as well as doing, and always with complete knowledge; and, in adultery, the deformity does not result from a material defect. Therefore, were God a direct cause of this act, he would be fully responsible for its wrongness, which should be imputed to him as well as to the individuals involved in the adultery.

Another way of saying the same thing is to argue that when two things are inextricably linked, he who knowingly wants one also wants the other, as in the case of so-called mixed actions.²⁰ A classic example is that of sailors who, in a storm, throw overboard the freight they are transporting to relieve their ship. They do not want to lose their merchandise; they want to save their lives. But, since saving their lives requires unloading the ship, they decide to sacrifice the cargo. Although they do not want to do this with an absolute will, but only with a conditional one, throwing away the goods is still a deliberate and free choice, not a forced one. Wanting the first end entails wanting the second. Similarly, to return to the case examined by Durand, if the deformity of adultery is intrinsic to the action, it cannot be said that God wills to co-cause the action itself but not in its sinfulness. If he wants the one, he also wants the other. He is therefore responsible for the sin.

As a consequence, concludes Durand, in order to avoid blaming God for evil and making him immoral, we must reject concurrentism and posit that God is the cause of our actions only as a remote cause (insofar as he gave us our nature and faculties) and as a conserving cause. This does not implicate God in our sins, for God provides us with a will that is free, that is, indeterminate with respect to evil as well as to good. The bringing

about of evil rests solely with us as immediate causes.²¹ God is the preserving cause of substances, not the concurring cause of their acts.

3. Durand's Refutation of Concurrentism on a Metaphysical Basis

Let us now turn to Durand's direct challenge to concurrentism, that is, his challenge based not on the undesirable results regarding God's responsibility for evil, but on the metaphysical reasons that oppose this theory.

Things are somewhat complicated by the fact that, while Durand successively refutes Aquinas and Giles of Rome, Giles himself had criticized a certain passage in Aquinas that Durand also takes aim at. On the other hand, Aquinas' and Giles' theories share several fundamental ideas, and Durand questions them when discussing both theories. We will need to unravel these different threads. I will start by explaining Aquinas' view.²²

3.1. Aquinas' Concurrence Theory

Aquinas uses the model of instrumental causality to clarify how God's concurrence with creatures' actions works. God is the higher or principal cause; creatures are like his instruments. So, we first have to see how Thomas defines instrumental causality.

3.1.1. The Instrumental Causality Paradigm

In his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei*, q. 3, a. 7, Thomas explains that one thing can cause the action of another in four different ways.

(C1) First, a thing is the cause of another's action when it gives that other thing its power of action (*virtus operandi*).

(C2) Second, that which preserves a power against corruption can be said to cause the action of another thing.

These first two meanings, when applied to God in his relationship with creatures, obviously correspond to creation and conservation.

(C3) Third, one thing causes the action of another insofar as it moves that thing to act. This is a much stronger sense than the donation or conservation of a power to act; it is the "application" of this power, as when the cutting power of a knife is actualized by the movement we generate.²³ A cause whose power is thus applied to its effect by the power of another cause becomes an instrumental cause, in the broadest sense of the term, of that other cause. It is therefore the nature of an instrumental cause to be a moved mover, as Thomas puts it.²⁴

This third sense corresponds to the action of God as the primary cause of all changes that occur in the world (through the intermediary of heavenly bodies, as far as physical changes are concerned).²⁵ Creatures do not move or act without being moved. They need a first, unmoved mover. This mover, God, is thus the cause of all actions of all things in nature.²⁶ God is not only the cause of secondary causes, but he is also what "applies" their power to their effects.²⁷ Through the continuous succession of actualizations: celestial movements, sublunary movements, etc., God is the ultimate cause of everything that happens in the universe.²⁸

(C4) Fourth, a superior cause can join the action of a subordinate cause and, as a principal cause, cause it to do something that the subordinate cause could not do on its own. The subordinate cause, then, becomes the instrumental cause of the superior cause, in a new sense of the expression (different from C3). This new form of instrumental causality is a particular case of secondary causality in which, under the impulse of the principal cause, *the subordinate cause produces something that is beyond what it can do by virtue of its own nature*, and which has, as its end, an effect intended by the principal cause.²⁹

It is important to note that the action of the subordinate cause driven by the principal cause is an *additional* action to that which the subordinate cause performs by virtue of its own essence and causal powers.³⁰ It carries out two superposed actions: that which corresponds to its nature, and that which the principal cause causes it to perform, which extends further than its natural action, and which it performs only by the power of the

principal cause (even as it continues to perform its own natural action).³¹ Otherwise, says Thomas, “it would not act as an instrument”.³² For example, heat has the natural effect of consuming and breaking down materials; but, insofar as its power is used by the vegetative soul for the digestion of nutrients, its action results in the fabrication of corporeal matter, which is the effect of the vegetative soul as the main cause. Heat (or rather the element fire, which is the agent, acting through heat, which is its property) accomplishes what it naturally does by its own *eidos* and causal power: decomposing matter; but, in doing so, it further contributes, under the power of the vegetative soul, to what it cannot do by itself: the production of flesh.³³ In the same way, the basic action of a carpenter’s tool, cutting wood, participates by the same token in the actualization of a piece of furniture, which it could not carry out simply by itself.³⁴

Thus, C4 defines what we can call instrumental causality in the strong sense, as opposed to that defined in C3. In the latter sense, using a knife to slice some bread does not go beyond what its nature is capable of: cutting (call it its action φ). Its power simply has to be actualized by the movement of the arm. If I now use this knife to engrave words in a piece of wood (call it its action χ), what the knife does goes beyond what its nature alone is capable of accomplishing on its own when moved. As in the first case (slicing bread), the knife’s action is to cut (here, the fibers of the wood), which is again its action φ ; but, the production of cuts that have various and well-defined shapes—which is its action χ —comes under a higher causality, that of the mind, whose action is not limited to setting it in motion. The fact that the cuts are arranged in a certain order is not causally explicable by the knife’s *eidos* alone, nor by the mere fact of being in motion. Consequently, not only must its power be actualized by an external agent, but there must also be a directing causality of another order that makes it do more than simply cutting, namely form letters. However, it is the knife that cuts the wood, not the mind or the hand. The design of the cuts cannot be explained solely by the properties of the tool, nor is it reducible to the action of the principal agent alone.³⁵ In short, the causality of the mind is only exercised through the knife, and the χ -causality of the knife is only exercised under the direction of the mind. In fact, these two causalities combine in a *single action* (the engraving)³⁶ to produce a *single effect* (the words).³⁷

3.1.2. Application to God’s Causal Concurrence

C4 is the model that Aquinas employs to explain how God acts, as the principal cause, in all the operations of all the creatures, which are like his instrumental causes. But why, in the first place, is God’s concurrence needed? Aquinas’ reasoning can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Every change in the world results in the actualization of a form, be it a substantial form in the processes of generation, or an accidental form in other kinds of change. Since it is through forms that existence (*esse*), the act of being (*actus essendi*), is provided, the actualization of a form amounts to the actualization of an *esse*, whether substantial or accidental. A compound of either substantial form and matter, or accidental form and substance comes into existence.³⁸
- (b) However, only God can give existence.
- (c) Therefore, creatures cannot be the sufficient causes of any of the natural processes, and God’s cooperation is always required as the immediate cause³⁹ that gives existence to the effect of a given action, even if it is only to heat water, for example.

It is clear that the whole theory hinges on premiss (b). What might justify this assertion, which is very counterintuitive? That any new existence is produced by God alone seems contrary to empirical evidence. Nonetheless, Aquinas does offer a number of demonstrations of that claim. Several of them are based on Neoplatonic axioms of causality and participation, which he mostly borrows from the *Book of Causes*.⁴⁰ Here is a typical one, taken from his *De Potentia*:

1. The order among effects reflects the order among causes: a subordinate effect comes from a subordinate cause, and a principal effect comes from a principal cause (and

vice versa, a subordinate cause engenders a subordinate effect, and a principal cause a principal effect).⁴¹

2. But existence is an effect that presupposes no other, and, on the contrary, is presupposed by all the others, for any effect can only be an effect if it exists.
3. Existence is therefore the very first effect in the order among conditions.
4. Consequently, existence must be produced by the First Cause only.⁴²

Premiss 1 entails that the action of the First Cause is more fundamental than that of a secondary cause and precedes it.⁴³ The more elevated a cause, the more extensive and effective its action; and the more effective it is, the deeper it penetrates the effect and draws it out of a greater state of potentiality. Conversely, the more universal and internal the effect, the higher its cause must be. This is why the First Cause is more closely connected to the effect than its proximate causes, and is more truly its cause.⁴⁴

Premiss 2 is also related to the *Book of Causes*' proposition I, which explains that the property of being (the proper effect of the first cause) is (onto)logically presupposed by the property of living or thinking (effects of secondary causes), whereas the reverse is not true.⁴⁵ The *De causis* gives the following concrete illustration: In the generation of a human being, the existence of the material substratum is given first; then comes life or animality; finally comes the rationality that makes her human.⁴⁶ Conversely, in the order of corruption, she first loses the use of reason, even though she is still alive and breathing; then, all that remains is existence, that of the inanimate body.

Since *esse* is the deepest, most fundamental effect, the argument concludes that it must be brought about by the First Cause. Thus, to give being is the prerogative of the First Cause: "if every cause gives its effect something, in this case, without any doubt, the first being gives being to all effects".⁴⁷

As a consequence, if the first cause did not act in the background, a secondary cause would simply have no effect. It is in this sense that God is the cause of all creaturely actions, for the existence of both accidents and substances is in fact given and preserved by him.⁴⁸

However, while the corresponding power belongs exclusively to God, the action of creatures is not superfluous with respect to the communication of existence to other effects, but is rightfully included in the process. The elements of a chemical synthesis do produce a compound; plants and animals do engender their descendants. Indeed, Thomas presents his theory as a middle ground between two opposites. One extreme is not to give creatures enough, denying them efficient causality and making God the sole efficient cause, as in the occasionalism of the Mutakalimun—known to Thomas via Al-Ghazali and Maimonides, and which he rejects. The other extreme is to give too much to creatures, by conferring on them a causal action that is independent of God, or even, as Avicenna did, the possibility of creating in their turn, by the delegation of divine power. The instrumental causality model helps Thomas to trace this via media, insofar as it makes room for creaturely action, while subordinating it to that of God.⁴⁹

In effect, it is here that the fourth way in which one thing causes the action of another, i.e., instrumental causality in the strong sense (C4), reveals its usefulness. The only means to reconcile the causal action of creatures with God's is for the former to be instrumental with regard to the communication of being, which comes from God as the principal cause.⁵⁰ As we have seen, by its very structure, instrumental causality reserves for the principal cause a power that nevertheless operates through instrumental causes, so that the latter contribute to an effect that is beyond what they can do by themselves. God's existence-giving action passes through the natural causal activity φ of creatures (which by itself cannot bring an effect into existence), and makes them perform an action χ that results in an effect coming into being.

Creatures therefore do communicate existence to effects.⁵¹ They do not do so as principal causes, neither by their own power nor thanks to a power that would be delegated by God and enable them to act autonomously. Nonetheless, when they are involved in a process of generation, divine causality combines with their own causality in a single action that gives existence.⁵² By their own action, they prepare and dispose a receiving subject,

they actualize a form in a substantial or accidental compound thus made existent.⁵³ The *esse* given by God is implemented through them as instrumental causes.⁵⁴

If we look at this arrangement of causalities from the point of view of the result, we find, in the effect, different strata of properties, each of which corresponds to one of the co-acting causes by virtue of the principle that Thomas holds to be axiomatic, namely that the order between effects corresponds to the order between causes.⁵⁵ This superimposition of layers of properties (being, materiality, specific essence, individual characteristics)⁵⁶ mirrors the hierarchy of interlocking causalities. An individual man, as an individual, can only communicate individual characteristics to his child.⁵⁷ The specific nature he transmitted was caused not by him as an individual, but caused through him by a more general cause, namely the heavenly bodies, which act on the elements in the processes of generation—in other words, one living being begets another of the same nature only by the virtue of the heavens, of which he is an instrumental cause.⁵⁸ Deeper down, the most fundamental and common layer is *esse*, which, as we know, can only be produced by the First Cause. It is neither the individual nor the heavens alone that could have caused this bedrock of the other properties, to wit, being simpliciter.⁵⁹

This stratification echoes the distinction between causality via creation and causality by information found in the *Book of Causes*.⁶⁰ The First Cause alone is said to act by creation, i.e., the production of existence, whereas secondary causes act by information, i.e., the addition of forms, of properties.⁶¹ Being is given by creation; being this or that, like “living” and any other such property, is given by information.⁶² The proper effect of divine action is existence, the proper effect of secondary causes is that what exists is of such and such a nature, that is, a determination of *esse* to be an existence of a given kind and to be an individual with certain particular characteristics. Secondary causes narrow down, so to speak, the action of the first cause.⁶³ Nonetheless, a material creature is produced by another material creature; this individual has begotten that individual. The progenitor does not simply arrange the matter so that God alone can then give existence to the effect. This would reduce the natural causality of the creature to being an occasional cause with regard to the giving of existence. Rather, God gives existence through the intermediary of the creature. The secondary cause is only an instrument, but it is the secondary cause that performs the action under the impulse of the primary cause.⁶⁴ The entire effect is thus produced by both God and the creature (*totus ab utroque*).⁶⁵

3.2. Durand's Objections

Now that we have a grasp of Aquinas' concurrentist theory, we can try to understand Durand's critique of it. As he announces at the beginning of his answer,⁶⁶ he is taking on the general position that God acts as a co-proximate cause in every creaturely action, but he immediately specifies that support for this view is split into two different rationales. His targets are Aquinas and Giles of Rome, respectively. As I said earlier, like Giles, he first raises objections against a certain passage in Aquinas where the latter says something rather odd, but he then trains his sights on Giles himself, whose theory borrows several principles from Aquinas. As a result, Durand first opposes Aquinas on specific arguments, and goes on to criticize the very foundations of the Thomistic theory, as used and reformulated by Giles.

In presenting and critiquing Aquinas' and Giles' theories, Durand focuses on their respective commentaries on the *Sentences*, rather than considering, as modern scholars generally try to do, the full range of their works. This is not uncommon in the Middle Ages, as medieval scholars were less attuned than we are to the possibility of discrepancies due to the evolution of an author's thought. Moreover, Durand himself was writing a commentary on the *Sentences*, and it is only natural that he had on his desk the corresponding works left by his predecessors.

3.2.1. Durand's Objections to Aquinas

Here is what Aquinas says in the passage targeted by Giles and Durand, where he tries to explain how God's action combines with the action of the created causes in the constant production of new beings:

"A creature can be the cause of those beings that are produced through motion and generation, either in such a way that it exerts causality over an entire species, as the sun is cause in the generation of humans or lions, or in such a way that it exerts causality on only one individual of the same species, as a man generates a man, and fire generates fire. However, God is also the cause of these same beings, operating in them more in depth than the other causes, which operate through motion, because it is God who gives existence to things. The other causes only delimit that existence, so to speak (*sunt quasi determinantes illud esse*). [a] No thing's existence entirely originates from a creature, since matter is from God alone. [b] Existence, however, is in all things deeper [*magis intimum*] than the characteristics by which existence is delimited [*determinatur*] in them. Hence, mere existence remains even when these characteristics have been removed, as *The Book of Causes* says. Therefore, the Creator's operation reaches out more into the depths of a thing [*magis pertingit ad intima rei*] than the operation of the secondary causes. And thus, the fact that something is caused by another creature, does not preclude that God operate as an immediate cause in all things (. . .)".⁶⁷

We recognize in these lines (correctly summarized by Durand) Aquinas' central idea that God alone provides existence, but that his action is intertwined with the actions of secondary causes (cosmic causes by equivocal causality, individuals of the same species by univocal causality), which account for the non-existential, both essential and accidental, characteristics of effects; that is, they restrict, as it were, the received act of being to a determinate *esse*, the existence of a certain individual of a certain nature.⁶⁸ This passage, therefore, is consistent with Aquinas' later formulations of his concurrentist theory. However, the argument marked [a] in the quote above poses a problem.

Following in Giles' steps, Durand first attacks that argument. The idea behind it seems to be that material forms—that is, forms that are designed, not to be self-subsisting, but to organize some portion of matter (like, for example, the substantial form of a tree)—cannot, obviously, receive existence by themselves, but exist only insofar as they are received into matter. But all the matter in the universe was created by God. Since then, secondary agents have only caused transformations, that is, successively introduced new forms into that matter, which is the permanent existing substrate under these changes of form. Creatures do not create anything; their action always presupposes some pre-existing matter provided exclusively by God. Thus, they do not give being in an absolute sense. Therefore, the being of any material substance and its accidents must be traced back to God's initial causation of matter, which means that God is the only cause of existence.⁶⁹ However, matter is not a principle of distinction; form is. But form is introduced by secondary causes. Thus, the role of creatures is to bring determinacy to existence; they cause the effects to be compounds that exist as this or that thing.

While not rejecting the gist of Aquinas' theory, Giles had already rebutted this particular argument with a dilemma.⁷⁰ Either God contributes to the actualization of the forms by the creatures, or not. If not, then he does not act together with every creaturely action, which is false according to Aquinas himself. If he does, then God contributes to the determinacy of the *esse* of the effects just as the creatures do. With this objection, Giles undermines the distribution of actions that Aquinas seems to envision here: God provides the *esse* by creating matter, creatures specify the *esse* by implementing forms.

Durand criticizes, in his turn, Aquinas' argument along the same lines (does God contribute to the actualization of forms or not?), but gives a different twist to his objection.⁷¹ Its thrust is that Aquinas' answer misses the point. Everyone agrees that it is God who creates matter. But the question is whether God and a creature are involved in the same

action. Thomas says that the creature's action results in the actualization of a form in matter. The problem, then, is whether this actualization is also immediately caused by God. Thomas, however, speaks only of another aspect of the process (God creates the matter necessary for the action of the creature), and thus does not answer the question of God's role in the actualization of the form.

To Durand's objection, one might add that Thomas' argument [a] does not fit with what is a tenet of his metaphysics, namely that matter cannot by itself communicate existence. It is through a form that a thing obtains its being (*forma dat esse*).⁷² As a consequence, if an agent is not the cause of the actualization of the form, this agent cannot per se be the cause of the existence of the effect. Therefore, it cannot be said that God is the universal cause of being because he is the cause of matter. Argument [a] is a mistake and does not support Aquinas' view.⁷³

However, Durand's aim is not, like Giles', to reject only this particular argument, but to take down the whole of Aquinas' theory. So he next attacks the argument marked [b] in the above passage (Giles, on the contrary, does not criticize it, but adopts the same view⁷⁴). Aquinas says that the bare act of being or being taken absolutely, the *esse simpliciter* (which is nevertheless the highest perfection in a creature), given by God (who is pure *esse*), is delimited, specified as the act of being such and such, by what creatures contribute. How exactly, asks Durand, does Aquinas understand this notion of *esse simpliciter*, which is supposed to be what is most fundamental in a creature? If, on the one hand, he understands the *esse simpliciter* as being in potentiality of being determined by the causal input of creatures, the proposition that it is what is most fundamental is false, because a thing is more truly what it is by what is actual in it, rather than by what is potential.⁷⁵ *Esse simpliciter*, taken in this sense, is therefore not "deeper" a layer in a thing than its subsequent determination. If, on the other hand, he understands *esse simpliciter* as the "common" actual being found in all existing things, then Thomas' argument is in fact pointless, for what he intended to demonstrate is that God acts by giving an *esse* of its own to each effect of a creature.⁷⁶

Moreover, the principle presupposed by Thomas' thesis is false, namely that, in a thing, one level of being is more "interior" or deeper than another.⁷⁷ In fact, being taken absolutely and being such and such are no different; they are not distinct by a real distinction. Durand cleverly turns against Aquinas an insight that the latter himself emphasizes. As per Aristotle, for a living being, to be and to live are one and the same: its *esse* is its *vivere* ("vivere viventibus est esse").⁷⁸ There are not two distinct acts, living on the one hand, and existing on the other, given independently of each other. This is why Aquinas can contend that because the proximate efficient cause gives life by actualizing a substantial form in matter (a soul, except in the case of the human soul), at the same time, as an instrumental cause, it transmits existence,⁷⁹ and the substance produced is therefore "immediately and wholly (*tota*)" the effect of God, but also "immediately and wholly" the effect of secondary causes.

But, Durand objects, if this is so, then being, taken absolutely, is not "deeper" in the thing than its determinate mode of existence (e.g., living). And so its *esse simpliciter* is not caused by God while its determination is caused by a creature. It must be the same cause (the creature) that gives existence, taken absolutely, and determinate existence, since they are in reality the same metaphysical feature.⁸⁰ Granted, there may well be a distinction of reason between the two. From this point of view, we can say that *esse simpliciter*, understood as the actual existence that is common to all beings, is more fundamental than the determinate existence of a thing. In this sense, one can say that bare existence is given first and disappears last in a thing that undergoes a process of generation and then of corruption. But this distinction between bare existing and existing as such and such is only a conceptual distinction, resulting from our making abstraction of the various determinations of being; it is not a real distinction as the *Liber de Causis* claims. And this distinction cannot serve to show that God acts more immediately in every effect than any other cause, for there is no universal except through the existence of singulars; that is, there is no existence taken absolutely, and common to all things, without the prior existence of

singular beings, and these singular beings must be produced by a cause which gives them both their *esse simpliciter* and their determinate being.⁸¹

Thus, Durand deals a serious blow to Aquinas' theory by challenging one of its essential linchpins, to wit, that different layers of *esse* require the cooperation of causes of different orders.

3.2.2. Durand's Objections to Giles

Durand next rejects Giles' formulation of the concurrentist theory.⁸² The latter is not fundamentally different from Aquinas'; but Giles gives it his own coloration.

As Durand recounts, Giles distinguishes between the case of creatures that are made by God "directly (*immediate*) and completely (*totaliter*)"—namely the immaterial substances—and the case of creatures that are not made by God alone, but also by secondary causes—namely all the effects that successively appear within natural processes in the material world. The latter are made by God "immediately" (i.e., without mediation: God acts directly on them), but not "completely", that is, not in every respect (*secundum omnem modum*).⁸³ Their diversity is due to the secondary causes, not to the primary cause. God always acts on all things in the same way, that is, he endows them all with existence; the diversity of effects is due to the diversity of the natures that receive his causality (a Neoplatonic idea on which Giles relies heavily).⁸⁴ Insofar as they simply are, creatures are indistinguishable from one another, and each receives its being from God. Insofar as they are this or that being, they differ from one another, and they receive these differences from secondary causes. Looking for an example, in the *Reportatio*, Giles exploits the same Aristotelian insight we have already seen used by Aquinas and by Durand: in a living being, living and existing are really the same. Therefore, a living substance is "immediately" and "as a whole" (*tota*) an effect of God, but also "immediately" and "as a whole" an effect of creatures. But it is not, in the same way, the effect of the first cause and that of these secondary causes. Insofar as it is, it is the effect of the first cause; insofar as it is alive, it is the effect of secondary causes. However, it is entirely an effect of both because there is no real distinction between being and living. God does not make one part of this substance, and the secondary causes another part. The primary cause and the secondary causes each contribute to the totality of this effect. God makes it alive under the aspect of being, which it has in common with every other creature; the secondary causes make it a living being under the aspect of living, which distinguishes it from many other creatures.⁸⁵ Or, as Giles cleverly puts it in his *Quaestiones de Esse et Essentia*, q. 5, when a flame ignites another flame, the first flame causes a flame that is a being, and God causes a being that is a flame; the flame produces a being because it produces a flame, and God, conversely, produces a flame because he produces a being.⁸⁶

Since Giles makes the same claim of a non-real distinction between *esse simpliciter* and determinate *esse* that Durand makes against Aquinas, one might expect Giles' formulation of concurrentism to avoid Durand's objections. But the latter finds it just as flawed.

Durand's first criticism is that Giles' thesis is plainly false. If it were correct, it would follow that God could not create a variety of creatures in the absence of secondary causes. But that is precisely what he did on the first day of creation, when there were no creatures yet; he immediately gave existence to a plurality of beings. Moreover, Giles contradicts himself. He posits that immaterial substances are caused by God alone, immediately and completely, that is, in every respect, both in terms of their determinate being and their mere existence. But immaterial substances are diverse, and God created them directly as such, without secondary causes, according to Giles himself.⁸⁷

Furthermore, the arguments that support Giles' thesis are flawed.

First, acting in a uniform way is a characteristic of natural, non-free agents, which act with necessity, not of voluntary agents like God.⁸⁸

Second, Durand rejects the Neoplatonism-inspired interpretation of a passage in Aristotle's *Physics*, in which the Philosopher says that degrees of generality in causes and effects correspond to each other; particular effects require particular causes, and general

effects require general causes.⁸⁹ Thus, this interpretation contends, statues, taken in general or indistinctly, are caused by sculptors, without further specification, but a particular statue is caused by a particular sculptor.⁹⁰ Similarly, as we have seen, Aquinas and Giles argued that a universal effect, such as existence, is due to God, the universal cause, while a specific effect, such as life, is due to specific, secondary causes.⁹¹ Durand objects that the distinction between particular and universal, both on the side of the causes and of the effects, is only according to predication, that is, when speaking at a certain level of abstraction and generality, and does not obtain in reality. There is no general statue, distinct from particular statues; therefore, it does not need a corresponding kind of cause, to wit, a general cause. There is no general sculptor either, but only individual sculptors. Likewise, since being and living differ only by a distinction of reason, their causes can be distinguished only conceptually. In reality, there is only one single cause (a creature), which communicates both being and living, but under different aspects: being insofar as it is itself a being in actuality and the effect is only in potentiality of being, life insofar as it is itself living in actuality and the effect is a living being in potentiality.⁹²

Thus, Giles' thoughtful reformulation does not shield the Thomistic concurrentist theory from Durand's fundamental objection: a plurality of hierarchically ordered cooperating causes is not required, because there is no plurality of more or less determinate levels of existence in a thing.

3.2.3. Durand's Objections to the Very Possibility of Concurrence

After his successive refutations of Thomas and Giles, Durand presents his conclusion: either God acts directly, as when he first created the world, or he acts through secondary causes, as in the subsequent changes that take place in the world, but, in this latter case, he does not act directly, as the very meaning of the phrase "to act through secondary causes" clearly implies.⁹³ Durand, however, wants to complete his demonstration by showing that, on the principle, a co-action of God and of a creature in the production of the same effect is impossible—it is therefore no longer a question of rejecting the explanations given by Thomas, Giles, or another author, but of challenging the very possibility of concurrentism.

Durand proceeds in the following way. If God acted directly to produce an effect with a secondary cause, his action would either be (A) identical to that of the secondary cause, or (B) different.

(A) It cannot be the same for the two following reasons:

- (1) Assuming that a secondary cause is maintained in existence by God with its nature and powers, it can produce its effect without any additional intervention by God, for an action that does not exceed the power of a certain specific nature needs nothing else than that specific nature to be carried out; consequently, God's action would be superfluous and assumed in vain.⁹⁴ Durand can argue in this manner because he has previously refuted the explanation given by Aquinas and Giles, according to which God, in giving *esse*, acts on the same effect as the secondary causes, but does so at a deeper level, that of existence.⁹⁵ Since being and living are only conceptually distinct and are in fact the same act, the thing that causes life can also cause existence; there is no need for God to act underhandedly to give the effect what the secondary cause cannot give. Durand has thus undermined the model of instrumental causality that Aquinas used to justify the need for divine assistance, and that is based on the idea that the primary cause makes the secondary cause do something that it cannot do on its own. This is why Durand can say that an action that corresponds to the capacities of a nature (such as the communication of life) does not require any additional cause. Consequently, a simultaneous action by God would be superfluous.
- (2) The general conditions for two or more agents to be involved in the same action do not hold when one of the agents is God and the other is a creature.

This is because there are only three ways in which the same action can be performed by multiple agents.⁹⁶

- a. It may happen that several agents each perfectly perform an action that is numerically the same, but, in this case, this action is produced directly by one, and mediately by the others. For example, the same action that is performed by a proximate cause is performed by a remote cause, but mediately, insofar as it gives the proximate cause its power and/or applies it. This is the case with God, but concurrentism requires in addition that he be a proximate cause too.⁹⁷
- b. It may also happen that several agents are at the same time the direct causes of a single action, but, in this case, none is a perfect cause. For example, instead of a single and sufficient cause, two limited causes cooperate, like when two men pull a ship: each is an immediate but partial cause.⁹⁸ This cannot be the case for God.
- c. Several agents can perform the same action numerically in such a way that they are each its immediate and complete cause if, and only if, there is a single power (virtus) numerically within these agents. For example, in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, each of whom is the Spirit's immediate and complete cause because there is one and the same power of spiration in both of them. But the same power numerically cannot be in God and in creatures. Consequently, it is impossible for both God and a creature to be direct and complete causes of the same action.

As we can see, Durand presents us with a dilemma: for the same action to be performed by two agents that do not share the same power numerically, one of them must either not be a direct cause, or not be a complete cause. But one cannot entertain the idea that God be an imperfect cause, and the theory of concurrence claims, precisely, that God and the creature with whom he cooperates are both immediate causes.⁹⁹ On the other hand, Durand has established that there is no reason to doubt that the creature is an immediate and complete cause through its own action, as this action does not exceed the power of its specific nature. God's action and that of a creature cannot therefore be numerically the same.

(B) Nor can they be different, Durand continues, opening up a new dilemma, for either one of these actions would produce the effect before the other, or it would not.

They cannot occur one before the other, for example, God's before the creature's, for then, God being a sufficient cause, the effect would be produced entirely before the secondary cause acts, and it would therefore be pointless for the latter to do so. And vice versa, if the action of the secondary cause preceded that of God.¹⁰⁰

Their two numerically different actions could not be simultaneous either. If each of the agents is a complete, sufficient cause, then only one needs to act and the other is superfluous.¹⁰¹ Moreover, actions are actually identical with their terminus (i.e., the actualization of a form) and are named after it. But only one form is actualized. As a consequence, it is impossible for several numerically different actions to simultaneously cause the patient to acquire numerically the same form (substantial or accidental). It is clear, then, that what is produced by a secondary cause cannot, at the same time, be produced directly by God.¹⁰²

Since God's action and the creature's action can occur neither successively nor simultaneously to produce the same result, it follows that there is simply no room for two complete direct causes that do not share the same power numerically.

In other words, one must choose between God's direct causation and that of secondary causes. Since one cannot exclude the latter without falling into pure occasionalism, and since God's direct causation is not, after all, indispensable, it is preferable to limit God's role to that of being, as the First Cause, the mediate cause and the preserving cause of all subsequent effects.

4. Conclusions

Durand's refutation of concurrentism is a sophisticated two-pronged attack. On the one hand, he shows that the concurrentist position leads to the unacceptable consequence that God is a direct cause of man's evil actions. This might be enough to disprove it, but Durand is not content with this indirect refutation. He also directly attacks the metaphysical foundations of concurrentism, first in its Thomistic–Aegidian version, then in a more general way, establishing that God's action and a creature's action can neither combine into one action nor be two different actions, and thus cannot be both immediate causes of the same effect.

Durand's series of objections are perhaps not unanswerable, but my goal here was simply to highlight them, since they have generally been underestimated, which has relegated Durand's conservatism to the lowly role of a mere foil to the concurrentist view in the historiography of the question. They are undoubtedly capable of doing considerable damage to concurrentism, and it would take many more pages to discuss the possible responses.

As for the thorny issue of moral evil, one solution might be to adopt a limited version of concurrentism: human free volitions are an exception to the rule of God's required co-action, and so are alone responsible for evil actions¹⁰³—but, of course, one must be willing to concede such exceptions, and this requires a whole metaphysics of the human soul and free will. One could also, like Leibniz, who in the 1680s changed his mind about privation,¹⁰⁴ try to integrate deficiency as a constitutive limitation of the creatures. Just as boats drifting on a river do in reality nothing when they slow down the speed of the current by their mere inertia, so by their very nature do creatures necessarily diminish what God gives, and thus are the cause of the imperfection of the effect.¹⁰⁵ This diminishing is only passivity, not an action; as a consequence, God does not have to concur with it. However, one may doubt whether this solution (which is fact an old Neoplatonic theory) shields Leibniz's later doctrine from the objection he himself had earlier raised against the traditional view that an evil will is only a deficient cause.¹⁰⁶ And, in any case, even if the status of creatures is the inherent reason of the lack of perfection of their actions, it is still God who, by his free decision to create, helps to bring this imperfection (i.e., evil) into existence, whereas he was not obliged to do so, as Bayle relentlessly objects against this kind of justification of God's actions.

As for the metaphysical part of Durand's refutation of concurrentism, the crucial point is whether, as Thomas Aquinas believes and Durand denies, one can distinguish different levels in the constitution of a being, with existence, *esse*, as the deepest layer. The strength of Durand's objection to this view comes from the fact that Aquinas and Giles accept and use Aristotle's claim that there is in fact no difference between existing simpliciter and existing as a thing of a certain kind (between being and living, in Aristotle's example). If so, a plurality of hierarchically ordered, cooperating causes is no longer required to explain a plurality of more or less determinate levels of existence in an effect. One and the same proximate efficient cause (a creature) gives its effect existence simpliciter by the very fact that it gives it its determinate existence. To refute this objection, one would have to take another hard look at the status of *esse* in Aquinas' metaphysics and its actual distinction from essence—a notoriously difficult problem. Be that as it may, it is an important aspect of Durand's critique that he challenges the Neoplatonic architecture prevalent in the thought of Thomas and Giles, especially the causal axiom according to which causality follows the same pattern as participation: the hierarchy of causes corresponds to the hierarchy of effects; a more extended and essential effect requires a higher cause, and, conversely, a higher cause has a wider scope of action, and its action penetrates deeper into its effects through the action of subordinate causes. By the same token, the model of instrumental causality, according to which a primary cause has a secondary cause do something that it cannot do alone—a model designed to justify the need for divine assistance and to account for the possibility of a plurality of causes of different orders acting simultaneously on the same object—becomes obsolete in Durand's view. One might say that Durand offers a more

streamlined and modern conception of causality, in which an action that does not exceed the power of a certain specific nature requires, in order to be performed, nothing more, all due circumstances obtaining, than that specific nature.

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Notes

- ¹ See for instance [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *Summa contra Gentiles* [=ScG] lib. III, cap. 67: “Sicut autem Deus non solum dedit esse rebus cum primo esse incoeperunt, sed quandiu sunt, esse in eis causat, res in esse conservans, ut ostensum est, ita non solum cum primo res conditae sunt eis virtutes operativas dedit, sed semper eas in rebus causat. Unde, cessante influentia divina, omnis operatio cessaret. Omnis igitur rei operatio in ipsum reducitur sicut in causam”.
- ² [Albertus Magnus \(1893\)](#), dist. 35, art. 7, resp., p. 575); quoted by ([Freddoso 1991](#), p. 555).
- ³ [Suárez \(1866\)](#), Disp. XXII, sectio 1, § 6, p. 803a): “(. . .) Deum per se et immediate agere in omni actione creaturae, atque hunc influxum ejus simpliciter necessarium est, ut creatura aliquid efficiat (. . .) [p]robatur primo ex communi consensu Scholasticorum, qui ita sentiunt de hac veritate, et de Catholico dogmate (. . .)”.
- ⁴ He is however neither the only one nor the first one to do so: he was preceded by Peter of John Olivi (see [Frost 2014](#)). But due to historical circumstances, Olivi’s work was far less known than Durand’s. In the later Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the modern era, Durand was singled out as the typical representative of this minority position.
- ⁵ [Suárez \(1866\)](#), Disp. XXII, sectio 1, §§ 2–5, pp. 802–3).
- ⁶ See [Malebranche \(1976\)](#), XV^e Éclaircissement, p. 243); [Bayle \(1731\)](#), pp. 489–90 and 493); [Bernier \(1685\)](#), p. 116) (in favor of Durand); [Leibniz \(2008\)](#), I^{ère} Partie, § 27, p. 118). For a broader view of the relation between Leibniz and Durand (including the future contingents problem), see [Piro \(2009\)](#).
- ⁷ So far Durand’s view has been studied in some aspects, but not in its entirety as I will attempt here. See ([Stufler 1935](#); [Freddoso 1994](#); [Flasch 2013](#), chap. 43; [Toth 2020](#); [Tuttle 2022](#)).
- ⁸ See for instance [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), ScG III.89.5: “Deus non solum dat rebus virtutes, sed etiam nulla res potest propria virtute agere nisi agat in virtute ipsius, ut supra ostensum est. Ergo homo non potest virtute voluntatis sibi data uti nisi in quantum agit in virtute Dei. Illud autem in cuius virtute agens agit, est causa non solum virtutis, sed etiam actus. (. . .) Deus igitur est causa nobis non solum voluntatis, sed etiam volendi”; *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei* [=De pot.] q. 3, a. 7: “(. . .) ipse in quolibet operante immediate operetur, non exclusa operatione voluntatis et naturae”.
- ⁹ [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#) *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* [=Sent.] I. II, dist. 37, q. 2, a. 2, c.: “(. . .) cum actio etiam peccati sit ens quoddam. . . secundum quod res in genere existentes entia sunt, eo quod et ipsae actiones in genere ordinantur, sequeretur, si actiones peccati a Deo non sunt, quod aliquod ens essentiam habens a Deo non esset; et ita Deus non esset universalis causa omnium entium, quod est contra perfectionem primi entis”; *Summa theologiae* [=STh] I^aII^{ae} p., q. 79, a. 2, c.: “(. . .) actus peccati et est ens, et est actus; et ex utroque habet quod sit a Deo. Omne enim ens, quocumque modo sit, oportet quod derivetur a primo ente; ut patet per Dionysium, V cap. de Div. Nom. Omnis autem actio causatur ab aliquo existente in actu, quia nihil agit nisi secundum quod est actu, omne autem ens actu reducitur in primum actum, scilicet Deum, sicut in causam, qui est per suam essentiam actus. Unde relinquatur quod Deus sit causa omnis actionis, in quantum est actio”. Cf. [Albertus Magnus \(1893\)](#), 35.1.7, p. 575).
- ¹⁰ [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *Sent.* II.44.1.1.c.: “In actu autem peccati sunt duo, scilicet substantia actus, et deformitas vel defectus debitarum circumstantiarum. Unde oportet quod etiam in ipsa potentia peccandi duo attendantur: scilicet ipsa potentia, quae est principium actus; et haec est eadem quae est principium actus ordinati et inordinati: et haec a Deo est. Consideratur etiam in ea defectus quidam, secundum quem actum deficientem producere possit. (. . .) Sic ergo potentia peccandi, quantum ad id quod potentiae est, a Deo est; sed quantum ad defectum qui implicatur, non est a Deo”.
- ¹¹ [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), ScG III.71: “Ex his autem apparet quod divina providentia, qua res gubernat, non impedit quin corruptio et defectus et malum in rebus inveniatur. Divina enim gubernatio, qua Deus operatur in rebus, non excludit operationem causarum secundarum, sicut iam ostensum est. Contingit autem provenire defectum in effectu propter defectum causae secundae agentis, absque eo quod sit defectus in primo agente: sicut cum in effectu artificis habentis perfecte artem, contingit aliquis defectus propter instrumenti defectum; et sicut hominem cuius vis motiva est fortis, contingit claudicare, non propter defectum virtutis motivae, sed propter tibiae curvitatem. Contingit igitur in his quae aguntur et gubernantur a Deo, aliquem defectum et aliquid malum inveniri, propter defectum agentium secundorum, licet in ipso Deo nullus sit defectus”; *STh* I-II.79.2.c.: “Defectus autem ille est ex causa creata, scilicet libero arbitrio, in quantum deficit ab ordine primi agentis, scilicet Dei. Unde defectus iste non reducitur in Deum sicut in causam, sed in liberum arbitrium, sicut defectus claudicationis reducitur in

tibiam curvam sicut in causam, non autem in virtutem motivam, a qua tamen causatur quidquid est motionis in claudicatione. Et secundum hoc, Deus est causa actus peccati, non tamen est causa peccati, quia non est causa huius, quod actus sit cum defectu”.

12 Another way is to adopt a restricted version of concurrentism: human free will as a cause is an exception to the rule of God’s required co-action. John Duns Scotus seems to have maintained this view at the end of his career. See [Frost \(2009\)](#) and [Wolter \(1994\)](#). Henry of Ghent endorses it more explicitly ([Henricus de Gandavo 1983](#), q. 5, pp. 120–21; [1987](#), q. 26, pp. 155–56).

13 [Leibniz \(2008\)](#), §§ 20 and 30, pp. 377 and 388). See also [Malebranche \(1976, Ier Éclaircissement, p. 21\)](#).

14 There are three different versions of Durand’s *Commentary*, conventionally labelled A, B, and C. The first version was probably written before 1308. Given that in it he was often criticizing Thomas Aquinas, Durand would have been barred by the Dominican order from getting a professorial chair in Paris and had to issue a new version, version B, probably written before 1312, in which he generally waters down his opposition to Aquinas. After he became a bishop in 1317 and was free from the Dominicans’ jurisdiction, he went back to working on his *Commentary*, which led to the third and final version, C, in which he often returns to his earlier positions (on Durand’s career and the history of his *Sentences Commentary*, see [Speer et al. \(2014\)](#), pp. 13–169). Despite the general trend of version B that I have pointed out, I will use here that version, which as far as q. 1 of book II, dist. 37 is concerned, is more complete and makes very clear the link with dist. 1, q. 4 (q. 5 in version C) of book II, where Durand refutes the arguments in favor of the concurrentist theory, as we’ll see below. In fact, in version B Durand has eliminated entirely II.1.4 (probably for the reason just given) but has moved to II.37.1 one of his objections against concurrentism (see [Durandus de Sancto Porciano 2012](#), dist. 1, q. 4, § A12, p. 54, for the passage included in the rewrite of dist. 37; and [Durandus de Sancto Porciano 2013](#), dist. 37, q. 1, § A6, p. 259, § B6, pp. 259–60, for the argument moved from II.4.1, and §§ A8–B8, p. 262, for another reference to II.1.4).

15 [Leibniz \(2008, I, § 27, pp. 118–19\)](#). Olivi’s rationale for his criticism of concurrentism is identical ([Petrus Iohannis Olivi 1926](#), q. 116, pp. 333–47; see [Frost 2014](#)). Same reason for Bernier.

16 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(2013, 37.1, §§ A8–B8, p. 262\)](#).

17 Quoted by [Sleigh \(1996, p. 485\)](#).

18 Quoted by [Sleigh, ibid.](#)

19 In the 1680s Leibniz changed his mind about privation and tried to integrate it into his system as the original limitation of creatures, their constitutive negation, as [Newlands \(2014, pp. 290–92\)](#), shows.

20 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(2013, 37.1, §§ A9–B9, p. 263\)](#). Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III.1).

21 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(2013, 37.1, §§ A8–B8, p. 262\)](#).

22 For more details on Aquinas’ theory, see [Solère \(2022\)](#).

23 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia [=De pot.]* q. 3, a. 7, c.: “Sed quia nulla res per se ipsam movet vel agit nisi sit movens non motum, tertio modo dicitur una res esse causa actionis alterius in quantum movet eam ad agendum; in quo non intelligitur collatio aut conservatio virtutis activae, sed applicatio virtutis ad actionem; sicut homo est causa incisionis cultelli ex hoc ipso quod applicat acumen cultelli ad incidendum movendo ipsum”.

24 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *ScG* II.21.4: “Est ratio instrumenti quod sit movens motum”; *STh* III.63.5.ad2: “Ratio instrumenti consistit in hoc quod ab alio moveatur, non autem in hoc quod ipsum se moveat”; *STh* III.72.3.ad2: “Instrumentum movetur a principali agente ad effectum”.

25 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *STh* I-II.109.1.c.: “Videmus autem in corporalibus quod ad motum non solum requiritur ipsa forma quae est principium motus vel actionis; sed etiam requiritur motio primi moventis. Primum autem movens in ordine corporalium est corpus caeleste. Unde quantumcumque ignis habeat perfectum calorem, non alteraret nisi per motionem caelestis corporis. Manifestum est autem quod, sicut omnes motus corporales reducuntur in motum caelestis corporis sicut in primum movens corporale, ita omnes motus tam corporales quam spirituales reducuntur in primum movens simpliciter, quod est Deus. Et ideo quantumcumque natura aliqua corporalis vel spiritualis ponatur perfecta, non potest in suum actum procedere nisi moveatur a Deo. (...) Unaquaeque autem forma indita rebus creatis a Deo, habet efficaciam respectu alicuius actus determinati, in quem potest secundum suam proprietatem, ultra autem non potest nisi per aliquam formam superadditam, sicut aqua non potest calefacere nisi calefacta ab igne”.

26 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: “Et quia natura inferiora agens non agit nisi mota eo quod huiusmodi corpora inferiora sunt alterantia alterata, caelum autem est alterans non alteratum et tamen non est movens nisi motum, et hoc non cessat quousque perveniatur ad Deum, sequitur de necessitate quod Deus sit causa actionis cuiuslibet rei naturalis ut movens et applicans virtutem ad agendum”.

27 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *ScG* III.67.4: “Quicquid applicat virtutem activam ad agendum, dicitur esse causa illius actionis: artifex enim applicans virtutem rei naturalis ad aliquam actionem, dicitur esse causa illius actionis, sicut coquus decoctionis, quae est per ignem. Sed omnis applicatio virtutis ad operationem est principaliter et primo a Deo. Applicantur enim virtutes operativae ad proprias operationes per aliquem motum vel corporis, vel animae. Primum autem principium utriusque motus est Deus. Est enim primum movens omnino immobile, ut supra ostensum est”.

- 28 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *STh* I.115.5.c.: “(…) si sint multa agentia ordinate, semper secundum agens agit in virtute primi; nam primum agens movet secundum ad agendum. Et secundum hoc, omnia agunt in virtute ipsius Dei; et ita ipse est causa actionum omnium agentium”.
- 29 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Sententia libri Metaphysicae* V.2: “Adjuvans dicitur causa, secundum quod operatur ad principalem effectum. In hoc tamen differt ab agente principali, quia principale agens agit ad finem proprium, adjuvans autem ad finem alienum; sicut, qui adjuvat regem in bello, operatur ad finem regis”.
- 30 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.4.c.: “(…) causa secunda duplicem actionem habere potest: unam ex propria natura, aliam ex virtutis prioris causae”; *STh* III.62.1.ad2: “Dicendum quod instrumentum habet duas actiones: unam instrumentalem secundum quam operatur non in virtute propria sed in virtute principalis agentis; aliam autem habet actionem propriam quae competit ei secundum propriam formam”. Cf. Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* [=De Ver.] 27.4.ad2: “(…) sacramenta novae legis non sunt causa gratiae principalis, quasi per se agentia, sed causa instrumentalis. Et secundum modum aliorum instrumentorum habent duplicem actionem: unam quae excedit formam propriam, sed est ex virtute formae principalis agentis, scilicet Dei: quae est iustificare; et aliam quam exercet secundum formam propriam, sicut abluere vel ungere (…)”.
- 31 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *STh* I.45.5.c.: “Contingit autem quod aliquid participet actionem propriam alicuius alterius, non virtute propria, sed instrumentaliter, in quantum agit in virtute alterius; sicut aer per virtutem ignis habet calefacere et ignire”; *STh* I-II.122.1.ad1: “Instrumentum non agit actionem agentis principalis propria virtute, sed virtute principalis agentis”; *Sent.* IV.1.1.4.ad1: “(…) sacramentum est causa et signum. Est quidem causa instrumentalis; et ideo virtus agentis principalis occulte in ipso operatur, sicut virtus artis vel artificis in serra”; *Sent.* IV.1.1.4.3.c.: “(…) instrumentum praedicto modo virtutem non accipit nisi secundum quod principali agenti continuatur, ut virtus ejus quodammodo in instrumentum transfundatur”.
- 32 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Sent.* IV.1.1.4.1.c.: “(…) sciendum, quod actio instrumenti quandoque pertingit ad ultimam perfectionem, quam principale agens inducit, aliquando autem non. Semper tamen pertingit ad aliquid ultra id quod competit sibi secundum suam naturam, sive illud sit ultima forma, sive dispositio, alias non ageret ut instrumentum”.
- 33 See Aristotle, *De anima* II.4, 416b 28–29. Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Sent.* IV.1.1.4.1.c.: “Instrumento autem competit duplex actio: una quam habet ex propria natura, alia quam habet prout est motum a primo agente; sicut calor ignis, qui est instrumentum virtutis nutritivae, ut dicitur in 2 de anima, ex natura propria habet dissolvere, et consumere, et hujusmodi effectus: sed in quantum est instrumentum animae vegetabilis, generat carnem”; *De Pot.* 3.8.ad13: “(…) forma accidentalis agit in virtute formae substantialis quasi instrumentum eius; sicut etiam in II de anima calor ignis dicitur esse instrumentum virtutis nutritivae; et ideo non est inconveniens, si actio formae accidentalis ad formam substantialem terminetur”.
- 34 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Sent.* IV.1.1.4.1.c.: “(…) omne instrumentum agendo actionem naturalem, quae competit sibi in quantum est res quaedam, pertingit ad effectum qui competit sibi in quantum est instrumentum, sicut dolabrum dividendo suo acumine pertingit instrumentaliter ad formam scamni”; *ScG* II.21.7: “Omne agens instrumentale exequitur actionem principalis agentis per aliquam actionem propriam et connaturalem sibi: sicut calor naturalis generat carnem dissolvendo et digerendo, et serra operatur ad perfectionem scamni secundo”; *STh* I.45.5.c.: “(…) securis, scindendo lignum, quod habet ex proprietate suae formae, producit scamni formam, quae est effectus proprius principalis agentis”; *STh* III.62.1.ad2: “(…) securi competit scindere ratione suae acuitatis, facere autem lectum in quantum est instrumentum artis. Non autem perficit actionem instrumentalem nisi exercendo actionem propriam; scindendo enim facit lectum”.
- 35 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *STh* I.45.5.c.: “causa secunda instrumentalis non participat actionem causae superioris, nisi in quantum per aliquid sibi proprium dispositive operatur ad effectum principalis agentis. Si igitur nihil ibi ageret secundum illud quod est sibi proprium, frustra adhiberetur ad agendum, nec oporteret esse determinata instrumenta determinatarum actionum”.
- 36 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *STh* III.19.1.ad2: “Actio instrumenti, in quantum est instrumentum, non est alia ab actione principalis agentis. Potest tamen habere aliam actionem prout est res aliqua”. Cf. *STh* I-II.14.3.ad4: “Agens principale et instrumentale sunt quasi una causa, cum unum agat per alterum”.
- 37 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *ScG* III.66.3: “Quando aliqua agentia diversa sub uno agente ordinantur, necesse est quod effectus qui ab eis communiter fit, sit eorum secundum quod uniuntur in participando motum et virtutem illius agentis: non enim plura faciunt unum nisi in quantum unum sunt”; *ScG* III.70.5: “Sicut igitur non est inconveniens quod una actio producatur ex aliquo agente et eius virtute, ita non est inconveniens quod producatur idem effectus ab inferiori agente et Deo: ab utroque immediate, licet alio et alio modo”.
- 38 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Sent.* I.17.1.1: “Constat enim quod omne esse a forma aliqua inhaerente est, sicut esse album ab albedine, et esse substantiale a forma substantiali”.
- 39 See Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.7.c: If we consider the subjects that perform the action, the proximate secondary cause is the cause closest to the effect. But if we consider the powers required by the action, the power of the superior cause, present in the particular agent, is more immediately the cause of the effect than the power of the inferior cause, because it gives existence, without which, obviously, the effect would be nothing (i.e., there would be no effect of the secondary cause at all)—more on this below. Cf. *De Ver.* 3.7.c.: “Sed quia nos ponimus Deum immediatam causam uniuscuiusque rei secundum quod in omnibus causis secundis operatur (…);” *ScG* III.70.5: “Oportet ergo quod actio inferioris agentis non solum sit ab eo per virtutem propriam, sed per virtutem omnium superiorum agentium; agit enim in virtute omnium. Et sicut agens infimum

invenitur immediatum activum, ita virtus primi agentis invenitur immediata ad producendum effectum; nam virtus infimi agentis non habet quod producat hunc effectum ex se, sed ex virtute proximi superioris; et virtus illius hoc habet ex virtute superioris; et sic virtus supremi agentis invenitur ex se productiva effectus, quasi causa immediata, sicut patet in principiis demonstrationum, quorum primum est immediatum"; *De pot.* 3.7.c.: "Et cum coniunxerimus his, quod Deus sit sua virtus, et quod sit intra rem quamlibet non sicut pars essentiae, sed sicut tenens rem in esse, sequetur quod ipse in quolibet operante immediate operetur, non exclusa operatione voluntatis et naturae".

40 *Liber de Causis*, an anonymous, Arabic compilation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.

41 See Proclus (1963, prop. 57, p. 54; prop. 60, p. 58; prop. 138, p. 122). Boulnois et al. (1990, cap. I, § 12, p. 40; cap. II, §§ 23–24, p. 42).

42 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.4.c.: "(...) ordo effectuum est secundum ordinem causarum. Primus autem effectus est ipsum esse, quod omnibus aliis effectibus praesupponitur et ipsum non praesupponit aliquem alium effectum; et ideo oportet quod dare esse in quantum huiusmodi sit effectus primae causae solius secundum propriam virtutem (...)". See also ScG III.66.6. For other demonstrations, see (Solère 2022, pp. 306–9).

43 Cf. Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: "Quanto enim aliqua causa est altior, tanto est communior et efficacior, et quanto est efficacior, tanto profundius ingreditur in effectum et de remotiori potentia ipsum reducit in actum".

44 Boulnois et al. (1990), cap. I, §§ 12–13 and 18, p. 40. More exactly, "vehementius causa", "more strongly the cause", says the text (cf. Proclus 1963, prop. 56, p. 54, l. 5 and 21): *aitioterôn, meizonôs aition*), because it "attaches itself more strongly to the thing than the operation of the next cause", or "adheres" in it with a stronger adhesion. Cf. Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), ScG III.67.5: "Causa autem actionis magis est illud cuius virtute agitur quam etiam illud quod agit: sicut principale agens magis quam instrumentum. Deus igitur principalis est causa cuiuslibet actionis quam etiam secundae causae agentes".

45 Boulnois et al. (1990, cap. I, § 6–11, p. 38). Cf. Proclus (1963, prop. 70, p. 66, l. 18–22).

46 Thomas, in his commentary (*Super librum De causis expositio*, lectio 1), points out that Aristotle argues the same thing in *Gen. An.* II.3, 736a 24: the individual is animal before being human.

47 Boulnois et al. (1990), cap. XVII, § 144, p. 66.

48 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), ScG III.67.1: "Omne enim operans est aliquo modo causa essendi, vel secundum esse substantiale, vel accidentale. Nihil autem est causa essendi nisi in quantum agit in virtute Dei, ut ostensum est. Omne igitur operans operatur per virtutem Dei"; *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: "Nec causa secunda potest in effectum causae primae per virtutem propriam, quamvis sit instrumentum causae primae respectu illius effectus. Instrumentum enim est causa quodammodo effectus principalis causae, non per formam vel virtutem propriam, sed in quantum participat aliquid de virtute principalis causae per motum eius".

49 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: "Non ergo sic est intelligendum quod Deus in omni re naturali operetur, quasi res naturalis nihil operetur; sed quia in ipsa natura vel voluntate operante Deus operatur".

50 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.4.c.: "quaecumque alia causa dat esse, hoc habet in quantum est in ea virtus et operatio primae causae, et non per propriam virtutem; sicut et instrumentum efficit actionem instrumentalem non per virtutem propriae naturae, sed per virtutem moventis; sicut calor naturalis per virtutem animae generat carnem vivam, per virtutem autem propriae naturae solummodo calefacit et dissolvit"; *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: "Sic ergo Deus est causa omnis actionis, prout quodlibet agens est instrumentum divinae virtutis operantis".

51 Wippel (2000) had already highlighted this fact.

52 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), ScG III.66.6: "esse est proprius effectus primi agentis, et omnia alia agunt ipsum in quantum agunt in virtute primi agentis"; *De Pot.* 3.1.c.: "inde etiam est quod nulla res dat esse, nisi in quantum est in ea participatio divinae virtutis. Propter quod etiam dicitur in Lib. de causis, quod anima nobilis habet operationem divinam in quantum dat esse".

53 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 5.1.ad5: "Si autem ponamus formas substantiales educi de potentia materiae, secundum sententiam Aristotelis, agentia naturalia non solum erunt causae dispositionum materiae, sed etiam formarum substantialium; quantum ad hoc dumtaxat quod de potentia educuntur in actum, ut dictum est, et per consequens sunt essendi principia quantum ad inchoationem ad esse, et non quantum ad ipsum esse absolute".

54 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: "(...) nihil agit ad speciem in istis inferioribus nisi per virtutem corporis caelestis, nec aliquid agit ad esse nisi per virtutem Dei. (...) unde etiam, ut dicitur in Lib. de causis, *intelligentia non dat esse, nisi prout est in ea virtus divina*". See also ScG III.66.3: "Cum igitur esse sit communis effectus omnium agentium (nam omne agens facit esse actu), oportet quod hunc effectum producant in quantum ordinantur sub primo agente, et agunt in virtute ipsius" (all emphases mine).

55 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: "Sed ulterius invenimus, secundum ordinem causarum, esse ordinem effectuum, quod necesse est propter similitudinem effectus et causae". See above the argument from *De Pot.* 3.4.c.

56 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: "In qualibet autem re naturali invenimus quod est ens et quod est res naturalis, et quod est talis vel talis naturae. Quorum primum est commune omnibus entibus; secundum omnibus rebus naturalibus; tertium in una specie; et quartum, si addamus accidentia, est proprium huic individuo".

57 Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *STh* I.45.5.c.: "Non enim hic homo potest esse causa naturae humanae absolute, quia sic esset causa sui ipsius, sed est causa quod natura humana sit in hoc homine generato. Et sic praesupponit in sua actione determinatam materiam per quam est hic homo".

- 58 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *ScG* II.89.16: “Sic enim homo sibi simile in specie generat, in quantum virtus seminis eius dispositive operatur ad ultimam formam, ex qua homo speciem sortitur”; *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: “Hoc ergo individuum agendo non potest constituere aliud in simili specie nisi prout est instrumentum illius causae, quae respicit totam speciem et ulterius totum esse naturae inferioris. Et propter hoc nihil agit ad speciem in istis inferioribus nisi per virtutem corporis caelestis (...)”; *STh* I.115.3.ad2: “Unde secundum philosophum, in II de Gen., necesse est ponere aliquod principium activum mobile, quod per sui praesentiam et absentiam causet varietatem circa generationem et corruptionem inferiorum corporum. Et huiusmodi sunt corpora caelestia. Et ideo quidquid in istis inferioribus generat, movet ad speciem sicut instrumentum caelestis corporis; secundum quod dicitur in II *Physic.*, quod *homo generat hominem, et sol*”; *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* 16.9.c.: “Cum enim suprema in entibus habeant virtutes maxime universales, passiva infima non sunt proportionata ad recipiendum effectum universalem immediate, sed per medias virtutes magis particulares et contractas; sicut apparet etiam in ipso ordine corporalium rerum. Nam corpora caelestia sunt principia generationis hominum, et aliorum animalium perfectorum, mediante virtute particulari, quae est in seminibus (...)”.
- 59 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: “(...) nihil agit ad speciem in istis inferioribus nisi per virtutem corporis caelestis, nec aliquid agit ad esse nisi per virtutem Dei. Ipsum enim esse est communissimus effectus primus et intimior omnibus aliis effectibus; et ideo soli Deo competit secundum virtutem propriam talis effectus (...)”.
- 60 [Boulnois et al. \(1990\)](#), cap. XVII, § 148, p. 66).
- 61 Cf. [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *De Pot.* 3.1.c.: “Causalitates enim entis absolute reducuntur in primam causam universalem; causalitas vero aliorum quae ad esse superadduntur; vel quibus esse specificatur, pertinet ad causas secundas, quae agunt per informationem, quasi supposito effectu causae universalis: et inde etiam est quod nulla res dat esse, nisi in quantum est in ea participatio divinae virtutis. Propter quod etiam dicitur in *Lib. de causis*, quod anima nobilis habet operationem divinam in quantum dat esse”; *De Pot.* 3.7.c.: “Ipsum enim esse est communissimus effectus primus et intimior omnibus aliis effectibus; et ideo soli Deo competit secundum virtutem propriam talis effectus: unde etiam, ut dicitur in *Lib. de causis*, intelligentia non dat esse, nisi prout est in ea virtus divina. Sic ergo Deus est causa omnis actionis, prout quodlibet agens est instrumentum divinae virtutis operantis”. See also *De Pot.* 7.2.c.
- 62 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *De Pot.* 3.1.c.: “(...) in nulla re naturali includuntur actus et perfectiones omnium eorum quae sunt in actu; sed quaelibet illarum habet actum determinatum ad unum genus et ad unam speciem; et inde est quod nulla earum est activa entis secundum quod est ens, sed eius entis secundum quod est hoc ens, determinatum in hac vel illa specie: nam agens agit sibi simile. Et ideo agens naturale non producit simpliciter ens, sed ens praeeistens et determinatum ad hoc vel ad aliud (...) Et inde est quod in *Lib. de causis*, dicitur, quod esse eius est per creationem, vivere vero, et caetera huiusmodi, per informationem. Causalitates enim entis absolute reducuntur in primam causam universalem; causalitas vero aliorum quae ad esse superadduntur; vel quibus esse specificatur, pertinet ad causas secundas, quae agunt per informationem, quasi supposito effectu causae universalis (...)”.
- 63 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *ScG* III.66.6: “Primum autem in omnibus effectibus est esse: nam omnia alia sunt quaedam determinationes ipsius. Igitur esse est proprius effectus primi agentis, et omnia alia agunt ipsum in quantum agunt in virtute primi agentis. Secunda autem agentia, quae sunt quasi particulantes et determinantes actionem primi agentis, agunt sicut proprios effectus alias perfectiones, quae determinant esse”. See also *ScG* II.21: “Alia vero agentia non sunt causa essendi simpliciter, sed causa essendi hoc, ut hominem vel album”.
- 64 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *De Pot.* 3.4.c.: “Nam actio alicuius, etiamsi sit eius ut instrumenti, oportet ut ab eius potentia egrediatur”.
- 65 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *ScG* III.70.7: “Patet etiam quod non sic idem effectus causae naturali et divinae virtuti attribuitur quasi partim a Deo, et partim a naturali agente fiat, sed totus ab utroque secundum alium modum: sicut idem effectus totus attribuitur instrumento, et principali agenti etiam totus”.
- 66 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571\)](#), [Redactio C] II.1.5, § 5, p. 130 va). For this question, I will use version C of Durand’s *Commentary*. As I said above, Durand altogether omitted this sensitive question in version B (besides moving part of it to distinction 37), and the text of version C is here identical to that of version A (it is an example of how Durand reverted to his first positions when he got free rein). Whereas it was the fourth question of distinction 1 in version A, it is the fifth in version C, because of the insertion of an additional question in the latter.
- 67 [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\)](#), *Sent.* II.1.1.4.c.: “Aliorum vero quae per motum et generationem producuntur, creatura causa esse potest, vel ita quod habeat causalitatem supra totam speciem, sicut sol est causa in generatione hominis vel leonis; vel ita quod habeat causalitatem ad unum individuum speciei tantum, sicut homo generat hominem, et ignis ignem. Horum tamen causa etiam Deus est, magis intime in eis operans quam aliae causae moventes: quia ipse est dans esse rebus. Causae autem aliae sunt quasi determinantes illud esse. Nullius enim rei totum esse ab aliqua creatura principium sumit, cum materia a Deo solum sit; esse autem est magis intimum cuilibet rei quam ea per quae esse determinatur; unde et remanet, illis remotis, ut in libro de causis dicitur. Unde operatio creatoris magis pertingit ad intima rei quam operatio causarum secundarum: et ideo hoc quod creatum est causa alii creaturae, non excludit quin Deus immediate in rebus omnibus operetur, in quantum virtus sua est sicut medium conjungens virtutem cujuslibet causae secundae cum suo effectu (...)”.

- ⁶⁸ Freddoso (1994, pp. 143–47), did not realize that it is Aquinas, and specifically this passage, that Durand discusses, whereas Stufler 1935 had long since highlighted it. As a consequence, if the position stated here is a blunder with respect to true concurrentism, as Freddoso underlines (the proposed solution suggests a “division of labor” between principal and secondary cause, by which “each agent contributes independently as an immediate cause to its own distinctive effect”, i.e., matter and form, whereas true concurrentism maintains that the two actions combine in the production of one and the same effect, the composite form-matter), it is Aquinas’ blunder—which he does not repeat later.
- ⁶⁹ Cf. Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *De pot.* 5.1.c.: “(...) formae generatorum dependent a generantibus naturaliter, quod educuntur de potentia materiae, non autem quantum ad esse absolutum”. It is possible that we find here an echo of Avicenna’s thesis according to which the builder of a house is not the efficient cause of the existence of the house, but only of its construction, as he assembles materials that already have existence.
- ⁷⁰ Aegidius Romanus (2003, lib. II, q. 8, p. 208, l. 15–18).
- ⁷¹ Durandus de Sancto Porciano (1571), lib. II, dist. 1, q. 5, § 6, p. 130 va.
- ⁷² See Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Sent.* II.9.1.4.c.; *De Principiis Naturae*, cap. 1; *De Ente et Essentia*, cap. III; ScG II.68; *STh* I.76.4.c.
- ⁷³ One should however keep in mind that the context of the passage at hand is the creation *ab initio* and *ex nihilo*. That may be why Aquinas is drawn to the idea that creatures cannot produce existence because they need to act on some preexisting matter.
- ⁷⁴ See Aegidius Romanus (1581 [Ordinatio], lib. II, pars I, q. 2, a. 6, p. 31a, B–C): “Intimius enim operatur Deus actionem ignis, quam ipse ignis; et magis conservat Deus ignem in esse et facit magis ad esse ignis, quam ipsa essentia ignis. Hoc enim modo dicitur esse Deus intimior rei quam ipsa res sibi, qui per se et potissime conservat rem in esse. Nam esse extrinsice magis faciunt ad fieri rei, intrinsece autem magis ad esse (. . .). Et quod dictum est de Deo respectu esse rei, verum est de Deo respectu actionis rei; nam ipsam actionem rei magis Deus causat et in esse conservat quam res ipsa agens actionem illam. Nam ad momentum nec res nec sua actio posset subsistere nisi Deus esset in ea”.
- ⁷⁵ Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* II.1, 193b 3–8.
- ⁷⁶ Durandus de Sancto Porciano (1571, II.1.5, § 6, p. 130 va).
- ⁷⁷ See Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Super Evangelium S. Iohannis Lectura*, cap. I, 1ect. 5, § 133: “Sed tamen aliter est de Verbo agente et causante omnia, et aliter de aliis agentibus. Nam alia agentia operantur ut extrinsecus existentia: cum enim non agent nisi movendo et aliterando aliquo modo ea quae sunt extrinseca rei, ut extrinseca operantur. Deus vero operatur in omnibus ut interius agens, quia agit creando. Creare autem est dare esse rei creatae. Cum ergo esse sit intimum cuilibet rei, Deus, qui operando dat esse, operatur in rebus ut intimus agens”; *De Ver.* 8.16.ad12: “(. . .) ipse Deus est propria et immediata causa uniuscuiusque rei, et quodammodo magis intima unicuique quam ipsum sit intimum sibi, ut Augustinus dicit”; *STh* I.105.5.c.: “Et quia forma rei est intra rem, et tanto magis quanto consideratur ut prior et universalior; et ipse Deus est proprie causa ipsius esse universalis in rebus omnibus, quod inter omnia est magis intimum rebus; sequitur quod Deus in omnibus intime operetur. Et propter hoc in sacra Scriptura operationes naturae Deo attribuuntur quasi operanti in natura (. . .)”. Cf. Aegidius Romanus (1581), II.1.2.6, p. 31a: “Intimius enim operatur Deus actionem ignis, quam ipse ignis; et magis conservat Deus ignem in esse et facit magis ad esse ignis, quam ipsa essentia ignis. Hoc enim modo dicitur esse Deus intimior rei quam ipsa res sibi, qui per se et potissime conservat rem in esse. Nam esse extrinsice magis faciunt ad fieri rei, intrinsece autem magis ad esse (. . .). Et quod dictum est de Deo respectu esse rei, verum est de Deo respectu actionis rei; nam ipsam actionem rei magis Deus causat et in esse conservat quam res ipsa agens actionem illam. Nam ad momentum nec res nec sua actio posset subsistere nisi Deus esset in ea”.
- ⁷⁸ Aristotle, *De An.* II.4, 415b13. Cf. Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Sent.* I.8.5.3.ad3: “(. . .) uno modo vivere est ipsum esse viventis, sicut dicit philosophus: *vivere viventibus est esse*; et hoc modo anima immediate facit vivere quamlibet partem corporis, in quantum est ejus forma (. . .)”; *Sent.* IV.49.1.2.3.c.: “(. . .) vita dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo ipsum esse viventis; quia, ut in 2 de anima dicitur, *vivere viventibus est esse*”; *Sententia Libri De Anima* I.14.11: “Unde et vivere dupliciter accipitur. Uno modo accipitur vivere, quod est esse viventis, sicut dicit philosophus, quod vivere est esse viventibus. Alio modo vivere est operatio”.
- ⁷⁹ Thomas de Aquino (2000–2019), *Sent. Lib. De An.*, II.7.11: “(. . .) anima viventibus est causa essendi; per animam enim vivunt, et ipsum vivere est esse eorum (. . .)”.
- ⁸⁰ Durandus de Sancto Porciano (1571, II.1.5, § 6, p. 130 va).
- ⁸¹ Durandus de Sancto Porciano (1571, II.1.5, § 6, p. 130 va–vb).
- ⁸² Durand discusses Giles’ *Reportatio* (written perhaps before 1271), which is the only version he could have known when he first wrote his own *Commentary*, before 1308 (version A, but recall that this *quaestio* is omitted in version B, and that its content is identical in version C). Giles worked on the *ordinatio* of his *Commentary* on book II of the *Sentences* only after 1309. The relevant passage there (II.2.6, p. 29b–33a) is longer than in the *Reportatio* because Giles preliminarily discusses more alternative views, but the gist of his answer (pp. 31b, B–32a, C) is the same as in the *Reportatio*. See also Aegidius Romanus (1503) (ca. 1286–87), q. 4 and 5.
- ⁸³ Giles specifies in the *Ordinatio* that of course, if he wanted to, God could make anything “completely”, in every respect, i.e., including the particular kind of being it is, without the intervention of any secondary agent: “(. . .) posset sine igne calefacere; quod faciendo, calefactionem ipsam faceret immediate totam, ut est ens et ut est tale ens; propter quod faceret eam immediate totam, et immediate totaliter” (Aegidius Romanus 1581, 1.2.6, p. 32a, B).

- 84 See [Aegidius Romanus \(1581, 1.2.6, p. 31b, B–C\)](#): “Sic ergo imaginabimur de actione Dei et secundorum agentium in his quae producit Deus secundum naturae cursum mediantibus eis, sicut imaginatur Dionysius, 4 *De Divinis Nominibus*, quod sicut sol non ratiocinans aut praeeligens, omnia illuminat valentia participare lumen secundum propriam rationem, sic bonum, quod est super solem, omnibus existentibus proportionabiliter immittit totius bonitatis radios. Prima ergo causa, non ratiocinans aut praeeligens, uniformiter se habet ad omnia. Existit enim in omnibus rebus secundum dispositionem unam, ut dicitur in 24. propositione de causis. Quantum ergo ad hunc modum agendi, omnia agit uno modo, sed non omnia recipiunt actionem Dei eodem modo”. [Aegidius Romanus \(1503, q. 4, p. 9 rb\)](#): “Deus uniformiter operetur omnia, sed si est diversitas in rebus, hoc est propter secunda agentia mediantibus quibus operatur Deus. Ipsam enim infrigidationem operatur Deus et etiam ipsam calefactionem, et secundum hunc modum agendi quem videmus Deus uniformiter operatur hanc et illam. Sed quod differat hec ab illa, ut quod differat calefactio ab infrigidatione, hoc est propter secunda agentia, ut quia calefactionem operatur mediante igne, infrigidationem vero mediante aqua”.
- 85 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 7, p. 130 vb\)](#). Cf. [Aegidius Romanus \(2003, II.8, p. 208, l. 19–35\)](#), and [Aegidius Romanus \(1581, 1.2.6, p. 32a, A\)](#): “Omnes ergo effectus, de quibus loquimur, sunt immediate a Deo, ut sunt entia et ut habent esse, et sunt immediate a secundis agentibus ut sunt tale ens et ut habent tale esse”. The same goes not only for the effects but also the actions of the creatures (*ibid.*, A–B: “calefactio ergo, quae est actio ignis, tota est immediate a Deo ut est ens (. . .) et tota est immediate ab igne ut est tale ens et ut differt ab alia actione, quia, ut dictum est, ipsa secunda agentia, recipiendo diversimode influentiam Dei, faciunt diversitatem in huiusmodi actionibus”).
- 86 [Aegidius Romanus \(1503, q. 5, p. 10 rb\)](#): “Concedimus enim eandem rem esse causatam a Deo et a natura, sed non eodem modo. Ut si Deus mediante igne causat ignem, ignis causatus ut est ignis est ab igne, ut est ens est a Deo. Ignis ergo causat ignem et ens, et Deus causat ens et ignem; sed ignis causat ens quia causat ignem, Deus autem e converso causat ignem quia causat ens”.
- 87 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 8, p. 130 vb\)](#).
- 88 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 10, p. 130 vb\)](#).
- 89 *Phys.* II.3, 195b 25–27.
- 90 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 8, p. 130 vb\)](#). The editor of Durand’s version A refers to James of Metz ([Durandus de Sancto Porciano 2012, II.1.4, 52, n. 106](#)).
- 91 Cf. [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\), STh I.45.5.c.](#): “Oportet enim universaliores effectus in universaliores et priores causas reducere. Inter omnes autem effectus, universalissimum est ipsum esse. Unde oportet quod sit proprius effectus primae et universalissimae causae, quae est Deus”.
- 92 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 10, p. 130 vb\)](#). The examples of concurrence between really distinct causes that [Freddoso \(1994, pp. 148–49\)](#), opposes to Durand are irrelevant, since they all involve particular causes, whereas what Durand is questioning is that there is a real distinction between universal cause and particular cause. For him, the former is merely the latter taken at a certain degree of generality.
- 93 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 11, p. 130 vb\)](#).
- 94 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 11, p. 131 ra\)](#).
- 95 Contrary to [Tuttle \(2022, p. 89\)](#), I do not find it particularly difficult to interpret Durand’s present argument, provided that it is read in continuity with the earlier refutations of Thomas and Giles.
- 96 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 12, p. 131 ra\)](#).
- 97 Cf. [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\), De Pot. 3.7.c.](#): “[S]i consideremus supposita agentia, quodlibet agens particulare est immediatum ad suum effectum. Si autem consideremus virtutem qua fit actio, sic virtus superioris causae erit immediatior effectui quam virtus inferioris; nam virtus inferior non coniungitur effectui nisi per virtutem superioris (. . .)”.
- 98 Thus, the similar case that [Freddoso \(1994, p. 149\)](#), tries to oppose to Durand, has in fact been described and taken into account by the latter.
- 99 Cf. [Thomas de Aquino \(2000–2019\), ScG III.70.5](#): “Quibusdam autem difficile videtur ad intelligendum quod effectus naturales et Deo attribuantur et naturali agenti. Nam una actio a duobus agentibus non videtur progredi posse. (. . .) Haec autem difficultatem non afferunt si praemissa considerentur. In quolibet enim agente est duo considerare, scilicet rem ipsam quae agit, et virtutem qua agit: sicut ignis calefacit per calorem. Virtus autem inferioris agentis dependet a virtute superioris agentis, in quantum superius agens dat virtutem ipsam inferiori agenti per quam agit; vel conservat eam; aut etiam applicat eam ad agendum, sicut artifex applicat instrumentum ad proprium effectum; cui tamen non dat formam per quam agit instrumentum, nec conservat, sed dat ei solum motum”.
- 100 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 13, p. 131 ra\)](#).
- 101 [Durandus de Sancto Porciano \(1571, II.1.5, § 14, p. 131 ra\)](#).
- 102 Again, if he wanted to, God could directly cause what the secondary cause produces, but in that case, it would be without the help of the secondary cause.
- 103 John Duns Scotus seems to have maintained this view at the end of his career. See [Frost \(2009\)](#) and [Wolter \(1994\)](#). Henry of Ghent endorses it more explicitly ([Henricus de Gandavo 1983, q. 5, pp. 120–21](#), and [Henricus de Gandavo 1987, q. 26, pp. 155–56](#)).
- 104 See [Newlands \(2014, pp. 290–92\)](#). Cf. above, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Leibniz (2008, § 30, pp. 119–21).

¹⁰⁶ As Newlands concludes. See these objections above, p. 3, and Newland’s conclusion about Leibniz’s later doctrine (Newlands 2014, pp. 303–5; see also Newlands 2019).

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