


Article

A Thomistic Account of Human Free Will and Divine Providence: Pedro de Ledesma and the *De Auxiliis* Controversy

David Torrijos-Castrillejo 

Facultad de Filosofía, Universidad San Dámaso, 28005 Madrid, Spain; dtorrijos@sandamaso.es

Abstract: Pedro de Ledesma is one of the Dominican theologians of the School of Salamanca involved in the *De Auxiliis* controversy, i.e., the disputes around a famous book by Luis de Molina on the relation between divine foreknowledge and providence and our free will. Studying an unpublished manuscript by Ledesma and his 1611 book on this subject, the article shows that he opposed Molina with a Thomistic position that we call deflationary. According to this interpretation, God, in moving the created will to do good actions, does not bring about an entity distinct from volition itself. Contrary to other Thomists, he does not think that the immediate effect of the divine motion of the will is an intermediary entity used by God to produce, with the will, the created free act. Ledesma defends his thesis by using some elements of Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, in particular, a minimalist interpretation of the relation between action and passion already present in Domingo de Soto and the specific causality of immanent acts.

Keywords: divine foreknowledge; divine providence; free will; determinism; Molinism; Spanish Inquisition; School of Salamanca; Domingo Báñez; Francisco Suárez



Citation: Torrijos-Castrillejo, David. 2022. A Thomistic Account of Human Free Will and Divine Providence: Pedro de Ledesma and the *De Auxiliis* Controversy. *Religions* 13: 375. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040375>

Academic Editor: David Peter Lawrence

Received: 17 March 2022

Accepted: 15 April 2022

Published: 18 April 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The question of free will and determinism is widely spread in the scientific debate and in its popularization. Alex Garland's recently broadcast television series *Devs* (2020) touches on this issue in an artistic way. In this science fiction series, a Silicon Valley company (Amaya) builds a quantum computer capable of reproducing the entire world in all its details under a deterministic hypothesis. In this way, the computer would be able to reconstruct virtually any moment in the past and any moment in the future.

Although *Devs* is a science fiction story, it involves not only contemporary cosmology but also theology. Many facts reveal that the atmosphere in which it unfolds is religious: the first chapter opens with Gregorian music; one of the episodes of the past that the computer is trying to reconstruct is the death of Jesus on the cross; the heads of several characters are haloed from time to time with a luminous (electric) nimbus; among these characters is the leader of the project, CEO Forest (Nick Offerman), characterised with a beard that reminds us of a biblical patriarch or prophet. But the most obvious revelation of the religious pretensions of the series' thinking comes at the end of the first season. Then we are told what is hidden behind the title of the project, *DEVs*, a term that, read in Latin, means God. Is the quantum computer a new divinity? Art is more suggestive for its capacity to stimulate questions than for the answers that it may provide. In any case, it is not my aim to offer here a hermeneutics of the series.

De Assis (2022) has emphasized that the deterministic conception defended in the series fits with the ideas of Laplace (1749–1827). Nevertheless, Laplace's cosmological conception has been found controversial by recent scientists. According to Laplace, the events of the universe are so connected in a deterministic combination that, looking at any moment in the universe, we could perfectly reconstruct the past and accurately predict the future. "Physics states, however, that even if we can describe natural phenomena using deterministic equations, we still cannot use them to predict the future or recover the past"

(De Assis 2022, p. 131). For instance, the well-known contemporary scientist Stephen Hawking, although engaging Laplace's determinism (Hawking and Mlodinow 2010, p. 30), recognizes "our inability to do the calculations that would enable us to predict" the actions of a so complex entity such as a human being (ibid., p. 178).

Although empirical science often encourages us to be humble about the scope of our cognitive claims, this does not prevent philosophers—as this same series suggests—from hypothesizing an exhaustive knowledge of all events: it suffices to attribute such foreknowledge to divine mind. However, this way of understanding divine knowledge of future events still would be linked to a deterministic idea of physical reality and even of free will, as Garland's series does not forget to insist.

My purpose in these pages is to offer a brief presentation of the conception of divine intervention in free will proposed by a Thomistic philosopher, Pedro de Ledesma, who defends divine foreknowledge but argues against a deterministic approach such as the one posited by Devs. Ledesma was involved in the famous controversy around Luis de Molina's book (de Molina 1588) on divine foreknowledge, titled *Concordia*. Hasker's (1994, p. 146) account of Molinism depicts it in a very deterministic way by using a computational metaphor. Similarly, Devs' computer could also be seen as a secularized Molinist God. As I have suggested in a previous article published in this journal (Torrijos-Castrillejo 2021a), the Molinist account of free will is, at its bottom, deterministic, while the Thomists who confronted Molina, although they also admit a divine foreknowledge of all future events in every detail, cannot be qualified as such. Ledesma arouses my interest because he held a personal view of the metaphysics of divine action on free will (Torrijos-Castrillejo 2020, p. 437 n. 19). In these pages I will focus on presenting his point of view in this regard, also considering some unpublished manuscripts. As we will see, his approach could be described as "deflationary," because Ledesma's ontology of divine motion includes less metaphysical items than other theories.

2. Who Is Pedro de Ledesma?

Pedro de Ledesma (1544–1616) has been recognised by different scholars as one of the greatest representatives of Spanish metaphysics (Orrego Sánchez 2001). This fame is due above all to his famous treatise known as *De esse Dei* (de Ledesma 1596), accompanied by an appendix on the ontology of finite being. This book might be counted among the first systematic works on metaphysics that flourished at that time (Gallego Salvadores 1973; Orrego Sánchez 2004, pp. 107–11). Indeed, his work is contemporary with the well-known *Disputationes metaphysicae* by Francisco Suárez.

Ledesma was a member of the Order of Preachers, in whose convent in Salamanca he was educated (Barrientos García 1984). During the preceding decades that convent, named San Esteban, had seen the birth and development of the School of Salamanca, "the summit of Spanish Renaissance humanism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries" (Roaro 2014, p. 190). He taught theology in Segovia and Ávila, but the peak of his career began in 1596 when he started teaching at the University of Salamanca, where he came to occupy one of the most important chairs. From a historical point of view, he was closely linked to the famous theologian Domingo Báñez, for whom he occasionally substituted in his chair (Barrientos García 2018, pp. 725–27). As is well known, Báñez is considered Molina's greatest theoretical adversary. Those who have studied Ledesma's metaphysical character have also noticed in him a scientific proximity to Báñez, who has also been extensively studied in this respect (Kennedy 1968; Orrego Sánchez 2001). Ledesma often quotes Báñez and designates him as "Padre maestro" (Hernández Martín 1991, p. 649).

Ledesma contributed in the first person to the polemic against the Jesuit Luis de Molina, a debate known as the *De Auxiliis* controversy, i.e., about "divine assistance." We know that Ledesma is one of the Dominicans asked by his superiors to write a treatise giving his opinion on Molina's book (Beltrán de Heredia 1968, p. 93). Those treatises were collected in the *Apologia* that the Spanish members of the Order of Preachers composed in 1595 as a common defense against their opponents' attacks. In 1594 he was one of the

theologians who signed a report for the Inquisition in which three propositions of Molina's *Concordia* were contested (Báñez 2021, p. 226). In addition to this, Stöhr (1980, pp. 6 and 14) informs us of several unpublished manuscripts by Ledesma in which he dealt with the questions of divine providence, foreknowledge and human free will: "Tractatus de gratia seu auxilio praeveniente seu sufficienti et efficaci" (de Ledesma 1594), "De gratia et libero arbitrio" (Archivo de la Catedral de Palencia) and his commentaries to the *Summa Theologiae's Prima Pars* by Aquinas (Archivo de la Catedral de Palencia); his commentaries to q. 19 (on divine will) and q. 23 (on predestination) are very relevant to the debates related to the dispute around Molina's book. However, Ledesma's most significant book on the controversy is a volume devoted entirely to the subject of divine foreknowledge, providence, predestination, grace and free will (de Ledesma 1611).

We have mentioned that Ledesma is of special interest as a representative of a deflationary metaphysics of divine motion, but to understand his contribution in its proper measure we must first recall the terms of this debate. When we speak of divine motion, we are referring to a thesis proper to Aquinas that both Molina's supporters and his detractors admitted in principle. For example, Suárez, who would agree with Molina on the substance of the controversy, polemicalizes with Durandus because he explains the existence of the cosmos and the changes within it only by means of divine creation and conservation (Freddoso 1991). For Christian theologians, God is the one who has created the being of things *ex nihilo* and, therefore, is expected to continue to act in them to preserve their being throughout time. This second action is named conservation. Suárez believes that conservation assures the continuation of things' existence but, in accordance with Aquinas, he thinks that created substances only act insofar as they are moved by God.

The controversy between Molina's defenders and his detractors lies in the fact that, to explain the decisions of free will, Molinists believe that the divine motion is general, so that it is free will which decides how to use that motion or divine aid (*auxilium*). According to them, with the same divine aid, one person could do a good deed, and another one could commit a sin. Suárez and other Molinist theologians insist that is not exact to say that both receive "the same aid" because, although two men can receive the same divine motion from an ontological point of view, from the moral point of view God knows that, in those circumstances, one of them is going to make good use of divine motion and the other is not (Hellín 1981, pp. 88–89). In this way, in accordance with tradition, God is still the one who decides the outcome of human events and works providentially. This way of looking at the matter presupposes that the very nature of things possesses an intrinsic determination to orient itself in a particular way (Hasker 1994; Leftow 2021; Torrijos-Castrillejo 2021a; Torrijos-Castrillejo 2022, pp. 17–21). Molinism only has the advantage that God does not intervene in an ontologically decisive way in the orientation of free will, but the Molinist account of free will is deterministic.

In contrast to the Molinist theory, the detractors of the *Concordia* considered themselves simply Thomists. They thought that the divine motion for every good act of the created will must be specific, so that the difference between the one who does good and the one who does not lies in a peculiar aid that God would give to the person who does good. They thought that the right use of divine aid is also due to a peculiar divine aid (Báñez 2021, pp. 133–34 and 292, §12), following the statements by the Synod of Orange (Denzinger and Hünermann 2009, p. 218, §374).

Among the Thomists, one can distinguish an inflationary and a deflationary position. The inflationary interpretation of divine motion is probably the most widespread. For example, we owe perhaps the most thorough exposition of these questions in the 20th century to Norberto del Prado. He writes:

"The physical motion is, first, something intermediate between the power of the free will and its operation, which is choice or consent; second, it is an act of the free will in so far as it is mutable; third, it is something active, which possesses the character of a formal cause in relation to the power of free will, but possesses the character of an agent power or efficient cause in relation to the operation of

free will; fourthly, it is a certain inchoation of the free operation in the power of the free will which is moved by God, as in something which is becoming white there already begins to be some whiteness.” [Del Prado \(1907, vol. 2, pp. 197–98\)](#)

As we can see, for this inflationary interpretation, divine motion in created free will, usually called “physical premotion,” consists of an “entity” that elevates the created faculty and predisposes it for action. It is an intermediate element between the created power and the action brought about by it with God’s aid, so that divine aid is a distinct entity placed in that faculty and prior to the action itself (although it is not prior in time it is reality distinct from the action itself and from the created power). This interpretation of physical premotion goes back to the origins of the controversy surrounding Molina’s book and has had great success. In our days, having been taken up by [Garrigou Lagrange \(1936, col. 39–40\)](#), it remains the standard account of divine premotion among Thomists. See for example most of the papers collected by [Long et al. \(2016\)](#), or the works by [Oderberg \(2016\)](#) or [O’Neill \(2019\)](#).

In contrast to this inflationary interpretation of premotion, we can speak of a deflationary interpretation which dispenses with this intermediate entitative addition between the created faculty and its act. This is less well known, but could have been the position of [Báñez \(Torrijos-Castrillejo 2020\)](#). It is undoubtedly [Ledesma’s](#) position, as we shall see below. According to this interpretation, it would not be necessary to add any intermediate entity between the faculty and its act, but one could still say that the good action is caused both by God and by the created faculty. It does not mean that God’s action affects exclusively the created act without affecting the created faculty: this would be Molina’s position ([Báñez 2021, pp. 384–87](#)). As Thomists, the supporters of the deflationary interpretation of premotion believe that God affects the faculty and moves it to perform the good deed according to the plan of His providence. The faculty behaves as an instrumental cause which, although set in motion by God, possesses its intrinsic capacity to act, and produces the good act, but does so insofar as it is moved by God. The result is that the good action is produced both by God and by created free will. But it would not be necessary to admit any intermediate entitative element in the faculty prior to the volition itself produced by it and by God.

3. Pedro de Ledesma’s Deflationary Interpretation of Physical Premotion

Although his main contributions are to be found in his treatise on the questions related to *De Auxiliis*’ problems ([de Ledesma 1611](#)), it is worth considering first a manuscript that he must have composed at the beginning of the controversy and is conserved in the Archive of the University of Pavia ([de Ledesma 1594](#)). As I mentioned, we have news of it thanks to the book by [Stöhr \(1980, p. 6\)](#). Although this scholar devotes a few pages to Ledesma in his foreword the same way he does with the other authors whose treatises he transcribes, Ledesma’s treatise nevertheless remains unpublished. I hope to print my transcription shortly, but, in the meantime, I would like to advance here some of its contents.

Let us explain why I think that Ledesma’s manuscript should be dated in 1594. As I said before, Ledesma was one of the theologians commissioned to compose an opinion on Molina’s *Concordia* after September 1594, during a phase prior to the writing of the Dominicans’ *Apologia* submitted to the Inquisition in 1595. [Beltrán de Heredia \(1968, p. 94\)](#) believed that we did not have any of these opinions, except perhaps the *Tractatus* composed by [Báñez](#), although we know it in its definitive version dating from 1600. It seems to me that Pedro de Herrera’s treatise could be one of those published by [Stöhr \(Torrijos-Castrillejo 2021b, p. 82, n. 193\)](#). [Beltrán de Heredia \(1968, p. 94, n. 97\)](#) explains that, at the very least, authors like [Álvarez](#) or Ledesma composed books in which their opinions were printed. However, I have recently found in the General Archive of the Order of Preachers (Rome) the opinions by Juan [De la Fuente \(1594\)](#) and [Álvarez \(1594\)](#). I believe that this discovery is of great interest to our knowledge of the first stage of the history of the *De Auxiliis* disputes. Likewise, I believe that Ledesma’s treatise composed in 1594 could be the writing preserved in Pavia. If it is not the same treatise written at the request of the superiors, it certainly

belongs to the same period. According to the manuscript, Ledesma was then “*Presentado* and lecturer on Theology at the Dominican school of Ávila” (de Ledesma 1594, f. 141r). We know that Ledesma was “*Presentado*” (i.e., an aspirant to the title of “*Maestro*” within his Province of the Order of Preachers) since 1591 (Hernández Martín 2017, vol. 2, p. 544). In addition to this, he taught theology in Ávila between 1582 and 1596 (Barrientos García 1984). Bearing in mind that the most dramatic period of the polemic began in 1594, it does not seem unreasonable to date the manuscript to that year, although it could also have been written in 1595 or 1596.

In this early treatise there is already a deflationary interpretation of physical premotion. As we are told there, when God determines the created will to act according to the plan of His providence, His motion is not an entity added to the will but is “*embedded*” (*imbibito*) in the very act that the will performs:

“That this predetermining efficacious aid, despite being prior to the operation, is in the order of the second act and not in the order of the power that provides a sufficiency is something that becomes evident for this reason: because the determination of the will is in the order of the second act, it is like a beginning and a principle of the second act; what is more, the predetermination of the will is not distinguished from the second act and thus the efficacious aid that predetermines the will also belongs to the second act: moreover, the predetermining aid is in no way distinguishable from the aid intrinsically coadjutant and embedded in the actual operation.” de Ledesma (1594, f. 178v)

As we can read, “*divine motion is not distinguished [as an entity distinct from another entity] from the second act,*” that is, from the act of the will (here, the will ready to act is the “*first act*” and the “*second act*” is the volition itself). The aid is immersed in the act itself, which is carried out by the will, which in turn behaves as a second cause with respect to the first cause of the act, the divine will.

This early formulation of his thesis will be developed more carefully in his book. There, de Ledesma (1611, pp. 148–50) teaches us that the divine motion is real in the will. Above all, he expressly states that the divine determination of the will “*is not produced by a certain really distinct act as one thing is distinct from another (res a res)*” (de Ledesma 1611, p. 150A). Ledesma believes that the most probable thesis is that the act produced by divine premotion coincides with the same act originated by the creature. God and the created will are convergent causes of a single act, the volition of the created will. Unlike Molina, the created will is subordinate to the divine action in its causation, but the divine cause does not produce a specific act distinct from the act produced by the created cause: that would be the premotion understood as an entity distinct from the created faculty and its act, as conceived by the supporters of the inflationary view. One and the same act can be contemplated either as an effect of the divine will or as an effect of the human will.

Ledesma (*ibid.*) considers that the created free act prompted by divine aid is “*one secundum rem*” but, at the same time, twofold according to a distinction “*in notion,*” which he names a formal distinction (*distinctum ratione, et formaliter*). To explain this, he gives examples of other psychic causalities, in which there is a similar simplicity to the immanent acts of the will. The first example is that of the reflexivity of the will itself. The will is the capacity to incline towards something, but we can also will to have an inclination, i.e., we can “*want to want.*” In such circumstances, the will is reflexive and becomes the cause of its own activity. As Aquinas explains (*S.Th.*, I-II, q. 16, a. 4, ad 3), in that case, there are not two acts, one to want and the other to want to want, but in the same act the will inclines itself and also inclines the whole man towards a given object. Thus, according to de Ledesma (1611, p. 150A), it does not take one act to will “*the riches*” and another act to decide “*to will the riches.*” However, Ledesma uses the Scotist expression of “*formal distinction*” to affirm that, in this case, the act by which the will inclines towards riches and the act by which it determines itself towards a concrete act (here, to will the riches) are formally distinct. I believe that this formal distinction can be understood in a Thomistic framework as a *distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re*.

The second example proposed by Ledesma is the formation of the mental word (*verbum*). Aquinas explains that our mind, when it understands, produces a word, by which it “says” to itself what it has grasped of the thing known (*De potentia*, q. 8, a. 1, co.). Ledesma states that, “in us, the production of the mental word or ‘diction’ is the same action as intellection; nevertheless, they are distinguished formally or in their notion (*formaliter seu ratione*). Diction is, moreover, prior to intellection, at least in its notion” ([de Ledesma 1611](#), p. 150B). Again, the formation of the inner word and the intellection itself are two acts insofar two distinct causalities intervene (two causal aspects of the intellectual power), but both causalities bring about one and the same entity. Thus, the word and the intellection are not two distinct entities. The intellection can be regarded from a certain point of view as a mental word, however the mental word is nothing but intellection itself. Likewise, we can see the act of the creature both as a human effect and as a divine effect because it is produced by human causality as well as by divine causality. Nevertheless, in the end it is one and the same act. This same example of the inner word and intellection had already been used by Ledesma in Pavia’s manuscript:

“As the philosophers say, the intellect, thanks to the *intelligible species* united in the notion of *intelligible species*, is in the ultimate disposition and actuality to understand. Therefore, it is a sufficient principle for understanding, for a principle which is in its ultimate actuality and disposition to act is called a sufficient one. However, the actual operation of the intellect necessarily requires the mental word, which is in a certain sense prior to actual intellection in the notion of intellection, for it is like a certain means by which the intellect understands, is in the order of the act and is reduced to the second act. Thus, although the potency, activated by the *intelligible species*, is a sufficient principle of intellection, the mental word is necessary since it is in the order of the second act.” [de Ledesma \(1594, f. 179r\)](#)

Divine motion in the free will behaves like mental word in intellection, i.e., it is something that is decisively involved in free action, just as the verb is a prerequisite for understanding. Despite its causal priority, it does not constitute an act numerically distinct from the action of understanding itself but is simultaneous with it. It constitutes a single act with it, just as divine motion, in so far as it is a created effect, constitutes a single act with human action.

4. Aristotelian-Thomistic Metaphysics and Ledesma’s Notion of Premotion

Ledesma defends his thesis by appealing to the principle of economy known among us as Ockham’s razor: if something can be explained with few principles, it is not necessary to use many ([de Ledesma 1611](#), p. 150C). According to our theologian, volition itself is sufficient to explain both the determination of the will and the inclination towards its object. The same is valid for divine premotion. Those who defend an inflationary interpretation of divine motion may think that it is necessary to introduce the physical premotion as an intermediate entity between the will and its act, because in this way we would have two entities as effects corresponding to two distinct causalities: divine action and human action. Just as both causes are distinct, there must be two distinct effects: the physical premotion and the act of will (although the second depends on the first, against the Molinist account). On the other hand, [de Ledesma \(1611, p. 151A\)](#) reveals himself to be well acquainted with Aristotle and invokes him to his aid: “Motion is in what is moved” (*Phys.*, III.3, 202a13–14). The movement caused by the agent is not in the agent itself but in the thing moved. In this case, the thing moved is the will, but it is not moved by divine action in a way that is independent of its capacity to move: this is precisely what the Thomists intend to explain, that the movement produced by created will requires a divine activation of the causal capacity of the will. However, this activation is no other entity but the motion of the will itself. The will’s motion produces a movement in the self-moving will. Consequently, the movement produced by God is the faculty moving, that is, it is the will itself in act, not something prior to that volition.

Ledesma finds in the difference between action and passion a formal and not a real distinction, that is, a *distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re*, because action and passion are really one and the same thing, but they are distinguished because the act in which they consist can be seen both as action with respect to the agent and passion with respect to the patient. For example, when fire heats water, the heat acquired by the water is passion with respect to the water and action with respect to the fire, but it is one and the same entity, namely, the quality called heat. The great member of the School of Salamanca, Domingo de Soto, who had occupied himself at length with the study of Aristotle's *Physics*, did not forget to treat this subject carefully. Ledesma, another member of the same current who belonged to the so-called "Second School of Salamanca" (Belda Plans 2000, pp. 811–12), could not ignore this page:

"[. . .] Aristotle [. . .] concludes that action and passion are one and the same movement, however, they differ formally, i.e., action is identically the same thing as passion, for instance one and the same movement, but formally this statement would be false: 'action is passion.' [. . .] For example, when fire heats water, the same heat that is successively received in the water is the passion by which the water suffers and is also the action by which the fire acts. Now, since one notion is action (for it means that which proceeds from the agent) and another notion is passion (for it means that which affects the water), then this statement is false: 'action is passion.' Indeed, they are two diverse notions in the first degree since they belong to two different predicaments and therefore differ in their genus." de Soto (1582, p. 175A–B)

As we see, we find here a deflationary interpretation of the distinction between action and passion similar to the thesis recently defended by Frost (2018) speaking of the philosophy of Aquinas. This ontological minimalism for causation justifies the minimalism of Ledesma's explanation of physical premotion.

Applying this ontology to God's action in our will, the divine motion of the will (the physical premotion) and the movement itself (volition) can consist of a single act. That does not prevent the distinction between three aspects within it: God as first mover, the created will as moved mover and the voluntary act as effect of both God and the creature. In any case, there would be no created effect due exclusively to divine premotion without the active concurrence of the created faculty.

However, the aforementioned thesis from Aristotle's *Physics* is not sufficient to explain the motion of the will, since his consideration simply concerns causation as such. Although the action of the agent is in the patient, if we deal with merely physical actions we will easily find, when the subordinate cause works by the action of a principal cause, that its effect is numerically distinct from the effect of the principal cause. Let us return to the example of fire and water. If I want to use water to heat an egg, it is true that the main cause of the heating of the egg will be the fire, however the fire will not directly cause heat on the egg, but its direct effect will be heating the water. The heat of the water is, in turn, the indispensable element that the liquid must possess to be causal with respect to the egg. Now, even if the heat of the water is due to the fire, the effect of the heat of the water would be the heat in the egg, so that we would have two effects: the heat of the water, an effect only produced by the fire, and the heat of the egg, an effect produced by both the (hot) water as proximate cause and the fire as first cause. Similarly, one might think that the will must receive a perfection analogous to the water's heat to become itself a subordinate cause: by virtue of that perfection, the will could act just as water acts insofar as it possesses the heat received from the fire.

For this reason, a remarkable feature of Ledesma's description in the metaphysics of premotion should be noted: he emphasizes that the act of the will cannot be conceived of as a physical, material causation, but possesses the perfection proper to spiritual acts, so that it is not necessary to speak of an intermediate entity between the faculty and its act:

“Since the immanent operation remains within the will itself, this operation can be perfectly identified with the predetermination of the will. However, the transient operation does not remain in the second cause but is in the patient (according to the most probable sentence) and therefore cannot be identified with the premotion of the second cause.” de Ledesma (1611, p. 151B–C)

Unlike the heated water that transfers its heat to the fire, when we consider the will as causal (in this context), we are talking about an act produced within the will itself. It is not a mere physical and material motion, although we have spoken here continuously of the “motion” of the will to refer to the voluntary act itself. We cannot forget that this act can only be called motion in a translational sense: properly speaking, it is an “operation,” that is, it is an immanent act and is perfect, as Aquinas explains (*S.Th.*, I-II, q. 74, a. 1, co.). That the acts of the will are “perfect” means that their perfection is attained from the very beginning of the action of the will’s power. When the will begins to act, then there is already a true will. If you compare such a causality with the transient causality, the perfection of the activity is attained only at the end: for example, if you build a house, a true house emerges only at the end of a long process. For this very reason, as soon as the will is moved, it is already in act, that is, it is already willing. The will cannot be moved to an act prior to the will itself. If we are speaking of divine motion of the will, we expect its effect to be a volition, not a habit or a potency (which are the other two species of quality). As soon as the will is moved by God, there is already a volition, since there are no transitory acts, imperfect acts (“movements” in the strict sense), in immanent actions, according to the teaching of Aquinas (*S.Th.*, I-II, q. 113, a. 7, ad 4).

5. Conclusions

We have presented the teaching of Pedro de Ledesma in the context of the *De Auxiliis* controversies as an example of the deflationary interpretation of physical premotion. This eminent disciple of Domingo Báñez is also one of the professors who played a leading role in the opposition to Molina during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. To do so, we have considered an unpublished manuscript as well as his book on this question, showing that Ledesma’s metaphysics fits well within the ontology taught by Thomas Aquinas himself. While it is true that the Thomists argued that God is Master of History, their view is not deterministic because they do not understand nature to behave in such a way that, knowing the state of affairs of the entire universe at a given moment in time, future events could be foreseen, if not by us, at least by God. For Thomists, there is nothing in the nature of things (including human beings) that can make it possible to foresee the future with complete accuracy. Divine causality is not part of the “state of affairs” of creation either but is situated on a plane external to the web of created causalities. Through it, God guides events in a way that is incomprehensible to us, because He does so without infringing upon our freedom of choice in any way, indeed, He aids our free will to be free.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: I would like to acknowledge my debt to Eduardo Soria who helped me to improve my English in this paper and many others.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Álvarez, Diego. 1594. Praecepto formali patris Magistri Fratris Thomae de Guzman Prioris Prouincialis Prouinciae Hispaniae, Ordinis Praedicatorum compulsus Archivum Generale Ordinis Praedicatorum, ms. XIV.384, ff. 3–28. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Báñez, Domingo. 2021. *Predestinación y libertad: Escritos en torno a la Controversia de Auxiliis*. Pamplona: EUNSA.
- Barrientos García, José. 1984. El maestro Pedro de Ledesma y la universidad de Salamanca. *Archivo Dominicano: Anuario* 5: 201–69.

- Barrientos García, José. 2018. *La facultad de teología de la Universidad de Salamanca a través de los libros de visitas de cátedras (1560–1641)*. Madrid and Porto: Sínderesis.
- Belda Plans, Juan. 2000. *La Escuela de Salamanca y la renovación de la Teología en el siglo XVI*. Madrid: BAC.
- Beltrán de Heredia, Vicente. 1968. *Domingo Báñez y las Controversias sobre la Gracia: Textos y Documentos*. Madrid: CSIC.
- De Assis, Leonardo P. G. 2022. The Quantum Computer: Sci-Fi Narrative's Favorite Character. In *Cybermedia: Explorations in Science, Sound, and Vision*. Edited by Carol Vernallis, Holly Rogers, Selmin Kara and Jonathan Leal. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 129–36. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- De la Fuente, Juan. 1594. De auxilijs ad finem supernaturalem. Archivum Generale Ordinis Praedicatorum, ms. XIV.384, ff. 81–127. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- de Ledesma, Petrus. 1594. Tractatus de gratia seu auxilio praeveniente seu sufficienti et efficaci. Biblioteca della Università di Pavia, ms. Aldini 543, ff. 141r–184r. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- de Ledesma, Petrus. 1596. *Tractatus de Divina Perfectione Infinitate et Magnitudine Circa Illa verba, Ego sum, qui sum, etc. Exodi Capit. 3. Salmanticae*: I. & A. Renaut.
- de Ledesma, Petrus. 1611. *Tractatus de divinae gratiae auxilijs, circa illa verba Esaiiae cap. 26. Omnia opera nostra operatus es in nobis Domine: & circa Doctrinam D. Thomae multis in locis. Praecipuè I. par. quaest. 19. Art. 8. & quaest. 23. Et 1.2. quaest. 111. Salmanticae*: A. Ramirez.
- de Molina, L. 1588. *Liberi Arbitrii cum Gratiae Donis, Divina Praescientia, Providentia, Praedestinatione et Reprobatione Concordia*. Olyssipone: Riberius.
- de Soto, Domingo. 1582. *Super octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis Subtilissimae Quaestiones*. Venetiis: F. Zilettum.
- Del Prado, Norbertus. 1907. *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*. Friburgi: S. Paulus.
- Denzinger, Heinrich, and Peter Hünermann. 2009. *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et Morum*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- Freddoso, Alfred J. 1991. God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Why Conservation is Not Enough. *Philosophical Perspectives* 5: 553–85. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Frost, Gloria. 2018. Aquinas' Ontology of Transeunt Causal Activity. *Vivarium* 56: 47–82. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Gallego Salvadores, Jordán. 1973. La aparición de las primeras metafísicas sistemáticas en la España del XVI: Diego Mas (1587), Francisco Suárez y Diego de Zúñiga (1597). *Escritos del Vedat* 3: 91–162. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Garrigou Lagrange, Réginald. 1936. Prémotion. In *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. Edited by Emile Amann, Eugene Manganot and Alfred Vacant. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, vol. 13, col. 31–77.
- Hasker, William. 1994. A Philosophical Perspective. In *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*. Edited by Clark H. Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker and David Basinger. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, Carlisle: The Paternoste, pp. 126–202.
- Hawking, Stephen, and Leonard Mlodinow. 2010. *The Grand Design*. London: Bantam.
- Hellín, José. 1981. Sobre la congruencia de la gracia eficaz en Vázquez y Suárez. *Archivo Teológico Granadino* 44: 63–94.
- Hernández Martín, Ramón. 1991. La Escuela de Salamanca del siglo XVI y los problemas de Indias: Fray Pedro de Ledesma. Paper presented at Actas del III Congreso Internacional sobre los Dominicos y el Nuevo Mundo, Granada, Spain, 10–14 September 1990; Edited by Isabel Arenas Frutos, Carmen Cebrián González and Damian Byrn. Madrid: Deimos, pp. 645–67.
- Hernández Martín, Ramón. 2017. *Capítulos Provinciales de la Provincia Dominicana de España. Desde 1241 hasta 1595*. Salamanca: San Esteban.
- Kennedy, Leonard A. 1968. Peter of Ledesma and the distinction between essence and existence. *The Modern Schoolman* 46: 25–38. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Leftow, Brian. 2021. Providencia, determinismo e infierno. In *Providencia, Libertad y mal: Estudios en Teología Filosófica Analítica*. Edited by Agustín Echavarría and Rubén Pereda. Granada: Comares, pp. 89–103.
- Long, Steven A., Roger W. Nutt, and Thomas J. White, eds. 2016. *Thomism & Predestination: Principles and Disputations*. Ave Maria: Sapientia.
- O'Neill, Taylor Patrick. 2019. *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin: A Thomistic Analysis*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Oderberg, David. 2016. S. Divine Prémotion. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79: 207–22. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Orrego Sánchez, Santiago. 2001. Sobre el autor y su obra. In *Pedro de Ledesma, Sobre la perfección del acto de ser creado (1596)*. Pamplona: EUNSA, pp. 7–20.
- Orrego Sánchez, Santiago. 2004. *La Actualidad del ser en la Primera Escuela de Salamanca*. Pamplona: EUNSA.
- Roaro, Jorge. 2014. La Escuela de Salamanca y la interpretación histórica del Humanismo renacentista español. *Disputatio* 4: 189–261.
- Stöhr, Johannes. 1980. *Zur Frühgeschichte des Gnadestretites*. Münster: Aschendorff.
- Torrijos-Castrillejo, David. 2020. Was Báñez a Bañecian? *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 94: 431–58. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Torrijos-Castrillejo, David. 2021a. Contingency, free will and particular providence. *Religions* 12: 832. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Torrijos-Castrillejo, David. 2021b. Introducción. In *Domingo Báñez, Predestinación y libertad: Escritos en torno a la Controversia de auxilijs*. Pamplona: EUNSA, pp. 21–112.
- Torrijos-Castrillejo, David. 2022. Poder divino y libertad creada en la modernidad temprana. *Scripta Theologica* 54: 9–34. [\[CrossRef\]](#)