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## **Divine foreknowledge and providence in the commentaries of Boethius and Aquinas on the *De interpretatione* 9 by Aristotle**

**Abstract.** Boethius represents one of the most important milestones in Christian reflection about fate and providence, especially considering that he takes into account Proclus' contributions to these questions. For this reason, *The Consolation of philosophy* is considered a crucial work for the development of this topic. However, Boethius also exposes his ideas in his commentary on the book that constitutes one of the oldest and most relevant texts on the problem of future contingents, namely Aristotle's *De interpretatione*. Although St. Thomas refers to Boethius many times in his systematic works and even devotes two commentaries to two of his theological opuscles, it is of special interest that both authors composed a commentary on the abovementioned work by Aristotle. The commentary of Saint Thomas does not interpret the whole book, but it does study the pages about future contingents in dialogue with Boethius. We will study such texts in our presentation. They constitute one of the greatest contributions of Aquinas to the problem of necessity and contingency and therefore to the *vexata quaestio* of divine intervention in the world and particularly in human free will. Not only Augustin but also Aristotle (read by Boethius) and Nemesius of Emesa will be decisive in Aquinas' perception of this matter.

**Keywords:** providence; determinism; free will; divine foreknowledge; Aristotle's commentaries.

### **Introduction**

**B**oethius (480–524/5) is a figure of great importance in the history of Christian reflection on divine providence and its relation to free will. His contributions to this topic in his *Consolation of Philosophy* are particularly well known. Aquinas will take advantage of this treatise especially to understand the question of divine knowledge of future contingents. However, Boethius had worked on this subject in a previous writing, his commentary on the treatise *De interpretatione* by Aristotle, in the famous passage where he wonders

if there will be or will not be a naval battle tomorrow (18b18–19b4). Boethius' commentary is particularly interesting when he speaks about the question of divine prescience and providence because he is one of the Christian authors who integrates Neoplatonic reflections in this regard, particularly the treatises of Proclus, which unfortunately Moerbeke translated only after the death of St. Thomas.

It is probable that Aquinas knew the comment to *De interpretatione* since the beginning of his career, but it is certain that he revisited it in his maturity when he composed his own commentary on that book of Aristotle around 1270/1.<sup>1</sup> In my contribution, first I intend to review the main teachings of Boethius; later, I will show how Aquinas uses them when he composes his own commentary and builds his personal view of the issues of providence, freedom and future contingents.

In his commentary on the book Aquinas follows, in addition to Boethius', the commentary of Ammonius.<sup>2</sup> It is remarkable that Ammonius' commentary was translated by Moerbeke only a few years before (1268). The comparison of the Greek commentator with the great Latin commentator was very useful to our author.

As mentioned above I will focus on the ninth chapter of Aristotle's book. The passage about the naval battle roused reflection on divine foreknowledge due to the question about the truth-value of future contingents. Boethius must address other philosophy's schools, particularly the Stoics, and therefore he develops a kind of *quaestio* on divine prescience. Aquinas also contributes to this topic with a sort of parenthesis in his commentary.

## 1. Boethius on *De interpretatione*

Let us begin by presenting the main contributions of Boethius to the subject of providence and human free will in his commentary on *De interpretatione*. It is a work preceding the *Consolation of philosophy*, where some years later several problems will be better explained. However, the most important arguments of Boethius' solution to the question of divine foreknowledge are already exposed.

In *De interpretatione*, Aristotle asks about the truth-value of future contingents. The question is: will there be a naval battle tomorrow or not? Only one of both possibilities will happen. Does that mean that the "truth" of the future

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<sup>1</sup> Between December 1270 and the middle of October 1271: for dating, see J.-P. Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, pp. 328.500.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 329.

event is already fixed? In fact, if one person affirms and another one denies that there will be a battle, after the event, it will be discovered that one told “the truth” and the other one said something “false”. Consequently, from the beginning, was one of the statements true and the other false?<sup>3</sup> The affirmative answer to this question was given by the Stoics. For them, the future is true because it is necessarily defined by a combination of unavoidable causes. It is the thesis of causal determinism combated by Christian authors and condemned again by Tempier.

One can also answer that question negatively, saying that one cannot speak of truth and falsehood in future contingents, as in ancient times the Epicureans suggested and Łukasiewicz proposed in his own way in our times. Another answer would be to say that one can speak of truth and falsehood of future propositions, even if the events are not determined by fixed causal laws, but are contingent and indeterminate. This is the position of Carneades. He said that the propositions about future contingents would be, however, as certain before happening as they will be afterwards. This is somewhat paradoxical: is the same kind of truth really given in the things that are happening and in those that happened or also in those that are not yet decided?

Boethius proposes a fourth alternative to this problem. His originality lies in it. Against causal determinism, he believes that future events are contingent because of the way they are produced, so that not all events are necessary but some are contingent. Furthermore, opposing Carneades, he does not believe that the truth-value of future contingents can be considered identical to that of past and present events. Thus, Boethius’ solution is that claims about future contingents can be evaluated as true or false, but their truth or falsity could be not “determined”. This is the same proposal presented by Ammonius but this does not necessarily mean that Boethius depends on him, since both could inherit a common tradition.

To understand Boethius’ position, the distinction sustained by Aristotle himself in *De interpretatione* should also be considered: he states that one can only say that an intrinsically contingent event (such as a naval battle) “is” necessary, under the assumption that it is in fact happening. In that sense and only in that sense it could be said that “everything that is, is necessary” (19a23–24). Even things that happen contingently can be designated as “necessary” at least under the condition that they are happening. This is called a “hypothetical necessity.” Now, this necessity is not an “absolute necessity,” which depends on necessary causes that origin the event and make the opposite impossible. In this way, the “coming out of the sun” is (absolutely) necessary because it re-

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<sup>3</sup> From this point, I follow R. Sharples, *Fate, prescience and free will*.

lies on the unavoidable cosmic laws, but a “naval battle” would only be contingent because it can happen or not. Now, when the battle is happening, under the hypothesis that it is happening, the naval battle becomes, in this sense, (hypothetically) “necessary.”

When Ammonius and Boethius claim that the truth of future things is “indeterminate” or “changeable,” the meaning of such statement becomes more obscure if one forgets the context in which such these is defended, i.e. the relationship of future events with divine foreknowledge.<sup>4</sup> The aim of this position is to introduce a new nuance in the history of thought about providence and created free will that probably had not been explored before Neoplatonism, although perhaps the Stoics tried to point in that direction. Neoplatonists attempt to save both the contingency of sublunary things and the perfect certainty of divine foreknowledge. Now, at first glance, if God knows contingent things in a certain and determined way, that seems to mean that He does not know things as they are: future things are not determined and, therefore, by knowing them in a certain and determined way, they are not known as they are. In other words, knowing in a determined way what is intrinsically undetermined would seem the same as not knowing it. This difficulty is expressly raised by Boethius in his commentary:

Therefore, whoever says that God knows all things and that, for that reason, all things are necessarily going to be, says that God believes regarding whatever things do not come about necessarily that they are going to come about necessarily. For, if God knows that all things are going to come about necessarily, he is mistaken in that knowledge of his, since not all things come about necessarily, but some contingently. Therefore, if he knows regarding the things that are going to come about that they are going to come about necessarily, he is deceived as regards his own providence.<sup>5</sup>

To avoid this difficulty, Neoplatonists usually hold what has been called the “Iamblichus Principle.” According to this principle, things do not have to be

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<sup>4</sup> *Pace* Kretzmann, who thinks that God, providence or fate “have no part to play” in Boethius’ theory of contingency (N. Kretzmann, ‘*Nos ipsi principia sumus.*’ *Boethius and the basis of contingency*, p. 47, note 53).

<sup>5</sup> “quisquis ergo dicit deum cuncta nosse et ob hoc cuncta ex necessitate esse futura, is dicit deum ex necessitate eventura credere, quaecumque ex necessitate non eveniunt. nam si omnia ex necessitate eventura novit deus, in notione sua fallitur. non enim omnia ex necessitate eveniunt, sed aliqua contingenter. ergo si quae contingenter eventura sunt ex necessitate eventura noverit, in propria providentia falsus est” (Boethius, ed. Meiser, p. 226, ll. 1–9; trans. Kretzmann, p. 171). This objection was already presented by Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato*, CAG 201, 13–21.

known as they are in themselves, because knowledge is not just of the same nature as things, it is something *better* than them. In fact, many things are material and, nevertheless, they are always known in an immaterial way (since knowledge is always immaterial); things are multiple and they are known in unity (not only in universal concepts, because also the sight, for instance, can see many colors at the same time). Likewise, things can happen contingently or freely but the knowledge of them has not to be contingent; it could be precise and, in this sense, “necessary.” In this way, God can know contingent things as He is, not as they are. Now, God would not be deceived in His knowledge, because He knows whether things are contingent or not. In a necessary way, He knows that the things are contingent. The necessity relies on the nature of His knowledge, not on its content, which grasps things as they are, i.e. contingent. Although things are not yet determined, divine knowledge, insofar as a perfect one, is precise, determined and therefore true. This principle of Iamblichus will be plainly used in the *Consolation* but already it was present in the commentary on *De interpretatione*, where Boethius clearly says that God knows things as they are, that is, proceeding from contingent or free causes in such a way that they could have come about otherwise:

God knows future things not as coming about necessarily but as [coming about] contingently, in such a way that he does not fail to know that something else can happen too. Nevertheless, he has complete knowledge of what happens by his notion (*ratio*) of human beings themselves and their actions.<sup>6</sup>

This text seems to suppose that God knows in a precise way the things whose truth, in Boethius’ terms, is still “indeterminate.” In any case, it would be strange that a Latin Christian author who writes after Saint Augustine could think otherwise. According to Sharples it is evident, by the last sentence, that Boethius is inclined to admit that God possesses an accurate knowledge of the reality of things, although he has not yet fully developed his personal point

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<sup>6</sup> “novit enim futura deus non ut ex necessitate evenientia sed ut contingenter, ita ut etiam aliud posse fieri non ignoret, quid tamen fiat ex ipsorum hominum et actuum ratione persciscat” (Boethius, *ibidem*). I modify the last part of the translation to be more faithful to the original: as we will soon see, God does not know human beings “by reason of human beings themselves” (as Kretzmann writes), but by *His* own *ratio* which is the cause of the creation of them. So, we do not have to see any contradiction between this treatment of the problem and the one of the *Consolation*, V, 6: *pace* N. Kretzmann, in: Ammonius, *On Aristotle’s On Interpretation 9*; Boethius, *On Aristotle’s On Interpretation 9*, p. 190, note 50. In a similar way, also R. Sharples (*Fate, prescience and free will*, p. 213) translates: “[...] what comes about he knows on the basis of the human beings themselves and their actions.”

of view, that will be exposed in the *Consolation*.<sup>7</sup> Although this affirmation is true, I think that we can already recognize in this text the core of the “Iamblichus Principle,” because there is a metaphysical reason to accept it. To find such a reason, one should acknowledge that Boethius is not saying that God knows things through “things themselves,” as Kretzmann and Sharples translate. That would signify that He knows them by “depending” in a way on the things themselves: in this case, the statement would be inconsistent with Boethius’ position in the *Consolation*. However, Boethius probably says here that God knows free events because of the “notion” (*ratio*) that He has about them; in other words, His knowledge “depends” only on the eternal divine ideas through which God knows everything. This *ratio* is somewhat similar to the expression used in the *Consolation*: “praesentaria notio” (*Consol.*, V, pr. 6, CCSL 94, p. 106, 142), a “presential notion.” It refers not to the “present” that creatures had, have or will have, but rather to the eternal presence of divine knowledge, the presence of such notion in God himself.

In addition to this, in the same page of the commentary on *De interpretatione*, Boethius indicates that it is necessary to admit the contingency of things not only to respect their own nature but also to preserve the divine benevolence itself, which benefits us by his will. But if God acts by will, He cannot act in a necessarily way.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, Boethius is advancing the thesis that Scotus will make famous but that was already present in Aquinas: only if God is free there can be freedom in the cosmos. Soon we will talk about this.

## 2. Saint Thomas on *De interpretatione*

When Saint Thomas wrote his commentary on Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*, the first condemnations of the Bishop of Paris, Tempier, had just been promulgated. Some of them deal with divine prescience and the relationship between omnipotence and freedom created. They are as follows:

3. That a human being’s will necessarily wills or chooses.
4. That all things here below come under the necessary control of the heavenly bodies. [...]

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<sup>7</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 214.

<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to compare Boethius with Ammonius’ *Commentary*, CAG 134, 12–18, who expressly denies that the gods act by their *proairesis* and *boulesis*, so that they would act only by their own being. That is in full harmony with Neoplatonism but far from a Christian conception of God.

10. That God does not know singulars.
11. That God does not know things other than Himself.
12. That human acts are not ruled by the providence of God.<sup>9</sup>

These condemnations are so significant and so linked with the problems addressed by Aquinas in this work that they constitute one of the criteria to date this commentary, as adopted by Gauthier and followed by Torrell. Also, at that time, Aquinas was composing or had composed other booklets on the same subject,<sup>10</sup> in addition to the question 6 *De malo* and the questions 9–13 of the *Prima secundae* that are also related to these topics.<sup>11</sup>

In the first two condemnations of Tempier cited above (3–4), we can observe the typical theses of astrological determinism that had been combatted by the Church Fathers; however, they did not cease to arouse interest even during the Middle Age. Secondly, the following condemnations (10–12) seem to point more to the danger that Alexander of Aphrodisia's reading of Aristotle, followed by Averroes, supposed for Christian teachings. An interpretation of these problems according to the faith had already been made by different Christian authors, among them Boethius, who also tried to find a middle ground between Stoic determinism and the merely general providence defended by Platonists and Peripatetics. The connection of such attempt with the concerns of Aquinas and the problems of his time is evident.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore somewhat surprising that McNerny neglected the question of providence and divine foreknowledge in his study *Boethius and Aquinas*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For the translation, see R. McNerny, *Aquinas Against the Averroists, On There Being Only One Intellect*, p. 9. Latin text: "3. Quod voluntas hominis ex necessitate vult vel eligit. | 4. Quod omnia, que hic in inferioribus aguntur, subsunt necessitate corporum celestium. [...] 10. Quod Deus non cognoscit singularia. | 11. Quod Deus non cognoscit alia a se. | 12. Quod humani actus non reguntur providentia Dei" (H. Denifle, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. 1, p. 487).

<sup>10</sup> *De sortibus*: 1270–1271, see J.-P. Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, p. 315; *De 30, 36 et 43 articulis*: 1271, see *ibidem*, pp. 244–246 and probably *De iudiciis astrorum*: see *ibidem*, p. 314, note 59.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem* p. 328.

<sup>12</sup> In Aquinas' approach to this question, we can appreciate how his metaphysical engagement helps him to present a faithfully interpretation of Christian doctrine, as some contemporary defenders of Biblical Thomism highlight: see P. Roszak, *Exégesis y metafísica. En torno a la hermenéutica bíblica de santo Tomás de Aquino*; *idem*, *Language, Metaphysics and the Bible. The Philosophical Background of Aquinas's exegesis of Sacred Scripture*.

<sup>13</sup> See R. McNerny, *Boethius & Aquinas*.



## 2.1. Boethius in Aquinas' commentary

In his commentary, when Aquinas reaches the question formulated by Aristotle about whether things will necessarily happen, he pauses to remember Boethius' broad explanation of the different positions on necessity and contingency.<sup>14</sup> There are some interesting reflections in his words. For example, against the Stoics and the Megarics, he believes that the necessity and contingency of things must be judged "by virtue of the nature of the things."<sup>15</sup> Thus, things that have the possibility of being otherwise are contingent in themselves. Now, although in other passages of his work he affirmed that the root of contingency resides in matter, which is itself open to opposites (*S.Th.*, I, q. 86, a. 3, co.), here he affirms that matter alone is not enough to speak of contingency, since the heavens possess matter and nevertheless everything that happens in them is necessary.<sup>16</sup> For this reason, Aquinas adds that to preserve contingency active powers must also be taken into account and they must also be open to opposites, not determined to only one.

Then, as in the question of the *Summa* on "fate" (*S.Th.*, I, q. 116, a. 1), Aquinas explains that there are events that happen without a proper cause: we say that they happen "by chance." They are such because there is no cause *per se* for them, they are only produced *per accidens*. He explains this idea by the example of a man who, upon leaving home to have a drink, he is assassinated by some assailants.<sup>17</sup> The combination of these events as such does not have a true cause: the death of the man is added *per accidens* to a causation that pursues another different purpose. In this sense, this effect is achieved "*praeter intentionem*", i.e. against the objective pursued by the agent. The Stoic notion of "fate" is precisely an attempt to suppose that all these events, which do not seem to have a true cause, actually do, thanks to the connection of the causes. Here again appears the astrological necessity that Aquinas intends to refute, following the example of the tradition and Tempier.

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<sup>14</sup> See *Expositio peryermeneias*, I, lect. 14, Ed. Leon., p. 73, 160ss.

<sup>15</sup> "[...] *secundum naturam rerum*, ut scilicet illud dicatur necessarium quod in sua natura determinatum est solum ad esse, impossibile autem quod est determinatum solum ad non esse, possibile autem quod ad neutrum est omnino determinatum" (ibidem, 183–187; I emphasize the text translated in the body).

<sup>16</sup> See ibidem, p. 74, 202–209.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 75, 245–250. Such occurrence is analogous to Aristotle's example of a man who, while going to the agora for other purposes, *by chance* finds a debtor ready to give his money back (*Phys.*, II, 196b33–197a17); nevertheless, it is mixed with other example by Aristotle about thirst (*Metaph.*, E, 1027b1–6).



As Aquinas explains, the intellect and the will do not possess a corporeal organ, therefore they cannot be subjected to the physical influence of the stars. Surely, the human being can be affected by them under other aspects, such as the sensitive powers, but these faculties of the soul are not capable of necessitating reason or the will.

Moreover, like in the mentioned question of the *Summa*, Aquinas sees a multiplicity in the casual events that presumably depend on fate. If something happens that joins *per accidens* the attempt of the main cause, a multiplicity is produced: now, this complex effect can only be apprehended by intelligence. Indeed, natural causes can only produce a single end.<sup>18</sup> Only intelligence is able to intend a complex outcome. Hence, many philosophers concluded that there must be a divine intelligence to guide the effects of fate.<sup>19</sup> However, some of them, while admitting the existence of a certain divine providence, denied particular providence. At that moment, omitting his characteristic circumspection and in accordance with the recent condemnations of Tempier, Aquinas allows himself to call those who denied that God possessed knowledge of the singulars and intended to benefit individuals “fools.” Their foolishness consisted in judging God’s intellect by the same rules that operate in ours, which ignore singulars. Easily one can see here a reference to Averroes.

At this point, Aquinas recalls that in God, intellect is identified with being, and His knowledge has the same extension of that infinite being. Since divine being embraces all things insofar as they all participate in it, so it can know any being. In the same way, divine will extends to any of the existing entities that, insofar they are good, are able to be wanted by the will. Aquinas interrupts here this metaphysical vision of providence to recall a well-known objection against particular providence: if God is the cause of all things, then everything happens necessarily since divine science cannot fail and divine will is always infallible.

The response of Aquinas represents his main solution to the problem we are examining. According to him, just as Averroes was wrong when he thought that the divine intelligence is unable to grasp singulars like ours, so everyone errs who says that, if God knows something with certainty and intervenes with his power in everything, that prevents contingency and freedom in created

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<sup>18</sup> See *Expositio peryermeneias*, I, lect. 14, Ed. Leon., p. 76, 305–308.

<sup>19</sup> “Et secundum hoc aliqui posuerunt omnia quecumque in hoc mundo aguntur, <etiam> que uidentur fortuita et casualia, reduci in ordinem prouidencie diuine, ex qua dicebant dependere fatum. | Et hoc quidem aliqui stulti negauerunt, iudicantes de intellectu diuino ad modum intellectus nostri, qui singularia non cognoscit” (ibidem, pp. 76–77, 333–340).

things.<sup>20</sup> I believe that the core of Aquinas' contribution to the question about the relationship between divine omnipotence and created freedom lies precisely here. This is the reason why I notice one of his most successful visions of the problem in the commentary on *De interpretatione*. Aquinas focuses above all on God as creator. Thus, only by keeping in mind that God maintains an exclusive relation to created beings totally different from the one maintained by other entities, His intervention into created events can be explained satisfactorily without endangering the nature of finite beings. As Te Velde and Goris insisted, divine motion is a "transcendental" action and cannot be compared with created agency but by analogy.<sup>21</sup>

To show the dissimilarity between God and created agents, Aquinas speaks first about divine intelligence, taking Boethius' ideas that inspired his interpretation of this problem throughout his career. He evokes a text of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, where he said that God "like someone who looks above the things from a height"<sup>22</sup> can see the past, the present and the future. Aquinas develops this image in different passages, speaking of a hill from which one can see people who come along a path, both distant and near, both those who already passed and those who are about to arrive; the situation of this viewpoint is very different from that of the walkers, who only see the other walkers ahead. Interestingly, in the commentary on *De interpretatione* that we are explaining here, instead of a simple mount the reference to an "elevated tower" appears.<sup>23</sup> In the commentary to Psalm 47, also written in this time, Aquinas says that "the towers are useful to see from afar."<sup>24</sup> In the footnotes of the Leonine edition of the commentary on *De interpretatione*, Gauthier indicates that he usually speaks of *specula* to refer to the point of view of the lookout. This scholar remarks that in Latin it is usual to link *specula* with *turris*. I would just like to add that in the *Catena aurea* Aquinas quotes a very pertinent text attributed to Saint Basil in which it is said: "[...] turris est alta speculatio ad custodiam civitatis et

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<sup>20</sup> "Procedunt autem hee obiectiones ex eo quod cognitio diuini intellectus et operatio diuine uoluntatis pensatur ad modum eorum que in nobis sunt, cum tamen multo dissimiliter se habeant" (ibidem, 365–368).

<sup>21</sup> See R.A. Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 160–183; H.J.M.J. Goris, *Free Creatures of an Eternal God*, pp. 300–304.

<sup>22</sup> "[...] quasi ab excelso rerum cacumine cuncta prospiciat" (*Consol.*, V, pr. 6, CCSL 94, p. 103, 63–64).

<sup>23</sup> "[...] in aliqua excelsa turri constitutus" (*Expositio peryermeneias*, I, lect. 14, Ed. Leon., p. 77, 388).

<sup>24</sup> "Turres sunt ad videndum a longe" (*Super Ps. 47*, n. 6, ed. Parmae, p. 334). In the commentary to Isaiah he had already written: "Usus turris ad conseruationem fructus, et prospiciendum ad custodiam" (*Super Is.*, ch. 5, lect. 1, Ed. Leon., p. 39, 81–83).

perceptionem hostilium occursuum apta: ad huius instar nobis datus est intellectus conservativus bonorum, praemeditativus contrariorum.”<sup>25</sup>

The example of the high hill or the tower is meant to indicate that the look-out is “out of the order of the walkers.”<sup>26</sup> Precisely because he is out of that “order”, He does not have to see the walkers “successively” but He can see all them “simultaneously” (*simul*). In a similar way, human intellect understands things under the aspects of past, present and future. We know the past by memory; thanks to our senses, we notice the present as soon as it is in act before us. However, we can only guess the future by looking at its causes, but if these are contingent, we cannot conclude with certainty what will happen. Only if future events are determined in their causes by some necessity, we can predict them without any doubt. On the contrary, God is “outside the order of time,” situated in the elevation of His eternity, that is “all at once,” and every actuality throughout the time is present to Him. God does not see the future as something that “is going to happen,” but by His eternity (*eternaliter*) He knows everything that happens at any time; He does so in a determined way and not by a conjecture, in the same way that we see the present as it is in itself but not in its cause: we see Peter walking here and now, we do not only conjecture it by knowing that he has legs to do it. Our certainty and cognitive infallibility with respect to present things does not eliminate anything from their contingency. Similarly, God’s science of vision does not remove anything from the contingency of things either.

Now, things are not before God as if He were a mere observer of events. For this reason, it is necessary to complete the teaching of Boethius paying more attention to divine will than he did. Already in the commentary on *De interpretatione*, Boethius concluded that only if the omnipotent God is free, there could be freedom in creation, but he did not focus on divine will either there or in the *Consolation*. Aquinas, however, gives particular relevance to di-

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<sup>25</sup> *Catena in Lc.*, ch. 14, lect. 6, ed. Marietti, p. 210. Probably, this is the translation used by Aquinas: “Turris est alta speculatio. ad custodiam civitatis. et cognitionem super-aggressus. hostium. apta. Talis nobis, datus est et intellectus. custos bonorum. previsivus insidiarum” (*Ex codice CCXLVI. Fragmentum Commentarii S. Basilii in Isaiam Prophetam*, vol. 4.2, p. 430b). For the Greek text under such translation, which is quite truthful, see PG 30, 270B. The authenticity of this work is suspected, but the English translator defends it as very probable: see N.A. Lipatov, *The problem of the authorship of the Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah attributed to St. Basil the Great*. Dobler attributes this quotation erroneously to Gregory of Nyssa: see E. Dobler, *Fälsche Väterzitate bei Thomas von Aquin*, p. 147.

<sup>26</sup> “[...] extra totum ordinem transeuntium” (*Expositio peryermeneias*, I, lect. 14, Ed. Leon., p. 77, 387–388). When Boethius compares divine mind and creation with the spheres of the cosmos, he says that the center is “ceterorumque *extra locatorum* ueluti cardo quidam” (*Consol.*, IV, pr. 5, CCSL 94, p. 81, 59–60; my emphasis).

vine will because according to himself the knowledge of God regarding any creature is mediated by the divine will (*S.Th.*, I, q. 14, a. 8). God does not know that things are in one way or another by being affected by them in the manner our eyes receive the colors which show that Peter is walking. God knows that things happen because He is their creator. Therefore, His creative will must be involved in His knowledge.

By listening to these ideas, it is easy to think about human life as seen by some rationalist philosophers of modernity: temporal events follow one another as a manifestation of a preconceived divine project in which everything happens with the same necessity, a kind of movie that is already shot and is only shown in a movie theater. However, I think that such representations are not able to understand the mind of St. Thomas, although he also believes that God knows each event in detail and His will—either benevolence’s will, or permission’s—is always fulfilled (*S.Th.*, I, q. 19, a. 6).

In the same way that divine intellect is outside the “order” of temporality, so must divine will “be understood as existing outside the order of the entities.”<sup>27</sup> For this reason, it is the source of every finite being and of all its differences. Among these differences, Aquinas points out the difference between the possible and the necessary. This means that both the necessary and the contingent are originated by the will of God and He himself is above both. This should call our attention from the beginning, because it means that even what is necessary, which in itself cannot not be, is under the power of divine will. It is a doctrine of Aristotle that Thomas repeats on several occasions: nothing prevents that some necessary things could have in another the cause of their necessity.<sup>28</sup> Those beings (such as the heavens and the spiritual creatures) will be in themselves necessary, though they are, insofar produced by divine will, contingent. Absolutely speaking they are necessary, but only in that respect they are contingent (relatively speaking). This idea should make us realize that, like the absolutely speaking necessary (*simpliciter necessarium*) is still such even if it is under divine will, yet in comparison it becomes in a way “contingent” (*contingens secundum quid*), in a similar way the absolutely speaking contingent (*simpliciter*

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<sup>27</sup> “Nam uoluntas diuina est intelligenda ut extra ordinem entium existens, uelut causa quedam profundens totum ens et omnes eius differencias” (*Expositio peryermeneias*, I, lect. 14, Ed. Leon., p. 78, 438–441; I emphasize the quoted text).

<sup>28</sup> See *S.c.G.*, I, ch. 15, n. 5; *S.Th.*, I, q. 2, a. 3; q. 50, a. 5, ad 3; *Compendium Th.*, I, ch. 6... In *S.Th.*, I, q. 44, a. 1, ad 2; I–II, q. 93, a. 4, ad 4; *In Phys.*, VIII, lect. 21, n. 14 (Marietti §1154) he quotes *Metaph.*, Δ, 1015b9–10. Aquinas’ commentary of this text: *In Metaph.*, lect. 6, n. 13 (Marietti §839).

*contingens*) remains such, even if it is under the infallibility of divine will and it becomes only in a sense “necessary” (*necessarium secundum quid*).<sup>29</sup>

In the passage of the commentary on *De interpretatione* that we are explaining, the mature teaching of *S. Th.*, I, q. 19, a. 8 is assumed: God’s will is the ultimate reason for the contingency and necessity of things. Their proximate causes could not suffice to make the things contingent and necessary if God did not want them to be that way; for that very reason He disposed such proximate causes to them. But the *denomination* of “contingent” or “necessary” that the entities receive, although depending on the causes that originate them, is not taken from the first cause but *from the proximate cause* ordered by it. The result is that divine will reveals itself as a singularity among all causes. There is no other cause capable by causing an effect of also deciding the mode of the effect it causes: that is, there is no cause that can decide that its effects are either necessary or contingent. Each one of the created causes is locked in the order of causality in which it has been placed by God, whether this order is that of contingency or that of necessity.

## 2.2. Nemesius in Aquinas’ commentary

Although Boethius had already timidly pointed to God’s freedom to safeguard the contingency of things, his considerations could have helped Aquinas to develop his own understanding of divine science of vision. Of course, to elaborate his doctrine of divine will as an analogous cause above all the order of contingency and necessity, Aquinas’ metaphysics of being was required. Without pretending to reduce his merit, we can appeal to another patristic source that could be latent under his explanation of divine will as a transcendental cause. I am referring to Nemesius of Emesa, known to Aquinas as Gregory of Nyssa.

We cannot understate the importance that the chapters of *De natura hominis* on providence and free will have to understand such problems in Aquinas. Nemesius informs him of the teaching about the providence sustained by the Middle-Platonists; it is precisely against them that this author must argue in defense of particular providence, which was denied by them. Like Alexander and

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<sup>29</sup> “Necessity in the unqualified sense, necessity *simpliciter*, is absolute necessity. Conditional necessity is necessity only in a restricted sense, *secundum quid*. Speaking unqualifiedly, what has merely conditional necessity is not necessary but contingent. This point considerably mitigates Thomas’s association of causality with necessity” (S. L. Brock, *Causality and Necessity in Thomas Aquinas*, p. 231). See D. Torrijos-Castrillejo, *La providence chez Saint-Thomas d’Aquin comme compréhension de la totalité*, pp. 303–307; idem, *Tomás de Vio, Cayetano: Sobre la providencia y el hado*, pp. 468–479.

Averroes will later do, they accepted only a general providence. To respond to such doctrine, Nemesius teaches that knowledge of individuals is required for the perfection of providence, just as a good physician cannot neglect any detail of the sickness and of the patient. The comparison with the medical art used by Aquinas in the *Summa contra gentiles* also appeared in Nemesius' treatise. This is Aquinas' text:

Haec est differentia inter cognitionem speculativam et practicam, quod cognitio speculativa, et ea quae ad ipsam pertinent, perficiuntur in universali; ea vero quae pertinent ad cognitionem practicam, perficiuntur in particulari: nam finis speculativae est veritas, quae primo et per se in immaterialibus consistit et in universalibus; finis vero practicae est operatio, quae est circa singularia. Unde medicus non curat hominem in universali, sed hunc hominem: et ad hoc est tota scientia medicinae ordinata. Constat autem quod providentia ad practicam cognitionem pertinet: cum sit ordinativa rerum in finem. Esset igitur imperfectissima Dei providentia si in universalibus consisteret, et usque ad singularia non perveniret.

Again, this is the difference between speculative and practical knowledge: speculative knowledge and the functions that pertain to it reach their perfection in the universal, while the things that belong to practical knowledge reach their perfection in the particular. In fact, the end of speculative cognition is truth, which consists primarily and essentially in immaterial and universal things; but the end of practical cognition is operation, which is concerned with singulars. So, the physician does not heal man as a universal, but, rather, this individual man, and the whole science of medicine is ordered to this result. Now, it is obvious that providence belongs to the area of practical knowledge, for its function is to order things to their end. Therefore, God's providence would be most imperfect if it were to confine itself to universals and not extend as far as singulars.<sup>30</sup>

Nemesius argued in a similar way, expressing a similar reference to a doctor:

Qualiter autem non valde inconveniens est artificem quidem cuiuscumque modi artis et maxime medicum procurantem universalialia nil particularium neque parvissimum derelinquere inartificiabile vel improcurabile, scientem quod ad totum proficit pars, conditorem vero Deum et artificibus enuntiare indoctorem?

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<sup>30</sup> S.c.G., III, ch. 75, Ed. Leon., p. 221b, 11–25; English trans. by V.J. Bourke in Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, vol. 3.1, p. 252. In his treatment of providence in the *Summa contra gentiles*, Aquinas quotes Nemesius' work: see S.c.G., III, ch. 73 and 76.

Would it not be utterly absurd if an adept at any art, and particularly a physician, should take thought for the broad exercise of his art, but take no notice of details, or if he should leave even the slightest point outside the scope of his art and his concern. Such a one would know that the part contributes to the whole. And is, then, God the Creator to be made out to have less sense than any craftsman?<sup>31</sup>

Nemesius also explains that although it is true, as enunciated by the Peripatetics,<sup>32</sup> that human rulers do not personally take care of all things, but leave the most minute details in the hands of subordinates, in reality that is not due to their greatness but rather to their weakness. If we speak of a truly divine ruler, it would not be necessary to disregard the minuscule things, because nothing would prevent Him from dealing with all of them. Let's read Nemesius' words:

Necesse est autem et eundem esse factorem eorum quae sunt, et provisorem; neque enim consequens est neque decens, alium quidem facere, alium vero ea quae facta sunt procurare: *in imbecillitate* enim videretur hoc tale esse. [...] homo autem et aliis omnibus quae sunt secundum hanc vitam, in quantum possibile est, providet; quae vero non provident, *propter imbecillitatem* non provident.

Moreover, the Creator of existent things, and their providence, must be one and the same God. For it would be inconsistent and unseemly for one to create and another to care for what was created. For such a division clearly betrays *limited powers*. [...] man goes further and provides for his children everything else that their life requires, of whatever kind and in whatever quantity. There are, it is true, creatures that make no provision for their young, but it is to be accounted mere *infirmity* on their part that they do not.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *De nat. hom.*, ch. 42, trans. Burgundio, ed. Verbeke, p. 165, 22–27; English trans. by W. Telfer, *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa*, pp. 443–444. Aquinas seems have used Burgundio's version of *De nat. hom.*: see W. Telfer, *ibidem*, p. 218. A similar reference to the physician is also present in Plato, *Leges*, X, 902d; the idea could also be linked to Aristotle's observations about the importance of knowing singulars in order to heal in a right way: see *Metaph.*, A, 981a12–24.

<sup>32</sup> See D. Torrijos-Castrillejo, *El aristotelismo en los primeros autores cristianos griegos*, pp. 544–548.

<sup>33</sup> *De nat. hom.*, ch. 42, trad. Burgundio, ed. Verbeke, pp. 158–159, 57–64; English trans. by W. Telfer, *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa*, p. 432; my emphasis. See Plato, *Leges*, X, 901a–c.



We see the same teaching reflected in the afore mentioned book by St. Thomas:

In his quae humana providentia reguntur, invenitur quod aliquis superior provisor circa quaedam magna et universalia per seipsum excogitat qualiter sint ordinanda, minimorum vero ordinem ipse non excogitat, sed aliis inferioribus excogitandum relinquit. Et hoc quidem contingit *propter eius defectum*: inquantum vel singularium minimorum condiciones ignorat; vel non sufficit ad omnium ordinem excogitandum, propter laborem et temporis prolixitatem quae requireretur. Huiusmodi autem defectus longe sunt a Deo: nam ipse omnia singularia cognoscit; nec in intelligendo laborat, aut tempus requirit, cum intelligendo seipsum, omnia alia cognoscat, sicut supra ostensum est.

Besides, in the case of things regulated by human providence we find that a certain higher overseer thinks out the way in which some of the big and universal matters are to be ordered, but he does not himself think out the ordering of the smallest details; rather, he leaves these to be planned by agents on a lower level. But, as a matter of fact, this is so *because of his own deficiency*, either because he does not know the circumstances for the individual details, or because he is not able to think out the order for all, by virtue of the effort and length of time that might be needed. Now, deficiencies of this kind are far removed from God, because He knows all singular things, and He does not make an effort to understand, or require any time for it; since, by understanding Himself He knows all other things, as we showed above.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, the passage from Nemesius most linked to our text from the commentary on *De interpretatione* is the following one:

Ipsa vero *extra omnem necessitatem non solum consistit*, sed et dominus et factor est. Potestas enim existens et natura potestativa, nihil neque naturae necessitate neque dispositione legis facit, omnia vero sunt ei contingentia et quae necessaria.

God is not only *outside any necessity* but also is its ruler and author. Since He is a power and a powerful nature, He does nothing neither by necessity of nature nor by the command of a law, but all things are contingent for him, even those that are necessary.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> S.c.G., III, ch. 76, Ed. Leon., p. 225a, 20–35; English trans. by V.J. Bourke in Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, vol. 3.1, p. 255; my emphasis.

<sup>35</sup> *De nat. hom.*, ch. 37, trad. Burgundio, ed. Verbeke, p. 141, 49–52; English trans. and emphasis are mine.

Let us now read the text of St. Thomas in his *Commentary*:

Nam uoluntas diuina est intelligenda *ut extra ordinem entium* existens, uelut causa quedam profundens totum ens et omnes eius differencias; sunt autem differencie entis possibile et necessarium, et ideo ex ipsa uoluntate diuina originatur necessitas et contingencia in rebus, et distinctio utriusque secundum rationem proximarum causerum [...], effectus dicuntur uel necessarii uel contingentes, quamuis omnes dependeant a uoluntate diuina sicut a prima causa que *transcendit ordinem necessitatis et contingencie*.

Divine will must be understood as if it were *outside the order of the entities*, as a certain cause from which all entities and all the differences of being emanate. Now, the differences of being are the possible and the necessary; therefore, the necessary and the contingent in things are originated by divine will and the distinction among them is made according to the nature of the proximate causes of every event [...] the effects are called either necessary or contingent, although all of them depend on divine will as on their first cause, which *transcends the order of necessity and contingency*.<sup>36</sup>

This “being outside the order of the entities” of Aquinas seems very close to that “being outside any necessity” of Nemesius. Certainly, St. Thomas has in mind an understanding of God as *ipsum esse subsistens* and as creator of every being but, in any case, here he is also referring mainly to the transcendence of God regarding necessity and contingency, which is what Nemesius is saying in the quoted text. Nemesius insists upon that point to indicate that in comparison to God’s will everything is contingent in a certain sense, because even the necessary depends on it. Such a combination of relative contingency (related to God’s will) and the intrinsic necessity of some entities becomes precisely the opposite in Aquinas: there is also a relative necessity (related to God’s will), i.e. a hypothetical necessity regarding the things that are in themselves contingent. In addition to this, Nemesius already realized that God is above created necessity and contingency precisely by being the author of both, and this is the core of Aquinas’ contribution.

Finally, in terms of terminological similarity, the reference to the double “necessitation” of nature and the command of “law” made by Nemesius seems evoked in the mention of a *lex necessitatis* made by Aquinas in a parallel pas-

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<sup>36</sup> *Expositio Peryermeneias*, I, lect. 14, Ed. Leon., p. 78, 438–454; English trans. and emphasis are mine.

sage. I refer to the following text from the commentary on *Metaphysics* that must have been written also in that same period:<sup>37</sup>

Quod quidem est singulare in hac causa, scilicet in divina providentia. Reliquae enim causae non constituunt legem necessitatis vel contingentiae, sed constituta a superiori causa utuntur. Unde causalitati cuiuslibet alterius causae subditur solum quod eius effectus sit. Quod autem sit necessario vel contingenter, dependet ex causa altiori, quae est causa entis in quantum est ens; a qua ordo necessitatis et contingentiae in rebus provenit.

This is singular in this cause, namely, in divine providence. The rest of causes do not institute a law of necessity or contingency but, having been established in one of them by a superior cause, they use it. Therefore, in the case of any other cause, only the fact that a thing is an effect of it depends on its causation. Now, the fact that this effect is necessary or contingent depends on a higher cause, which is the cause of being as being; the order of necessity and contingency in things comes from that cause.<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, in another work from this time, he writes:<sup>39</sup>

[...] voluntas Dei est principium totius entis, ergo non cadit sub ratione contingentiae vel necessitatis, sed haec effluunt et ordinantur ex Dei voluntate.

The will of God is the source of every being, therefore it does not fall under the notion of contingency or necessity but they come from the will of God and are ruled by it.<sup>40</sup>

As I defended elsewhere,<sup>41</sup> I disagree with Porro's interpretation of these texts in an article where he attributes a *lex necessaria* established by divine

<sup>37</sup> For dating, see J.-P. Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, p. 502.

<sup>38</sup> *In Metaph.*, VI, lect. 3, n. 32 (Marietti §1222); my translation.

<sup>39</sup> For dating, see J.-P. Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, p. 492.

<sup>40</sup> The text continues saying: "[...] et sic ipsa Dei voluntas facit quaedam contingentia, praeparando causas contingentes illis rebus quas vult esse contingentes; et similiter necessarias causas rebus et effectibus necessariis. Et sic voluntas Dei semper impletur; non tamen omnia necessario eveniunt, sed eo modo quod Deus vult ea esse: et vult quod sint contingenter" (*Quodlibet XII*, q. 3, ad 1; I take the Latin text from Marietti's edition, English trans. is mine).

<sup>41</sup> See D. Torrijos-Castrillejo, *La providence chez Saint-Thomas d'Aquin comme compréhension de la totalité*, p. 308.

providence for all events to Aquinas.<sup>42</sup> When he reads this text, he understands that “the contingent is after all subject to this *lex necessaria*; therefore, it is only contingent in a relative sense—regarding proximate causes—but not in an absolute sense because nothing is indeterminate or accidental regarding the providence.”<sup>43</sup> It is surprising that he reaches this conclusion precisely by reading the text from the commentary on *Metaphysics* quoted above. There, Aquinas is not saying that all things are subject to a “necessary law” but rather that God is the author of both a “law of necessity” and another “law of contingency.” By these “laws” Aquinas refers to the contingent or necessary nature that secondary causes have, a nature that cannot be altered by themselves. God on the other hand *is not subject to any causal law*, as the text plainly states, much less submits everything to a “necessary law” but sometimes establishes a “law of necessity” and other times a “law of contingency.” He makes things to be exactly what they are. Therefore, the fact that not only the finite cause but also God concurs in the effect as the first cause of all things does not mean a violation of the contingency of any being, since God’s agency is situated above the distinction between contingent and necessary. He conserves and moves the created cause as a transcendental cause.

It is true that the providence of God never fails and the will of God is always fulfilled. But this does not mean that all things are necessary in an absolute sense. In fact, Porro precisely inverts the meaning of the “absolute” and the “relative” as Saint Thomas understands it. Aquinas says that contingent phenomena are such in an “absolute sense” and the character of “infallible” they possess thanks to divine will does not make them necessary in an “absolute sense” but only in “a relative sense.” Divine providence ordained that such events should happen, and that they should happen in a contingent way. The infallibility of

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<sup>42</sup> He quotes the expression “*lex necessaria*” as if it belonged to Aquinas, but, in fact, he coined on his own: “Thomas speaks expressly in this context of the *lex necessitatis vel contingentiae* or the *ordo necessitatis vel contingentiae*, and, thus, of *lex necessaria* at least in the composite sense, which is in all the effects, even the contingent ones” (idem, *Thomas Aquinas*, p. 336). In this book, Porro is more precise than in the precedent article of 2012 and so he also says that “this does not imply the necessity of every effect” (ibidem, p. 337).

<sup>43</sup> “Anche ciò che è contingente, in definitiva, è sottoposto a questa *lex necessaria*: pertanto esso è contingente solo in senso relativo – rispetto cioè alle cause prossime – ma non in senso assoluto, perché nulla è indeterminato o accidentale rispetto alla provvidenza” (P. Porro, “*Lex necessitatis vel contingentiae*”. *Necessità, contingenza e provvidenza nell’universo di Tommaso d’Aquino*, p. 434).

divine action does not endanger the contingency but safeguards it: things are contingent precisely “because of the efficacy of divine will.”<sup>44</sup>

To corroborate my interpretation of *simpliciter* and *secundum quid* necessity, let’s see how that distinction is expressed by Aquinas himself in this text taken from the commentary on *De interpretatione*:

[U]nde non potest *simpliciter* <et> *absolute* dici quod “omne quod est, necesse est esse”, et omne “quod non est, necesse est non esse”, quia “non idem” significat quod omne ens, “quando est” sit ex necessitate, “et” quod omne ens “*simpliciter*” sit “*ex necessitate*”: nam primum significat *necessitatem ex suppositione*, secundum autem *necessitatem absolutam*.

One cannot *simply and absolutely* say that everything that is necessarily is and everything that is not necessarily is not, because it does not mean the same thing that “every being, when it is, is by necessity” and that “every being *absolutely is by necessity*,” since the first means *hypothetical necessity*, while the second means *absolute necessity*.<sup>45</sup>

Certainly, Porro knows well that the necessity that Aquinas admits for contingent things is a necessity “in the composite sense”<sup>46</sup> and that such necessity is therefore opposed to necessity “in the divided sense.” Despite this fact, as we had seen in the article he published in the same year as his book (the Italian version of the book was also printed in 2012), he called “absolute” the necessity imposed by the *lex necessaria* coined by him to describe the infallible plan of divine will. In any case, I think that even in the book the conditional necessity seems to be understood as if it were an absolute one: at the end of the day, for Aquinas even contingent things are necessary. If they are called “contingent,” it is a sort of compromise.

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<sup>44</sup> “[...] distinctio contingentium a necessariis [...] contingit *propter efficaciam divinae voluntatis*” (*S.Th.*, I, q. 19, a. 8, Ed. Leon., p. 244; I emphasize the text translated in the body). “Sicut enim dicit Dionysius, IV cap. *De div. nom.*, §33, col. 734, t. I [PG 3, 733B], non est providentiae naturae rei destruere, sed salvare” (*Super Sent.*, I, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, co., ed. Mandonnet, p. 932). See *De rationibus fidei*, ch. 7 and also *S.Th.*, I, 48, a. 2, ad 3, where he quotes the same text of *De div. nom.* Aquinas’ translation of the words of Ps. Dionysius seems a reference to Jn 12,47. Remember the well-known motto “*gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit eam*” (see *S.Th.*, I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2; consider also: “*gloria perficit naturam, et non destruit*”; *Super Sent.*, IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 3, ad 8, ed. Parmae, p. 1204).

<sup>45</sup> *Expositio Peryermeneias*, I, lect. 15, Ed. Leon., p. 81, 36–42; English trans. and emphasis are mine.

<sup>46</sup> P. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, p. 336.

The point of Aquinas is precisely the opposite: the “(hypothetical) necessity” of contingent things in God’s will and providence is extrinsic to them and it does not make them truly necessary. In fact, Aquinas is saying that divine causation is not perfectly understandable for us, since it is “outside the order of the entities.” Such transcendental agency cannot put either contingency or freedom in danger, because it is the one guaranteeing them. Such an action is outside our experience. It teaches us that if we control the effects of the instruments we use until the last detail, then the instruments do not act with internal spontaneity (e.g. a person guiding a donkey with a leash); if we give orders by leaving some freedom to them, then we are not able to determine the exact use of the instruments’ agency (e.g. if I order someone to go to the square without saying which street he should take, then I will not be able to determine the exact outcome of the process which I am producing). However, God acts in another way: He is able to determine all the details of the effects which are still spontaneously produced by secondary contingent or free causes. In a word, Aquinas puts us in front of a mystery.

## Conclusions

We have seen how Boethius helps Aquinas to understand the mystery of divine knowledge, which foreknows even future contingents. This combination between the necessity possessed by divine knowledge, insofar as infallibly determined, and the contingency belonging to certain things allows Aquinas to understand how a certain necessity in the sphere of the divine is compatible with contingency in the sphere of the creatures. Boethius, inspired by Neoplatonism, a philosophy that also permeates other important sources used by Aquinas in this field, like St. Augustine, gives St. Thomas the possibility of elevating the divine nature above every created being. Thus, God is established above all creatural order and, in this way, when our theologian moves from the problem of knowledge to the problem of will, he will be ready to understand that also divine will must be situated beyond every finite cause. It may have been Emesius of Emesa who helped Aquinas to elaborate this idea, although his own metaphysics of being undoubtedly oriented him to establish not only a very accurate concept of divine being but also of divine action.

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