R.J. Matava

Divine Causality and Human Free Choice. Domingo Báñez, Physical Premotion and the Controversy De Auxiliis Revisited. Leiden: Brill, 2016. Pp. 365. Hb, \$194.

By far the most vexing problem of late Scholastic philosophy and theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the issue of the reconciliation of divine causation of any created reality, on the one hand, and free human choice, on the other. Matava's book cuts right through the famous *de auxiliis* debate, on the operation of actual (as opposed to habitual) grace and the nature of human freedom (Chapter 1).

Among other things, the book is an excellent reconstruction of the thought of the Dominican Domingo Báñez and the Jesuit Luis de Molina, the two main proponents of the controversy and their mutual criticism of each other's theology (Chapters 2–4).

Favoring the Dominican position, in his study Matava looks for an adequate interpretation of the term *motio* in Aquinas (also called “application”). According to the latter, God moves each agent's active potency to produce its effect. As this applies to any agent, it is true also in relation to human will producing particular volitions. So the crucial issue at stake can be put thus: what does *motio* mean and how does God move the will to preserve its freedom?

For Domingo Báñez this divine causation or motion is realized through a special entity, called *premotio physica*, which predetermines the will to act in a specific way. The transition from being able to will to willing something implies a kind of increment in being, an added perfection, and thus cannot occur without divine intervention. Consequently, the premotion is efficient and infallible by its nature. The willing of this or that cannot not occur under its influence.

For the Jesuit Luis de Molina, this, in effect, destroyed libertarian human freedom which is inconsistent with any sufficient causal antecedents. Hence he rejected the predetermining impulse from God, the premotion of Báñez (as does Matava). The will acts on its own, determines itself, but God concurs with it in its action by conserving it and creating the being of its act (general simultaneous concurrence). God infallibly knows the future and providentially governs reality because he has infallible middle knowledge of what any possible free agent would freely do in any possible circumstances as well as the knowledge of his own decrees.

According to Báñez, Molina abandons the universal scope of divine causation. He also criticizes the concept of middle knowledge as ungrounded. Matava briefly surveys major contemporary objections to middle knowledge and finds them persuasive. So it seems that the *de auxiliis* debate ended in a

kind of impasse: either one safeguards libertarian freedom to the detriment of universal divine causation or *vice versa*.

For Matava, the way through the impasse of the *de auxiliis* debate is to be sought in abandoning some of the presuppositions of the debate. The chief villain is the idea that divine causality, divine *motio* of the human will, is realized through the created entity (premotion) within the physical order causally (not temporally) antecedent to the human choice. There are two problems with this account of *motio*: first, divine causation is modeled as a kind of change rather than creation *ex nihilo*. Thus God's causation is dragged into the physical order, resulting in a univocal concept of "cause." Second, the intrinsically efficient and infallible nature of premotion implies that there is sufficient antecedent to make the choice follow necessarily. The attempt of Bernard Lonergan to reinterpret the concept of *motio* in Aquinas's texts on divine concurrence with human free acts is treated with sympathy, but ultimately found wanting (Chapter 5). In a nutshell, it solves the first problem; however, the second remains. *Motio* does not mean that God acts on the secondary cause to elicit causal action (*premotio*), but that he is responsible for changing the secondary cause in some way so it can act itself (for instance, fire has to be brought into proximity with water in order for it to heat the water up). Consequently, the effect of the divine causation is not the particular choice, as in Báñez, but some other real change brought about in the secondary cause in order to explain why it transitions from not acting causally to acting. For Lonergan, God directly or indirectly brings about the antecedent external and internal factors necessary for free human choice to be able to occur: the willing of the end, the awareness and existence of the objective possibilities of choice, etc. While the factors required for choice are not necessitating, their intricate global arrangement or pattern (called fate by Lonergan) is sufficient for the particular choice to take place. Thus the interpretation is as odds with libertarian freedom.

Matava's own attempt (Chapter 7) is rooted in a fresh interpretation of Aquinas's texts (especially *Summa theologiae* 1, q 45, a 3) and yet another understanding of *motio* (Chapter 6). Recall that there were two problems with understanding *motio* as intrinsically efficient infallible physical premotion: first, that divine causation is not sufficiently different from the action of created agents. As in Báñez and Molina, and in contrast to Lonergan, for Matava the divine and human agencies extend to the same effect but are not of the same order. In contrast to Molina, they do not act as partial causes because the effect does not have two distinct parts. In contrast to Báñez, for Matava divine *motio* (application) is like creation *de novo* and conservation (continual creation), essentially a type of creation: creation of the agent as acting, in general, and a human as freely choosing, in particular. The latter distinctions are made

only from within the temporal order. From the point of view of the eternal God there is but creation.

The second problem concerned the existence of a sufficient temporal or natural antecedent of free choice. The solution, in a nutshell, is divine simplicity: Matava relies on Aquinas's understanding of creation as a real relation in the effect but only logical relation in God. Thus divine causation is not some *tertium quid* between God and free human choice; rather, divine action is identical with the divine essence, which remains the same in different modal contexts regardless of whether the effect obtains or not. Thus there is no antecedent of free choice in God threatening libertarian freedom.

All in all, the reviewed monograph presents a superb and most thorough historically grounded systematic philosophical defense of the Thomist line in the divine causation—human freedom debate to date. Its greatest merit lies in clear systematic expositions of the theses, arguments and objections. The work of the Jesuit giants, Molina and Lonergan, receives an extensive and fair assessment even though a Molinist might not always agree with the conclusions reached. The 350-plus-page tome is a true landmark for future research in the area.

Petr Dvorak

Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences

peterdvorak99@gmail.com

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00403007-07