

## DOES GOD KNOW THE FUTURE? AQUINAS AND SOME MODERNS

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QUE SARÀ, SARÀ—the sentiments of the popular song (and seemingly of much of the popular mind) suggest a future that is already determined and that will be, no matter what. Contemporary serious thought, by contrast, refuses this way of thinking and sees it as illusory. Logicians such as Henry Geach refer to the notion of a determinate future as “a dangerous piece of mythology” and dismiss any seeing of the future by either God or man as “a self-contradictory notion.”<sup>1</sup> The reasoning is that by definition the future as “that which is not but will be” does not exist: it lacks all actuality and so is in principle unknowable. God can no more know the future than He can know the past as never having been. This is understood as no diminishing of God’s omniscience nor of His control over the future: “God is almighty . . . God knows in advance all the possibilities and can do whatever he wills; so there is no doubt that he will win and he can even tell us how.”<sup>2</sup> Still, He does not know “the way things will definitely turn out, but only because . . . there is no such thing to be known.”<sup>3</sup>

The principle that undergirds this sort of thinking, scil., that only what exists actually can be the subject of infallibly certain knowledge, of the sort of cognition amounting to intuition or vision, is of ancient and noble parentage. Aristotle approximated it in the fourth century B.C. in his rejection of the Platonic forms; Aquinas re-presented it in effect in the thirteenth century in his notion of *esse* as act; and Whitehead offers what amounts to a twentieth-century version in insisting that what is knowable with certainty is a past *occasion*, i.e., a once actual occasion that has “perished,” apart from which there is only ideal knowledge as the entertainment of pure possibility. Allowing this principle, however, the question vis-à-vis God’s knowing of the future is whether events future to us might not be present and actual to God. The answer to this turns on what it means to speak of God as eternal. Modern thinkers tend to construe eternity as reducible to “timelessness”; God is eternal somewhat as we conceive numbers to be—number in the sense of the abstract mathematical measure as opposed to quantified realities, Aristotle’s *numerus numerans* in contrast to what he means by *numerus*

<sup>1</sup> Henry Geach, in his 1973 St. Thomas Day Lecture at Blackfriars, Oxford, published as “The Future” in *New Blackfriars*, May 1973, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

*numeratus*. For Geach, eternity appears to mean not only that God has no future of His own but that He stands outside of time; His relationship to time is accidental in the sense that He has no determining role in man's future other than knowing what transpires after the event and acting in a manipulative way upon a humanly determined course of events. In a somewhat similar vein, John Macquarrie views God as a chess player who continually counters the moves of men so that the outcome of the game remains in God's hands.<sup>4</sup>

Something very similar occurs with process philosophers and theologians. Whitehead locates eternity on the side of God's primordial nature, which is nonactual. Here God envisages mentally the realm of pure ideal possibility, but not in a way that bespeaks any actual or specific relationality to time. In His consequent nature, God does stand in relationship to a world of time, but this is only by way of (a) prehending values already achieved in the world and (b) supplying initial aims for actual occasions that indicate God's intentions for the future but do not allow for any sure knowledge of what that future is to be.<sup>5</sup> God is obligated to "trust the world for the achievement of that aim."<sup>6</sup> This emphasis upon creative becoming as ultimate category of the real enables Hartshorne to elaborate upon Whitehead by defining the future as "indeterminateness"; only the past is determinate and the present is the process of determination. For Hartshorne, God is not strictly a cause of what will be; He is limited to being a source of "adequate antecedent conditions" for what will eventuate. Thus He stimulates and guides history, and provides limits to what can occur. But the future remains indeterminate, lacking any specific order to actuality, and so is unknowable in principle even to God. When the future does come about, it will be novel and additive both to finite reality and to God.<sup>7</sup>

Other contemporary thinkers, however, prefer to take the very opposite

<sup>4</sup> *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York, 1966) p. 225.

<sup>5</sup> Whitehead's usual designation of God is as a "nontemporal actual entity," but he does not mean by this to exclude from God all temporality, but only that kind of time that is perpetual perishing. It is also true that in *Process and Reality* (Macmillan, 1929; Free Press edition, 1969) the initial aims of actual occasions are explained in terms of God's *primordial* nature as the locus of such ideal values. However, the primordial nature has influence only as a principle that is nowise an agent. Moreover, recent interpreters of Whitehead have indicated the logical necessity of appealing to the consequent nature as specifying the precise aim appropriate to each actual occasion; cf. John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia, 1965) pp. 176-214; Lewis Ford, "Divine Persuasion and the Triumph of Good," in *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought*, eds. D. Brown et al. (New York, 1971).

<sup>6</sup> Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (New York, 1941) p. 246.

approach and to think of God's eternity not as "timelessness" but as a sort of "primal temporality"—with nonetheless much the same conclusion regarding divine foreknowledge of the future. Inspiration for this derives to a considerable degree from Heidegger in a well-known footnote to *Sein und Zeit*, where he repudiates "the traditional concept of eternity in the sense of the stationary now (*nunc stans*)" and suggests that it should be construed philosophically "only as a more primordial temporality which is infinite."<sup>8</sup> Proper understanding of this introduces into God the distinction between His existence and His actuality, corresponding to the existenzial-existenziell structure within man, scil., the contrast between existentiality or essential structure on the one hand, and ontic existence or concrete actualization of that structure on the other. Thus God's actual involvement in concrete temporal events by way of His contingent acts traces back to His essential structure as primal temporality, wherein divine being as being-in-the-world (*in-der-Welt-sein*) is in real and necessary internal relatedness with everything else. God's being, then, in its existentiality is (like *Dasein*'s) "care" (*Sorge*). Such primal temporality is infinite and absolute in the sense that it is not itself dependent on anything else, whereas everything else is dependent upon and relative to it. Thus it constitutes God's distinctive being, His radical difference from all other historic beings.

Such temporality is existential time, constituted by experiencing itself, in which the future is reduced to a mode of present consciousness engaged in creatively achieving the future in a transcending of present limitations. This allows, even demands, that God act in finite history; moreover, it gives to God a certain transcendence over history; but the future remains indeterminate and open to the co-operative decisions of God and man. Indeed, God's own future remains open and yet to be achieved, and stands to the future of men merely by way of opening up possibilities to it. In the last analysis, it means in Schubert Ogden's phrase that "the final context of our finite decisions is God's own eternal life."<sup>9</sup> Here there can be no future infallibly foreseen by God.

The theologians of hope, notably Moltmann and Pannenberg, continue this emphasis upon creative becoming but in such wise as to give ontological priority to the future over the past and the present. By this they mean the eschatological or transhistorical future, but one already operative within present time. But that future is not yet and remains "an open realm of possibility that lies ahead and so is full of promise."<sup>10</sup> Thus it operates in time only *retroactively*, by coming to appearance within

<sup>8</sup> *Being and Time*, tr. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (New York, 1962) n. xiii, p. 499.

<sup>9</sup> *The Reality of God* (New York, 1966) p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York, 1967) p. 213.

history in an anticipatory way—most forcibly in that event which is the resurrection of Christ. Clearly this is an attempt to understand divinity in terms not of metaphysical ultimacy but of futurity: God is not “above” us but “ahead” of us. Here again, any genuine transcendence of God is collapsed into historical immanence; the most the former can mean is a relative pre-eminence within history.

This can be interpreted—as intended by Ernst Bloch in non-Christian, left-wing Hegelian terms—to mean only that the term “God” signifies some sort of ideal consummation of man’s future, that “in a distant future the transcendent will coincide with the immanent.”<sup>11</sup> Pannenberg himself does not preclude this construction when he writes that “God does not yet exist”;<sup>12</sup> in such an expression, “God” functions as a code word for man’s own future as one in which something radically new will occur whose force is already proleptically felt in the present, thus giving rise to hope as the basic human attitude of man as historical being. Such a future is transcendent only in the sense that it remains the unknown realization of possibilities that will break the confines of present limitations.<sup>13</sup>

Another interpretation, more tractable to Christian tradition, would ground such hope in God’s intention to act definitively in man’s future, an intention signaled by God’s *promise* to consummate history in some future eschatological event. But the promise is of an as yet undetermined fulfilment: “Christ did not rise into the Spirit or into the kerygma, but into that as yet undetermined future realm ahead of us which is pointed to by the tendencies of the Spirit and the proclamations of the kerygma.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, what is hoped for here is something that will radically break continuity with and be qualitatively different from that history which is now in the making: “the as yet unrealised future of the promise stands in contradiction to given reality,”<sup>15</sup> it is “to be born of a creative act of Yahweh upon his people beyond the bounds of the temporal and the possible,”<sup>16</sup> a creative act *ex nihilo*.

In any event, we are still speaking of a future that is only promised, one lacking all specificity and actuality, one that is understood as operative here and now solely in the sense that it is hoped for. It is without specific

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Louis Dupré, *The Other Dimension* (Garden City, N.Y., 1972) p. 468.

<sup>12</sup> This is Pannenberg’s doctrine of God developed in *Was ist der Mensch?* (Eng. tr., *What is Man?* [Philadelphia, 1972]); cf. the review of Pannenberg’s *Jesus: God and Man* by John B. Cobb, Jr., in *Journal of Religion* (April 1969), which clearly indicates that this is what Pannenberg means.

<sup>13</sup> Such an interpretation, which cannot be eliminated a priori from the work of Moltmann and Pannenberg, would appear to be a recasing of one strand of contemporary Marxist thought in a Christian vocabulary.

<sup>14</sup> Moltmann, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

content and so beyond all apprehension, human or divine. What God will do lies hidden in the dialectic of history as that sphere in which God will realize Himself. The most that can be said (on the basis of Christian hope) is that God will act in the cause of life and in conquest of the deadliness of death. What cannot be entertained is that God is presently implementing within time His freely chosen and eternally envisaged consummation of history.

Thus contemporary serious thought is practically unanimous in denying to God an infallible knowledge of the future, precisely because there is as yet no such thing, either within the existing temporal order (obviously) or within what has traditionally been known as the eternity of God.

#### AQUINAS

All of this is a reversal of the thirteenth-century thought of Thomas Aquinas. For Aquinas, God does know the entire course of the future down to the least detail of every event. As the Subsistent Act of Be-ing, God is the origin and sustaining ground of everything that "is." By definition, this does not admit of exception; thus it extends not only to substances but to activities, conscious as well as infraconscious, free as well as necessary or merely contingent. All free human activity that is yet to eventuate in time, then, first of all originates as predeterminations of the divine will in its transcendent creative freedom. Next, identity of divine intellect with divine will means that God knows all such determinations of His will. Lastly, eternity as an attribute of Being that is uncaused explains that all finite occurrences are present to God not sequentially but actually. Future events are before Him in the mode of presentiality, and thus are not known as merely possible but are "seen" in a true *scientia visionis*.<sup>17</sup> Eternity grounds, within divine existence, the simultaneity of all time—past, present, and future—so that events that have not yet occurred historically and which thus lack all *temporal* actuality nonetheless possess eternal actuality within the divine intentionality. The principle from which contemporary thought proceeds remains intact: Aquinas too insists that God "sees," that is, knows intuitively, only what is actual.

Thus we are left dialectically with contrary conclusions: Aquinas and the moderns as position and counterposition. Aquinas saves the transcendence of God; the moderns are obligated by logical necessity to compromise it. Obviously, however, the former creates a problem of its own: Can the Thomistic teaching be reconciled with any genuine notion of

<sup>17</sup> *Sum. theol.* 1, q. 14, a. 13, a. 8; cf. q. 86, a. 4; *1 Sent.*, d. 28, q. 1, a. 5; *Contra gentiles* 1, 67; *De verit.*, q. 2, a. 12; *De malo*, q. 16, a. 7; on eternity cf. *Sum. theol.* 1, q. 10.

human freedom—and, in light of this, is the doctrine of Thomas tenable?

Aquinas' eventual resolution of this aporia is by way of insisting that divine predetermination is not in conflict with man's self-determination. It is rather a precondition of the latter, and to fail to perceive this is to pose a false problem at the very beginning of critical reflection.

Thomas' own route to that conclusion, however, is one of gradual development. It is impossible to assign strict chronological stages to that process (they overlap); neither are the doctrinal positions sharply differentiated (later ones are anticipated earlier); but continual rethinking from distinct perspectives does result in a deepened understanding of the problem that is in fact a self-corrective process. In his earliest theological writing he is content to look upon the question of freedom and divine foreknowledge in Augustinian terms as merely a psychological problem of grace and sin. Very soon, however, the ontological problem does urge itself upon him, and here it seems possible to discern three relatively distinct phases in his thinking.<sup>18</sup>

1) In the *Scripta* on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (begun in 1252) and in the earlier questions of the *De veritate* (begun the year the *Scripta* was completed, 1256) the influence of Avicenna is pronounced,<sup>19</sup> enabling Thomas to maintain that "omnia providentiae subjacent."<sup>20</sup> But at the same time he is concerned to balance this with Aristotle's world of truly contingent realities enjoying their own proper existence and activity. Thus God's predetermination of things is general rather than universal; however man disposes of things in any particular sphere, nothing will escape in the end God's intentions for the whole of history.<sup>21</sup> At this point there is no evidence of an adequate theory of reconciling the two orders. Thus he can write in the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*: "multa fiunt quae Deus non operatur,"<sup>22</sup> and in the *De veritate* that the foreknowledge of God is not causal in all cases, and when it is, as in the case of the predestined, this is by way of exhortations and prayers.<sup>23</sup> Historically this antedates any knowledge by Thomas of what came to be known as Semipelagianism and its repudiation by the Church at the Second Council of Orange in 529.<sup>24</sup>

2) In the *Contra gentiles* (begun after completion of the *De veritate*, in

<sup>18</sup>The account of Aquinas' thought that follows owes much to Bernard Lonergan's work in the context of the distinct problem of *gratia operans* in St. Thomas, published originally in THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, 1941 and 1942, later in book form under the editorship of J. P. Burns as *Grace and Freedom* (New York, 1971).

<sup>19</sup>M. M. Gorce, in *Bulletin thomiste* 7 (1930), cited by Lonergan, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>20</sup>*I Sent.*, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2.      <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*I Sent.*, d. 47, q. 1, a. 2.      <sup>23</sup>*De veritate*, q. 6, a. 3.

<sup>24</sup>Lonergan locates the definitive repudiation of a semblance of Semipelagianism with *Contra gentiles* 3, 149 (*op. cit.*, p. 39, n. 63).

1259) and in the *Prima pars* (inaugurated in 1266) the divine causality is unambiguously said to be universal. Now Aquinas is writing his Christian *Summae*, and the dominant note is a God who transcends necessity and contingency. The contingency of the world is no longer due to secondary causes (as in Aristotle's accidentally contingent cosmos) but is attributed to God Himself.<sup>25</sup> God determines not only what happens but how it happens—necessary things necessarily, and contingent things contingently.<sup>26</sup> The universality of such causal determination means its infallibility. This is no violation of the will's liberty, because it is entirely noncoercive in kind. At this point Aristotle's concept of the will as passive potency is uppermost. As rational appetite, the will is indifferent to various courses of action (this is its radical freedom) and determination comes from the intellect. God moves the will freely precisely by moving it by way of the intellect. True enough, the intellect only gives the form of the operation (the *bonum apprehensum*); nonetheless Thomas gives priority to the intellect over the will. "Here there is no infinite regress, for understanding has an absolute primacy. For an act of knowledge must precede every movement of the will, but there does not have to be an act of will prior to every act of knowledge."<sup>27</sup> This explanation of things was earlier anticipated in some of the later questions of the *De veritate*.<sup>28</sup>

3) By the time of the *Prima secundae* (1269–72) it is clear that the will retains a radical control over its own act—though this position was even more strongly urged a bit earlier in the *De malo* (1266–67). The occasion may well have been a reaction against the determinism of the Averroists at Paris (as noted by Dom Lottin<sup>29</sup>), but the break-through rests upon distinguishing the order of specification from that of exercise. The role of the intellect is now entirely a directive one in the former order, one of supplying content. It is in the order of exercise that the will's freedom properly resides, and this is precisely active dominion over its own act—in short, self-determination. Without this, man is not free, but it remains created freedom, and so is unintelligible unless the will's transition from potency to act is explained. But now this is not due to the intellect but to the divine uncreated and creating activity.<sup>30</sup> The finite

<sup>25</sup> *Contra gentiles* 3, 94.

<sup>26</sup> *Sum. theol.* 1, q. 19, a. 8: "Non igitur propterea effectus voliti a Deo eveniunt contingenter quia causae proximae sunt contingentes, sed propterea quia Deus voluit eos contingenter evenire contingentes causas ad eos praeparavit."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3m.      <sup>28</sup> *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 12.

<sup>29</sup> "Liberté humaine et motion divine," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 7 (1935), cited by Lonergan, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>30</sup> *De malo*, q. 6, a. un. "Quantum ergo ad exercitium actus, primo quidem manifestum est quod voluntas movetur a seipsa; sicut enim movet alias potentias, ita et se ipsam

exists only *in* the Infinite but not *as* the Infinite (though the finite is not a necessary determination of the divine essence, as in the Hegelian dialectic, but a freely willed determination of the divine love). God's causal influx, remaining universal, is no interference with man's disposing of himself because of its transcendental; it is of an entirely different order. It is not extrinsic to the will (as is the case with all created agents) but entirely from within. A free human decision is not partly God's and partly man's, but entirely God's and simultaneously entirely man's.

The influence of Being-Itself is *toto caelo* different from all instances of finite causality; it remains unknown and in principle unknowable, beyond the pale of all human intuition or conception. Finite instances of causality merely offer a perspective from which it can be affirmed and designated, in what does not go beyond an analogy of attribution. One import of this is that to project causality upon God analogously is to eliminate from it the connotation of overcoming a natural resistancy in the effect (after the fashion in which fire overcomes the resistance of the log to the burning process). The conceptual model is origin, not in the sense of physical efficiency but in the sense of creation. This is to say, the issue is not a matter of becoming which characterizes all finite activity, but of being which *per essentiam* is proper to God alone. Another aspect is that divine activity is not anything temporal but totally outside time; time is itself part of the divine production. This too cannot be properly grasped in a concept, since all concepts deriving from sense intuition necessarily express within a time stream, but it can be named from the notion of time as "eternity." This means that it is somewhat imprecise to speak of God's *predetermination* or of His *foreknowledge*.

This absolute transcendence of God conveys that by definition He cannot be extrinsic to or in opposition to anything finite; rather He is present within the very occurrence of freedom, necessarily and according to His very substance as the origin and principle of freedom, not its limit or falsification. Our liberty as the free disposal of ourselves, at once our own and rooted in an inexhaustible source, is continually conferred on us as unexacted gift. It is not mere spontaneity in a world of pure becoming

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*movet. Nec propter hoc sequitur quod voluntas secundum idem sit in potentia et in actu. . . Relinquitur ergo . . . id quod primo movet voluntatem et intellectum, sit aliquid supra voluntatem et intellectum, scilicet Deus . . . (qui) etiam voluntatem movet secundum eius conditionem, non ex necessitate, sed ut indeterminate se habentem ad multa. . . Sic ergo quantum ad aliqua voluntas ex necessitate movetur ex parte objecti, non autem quantum ad omnia; sed ex parte exercitii actus, non ex necessitate movetur."* Cf. also *Sum. theol.* 1-2, q. 9, a. 1, where Aquinas is equally strong on reserving to the will active dominion over its own act, not however independently of the divine motion in the will.

(Whitehead), nor on the other hand is it mere self-assertion against *être en soi* as an irrational surd (Sartre).

## SECOND SCHOLASTICISM

The revival of Thomism in the late sixteenth century occurred in a cultural ambiance so altered that the questions urged theologically are by no means identical with those entertained by Thomas himself three centuries earlier. The Scholastics of the Counter Reformation faced an entirely new problem—largely created for them by the devaluation of human liberty on the part of the Reformers—and attempted to apply the principles of Aquinas to a problematic alien from the start to that within which the principles were originally devised. The upshot of this was a redefining of human freedom in limiting terms, so that God's predetermination of the human will now opposes the will's free determination of itself. Molina<sup>31</sup> (+ 1600) poses the problem in terms that strive to balance in tension two autonomous causalities, God's and man's. The result is the *scientia media*: God knows what the will is to do without any casual determination of it. Báñez<sup>32</sup> (+ 1604), allowing Molina to set the question for him, rescues the universal efficacy of God, but the price is the *praemotio physica*: God knows what the will is to do because He eternally moves it as a "motum, non se movens." Freedom is compromised in the Molinistic schema because God is enabled to foresee in the human will something that is simply not there, scil., that course of events to which the human will has not yet committed itself. The Báñezian scheme, perceiving the inadequacy of Molina's divine concursus, requires a physical premotion in which God alone is active and the will is entirely passive. In its own way, this too compromises the freedom of man's act, for the will is able to posit its own self-determinations only in a second moment (an *actus secundus*) under the determining premotion.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ludovicus Molina, *Concordia liberi arbitrii* (Rabeneck ed., Madrid, 1953).

<sup>32</sup> Domingo Báñez, *Comm. in Iam partem Summae theol.* (Urbano ed., Madrid-Valencia, 1934).

<sup>33</sup> Báñez is even willing to acknowledge that *in some sense* the future so determined by God is necessary. The *consequent*, i.e., the thing itself which eventually is chosen by man, is not such that it has to be; it is conceivable that the will not have chosen it at all, and so liberty is safeguarded. But the *consequence* is necessary, i.e., under the supposition that God premoves the will to a particular choice, that choice will be made infallibly. As premoved by God, the will is not free—but only in the sense that while actually choosing one course of action, the will is not free at the same time to choose an opposite course. St. Thomas himself more frequently speaks of a conditional necessity in this case ("necessitas ex suppositione") as opposed to an absolute one ("necessitas absoluta"); cf. *Sum. theol.* 1, q. 19, a. 8, ad 1m et 3m; q. 26, a. 6, ad 3m. At least once, however, he uses the very terms employed by Báñez ("necessitas consequentis," "necessitas consequentiae"); cf. *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, ad 13m, but this represents a relatively early phase in his work between 1256 and 1259, and the context of meaning is other than that which it has for

This should not be interpreted (as Báñez himself insists in his own defense) as if the will's freedom is nothing more than passivity to various divine determinations. Rather he makes clear that freedom is an indifference that is active in kind.<sup>34</sup> Still, the will is initially in potency and has to be first moved by God. So Báñez does posit a pure receptivity, preceding by a priority of nature the will's own activity. Moreover, what is received is motion, physical in kind, and something created.<sup>35</sup> This introduction of a created medium between God and will means that God's reduction of the will from potency to act is no longer conceived transcendently. The scholars of the Counter Reformation have introduced a new problem, and in the following terms: The finite will is in potency. Thus, it must be moved in every act by God. Therefore, either God moves it indifferently (Molina), leaving it up to the will to specify God's action; or God moves it determinately (Báñez), thereby negating that the will genuinely is self-determining.

Aquinas, by contrast, comes eventually in his developing thought to harmonize both truths: that God's efficacy is universal and infallible on the one hand, and on the other that man in his freedom determines himself. He does this by seeing God's actualization of the finite will as causality only in a transcendent sense. Unlike all finite agents that can cause only *ab extrinseco*, God causes *ab intrinseco*, in the sense that His moving of the will is nothing other than His creation of the very freedom exercised.

#### THE PROBLEMATIC IN CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

Are we in any more privileged a situation today vis-à-vis a resolution of this perduring question? In the sense of anything more than another tentative reach towards what remains a mystery, it would seem not. On the other hand, if the historicity of thought is indeed a real factor, our vantage point in time should be itself a new perspective on the thought of the past that may bring to light intelligibilities only latent and undeveloped there. One general perspective of this sort cannot be gainsaid: that shift in the thinking of being which constitutes meta-

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Báñez. At bottom, this is the same as the better-known Thomistic distinction *sensu composito-sensu diviso*, the will being necessitated in the first sense, remaining free in the second. In later Calvinist Scholasticism this came to mean that composing the divine premotion with the will's act resulted in the will's not having at such a moment any real potency to the opposite. The Thomist application was quite different and meant that in combination with God's premotion the will retained a *potency* for the opposite choice but could not actually elect the opposite as long as it continued to exercise in act its original choice.

<sup>34</sup> *Comm. in 1am 2ae Summae theol.*, q. 109, a. 1, n. 3 (de Heredia ed. 3, Madrid, 1948).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 2.

physics from the cosmological to the anthropological sphere, from nature to history, from the realm in which man exists alongside everything else to a specifically human realm in which man is a coconstitutor (with the given of nature) of his own world of meaning. For better or worse, the contemporary awareness of the positive value of historicity as distinguished from mere history, of time viewed less as Aristotle's *chronos* (a great tyrant to which man cannot but remain submissive) than as the biblical *kairos* (the free inner time of consciousness which leaves man creatively open to the future) must be given its due. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that the latter is situated in the former and is no negation of it on its own level; man's freedom, radicated in spirit, does not sever his ontic bond with a world of materiality. St. Thomas' own thinking of being does not explicitly prolongate itself in this way, though it can be argued that such a move is latent and unthematic in his thought.<sup>36</sup> One pointer in this direction is his clear distinguishing of two orders of being: the entitative and the intentional, that of objective being-there-ness and that of the subjective event of meaning as immanent to consciousness (only in God does there occur a real coincidence of these two orders).<sup>37</sup> Other indices are not lacking: the surmising that existence is act which opens the way to an understanding of historicity;<sup>38</sup> also the doctrine of personhood as neither essence nor existence but as an autonomy (a radical incommunicability) within a common nature reducible to relationality,<sup>39</sup> etc.

But does this throw new light on the question of God's knowing the future? Aquinas himself allows for only two possibilities: foreknowledge of things either in their proximate causes or in their transcendent divine cause. But the first alternative is impossible when the proximate cause is the human will which in its freedom has not yet determined itself, so that there is as yet no future to be known other than a merely possible one, about which there can only be conjecture. Accordingly Thomas opts for the second case<sup>40</sup> and then appeals to the transcendentality of God's causality to safeguard human liberty. The bipartite division, however, would appear to reflect a Greek dichotomy between necessity on the one hand and pure contingency on the other—a dichotomy in which perfection lies on the side of necessity, and the contingent is the domain of the imperfect. But is there not a third, intermediate possibility, one

<sup>36</sup> Cf., for one instance, J. B. Metz, "The Theological World and the Metaphysical World," *Philosophy Today* 10 (1966).

<sup>37</sup> *Sum. theol.* 1, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2m: "esse dupliciter dicitur: uno modo, significat actum essendi; alio modo, significat compositionem propositionis quam anima adinvenit conjungens praedicatum subjecto"; cf. q. 14, a. 1 & 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 3, a. 4.; q. 4. a. 1, ad 3m.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 29, a. 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 14, a. 13.

not explicitly adverted to in the above schema, and based upon an understanding of freedom as a self-positing and self-constituting act which in the finite sphere is made possible by, is limited by, and ever controlled by the creativity of God? God would then know the free future of man's history (*a*) not in the wills of men, which remain open to a future that is merely possible, (*b*) nor in His own divine will since this would amount to a predetermination of the future (*c*) but in dialectical encounter, wherein God, from His ontic situation outside history, enters it and interacts with men on the level of temporality. Without introducing temporality within His own inner reality, God (kenotically, as it were) opens Himself in and through the creature to an order of time and succession. This dialectical relationship is something directly intended by God in giving existence to a creature whose beingness formally participates in that of God Himself, scil., a beingness that is personal and free. To say that man is the *imago Dei* is to acknowledge, in an anthropology such as that of Karl Rahner at any rate, that man is God's *self*-utterance into the Void.

If this be taken to imply—as indeed it does—that God is in some sense determined by the creature in its response to the dialogue, then three qualifications must be borne in mind. (1) This is so only because God in His omnipotently creative love has willed to be so determined in the first place. (2) The determining powers of man are highly conditioned: (*a*) by the limitations of his nature, within whose parameters alone such freedom is exercised; (*b*) by God's having finalized (or better, "transfinalized," since we are here in the realm of grace) the goal of human history; and (*c*) by God's ultimate control over history as it in fact does unfold. (3) The area of determination regards not God's nature but His intentionality, not God in Himself but in His chosen relationality towards creatures. It is His knowledge and love which alter, not as subjective activity constituting divinity, but in terms of what objectively terminates and specifies that activity. In this sphere of intentionality, God determines Himself to be the sort of God He is by choosing to create this existing universe rather than any of an infinite number of other worlds possible to Him. This makes no difference to God's nature, not to His activity of knowing and loving, but it obviously makes a difference regarding what He knows and loves. Had God chosen not to create, or to create a different cosmos than the one we have, He would *in this sense* be a different God than He in fact is.

Now if self-determination within the created order necessarily means genuine novelty *in the world*, it would seem reasonable to conclude that while not allowing for novelty *within God*, this does mean that God assumes a novel relationality towards the world. He now knows (in the

mode of intuition) and loves what He did not so know and love before. This real alteration is not of God as nature or being but as answering to the concept of "person," of self-constitution, of the root source of subjectivity whence arises creative relationality to the other.<sup>41</sup> Thus man's making of his own future does make a difference to God in the sense of objectively determining what God's vision will behold and how His love will continuously transform it.

This view of things safeguards the transcendence of God in the face of its disappearance in much of contemporary thought. In opposition to Whitehead and Hartshorne, God is not here understood as infinite and in the process of acquiring His own perfection, but remains Pure Act eternally possessing within Himself the sum total of being and value, and in a fully actual way, that the world can ever reach and more besides. At the same time it allows that man can introduce genuine novelty into the world, i.e., something not determined by God beforehand. What is achieved in history is not a new acquisition *in* God, but does become a new acquisition *for* God in the finite realm. God becomes what He was not—not in Himself but in the world and in history. It is not simply the case that what is other than God changes, but rather that God changes—not in Himself but in the other and by way of the other.<sup>42</sup> God changes not absolutely but relationally, i.e., in terms of those dispositions of knowing and loving that He chooses to adopt towards a universe of creatures that in a finite and temporal way determine themselves.

In a very real sense, this means saying that God bestows upon the creature a share in His own creative power, which, however, the creature possesses only as "gift," one sustained within its transcendent source. But God cannot choose to assume a history in and through the creature without taking upon Himself the real limitations of finitude. His infiniteness of Being, Wisdom, and Love explains that He envisages the future in the full range of pure possibility (a *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*), but only subsequent to human decisions can God intuit (in a *scientia visionis*) what has in fact eventuated thereby. At the same time His providential care ceaselessly urges the course of human history to the maximum fulfilment of His vision. More than this, the promises of God assure us of His intentions to counter the negative moves of heedless men in such wise as to guarantee final triumph. Revelation (to men of faith) conveys that the purposes of God are saving purposes and that

<sup>41</sup> For St. Thomas, personhood within divinity is precisely constituted by subsisting relation: *Sum. theol.*, q. 29, a. 4. For a fuller development of this, cf. W. J. Hill, "Does the World Make a Difference to God?" *Thomist*, Jan. 1974.

<sup>42</sup> This is the express view of Karl Rahner; cf. "On the Theology of the Incarnation," in *Theological Investigations* 4 (Baltimore, 1966) 105-20. Rahner's consideration, however, is restricted to the instance of God's becoming other in Christ.

they shall prevail. But if this be taken in all seriousness, it means that God's temporal interaction with men derives from and will be consummated in a love that is not temporal but eternal. Divine love in its temporal aspect is then an "incarnation" of what God is in an eternal way; it is a particularization in created and human modalities of God as the transcendent ground of both being and becoming. But the concrete form of such particularizations God chooses to leave undetermined.

This need not be viewed as a collapse into Hegelianism, even that Christian version of Hegelianism which underlies much of the thinking of the theologians of hope. It is not the case that the Infinite becomes actual only as the finite. Rather the Infinite, eternally actual in Itself, becomes actual in a new and finite way with creation. It need not be said with Hegel that at one and the same time "man is not God"—religiously, and "man is God"—philosophically.<sup>43</sup> Rather the infinite qualitative difference remains. Pannenberg's understanding of his own repeated insistence that "God is the future" does not appear to escape this covert "anthropotheism." Taken literally, it means that what is to come as eventual triumph over present limitations is what a believer means by the term "God." It is in this sense that Pannenberg, with Moltmann, speaks of God as not existing, and of the present influx of God on the world as in fact the *retroactive* power of our future.<sup>44</sup> But man is not merged with the divine, precisely because the intrinsic infinity of the latter is actual in kind, entirely independent of man and world. It is simply that God's transcendent creativity is such that it can bestow upon the finite other a limited participation in its own purely actual freedom as the power of self-determination.

This brings to light another limitation shared by followers of both Whitehead and Hegel. For them, God's relationship to the world is necessary, a matter of intrinsic need. This compromises the divine transcendence, making it entirely relative in kind. What is called God's love for the world thereby loses its altruistic character; ultimately it is self-serving, reducible (in spite of an insistence to the contrary by Whitehead and Hartshorne) to Greek *eros* rather than to biblical *agape*.

<sup>43</sup>This would appear to be a quite legitimate interpretation of Hegel, who understands philosophy as a transfiguration, not a destruction, of faith: "Faith already has the true content. What is lacking in it is the form of thought" (*Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* 3 [London, 1895] 148), and then goes on in the famous passage from the *Encyclopedia* to indicate how philosophy transfigures the representational form with which religion describes the God-man relationship, as follows: "God is only God insofar as he knows himself; his knowing himself is, furthermore, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge of God that goes on to man's knowing himself *in* God" (sect. 564 of the *Enzyklopädie*; the above translation is that of Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel* [Garden City, N.Y., 1965] p. 275).

<sup>44</sup>Cf. n. 12 above.

In such a view man is not free to be man, because in the final analysis whatever future we are headed for is not man's future at all but God's. True enough—in the vision of things espoused in this essay, God acquires a history and one over which He exercises a lordship. But it is man's history that He takes upon Himself without despoiling it of its human character. Moreover, this occurs by an initiative of love in which man alone is made to be the beneficiary.

#### POSTSCRIPT

Undergirding the above thesis is a metaphysics which, without repudiating that adapted by Aquinas from Aristotle, extrapolated from the latter's science of physics concerned with a world of nature in which everything is marked either with necessity or with contingency, does move beyond it.<sup>45</sup> On the basis of the Judeo-Christian world view, it allows that his historicity and temporality are essential and not merely accidental to the specific beingness of man. Reality ultimately manifests a character that is not only thing-like but also event-like. Man's prior lodgement in the domain of matter and his oneness with the infraconscious cosmos cannot be ignored, but the Western religious vision focuses rather upon the world proper to man, the world of meaning, of freedom, and of personhood. As the ultimate natural entity, man transcends the nature of which he is part. In the sphere of historical consciousness man, at once individually and socially, "creates" himself with all the attendant risks implied therein. Moreover, this is the world that terminates God's continuing creation and which He assumes to Himself in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. As finite spirituality, man exists in virtue of the perduring presence to him of the divine Pure Act: (a) as the origin (efficient cause) of his very beingness in its properly human mode as free self-constitution, and simultaneously as (b) the destiny and term (final cause) of his historical dynamism. Far from

<sup>45</sup> The potency-act principle, e.g., so basic to the thought of both Aristotle and Aquinas, is retained intact here, without however being understood in such wise as to lead to Báñez's conclusions on physical premotion of the will. Originally discovered by Aristotle in the science of physics as a law of natural motion, it was extrapolated by him to metaphysics as a science of separated substances. But the Stagirite's thought about the realm of immateriality lacks any positive understanding of spirituality, of the character of personhood, and of freedom as something more than spontaneity. In the thought of St. Thomas these do begin to emerge, due in large part to a Christian influence on his metaphysics, now transformed into a science of being as being. The consequence of this is a gradual awareness of the limitations inherent in Aristotle's categories when it comes to reconciling divine causality with human liberty. Eventually Aquinas comes to view freedom as the will's *active* dominion over its own act. Its potentiality is not then a passivity demanding that it be physically premoved in every instance of operation, but means rather (a) that it reduces itself to act and (b) that it does not do so apart from God's transcendent activity as continually creative of finite freedom.

obliterating the radical otherness of divine and creaturely activity, the transcendental of the former rather grounds one of its effects in so eminent a way as to endow it with genuine creativity of its own. The open-endedness of a history man shapes by his own decisions does not then gainsay the universality of God's transcendentally creative activity. It is rather an index of the perfectness of God's creative act in the production of man, a consequence of a creative activity which is nothing less than God's *self*-utterance into the Void. Through man, God acquires a history open to novelty and creative advance, one not predetermined beforehand in every respect and in all its particulars. It is thus not exhaustibly knowable in a true vision or intuition prior to its temporal eventuation. Rather it is a history in which God, remaining ahistorical in His intrinsic being, interacts with man in free dialogic partnership. God remains the Lord of history, but by way of His creative adaptations to man's prior responses (including negative ones, those of malice and sin) to His own continuing initiatives of love.