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CONTINGENCY

AND

THE MODERN SCOLASTICS

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PROPOSITIONS

Forma et materia sunt sibi invicem causa.

Omne nomen cum defectu est.

Finis est nobilior iis, quae sunt ad finem.

Ea quae aliquando fuerunt vel erunt, licet de praesenti non sint, Deus cognoscit praesentialiter in sua aeternitate per scientiam visionis; quae vero neque sunt, neque fuerunt, neque erunt cognoscit per scientiam simplicis intelligentiae.

Quae sunt eadem uni tertio sunt eadem inter se.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

It is certainly true that in recent times an intense interest in Scholastic philosophy has revived and continues to gain momentum, to a certain extent even in secular circles where at least an indifference to such a movement might be generally expected. In a climate of careful study and of renewed emphasis on the value of adhering to authentic philosophical principles, once familiar truths are diligently explored with new respect and with an increasing recognition of their fruitfulness in any time.

The New Age of Scholasticism, if it is not too soon or gratuitous to give it this name, has been marked by the earnest efforts of serious thinkers to re-establish a sound learning and intellectual tradition in accordance with the doctrine and method of St. Thomas Aquinas. In view of this worthy intention to profit from the wisdom of the past, and the great intellectual good that can be accomplished by a faithful interpretation of the doctrine of St. Thomas and its application to modern philosophical questions, it is somewhat unfortunate and surprising if not remarkable that

on the important question of contingency there should exist a deep opposition between many modern Thomist philosophers and St. Thomas himself.

In a large number of recent and current scholastic manuals and books on philosophy, particularly on the Philosophy of Nature, one encounters a doctrine that reveals a completely deterministic interpretation of natural causality and the order of physical effects in the universe. In these writings it is quite generally taught that everything that takes place in the world of nature is completely determined in advance by the interaction of natural causes and properties; no future event is really uncertain in itself but is infallibly or necessarily pre-determined in the entire history of world factors and environment. To a divine intellect which would know all these world-components and influences, every future occurrence would appear inevitable and absolutely necessary.(1)

1. J. Maritain, Reflections on Necessity and Contingency, in Essays in Thomism (New York, Sheed and Ward, Brennan, 1942) p.27: "When a certain bee visits a certain rose at a certain instant of time, we say that the event is contingent. Still, neither the rose nor the bee is a free agent; everything which befalls them is determined by the meeting or the interaction of properties of the nature of each and of the actions occasioned by the environment. As a result, to a divine intellect which would know absolutely all the ingredients of which the world is made, all the factors involved in the world and the entire history of all the successions of causes which have been evolved in the world since its beginning, the visit of that bee to that rose at that particular instant would appear as an infallibly or necessarily determined event."

This view, which is contrary to the most fundamental principles of the Philosophy of Nature, although it is representative of many modern scholastics, is not new to philosophy or to Scholasticism; the same opinion was held by certain ancient Greek philosophers. And even after Aristotle's refutation and resolution of this position and the profound words of St. Thomas on this subject in his commentaries on Aristotle, in the Summa and elsewhere, one finds the same thing taught by Suarez, who held that an effect which is contingent with respect to a proximate cause is necessary when compared to the total order and series of causes in the universe, if no free agent intervenes.(2)

Thomistic writers teach further, as a logical consequence, that the sole condition required for the prediction of any future event in nature, even the effects of chance, is a sufficient knowledge of the physical universe. It is admitted that this knowledge happens to be inaccessible to man, but the unavoidable ignorance does not alter the strict necessity that governs the future as well as the past and the present; if man could have a thorough grasp of the causes

2. Disputationes metaphysicae, disp.XIX, sect, par 5: "...Effectus qui est contingens respectu causae proximae naturaliter operantis, si comparetur ad totum ordinem ac seriem causarum universi, et in his causis nulla intercedat libere agens, saltem ut applicans alias causas vel removens impedimenta, non habet contingentiam sed necessitatem."

at work in the world, and if his knowledge could embrace completely the initial state of things in creation, the future down to the last minute occurrence in nature could be unerringly predicted.

The only effects that are admitted to be really indeterminate and unpredictable in themselves are those that proceed from the freedom of the will. Even on this point there is confusion between the event that is unforeseeable because it is free and the incident that cannot be predicted because it is accidental, or fortuitous. Actually, the former kind of effect is contingent on the free extrinsic causality of the will, while the latter is undetermined and contingent because of the intrinsic limitation of the agent. This distinction is completely missed by those modern thomists who speak only of the first kind of contingency, which is not contingency in the strict sense but completely compatible with an absolute necessity, as will be shown.

Although accidental happenings, whether they be in nature or human activity, are not the only ones that can claim an intrinsic lack of necessity; every natural effect being contingent to the extent that it proceeds from a defective cause and can thus fail to come about, purely casual or fortuitous events are still the most contingent and least determined of the things that come to pass.

Indeed, they are not determined at all in any created cause or series of causes. But claiming as they do, the existence of a perfect determination in nature, modern scholastic writers are quite logically forced to deny the reality of chance, as well as the contingency of those effects that are intended by nature. For if natural activity is completely determined, chance and contingency have no chance, but are impossible - "In his enim quae in minori parte accidunt, dicitur esse fortuna et casus. Si autem non provenirent aliqua ut in minori parte, omnia ex necessitate acciderent; nam ea quae sunt contingentiae ut in pluribus, in hoc solo a necessariis differunt, quod possunt in minori parte deficere." (3)

The negation of chance and, implicitly, of fortune, by denying the principle of indetermination underlying both, namely the limitation and imperfect actuality of created causes, would in fact lessen the wisdom of divine providence. (4) This appears to be the most serious consequence of the modern scholastic teaching even if it is not the most evident, for the infinite wisdom of the Creator is more marvelously unveiled in the apparently absurd and in the accidental events that come to pass according to His design, than it is in the

3. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, III, c.74
4. ibid.; "Esset autem contra rationem providentiae divinae si omnia ex necessitate contingerent, ut ostensum est. Igitur et contra rationem providentiae divinae esset si nihil foret fortuitum et casuale in rebus."

regular, "rational" occurrences for which men can give immediately some reason within the world. God puzzles the wisdom of this world in one way by being the per se immediate cause of things that appear foolish to human wisdom since no created cause can be assigned for their coming to be. But in recalling that only God can be the determinate and per se cause of that which is in itself contingent, attention is drawn to God's infinite perfection and providence, for the purely contingent event cannot be referred to any created cause acting per se; it has its reason only in the divine intellect and will. Moreover, if the knowledge of the future that a divine intellect would have is to be based on "all the ingredients of which the world is made, all the factors involved in the world and the entire history of all the successions of causes which have been evolved in the world since its beginning,"(5) this not only implies that all these factors and causes are absolutely necessary (for otherwise the future would not be determined and hence, not knowable with certitude), but it also implies an imperfection and passivity in divine knowing if God's knowledge is thus made to depend on the things themselves, past and present, in order to know the future.

5. J. Maritain, <u>loc.cit.</u>, - see footnote 1.

But God does not know the future things as well as those which are past and present simply because He sees them in his eternal science; He knows them in as much as He is their cause by His science and will, and sees them in His eternity as the measure of His causality. It is not only free decisions that God knows only in Himself, but any future contingent event. Note too that if the series of causes and factors is not absolutely necessary, the science that God has of the future is imperfect and only conjectural if it must depend on these causes and factors. - "...Quicumque cognoscit effectum contingentem in causa sua tantum, non habet de eo nisi coniecturalem cognitionem."(6)

Perhaps an overbearing desire for clarity in all things even where no clarity could be found, has led many modern Thomists to seek a complete rationality in the operations of nature. This same inordinate desire for clarity -- it may even be that there is an unwillingness to admit that this clarity is hard to obtain, for if this were the case it might explain the superficial understanding of such really difficult things as natural causality, which these scholastic writers seem to exhibit(7) - could also explain why some modern

6. St. Thomas, Ia, Q.14, a.8, c

7. Would it be appropriate to quote here St. Thomas' words in the Ethics? - "...Ad hominem disciplinatum, idest bene instructum, pertinet, ut tantum certitudinis quaerat in unaquaque materia, quantum natura rei patitur. Non enim potest esse tanta certitudo in materia variabili et contingenti, sicut in materia necessaria, semper eodem modo se habente. Et ideo auditor bene disciplinatus, non debet majorem certitudinem requirere, nec minori esse contentus, quam sit conveniens rei de qua agitur." (I, lect.III, n.36)

scholastics have been moved to substitute metaphysics for the whole of philosophy; to the utter impossibility of achieving distinct knowledge of any kind, least of all about being as being, which is the subject of the very last natural science to be acquired by man.

The deterministic outlook on the universe, which modern scholastic writers maintain, simply cannot be reconciled with the teaching of Aristotle and St. Thomas, who insist on the intrinsic lack of necessity in future contingent events whether they are considered in relation to proximate causes alone or with reference to the whole of nature. The reason is definitive: Natural causes, acting for an end, achieve their effects only in the majority of cases and not always; they do not cause with an absolute necessity because of the contingency or lack of determination in the form itself, which is not sufficiently actual or determined to individuate itself, and because of the indetermination of matter, which is never completely dominated by the finite agent or exhausted by the natural form.

The attempt to set aside the contingency and indetermination of form and matter respectively, by introducing some absolutely necessary constellation or series of causes by which natural activity would be perfectly determined and necessitated is really a denial of the reality of individual nature in the sense of "principium motus et quietis in eo in

quo est, primo et per se et non secundum accidens"; for where there is perfect necessity and determination there is no purely natural form or matter. This is equivalent to obtaining a necessary cause by the addition of contingent ones. St. Thomas has clearly rejected this view which is plainly that of many modern thomists, as it is hoped will be shown in sufficient detail.

There are at least three reasons for undertaking a critical study of the modern scholastic teaching on contingency: The first of these is to show that this teaching would destroy the principles and science of nature by suppressing its very subject qua composed of matter, form and privation; the second is to make it clear that although it is presented by thomists, it is not the doctrine of St. Thomas; the third reason for the study is to show that this false doctrine of contingency implicitly denies the absolute universality of divine causality and the incommensurable wisdom of divine providence.

It is not to be inferred that modern thomists knowingly subscribe to these logical consequences of their teaching, or even that all of them hold the same general view. Our aim is to show that the position of many modern scholastics either leads to these conclusions or states them in another form; - that their doctrine is not always based on the teaching of St. Thomas, which, on this score, is derived directly from Aristotle,

and that on the whole it has nothing in common with it.

A few remarks must be made about the order of the chapters to follow. Chapters I and II together serve as a general introduction. In Chapter I, logical possibility is discussed as that which is common to necessary and contingent being, in order to bring out the foundation of extrinsic contingency in the liberty of contradiction possessed by free agents, and especially in the divine omnipotence, as a free, active, extrinsic cause in relation to which all creatures are contingent. The meanings of the terms to be used throughout are explained in this chapter.

Chapter II begins with a study of the physical possibility that is founded on an active potency, in terms of which extrinsic contingency is defined. A general division of contingency follows and the chapter concludes with a preliminary examination of the possibility and contingency that is rooted in an intrinsic, passive principle, in opposition to that which depends on a positively indeterminate active principle, previously discussed in the same chapter.

In Chapter III, the first direct reference is made to modern texts. In the first part of this chapter two kinds of necessity are defined and explained in the light of St. Thomas's teaching. In the second part of the chapter the teaching of modern scholastics on necessity is examined in relation to the doctrine of St. Thomas. The last part of this chapter deals

with the particular question of the "hypothetical necessity of the laws of nature". The discussion does not presuppose the meanings attached to this expression as it is used in the experimental sciences but deals with its interpretation in a philosophical context as presented in many modern scholastic manuals.

The aim of Chapter IV is to discuss briefly the kind of contingency proper to nature from the viewpoint of positive and negative indetermination and finality.

With Chapter IV as a preamble, Chapter V constitutes a critique of the modern scholastic position from the standpoint of what accidental causality is. Since casual and fortuitous events are the most evident forms of contingency, it is here that the errors of the modern teaching on this question are most clearly seen.

The last part of the final chapter is also the conclusion to the whole work. It deals with the impossibility of having a created per se cause for the purely accidental effect, and the ordination of casual and fortuitous events by a superior cause acting per se. It is hoped that the summary character of this section will be evident from the content.

Generally speaking, in addition to undertaking an analysis of the modern scholastic teaching, an attempt has been made to give the true doctrine of Aristotle and St. Thomas on contingency - certainly not in any exhaustive

manner. Despite the fact that the presentation is imperfect and far from profound, if, in order to avoid error and arrive at truth, the importance of being faithful to the letter of St. Thomas has been in some small measure made more evident, then the work has not been in vain. Quite the contrary, for today this spirit of docility to an intellectual master, in order to advance in knowledge and wisdom, is one of the most difficult things upon which to obtain agreement.

CHAPTER I

LOGICAL POSSIBILITY

1. Potency and possibility

Before we can give an explanation of logical possibility it will be necessary to discuss the various modes of potency, for as St. Thomas says in his commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle, "...Cum potentia tot modis dicatur, possibile etiam et potens pluribus modis dicetur."(1) The order of learning will be observed if we first divide potency into its modes and define each of these in turn.

There are four kinds of real potencies. The first is a principle of movement or change in another in as much as it is other.(2) This kind of potency is active and resides in the agent or mover as such. Thus, when something moves another or changes it in some way, the power that is in the agent in virtue of its form is a principle of the movement or change. A carpenter, for example, has the power to make a table, and fire has the power to burn wood.

1. St. Thomas, In V Metaphysicorum, lect.XIV(ed Cathala), n.961
2. Ibid., n.955: "...Primus est, quod potentia dicitur principium motus vel mutationis in alio inquantum est aliud."

The second kind of potency is a principle of change or movement from another in as much as it is other.(3) This potency is passive and is in the thing that is moved according as it is moved. The capacity of wood to be burned or to be shaped a certain way by the carpenter, is a passive principle of change in the wood.

Sometimes both the active and the passive potency are found in the same subject. In the case of a doctor who cures himself, for instance, the art of medicine which he possesses as a doctor is the active principle of his curing himself. It is only accidental, however, that the condition of illness, which is the passive principle of the change, be found in the same person.(4) It is for this reason that the phrase <u>in as much as it is other</u>(5) is included in the definition of each kind of potency. In the example just given the capacity to be cured is not in the man as a doctor but rather as someone who is ill.

3. St. Thomas, <u>In V Metaphys.</u>, lect.XIV, n.956: "...Alio modo dicitur potestas principium motus vel mutationis ab altero inquantum est aliud. Et haec est potentia passiva..."

4. St. Thomas, <u>In II Physicorum</u>, lect.I, n.5: "Contingit enim aliquando quod aliquis medicus est sibi ipsi causa sanitatis; et sic principium suae sanationis est in eo, sed per accidens...Non enim secundum quod sanatur habet medicinam, sed secundum quod est medicus; accidit autem eundem esse medicum et sanari..."

5. St. Thomas, <u>In IX Metaphys.</u>, lect.I, n.1776: "... Possibile est quod principium activum simul sit in ipso mobili vel passo, sicut cum aliquid movet seipsum; non tamen secundum idem est movens et motum, agens et patiens. Et ideo dicitur quod principium quod dicitur potentia activa, est principium transmutationis in alio inquantum est aliud; quia etsi contingat principium activum esse in eodem cum passo, non tamen secundum quod est idem, sed secundum quod est aliud."

Similarly, the art of medicine, the active principle of the change, is not in the man as someone ill but in so far as he is a doctor. In other words the doctor cures himself as a doctor but is cured as a person who is ill. If the doctor were not, as a doctor, other than himself, as a sick person, only those who are ill could be doctors, and only doctors could be ill.

A third kind of potency is a principle of acting with ease and efficiency or undergoing a change without opposition.(6) This kind of potency can be either active or passive; an example of the first would be the ability to play a musical instrument well and with ease; the property possessed by soft wood to burn easily would be an example of the passive potency defined here. If either of these potencies is absent in a subject, the opposite effect results; for example, someone who does not have musical talent may play an instrument but only with some difficulty, and the wood that is not soft is harder to burn than the other. This potency, then, makes an active potency more active and a passive potency more passive.

There is, finally, a fourth kind of potency that is any form or disposition by which a thing is incorruptible, or more

6. St. Thomas, In V Metaphys., lect. XIV, n.959: "Dicit quod alia potestas dicitur, quae est principium faciendi aliquid non quocumque modo, sed bene...Et (similiter)...Dicitur enim aliquid posse pati illud quod bene potest pati."

or less immobile.(7) An example of this is any durability that a thing has; we might cite the incorruptibility of the intellect or the stability of a certain government or even the permanent qualities of certain materials if these qualities are desirable. This principle is assimilated to the degree of actuality that a thing has, for it is in relation to act that a thing is perfect. When something is defective it is rather because of some impotency or lack of actuality. This should be pointed out here in order to keep this kind of potency distinct from the preceding one, which is sometimes active, sometimes passive. A man who is always in good health would be said to possess this fourth kind of potency or power, while one who is habitually ill would not have it in terms of physical condition.

In addition to the four kinds of potencies that have been already mentioned, there are two others that are called potencies only in an improper sense, that is, metaphorically. They are given the name of potency because they are in a way similar to true principles. Thus, in geometry a line is said to be a square in potency, and in arithmetic three is said to

7. St. Thomas, op.cit., n.969: "Dicit quod etiam potestates dicuntur omnes habitus sive formae vel dispositiones, quibus aliqua dicuntur vel redduntur omnino impassibilia, vel immobilia, aut non de facili mobilia in pejus."

be nine in potency because multiplied by itself it equals nine.[8] Secondly, in regard to the non-repugnance of terms in a proposition, we can speak of a certain potency because the terms have the capacity to be composed if what they signify is not contradictory.[9] One of the terms, however, is not the principle of the other, nor are they together the principle of their composition. Nevertheless, the subject "man," for example, has the capacity to be joined to the predicate "animal," and vice versa; if not, the proposition, "man is an animal," would be false. Here, although it is the domain of ens verum, there is a similarity to true principles and true potencies; the capacity of terms to be composed is similar to and based upon the capacity of the things signified to be composed in physical reality.

8. St. Thomas, In IX Metaphys., lect.I, n.1774: "In quibusdam enim dicitur potentia non propter aliquod principium habitum, sed propter similitudinem quamdam, sicut in geometricis. Dicitur enim potentia alicujus linese esse quadratum ejus; et dicitur quod linea potest in suum quadratum. Et simili modo potest dici in numeris, quod ternarius potest in novenarium quod est quadratum ejus, eo quod ex ductu ejus in seipsum facit novenarium. Ter enim tria novem faciunt."

9. St. Thomas, ibid., lect.I, n.1775: "Similiter in logicis dicimus aliqua esse possibilia et impossibilia, non propter aliquam potentiam, sed eo quod aliquo modo sunt aut non sunt. Possibilia enim dicuntur, quorum opposita contingit esse vera. Impossibilia vero, quorum opposita non contingit esse vera. Et haec diversitas est propter habitudinem praedicati ad subjectum, quod quandoque est repugnans subjecto, sicut in impossibilibus; quandoque vero non, sicut in possibilibus."

Besides the four modes of real potency, then, all of which are principles of real being, there are these two latter potencies, one mathematical the other logical, which are named potencies equivocally, according to a certain similarity.

The real potencies establish the foundation of real possibility; those that are potencies in an equivocal way enable us to speak of a logical possibility and a mathematical possibility. In order to orient our discussion and maintain the same order of presentation, we shall first treat briefly the possibility that is related to a real potency, examining each mode in turn. Then we shall take up in detail the question of logical possibility.

Note that the brief discussion of real or physical possibility that is to follow is undertaken first because physical possibility is better known to us. The extensive treatment of this kind of possibility, however, will be the subject of the second chapter. The reason for this twofold order is that, on the one hand, as mentioned, physical possibility is better known to us than logical possibility; it should, therefore, be studied first, at least briefly. On the other hand, the logical possible is a kind of genus, embracing both necessary and contingent being; from this point of view it may be studied first. Now since this dissertation does not deal primarily with potency and possibility, but rather with necessity and contingency, and chiefly the latter, the second order

is the more appropriate and the one required for our purposes. This means simply that the order that must be observed in this chapter is different from the order of the entire essay. The principle that we must proceed from what is more known to us is then not violated.

The multiplicity of the modes of real potency is analogical and all the modes are reduced to the first as to a principle. Potency is said, first of all, of the active potency, and the term is applied to the other modes by way of analogy.(10) According to the first mode of potency things are said to be possible per potentiam in altero, since the possibility attributed to them is not from an intrinsic principle but from the potency or power of causality in another.(11) Thus, a thing is called possible according as it is or can be subjected to the causality of another. For example, it is possible that a lawbreaker be more or less severely punished in terms of the power and authority of the judge.

10. St. Thomas, In IX Metaphys., lect.1, n.1776: "His ergo modis praetermissis, considerandum est de potentiis, quae reducuntur ad unam speciem, quia quaelibet earum est principium quoddam, et omnes potentiae sic dictae reducuntur ad aliquod principium ex quo omnes aliae dicuntur. Et hoc est principium activum...Et inde patet quod haec multiplicitas non est secundum aequivocationem, sed secundum analogiam."

11. St. Thomas, Ia, Q.9, a.2, c.: "Sciendum est enim quod mutabile potest aliquid dici dupliciter: uno modo, per potentiam quae in ipso est; alio modo, per potentiam quae in altero est."; In IX Metaphys., lect.1, n.1782: "Potentia vero activa est in agente, ut calor in calefactivo, et ars aedificativa in aedificante."

A second kind of possibility is derived from the second mode of potency, which is an intrinsic principle. In relation to this potency a thing is called possible per potentiam in se passivam.(12) To burn wood, for example, is possible because there is a passive principle in the wood that enables it to receive the action of an active cause, fire.

A third kind of possibility corresponds to the fourth mode of potency, which is that principle in a thing that renders it immobile or not easily corruptible. The intellect, for instance, cannot be corrupted since it is not joined to an organ. This potency or power is due, not to the matter, but to the form. It is not possible to burn metals, generally speaking, since they have the capacity to resist active causes that corrupt other materials.

The fourth mode of real possibility corresponds to the third mode of potency, and is derived from the principle that enables a thing to act efficiently or to undergo a change easily. An example of the latter is the possibility of burning very combustible materials, such as soft or dry wood; of the former, the high degree of efficiency possessed by an intense flame.

12. St. Thomas, In IX Metaphys., lect. I, n.1782: "Potentia enim passiva est in patiente, quia patiens patitur propter aliquod principium in ipso existens, et hujusmodi est materia."

These four kinds of possibility are denominated real in as much as they follow from some real potency. With these preliminary notions in mind we can now proceed to the principal subject of this chapter.

2. The Logically Possible is defined according to a non-repugnance of terms, and abstracts from real existence.

The logically possible, which is not derived from a real potency, is a possible that is defined according to a non-repugnance of terms. Such possibility prescinds from any real potency or principle of actual existence. It should be noted here that being is said not only of that which exists in nature, but also of the composition of terms in a proposition; being is thus divided in one way into ens reale and ens verum. According to the second member of the division, the truth of a given proposition is its being, while the falsity of another proposition is the same thing as non-being. Possibility and impossibility, then, are spoken of not only with reference to potency or impotency on the part of some thing, but also with reference to the truth or falsity of a proposition.

> Respondeo. Dicendum, quod, secundum Philosophum (in V Metaph., text. 17), possibile et impossibile dicuntur tripliciter. Uno modo secundum aliquam potentiam activam vel passivam; sicut dicitur homini possibile ambulare secundum potentiam gressivam, volare vero impossibile. Alio modo non secundum

> aliquam potentiam, sed secundum se ipsum, sicut dicimus possibile quod non est impossibile esse, et impossibile dicimus quod necesse est non esse. Tertio modo dicitur possibile secundum potentiam mathematicam quae est in geometricis, prout dicitur linea potentia commensurabilis, quia quadratum eius est commensurabile. Hoc autem possibili praetermisso, circa alia duo consideremus.
>
> Sciendum est ergo quod impossibile quod dicitur secundum nullam potentiam, sed secundum se ipsum, dicitur ratione discoherentia terminorum...(13)

According as various kinds of possibility refer to some real potency, they fall within the realm of real being which is divided into necessary and contingent things. Ens verum, however, is real only in the sense that creatures which are possible logically or absolutely, all have an essence capable of existing whether they will ever exist or not.

The logically possible abstracts from the real existence of things; consequently, things which will actually exist at some future time or which already exist, as well as those which have purely possible existence and will never exist, are possible absolutely in as much as none of them is contradictory.

> Dicitur autem aliquid possibile vel impossibile absolute, ex habitudine terminorum, possibile quidem, quia praedicatum non repugnat subjecto, ut Socratem sedere; impossibile vero absolute, quia praedicatum repugnat subjecto, ut hominem esse asinum. (14)

13. St. Thomas, Q.D. de Potentia, q.I, a.3, c.; see also John of St. Thomas, Cursus theologicus (ed. Solesmes), T.III, p.578a.

14. St. Thomas, Ia, Q.25, a.3, c

This possibility does not include in its concept determination to being or to non-being, and since it is not derived from a real potency as from a principle, it is said to be secundum se ipsum.(15) Logical possibility, then, is common and absolute. It is applied not only to actual and potential creatures but also to God Himself. It should be understood, not in opposition to the necessary but rather to the impossible. Thus, when we speak of the possibility of composing terms in a proposition we are not necessarily discussing anything that is to placed in reality: We may refer to the being of a proposition and to the being of an animal; the difference is that in the first case the word "being" is used in the sense employed when we say, "negation is the opposite of affirmation," or, "blindness is in the eye"; in the latter case, when referring to the "being" of an animal, the term is used according to its first imposition or signification, in which it means something existent. The logical possible refers to the kind of being which is identified with the non-repugnance of terms. Hence, it is not a question of real or physical possibility since it is not a question of real being.

But is there not a sense in which the logically possible is also really or physically possible, in as much as God can

15. St.Thomas, op.cit., ad 4: "Dicendum quod possibile absolutum non dicitur neque secundum causas superiores, neque secundum causas inferiores, sed secundum seipsum."

make whatever is not contradictory? Is it not precisely in this way that St. Thomas treats the question of divine omnipotence?[16] How can the logical possible be distinguished from the physical possible per potentiam in altero, if the active potency be taken to mean nothing other than God's power to create? And if God is logically possible, as He must be, will we not be obliged to say that He is the object of His own active power?

As has been explained, a thing is said to be possible in relation to some potency that can produce it. Thus, many things are within man's power. But we cannot say that God is omnipotent because he can produce whatever is possible in relation to His power, for such an argument is plainly circular. This is nothing other than saying that God is omnipotent because He is able to do whatever He is able to do. It must be said rather that God is omnipotent in as much as He is able to do whatever is possible, absolutely.[17] Here it is a question of the possible that is not referred to a potency but is defined logically, from the non-contradiction of the terms proposed. Thus, whatever is not contradictory falls within

16. Ia, Q.25, a.3, c

17. Ibid., corpus: "Relinquitur quod Deus dicatur omnipotens, quia potest omnia possibilia absolute, quod est alter modus dicendi possibile. Dicitur autem aliquid possibile vel impossibile absolute, ex habitudine terminorum; possibile quidem, quia praedicatum non repugnat subjecto,...impossibile vero absolute, quia praedicatum repugnat subjecto,..."

the infinite power of the Creator. How exactly does this resolve the difficulty?

St. Thomas explains that since the object of an active potency is ens factum, no active potency can have for an object that which is contrary to being as such.(13) Now whatever removes the very notion of being is contrary to it, as non-ens removes ens. Thus we cannot say that it is in God's power to make one and the same thing to be and not to be at the same time and in the same way. Hence, to assert that God can be the object of His own power is false, for this would be to remove by contradiction God as uncaused. That God be the object of His own power, therefore, is impossible, since the notion of caused being implies dependence on another, on a cause.(19) For the same reason God cannot make a being equal to Himself.

In his commentary on the question of the divine omnipotence, Cajetan says that we must understand all possible things, all beings, everything not implying contradiction, to

18. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, II, c.25: "Quia potentiae activae obiectum et effectum est ens factum, nulla autem potentia operationem habet ubi deficit ratio sui obiecti, sicut visus non videt deficiente visibili in actu: oportet quod Deus dicatur non posse quicquid est contra rationem entis inquantum est ens, vel facti entis inquantum est factum. Quae autem sint huiusmodi, inquirendum est."

19. ibid.; "Ex hoc autem patet quod Deus non potest facere Deum. Nam de ratione entis facti est quod esse suum ex alia causa dependeat. Quod est contra rationem eius quod dicitur Deus, ut ex superioribus patet. Eadem etiam ratione, non potest Deus facere aliquid aequale sibi."

be the object of divine power only in so far as such things can be conceived as effectively causable.[20] In other words, anything that is possible absolutely, is also possible with reference to the active potency of God, provided that it can be an effect. But God is not caused or causable, moved or movable; therefore, He cannot be the object of any potency, even His own, since God cannot be an effect. Absolute possibility is predicable of God but not the possibility that is derived from a real potency. What then is the root of this possibility which embraces everything that is not contradictory, being prior in a certain sense, to the divine omnipotence itself?

John of St. Thomas, in his own penetrating commentary, explains that logical possibility is a possibility that is presupposed to the divine omnipotence considered as it is an executive power distinct from the other attributes; it is a possibility consequent upon the divine omnipotence taken radically, which is nothing other than the divine

20. Ia, Q.25, a.3, commentary of Cajetan, n.5: "Circa praedictam assignationem obiecti divinae potentiae, dubium occurit. Quia si omne possibile absolute, omneque ens ac non implicans contradictionem, sub omnipotentis claudituR, Deus ipse continebitur sub sua omnipotentia: quoniam Deum esse de numero horum est, quod patet. Ad hoc, et similia, dicendum est, quod cum sermo praesens sit de omnipotentia factiva, cum dicimus omne possibile, omne ens, omne non implicans contradictionem, semper subintelligitur causabile effective."

essence itself as participable or imitable by creatures.(21) Because God forms these possibles as divine ideas, congruous and not repugnant, thus are they rendered possible absolutely. Nothing can be understood to be determinately and distinctly possible antecedent to the divine ideas in the mind of God.(22)

Through the interior formation of ideas in the divine mind, prior to any transient action, subjects and predicates are disposed as non-repugnant or repugnant, according to the ways in which the divine essence can or could be imitated. The number of such possibles is infinite, since the divine perfection is infinite and thus infinitely imitable by creatures. As John of St. Thomas says, God forms these ideas of

21. John of St. Thomas, Curs.theol., T.III, p.579b: "Secundum mentem D. Thomae possibilitas absoluta seu logica, ratione cujus aliquid est objectum proprium omnipotentiae, consistit in habitudine terminorum qua praedicatum non repugnat subjecto. Et haec habitudo terminorum praesupponitur ad omnipotentiam, ut est vis executiva et attributum distinctum ab aliis: sed consequitur ad ipsam omnipotentiam radicalem, quae est ipsum esse seu essentia divina ut participabilis et imitabilis est a creaturis."

22. ibid., p.582a: "Est autem idea divina summa et prima regula totius veritatis creatae. Ergo per hoc res redduntur absolute possibiles: quia id quod excogitat Deus et format, ut imitabile a se, est quod unicuique rei congruum et conveniens est, nec sibi repugnans; ergo est possibile, quia illud est possibile rei quod non est repugnans illi. Antecedenter autem ad ideas divinas, nihil intelligitur ut determinate et distincte formabile, nec rebus distributo sua praedicata quae eis sint debita vel convenientia..."

possibles, artificiose et intelligibiliter et non naturaliter.[23] Considered as prior to this artistic formation, such things are only radically formable and possible but not distinctly so, in as much as the perfection of all being is radically contained in the infinite being of God.[24] It is in terms of this regulation from the divine intelligence, then, that anything can have predicates that are compatible and not repugnant.

These considerations about logical possibility will enable us to group necessary and contingent under one heading, and, in regard to created beings, will help us to see how they are all possible in a real or physical way, in reference to the active potency of God. We shall see further that absolute possibility and divine omnipotence are the foundation for the extrinsic contingency of all creatures, and that this kind of possibility or contingency must be carefully distinguished from that which is rooted in an intrinsic, passive potency. One more point about logical possibility will establish a place of departure that is common to the various topics to follow.

23. Curs.theol., T.III, p.582a
24. ibid.: "Antecedenter vero ad artem et intellectum divinum, solum radicaliter intelliguntur formabiles et possibiles, quatenus scilicet in infinito esse Dei omnis ratio entis et perfectio radicaliter intelligitur esse contenta: ad ejus enim essentiae participationem res sunt factibiles."

3. The Logically Possible embraces both Necessary and Contingent being.

Because the logically possible abstracts from any determination of real being it can be predicated equally of necessary and contingent things.(25) Thus, St. Thomas demonstrates that things which exist necessarily, being uniquely determined to existence, must also be possible; the possible in question is not the one opposed to the necessary but the one opposed to the impossible.

> Possibile enim quoddam est quod ad necessarium sequitur. Nam quod necesse est esse, possibile est esse; quod enim non possibile est esse, impossibile est esse; et quod impossibile est esse, necesse est non esse; igitur quod necesse est esse, necesse est non esse. Hoc autem est impossibile. Ergo impossibile est quod aliquid necesse sit esse, et tamen non sit possibile illud esse. Ergo possibile esse sequitur ad necesse esse. (26)

We can consider this same possible as a genus with respect to its inferiors. If we consider the logically possible in this way, it is identified with what is called commonly contingent. The term altum is applied to this contingent because it does not descend to a special mode of contingency or possibility, but remains above its inferiors

25. St. Thomas, In IX Metaphys., lect.III, n.1812: "Alio vero modo possibile dicitur secundum quod est commune ad ea quae sunt necessaria, et ad ea quae contingunt esse et non esse, prout possibile contra impossibile dividitur."
26. Contra Gentes, III, c.86

as a certain potential whole. The commonly contingent is nothing other than the absolutely possible.(27) It is the mode of the contingent that is convertible with the logically possible considered in its community. St. Albert defines this contingent formally, ut superius, in relation to its inferiors of which the necessary is one. Thus, he makes a distinction between the commonly contingent and the mode of the contingent that follows upon the necessary.(28)

(Note that we have not yet referred to the kind of contingency which is opposed to necessity. Here we wish to manifest the quasi-generic character of the logical possible.)

Now if the logically possible follows upon the necessary, why is it said that the commonly contingent identified with this possible does not in like manner follow upon the necessary? St. Albert replies that it is because this contingent is considered precisely as common and, as he says, "multa accidunt sive conveniunt ei ratione communitatis talis, quae non conveniunt specialibus modis contingentis." Though convertible with the logically possible it stands above its

27. St. Albert, In I Priorum Aristotelis, (ed Vivès) tract.1, c.12: "Contingens dicitur secundum genus commune, aut secundum acceptionem specialem, si dicitur secundum genus commune: tunc est contingens quod convertitur cum possibili, et hoc vocatur contingens commune: et quidem vocant ipsum altum, eo quod non descendit ad modum specialem: et multa accidunt sive conveniunt ei ratione communitatis talis, quae non conveniunt specialibus modis contingentis."

28. Ibid.: Alius autem contingentis modus est, quod dicitur contingere id quod est necessarium: quia sequitur si aliquid necesse est esse, quod illud idem contingit esse."

inferiors and is narrower in meaning. There is another mode of the contingent that is identified with the logically possible in as much as the latter descends to its inferiors, the necessary and the possible opposed to the necessary. This mode of the contingent is nothing other than one that follows upon the necessary; it is a special mode distinct from the commonly contingent. We may say that if we understand the logically possible in the manner that it has been defined, according to a non-repugnance of terms, then it includes both of these modes of the contingent.

St. Thomas identifies the commonly contingent with the possible that follows upon the necessary because he does not define this contingent formally ut superius. St. Albert, however, in defining the commonly contingent, considers it not only in opposition to the impossible, but also formally as a genus. It is only in the restricted sense of a genus taken formally, that the commonly contingent does not follow upon the necessary. St. Thomas simply considers the logically possible in all its amplitude, hence, there is no difficulty, for it may be considered in either way. The important thing to note is that the logical possible does have the character of a genus, in the restricted sense of the commonly contingent that abstracts from the determination of the necessary. In other words, the commonly contingent ut superius, is contingent only not to be; that is, not necessary not to be. Hence, anything that does not imply contradiction is contingent

in this way. But since this contingent is contingent only not to be, it does not follow upon the necessary, which is contingent only to be. It can be applied equally to the possible that is opposed to the necessary, in as much as this possible (which will be discussed fully in the next chapter) (29) is also not necessary not to be; that is, not impossible.

It is important that we keep in mind the nature of logical possibility and its quasi-generic character. (30) We shall see that there is another kind of possibility, that is not derived from a non-repugnance of terms, but rather from a real potency, and that this kind of possibility is also compatible with necessity, if the necessity is caused. We have already touched briefly upon this point in distinguishing the absolute or logical possibility of God from the absolute possibility of creatures, which are also physically possible in relation to the active potency of God. There is another kind of possibility that is opposed to necessity of every kind. This possibility is derived from an intrinsic, passive potency; what this intrinsic principle is and what it implies, we shall

29. For a brief but lucid explanation of the views of St. Thomas and St. Albert concerning the logically possible and the commonly contingent see - M. Dionne, In I Priorum Divi Alberti, (Quebec, 1950) p.20

30. Ia.Q.9, a.2, commentary of Cajetan, n.6: "Magna differentia est inter necessarium et possibile ut differentiae entis realis et...veri. Inquantum enim differentiae entis veri, summuntur logice, et consistunt in solo habitudine terminorum, ut patet."

see in the succeeding chapters. We shall attempt to show that the failure of most modern thomists to recognize its importance has led to a completely deterministic view of nature, which undermines the science of nature by opposing its most fundamental principles, principles held alike by St. Thomas and Aristotle.

Having seen the quasi-generic nature of logical possibility, and how it provides us with a common point of departure, as well as a basic understanding of the terms that must be used in a discussion of necessity and contingency, we can now pass on to a more particular question.

CHAPTER II

PHYSICAL POSSIBILITY and THE DIVISIONS OF CONTINGENCY

1. The Possible "Per Potentiam in Altero."

The first mode of potency is defined as: Principium motus et mutationis in alio inquantum est aliud.[1] According as a thing is the object of an active potency it can be called possible. This kind of possibility is the first thing to be discussed in this chapter.

In this regard it should be noted that every thing can be called possible with respect to the divine omnipotence. This possibility, although it refers to a real, active potency, is not opposed to every kind of necessity, even absolute, but only to that kind which has no cause; it is opposed, then, only to the absolute necessity of God, Who is not the object of any potency, as explained previously. Thus, in as much as every finite thing depends on God's will for existence, every one is possible extrinsically.

In this way, separated substances are possible and yet necessary, for they do not have any intrinsic principle that can bring about their non-existence; they are pure forms and determined uniquely to being. Although absolutely necessary,

1. St. Thomas, In V Metaphys., lect.XIV, n.955

such creatures are nevertheless not necessary in every way

> Ponit enim S. Thomas hic, et in II S.G., et in Qu. De Pot., qu.5, a.3, et ubique, angelos et corpora coelestia entia necessarium reale, possibilia tamen logice et per potentiam in alio; et solum Deum omnimodo necessarium. (2)

It should be understood that this does not exclude absolute necessity from some creatures. A thing can be absolutely necessary without being the cause of its necessity. In this sense, angels are simpliciter necessary, but are not the cause of this necessity, just as they are not the cause of their being. With reference to this it should be noted that it is more proper and formal to define a thing from intrinsic principles, and predicate something of it on the basis of this definition than it is to exclude such a predicate according to something extraneous. (3)

Everything besides God, then, is possible per potentiam in altero. (4) For whatever has a cause is in potency in relation to that cause, and is called possible with reference to it. Now whenever we speak of a possibility or contingency that is referred to an active cause, we are no longer considering a

2. Ia, Q.9, a.2, commentary of Cajetan, n.6.
3. See - Ia, Q.44, a.2, commentary of Cajetan, n.11
4. St. Thomas, Ia, Q.9, a.2: "Sciendum est enim quod mutabile potest dici dupliciter: uno modo, per potentiam quae in ipso est; alio modo per potentiam quae in altero est."; comm. of Cajetan, n.2: "Probatur ergo primo, quod omnis creatura est mutabilis per potentiam in altero sic. Omnis creatura est mutabilis de nihilo in aliquid, et rursus ex aliquo in nihil: ergo. - Antecedens patet. Consequentia probatur: quia ex simplici voluntate Dei pendet creatio et conservatio."

possible that is defined logically, from the simple conjunction of subject and predicate; the logically possible, as we have noted, stands above being and non-being, not having of itself a positive ordination to either. The possible now in question, however, is one that is referred to a real potency.(5) It applies to everything that has a cause.

It should be remarked that, although this kind of possibility is convertible with the contingency that a thing has in terms of an active, extrinsic cause, the two can nevertheless be formally distinguished. In other words, the possible per potentiam in altero is materially the same as the contingent defined by an active, extrinsic cause, but is formally different. That which is possible according to an active potency is also contingent in as much as it depends on this potency and proceeds from it as an effect. St. Albert points out that there is no difference between these two in regard to some future existence, as if the contingent were that which will or will not exist, and the possible that which is not contradictory. To distinguish them in this way would be to

5. St. Albert, In II Perihermeneias, Aristotelis, (ed Vives) tract.2, c.4: "Ad intelligentiam ergo eorum quae dicta sunt attende, quod sicut dicit Avicenna, ens possibile dividit ens cum eo quod est ens necesse, et cum ens necesse sit quod nullo est in potentia, erit ens necesse quod nullam habet causam; quia ens quod habet causam quocumque modo, est in potentia comparatum ad causam illam secundum quod est in ea. Et per oppositum ens possibile est quod habet causam, et possibile est secundum quod comparatur ad illam causam, et secundum quod per esse dependet ab illa: et sic omnia causata possibilia sunt; et hoc modo ens necesse non est ens possibili, nec e converso."

confuse the absolutely possible with that which is rooted in a real potency. Both possibility and contingency refer to the future of that which is said to be possible or contingent. Simply speaking, the possible is related to a potency which is either active or passive, and so it differs according to the various kinds of potencies; the contingent, however, is referred to some cause, and thus is distinguished according to the type of cause from which it proceeds.

> Adhuc autem contingens esse convertitur cum possibile esse: et non est verum quod quidam dicunt, quod contingens differat a possibile in hoc, quod contingens dicat extensionem temporis in futurum, et possibile non dicat illud: possibile enim ante actum acceptum extenditur in futurum. Sed in hoc differunt possibile et contingens: quia possibile simpliciter dicit potentiam vel agentem vel materialem, et variatur secundum potentiae talis varietatem. Contingens autem respicit causam quae non est per se causa: et ideo distinguitur secundum causae distinctionem. (6)

Keeping in mind the fact that the possible refers to some potency and the contingent to some cause, we may now consider the divisions of contingency according to the various ways an effect can proceed from its cause.

2. The Threefold Genus of Contingency.

In the Perihermeneias, St. Thomas gives a lengthy explanation of Aristotle's teaching on contingency. The

6. St. Albert, In II Periherm., tract.2, c.4

occasion is the question of the truth or falsity of singular propositions about the future when the matter is contingent, and whether such propositions are determinately true or false. The problem is posed in the following manner:

If every affirmation or negation in singular and future propositions is true or false, then one who affirms or denies some thing about the future must speak truly or falsely. From this it follows that everything is necessarily in existence or necessarily not in existence. Therefore, if all affirmation or negation is determinately true or false in singular propositions about the future, it is necessary that everything be determined to exist or not to exist. One must conclude, then, that everything comes about by necessity. This, however, would exclude the threefold genus of contingency in things. It is impossible, therefore, that every proposition about the future be true determinately or false determinately.

> Quaedam enim contingunt ut in paucioribus, quae accidunt a casu vel fortuna. Quaedam vero se habent ad utrumlibet, quia scilicet non magis se habent ad unam partem, quam ad aliam, et iste procedunt ex electione. Quaedam vero eveniunt ut in pluribus; sicut hominem canescere in senectute, quod causatur ex natura. Si autem omnia ex necessitate evenirent, nihil horum contingentium esset. Et ideo dicit nihil est quantum ad ipsam permanentiam eorum quae permanent contingenter; neque fit quantum ad productionem eorum quae contingenter causatur; nec casu quantum ad ea quae sunt in minori parte, sive in paucioribus; nec utrumlibet quantum ad ea quae se habent aequaliter ad utrumque, scilicet esse vel non esse, et ad neutrum horum sunt determinata: quod significat cum subdit, nec erit, nec non erit. (7)

7. St. Thomas, In I Perihermeneias, lect.XIII, n.9

The contingens ad utrumlibet in the above division refers to an agent who acts from election; not necessarily then, but with freedom of choice. The things that are brought about by such a cause are not necessary as effects, precisely because the agent was free to have done or to have produced something else or not to have acted at all. In other words, a thing which one makes or does but is free not to make, or do is contingent extrinsically, in as much as it depends for existence on an active, positively indeterminate cause. For example, before Caesar crosses the Rubicon, he is free not to cross it, and neither his crossing nor his not crossing implies any contradiction. Such an event is extrinsically contingent, according to its dependence on an extrinsic, free cause.

The liberty of contradiction exemplified above is the foundation of extrinsic contingency. Just as every creature is possible per potentiam activam Dei, so too, everyone is contingent extrinsically in so far as each depends on the free, extrinsic, creative causality of God, and in so far as the non-existence of none of them is contradictory. (The non-existence of separated substances would be absolutely impossible, even to the power of God, if their non-existence implied a contradiction.)

Some creatures participate in the divine liberty and in so far as such causes are free, the effects that proceed from them in their freedom, according to the participated

perfection that such causes have, are also extrinsically contingent, just as these creatures are themselves extrinsically contingent in relation to the divine liberty. Potencies that cause effects in this way are active and rational, (8) and things that can have a future existence in causes of this kind are indeterminate according to the positive indetermination of these active causes. Effects of this kind are said to be contingens ad utrumlibet; in order to exist actually they must exercise the role of an appetible object, which causes the will to be more inclined to the production of this (9) effect than to the contrary opposed to it. Before considering the other members of the division of contingent things, it will be helpful to quote another text from St. Thomas where

8. Cajetan, In II Perihermeneias, (ed Leon.), lect.IX, n.4: "Ubi notandum est quod, sicut dicitur IX Metaphys., potentia activa, cum nihil aliud sit quam principium quo in aliud agimus, dividitur in potentiam rationalem et irrationalem. Potentia rationalis est, quae cum ratione et electione operatur; sicut ars medicinae, qua medicus cognoscens quid sanando expediat infirmo, et volens applicat remedia. Potentia autem rationalis potest in opposita et contradictorie et contrarie."

9. St. Thomas, In VI Metaphys., lect.II, n.1183: "Contingens enim ad utrumlibet, non potest esse causa alicujus inquantum hujusmodi. Secundum enim quod est ad utrumlibet, habet dispositionem materiae, quae est in potentia ad duo opposita: nihil enim agit secundum quod est in potentia. Unde oportet quod causa, quae est ad utrumlibet, ut voluntas, ad hoc quod agat, inclinetur magis ad unam partem, per hoc quod movetur ab appetibili, et sic sit causa ut in pluribus."

he divides future effects according to the ways in which they can be contained in their causes:

> In causis autem sunt aliqua futura tripliciter. Uno modo secundum potentiam tantum, quia scilicet aequaliter possunt esse vel non esse; quae dicuntur contingentia ad utrumlibet. Quaedam vero sunt in causis suis non solum secundum potentiam, sed secundum rationem causae activae, quae non possunt impediri a suo effectu; et haec dicuntur ex necessitate contingere. Quaedam vero sunt in causis suis et secundum potentiam et secundum causam activam, quae potest tamen impediri a suo effectu; et ista dicuntur contingere ut in pluribus. (10)

This division is somewhat different from the one given in the Perihermeneias. There St. Thomas does not mention the necessary contingent, while here it is the second member of the division. Moreover, the contingens ut in pauciboribus, which is by chance or fortune, is not explicitly named in the above text. It is implicit, however, in the last part of the division, for the impeding of the cause which is not perfectly determined to its effects, results in the exceptional event. (A consideration of the last part of this division will introduce us to the second kind of contingency.) The second kind of contingency mentioned above, is the same thing as necessity, and will be treated in the following chapter. It might be well to remark here that this is not contingency in any strict sense, but is what we have already called the commonly contingent and is identified with the logically possible. The necessary contingent, in other words, is that which is contained in its

10. Q.D. de Malo, q.16, a.7, c

cause necessarily, and proceeds from it with necessity. As St. Thomas remarks, "...Haec dicuntur ex necessitate contingere."

The second kind of contingency is the result of a cause that is so determined to certain effects that they are for the most part brought about successfully, although their coming-to-be may be impeded. Such effects are said to be contingens ut in pluribus, since the causes ordered to their production are more determined to their esse than to their non-esse. Nevertheless, such causes may sometimes fail to produce their intended effects because of a concurrence of causes, one of which is not controlled by the other, or because of a defect in the cause itself, or finally, because of the indisposition of the matter acted upon.[11] Natural things, for example, are those which come about for the most part and in the same way, and yet sometimes there is a failure, as in the birth of a monster. Things which proceed from causes of this kind are defectible in regard to their coming-to-be, just as the causes themselves are defective in being and in causing. Indeed when something is called contingent in the strict sense opposed to necessity, it is precisely this defectibility that is signi-

11. St. Thomas, In VI Metaphys., lect.III, n.1210: "Si igitur ea quae hic sunt contingentia, reducamus in causas particulares tantum, inveniuntur multa fieri per accidens, tum propter concursum duarum causarum, quarum una sub altera non continetur, sicut cum praeter intentionem occurunt mihi latrones...Tum etiam propter defectum agentis, cui accidit debilitas, ut non possit pervenire ad finem intentum...Tum etiam propter indispositionem materiae, quae non recipit formam intentam ab agente, sed alterius modi sicut accidit in monstruosis partibus animalium."

fied. (12)

In the Metaphysics St. Thomas explains how what is contingent ut in pluribus gives rise to the third kind of contingency: that which belongs to the accidental and rare occurrence:

> ...Quia non omnia ex necessitate et semper existunt et fiunt, ((sed plurima sunt secundum magis,)) ideat ut in pluribus, ideo necesse est esse quod est secundum accidens, quod neque est semper neque secundum magis, ut hoc quod dico, albus est musicus. Quia tamen aliquando fit, licet non semper nec ut in pluribus, sequitur quod fit per accidens. Si enim non fieret aliquando id quod est ut in paucioribus, tunc id quod est in pluribus nunquam deficeret, sed esset semper et ex necessitate, et ita omnia essent sempiterna et necessaria; quod est falsum. Et, quia defectus ejus quod est ut in pluribus, est propter materiam, quae non subditur perfecte virtuti agenti ut in pluribus, ideo materia est causa accidentis aliter ((quam ut in pluribus,)) scilicet accidentis ut in paucioribus: Causa inquam non necessaria, sed contingens. (13)

The contingens ut in paucioribus, then, is the third member of the threefold genus of contingency. It results from the defective nature of the cause determined to its effects ut in pluribus. The root of the actual failure of such a cause is an intrinsic, passive potency. This

12. St. Thomas, Ia, Q.86, a.3, c.: "Est autem unumquodque contingens ex parte materiae, quia contingens est quod potest esse et non esse; potentia autem pertinet ad materiam. Necessitas autem consequitur rationem formae, quia ea quae consequuntur ad formam, ex necessitate insunt. Materia autem est individuationis principium..."

13. In VI Metaphys., lect.II, n.1166

potency is nothing other than matter, which is not perfectly subject to the active potency of the agent. Of the three kinds of contingency, it is the latter that is most properly opposed to necessity, since its very existence depends on the defectibility of the cause.

Before examining more closely the contingency of that which proceeds from a defective cause, it will serve our purpose to reconsider the kind of contingency that is defined in terms of an active rational potency. As already stated, this contingency is extrinsic and is reducible to the liberty of contradiction in free agents. This means that a rational cause is free to act or not to act, to bring about a certain effect or not to bring it about. The effects that causes of this kind bring about are contingent in an extrinsic way, for the existence of the effect depends upon the free determination of an extrinsic cause. It should again be noted that this kind of contingency is not opposed to necessity. It does, however, imply an admixture of potency, for every creature is contingent extrinsically in so far as the existence of each is caused by God. Potency, then, is the root of this contingency and possibility from another point of view, in as much as nothing which is caused can be pure act. Cajetan explains that the degree of contingency in a thing is proportionate to its potentiality. Since the contingent in its first sense is opposed to the necessary, those beings, other than God, which do not have in themselves any potentiality incompatible with their

continued existence, are called necessary simpliciter, but contingent secundum quid, which is a contingency ab extrinseco. Material creatures, however, are more potential than they are actual, for the matter which is one principle of their essence always exceeds the determination of the form, since the potentiality of the former is never exhausted.

> Contingens enim cum sit quod potest esse et non esse, necessarium autem quod impossibile est aliter se habere, consequens est quod contingentia et necessitas entium, reales non logice differentiae, diversas habeant radices: ita quod contingentia ex potentia, necessitas vero ex actu oriatur. Cujus etiam signum est quod in his inferioribus, in quibus plurimum est de potentia, maxime viget contingentia; in rebus vero superioribus, maxime actus naturam participantibus, aut omnino non est, aut secundum quid est contingentia; simpliciter enim entia illa necessaria sunt, et tantum habet contingentiae, quantum potentiae eiusdam admixtionem patiuntur. Unde actus purus omnino liber est a contingentia omnino. (14)

In other words, the extrinsic contingency that created things are subject to in so far as they depend upon the free causality of God, is a contingency secundum quid, just as the effects of any free cause can be called contingent in a certain respect in so far as they depend on the liberty of that cause. This kind of contingency does not exclude necessity, as we shall see more fully in the next chapter; angels, for example, are extrinsically contingent but absolutely necessary.

The kind of contingency that is opposed to necessity is rooted in an intrinsic, passive potency. This is contingency

14. Ia, Q.86, a.3, commentary of Cajetan, n.7

in the strict sense, and will now be explained more fully, leaving the complete discussion of it, however, to be undertaken in the final chapter of this essay. For it is only after the general doctrine on contingency has been exposed that proper attention can be given to the more determinate aspects of the question. By proceeding in this manner we hope to avoid the error of modern thomists who teach a complete determinism in regard to nature. This is a teaching which results apparently, at least in part, from a judgment that it is not necessary to begin with what is more general and better known, and progress to what is more determined and less known to us. This, nevertheless, is the order imposed in the study of natural things, and although other than natural considerations have already found a place in this work, and will appear again when the subject requires it, they are included only to the extent that the contingency proper to nature and time thus may be made more manifest.

3. Physical Possibility and Intrinsic Contingency.

The contingency of natural things that is due to an intrinsic, indeterminate potency is convertible with the physical possibility of matter. This is a possibility and contingency per potentiam in se passivam. As we have seen, when a cause is natural, determined for the most part to its effects, these effects are said to be contingens ut in pluribus because a natural agent is more inclined to the

being of its effects than to their non-being. But all natural things come to be through a movement, and because that movement is variable, the becoming of these things is not absolutely assured. A natural cause can be impeded, either by the interference of some agent, or by the accidental meeting of several active causes, by the weakness of the cause, or finally, by the inequality of the matter acted upon.(15)

Nor can it be argued, as some writers propose, that when a cause is sufficient to produce an effect, the effect will necessarily follow. A cause may be adequate, considered in itself, to give existence to an effect, and yet when the causality is actually exercised, the effect may fail to come about. A cause that is sufficient in <u>actu primo</u> is not always successful in <u>actu secundo</u>, when it must overcome all the attendant circumstances of the "here and now" in order to accomplish its purpose. A sufficient cause should not be confused with a necessary one.

> Et forte in hoc deceptus est Avicenna, quia non distinxit inter sufficientiam causae quae attenditur penes actum primum, seu formam quae est principium agendi; et sufficientiam circumstantiarum actualis causalitatis respectu huius, nunc, hic, quae attenduntur penes diversa occurrentia. Certum est enim quod causam sufficientem hoc secundo modo, sequitur necessario effectus: non autem primo. Et tamen de primo

15. For the several reasons why a cause may fail see the lengthy exposition of St. Thomas in, <u>Contra Gentes</u>, III, c.86, which we shall again have occasion to consult in greater detail.

> est sermo, cum de causis loquimur. Et ideo exceptio Aristotelis vera est: ita quod quaedam sunt causae per se et sufficientes, quae necessario inferunt suos effectus non simpliciter, sed cum limitatione, scilicet ut in pluribus; ac per hoc, non inferunt absolute suos effectus. Et haec est una radix contingentiae, ut in I Periherm. dicitur. (16)

Since natural causes are finite and do not dominate perfectly the order of effects in nature, they do not always succeed. Their causality can be impeded by the intervention of a free agent, but also, what is more important, they can be impeded by the passive indetermination of matter. Since matter is an intrinsic, passive potency that can receive many forms, and is not necessarily determined to the one it has or the one the agent seeks to impose on it, it sometimes escapes the causality of the efficient cause. When this happens an accidental effect results. It is the physical possibility of matter in privation that is responsible for this, for the natural agent is not sufficiently determined to completely offset this possibility ad esse et non esse.

> Dicitur adhuc possibile secundum potentiam materiale ad esse quae inquam, potentia est cum privatione sicut possibile fieri vel generari vel possibile esse: et hoc, (quia cum privatione est) est ad esse et non esse: et sequitur quod possibile est esse et possibile est non esse; et hoc possibile secundum modum opponitur si quod est necesse esse. (17)

16. Cajetan, Ia, Q.115, a.6, n.5
17. St. Albert, In II Periherm., tract.2, c.6

The lack of necessity of a thing because of its material principle is what permits the arrival of events that are completely unforeseeable. As St. Albert explains, the cause and first root of this intrinsic contingency is matter in privation. It should be noted, however, that without this very indetermination, nature would be impossible. For in order to have natural causes and effects, there must be a determination which is not perfect but ut in pluribus. In other words, there must be forms not entirely determined ad unum, but which acquire existence in a subject through a movement from potency to act. (18)

The intrinsic contingency of things is thus resolved into the physical possibility of matter and the imperfect determination of natural causes. As St. Thomas explains, the impressions of causes are received in their effects according to the manner or mode of being of the subject. If the subject is in a state of flux and is inconstant in being, the causal impressions of the agent, even if it is a question of a superior natural cause, are accordingly modified and sometimes impeded. The reason for the occasional failure of even superior causes is the matter which is in potency to many forms, and also the very contrariety of the forms which in a certain way seek to

18. See chapter III, part 3

replace each other.[19] The form of heat for example, is opposed to the form of cold, and will tend to remove the latter unless a material condition impedes it. Irrational active potencies are not in themselves subordinated to one another, but must be regulated by a superior cause that dominates them. This regulation is absolute only from the point of view of divine causality and not from the point of view of any superior natural cause, as will be shown fully when the position of the modern scholastics is studied in detail.

It should be added, moreover, that a necessary effect does not follow from a remote necessary cause unless the middle and proximate causes are necessary. The defective nature of any active cause in the series renders the ultimate effect contingent, just as in syllogisms from a necessary major premise and contingent minor, a necessary conclusion does not follow.[20]

Some writers say that even though an effect may be contingent with respect to its proximate cause, it is necessary if the totality of causes and their respective order is taken

19. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, III, c.86: "Impressiones enim causarum universalium recipiuntur in effectibus secundum recipientium modum. Haec autem inferiora sunt fluxibilia et non semper eodem modo se habentia: propter materiam, quae est in potentia ad plures formas; et propter contrarietatem formarum et virtutum."

20. Ibid.: "A causa remota non sequitur effectus de necessitate nisi etiam sit causa media necessaria: sicut et in syllogismis ex maiori de necesse et minori de contingenti non sequitur conclusio de necesse."

into consideration. From many contingent causes, however, a necessary effect cannot come to be, for just as any one of these can fail, so can they all taken together.(21)

It should be remembered here that the contingency that a thing has from the fact that its cause is defective is not a contingency secundum quid, but is derived rather from an intrinsic principle. Such an effect is prevented from being necessary, because of this potential principle's twofold possibility ad esse et non esse, in regard to the effect contained potentially in it. The future existence of an effect that is not necessary depends not only on the order of active causes disposed to produce it, but also on the subjugation of matter by these causes, a subjugation that is not always achieved.

Note, then, that an agent causing naturally presupposes and requires matter in order to exercise its causality. Hence, we may say that natural agents do not cause with a necessity that is absolute because of the nature of those things to which their causality is extended, and also because of the limitation

21. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, III, c.86; "Adhuc. Ex multis contingentibus non potest fieri unum necessarium: quia, sicut quodlibet contingentium per se deficere potest ab effectu, ita et omnia simul. Constat autem quod singula quae in istis inferioribus fiunt ex impressione caelestium corporum, sunt contingentia. Non igitur connexio eorum quae in inferioribus contingunt ex impressione caelestium corporum, est necessaria: manifestum est enim quod quodlibet eorum potest impediri."

of the causes themselves.(22)

To summarize briefly the important points of this chapter, in order to have the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic contingency clearly in mind, we may recall that the different senses of the contingent are derived from the different ways an effect can proceed from its cause. When the cause is a rational potency, the effect is said to be contingent extrinsically in so far as it depends on the free, self-determination of an extrinsic cause. When the cause is an active irrational potency, such as the digestive or generative power in an animal, the effect is said to be contingent ut in pluribus, according to the natural determination of the cause. But in as much as every created active cause suffers from a certain degree of passive indetermination, rooted in potency as opposed to act, the effects of these causes are intrinsically contingent in terms of the intrinsic imperfection and limitation of the causes. It should be noted at the same time that besides the irrational, active potencies, there is an irrational potency that is not in itself determined at all, not even imperfectly, as is the case for natural agents, but which is pure indetermination. This passive potency, matter, which is an intrinsic

22. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, III, c.86: "Corpora caelestia sunt agentia naturaliter, quae requirunt materiam in quam agant...Materia autem in quam agunt corpora caelestia, sunt corpora inferiora: quae, cum sint corruptibilia secundum suam naturam, sicut deficere possunt ab esse, ita ab operari; et sic eorum natura hoc habet ut non ex necessitate producant effectus."

principle, is responsible for an intrinsic contingency belonging to natural effects; and this is true if it is added that the form and active potency is not entirely determined, for if the active potency could not be impeded, the matter could not be an obstacle. But then the active potency would not be natural, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Thus, in so far as the natural agent is more determined to its effects than not, the effects of a natural agent are contingent ut in pluribus, according to the extent that the matter is overcome. But in so far as the cause can fail, both because of its own imperfection, and because of the indetermination of matter, a rare or accidental event can take place. This is nothing other than the contingent ut in paucioribus.

Now if one abstracts from the extrinsic contingency of effects brought about freely by rational potencies, there still remains the contingency that is due to the passive potency and the limited, finite agent. This is why it is false to say, as many modern scholastics do, that everything comes about necessarily in material nature, or if we abstract from the intervention of free agents.

In the next chapter, a direct approach to this opinion and similar ones far from the teaching of St. Thomas, will begin. The point of departure for the second part of our study, which is to deal explicitly with the position of modern scholastics, will be a discussion of two kinds of necessity - one absolute, the other conditional.

CHAPTER III

ABSOLUTE AND CONDITIONAL NECESSITY

1. The Two Kinds of Necessity Defined and Explained.

Before investigating the modern scholastic teaching on necessity, an attempt should be made to explain the teaching of Aristotle and St. Thomas. This is important, since the intention in this chapter is to show that between these two positions, there is more than one basic difference. The divergence is all the more serious in view of the fact that many modern writers believe that they are giving the doctrine of St. Thomas, which they hold to be true. We too, hold that the teaching of St. Thomas, based as it is upon the teaching of Aristotle, is the true doctrine, and that the principles enuntiated by the Philosopher and the Angelic Doctor are most firmly established. Unfortunately, however, the interpretation of this doctrine advanced by many present day writers, as well as their frequent departure from it altogether, is not as accurate or well founded as one would wish. The question of necessity in nature is fundamentally important. We hope to show that here too, the deterministic view of the universe, sometimes unknowingly held by scholastic writers, is plainly evident, and that this view is contrary to the most basic principles of the philosophy of nature.

Let us begin by distinguishing between absolute and conditional, or hypothetical, necessity. When this has been done, we shall consider the modern scholastic position, and finally, the reference these authors make to "the hypothetical necessity of the laws of nature."

As St. Thomas explains, whatever is determined in its very nature to existence, and uniquely to this, is absolutely necessary.(1) Thus, what cannot be other than it is, is necessary simply and without qualification. Hence, we say that God is absolutely necessary, for by His very nature He is determined to existence; it is impossible that He be other than what He is. Some authors, failing to distinguish caused being from necessary being, restrict absolute necessity to God alone.(2) (In this connection we shall see the importance of grasping the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic contin-

1. Contra Gentes, II, c.30; - In I Periherm., lect.XIV, n.8: "...Et ideo melius ista distinxerunt secundum naturam rerum, ut scilicet dicatur illud necessarium, quod in sua natura determinatum est solum ad esse; impossibile autem quod est determinatum solum ad non esse; possibile autem..."; - see also De Potentia, Q.V, a.3, ad 8; ibid., a.3, corpus: "Dupliciter ergo potest contingere quod in natura alicuius rei non sit possibilitas ad non esse. Uno modo per hoc quod res illa sit forma tantum subsistens in esse suo, sicut substantiae incorporeae, quae sunt penitus immateriales. Si enim forma ex hoc quod inest materiae, est principium essendi in rebus materialibus, nec res materialis potest non esse nisi per separationem formae; ubi ipsa forma in esse suo subsistit nullo modo poterit non esse; sicut nec esse potest a se ipso separari."

genoy, for a thing can be absolutely necessary and still be contingent, extrinsically.) It is plain from the words of St. Thomas, however, that absolute necessity is to be found also among creatures:

> Licet autem omnia ex Dei voluntate dependeant sicut ex prima causa, quae in operando necessitatem non habet nisi ex sui propositi suppositione, non tamen propter hoc absolute necessitas a rebus excluditur, ut sit necessarium nos fateri omnia contingentia esse: - quod posset alicui videri, ex hoc quod a causa sua non de necessitate absolute fluxerunt: cum soleat in rebus esse contingens effectus qui ex causa sua non de necessitate procedit. Sunt enim quaedam in rebus creatis quae simpliciter et absolute necesse est esse.
>
> Illae enim res simpliciter et absolute necesse est esse in quibus non est possibilitas ad non esse. Quaedam autem res sic sunt a Deo in esse productae ut in earum natura sit potentia ad non esse. Quod quidem contingit ex hoc quod materia in eis est in potentia ad aliam formam. Illae igitur res in quibus vel non est materia, vel, si est, non est possibilis ad aliam formam, non habent potentiam ad non esse. Eas igitur absolute et simpliciter necesse est esse. (3)

Absolute necessity, then, must not be denied to all creatures, for there are some that are determined uniquely to existence, not having within themselves any potency to non-esse. Such are the separated substances, who have no intrinsic principle in any way alien to their existence. They are pure forms, not having any matter in potency to another form, as do material substances. Thus, we should not be led to the belief

3. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, II, c.30

that there can be no absolute necessity in creatures from the knowledge that God acts freely, without absolute necessity. What might cause such a belief is the consideration that all created beings proceed from the First Cause with complete dependence and contingency. God does not give existence to creatures by an absolute necessity for He is eternally and perfectly free. Nevertheless, among created things, all of which are contingent extrinsically in so far as they all depend upon the divine free will, there are some whose nature is such that it is impossible for them to be corruptible. These are the angels, who lack a principle of corruptibility. (4)

But the impossibility of corruption among the separated substances is not the only impossibility to be found in created things, nor is their unique determination to esse, the only absolute necessity. It is also impossible that a triangle have four angles, or that man be an irrational animal; and it is absolutely necessary that, because of its matter, an animal be corruptible; because of its form, sensitive; and because of its essence, an animated, sensate sub-

4. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, II, c.55: "In Omni quod corrumpitur, oportet quod sit potentia ad non esse. Si quid igitur est in quo non est potentia ad non esse, hoc non potest esse corruptibile. In substantia autem intellectuali non est potentia ad non esse. Manifestum est enim ex dictis quod substantia completa est proprium susceptivum ipsius esse. Proprium autem susceptivum alicuius actus ita comparatur ut potentia ad actum illum quod nullo modo est in potentia ad oppositum: sicut ignis ita comparatur ad calorem ut potentia ad actum quod nullo modo est in potentia ad frigus. Unde nec in ipsis substantiis corruptibilibus est potentia ad non esse in ipsa substantia completa nisi ratione materiae. In substantiis autem intellectualibus non est materia, sed ipsae sunt substantiae completae simplices. Igitur in eis non est potentia ad non esse. Sunt igitur incorruptibiles."

stance.(5) It is also absolutely necessary that Socrates run when he runs; for the time that he is running it is impossible that he not be running. It is in view of what is manifest in these examples that St. Thomas says, "Contingens a necessario differt secundum quod unumquodque in suo esse est...Secundum id vero quod utrumque eorum in se est, non differt quantum ad esse, supra quod fundatur verum."(6) Hence, contingency always refers to the future, because a thing cannot not be when it is. It is in reference to the future and not to the present that Aristotle, speaking of contingent events, makes this observation:

> If it be true to say of X that it 'will be', it must at some time be true to say of it that 'it is': whereas, though it be true to say of X now that 'it is about to occur,' it is quite possible for it not to come-to-be - thus a man might not walk, though he is now 'about to' walk. (7)

5. St. Thomas, In V Metaphys., lect.VI, n.833: "Differt autem necessarium absolute ab aliis necessariis: quia necessitas absoluta competit rei secundum id quod est intimum et proximum ei; sive sit forma, sive materia, sive ipsa rei essentia; sicut dicimus animal necesse esse corruptibile, quia hoc consequitur ejus materiam inquantum ex contrariis componitur. Dicimus etiam animal necessario esse sensibile, quia consequitur ejus formam: et animal necessario esse substantiam animatam sensibilem, quia est ejus essentia"; - see also Contra Gentes, II, c.30

6. Contra Gentes, I, c.67; - see also, commentary of Sylvester Ferrar, nn.2,6; St. Albert, In II Perihermn., tract.2, c.6: "Dicitur etiam de aliquo, quod possibile est cum fieri vel esse antequam sit: et dicitur de aliquo, quod possibile est cum esse quando est, et ante actum plus habet de potestate et potentia. Quando autem est in actu..."

7. Aristotle, On Generation and Corruption, II, c.11, 337b4-8 (transl. by H.H. Joachim, in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. R. McKeon, New York, Random House, 1941)

Absolute necessity and duration, therefore, are intimately associated. It is always in relation to the future that some things lack this kind of necessity. Hence, those beings whose duration is simple and not temporally successive, are absolutely necessary. Now then, can we say that it is absolutely necessary that Socrates run when he runs? Is he not measured by time, and does he not have a future? It is precisely in so far as the necessity attributed to Socrates' running is based on the present and not on the future, that it is absolute. As Aristotle points out, "It is quite possible for it not to come-to-be - thus a man might not walk, though he is now about to walk."(8) But to say that a man is about to walk is not to say that he is walking. While he is walking it is impossible that he be standing still; but he may stand still in the next moment, and this is contingent since it refers to a future event not contained necessarily in its cause; Socrates is "ad utrumlibet" in regard to walking or not walking, i.e., free to do either.

Let us recall, then, that separated substances do not have a future, properly speaking, since they are immutable in their substantial being. Since the angel has no material principle in his essence he is not subject to the changes we observe in the cosmic world, where things come into existence and pass

8. Aristotle, On Gen. and Corr., loc.cit., 337b7-8

out of existence, and do not possess an absolute necessity except for the moment that they cannot be other than what they are, as in the example of Socrates. Angels, therefore, are not contingent intrinsically, since they lack matter, the principle of future corruption for the material substance. To these creatures, pure forms, existing above cosmic time and movement, are applied the words of the Psalmist, "Statuit in aeternum et in saeculum saeculi."(9)

The creatures of the material universe, however, are corruptible substantially because of their matter which is in potency to another form. These substances are subject to substantial change and are not absolutely necessary, but contingent intrinsically; the next moment may bring the loss of the form that makes the material substance to be what it is. Their existence is precarious and unstable since their form is contingent and their matter is in potency. But if temporal creatures are not absolutely necessary in themselves, they can still be called necessary hypothetically. In order to make this clear we must now take up the second kind of necessity, which is not absolute but which is still opposed to contingency in the very strict sense.

Conditional necessity is a necessity derived from the end. If the end is to be realized, then such and such means are

9. Psalm, 148, 6

necessary. This necessity of the means is a hypothetical necessity, that is, the means are necessary on the condition of some end to be attained; the end itself is the hypothesis. Thus, in view of the end, the steel of a saw is hypothetically necessary; or again, on the supposition that health is to be obtained, walking may be necessary as a means to it.

> Alio vero modo est ex fine necessitas secundum quod est posterius in esse. Et haec est necessitas non absolute, sed conditionata: sicut dicimus necesse fore ut serra sit ferrea si debet habere serrae opus. (10)

Hypothetical necessity is a necessity attributed to some condition or conditions, required for some end posterior in existence, which is an effect of the things denominated hypothetically necessary, or which at least, cannot come about without these conditions or means.(11) St. Thomas explains clearly the difference between this necessity and absolute necessity, in the Physics. Since the distinction is often overlooked by modern writers, it would be well to consider carefully St.

10. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, II, c.30

11. St. Thomas, In V Metaphys., lect.VI, n.327: "Primus est, secundum quod dicitur aliquid necessarium, sine quo non potest aliquid vivere aut esse; quod licet non sit principalis causa rei, est tamen quaedam concausa. Sicut respirare est necessarium animali respiranti,..quia sine respiratione vivere non potest. Ipsa enim respiratio, etsi non sit causa vitae, est tamen concausa, inquantum cooperatur ad contemperamentum caloris, sine quo non est vita. Et similiter est de cibo, sine quo animal vivere non potest...Igitur hujusmodi dicuntur necessaria, quia sine eis impossibile est esse."

Thomas's words on this question:

> Quaerit ergo primo utrum in rebus naturalibus sit necessarium simpliciter, idest absolute, aut necessarium ex conditione, sive ex suppositione. Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum est, quod necessitas quae dependet ex causis prioribus, est necessitas absolute: consequitur enim ad hoc quod est animal, esse compositum ex contrariis. Similiter etiam quod habet necessitatem ex causa formali, est necessarium absolute; sicut hominem esse rationalem, aut triangulum habere tres angulos aequales duobus rectis, quod reducitur in definitionem trianguli. Et similiter quod habet necessitatem ex causa efficienti, est necessarium absolute; sicut necessarium est esse alternationem noctis et diei propter motum solis. Quod autem habet necessarium ex conditione, vel suppositione; ut puta si dicatur, necesse est hoc esse si hoc debeat fieri: et huiusmodi necessitas est ex fine, et ex forma inquantum est finis generationis. (12)

Hypothetical necessity is found not only in creatures, but also in God. It is certainly true that God does not will creatures by a natural necessity; the existence of creatures is willed freely, from all eternity.(13) Absolutely speaking, God could have not willed what He has willed in fact, for the perfect actuality of God is the root of a perfect liberty

12. In II Phys., lect.XV, n.2

13. St. Thomas, Contra Gentes, II, c.30: "Si autem dicatur quod ea quae sunt ex nihilo, quantum est de se, in nihilum tendunt; et sic omnibus creaturis inest potentia ad non esse; - manifestum est hoc non aequi. Dicuntur enim res creatae eo modo in nihilum tendere quod sunt ex nihilo. Quod quidem non est nisi secundum potentiam agentis. Sic igitur et rebus creatis non inest potentia ad non esse: sed Creatori inest potentia ut eis det esse vel eis desinat esse influere; cum non ex necessitate naturae agat ad rerum productionem, sed ex voluntate, ut ostensum est."