

[Distinctio 43

Quaestio 1

Utrum prima ratio impossibilitatis
sit ex parte Dei vel ex parte rei]

1 Circa distinctionem quadragesimam tertiam quaero utrum prima ratio impossibilitatis in rebus vel rei fiendae, qua dicitur impossibilis fieri, sit ex parte Dei vel ex parte rei.

Videtur quod ex parte Dei, quia, secundum auctoritatem *Sex principiorum*,¹ "actio est secundum quam in id quod subicitur agere [dicimur]" etc., "passio est effectus illatioque actionis". Est ergo passio et effectus ab agente, et per consequens quod non potest pati nec fieri, hoc est quia non potest esse actio in agente. Ergo quia non potest agens agere, non potest effectus fieri vel esse.

2 Item, si Deus daret capacitatem creaturae, posset eam recipere. Ergo quia creatura non recipit talem capacitatem ab eo, ideo non fit ab eo.

3 Contra Anselmus, *De casu diaboli*, cap. 3:² quia Deus dedit gratiam bono angelo, ideo recepit. Tamen de malo angelo dicit quod quia non recepit, ideo non dedit. Sic in proposito: quia creatura non recipit talem possibilitatem vel capacitatem ut possit fieri, ideo Deus non dat nec potest dare.

[I. — Ad quaestionem

A. — Prior opinio Henrici Gandavensis]

4 Hic dicit quidam doctor³ quod illa quae dicuntur de Deo sunt in triplici differentia. Quaedam enim illorum dicunt perfectionem simpliciter, ut attributa quae conveniunt Deo in se et non per respectum ad extra. Quaedam dicunt perfectionem et dignitatem (sed non perfectionem simpliciter quae in quolibet est melius esse quam non esse vel ipsum quam non ipsum), ut sunt illa quae conveniunt Deo respectu creaturae, ut esse dominus, creator,

¹ *Liber sex principiorum* c. 2, n. 16 (AL I⁷ 38); *ibid.*, c. 3, n. 29 (AL I⁷ 41).

² Anselmus, *De casu diaboli* c. 2-3 (ed. F.S. Schmitt I, 235-6; PL 158, 328ff).

³ Henricus Gand., *Quodl.* VI, q. 3 ad 2 (f. 221G-H).

Distinction 43

Question One

What is primarily responsible for impossibility:
God or the thing itself?

1 Regarding distinction forty-three I ask: What is primarily responsible for impossibility in things, i.e., for a certain thing's inability to come into being: God or the thing* itself?

It seems that it is God, because, according to the *Book of the Six Principles*, "action is that, according to which we are said to act on some subject" and "passion* is the effect of introducing an action." Therefore passion and effect are from an agent, and as a consequence if something cannot undergo an action or cannot come into being, this happens due to an impossibility of action in the agent. Therefore it is because the agent cannot act that the effect cannot be or come into being.

2 Also, if God gave a capacity to a creature, it would be able to receive it. Therefore, if a creature is not receiving this capacity from him, it is because it is not coming from him.

3 To the contrary Anselm in *De casu diaboli*, chapter 3: it is because God had given grace to the good angel that he received it. However, about the bad angel he says that it is because he was not receiving [grace] that God didn't give [it to him]. It is in the same way in the case at hand: it is because the creature is not receiving such a possibility or capacity to come into being that God does not, nor can give it [to it].

To the question

The earlier opinion of Henry of Ghent

4 Here some Doctor says that there are three ways according to which something is predicated of God. Some things are predicated as pure* perfections*, such as the attributes that are proper to God as he is in himself, and not in relation to something external. Some imply [the sort of] perfection and dignity (but not a pure perfection which is in anything 'better it than not it') that are appropriate to God considered in relation to creatures, for

gubernator et huiusmodi. Alia sunt quae conveniunt Deo privative vel negative, ut impossibile quod privat in eo rationem potentiae passivae. Potentia ergo activa non dicitur de eo privative vel negative — ergo altero duorum modorum praedictorum.

5 Potest autem potentia activa dupliciter considerari. Uno modo in comparatione ad illud in quo est, et sic potentia activa est perfectio simpliciter et in quolibet melius ipsa quam non ipsa. Alio modo potest comparari ad creaturam ut ad obiectum possibile, et sic non est perfectio simpliciter quia nulla perfectio simpliciter convenit Deo in respectu ad creaturam, sicut probat Anselmus, *Monologion* 15,⁴ quia tunc Deus non esset perfectus simpliciter illa perfectione si creatura non esset. Deus autem est perfectus ex se et ex natura rei.

6 Quia ergo potentia activa simpliciter perfectio est in Deo ad se, ideo potentia passiva est in creatura absolute. Et quia potentia passiva est in creatura a Deo sive a potentia activa in Deo, ideo consequitur relatio potentiae passivae in creatura ad potentiam activam in Deo. Et quia creatura sic refertur ad Deum, e converso Deus secundum relationem rationis potentiae activae refertur ad creaturam 'quia creatura refertur ad ipsum' ita quod primo potentia activa est in Deo ad se, secundo est potentia passiva ad se in creatura, tertio est relatio consequens potentiam passivam in creatura, quarto est relatio rationis consequens potentiam activam Dei ad creaturam sive potentiae activae ad creaturam.

example 'being the lord, creator, governor,' and so forth. Yet others are appropriate to God in a privative or negative sense. Among the latter are impossibilities¹ that eliminate the possibility of undergoing something, or of some passivity in him. Now active power is not predicated of God in a privative or negative sense, which means that [it is predicated] according to either of the aforesaid two ways.

5 For [as was said above, any] active power can be considered in two ways. One way is in relation to that in which it is, and in this sense an active power is a pure perfection and is in anything 'better it than not it.' Another way is in relation to the creature as to a possible object, and in this sense it is not a pure perfection, because no pure perfection is proper to God considered in relation to creatures, as Anselm proves in *Monologion*, chapter 15, because then God would not be simply perfect by virtue of that perfection if creatures did not exist. God, however, is perfect of himself and from the very nature* of things.

6 Now because in God we have active power that is taken absolutely as a pure perfection, therefore in creatures we have passive receptivity that is taken in an absolute sense. Furthermore, since passive receptivity is in creatures from God, or from God's active power, it follows that there is a relation between passive receptivity in creatures and God's active power. And because creatures relate to God in this way, God, in his turn, relates to creatures by a conceptual relation—[i.e., of the type] 'because the creature relates to him'²—that involves his active power, so that first there is in God some active power taken absolutely, secondly there is in creatures passive receptivity taken absolutely, thirdly there is a relation that originates in passive receptivity in creatures, and fourth there is a conceptual relation that originates in God's active power as regards creatures, or [a relation] of his active power to creatures.

⁴ Anselmus, *Monologion* c. 15 (ed. F.S. Schmitt I, 28; PL 158, 163-4).

¹ E.g., 'immortal,' which prevents the possibility of undergoing death, etc. Cf. *Add. M.*

² I.e., of the third type of relatives*.

7 Sed quid de impossibili? Respondet quod illa quae dicuntur de Deo negative in respectu ad creaturam non habent primam rationem ex parte Dei, sed prima ratio impossibilitatis est ex parte creaturae. Et secundum hoc negatio primo est in creatura in se, secundo consequitur relatio negativa creaturae ad Deum, tertio est relatio negativa consequens in Deo ad creaturam, — ut sic primo sit impossibilitas passiva in creatura, secundo creaturae ad Deum, tertio impossibilitas activa Dei ad creaturam.

[B. — *Opinio posterior Henrici*]

8 Hanc sententiam retractans iste doctor alibi,⁵ dicit quod non est verum simpliciter de impossibili quod ideo non potest Deus hoc facere quia hoc non potest fieri, sed e converso, ideo non potest fieri quia Deus non potest facere. Sicut enim in affirmativa non dicitur Deum⁶ aliquid posse facere quia illud possibile est fieri, sed e converso, quia Deus potest hoc facere ideo potest hoc fieri, vel subiective vel obiective, sic est in negativa.

[C. — *Contra priorem opinionem Henrici*]

9 Sed contra primam opinionem,⁷ et primo contra illud quod dicit quod potentia Dei activa ad se est ratio potentiae passivae in creatura. Potentia enim Dei activa est sua omnipotentia. Sed per omnipotentiam non habet primo res esse possibile, sed per intellectum qui non est formaliter omnipotentia vel voluntas, quae ponitur principium primum efficiens respectu eorum quae sunt

⁵ Henricus Gand., *Quodl.* VIII, q. 3 Resp. (f. 304Q).

⁶ *Sic codd.; lege:* dicitur Deus ... posse facere.

⁷ Cf. supra n. 4-7.

7 But what about impossibilities?³ He replies that the primary principle* of any negation that is predicated of God as far as his dealings with creatures are concerned⁴ does not originate in God; in fact, the primary reason for impossibility [of this kind] lies in creatures. According to this, first there is a negation in a creature in itself, secondly a negative relation of the creature to God is formed, and thirdly a negative relation in God towards the creature follows. In this way first there is passive impossibility in creatures, secondly [there is passive impossibility] in creatures as regards God, and thirdly there is active impossibility⁵ in God as regards creatures.

Henry's later opinion

8 This Doctor retracts this opinion elsewhere and says that it is not simply true of impossibility that the reason why God cannot make this is because it is not capable of coming into being, but the opposite is, i.e., the reason why this cannot come into being is because God cannot make it. For in the negative, subjectively or objectively, the situation is the same as in the affirmative: indeed, we do not say that God can make something because it is capable of coming into being, but the reverse, i.e., that the reason this can come into existence is because God can make it.

Against Henry's earlier opinion

9 However [I argue] against the first opinion, [n. 4-7] and first against his statement that God's active power taken in itself is the reason for passive receptivity in creatures. Indeed, God's active power is his omnipotence. However, it is not primarily by virtue of omnipotence that a thing has possible being, but by virtue of the intellect, which is not formally omnipotence or will, the latter being the first efficient principle as regards external

³ At this point what is meant is certainly the impossibilities that block the possibility of some activity (cf. impossibility of passivity above in n. 4), e.g., 'it is impossible for God to bring this into being.'

⁴ The example is provided in the note immediately above. It was already said above in n. 4 that negation of activity cannot be predicated of God properly.

⁵ I.e., impossibility of activity.

extra. Ergo ante potentiam Dei activam vel omnipotentiam (sive ponatur voluntas vel alia potentia executiva) creatura habet esse possibile.

10 Probatio minoris: quia creatura existente in intellectu divino per actum intellectus, habet formaliter esse possibile, quia hoc dicit sic opinans. Ponit enim quod lapis, ex hoc quod est exemplatus ab intellectu divino, habet entitatem ratam quiditativam, et per consequens possibilis est esse extra. Per hoc enim quod res potest esse extra, distinguitur entitas rata a figmentis. Sed intellectus divinus praecedit formaliter omnipotentiam, pro quacumque potentia sumatur omnipotentia. Ergo non per omnipotentiam est res aliqua primo possibilis. Et hoc est sic arguere: ab illo habet lapis esse possibile primo et principiative, a quo habet esse in intellectu vel in actu intelligendi divino; sed ab intellectu divino lapis primo habet esse intelligendi, ergo ab intellectu divino habet esse possibile primo et principiative. Intellectus autem divinus, ut distinguitur ab omnipotentia, praecedit omnipotentiam; ergo possibilitas in lapide non est per omnipotentiam.

11 Item, omnipotentia divina, ut distinguitur contra intellectum, non est principium rei nisi secundum esse existentiae ipsius rei; sed res, ante suam existentiam extra, prius fuit possibilis; ergo secundum suum esse possibile prius oportet principiari eam ab aliquo: non ab omnipotentia vel potentia activa, ergo ab intellectu.

12 Assumptum, scilicet quod res existens in effectu primo producat in esse possibili, probatur per eundem magistrum, ponentem propter hoc essentias aeternas, allegantem Avicennam II *Metaphysicae*⁸ suae, qui dicit quod nihil potest produci a quocumque agente nisi prius in se fuerit possibile. Sic ergo videtur quod si lapis exemplatus sit formaliter esse, circumscripta

things. Therefore, a created thing has its possible being [already] before God's active power, or omnipotence (whether omnipotence is understood as the will* or as another practical power) comes into play.

10 Proof of the minor. A creature existing in God's intellect by virtue of the act of his intellect formally has possible being: the person who holds this opinion says this [himself]. Indeed, he postulates that a stone, by virtue of its exemplar* existing in the divine intellect, has valid quidditative* entity, and as a consequence is capable of existing externally. (For it is the ability of a thing to have external existence that distinguishes a valid entity from fiction.) However, the divine intellect formally precedes omnipotence, whatever power it stands for. Therefore, it is not primarily by virtue of omnipotence that something becomes possible. The argument goes as follows: a stone has possible being primarily and by way of principiation* from the same thing from which it has its being in God's intellect or in his act of understanding; but it is from the divine intellect that the stone primarily has its intelligible being, therefore it is also from God's intellect that it has its possible being primarily and by way of principiation. Indeed, the divine intellect, insofar as it is distinct from omnipotence, precedes omnipotence; therefore, possibility in a stone is not by virtue of omnipotence.

11 Also, divine omnipotence, as distinguished from the intellect, is not the principle of a thing except insofar as the existential being of this thing is concerned; however, this thing, before its external existence, was first possible. Therefore, it must be first principiated by something according to its possible being: [this something] is not omnipotence or active power; therefore it is the intellect.

12 The assumption, namely that a factually existing thing is first produced in its possible being, is proved through [the words of] the same Master, who, in connection to this, postulates eternal essences, citing Bk. II of Avicenna's *Metaphysics*, where he says that nothing could be produced by any agent whatsoever unless it were first possible in itself. Therefore, it seems that if a stone existing as an exemplar has being in a formal* sense, it would be

⁸ Potius cf. Avicenna, *Metaph.* IV, c. 2 (AviL 202-3).

omnipotentia erit possibilis, et per consequens ante omnem actionem vel potentiam activam in Deo.

13 Contra aliam partem istius opinionis arguo sic: in causis praecisis, si affirmatio est causa affirmationis, et negatio negationis, I *Posteriorum*.⁹ Ergo si potentia Dei est causa possibilitatis in creatura, erit e converso. Ex praecisa igitur causa possibilis vel ratione possibilis erit danda praecisa ratio impossibilis.

14 Confirmatur hoc, quia ex cuiuscumque ratione praecise accipitur ratio possibilitatis in possibili, ex ratione eiusdem accipietur ratio impossibilitatis in impossibili. Si ergo ratio possibilitatis in creatura praecise accipiat a potentia activa in Deo, ergo impossibilitas praecise ex impossibilitate potentiae activae in Deo. Hoc ipse negat. Sed maior probatur, quia si non, detur oppositum: ergo cum illud per positum sit causa praecisa possibilitatis, remanebit tota ratio possibilitatis — et simul cum hoc impossibilitas, quod est impossibile.

[D. — Contra posteriorem opinionem Henrici]

15 Contra retractionem istius in VIII *Quodlibet*¹⁰ arguo sic: illud est simpliciter impossibile fieri, cui simpliciter repugnat esse secundum se et ex se, et non propter respectum aliquem ad extrinsecum, sed ex sua ratione formali in se repugnat suis propriis rationibus formalibus, ut album et nigrum sibi invicem repugnant et non propter respectum ad aliquod extrinsecum. Ergo quod impossibile sit hoc fieri 'quia hoc sibi repugnat' non est

possible even if omnipotence were written off, and consequently before every action or active power in God.

13 Against the other part of this opinion I argue in this way: in the case of precise causation, if an affirmation is the cause of an affirmation, a negation [is the cause] of a negation, [as in] Bk. I of *Posterior Analytics*. Therefore, if God's power is the cause of possibility in creatures, also the opposite will be the case.⁶ Therefore, one must provide the precise reason for impossibility on the basis of precise causation in the case of possibility.

14 This is confirmed, because, speaking precisely, whatever serves as the basis for the principle of possibility in the possible, the same thing will be the basis for the principle of impossibility in the impossible. Therefore, if the principle of possibility in creatures owes its existence precisely to God's active power, then impossibility [will owe its existence] precisely to impossibility of active power in God. Now he actually denies this. And yet, the major does have a valid proof. Indeed, if it is not [valid], we must grant the opposite:⁷ but then,⁸ since we postulated the precise cause of possibility in what is proposed, the whole reason for possibility will remain—but at the same time so will impossibility,⁹ which is impossible.

Against Henry's later opinion

15 Against his retraction of this in *Quodlibet* VIII [n. 8] I argue as follows: that is simply incapable of coming into being, to which being is simply repugnant internally of itself, and not on account of some relation to something external. Being's own formal notion of itself, then, must be repugnant to the proper formal notions of this thing, just as black and white are mutually repugnant, without any relation to something outside [of the two]. Therefore, [the explanation through] the 'inability of a thing to come into being for the reason that being is repugnant to it' does not amount to [the explanation through] 'God's inability to bring

⁶ I.e., the absence of power is the cause of impossibility.

⁷ I.e., that the source of possibility in the possible lies in one thing, and the source of impossibility in the impossible in another (cf. *Add. M.*).

⁸ That is, if the opposite is granted.

⁹ Because they will come from two different sources, see note above.

⁹ Aristot., *Anal. Post.* I, c. 13 (78b 21-2).

¹⁰ Cf. supra n. 8.

'quia Deus non potest hoc facere'. Et ideo, quantum ad hoc, credo prius dictum esse verius.

16 Item, impossibile simpliciter includit contradictionem, quia omne quod non includit formalem repugnantiam vel contradictionem est possibile Deo. Sed contradictoria habent formalem repugnantiam ex se et non ex respectu ad aliquam negationem extrinsecam: immo si esset possibile Deum non esse, adhuc contradictoria contradicerent sibi. Ergo impossibilitas simpliciter in creatura non est propter negationem aliquam vel impossibilitatem in Deo.

[E. — Tria corollaria]

17 Ex dictis etiam istius magistri hic infero aliqua corollaria contra eum alibi et pro me.

Primum est quod relatio terminatur ad absolutum sub ratione absoluti. Probatio: ponit enim quod in tertio instanti potentia passiva creaturae referatur ad Deum. Sed cum impossibile est esse vel intelligere relationem sine termino, quaero quid terminet istam relationem in isto instanti. Non Deus sub aliquo respectu ad creaturam, quia respectus Dei ad creaturam sequitur, secundum eum, in quarto instanti. Ergo vel nihil terminabit istum respectum in tertio instanti, vel Deus terminabit sub ratione absoluta, quod est contra istum alibi,¹¹ ubi recitans dictum Praepositini de relatione reali ad creaturam, corrigit eum dicens quod Deus terminat relationem creaturae ad ipsum secundum relationem rationis et non secundum relationem realem.

18 Secundum, quod sequitur contra eum, est quia dicit in materia de ideis¹² quod in omnibus ubi est ordo alicuius ut 'a quo alius', et alterius ut 'qui ab alio', cuiusmodi est inter Deum et creaturam, prior est respectus eius 'a quo alius' quam illius 'qui

this about.' Now, given this distinction, I believe that the first of the two explanations is closer to truth.

16 Also, [anything] impossible includes a contradiction in an unqualified sense, because all that does not include a formal contradiction or repugnance is possible to God. However, contradictory things are formally repugnant of themselves, and not by virtue of a relation to some external negation: so, even if it were possible for God not to exist, contradictories would still contradict each other. Therefore, impossibility in creatures in an unqualified sense is not due to some negation or impossibility in God.

Three corollaries

17 In addition, from the statements of this Master here, I infer some corollaries against what he says elsewhere, and in support of myself.

The first is that a relation is terminated in [something] absolute under the aspect of the absolute. Proof: he postulates that in the third instant passive receptivity in creatures is related to God. However, since it is impossible for a relation to be, or to be thought of without a term, I ask what would terminate this relation in that instant. Not God under any aspect of his relation to creatures, because, according to him, God's relation to creatures follows in the fourth instant. Therefore, either nothing will terminate this relation in the third instant, or it will be terminated by God under the aspect of [something] absolute. But this is against his own statements elsewhere, where, quoting a statement by Praepositinus about [God's] real* relation* to creatures, he corrects him by saying that God terminates a relation of creatures to himself through a conceptual relation, and not a real one.

18 The second corollary against him that follows [from his statements]. Speaking on the topic of ideas* he says the following. Imagine a situation where two things are related according to the following rule: one is of the type 'from which another [is],' the other of the type 'which [is] from another' (this is the sort of relation that exists between God and creatures). Now in every such situation the relation that originates in the one 'from which another [is]' is prior to the relation that originates in the one

¹¹ *Ad sensum* cf. Henricus Gand., *Quodl.* IX, q. 1 ad 2 (f. 343V); *ibid.*, q. 2 Resp. (f. 347H).

¹² Henricus Gand. *Quodl.* IX, q. 1 Resp. (f. 341rI).

ab alio', et sic prior est respectus rationis in Deo ad creaturam quam e converso. Hic tamen dicit contrarium, quia dicit quod prius est potentia activa in Deo quam potentia passiva in creatura, sed, secundum eum, prius est respectus creaturae ad Deum, quia in tertio instanti, quam Dei ad creaturam, quia in quarto instanti.

19 Tertium, quod sequitur ex dictis suis, est quod omnipotentia vel potentia activa, ut est attributum, est mere absolutum et non dicens aliquem respectum rationis, sicut ipse dicit alibi.¹³ Ergo non constituitur in ratione potentiae talis per respectum ad obiectum, sicut ipse dicit: est enim, secundum eum hic, potentia activa in primo instanti omnino ad se, et in instanti quarto tantum est respectus eius ad obiectum. Sic ergo omnipotentia et potentia activa in se erit aliquid absolutum — aliter non diceret perfectionem simpliciter in Deo, quia nullus respectus, nec rei nec rationis, dicit perfectionem simpliciter in Deo — et sic necessario sequitur quod potentia activa in anima et in aliis agentibus erit per aliquid absolutum, et sic potentia animae non dicit respectum, quod tamen ipse negat. Credo tamen quod nullus respectus sit potentia activa.

[II. — Responsio Scoti ad primam quaestionem]

20 Respondeo ergo ad quaestionem: et primo de possibilitate in creatura, secundo de impossibilitate in ea secundum processum prioris opinionis.

[A. — Art. 1: De possibilitate in creatura]

21 Quantum ad primum dico quod omnipotentia vel potentia Dei, ut est perfectio simpliciter et absoluta, est prior creatura secundum quodcumque esse eius, quia quod est ex se et formaliter

'which [is] from another.' Hence, God's conceptual relation to creatures would be prior to the opposite one [i.e., the relation of creatures to God]. However, here he says the opposite of this. Indeed, [although] he does say that active power in God is prior to passive receptivity in creatures, on the other hand, according to him, the relation of creatures to God, because it is in the third instant, is prior to God's relation to creatures, which is in the fourth instant.

19 The third corollary that follows from his statements is that omnipotence, or active power, insofar as it is an attribute, is merely absolute and does not imply any conceptual relation, as he himself asserts elsewhere. Therefore, it is not constituted in its being a potency* of such a sort¹⁰ by a relation to an object (as he himself says). Thus, according to his words here, [God's] active power in the first instant is completely self-referring, and it is only in the fourth instant that it forms a relation to its object. Therefore, in this way omnipotence and active power of itself will be something absolute—otherwise it could not imply a pure perfection in God, because no relation, neither real nor conceptual, implies a pure perfection in God—and so it follows necessarily that the active power that is found in the soul and other agents will be through something absolute, and in this way the power of the soul does not imply a relation, which is something he himself denies. (As for myself, I believe that no relation could be an active power.)

Scotus's reply to the first question

20 At this point I reply to the question: first about possibility in creatures, and second about impossibility in them, according to the order of the earlier opinion.

Article 1. About possibility in creatures

21 As for the first, I say that God's omnipotence or power, insofar as it is absolute and a pure perfection, is prior to creatures, no matter what sort of creaturely being [we have in mind],

¹³ Henricus Gand., *Quodl.* VI, q. 3 Resp. (f. 220D).

¹⁰ I.e., as omnipotence.

necessarium est prius non-necessario ex se. Creatura, secundum quodcumque esse eius — sive existentiae sive intelligentiae —, est possibilis et non ex se formaliter necessaria, sicut est quaecumque absoluta perfectio in Deo. Ergo prior est possibilitas et potentia activa ex parte Dei quam aliqua possibilitas ex parte creaturae.

22 Sed numquid est potentia activa in Deo prior quam passiva in creatura, quia haec in creatura est principiative ab illa potentia activa quae est in Deo?

Responsio. Dico quod non, quia prima ratio possibilitatis in creatura non est potentia activa Dei sive omnipotentia, sed intellectus est prior ratio possibilitatis eius, quia per intellectum constituitur in esse intelligibili primo. Tunc arguo: per quodcumque in Deo constituitur primo in esse intelligibili, illud est sibi prima ratio possibilitatis; sed per omnipotentiam, ut distinguitur contra intellectum, non constituitur creatura primo in esse intelligibili, sed per intellectum; ergo etc.

[B. — Art. 2: De impossibilitate in creatura]

23 Quantum ad secundum dico quod non est imaginandum aliquod unum esse primo impossibile vel aliquod negativum vel privativum cui repugnat esse vel fieri, quia nulla una negatio vel una affirmatio est primo impossibilis in entibus; immo nec negatio primi entis, ut non-Deus, est primo impossibilis, quia ipsa sequitur ad omne quod non est Deus (homo enim est non-Deus, etc.). Et per consequens est aliqua alia negatio primo impossibilis, si sit una. Nulla etiam affirmatio est primo impossibilis in

because that which is of itself and formally necessary is prior to what is of itself not necessary. Now creatures, no matter what sort of creaturely being [we are speaking of]—either existential or intelligible—, are possible and not formally necessary of themselves (in the sense that any absolute perfection in God is). Therefore, possibility and active power in God is prior to any possibility in created things.

22 But is it not that God's active power is prior to passive receptivity in creatures precisely for the reason that this [passivity] in creatures is, by way of principiation, from that active power which is in God?

Reply: I say that it is not, because the primary reason for possibility in creatures is not God's active power or omnipotence. In fact, the intellect is an even more primary reason for possibility in them, because it is through the intellect that they are first constituted in their intelligible being. Then I argue: whatever accounts for primarily constituting [creatures] in God in their intelligible being is also the primary reason for their possibility; but it is through the intellect, not omnipotence (insofar as it is distinguished from the intellect), that creatures are primarily constituted in their intelligible being; therefore, etc.

Article 2. About impossibility in creatures

23 As for the second, I say that one should not imagine that there is some one thing that is 'the first impossible,'¹¹ or something negative or privative to which being or coming into being is repugnant [that is first in its kind], because in beings no one particular negation or affirmation is 'the first thing that is impossible.' Nay, even the negation of the first being (non-God) is not the 'first impossible,' because it accompanies anything that is not God (indeed, humans are non-Gods, etc.). As a consequence, where there is one 'negation that is the first impossible,' there is [also] some other one.¹² Moreover, nor is there in beings any

¹¹ I.e., there is no 'first negation' that sets a sort of a starting point or threshold after which negation is possible, but beyond which the possibility of any negation stops. In other words, in beings there is no limit to negation, and no negation is impossible (cf. the wording of *Add. M.*).

¹² I.e., it is useless to try to find one that is 'first.'

entibus. Quodcumque enim affirmativum, quod potest concipi, potest esse. Et ideo nihil simpliciter est impossibile nisi quod implicat contradictionem: contradictoria autem seipsis¹⁴ contradicunt circumscripto omni respectu ad quodcumque aliud, ut 'homo irrationalis' vel 'albedo nigra'. Et ideo, cum impossibilia ex seipsis contradicant et formaliter repugnent, idcirco impossibilis vel includentis contradictionem non est causa quaerenda in Deo propter aliquam negationem vel respectum negativum in eo, sed in ipso impossibili ex se, propter formalem impossibilitatem et repugnantiam partium. Ergo impossibilitas in creatura non est ex impossibilitate in Deo, sed tantum ex se et ex suis partibus impossibilibus et invicem repugnantibus.

24 Sed cum ipsius impossibilis sit aliqua ratio prima, sicut et sui oppositi, scilicet necessarij, secundum Philosophum, IV *Metaphysicae*,¹⁵ oportet primam rationem impossibilitatis, sicut et necessitatis, inquirere.

Ad hoc dicendum est quod impossibilitas in impossibili habet reduci ad intellectum divinum, non quod in Deo sit prima impossibilitas ut ratio et causa impossibilitatis in creatura, sed ut in ipso respectu partium repugnantium impossibilis invenitur prima ratio principiationis. Nam partes ipsius impossibilis simul sunt impossibiles et in se formaliter repugnantes, ut album et nigrum. Primum esse possibile, quod habent ab intellectu divino, habent principiative, et per consequens ab intellectu divino principiative habent suam impossibilitatem (sicut et suas rationes formales), sed ex se formaliter sunt talia, circumscripto quocumque alio quod est extra illa. Et ideo impossibilitas huius 'album est nigrum' non reducitur ad Deum ut ad causam privativam in qua inveniatur talis impossibilitas vel repugnantia formaliter, sed reducitur ad intellectum divinum (ut ad causam positivam), a quo sunt primo principiative partes formales in

affirmation that is the 'first impossible.' Indeed, any conceivable positive can exist. For this reason, nothing is simply impossible, except that which implies a contradiction: for contradictions are contradictory within themselves, even if every relation to anything else whatsoever is written off, e.g., 'irrational human' or 'black whiteness.' For this reason, because impossibles are of themselves contradictory and formally repugnant, it makes no sense, in the case of something impossible or including a contradiction, to seek its cause in God on account of some negation or negative aspect in him. In fact, [the cause must be sought] in the impossible itself and of itself, on account of its formal impossibility and repugnance between its parts. Therefore, impossibility in creatures does not originate from impossibility in God, but only from within itself and from the mutual incompatibility and repugnance between its parts.

24 However, since according to the Philosopher, Bk. IV of the *Metaphysics*, there is some first principle of the impossible itself, as well as of its opposite, namely the necessary, we should inquire about the first principles of impossibility and necessity*.

In this regard one must say that impossibility in the impossible can be traced back to the divine intellect, not because there is some first impossibility in God that acts as the principle and cause of impossibility in creatures, but insofar as he contains the primary principle of principiation as regards the repugnant parts of the impossible. Indeed, [constitutive] parts of the incompatible, e.g., white and black, are of themselves mutually incompatible and formally repugnant. However, they receive their first possible being from the divine intellect by way of principiation, and consequently they receive their incompatibility (as well as their formal principles) from the divine intellect by way of principiation—although they are such formally of themselves, even if everything else that is external to them is written off. And therefore the reason why 'white is black' is incompatible is not traced back to God as to its privative cause, in which such incompatibility or repugnance is formally contained; however, it is traced back to the divine intellect (as to a positive cause), from which formal elements of the impossible itself (in their possible

¹⁴ Pro eis ipsis; cf. notam ad dist. 13, n. 4.

¹⁵ Aristot., *Metaph.* IV (Γ), c. 4 (1006a 1-18).

esse possibili ipsius impossibilis, et per consequens impossibilitatis totius.

25 Ex hoc apparet quod ens fictum distinctum contra ens ratum — ut chimaera vel homo irrationalis, et huiusmodi includens contradictionem — non est aliquod unum conceptibile nisi ab intellectu errante, et quod est conceptibile ab intellectu errante ut errans est, nihil est. Nec habent talia figmenta vel contradictoria ideas in Deo, nisi secundum partes illorum, quae tamen partes non faciunt per se unum nec in re nec in intellectu.

26 Et ita patet quod prima ratio¹⁶ de causa praecisa affirmationis et negationis non est contra me, quia sicut pono intellectum divinum esse primam causam possibilitatis in creatura, ita concedo eundem intellectum esse causam impossibilitatis quantum ad partes eius in esse primo possibili, sed non quantum ad totum impossibile, sive respectu totius impossibilis, quia ut sic, non habet causam nec in esse nec in intelligi.

[III. — Ad argumenta principalia primae quaestionis]

27 Ad primam rationem in oppositum¹⁷ dico quod actio non est causa passionis, sed est simul natura cum ea, quia sunt correlativa. Sed agens est causa passionis et prior ea: calefactibile enim non patitur a calore calefactionis-actionis sed calefacientis. Et tamen dato hoc, sequitur affirmativa, non autem negativa. Unde et haec prima impossibilitas est in isto ex se formaliter.

being)—and consequently of incompatibility as a whole—originate primarily by way of principiation.

25 From this it is clear that a fictitious being as distinct from a valid being—for example, a chimaera or an 'irrational human,' and so forth, i.e., something that includes a contradiction—is not something that can be conceived as a unity except by an erring intellect, and what is conceived by an erring intellect *qua* erring is nothing. Nor do such figments or contradictories have their prototype ideas in God, except as far as their component parts are concerned; however, these parts do not of themselves constitute a unity [if taken together], neither really nor conceptually.

26 And in this way it is evident that the first argument [n. 1] about the precise cause of affirmation and negation is not against me. Indeed, just as I postulate that the divine intellect is the first cause of possibility in creatures, in the same way I concede that the same intellect is the cause of impossibility: [except only] as far as its constituent parts in their first possible being are concerned, but not so far as the impossible as a whole goes, or as regards the impossible as a whole, because as such it has no cause either in being or in the understanding.

To the initial arguments of the first question

27 To the first argument for the opposite side [n. 1] I reply that action is not the cause of passion, although it is simultaneous with it by nature, since they are correlatives.¹³ At the same time, an agent is the cause of passion, but is prior to passion: indeed, something susceptible to heat is not affected by the heat of the action 'heating,' but [by the heat] of the heating agent. However, given this, an affirmative does follow, but a negative does not.¹⁴ Hence [we must conclude] that first impossibility is in it¹⁵ of itself formally.

¹³ I.e., while one can conclude that if there is no action, there is no passion (since they are correlatives and cannot exist without each other), one cannot conclude from this that "there is no cause of passion, therefore, there is no passion," since action is not its cause.

¹⁴ I.e., while the agent can be deemed responsible for passion, it cannot be deemed responsible for the impossibility of passion.

¹⁵ Presumably in the recipient of action.

¹⁶ Cf. supra n. 1.

¹⁷ Cf. supra n. 1.

28 Ad secundum¹⁸ quando dicitur quod si Deus daret capacitatem, creatura reciperet, dico quod si Deus daret creaturae capacitatem ad impossibilia sive ad impossibilitatem, creatura non posset talem capacitatem recipere, quia tunc idem et non idem aliquid reciperet, quod non est intelligibile. Et ideo non sequitur quod ideo creatura non recipit capacitatem ad opposita quia Deus non dat eam. Deus enim dat partes impossibilis quae simul repugnant in quolibet secundum omne esse, ut dictum est.

[Quaestio 2

Utrum Deus posset facere alia quam fecit]

29 Iuxta hoc quaero utrum Deus posset facere alia quam fecit.

Videtur quod non: quia Deus non potest facere nisi quod est bonum fieri; sed illa quae non sunt facta non sunt bonum fieri; quare etc.

30 Contra: Augustinus in *Enchiridion*¹⁹ et Matt. 26, [53]: *Numquid possum rogare Patrem meum et exhibebit mihi plusquam duodecim legiones angelorum?*

[I. — Responsio Scoti ad secundam quaestionem]

31 Respondeo hic sicut supra in quaestione de contingentia rerum,²⁰ et nisi illa quae sunt ibi dicta sint vera, non posset esse contingentia in rebus.²¹ Similiter, si Deus non posset facere alia

¹⁸ Cf. supra n. 2.

¹⁹ August., *Enchiridion* c. 97 (CCSL 46, 100; PL 40, 276-7).

²⁰ Cf. supra dist. 39-40, q. 1-3, n. 25-30.

²¹ *M addit* (cf. *Add. M. et supra dist. 39-40, art. 3-4*): Unde ad quaestionem dico quod Deus potest velle et non velle libere quidlibet aliud a se. Et sic potest velle quod vult et non velle quod vult, et quaelibet talis est distinguenda secundum compositionem et divisionem. In sensu composito est quaelibet talis falsa 'Deus volens hoc potest non velle', sive hic accipiantur extrema ut denotantur uniri pro eodem tempore vel alio. In sensu diviso est quaelibet talis vera, sive pro eodem tempore sive pro alio. Et debet exponi per duas categoricas: per primam de inesse et secundam de possibili. Et accipiantur extrema pro diverso tempore: patet quod utraque est vera. Si pro eodem, adhuc est utraque vera, quia simul est potentia ad opposita divisim pro eodem tempore. Et sicut est in voluntate nostra respectu effectus eliciendi quod simul est in potentia ad

28 To the second, [n. 2] when it says that if God gave a certain capacity, the creature would receive it, I say that if God gave creatures a capacity for the incompatible, they would not be able to receive such a capacity, because then something would receive both it and not-it, which is unintelligible. And therefore it does not follow that the reason why creatures do not receive a capacity towards opposite things is that God does not give it to them. For God does provide [individual constituent] parts of the impossible that are mutually repugnant in anything according to every kind of being, as has been said.

Question Two

Could God make things other than those that he has made?

29 In addition to this I ask: Could God make things other than those that he has made?

It seems that he could not: because God cannot make something unless it is well [suited] to be brought into existence; so those that were not made are not well [suited] to be brought into existence; therefore etc.

30 To the contrary: Augustine in the *Enchiridion*, and Matthew 26:53: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Scotus's reply to the second question

31 I reply here as above in the question on contingency in things. Unless [one accepts that] those things that are said there are true, there could not be contingency in things.¹⁶ Similarly, if

¹⁶ *M adds* (cf. *Add. M.*): "Whence I say to the question that God is able freely both to will and not will anything other than himself. Thus he is able to will or not will whatever he wishes, and any such proposition can be distinguished according to the senses of composition* and division*. In the sense of composition any proposition such as 'God, willing this, is able not to will [this],' whether it means that the extremes here are united for the same [instant of] time, or for different [ones], is false. In the sense of division any such proposition is true,

quae non fecit, nulla esset contingentia, sed omnia necessaria. Non enim hoc tantum est verum in Deo, immo in me. Ego enim multa possum adhuc facere quae non feci. In hoc tamen est differentia, quod in nobis non est possibile nisi prioritate durationis, in Deo autem non est nisi prioritas naturae et originis.

32 Et sic dico quod potest facere non tantum alia quae non fecit, immo opposita eorum quae fecit, quia oportet quod utrumque oppositorum sit Deo possibile, sed non simul. Nec est maior difficultas hic quam de futuris contingentibus. Nihil enim quod non includit contradictoria est Deo impossibile.

[II. — Ad argumentum principale secundae quaestionis]

33 Ad argumentum²² dicendum quod si hoc verbum 'est' determinet pro modo et de facto, tunc est falsa illa propositio quando dicitur quod Deus non potest facere nisi quod est bonum fieri; alio modo est vera, ut patebit in sequenti quaestione.

opposita divisim pro eodem instanti, et est ibi prioritas naturae quae est causae ad effectum, sic est de voluntate divina in aeternitate respectu omnium aliorum a se. Et est voluntas (*sic M*; *melius lege* in voluntate *vel* voluntatis) ad effectum prioritas naturae quae est causae, quia voluntas est prior quam effectus suos prioritate causae.

²² Cf. supra n. 29.

God had no ability to make other things, i.e., those that he has not made, there would be no contingency, but all would be necessary. In fact, this is not only true of God, but even of myself, for I can still do many things that I have not yet done. The difference is in this, however, that in us it is not possible except by the priority of duration, and in God there is only a priority of nature and origin.

32 I say that he can make not only those things that he has not made, but even the opposite of those that he has made, because it is appropriate that both opposites be possible for God, although not simultaneously [together]. And the difficulty here is not greater than the one regarding future contingents. For nothing is impossible for God, provided that it does not include contradictories.

To the initial argument of the second question

33 To the argument [n. 29] one should say that if this expression 'is' is taken to refer to the present factual state of affairs, then this proposition is false, when it is said that 'God cannot make something unless it is well [suited] to be brought into existence'; otherwise it is true, as will become clear in the following question.

either for the same [instant of] time or for different ones. One should take [these] in the context of two categorical [expressions]: first, of the simple factual proposition, and second, of the one about something possible. Now if the extremes are taken [to be united] for different [instants of] time, it is clear that both propositions are true. But even if [they are taken to be united] for the same [instant of] time, still both are true, because [one's will] power extends simultaneously, for the same [instant of] time, to [both] opposites [granted that they are] taken separately. [cf. Dist. 39-40, n. 39-43] And just as [the situation] in our own will as regards choosing an effect is such that its power extends simultaneously, for the same [instant of] time, to [both] opposites, [granted that they are] taken separately, and there is a natural priority there of the cause to the effect—such is also the situation in the divine will from all eternity in respect to everything other than himself. And the priority of the will [there] as regards its effect is one of nature, i.e., of the cause [to its effect], because the will is prior to its effect by a causal priority."

— JOHN DUNS SCOTUS —

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