ANALOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF DIVINE CAUSALITY IN THOMAS AQUINAS

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Abstract. The article presents the question of understanding divine causality and its analogical character in the context of Thomas Aquinas's teaching on Divine Providence. Analyzing Aquinas's texts concerning the relation of God's action towards nature and its activities it is necessary to emphasize the proper understanding of mutual relations between secondary causes and the primary cause which are not on the same level. Influenced by the reflection of M. Dodds OP and I. Silva, the author of the article refers to Aquinas's biblical commentaries which have not been discussed so far from the perspective of the character of God's action. In the final part of the article, metaphors used by Thomas in reference to the relation of God towards the world will be presented.

Among some researchers who investigate the mode of God's action in the world and try to include it into the achievement of natural science, there have been recently some significant references to Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).[1] It still draws our attention that Aristotelian tradition adopted and enriched by Thomas Aquinas, seems to be a useful tool in building models of the philosophical worldview where God's action is seen as possible. Perhaps for this reason, the authors from the analytic tradition have recently evoked thoughts of Aquinas on several specific issues in philosophical theology.[2] In this paper, I would like to present a specific question of Divine Providence in Aquinas as a starting point for analytic reflection. Having defined the goals, I divided my paper into two main parts. In the first one, I shortly characterize Aquinas's teaching on Providence, the relationship between God's action and action of the nature that He created. In the second part, I present some examples of

1 See Dodds (2012), Casadesus (2014), Tabaczek (2015).
2 See di Ceglie (2015). See also Silva (2016: 65-84).

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metaphors that Aquinas uses for describing how God providently acts in the world. This special way of speaking about God and His action requires attention in order to clarify its meaning.

1. THE CONCEPT OF PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN AQUINAS'S PHILOSOPHY

The topic of Providence is essential for Aquinas's thinking about God and his attitude toward the world. Trying to present his thought accurately, we need to note and compare his doctrine of Providence in different works written at different stages of his academic career. It is interesting that Aquinas expresses his reflection about Providence not only in his systematic works (i.e. commentary on the 'Sentences' of Peter Lombard, *De Veritate*, the *Summa contra Gentiles* or the *Summa Theologiae*), but also in his biblical commentaries (particularly in the commentary on Job). What is predominant in all of his writings is a conviction about the universal character of Providence. Nevertheless, the mode God's Providence is exercised is not the same in all cases, but depends on the nature of each being. None of entities, contingent or not, can escape it. Yet in *De Veritate* Thomas observes that the closer created beings are to the first cause as *primo principio*, the more noble is their collocation within the order of God's Providence.[3] That's why the main task of philosophy, as Aquinas suggests, consists in trying to discover and comprehend the secrets of the first cause: *investigare autem secreta primae causae maximum est*.[4]

In recent years, there have appeared many publications presenting the actuality of the philosophical thought of Aquinas concerning the description of the nature of God's action in the world, just to mention studies of Ignacio Silva or Michael Dodds OP. The field of reflection has increased significantly thanks to the recent scientific discoveries and profound debates on determinism/indeterminism which were reactivated when the Uncertainty Principle of Heisenberg was declared.[5]

3 *De Veritate*, q.5, a.5c: 'Quanto aliquid est propinquius primo principio, tanto nobilius sub ordine providentiae collocatur'.

4 *In Eph*., cap. III, lect. 2.

5 Dodds (2012: 205) says that contemporary 'science is breaking out of the confines of causality as understood by Newtonian physics (…) Newtonian causality was univocal, the force

In this context, the question arises what to think about Providence which governs the world and how to perceive the reference between operations of nature and God. In this analysis, I focus mainly on trying to understand how God acts in the nature, the models of which Aquinas proposes to explain and how to think about Providence in the perspective of the relationship between the primary cause and secondary causes.

1.1. Providence as ordinare in finem

Aquinas distinguishes Providence understood as *ratio ordinis rerum in finem* from the government of God over the universe (*executio*), it means realization of this order. Behind this distinction we can recognize Aquinas's conviction that the world is ordered, although the intention of this order *(ratio ordinis*) is not always known by men, particularly in reference to these beings that possess free will. Good or bad things happen to both, good and bad people (Brague 2013).[6] But God knows this *ratio ordinis*: like a doctor who knows when he should apply the appropriate medicine, sometimes sweet, another time bitter. Thomas Aquinas understands this *ratio ordinis*, located in the mind of God, as an idea or plan to carry things to their purpose.[7]

But Aquinas knows that sometimes this *ordo* in the world is not perceptible. Some kind of disorder (*inordinatio*) — as Thomas explains — in perception of God's reason ordering all in the world is not referring to this good to which man goes *per se*, but to those which are joined to them: a good act has always a reward of perfect virtue (which is a *bonum humanum*, human good) and happiness.[8] At this particular level - *permixtio* - the wrong perception of Providence may take place.

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that moved the atoms. Contemporary causality is analogous, expressed in many different ways in the various sciences. Analogy is also essential in our language about God. If we speak of God univocally, we reduce God to the level of a creature. By speaking analogously, we preserve both the reality of God and the integrity of creature.'

6 The experience of providence is one of the important sources of sense for man. For R. Brague, the contemporary postmodern context, which is a self-retreat from the project of the Enlightenment, is a sign that we are entering a new Middle Ages.

7 *S.Th.*, I, q.22, a.1c.

8 *In I Sent*., d. 39 q. 2 a. 2 ad 5: 'Sicut medicus scit quare quibusdam aegris quandoque det calida et quandoque frigida, et similiter sanis; quod tamen ignorans artem admiratur, ut dicit Boetius. Ista tamen inordinatio si diligenter advertitur, invenitur non in his ad quae per se ordinatur humana opera, et quae per se sunt tantum bona vel mala. Habet enim bonum opus semper sibi adjunctum bonitatis praemium in perfectione virtutis, quae est bonum humanum,

Every providential action of God has this double characteristic: on the one hand, it is *dispositio*, which is a work of divine intelligence, and on the other hand, implementation of what is planned and what belongs to the will of God.[9] The fundamental issue that Thomas discusses each time, while considering Providence, is the question of 'how' God carries out this order. This is essentially a question of the *principium providentiae*, and this is good only. It is worth noting that good is the way in which God runs the world[10] and it is best expressed by the order of His Providence.[11]

Providence in Thomistic perspective is characterized by directness and includes all beings, even the least significant. In contrast, governing the world is not executed directly, but by means of secondary causes. Everything that has been created is subjected to Divine Providence, which is mainly related to two attributes: the wisdom and power.[12] As we can see, for Aquinas the perspective of the debate on Providence is twofold: *providentia* is applied both to general and particular order of things, *in universali* and *in singulari*. Accord-

et in consecutione beatitudinis, ad quam opera humana ordinantur; et e contrario est de malis. Sed ista permixtio videtur accidere in his bonis quae extra hominem sunt, vel quae non sunt bona ejus inquantum est homo, sicut in bonis corporalibus et in bonis fortunae; cum tamen ista permixtio semper ordinetur ad id quod est per se hominis bonum, vel gratiae, vel gloriae, secundum apostolum Rom. 8, 28: *diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum*, vel in justitiae divinae manifestationem; frequenter enim impii prosperantur in hac vita, ut manifestior appareat in judicio eorum animadversio'.

9 *ScG*, III, cap. 71.

10 *De Veritate*, q. 5 a. 1 ad s.c. 3. 'Ad tertium dicendum, quod Deus dicitur gubernare per bonitatem, non quasi bonitas sit ipsa providentia, sed quia est providentiae principium, cum habeat rationem finis; et etiam quia ita se habet divina bonitas ad ipsum sicut moralis virtus ad nos'.

11 *ScG* III, cap. 64: 'the ultimate end of the divine will is His goodness, and the nearest thing to this latter, among created things, is the good of the order of the whole universe, since every particular good of this or that thing is ordered to it as to an end (just as the less perfect is ordered to what is more perfect); and so, each part is found to be for the sake of its whole. Thus, among created things, what God cares for most is the order of the universe.'

12 See te Velde (2013: 51): The Providence is the manifestation of divine reason and wisdom. As authors observer the structure of Aquinas's reflection in Summa contra Gentiles is based on the analysis of relationship of Greek (and Arabic) necessitarianism and Christian doctrine of freedom, which decides about the human free agency. According to te Velde, 'freedom is included under the universal order of God's providence, because God not only concerns the effect, but also the way — in this case, a free way — in which this effect is realized by the secondary cause. Freedom is not "outside" of the regimen of providence' (p. 60). See ScG, III, c.94: *sic enim sunt a Deo proviso ut per nos libere fiant*; see also S. Ausin (1976: 477-550).

ing to him the contingency, free will, fortune and chance are 'dimension' (or framework), through which providence acts.[13]

The presence of the universal cause is not 'overwhelming' the particular causes, but is most intimate in it.[14] Combining Providence with secondary causes: what models do we have at our disposal? A debate on this subject has been in progress for some time and many attempts have been made to provide solutions to the question of divine action in relation to the creation. It has been understood according to the principle of instrumental causality; as an axe in a hand of a lumberjack so God works through His creation.

Thomas Tracy (Tracy 1994) analyzes different variants of this model: it is possible that causes act together in the same way as we can touch together one string, the second model is acting 'on behalf of' someone greater (a herald acts on behalf of his ruler and similarly the creation acts on behalf of God); the third option focuses on divine action in the form of encouragement, persuasion, in order to encourage the other one — the secondary causes — to act. Tracy's manner of thinking and suggested models have numerous limits and might give rise to concern. They all assume that divine action limits the freedom of an agent. But is it not a trap of univocal language which pushes God only into one meaning which is hidden behind our own basic categories of explication? To some extent, this equalisation of the perspectives of God and the creation is the heritage of some kind of natural theology which building rational explanation of the world has to define God and the creation according to the same system of principles. Tracy's models are characterized by reductionism which places God on the same footing as homogenous causes.

It is clearly visible that the most significant question is understanding of an analogical manner of divine causality which is neither in conflict with the creation nor replaces it. However, the mode of thinking which might be called 'Promethean' is different. It has been culturally present since ancient times and proclaims that the more of God, the fewer of man. Aquinas's thinking is radically different. In order to understand it, it is necessary to take into consideration a separate nature of two orders: particular and universal, but it is not everything. God cannot be perceived as the One who influences this system 'from outside'. Rudi te Velde emphasized it in one of his essays saying

13 Elders 2013.

14 Durand 2014.

that '[f]or Thomas, an absolute power is not a power which does not tolerate any other power besides itself; "absolute" means that I can cause something else to be and to act by its own power.'[15] Understanding these challenges Eleonore Stump in her monograph entitled *Aquinas* (Stump 2003: 300) referred to the theme of relation between divine action and created causality. For her, a good framework to solve this question is a reference of divine grace to human freedom. It demands preservation of the priority of ontological grace, on the one hand, and libertarian freedom of the created cause, on the other hand. A solution is to perceive divine action as a formal cause, a specific habitus (*donum habituale)* which enables man to receive grace.[16]

First, it is worth concentrating on what an analogical mode of perceiving divine causality means.

1.2 Analogical character of divine causality

When we ask how God acts, in which manner He is seen as a cause for Aquinas, there is no doubt that He cannot be equated with the causation's mode appropriate to creatures. God is not one of the many others among natural causes, it is not possible to set Him in the same line. Thomas repeatedly emphasizes the transcendence of God over creation, which cannot easily be reconciled with the fact that he would be forced to supplement the impotence of natural causes. At this point it is important to clarify, following I. Silva, how to understand the natural causes. Natural agents belong to the fabric of nature and have natural causal powers. Finding a space for God in this world - as Russell states - means, however, that God's action is limited to interacting within the created world, and loses His providential (*ordinare in finem*) power, because 'it does not seem clear how one of many causes may direct the world created as such to his purpose, especially if we think of humanity'.[17]

God and natural causes operate on different levels, a result which originates from their interaction, and cannot be divided in such a way that 'the part' of the action is on God's side, and other on the side of nature. It should rather be seen holistically at the effect of dual action of God and natural causes. Aquinas expresses this thinking in the *Summa Theologiae:* 'Because in all

15 te Velde (2013: 53).
16 Rooney (2015: 711-721).
17 Silva (2013: 413).

things God himself is properly the cause of universal being which is innermost in all things, it follows that in all things God works intimately.'[18]

Some philosophers of religion call it the paradox of 'double agency', following the observation of Anglican theologian, Austin Farrer.[19] In order to understand how God acts and what His analogical causality denotes Farrer's designation refers to Christian understanding of grace 'as a clue to the way God acts throughout the created order'.[20] In this context a mystery of Incarnation acquires a special meaning as it recognises a complex way of understanding and naming the cooperation of divinity and humanity in the form of the Word Incarnate. 'The grid of causal uniformity does not (to any evidence) fit so tight upon natural processes as to bar the influence of an over-riding divine persuasion.' Something similar occurs in the case of musical interpretation: the interpreters of music are both musicians performing on instruments and the symphony conductor. In some respects, they are all authors. It is a sign of the providential action of God: God maintains the relationship with the created causes in a completely different way than they maintain to each other. To understand this, a prior reflection on the ontological status of God and creation is required.

Aquinas uses not a univocal, but analogical comprehension of causality in the case of God and, that's why, he is able to manifest precisely, metaphysically the different characteristics of God's causality in comparison to creatural causality.[21] Therefore, in his book *The Mind and Universe,* Mariano Artigas, an eminent philosopher of science, starts his chapter devoted to the ways of divine action in the world with this question. Reflecting on the ways of divine action Artigas observes that 'divine and natural causality must have something in common, insofar as in both cases we are dealing with causes that produce effects. In this context, analogy means that we apply the concept of cause both to God and to creatures, partly in the same way and partly in a different way'.[22]

18 *S.Th.* I, 105, 5c: 'et ipse Deus est proprie causa ipsius esse universalis in rebus omnibus, quod inter omnia est magis intimum rebus; sequitur quod Deus in omnibus intime operetur'. In this article Aquinas speaks about *ordo secundarum causarum* and analyzes how is the relation of God towards this causes. See also *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1 cap. 136 co.

19 Farrer (1967: 173).

20 Hebblethwaite (2012: 141).

21 White (2015: 188-193).

22 Artigas (2001: 145).

In his recent book, Dodds considers this analogical understanding of God's causality as a very important condition for the right comprehension of Aquinas's teaching about Providence: 'As a univocal cause, God will necessarily interfere with the causality of creatures if God acts in the world. When two univocal causes are involved in one action, the causality of one must necessarily diminish that of the other.'[23] This is a famous 'causal join': the point where God's causality intersects with that of creatures. The term was introduced by Austin Farrer, who indicates that this point must remain a mystery. The reason of the crisis in the notion of divine action is a consequence of narrowing the understanding of causality which appears with the modern science. It appears here what Dodds called 'theophysical incompatibilism'. In a world described only through the mechanistic reductionism, God cannot work with other causes: there is no place for Him. But it is not a problem of causality itself, rather our perception of it, so it always happens when we ontologically unify the Creator and creatures.

In Aquinas's philosophy, God's action does not mean exterior manipulation of creatural being: God acts in constitutive manner, non-controlling or non-compelling. God makes that a cause is a cause and for this reason He is the source of its power of causality. To understand this doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, one should remember that God and His action are inseparable: God is whole in His action. Therefore, in order to understand how God providently acts, it is recommended to return to Aquinas's thinking about the nature of theological language: in what terms — analogical or univocal — we speak about God and we express His mystery. As creatures, we never escape from our, appropriate to human intelligence, *modus significandi*.[24] And therefore we have to remember that we depend on analogical language. It results from the fact that although we can use non-divine words to express what is divine we may not understand who God is. God cannot be defined entirely by any function, which Thomas Aquinas was aware of.

Analogical language refers to the lack of complete translatability of terms when it comes to a new discovery. It is something more than a metaphor as it establishes a relationship between what is already known and yet unknown

23 Dodds (2012).

24 Rocca (2004: 109) says: 'Contemporary science is now emerging from the narrow causal paradigm of Newtonian science, but much of theology is still trapped in them.'

introducing proportion. As Castro observes, analogy is not limited to a pure negativity because it has veritative aspirations: 'it is not reduced to the three unities as one term is unknown and the other includes infinity. But we can understand what we say when we state that 3 is to 5 as x is to infinity although we cannot adjudicate the relationship of x to infinity. Undoubtedly, analogy supplies us with certain knowledge.' (Castro 2012: 120) Analogical character of language is a feature of natural language to refer to new meanings and create, at the same time, a conceptual network which opens new possibilities. When someone discovers something new they attempt to refer to what is already known and build a new meaning.

From the perspective of Thomas Aquinas analogical understanding of divine causality means that God does not act like one of the many causes.[25] On the contrary, this term — analogical — describes the unique relationship between Creator and creature, which gives the existence to the created being and enables it to act. Precisely, basing the action of Providence on the secondary causes is not a sign of weakness, but the opportunity for the creatures to be a real causes, stemming from the love of God and contributing to His greater glory.[26] Aquinas explained it in a commentary to one of the psalms (and therefore in his last work), referring to the idea of movement, so characteristic for the wisdom of God which in this manner performs the task of *ministerio spiritualis creaturae*.[27]

1.3 Primary and secondary causes: levels of divine action according to Aquinas

Thus, the causality of God extends not only to the way in which the operating beings cause, but to each being as such, in its distinctiveness and uniqueness. This is a consequence of Thomas's doctrine of creation, according to which God not only creates a general order of the world, but also its particularity. While creating beings, God at the same time creates their actions, so we can say He acts providentially through the causality of created beings. The

25 See Silva (2014: 277-291).

26 ScG II, cap. 25: 'Deus, qui est institutor naturae, non subtrahit rebus id quod est proprium naturis earum'.

27 *In Ps.* 17, n. 8: 'Divina autem sapientia moveri dicitur, inquantum motum causat in mobilia. Quidquid autem causat Deus in istis inferioribus, causat ministerio spiritualis creaturae: unde dicit Augustinus quod Deus movet corporalem creaturam mediante spirituali: sed non facit hoc sua virtute spiritualis creatura, sed Deo praesidente. Et dicitur hoc specialiter facere Cherubin, quia interpretatur plenitudo scientiae: et Deus omnia per suam scientiam facit'.

fact that some beings are causes of good for others is an expression of God's goodness and it emphasizes that God not only creates their existence, but also their power of causation. This point is explained in the significant passage of the *Summa Theologiae*:

> But since things which are governed should be brought to perfection by government, this government will be so much the better in the degree the things governed are brought to perfection. Now it is a greater perfection for a thing to be good in itself and also the cause of goodness in others, than only to be good in itself. Therefore God so governs things that He makes some of them to be causes of others in government; as a master, who not only imparts knowledge to his pupils, but gives also the faculty of teaching others.[28]

The key question is how it is done. For understanding this, Thomas analyzes in the pages of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* four different ways or models whereby God's action can be related to the natural causes. Silva calls first two static, while the other two dynamic.[29] In the first model, it is possible to attribute to God the effects of an action of natural agent due to the fact that God is the cause of the causal power of being. God is the creator of everything that exists - including this power of causation, which is characteristic for beings. The second aspect is sustaining in existence of these abilities of natural agent to act - the distinction extremely important for Aquinas, constituting the crucial point of his teachings about the *creatio continua*, and based on the distinction between the act of creation (*creatio*) and sustaining beings in existence (*conservatio*).[30]

Another two modes of God's action in and through natural causes refer not so much to the efficient causality, but its particular case, which is an instrumental causality. For Thomas, each being as instrument has two main activities: one in accordance with its own nature and the other one which goes beyond. This distinction helps Aquinas to depict two successive modes of God's action.

In the third model, Aquinas thinks about situation in which a being acting naturally is moved to action by another: an example might be a person

28 *S. Th.*, I, q.103, a.6c.

29 Silva (2013a: 658-667). I am in debt to Silva and his analysis of the doctrine of Providence in the Summa *contra Gentiles* of Aquinas and in this part I follow his observation based on Aquinas's texts.

30 Roszak (2011: 169-184).

who uses a knife, and causes it to cut. Knife's power of cutting was applied by a man through the movement of the knife. In the fourth case, Aquinas is referring to activities that exceed the capacity of secondary causes, which take place in the case of causation of existence that escapes natural competence. They can create life only through participation — which is a category important for our theme — in the power of the first efficient cause. Therefore, God is the cause of this action, and a natural being is an instrument under God's action causing the existence. Neither in the first nor in the second case, action of natural agent can take place without the action of the first cause, and therefore the effects of this action can be applied to both. Without a man, a knife would not cut anything, and the excision of specific shapes or forms exceeds its natural capabilities. For this reason, Thomas Aquinas in *De Veritate* in this manner captures the interaction of the first and secondary causes: *effectus non sequitur ex causa prima, nisi posita causa secunda*.[31] On account of this, each time a natural agent acts, it carries out the plan of Providence and, that's why, every natural action may be related to God. For the same reason, Aquinas rejects occasionalism, understood as a view arguing for full divine responsibility for the causality of secondary causes, where God appears to be a sufficient cause of the effects. Thomas indicates that the nature needs God's power to work: there are no 'gaps' in which God would not act, but it does not mean that God acts 'in place of His creation'. As Silva summarizes: 'God gives the power, sustains the power, the power applies this cause, and achieves effects that go beyond this natural power He applies.'[32]

God's causation, however, does not remove the contingency of action and power to natural agents.[33] An interesting example could be Aquinas's distinction between events taking place in the majority of cases (*ut in pluribus*), and these that occurred in a few cases (*ut in paucioribus*).[34] It means derogation from the rules that usually take place in the operation of natural causes.[35] As

31 *De Veritate,* q.5, a.9, ad 12.

32 See Silva (2013a: 665).

33 See Andrews (2015: 1-12).

34 More about this distinction in Aquinas, see: Silva (2013b), Minecam (2017: 31-51).

35 *S.Th.*, I, q.23, a.7, ad 3: 'The good that is proportionate to the common state of nature is to be found in the majority; and is wanting in the minority. The good that exceeds the common state of nature is to be found in the minority, and is wanting in the majority. Thus it is clear that the majority of men have a sufficient knowledge for the guidance of life; and those who have not this knowledge are said to be half-witted or foolish; but they who attain to a profound

Thomas specifies in one of the chapters in *Summa Against the Gentiles*, such deficiencies can occur for three reasons:

> For the order imposed on things by God is based on what usually occurs, in most cases, in things, but not on what is always so. In fact, many natural causes produce their effects in the same way, but not always. Sometimes, indeed, though rarely, an event occurs in a different way, either due to a defect in the power of an agent (1), or to the unsuitable condition of the matter (2), or to an agent with greater strength—as when nature gives rise to a sixth finger on a man (3). But the order of providence does not fail, or suffer change, because of such an event. Indeed, the very fact that the natural order, which is based on things that happen in most cases, does fail at times is subject to divine providence. (…) divine power can sometimes produce an effect, without prejudice to its providence, apart from the order implanted in natural things by God. In fact, He does this at times to manifest His power.[36]

God in His creative action acts through secondary causes, even when they run out of their normal course of events, of their natural tendency to act in a particular way.[37] In such cases, God realizes His Providence as well, which refers to each being acting naturally in two dimensions: its ordering with respect to Himself and to something different from Him. Therefore, although the tendency or intention of a being acting naturally does not extend to an indeterminate result, it is God's intention which is extended to the effect that exceeds the possibility of a natural being. As the result, to find God's action in the world one does not have to look for 'places' where nature does not work (which is the core of the argument God of the gaps[38]). Nevertheless, the fact that some natural events are not determined can be an argument for creation's perfection. The chance, therefore, plays an integral role in Aquinas's un-

knowledge of things intelligible are a very small minority in respect to the rest. Since their eternal happiness, consisting in the vision of God, exceeds the common state of nature, and especially in so far as this is deprived of grace through the corruption of original sin, those who are saved are in the minority. In this especially, however, appears the mercy of God, that He has chosen some for that salvation, from which very many in accordance with the common course and tendency of nature fall short.'

36 *ScG*, III, cap. 99.

37 See *In I Cor*., cap. XII, lect. 1: 'Unde subdit idem vero Deus, qui operatur omnia, sicut prima causa creans omnes operationes. Ne tamen aliae causae videantur esse superfluae subdit in omnibus, quia in causis secundariis prima causa operatur. Isa. XXVI, 12: omnia opera nostra operatus es in nobis'.

38 Oleksowicz (2014: 99-124).

derstanding of the nature.[39] Thomas states that the contingency of the world is required by God's Providence and it is the sign of the greater perfection of the world.[40] Aquinas explains that in the *Summa Theologiae*:

> For to providence it belongs to order things towards an end. Now after the divine goodness, which is an extrinsic end to all things, the principal good in things themselves is the perfection of the universe; which would not be, were not all grades of being found in things. Whence it pertains to divine providence to produce every grade of being. And thus it has prepared for some things necessary causes, so that they happen of necessity; for others contingent causes, that they may happen by contingency, according to the nature of their proximate causes.[41]

Thomas sees that God is not constantly using the same way. God sets a balance between the events happening by chance and the ones proceeding from a natural tendency.[42] In this sense, it should be noted that chance is a part of God's *ordinatio*: 'It is necessary that the entire work (*operatio*) of nature be ordered from some knowledge and this certainly must be reduced to God in an immediate or mediate way.'[43] God is not only responsible for the ordering of means to the end, but He is also responsible for the ordering of universe. The activity of the secondary causes, including contingent ones, does not turn against the governance of Providence, but bespeaks of greater wisdom on part of the governor.[44]

Aquinas writes about it clearly in his commentary on the Book of Job which, as it is known, presents the mystery of Divine Providence in the context of reflection on the presence of evil in human life and the existence of chance.[45] He emphasizes the necessity of remembering the difference between causality of secondary causes and the power of the First Cause which requires careful thinking when applying philosophical categories which describe it. Aquinas notices that

39 *In Matt*., cap. II, lect. 1: 'Nota ergo quod videmus multa in rebus humanis per accidens et casualiter accidere…'.

40 See Sanguineti (2013: 387-403).

41 *S.Th*., I, q.22, a.4c.

42 See Hilaire (2015: 113-131).

43 *ScG* III, 64.

44 See Bonino(2010: 493-519); Conrad (2014: 167-205).

45 Nutt (2015: 44-66).

> we fail to understand divine things in two ways. First, because as we cannot know 'the invisible things of God' except through 'things which have been created' (Rom. 1:20) and things which have been created express the power of the creator very weakly, many things must remain to be considered in the creator which are hidden from us. These are called the secrets of the wisdom of God. […]. Second, because we are not even able to understand the very order of creatures in itself completely in the manner in which it is governed by divine providence. For divine government functions in a very different way from human government. Among men, one is superior in ruling to the extent that his ordering extends to more universal considerations only and he leaves the particular details of government to his subordinates. Thus the law under the direction of a higher ruler is universal and simple. But God is more superior in ruling the more his ordering power extends even to the most insignificant matters. So, the law of his rule is not only secret if we consider the high character of the ruler in exceeding completely any proportion to a creature, but also in the versatility with which he governs every single thing, even the most isolated and most insignificant according to a fixed order.[46]

In Aquinas's commentary a characteristic realism of a philosopher might be heard, a philosopher who is able to accept that his knowledge about the world is not complete. He even admits that the order of creation is not entirely clear for man. He notices, however, using a simple term *aliter* for comparing divine and human orders of acting, that the most significant matter, when reflecting on divine action, is to avoid a trap of closing God in terms and notions.[47] The way of analogy leads to 'luminous darkness' of human language about God.

2. HOW GOD PROVIDENTLY ACTS – THREE METAPHORS OF AQUINAS

Let's focus on a few interesting for Aquinas's metaphors that express his manner of understanding the divine action in the world. They have not been yet a subject of a broader analysis because of the fact that most of them are from his biblical commentaries, which are, unfortunately, forgotten by most researchers.[48] However, these commentaries reveal the new perspectives for our discussion, particularly because of some metaphors that Aquinas uses there.[49]

46 *In Iob.,* cap. XI.
47 Kahm (2013).
48 Roszak, Vijgen (2015).
49 See Marcos (2012: 270-315, the chapter dedicated to metaphors in contemporary science).

Before following these metaphors, we should pay attention to their epistemological sense. Still today, metaphors are one of the frequent tools of theology in many traditions. Although it seems to be a little suspicious because of their informal and imprecise language. The postulate of clarity of reasoning seems to interfere with the little precision of them. But we should recognize that metaphors remain interesting vehicles of the content. Thomas is an exceptional example of caution in their application, but at the same time he is aware of their role in building the models for explaining the reality. It explains that he pays attention to the metaphor already in the first question of his *Summa Theologiae*.

2.1 Fire and heat

The first of the metaphors is found in the commentary on the Letter to the Ephesians and treats about the relation between fire and heat. Aquinas tries to explain in this passage why the plan of salvation was hidden in God. It is the relationship that reflects the dialectics of visibility and hiddenness. Apart from the theological themes here, we can see a broader perspective that Aquinas introduces through the so-called 'note', which is one of the characteristic tools for his exegesis (a note begins with a significant *sciendum est* and it is thrown into the course of the lecture). It is worth pausing at this comparison, which can be widely applied to the action of God in the world.[50]

Thomas begins by saying that everything which is in the effects always shines in their reasons, although some of them are visible and some not. Heat is perceptible in fire, although it is invisible. The metaphor of fire and heat also appears on the occasion of Aquinas's reflection on Providence in the *Summa Against the Gentiles*. Aquinas emphasizes that God's Providence is being realized by means of secondary causes. This is his explanation:

> Besides, the stronger the power of an agent is, the farther does its operation extend to more remote effects. For instance, the bigger a fire is, the farther away are the things it heats. But this does not occur in the case of an agent

50 *In Eph*., cap. III, lect 2: 'Ubi sciendum est quod omnia quae sunt in effectu, latent virtute in suis causis, sicut in virtute solis continentur omnia quae sunt in generabilibus et corruptibilibus. Sed tamen ibi quaedam sunt abscondita, quaedam manifesta. Nam calor est manifeste in igne; aliquorum vero ratio, quae occulto modo producit, latet in eo. Deus autem est omnium rerum causa efficiens, sed producit quaedam, quorum ratio potest esse manifesta, illa scilicet quae mediantibus causis secundis producit. Aliqua vero sunt in eo abscondita, illa scilicet quae immediate per seipsum producit'.

> that acts without a medium, for whatever it acts on is adjacent to it. Therefore, since the power of divine providence is the greatest, it must extend its operation to its most distant effects through some intermediaries.[51]

In a similar vein, M. Dodds has built his metaphor of fire and a container heated by it without losing its specificity so that the effect is common for both beings, the first and second one.[52] Dodds compares their relationship to the pan, which is placed on the fire and heats other products. This fire makes the heated pan able to fry anything: but in fact both create the same effect. Thomas Aquinas recognizes in a similar manner the relationship between God and created causes.

2.2 Architect and contractor

The second interesting metaphor is the architect and contractor of the project, which refers to the commentary on the Letter to the Corinthians, and it is already in the commentary on the Sentences:

> There is found in regard to artificial things an artisan who only works with his hands, executing the orders of another and commanding no one, as the one who prepares the material; another who commands the one preparing the material, and himself works to introduce the form: another who does not work at all but commands, possessing the plan (*rationes*) of the work taken from the end of which he is the director and such a one is called an architect…'[53]

It means that the architect is still in his draft, although it can be attributed to both the performers of particular elements, as well as the one who carries the plan. Hence it is not only a certain type of supervision, but participation in the process, although not at the same level (because God remains transcendent, with all the connotations that it supposes). Thomas speaks about *imperium supremi architectoris*,[54] whose power enables the lower architect to

51 *ScG* III, 77.

52 Dodds (2008: 166).

53 *In Sent*., lib. 2 d. 10 q. 1 a. 3 ad 1: 'Sicut autem in artificialibus invenitur aliquis artifex qui tantum manu operatur exequens praeceptum alterius et nulli imperans, sicut ille qui praeparat materiam; alius vero qui praecipit praeparanti materiam, et ipse operatur ad inducendam formam; alius vero qui nihil operatur sed praecipit, habens rationes operis sumptas ex fine cujus est conjectator, et talis dicitur architector, quasi princeps artificum, Por. ScG III, 144: cuiuslibet autem operis ratio a fine sumitur'.

54 *ScG* III, 67, nr 5.

act and in this way we can attribute the same effect to God and creature, although more to God. A similar comparison from the field of architecture can be found in another work of Thomas: 'thus an architect does not put his hands to the production of his art, but only disposes and orders what others are to do.'[55] It is more precisely explained by Aquinas in his commentary on the book of Job where he observes that:

> Next he treats the making of man with reference to the work of propagation by which man is generated from man. Note here that he attributes every work of nature to God, not so as to exclude the operation of nature, but in the way things done through secondary causes are attributed to the principle agent. Similarly the operation of the saw is attributed to the carpenter. The fact that nature operates comes from God, who instituted it for that purpose.[56]

Besides, Thomas observes that Job sees all the works of nature as caused by God, 'not in order to exclude the operation of nature but in the way which things which are done through second causes are attributed to the principal agent, as the operation of the saw is attributed to the artisan.'[57]

2.3 Archer and arrow

The third image is an archer and arrow and it reveals Providence by reference to teleology of nature, tending towards its perfection.[58] The need for achieving the end lies not in the shot, but in the archer. St. Thomas explains it in his commentary on the First Letter to the Corinthians based on the reflection concerning the resurrection of the body and the relation between God's will and what man has achieved during his life on earth:

> But it is manifest that natural things without knowledge work towards a determined end, otherwise they would not always, or most of the time, reach the same end. And it is manifest that nothing lacking knowledge tends to a fixed and unless directed by a knower, as an arrow tends to a fixed target

55 *S. Th*. I, q. 112 a. 4 ad 1: 'Sicut architectores in artificiis nihil manu operantur, sed solum disponunt et praecipiunt quid alii debeant operari'.

56 *In Iob*, cap. X.

57 *In Iob*, cap. X.

58 *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. V, lect. 2, n. 6. 'In hoc tamen differt ab agente principali, quia principale agens agit ad finem proprium, adiuvans autem ad finem alienum; sicut qui adiuvat regem in bello, operatur ad finem regis. Et haec est dispositio causae secundariae ad primam; nam causa secunda operatur propter finem primae causae in omnibus agentibus per se ordinatis, sicut militaris propter finem civilis'.

> by the direction of the bowman. Therefore, just as if someone saw an arrow directly moving toward a definite target and did not see a bowman, would immediately know that it was directed by a bowman, so when we see natural things without knowledge tend to definite ends, we can know for certain that they are acting under the will of some director, which we call God.[59]

CONCLUSION

The topic of Divine Providence can serve as a 'philosophical lens' which focuses on the central issue in systematic theology. The fundamental question is how God acts and what language can be used to describe it. For Aquinas the solution consists in adopting the analogy as an appropriate instrument for reflection on the causality of God. In this manner he avoids the superficial conclusion that God is a cause among causes.[60] Aquinas introduces the important (and still valid, as we could observe!) distinction between the primary and secondary causes, underlining that they belong to a different order.

At the same time, according to Aquinas, God's Providence requires the contingency feature of the universe. Analogical understanding of divine causality demands not placing God and His creation on the same level, which is a basic assumption of Christian theology developed on the grounds of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. We cannot speak about divine action 'from outside' on a particular order of things as the effect of acting of a universal cause must embrace all things. Freedom of acting of secondary causes is inscribed in the logic of providence because this free acting is a proper mode of causality of rational creature. As Rudi te Velde observed,

> The problem of human freedom and providence (of a sovereign and all-powerful God) is a typically modern problem resulting from the difficulty to reconcile human freedom with our status as secondary cause. Also typically modern is the tendency to think about freedom in terms of counterfactuals: what if I decide to do otherwise, can my free decision be a surprise for God? […] And what we, as rational creatures really want is not so much freedom as such, but the free fulfilment of our desire. The exercise of human freedom is therefore embedded in the teleological order of creation.[61]

59 *In I Cor*., cap. XV, lect. 5

60 Silva (2014a: 8-20).

61 Velde (2013: 60).

That's why, the metaphysical language of Thomas, with this analogical impress, is less prone to these errors which grow out of the univocal understanding of causality of God and creature and it still is worth our attention.[62]

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