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Did God Cause the World by an Act of Free Will, According to Aristotle? A Reading Based on Thomistic Insights

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Abstract: As a contribution to the reflection on whether classic Greek philosophy gave priority either to *Necessity* and the *Fatum* or to freedom, this paper endeavors to prove three theses: (1) according to Aristotle, God caused the being of the world by an act of His will; (2) such an act of divine will was free and not necessary; (3) however, such causation is subject to the necessity of supposition. In order to do this, the paper delves into the interpretation of many passages contained in the *Physics*, the *Metaphysics*, *De anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics* as well as *Politics*, *Topika*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *De coelo* and *De partibus animalium*. This interpretation benefits from Aquinas' acute analysis. In such passages, Aristotle holds that (1) God's causal power must be exercised not in proportion to the magnitude of divine power, but to the requirements of the effect; (2) such a way of acting is similar to human power; (3) nature is subject to teleology because it is caused by an intellectual power; (4) God is the highest intelligible and the highest good, totally autarchic; and (5) just as the highest intelligible is simultaneously also intellect, so too is the highest good simultaneously also will.

Keywords: God's will; freedom of God; necessity of supposition; highest good; natural teleology



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1. Introduction

In *La philosophie au Moyen Age*, Etienne Gilson claimed that “Greek philosophies are philosophies of necessity, while philosophies influenced by the Christian religion will be philosophies of freedom” (Gilson 1944, pp. 9–10). I hold that this position is not accurate. Both, Plato and Aristotle underlined that (1) each man decides his own fate through choices that determine his character, and that (2) God acts freely.¹ However, Aristotle in particular did not see a true opposition between some kind of necessity, on the one hand, and freedom, on the other.² I do not wish to explore the interrelations between these concepts in the Aristotelian *corpus*. My purpose here is just to demonstrate that, according to Aristotle, God acted with free will when He caused the being of the world, although the divine will was of course subject to some necessity.

In previous research I have demonstrated that Aristotle holds that God is the origin of the being of the world by efficient³ and final causality, though not by creation. I have also shown that in Aristotle's work one finds all the principles by which creation (understood as a total production of the world without a preexistent matter) can come to be known, but that he did not connect those principles to actually conclude that God created the world out of nothing (see Casanova 2007, pp. 95–155; Casanova 2013).

I am well aware that there are alternative readings to mine. Since the 19th century Eduard Zeller and other 19th and early 20th century Aristotelians imposed the view that, according to Aristotle, God is just final cause (not efficient) and of the movement of the cosmos (not of its being). Although this thesis in its inception encountered opposition of

great intellectual power in Franz Brentano (see [Brentano 1978](#), especially pp. 61–95), it was established in academic circles in such a way that it became almost impossible to even question it except in marginal publications by authors such as Thomas de Koninck or Ralph McInerney. Actually, Brentano's interpretation was rejected on strange intellectual grounds, which can be perceived in David Ross's review of the impressive book *Aristoteles Lehre vom Ursprung des menschliche Geistes*: "Time after time he [Brentano] is able to show that Zeller has missed some more or less important distinction which should be drawn in interpreting the text. Where Brentano is somewhat lacking is in power of judgment. He is often in danger of not seeing the wood for the trees; Zeller's greater common sense has enabled him to see better than Brentano the significance of many passages which he has evidently studied with much less care". And the reason for these assertions is that while Brentano, on the one hand, endeavors to prove that God is the origin of being for the human intellect and for the celestial spheres and secondary separate substances, and that this is the cause of the unity of the whole cosmos, Zeller, on the other, with "common sense", holds that, according to Aristotle, the human intellect is eternal, not caused. Zeller is right, according to Ross, even though Aristotle says nothing about the human intellect's "life before birth". With the same "common sense", Zeller also holds both that the eternal secondary substances are uncaused and that the universe has unity not because it has one origin, but because it is *pròs hén*, which Ross takes to mean that it has one final end. (However, we have no experience of a common final end of a variety of things without a common efficient cause serving as the origin of such things or of their order (see David [Ross 1914](#), pp. 289–91).)

It was with reviews like this that Brentano's interpretation and any other similar to it were rejected afterward. At the same time, that is how Zeller's interpretation (and similar ones) became the standard.

However, in the 1990s, a timid movement of revision of the central view started, although it had become a robust centennial tradition of interpretation. David Bradshaw, Sarah Broadie and Enrico Berti brought some aspects of it into question (see Alberto [Ross Hernández 2007](#)).

Bradshaw decided to go back to the Aristotelian text. With a careful reading of the book *Lambda* of the *Metaphysics*, and especially of its chapter 6, he was able to establish that God is not only final cause of the movement of the cosmos, but also efficient cause of the said movement (see David [Bradshaw 2001](#)). Lindsay Judson also apparently deviated from the already traditional core interpretation in 1994. He stated then that there is a kind of final cause that can also be considered efficient because it originates the desire for which it is an end, but not because it actually transmits any "energy" or movement. And this is how he explains that *Metaphysics Lambda 7* speaks of the First Substance (which Judson systematically calls "the Prime Mover") as *kinetikón kai poietikón*.⁴ Enrico Berti implicitly disagreed with Judson's reading, arguing that if God were not an efficient cause in the proper sense, then Aristotle could not call Him *kinetikón kai poietikón* and, moreover, he would have been unable to object to the Platonic thesis of conceiving a Form as the origin of movement. A final cause might be *kinetikón*, but not really *poietikón* (see [Berti 2000](#), pp. 181–206). Sarah Broadie just formulates doubts by pointing out that in the *Physics*, the entirely separate substance seems to be an efficient cause, but then in the *Metaphysics*, one could perhaps understand that the unmoved mover is the soul itself of the sphere (see [Broadie 2009](#), pp. 230–41).

All these authors, by breaking the consensus of the until then standard interpretation of Aristotle, opened the opportunity to re-introduce views closer to Brentano's, even using Aquinas' insights, and that is what I did some years ago when I argued that, according to Aristotle, God is efficient cause not only of the movement but also of the being of the cosmos. My guiding hermeneutic principle is drawn from [Plato \(1900b\)](#), *Phaedrus* (275a–

277a): written works cannot defend themselves, he stated, which is why he and his disciples often wrote works that served as mere signposts pointing at (mostly metaphysical) realities: γεγραμμένους τοῦ τὸν εἰδὸτα ὑπομνησθαι περὶ ὧν ἂν ᾗ τὰ γεγραμμένα.⁵ So, squeezing the text is not the best procedure to understand its meaning. Although, of course, one has to mind the text, one has mainly to grasp the experiences that gave rise to the text. One must try to look at the realities towards which the sign posts aim.

I am keenly aware of the alternative readings standing today in the field, but I wish to explore the line that I opened some years ago and push forward one aspect connected with my interpretation. Concretely, I wish to investigate an aspect of divine causality implicit in my previous research, but which is worth making explicit: supposed that God as efficient cause gave rise to the forms of the world, which is the problem with which I dealt with in previous research, then He must have done that by an act of His free will. This aspect of Aristotle's teaching drastically separates him from neo-Platonic emanationist doctrines.

I know that to many current Aristotelian scholars, this problem might sound almost like science fiction, unless they agree with me in the solution to the previous problem: whether God is the ultimate origin as an efficient cause of the being of the other substances of the cosmos. However, if they just take my conclusion concerning God's efficient causation of the being of the cosmos by hypothesis, they may wonder how Aristotle thought that the being of the world was caused by God?

2. A Preliminary Point: The Concept of "Will" in Aristotle

In the following pages, I am going to assume that Aristotle had a concept of the will, and I am going to explore the basic ontological structure of divine will, parallel to that of divine *noûs*. As is well known, however, there is an ongoing discussion among scholars about the question of whether or not Aristotle admits the existence of free will at all.⁶ Thus, I need to state as a sort of prologue to my investigation that on this point I am in almost complete agreement with Terence Irwin's paper, "Who Discovered the Will?" (see [Irwin 1992](#)). I will briefly trace the main lines of my position, although I cannot now enter to defend each step.⁷ After presenting the main lines, I will defend Irwin from some recent critiques.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, after establishing in book 2 that virtue is an "elective habit" [*héxis proairetiké*: 2.6, 1106b36], Aristotle in book 3.1-5 endeavors to study the elements of choice and their implications for ethical action and character. In chapter 1, he studies *tò hekoúision*. This is translated into modern languages as "the voluntary", and it is the source of many of the difficulties that Aristotle's understanding poses for contemporary philosophers. In Latin, *voluntarium* is much closer to the Greek *hekoúision* than the English *voluntary*. The Greek concept is analogical. In each kind of being gifted with knowledge and some degree of self-determination, *tò hekoúision* exists when the being in question acts by using the full degree of that knowledge and self-determination. Therefore, human adults, children, and irrational animals, all have *tò hekoúision*. But only in human adults can it provide the proper context in which choice or election (which I regard as synonyms) takes place. In human adults, *tò hekoúision* is destroyed if an action is done due to ignorance or coercion, and it is diminished if an action is done due to serious threats or similar circumstances. All of this implies (a) that *tò hekoúision* is destroyed neither by *akrasía* nor by the mere absence of choice and (b) that the kind of "ignorance" that excludes *tò hekoúision* varies according to the kind of being in question: a sleepwalker or a drunk adult might have the same awareness as a dog or a child, yet his actions are considered *akoúisia* because, in such a state, the individual lacks the full knowledge and self-determination that normally belong to an adult man.

In chapters 2 and 4 of book 3 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle studies choice or election and *boulesis*. The study of choice is most interesting because it takes over Plato's arguments in *Republic* 4,⁸ but instead of distinguishing between *epithymía*, *thymós* and *lógos* (or *logistikón*), Aristotle distinguishes between *epithymía*, *thymós* and *proaíresis*. Why is this? This is because Aristotle distinguishes between the cognitive and appetitive [*orektiké*]⁹ powers of the soul. So, Plato's division is flawed because *lógos* is a cognitive power and Plato connumerates it with the appetitive powers *epithymía* and *thymós*. Explicitly, Aristotle distinguishes *proaíresis* from an act of *lógos*, the one most similar, which is *dóxa* (see 1111b-1112a13). Still, Plato is not entirely wrong, because *órexis* and *lógos* intervene in *proaíresis* [choice]. Actually, the essential description of *proaíresis* is *órexis* based on *lógos* or, as Aristotle states, *bouleutiké órexis* (1113a11).

In chapter 2, Aristotle distinguishes *proaíresis* from *boulesis* (1111b19-30), and in chapter 4, he studies *boulesis*. But this latter word is again used in many senses by Aristotle, as *voluntas* is used in Latin in many senses as well. In *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.4, it is a volitive desire, very close to the Latin *intentio*.

Since *Nicomachean Ethics* is not a treatise on the soul, Aristotle does not say more here. But in *De anima* 3.9-10, he adds plenty. There, in contrast to Plato, he distinguishes between cognitive and appetitive powers of the soul. But he clarifies that to each level of knowledge (sensitive and rational) belong one respective level of appetitive powers. Therefore, *epithymía* and *thymós* are common to animals and humans. Instead, *boulesis*, the will, is a power pertaining to the rational soul and, therefore, absent from irrational animals (see *De anima* 3.9, 432b5-6; and 10, 432a31-b4). At this point, we can understand that the *órexis* present in *proaíresis* belongs to this power of the soul, so much as the actual volitive desire that Aristotle called *boulesis* in *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.4. And these operations are not the only ones of the rational appetitive power of the soul: besides desiring, man loves with the will¹⁰ and, therefore, enjoys, fears, hopes, etc. This power (*boulesis*), its object (*bouletón*) and its actions or states, including *eudaimonia* (Aristotle 1962, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.8, 1178b24-32) and joy (or the most pleasant stable state (Aristotle 1895, *Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072b15-18)), are what Aristotle will attribute to God in the line of the appetitive perfections, as we shall see. He will explicitly attribute free will to God in 1960 (Aristotle 1960), *Topica* 4.5, 34–39.

Christof Rapp's paper, "Tackling Aristotle's Notion of the Will", summarizes several lines of critique to the kind of understanding of the will that I have presented here. I will briefly outline my response to such critiques so as to make the remaining parts of this paper more plausible to the modern reader.

First of all, Rapp cites Charles Kahn: "To say that Aristotle lacks a concept of will is to say, first of all, that these four notions (or at least the last three [an action that is up to us, *hekoúision*, *proaíresis*, *boulesis*] are conceptually independent of one another: there is not one concept that ties together the voluntary, *boulêsis* or desire for the end, and *prohaíresis*, deliberate desire for the means" (Rapp 2017, p. 71).

To this argument, I reply: *proaíresis*, on the one hand, and *boulesis* as volitive desire, on the other, are operations of *boulesis* as an appetitive power of the soul. The presence of this power, if unimpeded, is what ultimately explains that our actions are up to us and also that the adults have a kind of *to hekoúision* that is different from that of irrational animals or of children, who cannot use their reason to judge properly yet.¹¹

Second, Rapp objects to Irwin this: "*voluntary* is condition for being susceptible to praise and blame". But if it is a sufficient condition, then animals should be susceptible to blame, since they also possess *tò hekoúision*. To this, Irwin replies, with Aquinas, that animal voluntariness is not voluntariness in the fullest sense. Against this, Rapp brings to our consideration the *De motu animalium*, in the last chapter of which Aristotle states

that he has dealt with the voluntary movement of animals. Rapp argues that such a statement means that Irwin's reply to the problem is contrary to Aristotle's mind, since the voluntary encompasses the movement of irrational animals (Rapp 2017, pp. 77–78). But this objection is based on a simple homonymy: as was already pointed out, “voluntary” is a bad translation for *tò hekousion*, and *tò hekousion* is a concept that admits a greater variety of degrees and forms than “voluntary”.

3. A Fundamental Text of *Physics* VIII

It is memorable that in the eighth book of *Physics*, when Aristotle proves that there is a First Immobile Mover, one of his arguments addresses the fact that since motion has an infinite duration, it must depend on an infinite power. But that power cannot reside in magnitude (or be corporeal) because magnitude cannot be infinite, and a finite magnitude cannot have an infinite power for several reasons. One of them is that if it did, the effect would be proportionate to it and the velocity of the motion would have to be infinite, which is impossible. Therefore, there cannot be a corporeal infinite motive power. The power of the First Mover must be the power of a being without magnitude, that is, intellectual and spiritual (and therefore immobile),¹² which adapts the effect to the conceived form, and not to its own natural form, as Aquinas explains.¹³ Aristotle does not elaborate on this point because it is clear. It is clear indeed that for an infinite duration of the motion, an infinite power is necessary. But this infinite power cannot be corporeal, because if it were, the motion would be proportionate to the magnitude of the power and, therefore, infinite in its velocity, instantaneous, which is impossible (see 266a31).¹⁴ That the motion must be proportionate to the magnitude of the power in this case is due to the fact that corporeal agents cannot regulate the use of their power, but this use emanates from them naturally. Therefore, the reason why the potency must be incorporeal is that, in this case, the effect conforms not to the “magnitude” of the power, but to the form apprehended by it, to which form the power conforms in its action.¹⁵

Specifically, the intellectual agent acts by means of an appetitive [*orektiké*] potency that conforms to the conception of the intellect (i.e., the will, *boúlesis*).¹⁶ This means that God acts by will and not by a natural emanation of His power.¹⁷ The problem boils down to determining whether that act of will is natural or chosen. But if it is natural, how would it be different from emanation? The terms of the problem are clear if we consider the way in which Aristotle explains (starting in the book *Alpha* of his *Metaphysics*) the passage through which Greek philosophers came to know spiritual, invisible realities departing from the knowledge of visible realities. The hierarchy of beings goes from the inert material beings, which can only move if they are moved by another, up to the highest intellectual substance in which the intelligible and the intellect are the same; in the middle of his *scala naturae*, there are the mortal living bodies, which move themselves because they possess an immobile mover, which is the vegetative or sensitive soul¹⁸; above them, there is the intellectual soul which has dominion over its acts; above them, the immortal living bodies; and, further, the second intellectual substances, which, because they contemplate other higher substances, are not completely simple, since in them essence and operation are distinguished.¹⁹ On this scale, the First Cause and First Motor can only be an intellectual agent, which also has appetite (*órexis*), as we shall see. But that appetite can only be called *boúlesis*, for our intellectual appetite is what most resembles it among all the things of our experience. To imagine that such a being could be subject to “necessary emanations” or to cause in a manner not willed is either to cling to Platonism, in which the highest intelligible is different from the highest intellect (or divine intellectual soul) (see Plato 1900e, *Laws* 10, 897b–899d; Plato 1900d, *Timaeus*, 51d–53c), or to introduce a sort of processual pantheism to which we have become accustomed by some strands of the Cabala (see Gershom Scholem

1995, Sixth Lecture, in particular n. 4), Spinoza (see Baruch Spinoza 2006, pp. 13–24, part 1, propositions 16–36), and German idealism and other deistic or similar thinkers, such as Herbert Spencer (see Taylor 2007, pp. 141–43). That is to say, that image is either the fruit of [neo]Platonism, or it is a relapse into a Presocratic view in which the spiritual and the corporeal are understood as mixed and confused, just as Herbert Spencer or, before him, Baruch Spinoza understood them.²⁰

I could now start an investigation of the Aristotelian doctrine of the will and of friendship, which would lead us to demonstrate the thesis by deductive arguments. However, I prefer first to show that there are Aristotelian texts that explicitly speak of a free act of will or of a choice at the origin of God's causation of the world. Let us proceed, then, to examine them.

4. Texts Clearly Speaking of an Act of Divine Will as the Origin of the Order of the Cosmos

Let us begin with an instructive text from Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione* (2.10, 336b27–34):

For in everything we say that nature desires what is better, but it is better to be than not to be, [...] but this [sc. to be always] cannot happen in all, because they are removed far from the principle. God, then, filled the whole in the remaining manner, making generation uninterrupted; thus they are kept in being as much as possible, because this is the main way in which being is continued, by becoming and generation closest to substance [*tês ousías*].²¹

In his commentary, Aquinas writes:

To be always is a property of divine being: this [sc. to be always] cannot be the case in all, because some are too far from the first principle, such as material things which are susceptible of generation and corruption. These things share little in divine being. For this reason, God fulfilled the desire of matter in a different way, by making everlasting their being [sc. of material things] through continuous generation. In this way their being continues, i.e., [in generation] it always happens that what is generated is a substance of the same species of the one generating it.²²

These two passages explicitly unfold what Aquinas states in the commentary on *Physics* and in the fifth way to prove the existence of God: the fact that there is a final cause in nature, which therefore resembles art and departs from chance,²³ is a testimony that there is divine providence.²⁴ Both passages also corroborate that the way God causes the world is by intellectual agent causality, which is the kind of causality that can be compared to art, *téchne* (see Aristotle 1895, *Metaphysics Lambda* 6, 1071b28–30). But if God causes the world by intellectual causality, imprinting an order intrinsic in nature, this means that He acts based on form understood and, therefore, through an act of His will. In *Metaphysics Lambda* 10, 1075b8–10, Aristotle explicitly teaches that the good is a cause and that the intellect is also a cause. However, in the case of God, the good and the intellect are one and the same thing,²⁵ which occurs analogously in human art, where medicine, which causes health, is identified with health itself, for what is understood and the one who understands are one. Now, if God is a cause like the craftsman, then He operates by the apprehended form, as is supposed in *Physics* VIII. But a subject who operates by an apprehended form operates by the appetite that follows the intellect, that is, by volition. The act of causing the world is therefore a volitional act.

This conclusion can be corroborated by numerous passages taken from various works by Aristotle. Let us look at a handful of them before proceeding further.

In the first place, in *Metaphysics Lambda*, once Aristotle has established that act must be prior to potency in general and that, therefore, the origin of motion and of the cosmos must be pure act, he praises Anaxagoras and Empedocles for having pointed in the same direction: one stating that the intellect is principle, and the other that appetite (*órexis*) is (see Aristotle 1895, *Metaphysics Lambda* 6, 1072a4–6). The principle cannot be material, nor can it be soul; it must be a pure intellectual substance, which is not first act, but pure act. Therefore, such a substance is endowed with intellect and will.

Secondly, we can bring up all the passages in which he praises Anaxagoras and Empedocles, and then criticizes them for not making use of the intellect, the intellectual appetite and the good to explain the causes but falling back on the explanations of other Presocratics. Among such texts, we quote here these three: *Metaphysics Alpha* 3, 984b8–22, 4, 985a18–b4 and *Lambda* 10, 1075a37–b12.

Third, we can cite the passages in which he simply praises Anaxagoras for having affirmed that the intellect moves everything because it is separate and unmixed from anything material. Let us mention here, for example, *Physics* 7.5, 256b24–27 or *De anima* 3.4, 429a18–20.²⁶

5. Is the Divine Volitional Act That Gives Origin to the Cosmos Necessary?

That God originates the cosmos by means of a volitional act is clear. But is this volitional act necessary? This question can be answered in several ways. Let us begin to answer it by turning to an explicit Aristotelian passage. In *Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072b8 ff., it is argued that there is an unmoved motor that moves the first heaven and that the first circular motion of the heaven *necessarily* exists. Immediately after this, it is made clear that “necessary” has several possible meanings: (a) that which is violently produced by being contrary to inclination, which is not the case for the motion of the first heaven; (b) that without which a good is not achieved, which is a necessity of art (*téchne*), such as that mentioned in *De generatione et corruptione* 2.10, 336b27–34; and (c) that which cannot be otherwise, but absolutely must be the way it is. We can state with certainty that the necessity according to which God acts is not that of violence. And now, having seen that God causes through a volitional act, we must state that the second sense of necessity certainly applies to divine causation. As for the third sense, in order to rule it out of the divine action of causing the cosmos, it is necessary to advance in our investigation. According to the commentary of Aquinas, the movement of the heaven is not necessary in the third sense because it has a certain potentiality and, therefore, is not absolutely necessary. This observation contains an important key. This movement, due to its potentiality, could have not been. However, in order to understand well the said key, we need to delve deeper into Aristotle’s mind because the necessity could be in God as cause, instead of being in the movement of the heaven, which is an effect of God’s moving power. If we consider the nature of God and of His volitional act, it would seem that such an act cannot be necessary because, again, if it were, how would it be different from a necessary emanation?

Let us answer the present main question not in a merely formal way, but by trying to understand the content, the substance, of what is said. We know that God, as the cause of perpetual motion, must be pure act without any potency, because, otherwise, motion (and the universe) could have ceased to be and, in fact, would have already ceased to be. That which has potency may not cause, and that which may not cause would, in an infinite time, cease to cause (see Aristotle 1895, *Metaphysics Lambda* 6, 1071b16–26). God is pure act; therefore, He cannot be a soul; that is, He cannot be just a *first act* like the soul is (see Aristotle 1896, *De anima* 2.1, 412a27). He has to be pure intellect in act, without distinction between first act and second act. The operation of that intellect must be identified with the intellect itself. But this presupposes that the object of that intellect, that which actualizes it,

cannot be different from the intellect itself, because if it were, the operation would not be identified with the intellect's being. This is why, in order to erase all reference to the first act, Aristotle states that God is intellection of intellection.²⁷

But that intellection or intellectual operation has a more stable being than any intellectual substance that performs operations different from its substance. Its being is also more stable than the being of other separate intelligences, for these are actualized in contemplating God. They have potency at the heart of their being, although they have no potency for non-being or for physical motion, because they have no matter. Since their *télos* is outside of them, their being, therefore, depends on another, too.²⁸ The whole universe (heavens and nature) depends on God (see Aristotle 1895, *Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072b14).

But let us reflect a little on the point we have reached. If God has no end outside Himself, if He needs nothing and the end exists in Him only as the good always possessed, how could His volitional act of causing the world have been an act necessitated in any way? God is self-sufficient, much more completely than the mature and wise man. The wise man is still a man and needs others even for contemplation, and much more for ethical action.²⁹ Not so God, who has no practical life (see Aristotle 1962, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.8, 1178b6–25) and who contemplates Himself and is thus most happy.

6. Answer to a Difficulty: God Cannot Move from Not Causing to Causing; Therefore, Aristotle Concludes That the Cosmos Has an Infinite Past Duration: Does This Not Imply Necessity?

An objection may be raised against my interpretation because Aristotle states that the world must have been caused from all time, and the motion must have infinite duration, for God cannot move from not causing to causing (see Aristotle 1879, *Physics* 8.8, 251a5–251b10; Aristotle 1895, *Metaphysics Lambda* 6, 1071b3–22; 1072a7–18; 7, 1073a3–12; 8, 1073a26–1073b6). Here, we find a difficult knot to untie. The problem is solved by making the proper distinctions. God had no need to bring the world into being. The perfection of love is realized in Him, and this perfection is exemplified by motherly love.³⁰ Like mothers, God loves without expecting to be loved; He loves with pure love of friendship, and for this reason, He may cause the world to exist, although He does not need it. However, since the world exists, He did cause it to exist and He can no longer not have caused it. And, since He is immutable, He cannot have passed from not causing to causing. There is, then, a conditioned necessity in divine causation, according to Aristotle.

Herein lies an important difference and an important similarity (conditioned necessity) between Aristotelian and Thomistic theology. The difference consists in the fact that Aquinas knows, both from revelation and from the principles that Aristotle managed to recognize, that the world was created out of nothing. This implies that God transcends the world and time and that, therefore, by an act of divine will, the world and time may have come into existence in such a way that past time is finite, without this implying a change in God, since He is outside of time (see Aquinas 2000b, *In octos libros Physicorum*, lib. 8, l. 2, nn. 18–20). St. Thomas considers and deeply understands the reasons why Aristotle postulates the infinite duration of time and motion. Aristotle thinks that if God moved from not causing to causing, there would be a change in Him prior to the beginning of the world's being. Aquinas shows that this is true of the natural agent, but not necessarily of the agent who works by will, for the latter can be outside of motion.³¹ However, since our will, being incorporeal, is immersed in time and passes from not causing to causing by virtue of a prior change (see Aristotle 1879, *Physics* 8.6, 259b1–22), Aquinas masterfully points out that “God produced at once both time and things *after* they did not exist. Accordingly, we must not consider in the divine will that it willed to make things not then but later, as though time were already existing; rather, we must solely consider the fact that he willed

that things and the time of their duration should begin to be *after* they had no existed at all" (Aquinas 1958–1962, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, book 8, l. 2, n. 989; my italics). Here, of course, "before" and "after" have metaphorical or ontological meaning, but not chronological, for there was no time before creation. There was only eternity, the eternity of God.

This crucial difference between Aquinas' and Aristotle's theology implies a deep difference in the understanding of divine will. Aristotle was unable to conceive of a radically transcendent God and, therefore, a divine will able to produce a world that has finite duration. He still comprehends divine will as somehow connected to the matter on which it acts so as to think that God either does not cause the world or, if He does, He does it from eternity or from an infinite past time.³² Moreover, for this reason precisely, divine will as Aristotle conceives it is not really as omnipotent as Aquinas in turn conceives it to be—that is to say, as able to produce even matter.³³

Aristotle's point of departure here is his experience within the world that exists, seen initially with Platonic eyes. In his analysis of this world within which he finds himself, he determines that the universal principles are only two, God and matter (celestial and terrestrial).³⁴ In this, he corrected his mentor, Plato, who postulated three principles: the *chóra*, the ideas and the soul. The highest principle, God, is the origin, the fountainhead of all formality, including that of heaven. However, God does not "generate" heaven because it is non-generable and, according to Aristotle, it cannot come to be from a contrary formal state of matter. Rather, from an infinite past time, God infuses form into the matter proportionate to heaven's forms and thus structures it. "There is good reason to think that, if the heaven was generated, it was generated by such a cause [i.e., by nature, which is always directed towards an end, even better than art³⁵]"³⁶. And we know this because heaven participates more in divine order than mortal living beings.³⁷ However, Aristotle failed to realize that, on the one hand, since matter is related to form and God is the origin of all formality, (a) the very being of matter depends on God and, therefore, had to be created, and, on the other hand, (b) God had to be so transcendent to this whole universe that we see, that He was not affected in any way by creating or not creating. If I am wrong and Aristotle had come to know that the origin of the world was an act of creation out of nothing,³⁸ in any case he did not come to draw all the consequences that follow from that truth, namely, that the transcendent God's providence encompasses even chance, that matter is also totally subject to the divine order,³⁹ and that God has the power to originate the world in such a way that its duration toward the past can be a finite duration because the fact that creation has a temporal beginning does not affect in any way the totally transcendent God, who is utterly outside time. In any case, Aristotle did come to realize that God had the power to cause or not cause the particular world that he caused (and perhaps even to cause or not cause the world at all), since God acts by will and is self-sufficient.⁴⁰ (He also realized, as a good Platonist, that God takes care of human affairs.)⁴¹ Aristotle correctly understood that since God does not change, His decision must have been made from eternity, but he confused this with the [conditional] necessity that the world has an infinite past duration.

There is, however, a similarity with the conception of Aquinas. He also thinks that God, although omnipotent, is subject to a conditional necessity, for He cannot contradict Himself. To have the power to do "everything" means the power to produce all being, but no being can receive in itself any contradiction; being is repulsed by contradiction. Thus, not being able to do something that entails a contradiction is not a limit to omnipotence.⁴² This is the reason why Aquinas teaches, in the *Summa contra gentiles*, that God wills what is distinct from Himself with the necessity of supposition. This means, in the first place, that once He wills something, He can no longer not will it. Moreover, if He wills a thing,

He also wills all that the thing presupposes or implies. This necessity of supposition is expressed in a masterly way in chapter 86 of *Summa contra gentiles*, book 1:

From what has been said we can infer that a reason can be assigned to the divine will. (1) The end is the reason for willing the things that are for the sake of the end. But God wills his own goodness as the end, and other things He wills as things that are for the sake of the end. His goodness, therefore, is the reason why He wills the other things which are different from Himself. (2) Again, a particular good is ordered to the good of the whole as to its end, as the imperfect to the perfect. Now, some things fall under the divine will according to their disposition in the order of the good. It remains, then, that the good of the universe is the reason why God wills each particular good in the universe. (3) Again, as was shown above, on the supposition that God wills something, it follows necessarily that He wills the things required for it. But that which imposes necessity on another is the reason why that other exists. Therefore, the reason why God wills the things that are required for each thing is that that thing be for which they are required.

Thus, therefore, can we proceed in assigning the reason of the divine will. God wills man to have a reason in order that man be; He wills man to be so that the universe may be complete;⁴³ and He wills that the good of the universe be because it befits his goodness. However, this threefold reason does not proceed according to the same relationship. For the divine goodness neither depends on the perfection of the universe nor is anything added to it from this perfection. For, although the perfection of the universe necessarily depends on certain particular goods that are its essential parts, yet on some of them it does not depend of necessity, but nevertheless a certain goodness or adornment accrues to the universe from them, as from those things that exist only for the support or adornment of the other parts of the universe. A particular good depends necessarily on the things that are absolutely required for it, even though this too has certain things that are for its embellishment. Hence, at times the reason of the divine will contains only a befittingness; at other times, usefulness; at still other times, a necessity of supposition; but a necessity that is absolute only when it wills itself.⁴⁴

7. Conclusions and Corollary

From the previous considerations follows our conclusion. Since divine causality is causality of the intellect and of the will, just as the pure act is *Nóesis nóeseos*, it must also be *Boulesis bouléseos*. That is to say, the volitional good (*bouletón*) must be identified in Him with the will that loves it, for otherwise, the will would be actualized by the good. But this means that in Him there is no desire but, as Aristotle points out, love and joy of Himself and in Himself.⁴⁵ In God, and only in God, good and joy are identified, just as the intellect and the intelligible are identified. That is why Aristotle says that the activity of God is pleasure (*Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072b 15-18). But if this is so, how can God necessarily will to cause the world, as if He needed it? His causation of the world is an act of pure free love, not a necessary completion of His being.

Let us go one step further, which already takes us beyond the original purpose of this work. If the will and the good in God are the same, then He is good in a very different sense from the sense in which the good caused by Him is said to be good, just as He is intelligible in a very different sense as well (because in Him, the intellect and the intelligible are totally identical). As the truest [more intelligible] realities originate the less true realities (*Metaphysics alpha élatton* 1, 993b19–31), so also the first good, the best, causes all other good because the common denomination “good” is not transmitted by Platonic participation,

but by efficient causation. We have seen that God, the first intelligible being, causes as a craftsman when bringing about the cosmos. This means that things caused by Him receive their intelligibility by conforming to the idea of the craftsman. The first in the series of intelligible realities is the same as the first in the series of desirable realities (*Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072a26–27), and in the series of the good and the eligible by itself, the first is always the best or something analogous (1072a35–36)—analogous because He is not desirable for Himself, but for the things He causes, and because He causes things not because He desires them, but so that they may desire Him. That is, He causes things not because they are good, but they are good because He causes them. And we can say, “He makes them”, because Aristotle also calls God the demiurge and also compares divine causality to that of the craftsman, as we have seen. He is desirable for us and for all other finite beings, but He is not desirable in Himself and for Himself. In Himself, He is only love [*boulesís*] and lovable [*bouletón*] in a single act.

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Acknowledgments: The author wants to acknowledge the technical support received from Father See, for instance, the works by Jedan (2000), Mesch (2013) or Rapp (2017). Of course, I believe that Aristotle holds a sufficient notion of freedom, but I can only outline my position. However, the reasons I give below will prove the existence of freedom in God and a fortiori of freedom in Aristotle’s thought. David Torrijos-Castrillejo, Universidad San Dámaso.

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Notes

- ¹ On Plato see his works *Republic* 10, 616c–421a (Plato 1900c); and *Timaeus* 30a–31a (Plato 1900d). On Aristotle’s works, see *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.5.1113b3–114b25 (Aristotle 1962) and all the texts analyzed in this present paper.
- ² See, for example, *Metaphysics Lambda* 10, 1175a16–24 (Aristotle 1895). The more the different levels of being share in intelligence, the more they share in order and are connected to the good of the whole through the tendencies of their respective natures, and the less their doings and sufferings are left to chance. According to Alberto Ross Hernández (2016), Alexander of Aphrodisias identified nature as a cause with *fatum* and as being opposed to chance, in the sublunary world.
- ³ At the time in which the 20th-century “traditional” interpretation of Aristotle was starting, Franz Brentano identified the influence of Hume’s conception of causality as the main factor in bringing about the belief that there is an incompatibility between the infinite past duration of the cosmos held by Aristotle, on the one hand, and God’s efficient causality of the being of the cosmos, on the other. Brentano clarified that the Humean conception of causality is entirely alien to the Aristotelian conception. See Brentano (1978, p. 62).
- ⁴ See (Judson 1994). See also Judson (2019, pp. 179, 202, 205–8). One presupposition of Judson’s views is that any efficient cause that transmits movement must “expend power” (see Judson 2019, pp. 206, 235). But, actually, this is not the case of an efficient cause that is completely spiritual or dispossessed of magnitude. Judson acknowledges that it might be the case that an efficient cause without magnitude does not “expend power” (see Judson 2019, p. 235), but then he returns to his belief that the Prime Mover moves only as final cause and is perplexed about why, then, according to *Physics* 8.10, a magnitude could not move eternally as final cause since in that way it does not need to “expend power”. A serious omission in Judson’s understanding is that he thinks that the natural movement of the heavens does not need an efficient or moving cause, precisely because it is natural. Consequently, he is perplexed about why a Prime Mover or *kinetikón* would be at all needed in *Physics* and conjectures that Aristotle must have suffered an important change of mind in between *De Coelo* and *Physics* (see Judson 2019, p. 178). But Aristotle is very clear that all that is moved is moved by another: the living being by an intrinsic unmoved mover (which cannot be the Prime Mover) and what is light or heavy is moved (even in its natural movements) by the cause that brings them into being and by the cause that removes the obstacle to their movement. See Aristotle (1879, *Physics* 8.4, 256a1–3).

- Of course, here, “to remember” is alluding to the theory of anamnesis, which is an explanation about how we first acquired the experience of those realities that we contemplate in philosophy and other sciences.
- See, for instance, the works by Jedan (2000), Mesch (2013) or Rapp (2017). Of course, I believe that Aristotle holds a sufficient notion of freedom, but I can only outline my position. However, the reasons I give below will prove the existence of freedom in God and a fortiori of freedom in Aristotle’s thought.
- The reader should see the said paper by Irwin, where he succeeds in defending a very similar view.
- Compare 1111b10-19 with *Republic* 4, 439a-441 d.
- It is not appropriate to translate *orektiké* with the word “desire” because this English word does not cover all the wealth of meaning of that Greek word. It would be better to translate it as “inclination” or “tendency”, but really the Latin translation is best: *appetitus*, which in English can be expressed as “appetitive power”, as I have chosen to do.
- Only among beings with intellect can there be *philia*. See *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.2, 1155b26-32; 11, 1161b1-8; 1162a4-5; 1163b15-19.
- This is the reason why “justice” exists only among beings that have *noûs* (*Nicomachean Ethics* 5.9, 1137a26-30). Slaves can have friendship (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.11, 1161b1-8) and virtue because they have *lógos* (Aristotle 1894, *Politics* 1.13, 1259b22-28 and 1260a14-24), and virtue can exist only among those who can choose (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2). The appetitive power of *boúlesis* is in the rational part of the soul.
- See Aristotle (1879), *Physics* 8.10, 266a10–267b26. Sarah Broadie cites the passage of *Physics* and the conclusion, but not the reasons why a finite magnitude cannot have infinite power. See Broadie (2009), p. 237.
- “[...] actio agentis per intellectum, non proportionatur naturae ipsius, sed formae apprehensae; non enim aedificator tantum aedificat quantum potest, sed quantum exigit ratio formae conceptae” (Aquinas 2000b, *In octos libros Physicorum*, lib. 8, l. 21, n. 10).
- Lindsay Judson points out another reason why a finite magnitude cannot have infinite power in Aristotle. *Metaphysics Book Λ* (1919), pp. 193–94, namely: “his idea seems to be that, if the cause had magnitude, determinate amounts of power would be located in distinct spacial parts of the cause, and used up successively, like a series of batteries used one at a time”. This is not incompatible with what I hold in the text, but I am focusing on a particular argument of *Physics* 8.10.
- Aristotle gives other reasons for postulating an incorporeal power: “that which exists without magnitude cannot be in motion” (267a22–3), and this is how the first mover can be motionless and the beginning of the chain of movers and moved. Moreover, “we have a mover that has no need to change along with that which it moves but will be able to always cause motion (because causing motion under these conditions requires no effort)” (267b22–3; see also Aristotle 1879, *Physics* 8.10, 266a10–267b26). What the first mover does is not to transmit physical energy, which cannot be done without undergoing change; what the first mover is doing is “touching without being touched”, as Aristotle (*Physics* 8.5, 258a18–22) states. And that is precisely what the intellectual substance, entirely incorporeal, does, and (analogously) so does the human will, in moving the body.
- See Aristotle (1896), *De anima* 3.9 432b3–7; 10, 433a22–30; 11, 433b3–13; and Aristotle (1895), *Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072a26–30 and 1072a34–b5. Regarding the action that conforms to the conception of the intellect, see the general description of *téchne* by Aristotle (1962), *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.4, 1140a6-14, and its application to theology here, *Metaphysics Lambda* 10, 1075b8-10.
- As I will show below, there are texts that allow us to attribute “will” to Aristotle’s God. This interpretation has been defended by Brentano (1977, pp. 175–77), Berti (1977, pp. 435–36; 2005, p. 747), De Koninck (2008, p. 130), George (2010, pp. 4–5) and Torrijos-Castrillejo (2013).
- That the vegetative soul is the source of nourishment, growth and reproduction can be seen in *De anima* 2.4, 416a6-9. That the sensitive soul is the origin of the animals’ movements can be seen in *De anima* 3.9-10. That the soul is an unmoved mover can be seen in *Physics* 8.5, 258a1-4.
- On the way in which these substances know, see Aristotle (1896), *De anima* 3.6, 430b20ff. It is presupposed here that there cannot be causes separate from matter, and moreover, there cannot be intelligibles that are not intelligences (or acts of intelligences). On the fact that their contemplating another substance implies that they are not the highest substance and that their substance is not their operation, see *Metaphysics Lambda* 9, 1074b18-21. Lindsay Judson interprets this passage differently in 2019, pp. 306–307. Instead, Aryeh Kosman interprets it in the same way as I do. See Kosman (2000), p. 314.
- See Aristotle (1895), *Metaphysics Lambda* 10, 1075b13–16. Aristotle describes the opinions of some Presocratics, which are considerably similar to those of some modern philosophers and even some of his modern interpreters.
- Aristotle (1922), my translation. Note how Plato (1900a, *Symposium* 206c) resonates here. A similar idea is repeated in *De anima* 2.4, 415a26-b7: living beings participate as much as they can in eternity and divinity through the generation of other beings similar to them. In Aristotle (1962), *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7, 1177b31–34, this subject is dealt with once more, and again closely following Plato’s *Symposium* (212a): man may imitate God not only through generation but also through contemplation, and in this latter way, he “immortalizes” himself as much as possible.
- Aquinas (2000a), *In De generatione et corruptione*, lib. 2, l. 10, n. 7. My translation. Actually, in inanimate things, the substance generated by other non-living substance might be of a different species, but it belongs always to the same genus. According to Aristotle (1922), there is a cycle in the generation and corruption of inanimate things (*De generatione et corruptione* 2.11, 338a2–11).

- 23 See this clear text: [Aristotle \(1879\)](#), *Physics* 2.8, 199a20–b32. See also *Physics* 7.1, 252a11–14: *ubi natura, ibi ordo* because “nature is cause of order for all beings”.
- 24 See [Aquinas \(2000b\)](#), *In octo libros Physicorum*, lib. 2, l. 12, n. 1; and [Aquinas \(2000d\)](#), *Summa theologiae* I q. 2, a. 3, c. St. Thomas states in his commentary on *Physics*: “Ea enim quae non cognoscunt finem, non tendunt in finem nisi ut directa ab aliquo cognoscente, sicut sagitta a sagittante: unde si natura operetur propter finem, necesse est quod ab aliquo intelligente ordinetur; quod est providentiae opus”. Aristotle explicitly states that there is divine providence: see [Aristotle \(1962\)](#), *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.8, 1179a22–32. I have proved that, actually, this is Aristotle’s mature thesis, that there is providence: see [Casanova \(2016\)](#). [Brentano \(1978\)](#), pp. 58–60) and contemporary interpreters such as [George \(2010\)](#), [Torrijos-Castrillejo \(2012\)](#), p. 13) and [Pelletier \(2020\)](#) agree with my interpretation.
- 25 In [Aristotle \(1895\)](#), *Metaphysics Lambda* 10, 1075a11–15 Aristotle has stated that God is the highest good. Lindsay Judson comments on this passage ([Judson 2019](#), pp. 356–57), but he seems to overlook that it poses a problem for his general interpretation of Lambda. Indeed, if the highest Intellect as an efficient cause acts for the sake of the highest good, then it seems that the Intellect would not be the highest cause. Anaxagoras, when stating that the Intellect alone was the highest cause, touched on this problem but did not understand it in all its depth. Aristotle solves the problem because he knows how to reduce the good for which the craftsman acts to the craft that is the principle of action in the craftsman. Thus, the *poietikón* (not mere *kinetikón*) conceives precisely the good that He wants to produce, and in His act of understanding, the form understood and that good are one. [Judson \(2019\)](#) seems to criticize Aristotle because he does not mention Plato’s *Timaeus*, where “the Demiurge is portrayed as a divine and rational moving cause”. But the reason for that is simple: Plato’s demiurge acts for the sake of the highest good, which in Plato’s understanding is a different entity.
- 26 A post-Jaegerian reader may ask whether Aristotle’s mind did not change during his long philosophical career. To this concern, I reply that it did, and considerably. In his youth, as a Platonist, he believed in separate forms. When he realized that they could not exist, his theology went through a crisis. One can feel that in some passages of *Posterior Analytics* where he talks about the science that he later will call “wisdom”, “first philosophy”, or “theology” as if that science were a hypothesis (see [Aristotle 1964](#), *Posterior Analytics* 1.11, 77a25–35, for example). Moreover, in some passages of the *Metaphysics*, he uses the expression “the sought for science” (see [Aristotle 1895](#), *Metaphysics Alpha* 1–2, 981b27–982a6; 982b5–10). The reason is that he needed to discover that there were formalities that, being metacategorical (*being, good, one, intelligible*), can be predicated of both suprasensible and sensible realities in order to establish the new science of first philosophy in place of Plato’s dialectics. Once he made this discovery, he established his theology, which did not suffer drastic changes or revisions afterwards.
- 27 See [Aristotle \(1895\)](#), *Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072b17–30; and 9, 1074b18–1075a11. I have already pointed out that Lindsay Judson reads these passages in a different way. See [Judson 2019](#), pp. 306–7.
- 28 The statement in the text depends on the following reasoning: if one thing is directed to an end by a natural desire, such desire does not depend on the knowledge that such a thing might have, since it is previous to such knowledge. But the direction of all desires depends on knowledge. For this reason, natural desires must depend on the knowledge of the Author of nature. Aristotle does not state this, but he comes very close in *Physics* 2.8, 199b26–32. Regarding the dependence of secondary separate substance from the first, see [Aristotle \(1895\)](#), *Metaphysics Lambda* 8, 1073a23–24 (God is called here “the principle and the first of beings”), 1073a30 (here God is called “the first substance”) and 1073b1–3 (here Aristotle states that among the separate substances there is one that is first, another one is second, and so on. He states, moreover, that the order of the substances may be known through the order of the moving spheres); and 9, 1074b29–30. Note that in *Lambda* 8, 1074a31–37, after stating that there are many separate substances, Aristotle adds that the first is only one, both in species and in number. In *Metaphysics alfa élatton* 1, 993b19–31, Aristotle argues explicitly that the community of the name “truth” [intelligibility], which is not mere equivocation, must come from what is *Truest*. He concludes the passage thus: “as each thing is in respect of being, so it is in respect of truth”. But it is clear that the First Substance is the Highest Being. Therefore, it must be the *Truest* reality. Actually, without the community of name coming through efficient causality from the *Truest*, the Aristotelian cosmos would be much more episodic than the Platonic. In the Platonic, there was at least an explanation (through Ideas and participation) of the community of name. But I cannot in this context go further in this direction. For further development on this point, I suggest that the reader look at my previous work. See [Casanova 2007](#), pp. 95–155.
- 29 See [Aristotle \(1962\)](#), *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7, especially 1177a27–1178a8, where Aristotle deals both with the self-sufficiency that is proper for the highest happiness and with how it assimilates us to God. God is the happiest and most self-sufficient being because He needs nothing outside of Himself. He just contemplates Himself and in Himself he knows everything else.
- 30 See [Aristotle \(1962\)](#), *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.8, 1059a27–b1; 9.4, 1166a2–6. For instance, [Flannery \(1999\)](#), pp. 134–35) acknowledges that Aristotle’s God loves men with a love of friendship, although He does not need them.
- 31 Lindsay Judson states that a mover without magnitude could be unmoved. However, he seems to suppose that as long as it transfers power, it cannot be really unmoved like the object of desire (see [Judson 2019](#), pp. 206, 235). He is taking “movement” in *De anima* 3.10 in the strict sense that has an intermediate state between the initial one and the final one (see [Judson 2019](#), p. 179), which Aristotle denies of sense perception and of intellectual grasping (see *De anima* 3.7, 433a27–b10). But Aristotle states as well

that intellectual grasping has a greater degree of immobility (see *De anima* 4, 429a29–b5 and 429b22–430a9). Thus, perceiving is a “movement” of a species different from the physical movement because in the former there is no intermediate state as there is in the latter: perceiving is act of the being in act not of the being in potency. The same thing is said of “desiring” in *De anima* 3.7, 17–18: it is a “movement” of that which is in act. This is why even animals’ souls, *qua* agents, are unmoved movers. But a greater degree of immobility belongs to the appetite belonging to reason, *boûlesis*. What Aristotle is arguing in *Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072b14 is precisely that the First Substance (not just “Prime Mover”) moves as an agent with the same immobility as the object of love. That is, among the agents, the first one has the greatest degree of immobility.

32 The necessity is probably stronger: if matter is a necessary being by itself, not created, then God must have caused necessarily, although He did not cause necessarily this concrete cosmos. Here Brentano’s view (explained in the next note) can come into place, since he thought that God created the separate substances, the human intellects and matter and in that way he presents the Aristotelian as a complete, coherent view of the cosmos in which God’s *autarchia* would really be totally independent from matter. However, it seems to me that Aristotle had the true insight that matter is a necessary [principle of] being and could not come to conceive that its necessity could be dependent on an original divine act of creation out of nothing.

33 Even in the foundational discussion between David Ross and Franz Brentano, we see this subject emerge. Indeed, against Brentano, who held that according to Aristotle God created the world from eternity, Ross argues that “the spheres in so far as they have *hýle* cannot have been thought of as created by God, for *hýle* is what making presupposes and what therefore cannot be made” (1914, p. 291). The truth is that Brentano’s position is very strong. It is clear that human intellects come to be (as he argued and Ross and Zeller contested) and that, since they are incorporeal, they do not come to be through natural change and generation. Moreover, if, as Brentano plausibly holds, the being of the secondary separate substances depends on the first substance (since their operations do depend on the first substance, as most interpreters accept, including Lindsay Judson: see Judson 2019, pp. 330–31, 341), this dependence seems to suggest an eternal creation. Certainly, since the being of the spiritual substances, including the human intellect, is much more solid than the being of material realities, and if it is plausible to hold that incorporeal substances were caused by God, according to Aristotle, then it seems plausible to argue, as Brentano did, that matter was also produced by God, although not through natural change. But this is what I deny in the body of the article because I do not see that Aristotle draws the necessary consequences that would follow from holding this position.

34 On the two kinds of matter, see Aristotle (1895), *Metaphysics Lambda* 2, 1069b23–26. It presupposes Aristotle (1881), *De coelo* 1.3, 269b18–270b31.

35 See Aristotle (1961), *De partibus animalium* 1.1, 639b19–21. Here, Aristotle calls this final cause the *lógos* (the *reason*, *ratio*) of things, and he states that art or craft is a *lógos* without matter (see 640a33–34). In all this, it is easy to perceive the connection between divine Art of Craft, on the one hand, and nature, on the other. How could there be *lógos* in nature without an intellectual cause? In *De partibus animalium* 1.5, 644b23–645b, Aristotle states that when contemplating the works of the art of painting or of sculpture, which are mere imitations of nature, we experience a great pleasure because in them we co-contemplate the art itself that devised them. He adds that a similar pleasure exists when we contemplate the works of nature, since in them, we can contemplate [*kathorân*] the causes. This passage of *De partibus animalium* is relevant for an additional reason. Werner Jaeger took it to belong to the last intellectual period of Aristotle which is the less Platonic period. See Jaeger (1934, pp. 337–41). Despite this, the doctrine of the passage is extremely close to that of Plato (1900c, *Republic* 3, 401a–2a).

36 Aristotle (1961), *De partibus animalium* 1.1, 641b16–18. See up to line 642a2. Aquinas corrects Aristotle regarding the explanation of the non-generability of heaven. He argues that it is not due to being composed of a matter different from the sub-lunar sphere, but to a disposition of the celestial matter to a different kind of form (a heavenly one), a kind of form that can entirely actualize the potentiality of matter (Aquinas 2000e, *In libros de coelo et mundo*, lib. 1, l. 6, n. 6). This is interesting because, contrary to what many Thomists hold, Aquinas teaches that “potencies are diversified according to their order to a diversity of acts”. Besides this, he follows Aristotle in holding that heaven is non-generable, and thinks that Aristotle and other philosophers came to know the creation of heaven itself (an emanation [*effluvium*] from the first principle), although they understood it to be coeternal with God, while “we state that the heaven was caused by God according to the whole of its substance [*sc.* the heaven’s] from a particular initial instant in time” (n. 7).

37 See Aristotle (1961), *De partibus animalium* 1.1, 641b18–24. Here Aristotle points out an idea that echoes Aristotle’s (1895) *Metaphysics Lambda* 10, 1075a16–22. In the biological work, Aristotle calls “*lógos*” this formal aspect of nature.

38 Brentano (1977, p. 134) sustained this opinion.

39 In *Metaphysics Lambda* 10, Aristotle points out that the cosmos has been ordered by God, but the lowest parts in it were left more to chance than the upper parts. I agree that there is chance in the universe, but if Aristotle had known that God created matter, he would know, as Aquinas did, that even chance is subject to God’s providence. In *Physics* 2.6, 198a1 ff. Aristotle divides, like Plato, the most general (efficient) causes into three: nature, art and chance. In the commentary on this passage, St. Thomas makes an observation beyond what the text states (introduced by the typical expression “*considerandum est autem*”) to point out that chance is subject to a superior cause that orders it. In comparison with it, it is not “chance”, even if it is chance in comparison

with its effects. Aristotle, as far as my knowledge goes, never made such a remark, but, on the contrary, he seems to speak of chance as something that originates at one of the two poles of the cosmos and is not subject to the other pole.

Aquinas (2000c, *Summa contra gentiles* I, chapters 81 and 82) offers arguments—that are purely Aristotelian—in order to prove that God does not necessarily will anything different from Himself.

See George (2010) and Pelletier (2020). In Plato (1900e, *Laws* 10), it has been proved that God exists, takes care of human affairs and cannot be placated with sacrifices.

See Aquinas (2000c), *Summa contra gentiles* 1, chapter 84: “Secundum hoc [...] quod aliquid repugnat rationi entis in quantum huiusmodi, non potest in eo salvari similitudo primi esse, scilicet divini, quod est fons essendi. Non potest igitur Deus velle aliquid quod repugnat rationi entis in quantum huiusmodi”. For more on this question, see Brock (1993).

Note the closeness of Aquinas’ choice of words here to that of Aristotle in *De generatione et corruptione* 2.10.

Aquinas (1975). I follow the division of the text in Aquinas (2000c).

See Aristotle (1895), *Metaphysics Lambda* 7, 1072b18–30. Joy or pleasure presupposes love. Aristotle explicitly attributes to God the activity of loving in other passages, as when he states that there are men who are loved by the gods: see, for example, Aristotle (1962), *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.8, 1179a22–32 and Aristotle (1935), *Eudemian Ethics* 7.14, 1247a27–1248b6. But, besides this, although Aristotle rejects the Delphian separation of the most beautiful, the best and the most pleasant, he agrees that “the most pleasant is that somebody achieves what he loves” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.8, 1099a28). His agreement is clear in *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.4, 1175a10–16, where he holds that pleasure makes perfect the activities or operations and, in that context, states: “each one exercises the faculties [that he most loves] and concerning the things that he most loves”.

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