POMPONAZZI'S *DE FATO* AND THOMAS AQUINAS

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In his *De fato*, written in 1520, Pomponazzi examines Thomas Aquinas's doctrine of predestination. From his point of view, Thomas's solution to the traditional conflict between divine science and human liberty is twofold: it mixes philosophy and theology, thereby transforming the revealed doctrine as well as that of philosophical rationality. The analysis of the Thomistic position is therefore an opportunity to define the specificity of the theological discourse from a critical point of view.

"Quid enim pulex contra elephantum?" "What can a flea do against an elephant?" By this adage commented by Erasmus (*Adagia*, III, 1, 27), Pomponazzi expresses, in the 8th chapter of his *De immortalitate animae* his consideration for the enormous weight of St. Thomas's authority right after he called into question the Thomistic solution to the problem of immortality of the soul. However, adds Pomponazzi, the point of these doubts and objections is not to "contradict a great philosopher", but simply to clarify the truth.[1] The formula gives a fairly accurate idea of Pomponazzi's attitude with respect to the *doctor angelicus*. In all of his works, and in many of his university courses which have made it down to us, Pomponazzi maintains a critical dialogue with St. Thomas precisely because he constantly discusses the

[1] Cf. *De immortalitate animae*, VIII, ed. G. Morra, Nanni & Fiammenghi, Bologna, 1954, p. 102 (on problems raised by the attribution to Aristotle, by St. Thomas, of the thesis of immortality of the soul): "Praeterea oporteret vel ponere resurrectionem, vel fingere fabulas Pythagoreas, vel otiari tam nobilissima entia; quae omnia videntur remotissima a Philosopho. Heac autem dicta sint non ut tanto philosopho [i.e., Thomas Aquinas] contradicamus — quid enim pulex contra elephantum? — sed studio addiscendi."

thesis which is most definitely at the heart of Thomistic theology: that of the agreement between faith and reason.[2]

In the *De immortalitate animae*, Pomponazzi denounces the compromise which pushes Aristotelian philosophy towards theological presuppositions that are foreign to it, and shows that the thesis of the mortality of the soul remains central to the Thomistic commentary of the *De anima*.[3] In the *De incantationibus*, Pomponazzi proposes a criticism of the causality specific to immaterial substances. From St. Thomas, he quotes the *De occultibus operationibus*, on the subject of the virtue of relics. Here he only rejects the main argument saying that "the theory presented here by St. Thomas, may God rest his soul, has no weight":[4] miraculous healings are the effects of faith and imagination, "unde si essent ossa canis, […] non minus subsequeretur sanitas, immo multa corpora venerantur in terris, quorum animae patiuntur in inferno, iuxta Augustini sententiam."[5] He then opposes Thomas's authority to the unanimous *consensus* of "doctors and philosophers" ("ut notum est ex medicis et philosophis"), by concluding: "This is why St. Thomas often astonishes me and I doubt that this work be his" ("Unde multo-tiens miratus sum de divo Thoma, et suspicatus sum illud opus non prodiisse ex eius officina").[6] This astonishment can seem legitimate, although the authenticity of the *De occultibus operationibus* can certainly not be called into question.

Now we must recall the *De Fato, de libero arbitrio et de praedestinatione*.[7] This work, written in 1520, and published much later in 1556,

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[2] Several courses have been published, notably by B. Nardi, *Studi su Pietro Pomponazzi*, Le Monnier, Florence, 1965 and by A. Poppi, *Corsi inediti dell'insegnamento padovano*, Antenore, Padova, 2 vol., 1966–1971. For a more complete list of published works and courses, see my *Unité de l'être et dialectique. L'idée de philosophie naturelle chez Giordano Bruno* (Vrin, Paris, 1999); I commented on the two questions published by A. Poppi, one on the demonstrative *regressus* (chap. V, p. 146–151), the other on the question of indeterminate dimensions of matter (chap. XIII, p. 373–391). In both questions, Pomponazzi opposes the Thomistic view to the Averoistic one.

[3] Concerning this ambiguity about St. Thomas's commentary, as set forth by Pomponazzi, see the long and stimulating introduction by V. Perrone Compagni to her translation of the treatise: *Trattato sull'immortalità dell'anima*, Olschki, Florence, 1999.

[4] "Ratio autem ibi per divum adducta, pace eius dixerim, nullius est ponderis", *De naturalium effectuum causis sive de incantationibus*, in Pomponazzi, *Opera*, Basel, 1567 (reprint Hildesheim, Olms, 1970), p. 233.

[5] *Ibid.*: 232.

[6] *Ibid.*: 234.

[7] I quote the most recent edition: Pietri Pomponatii Mantuani, *Liber quinque de fato, de libero arbitrio et de praedestinatione*, edidit R. Lemay, Lucani, in aedibus Thesauri Mundi, 1957 (abriged: *De fato*).

thirty years after Pomponazzi's death in 1525, is perfectly representat-
ive of the very singular relationship between the Italian philospher's
and St. Thomas's thought. The *De Fato*, which is contemporary to
early Lutherian reform, is not a theological work claiming to make
a statement on the interpretation of the Scriptures. Christian doc-
trine is only mentioned in the context of a study of Alexander's *De
Fato* which extends to different doctrines (Epicurian, Stoician, Peripat-
etician). Among them, we find the *doctrina fidei catholicae*, which states
the coexistence of providence extended to individual things and the
liberty of human will. Pomponazzi claims his implicit faith in this doc-
trine because of the authority of the Revelation and the infallibility of
the Roman Church. This truth, seen as absolute, is not the subject of
the discussion. What one looks at here is not the article of faith in and
of itself, but at the doctrine from a strictly "philosophical" point of
view, meaning the *modus intelligendi.*

Thomistic theology is used here because, according to Pomponazzi,
it proposes the most complete philosophical exposition of the Chris-
tian doctrine of providence, of freedom, and therefore, of predestina-
tion. As opposed to *De immortalitate animae*, it is not a question of ex-
amining Aristotelian orthodoxy of the Thomistic path, but its internal
consistency on points which do not concern Aristotle directly. The
possibility of a theology which borrows argumentative principles from
philosophy is questioned here. In this respect, the question bears dir-
ectly upon the Thomistic tentative to consider theology as a "science."

THE STAKES OF THE ARGUMENT OF AUTHORITY

In order to better understand this singular philosophical dialogue, we
can consider the presentation of Thomas's opinion which introduce
discussion, in Book V, of the doctrine of "predestination." In his para-
phrase of the main articles of the 23rd question of the first part of the
Summa theologica, Pomponazzi states: "In order therefore to understand
what predestination is, one must know what theologians commonly
say, and mainly the divine Thomas."[8] In conclusion, Pomponazzi jus-
tifies his choice in remarking that Thomas's position is "clearer and
more common" than all the rest.[9] Immediately afterwards, at the be-

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[8] *De fato*, p. 413: "Ut igitur intelligatur quid sit praedestinatio, scire oportet ut com-
muniter dicitur a Theologis, et praecipue a divo Thoma."

[9] *De fato*, V, 5, p. 417: "Haec sunt quae sub compendio de praedestinatione dicuntur
a divo Thoma; immo quasi communiter ab omnibus sic tenetur. Quare quoniam ipse

ginning of the following chapter, in which he presents a series of objec-
tions or "doubts", Pomponazzi continues by putting forth Thomas's
huge authority, especially with respect to his Dominican brothers for
whom "everything which was written by their Thomas about theology
is very true and perfectly expressed."[10] Therefore, if this is true, adds
Pomponazzi,

> this discourse on predestination will not raise any doubts, because even
> if it seems to me that there are false and impossible things, which seem
> erroneous and illusory instead of clear, still, as Plato says, it is impossible
> not to believe in gods and their sons, even if they seem to say impossible
> things; and the Apostle himself says it: 'Oportet captivare mentem nos-
> tram in obsequium Christi'.[11]

After elevating Thomas to an almost canonic rank of authority, Pom-
ponazzi presents his doubts as scrupules of conscience, desiring that
one of the many "famous people" (*viri clarissimi*) of his school cure him
of his ignorance (*mentemque meam ab omni ignorantia purgabunt*), because
error and ignorance are sicknesses of the intellect (*nam intellectus morbi
sunt ignorantia et error*).[12] Pomponazzi does not oppose the impossib-
ility of believing what one does not understand, as rationalists from

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est aliis clarior et communior, ideo eius sententiam apponere volui." Showing a lot
of practical sense, he adds: "fortassis enim si uniuscuiusque dicta vellem recensere
fastidium generaretur et non proficuum."

[10] *De fato*, V, 6, p. 417: "Percelebre divulgatumque est, praecipue apud fratres divi
Dominici, divum Thomam habuisse a Redemptore nostro, multis veraciter audienti-
bus et non phantastice, quod omnia quae per eum Thomam scripta sunt quae attinent
ad Theologiam verissima esse et recte declarata."

[11] *De fato*, V, 6, pp. 417–418: "Quod si verum est, nihil est quod in dictis his
de praedestinatione dubitem; nam quanquam mihi falsa et impossibilia esse videan-
tur, immo deceptiones et illusiones potius quam enodationes, tamen, ut inquit Plato
[Tim. 40e], impossibile est Diis et eorum filiis non credere, et si impossibilia videan-
tur dicere; et iuxta Apostoli sententiam: 'Oportet captivare mentem nostram in ob-
sequium Christi'." Same reference to *Timalus*, and same position, but applied to the
revelation itself, in *De incantationibus*, cap. XIII, op. cit., 1567, p. 320-321: "Nam secun-
dum Augustinum 32. libri 16. de civitate Dei, Divino intonante oraculo, non est
disputandum, sed parendum sine mora, eius dictis sine inquisitione vel interrogatione
adhaerere debemus: quoniam, ut inquit Plato in Timaeo, impossibile est deorum filiis
non credere, quanquam incredibilia dicere videantur. Quanto magis verbo quod est
ipsa veritas? Aristotelem autem et Platonem scimus fuisse homines mortales, ignor-
antes et peccatores, veluti ipsi de seipsis dicunt. Quare, fatuum est in omnibus fidem
eis adhibere, et praecipue in his in quibus Christianae religioni adversantur. Et quamvis
eorum rationes adversus religionem videantur nobis apparentes, et fortassis nescimus
perfectam earum solutionem, unica solutio est, quoniam fidei adversatur, ergo quod
dicitr ab eis falsum est. Impossibile namque est Dei mentiri, neque praestigiari."

[12] *De fato*, V, 6, p. 418.

the following century would do. Instead, he opposes the necessity of a "medicine of the mind" which would heal the intellect of mistakes and ignorance of truth. Although doubt does not damage "faith", the contradiction between faith and knowledge on the subject of "impossibilities" must lead to the healing of the mind.

This manner of addressing the issue is typical of Pomponazzi's specific philosophical model. With respect to St. Thomas, it is a question of philosophizing in the first person, and putting forth doubts and conjectures of a scrupulous conscience, facing uncertainties of a still imperfect wisdom which is prey to *contrarietas*.

Behind the modesty, it appears clearly that Pomponazzi intends to question Thomas's architectonic conception of theology and the harmonious integration of philosophy into an edifice regulated by theological wisdom. The conclusion of *De fato*, as we know, is negative: the contradictions of the doctrine of the predestination cannot be solved and the Revelation remains an object of faith extraneous to any rational discourse. According to reason, the stoician opinion is the only philosophical answer to the question, a conclusion extremely problematic for Pomponazzi because it finally means that reason is absolutely incapable of giving any satisfying answer to the question of man's destiny and salvation.[13]

DIVINE SCIENCE AND LIBERTY

The explicit thesis of the *De fato* is to prolong the analysis of Alexander's treatise by the examination of the main doctrines of causality and the universal order, meaning destiny and providence. In chapter 6 of Book II, Pomponazzi exposes the "opinion of catholic faith" which sustains a providence extended to singular realities and maintains the

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[13] The conclusion of *De Fato* calls into question philosophy's capacity, meaning the rational discourse in general, to provide satisfactory answers to the ethical problem which is to coordinate the order of human life to natural and divine order. It therefore takes into account the Thomistic position of which the compromise necessarily seems equivocal. On this lesson of *De Fato*, see A. Ingegno, *Saggio sulla filosofia di Cardano*, La Nuova Italia, Florence, 1980, of which the first chapter (pp. 1–78) is dedicated to Pomponazzi. In her introduction to the *Trattato sull'immortalità dell'anima* (*op. cit.*), V. Perrone Compagni perfectly highlights the aporetic meaning of Pomponazzi's philosophy, which she refuses to consider as a mask hiding an antireligious or atheist position: such a reading, justified in the case of Vanini, is only based here on the "petition of principle." Of course, this does not make him an orthodox.

free will.[14] This thesis is distinguished from the five other examined opinions, in particular the thesis of Peripatetic inspiration which denies that providence extends to sublunar realities, and the Stoic thesis which extends divine providence to all singular things, but denies the freedom of will.

Pomponazzi then declares the main problem that must be faced: although providence extends to contingent things, God must have a certain and determined knowledge of all events, and of the future not only as it is *in potentia et in suis causis*, but also *ut erit extra suas causas et deventum ad actum*. God, whose eternity embraces all of time, must know in a perfectly determined way all of the parts of time, and consequently all future happenings, including those which proceed from the free will of man:[15] "This opinion seems to me intelligible and in keeping with truth: although some did not express it this way, I suppose nonetheless that they understood it this way, *et maxime divi Thomae, ut ego existimo*." Pomponazzi then adds a first series of difficulties: "Although this opinion seems easy and intellgible, there are several difficulties which scholars often evoke."[16]

The first difficulty concerns the determination of the contingent in divine intellect, and especially what comes from the causality of will. I am going to turn my attention to this. It is examined in chapter 2 of Book IV, in direct relation to question 14 of the first part of the *Summa theologica*. As an answer to traditional difficulties, Pomponazzi exposes two fundamental theses taken from Boethius, but relayed and explained by Thomas. The first considers the question from the point of view of divine prescience, the second from the point of view of causality:

(1) Divine science can be *in se certam*, although its object is *in sui natura incertum*. Therefore, explains Boethius, there is no difficulty in the fact

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[14] *De fato*, II, 6: "Opinio igitur fidei catolicae, secundum quod existimo, haec est. Deus conctorum tam caducorum quam non caducorum, tam in singulari quam in universali, tam causalium quam non casualium providentiam certissimam et infallibilem habet, nihil est vel fuit vel erit vel poterit esse de quo scientiam Dei non habeat et providentiam: et cum hoc toto stat liberum arbitrium."

[15] *Ibid.*: 185.

[16] *Ibid.*: 186–187: "Iste igitur mihi videtur modus intelligibilis et consonans veritati, qui qaunquam non taliter exprimatur ab aliis, puto tamen eorum esse hunc intellectum, et maxime divi Thomae, ut ego existimo. Et quanquam modus iste videatur facilis et intelligibilis, multas tamen habet difficultates quas communiter doctores adducunt, de quibus in quarto volumine huius libri dicetur."

that human acts be uncertain in themselves (and therefore depend on free will), although they are certain from God's point of view.[17]

This argument is prolonged by the distinction proposed by Thomas in article 13 of question 14, between a "composed" and "divided" meaning. The point is to explain the link between the specific necessity of divine science, which eternally knows the integrality of futures, and a temporal order, in which all futures are said to be contingent.[18] According to Thomas, the proposition: "Everything known by God is necessary" (*Omne scitum a Deo necesse est esse*) can be considered in two ways:

(a) First, in a "divided" meaning. The modality (the necessity) is understood *de re*, about the thing. In the example, necessity will be attributed to the object of divine knowledge. In this sense, one should therefore deny all indetermination and all contingency in the events of the sublunar world. In this "divided" meaning, according to Thomas, the thesis is false.

(b) Secondly, in a "composed" meaning. The modality is only understood *de dicto*, and concerns the complete or composed proposition. In this respect, necessity must be understood conditionally, as only relative to divine science, but not to the thing itself which God knows. Necessity in the order of knowledge therefore does not imply a necessity in the order of things. This is the crux of Lorenzo Valla's demonstration in his dialogue *De libero arbitrio*. In other terms, one must differentiate between the "necessity of the consequent" (*necessitas consequentis*) (understood *de re*, of the thing), and "necessity from the consequence" (*necessitas consequentiae*) (un-

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[17] *Ibid.*: 327.

[18] The distinction is inspired by Boethius, *De consolatione*, V, prosa VI: "For there are really two necessities, the one simple, as that it is necessary that all men are mortal; the other conditional, as for example, if you know that someone is walking, it is necessary that he is walking. Whatever anyone knows cannot be otherwise than as it is known, but this conditional necessity is not caused by a thing's proper nature, but by the addition of the condition; for no necessity forces him to go who walks of his own will, even though it is necessary that he is going at the time when he is walking. Now in the same way, if providence sees anything as present, that must necessarily be, even if it possesses no necessity of its nature. But God beholds those future events which happen because of the freedom of the will, as present; they therefore, related to the divine perception, become necessary through the condition of the divine knowledge, but considered in themselves do not lose the absolute freedom of their nature" (Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, translation by S.J. Tester, Harvard University Press & W. Heinemann, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1978, pp. 429–431).

derstood *de dicto*, meaning the complete and composed proposi-
tion). This distinction is naturally essential to Thomas's doctrine
of predestination, as it appears in other works as the *Commentary of
the Sentences* and the questions *De veritate*.[19]

(2) Boethius' second answer leads us to consider the question from the
perspective of causality. It first proposes the necessary and the contin-
gent as relative determinations. According to Boethius, it is possible
that one thing has a certain disposition with respect to another, but
that related to another thing it has the opposite disposition. Thus, hu-
man action, which is certain relative to God, remains contingent relat-
ive to natural contingent causes. Therefore, free actions are ultimately
contingent and indeterminate, but they are conditionally necessary and
determined, *ut stant sub divina providentia*.[20] Using this solution, Pom-
ponazzi mentions yet another example taken from *Summa Theologica* I^a,
q. 14, a. 13 ad 1^m: "They also give the example of the plant which is
produced from a necessary cause, the sun, and a contingent cause, the
seed." Therefore, "because the science of God is necessary, the human
act, relative to the science of God, will be necessary. But if it is con-
sidered as produced by will, it will be contingent. And these two de-
terminations joined together are not in any way incompatible."[21] The
argument on a whole reproduces here the Thomistic solution which
distinguishes divine causality, first and universal, which extends to all
beings, including the contingent realities and free acts of will, of caus-
ality specific to will. Divine will is not only an efficient cause of all that
happens in general, as the cause of being itself. Instead, it is also the
cause of modalities responsible for all the events of the world. This is
why contingency, and therefore the free mode of our actions, also falls
under the providence of God's almighty power: "Unde modus con-
tingentiae et necessitatis cadit sub provisione Dei, qui est universalis
provisor totius entis."[22] From this perspective, contingency and neces-
sity appear as "compossible" determinations, relative to two distinct

[19] Cf. (for example) *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, 67; *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 12, ad 4^m; q. 2,
a. 13, ad 5^m; *In Sent.* I, d. 38, q. 1, ad 5^m. But also, on predestination, *Summa theologica*
Ia, q. 23 ad 3^m, *De veritate* q. 6, arg. 8 and resp. ad 8^m.

[20] *De fato*, IV, 2, pp. 327–328.

[21] *Ibid.*: 328: "Dant et exemplum de planta quae quanquam producatur a causa ne-
cessaria, ut puta sole, et contingenti, ut puta semine, magis tamen dicitur effectus
contingens quam necessarius. Quare quanquam scientia Dei sit necessaria, et in or-
dine ad eam actus humanus sit necessarius, in se tamen et ut a voluntate producitur
est contingens; neque haec simul iuncta aliquam incompossibilitatem claudunt."

[22] *Summa theologica*, Ia. q. 22, a. 4, ad 3^m.

orders of causality: the infallibility and the efficiency of the first cause must not question the contingency of the effect relative to the order of second causes. God can therefore push will, without restraining it.[23]

POMPONAZZI'S ANSWER

Pomponazzi's answer is perfectly clear: "Hae igitur sunt communiores responsiones quas, nisi gravissimi viri inventissent vel approbassent, certe dicerem esse deliramenta et illusiones pueriles; verum virorum autoritas me terret" ("Such are the most common answers. If they had not been invented and approved by very serious men, I would certainly have held them for delirious thoughts and childish illusions. However, the authority of men strikes fear in me — and prevents me from speaking in such a manner.")[24]

Pomponazzi then proposes a similar objection to the two solutions: the compossibility allowed by Boethius and Thomas as theological argument is reduced to a pure and simple contradiction of the philosophical point of view. Theological language therefore rests on a equivocal use of philosophical categories of cause and of science, which must be disallowed in the context of a rational discourse. At worst, it is devoid of meaning, at best, it is metaphorical.

Pomponazzi responds to the solutions in order, but his objections are taken from the same principle: that of the definition of truth as adequation of the concept and the thing. He draws the following conclusion: the modality of knowledge must correspond to the modality of the thing known. In saying that a thing which is by definition indeterminate, can be determined relative to God, Boethius absolves divine science of the principle of contradiction, and enters into the paradoxes of a divine knowledge of impossibilities.[25] Also, in saying that with God, knowledge does not follow the nature of the known and therefore that science can be determined when the existing thing

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[23] Cf. *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 8 and *De Malo* q. 6 a 1 ad 3ᵐ.

[24] *De fato*, IV, 2, p. 329.

[25] *Ibid.*: 329–330: "Prima nanque responsio Boetii nullo modo videtur esse tolerabilis. Dicit enim: Quae ex natura sua est indeterminatum, apud Deum tamen est determinatum. Si enimhoc esse posset, nulla est ratio quare Deus impossibilia scire non posset, quod tamen est impossibile; nam quod scitur, est; quod est, esse potest; et sic impossibile esset possibile."

is indeterminate in itself,[26] Boethius overthrows the essential order of knowledge and definition of truth as adequation of the science and the known thing. If the principles of that which is known are indeterminate (and indetermination does indeed belong to the concept of the contingent future), and if God has a determined knowledge, his knowledge will be false.[27]

(1) The argument is then specified from the point of view of the question of the modality of knowing, based on the *Second analytics* (I, 2, 71b15) where Aristotle enounces this principle: "Quare cuius est scientia simpliciter, hoc impossibile est aliter se habere." Put otherwise, science is only necessary because its object is.[28] Therefore, "if the science of God is certain, its object will be certain." The principle is indeed universally received: "Universaliter enim certitudo et incertitudo cognitionis est ex objecto, ut est notum omnibus philosophis,"[29] and therefore, "maintaining that a thing, as being in the science [of God] is necessary or certain, but in and of itself contingent and uncertain — this proposition implies a contradiction."[30]

From the point of view of causality, Pomponazzi goes back to the example of the plant which is supposed to illustrate the thesis of the cooperation between the first cause and second causes. The example is in itself null because, being relative to the universal and necessary cause (the sun), the effect itself must be said to be contingent and depend on second causes (the seed). It is impossible to infer from the example, as Thomas does, that "in the same way, contingent causes that God knows are contingent because of their next causes, although the science of God, which is their necessary cause, is a necessary cause."[31] The example is used by Thomas to maintain that in itself, the effect remains contingent because of its next causes, and that the first cause only produces its effect according to the modalities specific to the order of second causes. Therefore, one must not try to distinguish, in the effect, that which is due to the first cause and that which is due to second causes. This idea then reconciles the necessity specific to

[26] *Ibid.*: 330: "Dicit autem quod cognoscens non sequitur naturam cogniti, quare stat cognoscens esse determinatum, cognito existente indeterminato."

[27] *Ibid.*: 330–331.

[28] *Ibid.*: 332.

[29] *Ibid.*: 332–333.

[30] *Ibid.*: 333: "Implicat ergo contradictionem dicere: ut est in scientia, est necessarium vel certum, in se tamen est contingens vel incertum."

[31] *Summa theologica*, Iª q. 14, a. 13 ad 1ᵐ.

divine science to the contingency of futures as they take place in the natural order of things.[32] Pomponazzi then identifies the metaphorical character of the comparison, to insist upon the fact that relative to the sun, the plant could not be considered as a necessary effect. "The sky, without a particular agent, would not be able to produce the plant."

It is therefore "erroneous to maintain that something is contingent because of its intrinsic nature, but, considered with respect to something else, that it becomes necessary."[33] Thomas's reasoning comes down to taking necessity and contingency which are intrinsic modalities of the thing as relative determinations. In this way, "the same thing can be similar or dissimilar, large or small, compared to different things, but the same thing would not be man or non-man neither in itself, nor relatively. If a man was called a man compared to a thing, but beast or non-man compared to another, it would not be relative to his specific nature or to intrinsic principles (which make it up), but by accident, following a certain resemblance and by metaphor, and not veritably."[34] "Consequently, those for which nature is contingent, would never be said to be necessary compared to whatever may be, unless by similitude," unless by denying all consistency of the properties of the species and saying that "a man can change into a donkey": "sic homo posset fieri asinus."[35]

According to Pomponazzi, the equivocalness of the principle of the theological discourse consists in adding to the discourse of natural philosophy from a higher supplementary perspective in which modal immanent determinations are converted in terms of relationship. The Italian philosopher in this way emphasizes a fundamental and general point which could in itself define religious language as a whole which, even in its most elaborate forms like those that Pomponazzi examines here, still recalls Ovid's fables. I think that Pomponazzi's remark must

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[32] Cf. *In Sent.* i d. 38 a. 1 resp.

[33] *De fato*, IV, 2, p. 333: "Unde falsum assumitur etiam quod aliquid ex natura intrinseca sit contingens et ut refertur ad alterum sit necessarium."

[34] *Ibid.*: 333–334: "Idem enim est simile et dissimile, et magnum et parvum, in comparatione ad diversa; sed idem non est homo et non homo, neque in se neque ad diversa. Quod si aliquis homo alteri comparatus aliquando dicitur homo, alteri comparatus dicatur bestia et non homo, non est quoad naturam et principipia intrinseca, sed quoad accidentia et quamdam similitudinem et metaphoram; non autem secundum veritatem."

[35] *Ibid.*: 334: "Quare quod natura est contingens nunquam fit necessarium, cuicunque comparetur, nisi similitudinarie; aliter enim una natura transmutaretur in alteram, et sic homo posset fieri asinus."

be taken seriously, because it does not only maintain that St. Thomas's solution is contradictory. He goes further, to the point of saying that theological language at its very roots, enters into clear conflict with philosophical rationality and the univocity of concepts on which it is based. The answer appears to be perfectly ambiguous because it will lead Pomponazzi to question all possibility of thinking philosophically about a supernatural destination of man, which strikes a great blow at the rhetoric of *de dignitate hominis*.

(2) The answer to the second part of Boethius's and Thomas's argumentation proceeds from a logical analysis of the conceptual content of these solutions which try to reconcile human language of philosophy to the singularity of revelation. This is why the answer is still completely disappointing for whomever would expect arguments with the theological depth of those of St. Thomas.

In the name of the principle according to which the modalities of knowledge are borrowed from its object, Pomponazzi therefore concludes that what is contingent in itself would not be necessary with respect to God and divine science: "Quod in se est contingens, Deo comparatum non est ex natura necessarium; quare si contingens certe et determinate sciretur, cum scientia capit certitudinem ab objecto, veluti necessitatem [...] quare si cognito Dei est certa de aliquo, oportet illud esse certum."[36]

St. Thomas's distinction between a "divided" meaning and a "composed" meaning is also dropped: Thomas's response "videtur esse illusio et involutio, neque est vera in se."[37] The philosopher will make constant allusions to this question which to him, is the heart of the Thomistic answer to all problems posed by divine prescience in general (by providence and by predestination in Book V).

The answer specific to the difficulty clearly comes from the will to restore the univocity of modal determinations of natural realities. Here is how it stands: one supposes therefore (according to *opinio fidei catholicae*) that God knows all things, not only of the last species, but according to the individual. Futures therefore come under God's knowledge (as long as they are possible). Some of these future events are determined and can be known as certain in their causes (like the astronomer who foresees the eclipse with certainty). On the contrary, other futures come under the power of free will. No intellect created would be able

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[36] *Ibid.*: 334.
[37] *Ibid.*: 337.

to know these futures before they happen, even if it was possible to guess about them.[38]

Up until this point Pomponazzi has only explained known premises. He then adds: "With respect to God, when one speaks while these futures are in potentiality and in their causes, they cannot be known by God in a certain and determined way, unless the moment when they take place is present to God."[39]

Given that in the eternity of all times are equally present, one must say that God knows the futures in two distinct ways: as they are in their causes, and divine science must then be said to be uncertain, but also as these futures have taken place, and in this respect, divine science is certain and determined.[40] God, therefore, sees the same contingent thing in two different ways: "utrunque simul videt, non tamen secundum eandem rationem, sed secundum diversam."[41] Therefore, before Socrates sinned, God "is not certain nor can he be certain if Socrates will sin because Socrates is free. God therefore has only an indeterminate knowledge of Socrates' sin, a knowledge of sin *in suas causas et in potentia: tantum scit quod potest peccare et non peccare.*"[42] However, with respect to the time in which the sin was committed, God is certain because the sin was consumated.

Therefore, against Thomas, Pomponazzi affirms that all that God knows as necessary, is simultaneously so in a divided meaning and a composed meaning, *de re* and *de dicto*. Here again, the theological weakness of the argument is entirely remarkable, but it is commanded by a philosophical principle, aiming to guarantee the identity of modal determinations of the order of natural realities. Basically, the refusal of distinction between a composed meaning and a divided meaning comes from the same analysis as the preceding example: in both arguments, Pomponazzi refuses to consider a modal property of the natural subject as simply relative. Here, the distinction between a composed meaning and a divided one must, as said by St. Thomas, apply to determinations or forms which can be separated from their subject.[43]

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[38] Cf. *De fato*, IV, 3, pp. 337–339.

[39] *Ibid.*: 339: "Respectu autem Dei, loquendo de his quando tales actus sunt in potentia et in suis causis, certe et determinate a Deo cognosci non possent nisi ipsi Deo tempus in quo erunt illi actus esset praesens."

[40] *Ibid.*.

[41] *Ibid.*: 340.

[42] *Ibid.*: 341.

[43] *Summa theologica*, Iᵃ, q. 14, a. 13, ad 3ᵐ; but also *In sent.* d. 38, q. 1, ad 5ᵐ and *De veritate*, q. 6 a. 3 arg. 8 ("Sed contra in formis illis quae non possunt removeri a subiecto,

However, adds Thomas, the fact of being known does not imply any inherent disposition in the subject: "One can (therefore) attribute to the subject in itself, although it is always known, something (here, the contingency) which is not attributed to it whether it falls under the act of knowing." St. Thomas continues then by this example: "It is in this way that the quality of being material is attributed to stone in itself, and it is not attributed to it in that it is intelligible."

To Pomponazzi, St. Thomas is doing precisely the contrary of what he claims to do: he does not attribute to the subject itself a determination which does not belong to it as an object of knowledge, but he attributes moreso to the known thing a determination which does not belong to it in itself, as though one attribute for example, immateriality to stone under the pretext that God has a separate intellection. In this respect, the examples of the *De veritate* (the white crow) and of the *Commentary of the Sentences* (the black swan) seems to go in this direction, and could still be criticized by Pomponazzi who precisely does not cease to order divine science to its object—and naturally closes himself off to the possibility of thinking of the specificity of divine science.

Fundamentally, it seems as though the two arguments lead to the same conclusion, the revelation of an equivocalness of the theological discourse which gives a relational meaning to strictly modal determinations of the being. This is clearly the *crux* of the contradictions resulting from the Thomistic attempt to produce a philosophical concept of the revealed doctrine. One could also add that, perhaps without this conversion of the modalities in relation, no philosophical discourse could produce a doctrine of salvation or human destination, except if it developed a purely naturalistic theory of vicissitudes and metamorphoses. This seems to be the final word of the *De fato* which closes on a statement without illusion of this type which finally gives credibility to Stoicism tinted with origenism.[44] I believe that Pomponazzi's thesis translates a characteristic insatisfaction, in several respects, of many

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non differt utrum aliquid attribuatur subiecto sub forma considerato, vel sine forma utroque enim modo haec est falsa: corvus niger potest esse albus").

[44] Pomponazzi's solution should be compared to that of Origenis (*In Epist. S. Pauli ad Romanos*, VII, 8: "Nam et si communi intellectu de praescientia sentiamus, non propterea erit aliquid quia id scit Deus futurum, sed quia futurum est, scitur a Deo antequam fiat," PG 14, col. 1126; *Philocalia*, in *Eusebii Evang. Praep.*, VI, 11, 34; cf. Boethius, *De consolatione*, V, prosa 3ª et 4ª, as well as Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologicae*, Iª, q. 14, a. 8, sed contra 1 et resp.). Pomponazzi mentions Origenis in several places: *De fato*, II, 6 (p. 110); III, 13 (p. 318–321). To our knowledge, the question of origenism of the *De Fato* has not been studied.

Renaissance philosophers, and not only in Pomponazzi's peripatetic entourage. This duality of the relation and modality is indeed at the heart of Neoplatonic reform undertaken by Ficino who, in his *Platonic Theology* and even more so in his commentaries on Plato, constantly comes to found the relational theme of "conversion" on a modal doctrine of "participation." This is precisely done to overcome the dualism emphasized by Pomponazzi. In return, we can also obviously guess that Pomponazzi, in these pages, refuses the thesis of a human "twofold nature" specific to Ficino's or Pico's. This is the reason why the stakes of his dialogue with St. Thomas go far beyond those of the theology of the School or those of the leading 16th-century philosophers of religion— those of Pico or Agrippa, and even beyond to those of Servet and Giordano Bruno.