

I. *Introduction: Anscombe's criticism of Thomas on the object of knowledge*

Among the leading figures in the emergence of what is called 'analytical thomism', we must certainly count the late G.E.M. Anscombe.¹ But when we rummage her publications for the writings on Thomas, we are met with a something of a surprise. As far as I can ascertain, there is only a single piece (Anscombe, 1981b). It is very short, and in fact most of it is a criticism.

The target is Thomas's view, which Anscombe traces back to Plato and Aristotle, that human knowledge can be only of what is necessary. She focuses on knowledge of temporal events.

Of itself this [opinion] would not exclude history from being known since Aristotle held that the past is necessary; but St Thomas goes farther than this in his adherence to the Greek conception of knowledge; in the field of speculative reason, he says everything derives from some first, indemonstrable principles which are known of themselves. Indeed in at least one place (1a2ae, 94, 2c) we find him saying that everything in this sphere is 'founded upon' the principle of contradiction. (Anscombe, 1981b, p. 83)

Anscombe goes on to object to this view because of its implications for knowledge of the future. Whatever Thomas says, she argues, he cannot consistently hold that there is any such knowledge.

Our own knowledge of future events is only in their present causes; when these do not absolutely necessitate their effects, so that the effects are contingent, he thinks we cannot know them. But, we might argue on his own principles, what causes in the world cannot conceivably be tampered with, at least by divine power? Thus we can know nothing of the future. (Anscombe, 1981b, p. 82)

Anscombe does note that this conception of knowledge is not as archaic as it might seem.

Indeed if one speaks in the manner of Plato of 'objects of knowledge' and 'objects of opinion' it will be replied by everyone that these things do not have to differ in their objects. But ... it is a standard method to test any philosophical assertion — e.g. 'Emotion always has an object', 'A cause must be prior to its effect' — by considering whether a counter-example to it can be conceived without contradiction. Contradiction indeed may have to be rather generously conceived: not every inconceivability can be displayed as of the form 'both thus and not thus', where the two occurrences of the word 'thus' are replaced by the same term. Sometimes an inconceivability seems irreducibly of the kind where the two 'thus' receive different substitutions as in 'both coloured and not extended' or — to take examples claimed by Aquinas — 'both a human being and lacking any potentiality for laughter', 'both an existent by sharing in existence and uncaused' (1a, 3, 6c and 44, 1 ad 1). (Anscombe, 1981b, p. 83)

Nonetheless, she wants to insist that there can be knowledge of what is not necessary, i.e., of what can conceivably be other than it is known to be.

Knowledge is not restricted to what could not imaginably turn out mistaken: given that there are not more specific grounds for refusing the title 'knowledge' to my claim that something is true, it is sufficient that the claim does not turn out mistaken. It may be that I can conceive circumstances that would prove me wrong; that does not show that I may be wrong. (Anscombe, 1981b, p. 82)

Something of this sort that she claims to know is: *'that I shall not find that pot of coffee at my elbow too hot to drink'* (Anscombe, 1981b, p. 81).

As my title indicates, what I propose to address in these pages is not the issue of knowledge as bearing only on the necessary. It is an underlying matter: the relation between our two thinkers' very conceptions of 'the necessary', particularly with respect to temporal events. This relation is both complex and, I believe, philosophically interesting. In the rest of this introduction I shall try to give some sense of its complexity.

Now, Anscombe is quite correct to say that St Thomas confines human knowledge to what is necessary. If he does allow for knowledge in the domain of contingent things, such as sensible objects or human actions, it is only to the extent that there is some necessity in them.² As for future events, he says that these can be apprehended 'with the certainty of knowledge' — as opposed to mere 'conjecture' — only insofar as they are in their present causes in such a way as to issue from them necessarily.³ These would be causes that are both sufficiently powerful to yield the events and fully inclined to do so, and that either cannot be impeded, or at least are not in fact impeded in the particular case in question.⁴ For Thomas, the movements of the heavens would be examples of the first type; he thinks their causes cannot be impeded.⁵ Anscombe's pot of coffee would seem to be a good example of the second type. But she is saying that Thomas cannot be consistent in holding that such things are necessary and can be known. For he must hold that God, at least, could 'tamper' with the causes. I suppose she is referring to his teaching that God can bring about whatever does not involve a contradiction (*ST*, I, q. 25, a. 3). Is there any contradiction in, e.g., the sun's not rising tomorrow, or in the coffee's being found too hot to drink after all?

I do not think Thomas would say that there is. But neither would he have to acknowledge any inconsistency in his views. This is because in speaking of a cause whose future effect is ‘necessary’, he does not mean that its failing to yield the effect is ‘inconceivable’. As I shall explain in section IV, what he has in mind is not ‘logical’ necessity. It is necessity in a different sense.

The striking thing is that Anscombe does not even suspect Thomas of having another notion of necessity. If she did, perhaps she would qualify her criticism. For we should note that even she, after all, is ascribing *some* kind of necessity to the known. The last quotation above says, ‘It may be that I can conceive circumstances that would prove me wrong; that does not show that I may be wrong’. So in order to prove that she does not ‘know’, it would suffice to show that she *may* be wrong. One who knows *cannot* be wrong. What she is arguing is that her being wrong, although in some sense impossible, need not be inconceivable, even to herself. But if in some sense she cannot be wrong, then what she holds is something that not only is not, but also in some sense cannot, be otherwise (even if it can be conceived to be); it is somehow necessary.

This is not at all to charge Anscombe herself with inconsistency (though she might have expressed herself more clearly). For her own views on necessity are anything but simple, and elsewhere she explicitly holds for a type of ‘non-logical’ necessity. In fact it is precisely causal necessity (Anscombe, 1981e). However, I do not think it is quite the same as Thomas’s non-logical causal necessity. For Thomas’s does seem to be ‘founded on’ the principle of non-contradiction in a way that hers does not. Where this contrast is seen most clearly, I believe, is in the case of simultaneous causes and effects — present causes of *present* events. I discuss all of this in section V.

So I shall not be arguing that Anscombe’s criticism of Thomas on knowledge involves only a misinterpretation and no real disagreement. But with respect to the doctrine of necessity, the misinterpretation itself is interesting. Given the intricacies in Anscombe’s own views on necessity, her failure to appreciate those in Thomas’s is surprising. My suspicion is that this failure is connected with a no less surprising number of differences in their interpretations of

Aristotle — whom both are quite eager to get right — on the necessity (or necessities) found in temporal events. I think these differences can help to explain why Thomas's conception of the necessity enjoyed by future events in their present causes escapes Anscombe. For he gets (or at least thinks he gets) this conception from Aristotle, and it is precisely with regard to future events that their readings of Aristotle differ most sharply. Exploring these differences (sections II-IV) will also help show the contrast that I think exists between Anscombe and Thomas on causal necessity (section V). There, however, the decisive factor will not be the interpretation of Aristotle, but the influence of Hume.

II. *Anscombe on Aristotle on necessity in temporal events*

As is well known, Anscombe's reading of Aristotle's treatment of truth and falsity as found in statements about future contingent events is 'unorthodox'.⁶ On the standard interpretation, Aristotle considers such statements to be indeterminate as to truth and falsity. Anscombe rejects this.⁷ As she reads him, the difference between future-contingent statements and statements about past or present contingents is not that the former are indeterminate as to truth and falsity. It is that the truth or falsity belonging to them is not necessary. For instance, if a coat was torn yesterday, then it is now impossible for it not to have been torn yesterday; and so the statement that it was torn is not only true but also necessarily true. But if two days ago someone said that it would be torn the next day, this was merely true; it was not necessarily true. For two days ago it was still possible for the coat to remain intact throughout the next day — even though in fact it would not.

Anscombe judges that contemporary philosophers must find such talk strange. The meanings that Aristotle is giving to 'necessary', 'possible' and 'impossible' are not the usual ones.⁸ He is certainly not talking about 'truth-table' necessity, the necessity of what logicians call 'tautologies'.

Aristotle's point (as we should put it) is that 'Either p or not p ' is always necessary: this necessity we are familiar with. But — and this is from our point of view the right way to put it, for this is a novelty to us — that when p describes a present or past situation, then either p is necessarily true, or $\sim p$ is necessarily true; and here 'necessarily true' has a sense which is unfamiliar to us. In this sense I say it is necessarily true that there was not — or necessarily

false that there was — a big civil war raging in England from 1850 to 1870; ‘necessarily true’ is not simply the same as ‘true’; for while it may be true that there will be rain tomorrow, it is not necessarily true. (Anscombe, 1981a, p. 53)

Corresponding to this sense of ‘necessary’ is an unfamiliar sense of ‘possible’.

‘What can happen to this coat’ is a phrase introducing a special sense of ‘can’ of which this sense of ‘necessity’ — in which everything true about the present and past is not merely true but necessary — is the correlate. ‘This coat can get torn’ states something other than that ‘This coat will be torn’ is a logical possibility — i.e. is not self-contradictory. For ‘This coat did get torn yesterday’ is not self-contradictory, but what it says, namely that the coat got torn on a certain date, cannot now come about if, as is indicated by the past tense, we are already past that date’ (Anscombe, 1961, p. 7).

She suggests that ‘we have here the starting-point for the development of Aristotle’s notion of potentiality’ (Anscombe, 1981a, p. 48).

Anscombe also offers an interesting way of getting at these meanings of ‘necessary’ and ‘possible’. She relates them to the concept of ‘determination’. The move seems fitting, since the *De interpretatione* discussion is aimed at avoiding what we call ‘determinism’ in future events.

But he [Aristotle] erects a special concept of ‘necessity’ according to which what is happening or has happened is ‘necessary’ — one cannot determine what is already determined, any more than one can make what is already there — whereas one can determine what will be by deliberation and choice. (Anscombe, 1961, p. 7)

Of course this ‘determination’ of past and present events is not *pre*-determination. In her famous lecture, ‘Causality and Determination’, Anscombe describes *pre*-determination as follows.

When we call a result determined we are implicitly relating it to an antecedent range of possibilities and saying that all but one of these is disallowed. What disallows them is not the result itself but something antecedent to the result. The antecedences may be logical or temporal or in the order of knowledge. Of the many — antecedent — possibilities, *now* only one is — antecedently — possible. (Anscombe, 1981e, p. 141)

She then anticipates what seems to be a possible objection to this description.

It might be said that anything was determined once it had happened. There is now no possibility open: it *has* taken place! It was in this sense that Aristotle said that past and present were necessary. But this does not concern us: what interests us is *pre*-determination. (Anscombe, 1981e, p. 141)

I take it that difference between *pre*-determination and the determination of any past or present event would be that what determines the latter — what ‘disallows’ the other possibilities — is precisely the ‘result itself’, the very occurrence of the event. The ‘other possibilities’ are at least logical possibilities; and in the case of a past or present *contingent* event, they *were* also

‘real’ possibilities, *prior* to the occurrence of the event. There was ‘potentiality’ for them to occur. But the occurrence of the event eliminates this potentiality, at least with respect to the time of the occurrence. It is in this sense that at that time, the alternatives become impossible. The idea of their occurrence at that time does not become self-contradictory, but there is no longer potentiality for them to occur at that time. And there never will be.

‘One cannot determine what is already determined.’ This would be why past and present seem ‘unchangeable’ in a way that the future does not — even though in some sense the future is too.

If someone said: ‘The future cannot change, for if it is true that something is going to happen then it is going to happen’, this would seem perfectly empty. Similarly ‘If it is true that something has happened, then it has happened’ is empty. ‘But’, it may be said, ‘there is a difference between the past and future which shows what is meant by ‘the past cannot change’. If something is going to happen, it is going to happen; but a change does come about precisely when it does happen. When it has happened it is no longer going to happen. Thus the future changes in just that sense in which we say that the past can’t change.’ To say this is to regard the happening of an event as an irreversible change that takes place in it, and fixes its character. (Anscombe, 1981d, p. 112)

Prior to its happening, the event’s character was not ‘fixed’, not determined; once it happens, it is. This is what makes the past’s not changing ‘so absolute a necessity’, and what therefore seems to explain why the idea of a change in the past is ‘nonsensical’ (Anscombe, 1981d, p. 113).

Let me sum up what we have seen so far. The necessity of ‘if it is true that something is going to happen then it is going to happen’ presents Aristotle with an argument for determinism. What Anscombe takes his refutation to consist in is not the denial of the antecedent (‘it is not true — though neither is it false’), but in the distinction between this merely conditional necessity and the ‘so absolute’ necessity belonging to the already determined events of the past and the present. The latter necessity, although ‘absolute’, is not ‘truth-table’ necessity. It is not the necessity of something whose opposite is self-contradictory, but that of something of which there is no longer any potentiality for the opposite.

Now, in Aristotle’s cosmology, not all future events are contingent. Some are necessary, because they are *pre*-determined. Such are the future movements of the heavenly bodies.

Potentiality for their opposites *never* existed. This is because their ‘determinant’ is not their mere occurrence, but the very nature of things. But evidently, on Anscombe’s reading, this difference is incidental to the type of necessity involved. It is the same necessity as that which belongs to past and present contingent events — the necessity that is the correlate of the special sense of ‘can’ in ‘what can happen to this coat’. A remark of hers on Aristotle’s doctrine of the heavens brings out another important point about how she understands this necessity.

She is glossing a passage in the *De interpretatione* where Aristotle explicitly distinguishes between two types of necessity (*De interpretatione*, ch. 9, 19a23-25). One type is expressed thus: that which is, at the time when it is, necessarily is. This would be the necessity applying commonly to what was, at the time when it was; to what is, at the time when it is; and to what will be, at the time when it will be. It is mere ‘truth-table’ necessity. But for a thing to be necessary in this way, Aristotle says, is not the same as for it ‘simply to be of necessity’.

Anscombe remarks:

there is a temptation to recognize what we are used to under the title ‘logical necessity’ in this phrase. Wrongly, though: Aristotle thought that the heavenly bodies and their movements were necessary in this sense. On the other hand, he seems to have ascribed something like logical necessity to them (Anscombe, 1981a, p. 49)

The situation is certainly complex. Having contrasted the necessity of past and present, and now the necessity of the heavenly bodies and their movements, with ‘truth-table’ or ‘familiar’ logical necessity, Anscombe tells us that it is still ‘something like’ logical necessity. Perhaps she does so because Aristotle speaks of it as necessity ‘simply’. It is ‘unqualified’ or ‘absolute’ necessity. For a moment ago we saw that she speaks of the necessity of past or present events as ‘absolute’, and she connects this with the fact that the idea of their changing or being otherwise is ‘nonsensical’.

So her thought seems to be this. Past and present events, insofar as they are understood to have been or to be, and so already determined to have been or to be, cannot be conceived not to have been or to be. And similarly — granting Aristotle’s cosmology — insofar as the heavenly bodies are understood to be determined, this time ‘by nature’, to exist forever and to continue

moving just as they do, they and their movements cannot be conceived not to be going to be. None of these items is such that its negation is self-contradictory; this is why the necessity is not of the 'truth-table' sort. But the 'determinant' excludes the potential for the negation, and thereby excludes the negation itself. And this exclusion too is in some way 'logical'. Insofar as something is understood to have no potential for some feature, it cannot be understood to have the feature itself. There would be some kind of contradiction. Perhaps she would call it 'generously conceived'.

This reading of Aristotle certainly fits with what we saw at the beginning about how she understands the 'Greek' conception of knowledge. Aristotle thinks he *knows* that the heavenly bodies will go on existing and moving as they do forever.⁹ As she understands it, this must mean that he thinks that for one who has grasped the matter, their doing otherwise is inconceivable.

Why then does she not criticize Aristotle on this point, as she does Thomas? A reason is not hard to guess. Aristotle, it is commonly said, has no notion of *creatio ex nihilo* or of an *omnipotent* deity; for the Greeks, a power capable of 'tampering' with the very order of the world would indeed have been 'inconceivable'. But for a Christian such as Thomas it certainly is not. In relation to such a power, everything in the world must be 'radically contingent'. If Thomas still speaks of necessary causes, this only shows how strong the Greek influence upon him was.

Or so a very widespread view has it.¹⁰ I hope we will see that it does not really do him justice.

III. *Thomas on Aristotle on the necessity of past and present events*

Thomas's reading of the *De interpretatione* on future-contingent statements is along the traditional lines (*In Peri.*, I, lects. 13-15). He takes Aristotle to be saying that such statements are indeterminate with respect to truth and falsity.¹¹ As a result, he can see the necessity of all past and present events as nothing but the application, in each case, of the general principle that during the time of a thing's being, its being is necessary. What is or was, at the time when it is or was, necessarily is or was.¹²

Of course, even when put in the future tense, the general principle still holds: what will be, at the time when it will be, necessarily will be. This is why Anscombe thinks that the necessity of past and present lies somewhere else. But for Thomas, the indeterminacy of future-contingent statements means that in their case, the principle remains as it were suspended in generality. It has no sure application, because the matter is undecided.¹³ To say that ‘tomorrow’s sea-battle, at the time when it will be, necessarily will be’, is to suppose that it will be; and this is just what cannot (truly) be supposed (or denied). There may be no such thing as ‘the time when tomorrow’s sea-battle will be’. Hence there may be no such thing as a sea-battle that will be necessary tomorrow.¹⁴

And so the necessity that Thomas ascribes to past and present contingent events turns out to be ordinary ‘truth-table’ necessity, the necessity of the principle of non-contradiction. At the same time, he readily acknowledges that the negation of a past or present contingent event, considered just for what it is, is not self-contradictory. The negation *by itself* is not impossible. It is only impossible ‘on a supposition’ or ‘*per accidens*’.¹⁵ To use his example: that Socrates run or not run is contingent (*De pot.*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 9). Socrates’ not running is not, by itself, inconceivable. But if he did run at some time, then his not having run at that time would ‘plainly imply a contradiction’. The necessity by which what is, at the time when it is, necessarily is, is only necessity on a supposition¹⁶ — viz., the supposition that it is; but it is still logical necessity.

So this is one difference from Anscombe’s account of the necessity of such events: whereas she speaks of a different *type* of necessity from that of ‘not both p and $\sim p$ ’, Thomas regards it as the same type. He simply distinguishes between what has such necessity by itself, and what has it only on a supposition.

This is not to say that he would reject the language of ‘determination’.

Something contingent can be taken in two ways. In one way, in itself, insofar as it is already in act. And in this way it is not considered as future, but as present, nor as contingent between opposites, but as determined to one In the other way, the contingent can be considered as it is in its cause. And thus it is considered as future, and as contingent, not yet determined to one; because a contingent cause is open to opposites.¹⁷

However, I do not think that Thomas would say that the determination of past and present events

consists in the fact that the potentiality for their opposites has been eliminated. Especially pertinent here is a passage from his commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo*.

The passage concerns a portion of Aristotle's efforts to defend the following two-part thesis: what is incorruptible cannot have been generated, and what is ungenerated cannot be corruptible.¹⁸ One of Aristotle's argument for this, as Thomas reports it, is that what is generated has matter with potency both to be and not to be, and so it is contingent and cannot be incorruptible; and likewise, what is ungenerated has only potency to be and no potency not to be, and so it is necessary and cannot be corruptible.¹⁹ Further on, a rather strange counter-argument is entertained and rebutted (*In De caelo*, I, lect. 29, §10). It says that what is incorruptible and generated would indeed have potency to be and not to be — but solely with respect to the past, not the future; and likewise, what is ungenerated and corruptible would have (only) potency to be — but again, solely with respect to the past, not the future. The gist of Aristotle's reply, according to Thomas, is simply that the past cannot be present or future, and that 'potency' is solely for the present or the future. And so it makes no sense to say that what is corruptible has potency always to have been, or that what is incorruptible has potency to have been and not to have been. It would be like saying that I now have the power to have walked yesterday. Even if I did walk yesterday, what I have the power for can only be to walk now or in the future; and yesterday cannot be now or future.

What Thomas means by 'potency' here is clearly something quite distinct from 'logical' possibility.²⁰ For he is saying not only that what is incorruptible has no potency not to have been, but also that it does not have potency to have been — even when it *was*. Obviously, if something was, then it is 'logically' possible for it to have been — there is no contradiction. But 'potency' just does not regard the past.

Now, if there is not even any such thing as potency for what *did* happen, let alone for what did not, then clearly the necessity of what did happen cannot properly consist in the mere absence of the potency for its not happening. The necessity of what is past is, as it were, *only* a logical necessity. It is not a question of potency at all.

The distinction between potency and logical possibility comes out even more sharply in what follows (*In De caelo*, I, lect. 29, §12). Thomas observes that this discussion is in no way incompatible with the fact that all creatures had a temporal beginning, before which they were not, and that nonetheless some of them are incorruptible and necessary. (These would be the angels, human souls, and the heavenly bodies.) Such a creature has no potency not to be.²¹ But this does not entail that it always was; for it only has its potency once it is, and its potency does not regard the past.²² So it is ‘possible’ for something incorruptible and necessary — something without any potency not to be — not to have been. It is logically possible, free of contradiction.²³

What about the present? Thomas says that potency only regards the future *or* the present. What someone is doing now is something that he now has potency to do, and to do now. But does the necessity of his doing it now consist in the fact that he now has no potency *not* to do it now? An earlier passage from the *De caelo* commentary indicates that the answer is negative.

For if I say that you are standing — you who are not standing but sitting — what is said will be false, but not impossible ...; but that someone both stand and sit ... is not only false but also impossible And granted that something simultaneously have a power for opposites (e.g., for sitting and standing), as is shown by the fact that sometimes one potency is reduced to act, and sometimes the other; nevertheless nothing has the potency to have the opposites simultaneously (for instance to sit and stand simultaneously), but this must be at different times.²⁴

Now, in saying that your standing now is false but not impossible, Thomas must mean that it is not impossible *by itself*; as we have seen, it is impossible *ex suppositione* or *per accidens* — it is excluded by your sitting. But there is no talk of your sitting’s eliminating your *potency* for standing. It does not need to. Your sitting now excludes your standing now, *whether or not* you have the potency to stand now. The potency for standing does not have to be discarded; the actuality of the sitting simply trumps it. As he says in another place,

The contingent differs from the necessary insofar as each is in its cause; for the contingent is in its cause in such a way that it can be and not be from it, while the necessary cannot but be from its cause. But insofar as each is in itself, it [the contingent] does not differ [from the necessary] in being ...; because in the contingent, insofar as it is in itself, there is not both being and not being, but only being, even though in the future the contingent can not-be.²⁵

So it seems clear that for Thomas, the necessity or ‘determination’ which is *common* to past and present events is something quite different from the mere absence of potency for their

opposites. Even in the case of a past event, for whose opposite there is indeed no potency, its necessity does not *consist* in the absence of potency for the opposite, or even in the general impossibility of there being potency for anything past. The necessity of past and present events is simply the result of the impossibility that contradictories ever be true simultaneously.

IV. *Thomas on necessary future events*

The distinction between the possible in the sense of what is free of contradiction, and the possible in the sense of what a thing has potency for, is something that Thomas takes from Aristotle.²⁶ Thomas calls the former ‘absolute’ possibility; the latter, ‘possibility with respect to potency’ (*ST I*, q. 25, a. 3). He describes absolute possibility as something pertaining to ‘logic’ (*In Meta.*, IX, lect. 1, §1775). It is just what we call logical possibility: the possibility of a proposition’s being true, the compatibility of subject and predicate. Some of Thomas’s examples show that the logically impossible includes not only straightforward contradictions (‘thus and not thus’), but also Anscombe’s ‘contradiction generously conceived’.²⁷

In saying that absolute possibility pertains to ‘logic’, Thomas obviously does not mean that it does not have application to ‘real’ things. It does, because there is truth and falsity about real things. But whereas absolute possibility and impossibility extend to every object about which there can be propositions, possibility and impossibility ‘with respect to potency’ pertain *only* to real things; i.e., to things that can act or be acted upon.²⁸ For a ‘potency’ is a principle either of acting (active potency) or of being acted upon (passive potency). Thomas in fact says that this sense of ‘possible’ and ‘impossible’ – ‘what an agent or patient is or is not capable of’ — is the one that ‘most befits’ natural things.²⁹

Now, ‘necessary’ means ‘impossible to be otherwise’ or ‘impossible not to be’. However, in order to understand Thomas’s doctrine of necessity, and especially the necessity that he attributes to natural things such as the heavens and their movements, it is important to notice that the terms he uses to distinguish types of necessity do not perfectly correspond to those that he uses for types of possibility and impossibility. Especially liable to cause confusion is his use of the term ‘absolute’.

Again following Aristotle,³⁰ Thomas distinguishes between what is ‘absolutely’ necessary, and what is necessary ‘on a supposition’ or ‘under a condition’. The former is what is necessary for a thing ‘taken absolutely’, i.e., when considered just according to its own nature. The latter is what is made necessary for it by some factor extrinsic to its nature; e.g., by something acting upon it by force, or by some goal to which it is directed. But thus, ‘absolutely necessary’ is not opposed to ‘necessary with respect to potency’. For not every potency or lack thereof is something extrinsic to a thing’s nature. Some potencies and impotencies are natural for it. And so what is ‘absolutely necessary’ for a thing *may* be something whose opposite would involve a contradiction, being incompatible with the thing’s existence; but it may also be something for whose opposite there is merely no natural potency in the thing. The latter may not involve any contradiction.

For instance, it is absolutely necessary for human beings to die.³¹ They do not by nature have any potency to live forever. But their living forever would not involve a contradiction. It is not ‘absolutely impossible’, but only ‘impossible with respect to (natural) potency’. God can make them live forever, by giving them a *supernatural* potency to do so.³²

It is in this way, then, that Thomas interprets the ‘simple’ necessity that Aristotle ascribes to the existence and movements of the heavenly bodies. They are by nature unable to be otherwise, in the sense that they do not by nature have any potency for being otherwise. They are in no way ‘liable’ to stop. But it would not involve any contradiction for them to stop — not even a contradiction of the ‘generous’ sort. It is ‘absolutely’ possible for them to stop. And God can make them stop. Thomas takes quite literally the Scriptural episode in which, in answer to Joshua’s prayer, the sun and the moon stood still.³³

Thomas is quite insistent upon the existence of such ‘absolutely necessary’ things in the world. He argues that their necessity is not excluded by the fact that they depend upon God’s will and that His will with respect to them is not itself absolutely necessary but free.³⁴ Some of Thomas’s ascriptions of absolute necessity, of course, can hardly be accepted now; the heavens are not as he thought. There seem to be no absolutely necessary bodies. But this is simply to

make universal another absolute necessity, one that he only ascribed to some bodies: the necessity of corrupting. There also remains the absolute necessity of the continuation of the underlying substantial potency in bodies, matter.³⁵ And naturally we should not neglect the spiritual creatures.

There is one other point to notice about how Thomas understands the absolute necessity in creatures. Even though it does not always consist in the necessity of the principle of non-contradiction, it nevertheless ‘rests’ on that necessity in a certain way. Or rather, in two ways. The first is that if a thing has no natural potency for a feature, then there would be a contradiction in its obtaining that feature by any merely natural operation. A miracle is the only conceivable way for it to happen. One place where Thomas makes this point explicitly is in defense of the thesis that what is impossible for nature is possible for God. An objection to the thesis runs as follows:

Just as everything necessary in nature is demonstrable, so everything impossible in nature is disprovable. But in every conclusion of a demonstration the principles of demonstration are included; and in all principles of demonstration are included this principle, that affirmation and denial are not true together. Hence this principle is included in anything that is impossible for nature. But God cannot make it be that negation and affirmation are true together Therefore he cannot bring about anything that is impossible in nature.³⁶

Thomas answers:

In anything impossible, affirmation and negation are implied to be together just insofar as the thing is impossible. But the things that are impossible on account of a lack of natural potency, such as that a blind man become sighted ... are not impossible according to themselves; and so neither do they imply that sort of impossible [i.e., the self-contradictory] according to themselves, but only in comparison with the natural potency with respect to which they are impossible. Thus if we say that nature can make a blind man sighted, the aforesaid sort of impossible [the self-contradictory] is implied, because the potency of nature is terminated (*terminata*) to something that what is being attributed to it exceeds.³⁷

The other way in which absolute necessity in creatures rests on the principle of non-contradiction is with respect to their very possession of their natural potencies. There would be a contradiction in their not having them. To be sure, a thing’s potencies — e.g., the powers of the soul — are not, for Thomas, contained in the thing’s very essence or definition; they are ‘accidents’, or rather, ‘properties’. Thus he says that ‘what the soul is’ can be understood without its powers. But as properties, they belong to the soul *per se*: immediately, just by *virtue* of what

it is. And hence, he says, 'that the soul exist without them is neither possible nor intelligible' (*QDA*, a. 12, ad 7). It is in this way that some potency for laughter belongs to man. (This potency is nothing other than the power of reason, considered in relation to the laughable or the funny.) So it seems clear that we are in the domain of what Anscombe calls contradiction 'generously conceived'.

To conclude this section: the sense in which it is 'impossible' that a blind man become sighted, or that a human being live forever, is the sense that 'most befits' natural things. Thomas finds this sense in Aristotle. That God can make such things happen does not eliminate the impossibility. Divine omnipotence in no way dissolves the necessities that Aristotle found in the world. Rather, it means that God has power over the necessities themselves. As the universal 'cause of being' and of all the 'modes' of being, Thomas says, the divine will 'transcends the order of necessity and contingency' (*In Peri.*, I, lect. 14, §22). I am not aware that he ever attributes the complete doctrine of divine omnipotence to Aristotle. On the contrary, he seems to hold that none of the pagans achieved it fully.³⁸ He knows the difference between himself and 'the Greeks'.³⁹ But it is no obstacle to his agreeing with Aristotle about the necessities in things. If anything, the agreement only serves to highlight the transcendence of his God.

V. *The necessity of the present in its present causes*

Anscombe takes the 'absolute' necessity that Aristotle ascribes to the future movements of the heavens to be some kind of 'logical' necessity. Thomas does not. He only sees it as the necessity with which those movements exist in the potency of their present causes.⁴⁰ The failure of such causes is not 'absolutely impossible', involving a contradiction.

But of course one thing is Anscombe's interpretation of Aristotle, and another is her own philosophy. There is no good reason to think that she is *accepting* the idea that future events sometimes issue from their present causes with logical necessity; quite the contrary. This however is not because she ever denies the existence of any such thing as causal necessity, as the *Tractatus* does.⁴¹ It is because she does not think that causal necessity is a kind of logical necessity. But although this may seem to put her own views closer to Thomas's, what I want to

suggest here is that she takes the dissociation of causal necessity from logical necessity even farther than he does.

Much of Anscombe's discussion in 'Causality and Determination' is directed against the idea that causation should be flatly identified with a kind of necessitation. But nowhere does she reject the existence of causal necessity. She simply distinguishes between necessitating and non-necessitating causes. The former would include many physical causes; the latter would include both free agents and physical causes whose causation is what she calls 'mere hap' (Anscombe, 1981e, pp. 144-146). She explains the distinction between necessitating and non-necessitating causes thus:

a cause *C* is a necessitating cause of an effect *E* *when* (I mean: on the occasions when) if *C* occurs it is certain to cause *E* unless something prevents it. *C* and *E* are to be understood as general expressions, not singular terms. If 'certainty' should seem too epistemological a notion: a necessitating cause *C* of a given kind of effect *E* is such that it *is not possible* (on the occasion) that *C* should occur and should not cause an *E*, given that there is nothing that prevents an *E* from occurring. A non-necessitating cause is then one that can fail of its effect without the intervention of anything to frustrate it. (Anscombe, 1981e, p. 144)

At the same time, both here and elsewhere, Anscombe accepts and gives great importance to Hume's doctrine that the connection between cause and effect is not, in general, a logical one. She does think there might be exceptions to this; she finds it uninteresting to redefine 'cause' in such a way as to exclude any logical connection *a priori* (Anscombe, 1981f, p. 148). But she can think of only one exception.⁴² So she regards Hume's doctrine as a great discovery.

For he made us see that, given any particular cause — or 'total causal situation' for that matter — and its effect, there is not in general any contradiction in supposing the one to occur and the other not to occur. That is to say, we'd know what was being described — what it would be like for it to be true — if it were reported for example that a kettle of water was put, and kept, directly on a hot fire, but the water did not heat up. (Anscombe, 1981e, p. 134)

This would surely be a necessitating cause, not 'mere hap'. But the necessity is not logical.

Now, Thomas certainly does not make the connection between cause and effect to be universally a logical connection. There are 'contingent' causes. This is most obvious in the case of present causes of future effects. If the cause is one that can be impeded, he says, its future effect cannot be demonstrated or foreknown with certainty (*In Post.*, II, lect. 10, §9). And as we

have seen, even for a cause that has no 'potential' for being impeded — an absolutely necessary cause — the necessity of its future effect is not logical.⁴³

But what about a present cause of a present effect? Such causes abound in Thomas's world.⁴⁴ And Anscombe's kettle of water on the fire is an example. The fire is now causing the water to be heated, and the water is now being heated. Granted, this is not a case of what Thomas would call an 'absolutely' necessary cause; that would mean that no created agent could ever have intervened to impede it. But this is incidental. It is certainly a case of what he would call a 'sufficient and unimpeded' cause. Upon such a cause, the effect follows with necessity.⁴⁵ When the effect is also simultaneous with the cause, is the necessity logical?

Anscombe is saying that it is not. Failure is conceivable, even on a complete understanding of what the cause and the effect are.⁴⁶ Especially crucial is her reference to the 'total causal situation'. Not even this makes the water's failure to heat up inconceivable. It is not a matter of imagining some hidden obstacle to the heating.

Now if we were dealing with a future effect, then this would be easy to explain. Whatever the total causal situation is *now*, there would be room for a future impediment to appear, prior to the time when the effect is to occur. But since the effect is simultaneous, this explanation will not work.

Perhaps she is speaking only of the total 'physical' causal situation, i.e., allowing for the possibility of divine intervention. But how should we conceive that? It must consist entirely in something 'in God' — His saying, as it were, 'Let the water not heat up this time.' That is, it could not involve, e.g., His giving the water some sort of 'supernatural potency' to resist being heated.⁴⁷ For then the total causal situation would not be the one being supposed.

The question that then arises is: in *what sense* does the causal situation 'necessitate' the water's heating up? 'In such circumstances, water always heats up.' Well, up to now it always has. For Hume, of course, that is all there is to it. The experience of regular association somehow compels us to infer the result from the antecedent, and this is all that we really mean by calling the result 'necessary'. Understanding the nature of the antecedent does not reveal anything in it

— anything like causal ‘potency’ or ‘power’ — making it such that its existence would be contradicted by the result’s failure. Anscombe is saying that the ‘necessity’ of the result does not have to mean that its failure would involve a contradiction. And so is Hume. But given his denial of causal ‘power’, is Hume not correct in saying that this ‘necessity’ is not anything *intelligible* at all?

Although I am not entirely sure how Anscombe stands on the question of causal ‘power’, my impression is that she is closer to Thomas than to Hume.⁴⁸ But on Thomas’s understanding of it, I believe, there would indeed seem to be a kind of logical connection between cause and effect in a case such as that of the fire and the water. The point is very simple.

Thomas would explain the water’s heating up by the natural passive potency in the water for being heated, the natural active potency in the fire for heating, and the unobstructed contact between the two — the direct application of the fire to the water. Now, being a natural potency,⁴⁹ the fire’s active potency to heat also constitutes an *inclination* or a *tendency* to heat. The fire ‘determines’ the water to heat up, and it does so in virtue of its own ‘determination’ to do so.⁵⁰ It is not ‘open to opposites’. But what does it *mean* to say that the fire is inclined to heat or tends to heat, if not that when it can, and when there is nothing that can obstruct it, it *does*?⁵¹ I find it very hard to see how its failure could be regarded as even a logical possibility.⁵²

But I have to be tentative about this as an interpretation of Thomas. I have not found any place where he explicitly asserts a logical connection between cause and effect for cases such as the unobstructed heating up of water by fire.⁵³ One point in its favor, however, is something we saw in the previous section: that a thing’s natural potencies belong to it with logical necessity. For Thomas understands this as a causal necessity. In fact he says that the soul is a kind of *active* source of its powers (*ST*, I, q. 77, a. 6).

At any rate, even if Anscombe does not give us the final word on Hume’s ‘discovery’ or on how it stands in relation to Thomas’s philosophy, she can certainly be of considerable help in pursuing the questions. I am thinking especially of her work to undo other Humean influences on analytical philosophy; in particular, her refutation of the thesis that ‘a beginning of existence

without a cause' is conceivable (Anscombe, 1981c & 1981f). Perhaps something like the therapy that she employs there would be applicable here as well. And for the interpretation of Thomas, the brilliant notion of 'contradiction generously conceived' puts the spotlight on something that it is all too easy to overlook or to take for granted. A better understanding of how it works would seem to be a desideratum for thomists of all persuasions.

Abbreviations for works of Thomas Aquinas

ST = *Summa theologiae*

SCG = *Summa contra gentiles*

QDV = *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*

QDA = *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*

QDP = *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*

In Sent. = *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*

In Post. = *Expositio libri Posteriorum*

In Phys. = *Sententia super Physicam*

In Eth. = *Sententia libri Ethicorum*

In Meta. = *In XII libros Metaphysicorum expositio*

In Peri. = *Expositio libri Peryermeneias*

In De caelo = *Sententia super librum De caelo et mundo*

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¹ See Martin (1997), pp. xiii & xviii.

² *ST*, I, q. 86, a. 3. See *In Meta.*, IX, lect. 9, §1873; *In Post.*, I, lect. 4, §5.

³ *ST*, I, q. 86, a. 4. See *In Peri.*, I, lect. 14, §19.

⁴ See *ST*, I-II, q. 75, a. 1, obj. 2 & ad 2; also pertinent is *SCG*, I.67, §4.

⁵ See *In Peri.*, I, lect. 14, §9; also *SCG*, II.30, §15; *In Post.*, I, lect. 16, §8.

⁶ Anscombe, 1981a. For a criticism of her reading and a defense of the traditional one, see Frede (1985).

⁷ Among other things, she takes it to mean that he is denying the Law of the Excluded Middle, which she finds him affirming in the very midst of his treatment of future contingents (at 18b18-25). See Anscombe, 1981a, p. 46 (gloss on 'Still, it is not open to us, either, to say that neither is true'); Anscombe, 1961, p. 7. See also Geach (1980), pp. 80-81.

⁸ 'It is a very common dogma at the present day that there is no sense of "necessity" and "possibility" except "logical necessity" and "logical possibility". It is possible that this dogma, which is in part an effect of the influence of Hume, is also a hangover from the time of the overwhelming influence of the *Tractatus*.' (Anscombe, 1971, p. 80). Here are some pertinent passages from the *Tractatus*. Note that Wittgenstein is especially concerned to eschew 'causal' necessity.

5.1361 'We cannot infer the events of the future from those of the present. Superstition is nothing but belief in the causal nexus.'

6.36311 'It is an hypothesis that the sun will rise tomorrow: and this means that we do not know whether it will rise.'

6.3 'The exploration of logic means the exploration of *everything that is subject to law*. And outside logic everything is accidental.'

6.37 'There is no compulsion making one thing happen because another has happened. The only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity.'

6.375: 'Just as the only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity, so too the only impossibility that exists is *logical* impossibility.'

⁹ 'Therefore, the sun and the stars and the whole heaven are ever active, and there is no fear that they may sometime stand still, as the natural philosophers fear they may.' (*Metaphysics* IX.8, 1050b23-25; trans. Ross)

¹⁰ One finds something like it even among some self-professed thomists (though they may seek a way to avoid the charge of inconsistency). For good clarifications of the matter see Brown, 1964; Dewan, 1991; Dewan, 1994.

¹¹ See also *ST*, II-II, q. 171, a. 3, where he speaks of 'future contingents, of which the truth is not determinate'. It does not seem to me that Thomas thinks this amounts to a denial of the Law of the Excluded Middle. (Indeed he affirms it just a little earlier in the commentary: *In Peri.*, I, lect. 11, §7. See also *In Peri.*, lect. 15, §3, on 18b18-25. At *In Meta.*, X, lect. 9, § 6, he says '*contradictio nullum habet medium*'.) What suggests this is the very word 'indeterminate'. The only possible *determinations* of a proposition are 'true' and 'false'; 'indeterminate' is not another determination. It is not a third 'truth-value', but simply the lack of a value. In other words, if 'true' and 'false' in propositions are like 'won' and 'lost' in baseball, 'indeterminate' is not like 'tied' (there is no such outcome in baseball); it is like 'suspended'. Or again, true and false are like two decisions: 'decided for' and 'decided against'. 'Undecided' may also be a possibility, but it is not another possible *decision*. If we are capable of simply withholding judgment about a proposition, neither affirming or denying it, is it inconceivable that a proposition be in itself neither fit to affirm (true) nor fit to deny (false)? Still, one might object that conjunctions and disjunctions of propositions are truth-functions of their component propositions (cf. Geach, 1980, pp. 195-196). The conjunction of any pair of contradictories is determinately false, and their disjunction is determinately true; so how can the contradictories themselves ever be indeterminate? But this question raises another one: is it true that a conjunction or disjunction of *contradictories*, as opposed to just any random pair of propositions, is a truth-function of its components? Why must it be, if we can *know* that the conjunction is false, and that the disjunction is true, without knowing the truth-value of either component?

¹² See *SCG*, II.25, §15; *In Eth.*, VI, lect. 2, §1139.

¹³ See *ST*, I, q. 10, a. 5, ad 3.

¹⁴ On Anscombe's reading, if there is a sea-battle today, then yesterday it was true that there would be, and so there definitely was such a thing as a sea-battle that would be necessary today; but determinism is avoided by the fact that the necessity did not exist until today. See Anscombe, 1981a, p. 56.

¹⁵ Thomas is not being original on this. The first to speak of the past as necessary '*per accidens*' seems to have been William of Sherwood (ca. 1200-1270); see Kretzmann, 1966, p. 41. Thomas uses this expression, for example, in *De pot.* q. 1, a. 3, ad 9 and in *ST*, I, q. 25, a. 1, obj. 4 & ad 4. In other places he uses '*ex suppositione*'; e.g., *ST*, I, q. 10, a. 5, ad 3; *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 3; *In Peri.*, I, lect. 15, §2.

¹⁶ *In Peri.*, I, lect. 15, §2.

¹⁷ 'Contingens aliquod dupliciter potest considerari. Uno modo, in seipso, secundum quod iam actu est. Et sic non consideratur ut futurum, sed ut praesens, neque ut ad utrumlibet contingens, sed ut determinatum ad unum.... Alio modo potest considerari contingens, ut est in sua causa. Et sic consideratur ut futurum, et ut contingens nondum determinatum ad unum, quia causa contingens se habet ad opposita.' (*ST*, I, q. 14, a. 13)

¹⁸ The discussion of this thesis begins at *In De caelo*, I, lect. 26.

¹⁹ *In De caelo*, I, lect. 26, §5-7. From here on I shall use the word 'potency' rather than 'potentiality', since Thomas's *potentia* covers not only passive principles such as matter, but also active ones ('powers'); it seems to me that 'potentiality' rather suggests something passive.

²⁰ See *In De caelo*, I, lect. 25, §3.

²¹ See *ST*, I, q. 9, a. 2. Note that potency is not always 'two-way': see *In Meta.*, IX, lect. 2; also lect. 9, §1878.

²² See *ST*, I, q. 46, a. 1, ad 2.

²³ ‘Taken without qualification, it is not in itself impossible, as though implying a contradiction, that creatures not exist; otherwise they would have existed from eternity.’ (*QDP*, q. 5, a. 3; see also ad 8.)

²⁴ ‘Si enim dicam te stare, qui non stas sed sedes, falsum erit quod dicitur, non autem impossibile ...; sed quod aliquis simul stet et sedeat ... non solum est falsum, sed et impossibile Et ... licet aliquid simul habeat virtutem ad opposita (puta ad sedere et stare), tali ratione, quia quandoque una potentia reducitur in actum, quandoque altera; nihil tamen hanc habet potentiam ut simul habeat opposita (puta ut simul sedeat et stet), sed oportet hoc in alio et alio tempore esse.’ (*In De caelo*, lect. 26, §4)

²⁵ ‘Contingens a necessario differt secundum quod unumquodque in sua causa est: contingens enim sic in sua causa est ut non esse ex ea possit et esse; necessarium vero non potest ex sua causa nisi esse. Secundum id vero quod utrumque eorum in se est, non differt quantum ad esse, supra quod fundatur verum: quia in contingenti, secundum id quod in se est, non est esse et non esse, sed solum esse, licet in futurum contingens possit non esse.’ (*SCG*, I.67, §3)

²⁶ *In Meta.*, V, lect. 14, §971; IX, lect. 1, §1773-1775; *In De caelo*, I, lect. 25, §3. Cf. *ST*, I, q. 25, a. 3.

²⁷ See *SCG*, II.25, §14; *In Meta.*, V, lect. 14, §971.

²⁸ Thomas connects the two senses by way of the connection between two senses of ‘being’. ‘Cum enim posse dicatur in ordine ad esse, sicut ens dicitur non solum quod est in rerum natura, sed secundum compositionem propositionis, prout est in ea verum vel falsum; ita possibile et impossibile dicitur non solum propter potentiam vel impotentiam rei: sed propter veritatem et falsitatem compositionis vel divisionis in propositionibus.’ (*In Meta.*, V, lect. 14, §971)

²⁹ ‘... quod aliquod agens aut patiens potest aut non potest: haec enim significatio maxime congruit rebus naturalibus.’ (*In De caelo*, I, lect. 25, §3)

³⁰ See *In Meta.*, V, lect. 6, §833-5. Also *In Phys.*, II, lect. 15, §270; *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 1; III, q. 14, a. 2; *SCG*, II.28, §16; II.30, §15.

³¹ See *ST*, I, q. 82, a. 1.

³² See *ST*, I, q. 97, a. 1.

³³ Joshua 10:12-14. See *ST*, I, q. 105, a. 8; II-II, q. 178, a. 1, ad 1.

³⁴ See especially *SCG*, II.30.

³⁵ See *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 1, ad 3.

³⁶ ‘Sicut omne in natura necessarium est demonstrabile, ita omne impossibile in natura, est improbable per demonstrationem. Sed in omni conclusione demonstrationis includuntur demonstrationis principia; in omnibus autem demonstrationis principiis includitur hoc principium, quod affirmatio et negatio non sunt simul vera. Ergo istud principium includitur in quolibet impossibili naturae. Sed Deus non potest facere quod negatio et affirmatio sint simul vera, ut respondens dicebat. Ergo nullum impossibile in natura potest facere.’ (*QDP*, q. 1, a. 3, obj. 2.)

³⁷ ‘In quolibet impossibili implicatur affirmationem et negationem esse simul secundum hoc quod est impossibile; sed ea quae sunt impossibilia propter defectum potentiae naturalis, ut caecum, videntem fieri, vel aliquid huiusmodi, cum non sint impossibilia secundum se ipsa, non implicant huiusmodi impossibile secundum se ipsa, sed per comparisonem ad potentiam naturalem cui sunt impossibilia, ut si dicamus, natura potest facere caecum videntem, implicatur praedictum impossibile, quia naturae potentia est terminata ad aliquid, ultra quod est id quod ei attribuitur.’ (*QDP*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2.) A similar discussion, this time concerning whether God can annihilate the rational soul, is found a little later in *QDP* (q. 5 a. 3 ad 7).

³⁸ See *ST*, II-II, q. 1, a. 8, ad 1.

³⁹ On the other hand, though, I wonder whether he would agree that for Aristotle, the suspension of natural necessities, e.g. the cessation of the heavenly movements, must have been altogether inconceivable. What I have in mind is a brief passage from the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle is arguing, as part of his polemic against platonic Ideas,

that singulars cannot be defined. He notes that some thinkers have tried to define the sun. They do it badly, he says, because they add ‘attributes after whose removal the sun would still exist, e.g. “going around the earth” or “night-hidden” (for from their view it follows that if it stands still or is visible, it will no longer be the sun; but it is strange if this is so; for “the sun” means a certain *substance*)’. (*Metaphysics* VII.15, 1040a31-34; trans. Ross) The sun’s not moving as it does seems to be quite ‘conceivable’ to Aristotle.

⁴⁰ See *In Peri.*, I, lect. 14, §9.

⁴¹ See above, n. 8.

⁴² The exception is that travelling from point A to point B is a cause of being at point B, and it also logically entails being at point B, at least for a moment. (Anscombe, 1981c, p. 93; 1981f, pp. 150-1)

⁴³ In relation to Hume, for whom indeed causality is *entirely* a matter of temporal succession, this is surely an important point. That *successive* causes and effects are not logically connected is hardly a ‘discovery’ of his.

⁴⁴ He even seems to hold that successive causality always has simultaneous causality associated with it: *In Post.*, II, lect. 10, §2.

⁴⁵ See above, n. 4.

⁴⁶ ‘Is it [Hume’s thesis] to be taken as saying only that a rudimentary understanding of the objects which are causes and effects will never yield a necessary connection? That so long as we remain ignorant of the nature of things, we will find no logic in the sequence of events? That would not be too impressive. A proper physical statement of the cause will never logically yield a proper physical statement of the effect — that is the thesis.’ (Anscombe, 1981f, p. 150)

⁴⁷ See above, at n. 32.

⁴⁸ See below, nn. 51 & 52.

⁴⁹ As opposed to a rational one: see *In Meta.*, IX, lect. 2; lect. 4, §1818-1821.

⁵⁰ On the cause as ‘determining’ to the effect, see *QDP*, q. 5, a. 3, obj. 5: ‘manente causa, necesse est permanere causatum. Si enim non est necesse, possibile erit causatum esse et non esse, posita causa. Et sic indigebitur alio quo causatum ad esse determinetur; et ita causa sufficiens non erit ad esse causati.’

⁵¹ ‘To say that something has a tendency to move is precisely to say that unless something interferes, it will move.’ (Kenny, 1969, p. 18) Anscombe certainly recognizes that ascribing agency to something goes hand in hand with ascribing tendency to it. In fact she writes in support of ‘the argument of Aquinas that if there isn’t something determinate that an agent does, it will not do one thing rather than another. Or again, that what is indifferent between just any outcomes does not *produce* one rather than the other.’ (Anscombe, 1992, p. 301)

⁵² Anscombe writes: ‘It is true that causal properties enter into the definition of substances, so that you might think certain effects resulted of necessity — logical necessity — from the interaction of substances. But you would be wrong in making this inference. A *lusus naturae* is always logically possible. A different melting point may indeed prove this isn’t phosphorus; the lump of phosphorus turning into a little bird or a piece of bread would not.’ (Anscombe, 1981f, p. 151) This may be so; but the question is whether the phosphorus’s turning into a little bird *under the very same conditions* in which it naturally melts is logically possible.

⁵³ Cajetan does: he acknowledges that if a non-free cause is sufficient and not impeded, ‘it cannot be understood that the effect not follow’. See his commentary on *ST*, I, q. 115, a. 6, sections IV-V; in the Leonine edition, p. 548.