AURIOL ON DIVINE CONCURRENCE WITH SECONDARY CAUSES

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Early historians of scholastic philosophy, such as Suárez or Leibniz, already note that Peter Auriol maintained some unusual views: among others, that God is not causally active in the operations of secondary agents.[1] With this, he was indeed in a minority position, since, as is well known, according to most scholastic authors, when fire heats, God concurs with this action, contributing, one way or another, to the observed causal happening.[2] While some aspects of Auriol's theory of causation have been examined before,[3] his conservationism has not been. In this short paper I trace what lead Auriol to endorse this unusual view. On the way, I will also briefly consider some related issues, such as Auriol's criticism of Scotus on divine foreknowledge, while also briefly remarking on the considerations of Auriol's Franciscan predecessor, Peter John Olivi, and to his successor, Aufredo Gonteri Brito, both of whom endorse the same general position on divine concurrence.

I will start by giving some background to the problem and briefly presenting the most important authors that Auriol is responding to. I will then turn to Auriol's position, which is intertwined, with his views on some other, seemingly distinct issues.

Some Background

The problem of divine concurrence, which is the question of whether and if so how God is causally active in the operations of created agents, was discussed in the medieval period in several different contexts. Thus, for instance, Aquinas, Durand of St.-Pourçain, Peter of Palude, and seemingly the majority of Dominicans often devote a question towards the beginning of the second book of their *Sentences* commentaries to discuss, right after the

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1. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, §27, in which he mentions Durand of St.-Pourçain and Auriol by name as examples of those who maintained that God does not immediately act in creaturely causation. For Suárez, see *Metaphysical Disputations* 20–22. While in the question on concurrence proper, only Durand's name is mentioned, Suárez deals with and references Auriol's views throughout.

2. For very different versions of this concurrentist position, see, e.g., Aquinas in various places (*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis* (= *In Sent.*) II.1.1.4; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* (= QDP) 3.7; *Summa contra gentiles* (= ScG) III.69; etc.); examined, e.g., in Petr Dvořák, "The Concurrentism of Thomas Aquinas: Divine Causation and Human Freedom," *Philosophia* 41, no. 3 (August 2013): 617–634) and Duns Scotus (*Lectura* II.34–37.4 and the parallel places in the *Reportatio* and *Ordinatio*), examined, e.g., in Gloria Frost, "John Duns Scotus on God's Knowledge of Sins: A Test-case for God's Knowledge of Contingents," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 48, no. 1 (2010): 15–34; and William A Frank, "Duns Scotus on Autonomous Freedom and Divine Co-Causality," *Mediaeval Philosophy and Theology* 2 (1992): 142–164. While there is, to my knowledge, still no general overview of the medieval problem in its entirety, various aspects of it have been examined in Alfred J Freddoso, "God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Pitfalls and Prospects," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (1994): 131–156 and others. For a broader overview, see Zita V Toth, "Medieval Problems of Causation and Divine Concurrence" (PhD diss., Fordham University, 2017), or for the specific problem of occasionalism, Dominik Perler and Ulrich Rudolph, *Occasionalismus: Theorien der Kausalität im arabisch-islamischen und im europaeischen Denken* (Göttingen: Vandenhöck / Ruprecht, 2000).

3. See especially Can Laurens Löwe, "Peter Auriol on the Metaphysics of Efficient Causation," *Vivarium: a journal for mediaeval philosophy and the intellectual life of the Middle Ages* 55, no. 4 (2017): 239–272; and Gloria Frost, "What is an Action? Peter Auriol vs. Thomas Aquinas on the Metaphysics of Causality," *Ergo* 6, no. 43 (2020): 1259–1285.

discussion of creation, "whether God immediately acts in every action of a creature." We can call this formulation the *general problem*, asking whether it is the case that in every causal interaction, both God and the created agent ("secondary agent") are responsible for bringing about the effect. (If the answer is 'yes', then spelling out the particular contribution of each will be a further issue, and may be a point of disagreement between authors who otherwise agree in the affirmative answer.) Auriol's discussion, however, just as some of his Franciscan predecessors', such as Peter Olivi's and Duns Scotus's, focus on what we may call the *special problem* of divine concurrence, namely whether God concurs with secondary agents in bringing about sinful volitions.

Before saying more about the particular question at hand, it should be noted that the relationship between the general problem and the special problem is not as straightforward as it may seem. Some, such as Aquinas or his early fourteenth-century confére, Peter of Palude, think that since the answer to the general problem is affirmative, so it must be, and for the same reason, to the special problem.[4] Others, such as arguably Henry of Ghent and perhaps the late Scotus, think that although the answer to the general problem is affirmative, this needs to be qualified in order to grant exception for cases covered by the special problem, for which cases the answer is negative.[5] Still others, such as Olivi, think that the answer to the special problem must be negative since it is also negative to the general problem;[6] while some, including Auriol himself, argue the other way, maintaining that since the answer to the special problem is negative, it must also be negative to the general problem.[7] In short, it should be kept in mind that no particular answer to either of these problems implies a particular answer to the other (or at least not without some qualifications).

But returning to the special problem: why do sinful voltions constitute a case that many authors deemed as being worth considering on its own? Sinful volitions, of course, raised various issues for a medieval theologian, including questions about freedom, original sin, due justice, and so on. The present issue, however, emerges because according to most medieval thinkers, the forming of a volitional act is a particular kind of causal interaction, namely, the faculty of will as causal power forming a new accident. (Since both the agent of the interaction (the will) and the resulting accident (volition) are in the human soul, this causal interaction is customarily called *intrinsic*, to distinguish it from the more usual cases of *transeunt* action, where the agent and the effect are in different subjects.[8]) Now, if one thinks that the answer to the general problem is affirmative, that is, that God is causally active (in one way or another) in contributing to the effects of secondary agents, and one thinks that this is applicable without exception to all created causal action, then one must admit that God is causally responsible for contributing to bringing about volitions as well. While this, depending on the nature of the concurrence, may already raise some problems regarding the freedom of such volitions (which I will put aside for the present and for the majority of this paper), it raises an even more serious worry if the

4. For Aquinas, see the texts noted in n. 2 above, as well as his *In Sent.* II.37.2; for Peter, see *In Sent.* II.1.4.

5. For Henry, see, e.g., *Quodlibeta* 9.5. Scotus has been interpreted to change his mind on this issue; see, e.g., Allan B Wolter, "Alnwick on Scotus and Divine Concurrence," in *Greek and Medieval Studies in Honor of Alan Sweeney, S.J.* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

6. See *In Sent.* II.116.

7. See *In Sent.* II.38.1.1, as examined below.

8. For some intricacies of this particular intrinsic action, see Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), esp. ch. 3; and Marilyn McCord Adams, Cecilia Trifogli, and Robert Merrihew Adams, *Housing the Powers: Medieval Debates about Dependence on God* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2022), ISBN: 978-0-19-286254-9, chs. 3 and 4.

formed volition happens to be sinful: it seems *prima facie* problematic if not altogether absurd to posit that God can causally contribute to an act of will that is against the moral law or divine command. Can God be active in these sinful volitional acts? If yes, how, and if not, what ramifications does that have with respect to the general problem?

There were several ways medieval thinkers dealt with the special problem, and some part of this story is relatively well known. Thus, what I will just call the "standard view," endorsed by Aquinas, but also in some way by Scotus and others, maintains that God concurs even in the bringing about of sinful volitional acts, without, however, being a cause of these sinful acts *as* sinful.[9] According to these thinkers, this is possible because there are two components in every sinful volition: On the one hand, a positive substrate, or material element, which makes a volition to be something rather than nothing; and a formal element, which in sinful volitions is a deficiency or lack of due justice, making the volition to be of a certain character (in this case, sinful). Take the following example: you steal a loaf of bread, which, in this case, constitutes a sinful act.[10] The substrate here is what would be picked out by the physical description of the action – the movement of your muscles, the lifting of the bread, and so on – which elements are brought about concurrently by you and by God, in one way or another. (E.g., Aquinas would insist that you and God consistute a hierarchically ordered instrumental causal pair, where God is a primary and principal cause of the action, while you are an instrumental cause of it; Scotus would deny this and maintain that you and God are both partial causes of the same act.[11]) The formal element in this action would be the lack of justice where justice would be due. Of course, not every taking of a bread is stealing, so it is only this lack that makes this particular instance of bread-taking different as regards its moral value from non-sinful acts of the same physical description. This lack of justice would be "caused" (in at least sense of being caused) by the particular person alone. In other words, according to the standard view, while God concurs with bringing about the substrate of every volitional act, God does not need to act in bringing about the deficiency of sinful volitions. But this is not because God is not active in every instance of causation, but because since deficiency is a privation, it has no proper, *per se* cause at all, only a *per accidens* one, which means that the secondary agent's "bringing about" of the deficiency without divine concurrence, despite appearances, does not violate the affirmative answer to the general problem. All in all, the standard view enabled thinkers to maintain that God is causally active in bringing about sinful volitions (understood properly), just as God is causally active in bringing about everything else.

Auriol disagrees with the standard view, and as has been documented,[12] so did Peter Olivi. Olivi thinks that the answer to the special problem must be negative, because (1) it is also negative to the general problem; (2) otherwise we could not posit free will in creatures; (3) being 'sinful' excludes having an origin in God; and (4) otherwise we

9. For a clear statement of the view, see Aquinas, *In Sent.* II.37.2.2.co: "Secundo, quia cum actio etiam peccati sit ens quoddam...sequeretur, si actiones peccati a Deo non sunt, quod aliquod ens essentiam habens a Deo non esset; et ita Deus non esset universalis causa omnium entium.... Et ideo cum prima opinione dicendum est, quod actus, inquantum actus, a Deo est."

10. In the example, for simplicity's sake, I will consider the act itself rather than the volition; but the same applies to the latter as well (even if the relationship between a volition and the corresponding human act is not completely straighforward; for some details in Aquinas, see Can Laurens Löwe, *Thomas Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Human Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021)).

11. See the places cited in n. 2 above.

12. See, e.g., Gloria Frost, "Peter Olivi's Rejection of God's Concurrence with Created Causes," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22, no. 4 (October 2014): 655–679; and earlier, Johann Stufler, "Die Konkurslehre des Petrus Olivi," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 54 (1930): 406–424.

could not be impute a sinful act to its human agent.[13] We do not need to go into the details of these arguments, but should note, concerning (1), that Olivi argues against the standard solution to the general question by considering various ways one may conceive of God's concurrence, and showing that all these ways eventually lead to some metaphysical contradictions or at least implausibilites. Thus, as Olivi concludes, God is not immediately active in causal interactions, and while this is true of even such actions as fire bringing about heat, it is especially true of the acts of the human will and foremost of those that are sinful.

Auriol's text displays some acquaintance with Olivi's arguments. Besides Olivi, however, it also displays deep familiarity with Scotus's rejection of Olivi's view, to which we now turn briefly. Scotus does not answer Olivi's detailed critique by presenting a version of concurrentism that would be immune to the implausibilities alleged by Olivi; rather, he presents a *reductio* against Olivi's position by arguing that if Olivi were right, God would have no knowledge of future contingents, including future sinful acts of the will.

The Problem of Foreknowledge

Scotus, at least in the *Ordinatio*,[14] endorses what we called the standard view: that in every causal production, including the production of a sinful volition, both the created agent and God are causally active. In Scotus's analysis, this means, more precisely, that they are two partial, essentially ordered but autonomous co-causes,[15] constituting one total cause of the act. One of Scotus's reasons for endorsing the standard view and rejecting Olivi's position is that, as he contends, the latter would have the inadmissible implication that God does not know future contingents. As Scotus notes,

> God does not have knowledge of future contingents unless because he knows with certainty the determination of his will with respect to them, which will is immutable and unimpedible; but if the created will is a total cause with respect to its volition, and it is contingently related to that volition, then no matter how the divine will is posited to be determinate to one part of those that depend on the created will, the created will will be able to will otherwise, and thus certainty does not follow from the knowledge of the determination of the divine will.[16]

As is well known, the problem of divine foreknowledge – in what way God knows the contingent happenings of the future, without making that future inevitable – had puzzled Christian thinkers from at least Augustine (indeed, Boethius already labels the problem as

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13. Olivi gives these arguments in his *In Sent.*, II.116.

14. *Ord.* II.34–37.1–5; see also *Ord.* I.47.un. There is some disagreement about whether and to what extent Scotus changed his mind on this issue; e.g., Frost, "Duns Scotus" (especially pp. 30 ff.) thinks he did. Notably, he does not take a stance on the question in the *Reportatio*. While it seems to me that the change of view is more that of emphasis than of substance, I am not going to argue for that view here. What I consider below as Scotus's position can be just taken as the position of the early Scotus.

15. Autonomous but essentially ordered causes are one kind of partial causes that Scotus distinguishes in the *Ordinatio* (*Ord.* I.3.3.2). They are described as those partial causes that "concur not in the same way, but having an essential order between them ... the superior cause does not move the inferior, neither gives ⟨the inferior cause⟩ its power by which it moves, but the superior has a more perfect power to act, and the inferior has a less perfect power to act" (Vaticana 3:293). For the kind of essential order that can stand between these causes that are not themselves causally related, see *De primo principio*, 1.11–12.

16. *Ord.* II.34–37.1–5, n. 120: "Probatio primae consequentiae, quia non habet scientiam de futuris contingentibus nisi quia certitudinaliter novit determinationem voluntatis suae respectu eorum ad quae voluntas est immutabilis et inimpedibilis; sed si voluntas creata it totalis causa respectu sui velle, et ipsa contingenter se habet ad illud velle – ergo quantumcumque voluntas divina ponatur determinata ad unam partem eorum quae dependent a voluntate creata, poterit voluntate creata aliter velle, et ita non sequitur certitudo ex cognitione determinationis voluntatis divinae" (Vaticana 8:418–419).

an "old" one, ascribing it to Cicero, and roots of it can be found in Aristotle's *Hermeneutics*). According to Boethius's famous solution, mostly adopted also by Aquinas and others, God sees all things in his timeless eternal present, possessing life "simultaneously entire and perfect."[17] According to this solution, just as our seeing Peter sitting down right now does not make that sitting down necessary, similarly, God's knowing, in his eternal present, that Peter would deny Christ three times, does not make Peter's denial necessary either. As it became the somewhat standard way to put it, the necessity of the consequence ("It is necessary that if God knows that P, then it is P") does not imply the necessity of the consequent ("If God knows that P, it is necessary that P").[18]

There are many details to work out in this solution, but they need not concern us at present; for whatever the virtues of the Boethian-Thomistic solution may be, Scotus deems it altogether unsatisfactory. In particular, Scotus rejects Aquinas's view that God knows future things by their real presence to God in God's timeless eternity, because he thinks it relies on a relation between non-existent relata, and in any case, it would violate divine aseity.[19] He also thinks that eternal presence cannot really safeguard contingency, especially because it misunderstands its origin, which is in fact the divine will.[20] Thus, instead of appealing to real presence, Scotus maintains that God knows future contingents by causing them:

> The divine intellect either presents simples whose union is contingent in reality, or — if it is a complex — the intellect presents it as neutral to itself; and the will, choosing one part, namely their conjunction in reality at some 'now', makes this determinately true: 'this will be at a.' But this existing determinately true, the ⟨divine⟩ essence is the basis in the divine intellect for understanding that truth.[21]

According to this account, God's knowledge can be considered as consisting of multiple moments or instants of nature. (While it may be helpful to think of these as a temporally ordered series, it is not so; Scotus's analysis only assumes that they are logically distinct.) In the first instant, the divine intellect understands all simples, that is, possible individuals and properties (such as 'Socrates' and 'whiteness', but no such things as a square circle), without making any judgment about how these simples are related to one another. At the same instant, the divine intellect also understands all the possible pairs of complexes that these simples may form – such as the pair 'Socrates

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17. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, V.6.

18. For Boethius, see *Consolation*, V. For Aquinas, see *ScG* I.66 and 67; *De veritate* 2.12 and elsewhere. For a general overview, see William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (Leiden: Brill, 1988); or more recently, Gregory A Boyd et al., *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*, ed. James K Beilby and Paul R Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). For the medieval discussion especially, see Chris Schabel, "Parisian Secular Masters on Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents in the Early Fourteenth Century, Part I: John of Pouilly's Quaestio Ordinaria I," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 78, no. 1 (2011): 161–219; and its sequel in the same journal.

19. *Ordinatio* I.38.2 and I.39.1–5.

20. E.g., *Lectura* I.39.1–5; see also, e.g., Stephen D Dumont, "The Origin of Scotus's Theory of Synchronic Contingency," *The Modern Schoolman* 72 (1995): 149–167; Scott MacDonald, "Synchronic Contingency, Instants of Nature, and Libertarian Freedom: Comments on 'The Background to Scotus's Theory of Will'," *The Modern Schoolman* 72 (1995): 169–174; and, for a different reading, Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 2:1123, 1315.

21. *Ordinatio* I.38.2 et I.39.1–5, n. 23: "Intellectus divinus aut offert simplicia quorum unio est contingens in re, aut — si complexionem — offert eam sicut sibi neutram; et voluntas eligens unam partem, scilicet coniunctionem istorum pro aliquo 'nunc' in re, facit illud esse determinate verum: 'hoc erit pro a'. Hoc autem existente 'determinate vero', essentia est ratio intellectui divino intelligendi istud verum" (Vaticana 6:428).

is white' and 'Socrates is not white' – while presenting each of these pairs of complexes as neutral at this point. At the next instant, the divine will choses one of these pairs, and then the divine intellect knows (by knowing the divine will) that the given complex is true (that is, knows that 'Socrates is white at t1', instead of knowing that 'Socrates is not white at t1'). Put it more succintly, denoting instants of nature by 'n', at n1 the divine intellect understands all simples and pairs of complexes, such as p1 and $\neg p1. At n1, since the divine will has not yet determined what states of affairs will actually obtain, these propo$

As this account implies, according to Scotus, the certainty of divine knowledge derives from the determination of the divine will, and thus the extent of the former is the same as that of the latter.[22]

This solution, as Scotus argues, solves the difficulty of divine foreknowledge, and also provides an account of the origin of contingency (the divine will). But whether or not the solution succeeds, it obviously presupposes that God at least contributes to the effects of secondary agents by the determination of his will. Thus, Scotus contends, Olivi's mere conservationism cannot be right.[23]

Divine Concurrence

Although Scotus's primary concern when discussing the problem of foreknowledge was to preserve freedom and contingency in the created order, Auriol thinks that the Scotist solution does not succeeed in doing so: As Auriol claims, Scotus's account in fact rules out human freedom. He also thinks that Scotus's explanation of contingency – i.e., positing contingency in the divine will itself – is mistaken: God is absolutely necessary, and, since both God's knowledge and his will is identical to this necessary divine essence, consequently they are also necessary. Auriol further rejects Scotus's distinctions between instants of nature. For these and for other reasons, Auriol rejects Scotus's account of foreknowledge, and together with this, the thesis that God must (co-)cause future contingents in order to know them. God's knowledge does not derive from his causal activity, but rather, similarly to what the Boethian solution maintains, from his "indistant" presence to all things.[24]

Since Auriol thinks that God does not need to concur with volitions in order to know them, the concurrentist position lost at least one important consideration going for it, especially as elobarated by Scotus in resopnse to Olivi. But this, alone, would not be sufficient to establish that God does not in fact concur, and so Auriol provides some direct arguments for this conclusion as well. He thinks that there is no divine concurrence in sinful volitions, and that from this, we can infer that there is no divine concurrence in other instances of secondary causation either (in other words, he thinks that the negative answer to the special problem implies a negative answer to the general problem of concurrence).

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22. We should keep in mind that Aquinas also appeals to God's causal activity when discussing divine knowledge, especially God's knowledge of individuals: as he notes, "God's knowledge extends insofar as his causality extends" (*Summa theologiae* I.14.11). However, he does not appeal to this directly in his discussion of the problem of foreknowledge, perhaps because he conceives of God's eternity differently from Scotus.

23. There is some disagreement about how exactly to interpret Scotus's stance on God co-causing volitions. Is it the case that whenever there is an act of volition, whether sinful or good, God contributes what is required for the good act, and it is only the created will that makes the act lacking in justice? Or is it rather the case that God withholds his concurrence from the volitions that are not good due to the secondary agent? See Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus on God* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); vs. Frost, "Duns Scotus."

24. Auriol's discussion of future contingents is complex and we do not need to revisit it here. See the text edited in Peter Auriol, "Peter Aureol on Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents: *Scriptum in Primum Librum Sententiarum*, Distinctions 38–39," ed. Chris Schabel, *Cahiers de l'Institute du Moyen Age Grec et Latin* 65 (1995): 63–212 and Schabel's analysis for some more details.

The special problem. Auriol starts his discussion by presenting what we have called the "Standard View", especially as it was developed by Scotus. His understanding of this view is the following:

> In the sinful action there are two things, namely the substrate and the deformity, and the first is from God, just as any other positive nature, because God coacts with the action of a creature; but as far as the privation and deformity is concerned, which is in the sin formally, they say that the sin is only from the deficient will.[25]

Auriol's first argument against the standard view is one that regularly features as one of the most important objections against the position: that in a deformed act (such as the act of will in question), the deformity is inseparable from the act itself that the deformity characterizes, which means that whatever is acting in bringing about one of them, it is also acting in bringing about the other. As Auriol concludes, because of this it cannot be maintained that God causes the act of will but does not cause thereby the deformity in it.[26]

Auriol provides an example to support his argument: if we regard blackness as a lack of whiteness, and there is someone who produces blackness, we cannot say that she, at the same time, does not produce the lack of whiteness in the same subject.[27] Similarly, if we regard the act of hatred as lacking in due justice, and there are agents (the secondary agent and God) who produce the act, we cannot say that both of them, at the same time, do not produce the lack of due justice. In other words, Auriol argues, in this case we cannot say that God caused the act but not the lack of due justice, because the positive and the negative parts are just as inseparable as blackness is from the lack of whiteness.

One might note here that Scotus's account may not necessarily assume that there is a real separability of the substrate of the act and its deficiency. His notion of essentially ordered autonomous co-causes seems to allow for cases where only one cause is deficient, and by their acting together the two causes bring about a deficient effect in such a way that its deficiency is due only to the one deficient cause. Aquinas may also respond along these lines, perhaps pointing out that in matters of instrumental causation (e.g., a painter painting a landscape with a brush), the deficiency of the effect can come about either from a deficiency in the principal cause (the painter not being skillful) or from the deficiency in the instrument (the brush being worn out). In the example Auriol considers, there is statedly just one cause of the deficient effect (instead of, for instance, considering a lightsource and a shaded glass as co-causes of a grey patch), which seems to indicate that he begs the question instead of establishing the position by this first argument.

Auriol's second argument is meant to answer Scotus's claim that the freedom of the will can be preserved by distinguishing prior and posterior instants of nature, and thereby securing the natural priority of the will even with the temporal simultaneity of the

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25. *In Sent.* II.38.1: "in actu peccati sunt duo, scilicet substratum et difformitas, et primum est a Deo sicut quaelibet alia natura positiva, quia Deus coagit actioni creaturae; sed quoad privativum et difformitatem, quod est formale in peccato, dicunt quod peccatum est a sola voluntate deficiente" (Zanetti ed., 302). The 1605 edition of Auriol's *Sentences* is notoriously unreliable, so I have silently corrected it against Padova Bib. Ant. 161 and occasionally against the other manuscripts.

26. *In Sent.* II.38.1.1: "Probo consequentiam, quoniam aliquando aliqua sic se habent, quod unum est privatio in alio inseparabilis ab illo, quidquid agens in unum necessario agit in reliquum: sed ita se habet deformitas ad actum, ergo etc." (Zanetti ed., 303). Whether a deformity is in reality separate from the deformed volition receives a separate question, e.g., in Ockham, who also argues for the negative (i.e., that form and matter do not differ in an act): Cf. his *Quodlibeta*, III.15.

27. *In Sent.* II.38.1.1: "Maior patet, quia enim privatio albedinis et nigredo est annexa inseparabiliter nigredini, ideo producens nigredinem necessario producit non-albedinem" (Zanetti ed., 303).

secondary agent's and God's actions.[28] According to Auriol, this will not suffice. As he notes,

> If God concurs with the act of the will, this is either because he follows the determination of the will in that act, in such a way that the will in a previous instant of nature determines itself to that act, and because of this, God concurs with the determined will; or the other way around, namely that God previously determines himself to act, and our will follows his determination, and comes to that action. But neither of these ways is satisfactory; therefore etc.[29]

In other words, according to Auriol, if God concurs with the acts of will, this either happens so that the will determines itself at n_1 and God follows this determination at n_2; or it happens conversely, so that God determines his own will at n_1 and the human will follows this determination at n_2.[30] According to Auriol, both of these options lead to insurmountable difficulties.

The first option is not satisfactory because it would imply that if the will determines itself to sin, God will choose to concur with this sinning (which Auriol deems absurd); moreover, it would also entail a contradiction in implying that God was not immediately active in the determination itself (and thus maintaining both that God concurs immediately and that he does not).[31] However, as Auriol suggests, the second horn of the dilemma is not much better off either. If Scotus maintains that God determines himself first and our will follows, that would mean that God determined the human will to its sinning – but this is a contradiction! It is a contradiction since in this case, the will could *not* sin at all, because it would not be acting freely.[32] Either way, Auriol thinks that Scotus's proposal of spelling out concurrence in terms of instants of nature, leads to absurdity.

It is perhaps worth noting here that although Scotus thinks that the divine will determines God's action at an instant naturally prior to the determination of the human will, nevertheless, he does *not* think that the divine will's determination would causally necessitate the human will's determination. Thus, according to Scotus, had Peter's will determined itself not to deny Christ, God would not have concurred with the volution of denying Christ; even though, since Peter's will determined itself to do deny Christ, God had already determined that he would concur with (the positive substrate of) Peter's denial of Christ. According to Auriol, however, this counterfactual dependence of the two determinations is at once too much and too little: too much infsofar as it would not save the freedom of the human determination; and too little insofar as it would not be sufficient to guarantee infallible and unchangeable character of divine knowledge.

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28. For Scotus, see above, as in *Ordinatio* I.39.1–5.

29. *In Sent*. II.38.1: "Si Deus coagit actui voluntatis, aut hoc est quia sequitur determinationem voluntatis in illo actu, sic quod voluntas prius natura determinet se ad actum illum, et ex hoc Deus coagit voluntati determinate; aut econverso prius Deus determinat se ad agendum, et voluntas nostra sequitur determinationem eius, et venit ad actionem illam. Sed nullo eorum eorum modorum est; ergo etc." (Zanetti ed., 303).

30. A similar dilemma against concurrentism, although in this case concerning the general problem, is presented by Durand of St.-Pourçain in his *Sentences*, II.1.4. For a more thorough analysis of this dilemma, see Zita V Toth, "Peter of Palude and the Fiery Furnace," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (2020): 121–142, at 124–125.

31. *In Sent*. II.38.1: "Tunc Deus voluntarie coageret ad peccatum; et etiam haberetur propositum, quia in illo determinare non coagit Deus" (Zanetti ed., 303).

32. Ibid.: "Nec potest dari secundus modus, quia tunc voluntas determinaretur a Deo ad peccatum: ergo non ageret a se sed ab illo, et ita voluntas non peccaret, quia de se non haberet, unde esset causa peccati, quia non libera; determinaretur enim ab extrinseco" (Zanetti ed., 303).

As can be seen from these objections, Auriol's main concern here is God's concurrence with the free actions of the created will, or perhaps with contingent actions in more general. His arguments are negative, that is, they are targeted against the concurrentist position especially as it was formulated by Scotus. Since he thinks that Scotus's account of contingency (as based on the contingent divine will) is mistaken, and neither Scotus's account of foreknowledge, nor his account of concurrence is successful at preserving human free will or contingency in the world, he concludes that God is not immediately active in bringing about human volitions. I turn now to his remarks that apply more generally to all created causes.

The general problem. While so far Auriol has focused on the special problem, which he thinks has implications with regard to the general one, he also employs some arguments addressing the general problem directly.

The first of these arguments is common among mere conservationists,[33] and it also often serves as an objection in authors arguing for the other view. According to this argument, divine concurrence would only be needed if bringing about a proper effect would exceed the secondary cause's power; bringing about a proper effect would only exceed the secondary cause's power if it required infinite power; but secondary effects do not require infinite power; therefore, there is no need for divine concurrence.[34]

Auriol regards the first and the second premise as obvious, and most concurrentists would agree. Indeed, one of the most common arguments for divine concurrence proceed precisely from the denial of the third premise; as, e.g., Aquinas puts it, bringing about a *being* does require infinite power, since being, as opposed to nothing, is the proper effect of the omnipotent God.[35] Auriol, however, thinks that the third premise is true: once God has created matter, secondary agents are able to elicit the relevant (substantial or accidental) forms from that matter entirely by exercising their own causal powers.

If the concurrentist is not convinced by this much, Auriol presses the point further (with an argument that can also be found in Olivi and Durand, although in less detail). If the concurrentist thinks that in every causal interaction, both God and the secondary agent are active, she may conceive of these two activities in two ways: either as each being a partial cause of the effect (arguably Scotus's view, and later Ockham's), or each being a total cause (Aquinas's view). However, neither of these options is satisfactory.

If God and the secondary agent are both partial causes of the whole effect, then it seems like we do *not* need divine concurrence for every causal interaction, *pace* the concurrentist's insistence. For whatever part the secondary agent brings about in the above model, that part, by our assumption, is brought about by the secondary agent alone. If this is the case, however, Auriol argues, then it is difficult to see why we can't just say that the whole effect is brought about by the secondary agent alone; moreover, it would lead to difficulties in cases where the effect has no parts. (The concurrentist could insist that *all* effects – indeed, all created things – have some metaphysical parts, since God alone is entirely simple; or hold, like Aquinas, that the theory of divine concurrence only applies to material things.[36] Auriol does not take up this line of argumentation here.)

On the other hand, if God and the secondary agent are both *total* causes, then that leads to a metaphysical absurdity: there cannot be more than one total cause of the same

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33. Both Peter Olivi and Durand of St.-Pourçain advances it in a similar way (see above for references).

34. *In Sent.* II.38.1.1: "Non apparet quare Deus non possit communicare creaturae actionem, quae non est creatio sed ex actione perfectibili ad complementum, et educta de potentia ad actum. Ratio est, quia ad talem actionem non requiritur virtus infinita." (Zanetti ed., 303).

35. For Aquinas's argument along these lines, see *QDA* 7.3.

36. Aquinas explicitly claims this in his *In Sent.* II.1.1.4, and that simple things do not change except by divine action.

thing that are acting simultaneously, since in that case the effect would be brought about twice. (The concurrentist, again, could insist that this is only true if the two causes are of the same kind, but not in cases when one of the causes is what they would call 'equivocal cause', belonging to a different order. She may cite the example of how the Sun and the animal are both total causes of the animal's offspring, or refer to cases of instrumental causation where both the principal cause and the instrument are total causes.)

This much for Auriol's direct arguments. None of these arguments is original to him, and Auriol does not engage with what one may regard as the usual concurrentist response to them, as briefly noted above. What his perhaps most original contribution to the debate is, is his awareness of some of the objections that were often brought up against Olivi's (and Durand's) position. His response to these objections also helps to characterize his view better.

The first objection highlights an assumption that underlies many concurrentist positions, namely that creation and conservation are the same divine action; hence if God conserves everything, he must also immediately bring about everything.[37] In his response, Auriol grants the conditional, but denies the antecedent; in other words, he argues that creation and conservation are different. With this, he falls, again, into a minority position.[38] His main argument rests on the claim that while conservation or continuation is, by definition, an ongoing, temporally extended process, creation is not so: production is an activity that ceases after its object has been produced (except for cases in the Trinitarian context).[39] Thus, Auriol argues, since one of the actions is intrinsically continuous while the other is intrinsically instantaneous, they cannot be identical. Auriol goes further: production and conservation cannot be the same, since God communicated the former to creatures (hence creatures can bring about things), while he did not communicate to them the latter (they cannot conserve things in being). While the concurrentist opponent may be underwhelemed by this latter argument – it seems to beg the question against the concurrentist position, and also seems to equate creation with production in general, which is arguably too hasty – Auriol's conclusion is clear: creation and conservation are distinct actions, hence the objection to his mere conservationism does not stand.

The second objection discussed by Auriol is one that according to many, seems the most compelling case for the concurrentist view.[40] According to this objection, it is difficult to account for the metaphysical possibility of certain kinds of miracles without positing divine concurrence with secondary causes. For instance, if we assume that God does not ordinarily concur with fire but rather, the fire is, by its own causal power, a sufficient cause

37. *In Sent.* II.38.1.1: "Idem est creatio et conservatio; sed per te Deus est immediate conservans omnem creaturam; ergo esset immediate agens omnem creaturam" (Zanetti ed., 303).

38. It should be pointed out that while the thesis was widely held – including by Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Bonaventure, Scotus, and perhaps the later Henry of Ghent – it was, and is, somewhat controversial on the grounds that it would entail occasionalism. For such a reading, see, e.g., Richard Cross, "The Eternity of the World and the Distinction between Creation and Conservation," *Religious Studies* 42, no. 4 (2006): 403–416.

39. *In Sent.* II.38.1.1: "Secundo, quia productio ex vi productionis non habet quod manet per subiectum, excepta productione divina. . . . Contradictio enim est, quod aliquid de se sit continuatio, et quod ipsum possit non continuari: ergo si productio seipsa esset continuatio, illa esset aeterna seipsa; consequens est falsum . . . ergo productio et continuatio non sunt idem" (Zanetti ed., 303–304).

40. At least, Peter of Palude, a fourteenth-century Dominican posits it against his contemporary, Durand of St-Pourçain's mere conservationism as one of the deciding arguments; and Freddoso would also agree (see *In Sent.* II.1.4 (edited in Zita V Toth, "Peter of Palude on Divine Concurrence: An Edition of his *In II Sent.*, d.1, q.4," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 83, no. 1 (2016): 49–92) and Alfred J Freddoso, "God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Why Conservation is not Enough," *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991): 553–585, respectively. For an examination of this argument in more detail, see Toth, "Peter of Palude and the Fiery Furnace."

of burning, then it is difficult if not impossible to account for the metaphysical possibility of fire *without* burning.

Why would one account for this possibility, and why would it be difficult? The case a medieval theologian would have in mind is the story related in the book of Daniel about Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, which did not burn Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when cast into it, but did burn the soldiers doing the casting.[41] According to the usual interpretation of this story, the fire was in full possession and was exercising its causal power, yet failed to bring about its characteristic effect on some suitably disposed patient. These and similar cases are customarily called 'miracles against nature'[42], which in general one may characterise as involving an object that keeps its nature with its causal powers, while God producing something that is the opposite of the usual effect of these same powers.[43]

Now, concurrentists often thought that the mere conservationist has no tool at hand to respond to these cases, since according to him, causal powers are sufficient for their effects, and there is no other element involved in the causal interaction than the actualisation of the respective active and passive powers of the agent and the patient. The only way to account for miracles such as that of the fiery furnace is, as for instance Peter of Palude elaborates against Durand's view, by assuming that God can suspend his usual concurring activity (which in regular cases forms a sufficient cause together with the secondary agent) in certain cases, as a consequence of which the effect does not come about even though the agent is acting as usual.[44]

Auriol, in contrast with Olivi and Durand, explicitly addresses this objection (even if very briefly), which indicates that he may have been familiar with contemporaries who thought of it as a serious one against mere conservationist positions. Here is his response:

> I grant that by conserving the fire and ⟨conserving⟩ the burning of the fire, God cannot bring about that the fire does not act, naturally speaking, or by his ordained power; he could, however, suspend the action and effect of the fire according to his ⟨absolute⟩ power.[45]

Auriol, unfortunately, does not elaborate, so we can only conjecture his fuller response. Recall that the objection relied on the thought that if mere conservationism were true, and fire were a sufficient cause of heat, then, since there is no other thing involved in the production of heat than the fire exercising its causal power, it is metaphysically impossible for the fire to exercise this power and at the same time the patient not being burnt. What Auriol may be denying is the additional assumption in this argument, namely that there is no other thing involved in the production: Auriol seems to say that there very much is, but not divine concurrence but the very agent's action.

While Auriol does not make this point explicitly here, we can support this reading by two considerations. First, Auriol's later contemporary, Aufredo Gonteri Brito (fl. ca. 1322)

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41. Daniel 3:19–27.

42. See Aquinas's division between supernatural, praeternatural, and contranatural miracles in *QDP*, 6.2, ad 3.

43. The concurrentist may also think that the same difficulty arises with respect to the supposed impassibility of resurrected bodies of the blessed after the Day of Judgment. For some analysis of various ways to solve that problem, see Zita V Toth, "Perfect Subjects, Shields, and Retractions: Three Models of Impassibility," *Vivarium: a journal for mediaeval philosophy and the intellectual life of the Middle Ages* 59 (2021): 79–101.

44. For Palude, see *In Sent.* II.1.4.

45. *In Sent.* II.38.1.1: "Concedo, quod conservando ignem et ignitionem ignis, non posset Deus facere quin ignis ageret, naturaliter loquendo, sive de potentia ordinaria; posset tamen suspendere actum et effectum ignis secundum potentiam suam" (Zanetti ed., 304).

is explicit about it, when discussing the matter of concurrence and considering the same objection. As he notes,

> Since the nature of the agent is something absolute, prior according to its nature to its action, hence God, without contradiction, can will the prior one to be while willing the posterior not to be; and thus sometimes he wills the fire to be and the burning not to be. And thus it is not because of the retraction of his immediately concurring action to the making of the heat.[46]

From this, it seems that Gonteri regards the objection problematic for the mere conservationist only if she thinks that actions are not eliminable by God for the reason that they are not absolute things. (The issue can also be put in this way: when one counts all the items that are necessary for a causal interaction to occur, what items are there? If, apart from the actualisation of the relevant powers, action is not one of them, then not even God can annihilate it while keeping everything else intact.) However, if one thinks, as Gonteri does, that actions are *res*, one may also think that (as far as God's absolute power is concerned) that they are creatable and annihilable by God without creating or annihilating any other absolute thing. In this case, the mere conservationist can also say that even though fire is present, God can prohibit it from acting by annihilating its action, which is something posterior to its essence and heating power.

Auriol also accepts this robust view of actions.[47] He thinks, for instance, that in the case of projectile motion, the motion itself remains when the agent mover is removed (hence, this motion cannot be identical with the actualisation of the agent's power); and that in general, that motions are distinct from the agent's exercising its active power.[48] Moreover, when explaining his view, it seems that cases similar to the miracle of the fiery furnace may have motivated him to endorse it. For instance, consider the following:

> It is clear that by the divine power the same mover and motion can remain, while the act of that mover, or the motion's-being-by-the-mover, not existing. For instance, after something combustible is placed next to a fire, God can suspend the activity of the fire, so that it does not act for a while, and God can make in the combustible thing the very same motion that the fire would make in that time.[49]

The scenario described seems to be this: we put a kettle on the fire, and as usual, it heats up. But theoretically, there can be two, metaphysically different ways this can happen. In the first, regular case, fire exercises its causal power, and by this, induces a motion in the kettle (i.e., the kettle becoming hot). In the second, supernatural case, God suspends (or rather, annihilates) the action of the fire on the kettle, and instead produces the same motion directly, leaving the fire itself intact. This is only possible if we regard

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46. Brito, *In Sent.* II.37: "Ad secundum dico quod quia natura rei agentis est aliquod absolutum, prius secundum naturam sua actione, et ideo Deus sine contradictione potest velle prius esse volendo posterius non esse; et ideo vult quandoque ignem esse et calefactionem non esse. Et ideo ita est non quia subtrahit actionem suam concurrentem immediate ad calefactionem faciendam" (Wroclaw, Univ. 195 (I F 184), fol. 659ra).

47. For a detailed analysis of his view, as compared to Aquinas's, see Frost, "What is an Action?" See also Löwe, "Peter Auriol on the Metaphysics of Efficient Causation" for further details of his metaphysics of action.

48. For the example of projectile motion, see *In Sent.* I.27.1.1.

49. Auriol, *In Sent.* I.27.1: Sed manifestum est quod per divinam potentiam potest manere idem motor et idem motus, non existente agere ipsius motoris nec agi motus aut fieri a motore; approximato namque igne alicui combustibili potest Deus suspendere activitatem ignis, ne agat pro aliqua hora, et facere in combustibili eundem motum quem ignis faceret in illa hora. (Trnscr. Russ Friedman)

the action as something over and above the mover and the resulting motion; otherwise, the two cases would be indistinguishable.[50]

Both this example and the example of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, as presented by Auriol, suggests that he regards actions as something ineliminable without a change in any of the other items involved in the causal interaction. God can add actions or take them away, while keeping everything else fixed. But this means that if we regard actions as absolute things in this sense, then there is no difficulty for the mere conservationist to say that the fire did not produce heat in one instance, even though it was exercising its causal power – a solution that was not open to Durand, since arguably he regarded actions as mere modes.[51]

Conclusion

Auriol, in contrast with most of his contemporaries, argues that God is not causally active in the happenings of the world, and is especially not causally active in the bringing about of sinful volitional acts. Compared to Olivi's detailed and sophisticated treatment of the same position, Auriol's discussion may seem somewhat underwhelming: while he does engage with the alternative position, he does so in much less detail than his predecessor. Nevertheless, what makes Auriol worth considering on this topic is that he clearly demonstrates how the question of divine concurrence became intertwined with a host of other, seemingly independent issues.

First, as we have seen above, Auriol's rejection of Scotus's position on divine concurrence rests, at least partly, on his rejection of the latter's position on divine foreknowledge of future contingents. If one thinks, as Scotus does, that God can only know future (free, contingent) volitions because he partly causes them, then one must maintain that God is a co-cause, in some way, of all of these volitions, including sinful ones. Auriol, however, rejects this view of foreknowledge, and thinks that he can preserve God's knowledge of the future without relying on his concurring activity.

Second, as was also briefly mentioned, Auriol is aware that one may argue for divine concurrence on the basis of holding that creation and conservation are identical. While Auriol endorses the conditional, he denies the antecedent: in other words, he argues against the identity thesis, which is, indeed, endorsed by such diverse concurrentists as Aquinas, Giles of Rome, or Scotus.

Finally, as was argued above, Auriol's response to the Three Young Men objection relies on his theory of action, according to which actions are absolute things, really distinct from their agent's exercise of causal power, and from the motion caused in the patient – and consequently, can be preserved or eliminated while all of those other elements are kept intact. In this, again, Auriol's position is unusual, although it seems to be followed by Gonteri Brito, who was perhaps motivated by the same objection to endorse it.

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50. The scenario with its possibly skeptical consequences regarding our perception of the origin of causation is a long-standing example in the medieval discussion. According to its more usual formulation, such cases actually can and do happen when, for instance, you put the consecrated chalice next to the fire, and it gets hot – not by the fire, since hotness in this case will not inhere in the wine that is not there, but rather, by God directly. See, e.g., Ockham, *Quodlibetal questions*, II.9, dub. 4. For its extreme version, arguing for the conclusion that "the one who denies the action of the fire, does not deny anything that appears to the senses", see Gabriel Biel, *Collectorium*, IV.1.1.1.3.

51. See Peter Hartman, "Durand of St.-Pourçain's Theory of Modes," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 60, no. 2 (2022): 203–226 for a detailed analysis.

All in all, the present case study shows how the problem of divine concurrence became entangled with these other issues, at least by Auriol's time but perhaps slightly earlier. This entanglement will remain.[52]

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52. Suárez treats all these issues, with some others, in his disputations on divine concurrence (*DM* 20–22).

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