

Augustin Erath's reconciliation of Thomist and Molinist Doctrines on Grace and Free Human Action¹

Petr Dvořák —

Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences

peterdvorak99@gmail.com

The controversy between Thomism and Molinism on matters of divine knowledge and causation in relation to human freedom is by far the most important intellectual struggle of early modern scholasticism.² It has essentially the character of applied logic, which makes it available to modern analytical reconstruction. Much can be learnt from the debate even from a systematic point of view thus enriching contemporary debates on free will and determinism.

Inspired by the Cistercian Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz (1606–1682), who at one stage of his thinking on the Thomist-Molinist controversy advocated a thesis according to which the differences between the two positions are merely verbal and not substantial, the German Augustinian canon regular Augustin Erath (1648–1719) attempts to resolve the contradictions between

1 This study is an outcome of the research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as the project GA ČR 14-37038G “Between Renaissance and Baroque: Philosophy and Knowledge in the Czech Lands within the Wider European Context” carried out at the Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences.

I would like to thank Justin Petr Dvorský, Michał Głowala, David Peroutka, David Robjant and Patricio Shaw for helpful discussions on earlier drafts of the paper.

2 As for primary sources on the controversy, see Domingo Báñez, *Comentarios inéditos a la prima secundae de Santo Tomás, Tomo III: De gratia Dei* (qq. 109–114). Ed. V. Beltrán de Heredia. Salamanca, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas 1948 (1599–1600). See also a concise synopsis of Báñez's mature position in the appendix to the latter edition, “Tractatus de vera et legitima concordia liberi arbitrii creati cum auxiliis gratiae Dei efficaciter moventis humanam voluntatem” (1600), p. 351–420. Luis de Molina, *Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione concordia: Editionem criticam*. Ed. I. Rabeneck. Oña, Collegium Maximum Societatis Jesu; Madrid, Societatis Editorialis “Sapientia” 1953 (1588). Throughout the paper “Thomism” refers to the classical predeterminist stance employing the so-called physical promotion.

For the best current introduction to the topic and the abundant up-to-date literature see Matava, R. J., *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Domingo Báñez, Physical Premotion and the Controversy de Auxiliis Revisited*. Leiden – Boston, Brill 2016.

Thomist and Molinist views on the relationship of grace and free human action.³ In his massive tome (over 600 pages) *Conciliatio Praedeterminationis Physicae, seu Decreti Divini intrinsece efficacis cum Scientia Media, directiva Decreti Divini extrinsece efficacis, Seu Unio Theologica...* he systematically surveys both opposing views and takes a Thomist perspective on the matters, defending predetermination for instance.⁴ Our account shall be based on Tractatus III, Membrum I, Puncti II, III, and IV.⁵

In what follows we offer a partial interpretative systematic reconstruction of Erath's attempt to reconcile Thomist and Molinist claims in relation to divine grace and human action. We shall focus on the relation of grace to action, and the different understandings of that relation in Thomism and Molinism.⁶ This seems to be a key difference implied by the other differences between the competing accounts identified by Erath. First we shall outline the key differences between the respective theories which Erath's reconciliation attempts to harmonize. Second, we explain Erath's key distinction in predication concerning grace on which the reconciliation is based. Third, we offer three different interpretations of the distinction between the concrete predication of the Thomist and the abstract predication of the Molinist. All three interpretations will initially be found wanting. Fourth, the second interpretation (Interpretation 2) will be revisited and qualified.

3 Dvořák, P., Caramuel's Middle Way between Molinism and Thomism on Future Contingents. *Un'altra modernità. Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz (1606–1682): enciclopedia e probabilismo*. Ed. D. Sabaino, P. C. Pissavino. Pisa, Edizioni ETS 2012, p. 85–96.

4 Augustin Erath, *Conciliatio Praedeterminationis Physicae, seu Decreti Divini intrinsece efficacis cum Scientia Media, directiva Decreti Divini extrinsece efficacis, Seu Unio Theologica, In qua difficultates de Divina Scientia simplicis intelligentiae, Media, et Visionis: Item de Decretis Dei extrinsece vel intrinsece efficacibus seu praedeterminantibus, inter Thomistas et Recentiores hactenus Controversae, ad exploratam mentem utriusque sententiae Authorum, imprimis in utramque partem ex aequo disputantur, et demum demonstrative conciliantur*. Augustae Vindelicorum, Kroniger 1689. For Caramuelian inspiration see the preface “Benevole Lector”. Erath's attempt at resolution and his interesting text have been pointed out to me by the independent researcher Patricio Shaw.

5 Augustin Erath, *Unio Theologica*, Tractatus III, Membrum I “Assertiones Positivae Recentiorum et Thomistarum Conciliantur”. Punctum II begins from p. 449, Punctum III on p. 453, Punctum IV starts on p. 464, Point V on p. 484. Punctum or Point II lays out contradictory pairs of statements of both competing accounts (12 in total). Point III resolves the first two pairs; Points IV and V each resolve five inconsistent pairs of statements. Since the book is freely available through Google Books, the text shall not be cited *in extenso*. This is also on account of the limits on length set by the journal.

6 All parties agree that (actual) grace is necessary for the so-called salutary action, i.e. action leading to the supernatural end of man – the salvation of the subject who performs it. Most of what shall be said in the paper would fit also human action in general and the so-called divine predetermination (which Erath accepts with the Thomists). However, since Erath narrows down the focus on grace, we shall follow his lead and speak about (actual) grace in relation to salutary action.

The concluding reflection evaluates Erath's attempt at reconciliation as ultimately unsuccessful, yet useful in other respects.

Grace and Action

The matter at issue concerns two entities and their relationships: divine decree concerning a particular salutary action of a human subject in time, the action in time itself, and, finally, the question of their logical, ontological and, more specifically, causal relationships.

1) "God wills that Peter does A at t_1 "

2) "Peter does A at t_1 "

Since the discussion typically focuses on volitions rather than just any actions whatever, let us reflect this fact in the following statements:

3) "God wills that Peter wills A at t_1 "

4) "Peter wills A at t_1 "

According to the Thomist, God causally determines the active potency of Peter's will to will A at t_1 . This means that, under this divine causal influence, Peter's will necessarily causes its volition of A at t_1 .⁷ In case of salutary human actions the divine volition or decree is realized through a special entity of grace (*auxilium*). The Thomist maintains that grace (for Peter to will A at t_1) is intrinsically efficient and thus essentially connected to its terminus, a particular action: Peter's willing A at t_1 . The Molinist on the other hand regards this connection as accidental because the efficiency is extrinsic, it depends on whether the human cause (Peter) actually causes the action (wills A at t_1). Thus grace does not causally determine the action but the action itself determines whether the grace is efficient or not. Grace enables the action as its necessary condition only. The efficient causal determination of the effect, Peter's willing A at t_1 , comes solely from Peter's will.

So it appears that the Thomist and Molinist accounts offer mutually incompatible statements: "the grace is essentially related to its terminus (action)" versus "the grace is accidentally related to its terminus (action)"; "the grace is intrinsically efficient" versus "the grace is extrinsically efficient"; "the causal

7 Notice that Peter's will still remains a genuine cause of its act, of willing A at t_1 , albeit a subordinate one and necessarily causing its effect, the particular volition.

determination of the action comes from God through grace (as well as from the agent)” versus “the causal determination of the action comes from the agent”. We shall concentrate predominately on the first pair of inconsistent statements, as this pair is implied by the remaining pairs.

Erath’s Resolution Based on the Distinction in Predication

Now let us focus on Augustine Erath’s resolution of the contradictory pronouncements.⁸ A contradiction arises when the same predicate is being at once affirmed and denied of the same thing(s). From this characterization it immediately follows that there are two ways of resolving a contradiction in the sense of showing it to be merely apparent. One way of resolving a contradiction is by showing that what is being affirmed and denied does not concern the same thing(s). The other way is to show that what is being affirmed and denied at the same time is not the same predicate. In resolving the contradiction arising from the contrary statements on grace and human action from the Thomist and the Molinist, Erath uses the former strategy. It is based on a key difference concerning two ways to consider the entity of the divine decree. Let us say we have a decree which makes the statement

3) “God wills that Peter wills *A* at t_1 ”

true. The decree can be considered as such (in abstract or fundamentally in Erath’s terminology) without taking note of its terminus. This is to understand the decree as a mere volition without reference to the specific temporal action of Peter, i.e. Peter’s willing *A* at t_1 . Considered in such a light, the decree can be combined with Peter’s action or with the lack thereof.

Now one might object that the product of such a consideration, the volition without a specific terminus, is merely a logical entity, a universal concept whose universal content is, *qua* universal, incapable of being realized in reality. The latter contains only specific volitions determined by specific termini (e.g. Peter’s willing *A* at t_1). In a similar way one could form the universal concept of animality which as particular cannot exist in reality without *some* specific difference. Animality existing in reality within a definite individual is always accompanied by some specific difference: the difference *rational* or some other (non-rational) animal difference, for instance that which differentiates cats from all other animals.

But what is more, a *particular* animality (existing in e.g. human individual) cannot be accompanied by difference other than that which actu-

⁸ See Punctum III, p. 453 ff.

ally determines it. If one could, *per impossibile*, isolate a *particular* animality from its difference *rational*, one could never combine it with another difference, for example that constitutive of cats. To put it differently, there is no possible world in which animality, existing within a particular individual in one world, is combined with another specific difference to form a different individual of a different animal species. Now comes the argument by analogy: just as a particular animality apart from its specific difference cannot be considered to be part of the real world, so too a particular volition cannot exist apart from its specific terminus.⁹ In other words, when we consider divine decree without its specific terminus, we do not consider anything real, but only a general concept, that of divine volition.

So, in a nutshell, if the decree is to be part of the real world it cannot be separated from its *specific* terminus (not just *some* terminus or other). This is what the objector maintains. Regarding it as inseparable from the terminus of a definite type is the second way of considering the divine decree distinguished by Erath: it is seen as concrete and taken reduplicatively, that is, *qua* its terminus, the specific temporal action. In other words, for the objector the decree is essentially connected to the terminus: Not only is there no possible world containing the particular decree without *any* specific terminus, but there is no possible world in which there is the decree with any specific terminus *other* than that to which it actually refers.

To state Erath's position succinctly: he accepts the former (the decree must have *a* terminus), but denies the latter (it does not have to have *the* terminus). The key point for Erath is that even in the first way of considering the divine decree, i.e. in abstraction from the terminus, the decree can be something real. The hypothetical objector is wrong in denying that. Rather than resembling an essential composition of a (particularized) generic feature combined with a specific *differentia*, there is a better analogy to view the relationship of the decree to its terminus: the decree is like a particular substance with some metaphysical accident attached to it which also happens to be a logical accident, that is, a contingent feature of the substance.¹⁰ For instance, a wall which is painted white is constituted by the

9 We are denying that some particular animality, e.g. that of Peter, can be combined with a specific difference other than "being rational". What we say has no bearing on the question whether this particular animality can be combined with the difference "being rational" which is to be found in some different individual of the same species, e.g. Paul. We are not even assuming that the question is genuine and thus has an answer. The question seems to be genuine when one considers the analogue to a particular animality represented by a particular volition. Can an individual volition be related to a numerically different terminus, another token of the same type of action belonging to Peter? The answer seems "no". Luckily, we do not have to resolve the issue here.

10 Punctum III, p. 459–460.

wall and its whiteness. While under the description “white wall” the wall can never be but white (there is no possible world in which a white wall is not white), the wall as such can be considered without the specific colour: There is a possible world in which the wall has a different colour than that it actually has. Obviously, the particular wall cannot be considered without any specific colour in the sense of not having any colour at all. The referent under the expression “white wall” is concrete and reduplicative (the wall *qua* white), that without any specific colour is fundamental and abstract. It is clear by now that “abstract” in Erath’s use within the particular context of the debate does not imply “universal”, neither does it mean “without any form”, but can be rendered as “without the form”,¹¹ whether this be an accident or a terminus.

For Erath then, in the same way as the wall is white in the actual world and, say, green in some other possible world, there can be a particular divine volition in reality (in the actual world) combined with a specific terminus (Peter’s willing *A*) and, in some other possible world, *the very same* particular volition can be combined with a different specific terminus; namely, the contrary one (Peter’s not willing *A*).¹²

Now Erath acknowledges that the relationship between the divine decree (divine volition) and the terminus, Peter’s willing at a definite time, is not contingent to the same extent as the colour of the wall is contingent or accidental to the wall as such.¹³ To spell the difference out, let us use the language of possible worlds again. We need to add a temporal dimension to possible worlds: From now on each world contains a temporal extension consisting of ordered time instants. The decree-terminus conjunction stays constant in the temporal dimension, i.e. from time to time within a world, but changes in the dimension of possible worlds, from world to world. Within any possible world there is no time in which a particular volition existing in the world is not accompanied by its specific terminus. But the very same volition may refer to different specific termini in different worlds. So unlike the white wall which can change its colour over time, the divine decree is essentially

11 “Form” is taken very broadly here to cover also a relation to a terminus.

12 We are speaking about the real terminus here, not only the intentional one. In human affairs one can distinguish Peter’s willing that Tom comes home (intentional terminus) and Tom’s coming home (real terminus). The former can occur without the latter. In contrast, on Erath’s terms, a divine volition can be characterized by the relationship to a specific intentional terminus in some possible world only if there is the real correlate of the terminus. One and the same divine volition can be the volition that *A* be the case (intentional terminus) in one world (*A* is the case in that world) and the volition that *B* be the case (intentional terminus) in another (*B* is the case in that world).

13 Punctum III, p. 460, § 1220, § 1221.

connected to its terminus in that it cannot change its terminus over time. "Essentially" here means "temporally necessarily".

Although Erath does not say so, we might add that the view that the decree can in reality be detached from its terminus gains support from the common teaching on divine simplicity and immutability, a position accepted by the Thomist. Because God is metaphysically simple, the decree is identical with God. If the decree were undetachable from its terminus, God would change in modal contexts: God can will various mutually exclusive things. In a possible world in which God wills something different from what he wills in the actual world a different decree would be identical with God compared to the decree in the actual world. The solution is to say that there is just one decree and the termini might differ. Consequently, the relation of the decree to its terminus is only rational, not real.

Now we are in a position to appreciate how the distinction according to which a divine decree can be taken in abstract and in concrete resolves the contradiction between the doctrines of Thomists and Molinists. Recall that the Thomist maintains that grace is intrinsically efficient and thus essentially connected to its terminus, a particular action; the Molinist on the other hand regards this connection as accidental because the efficiency is extrinsic, depending on whether the human cause actually causes the action which is the terminus of the decree.

One can bring the substantial aspects of the difference out rather crudely by considering two statements,¹⁴ "There is a grace for *S* to perform *A*" and "*S* performs *A*", and the "being implied by" relationship of the latter to the former. Is there such a relationship? The Thomist says "yes", the Molinist "no". For the Thomist, grace is essentially related to action: "There is a grace for *S* to perform *A*" necessarily implies "*S* performs *A*". In other words, necessarily, the occurrence of grace is a sufficient condition for the performance of the action. Or, what comes to the same thing, any possible world containing the specific grace contains the action as well. The Molinist denies this. For him it is possible that the antecedent be true, but the consequent false. This means that there can be graces which are not effective by themselves (i.e. intrinsically). Such graces are not followed in reality by the action. Therefore, in the Molinist doctrine, grace is only accidentally related to its action. On the other hand both the Molinist as well as the Thomist would accept the reverse implication as necessary. For both schools of thought, necessarily,

14 The consideration is crude or in a sense approximate because we are effecting a reduction of the intricate causal relationships between *x* and *y* to a mere co-occurrence of *x* and *y*. This seems justified as Erath himself uses essentially the same reduction strategy explicating "x applies *y* to causing *z*" in terms of co-occurrence of *x* and *y* causing *z*, see Punctum IV, p. 467, § 1244.

grace is a necessary condition of action. This is to say that without grace there could be no action.

If one regards the occurrence of divine grace as merely an outward manifestation of the divine decree, the latter being internal to God, as Erath does, then it is possible to resolve the contradiction between the two positions in the following way: There is no contradiction, because contradictory predicates are not being predicated of the same thing. These contradictory predicates are “being essentially connected to the specific terminus” and “being accidentally connected to the specific terminus”. While the Thomist predicates of grace (divine decree) taken in concrete, the Molinist attribution concerns grace in the abstract. Both statements are then true: divine grace essentially implies the action when considered in concrete, but it is related to action only accidentally when taken in abstract.¹⁵

How are we to understand this? We shall introduce several interpretations. In doing so we will follow some false leads, ultimately settling on an interpretation which is the most faithful to Erath’s project of reconciliation.

Interpretation 1

Recall that the issue of contention was the necessary implication:

It is necessarily the case that “There is a grace for *S* to perform *A*” implies “*S* performs *A*”.

The Thomist regards it true, the Molinist false. Now Erath could be interpreted as saying the following: The implication is necessary in the temporal sense and only in this sense. This is the sense of necessity sufficient to express the Thomist position and not excessively strong for the Molinist to accept too. Consequently, The Thomist is right in regarding the connection of grace and action essential, but wrong in interpreting “essential” as “broadly logically necessary”.¹⁶ The true meaning of “essential” as applied to the conjunction of grace and action is “temporally necessary”. The Molinist is right in regarding the connection of grace and action accidental, i.e. “broadly logically contingent”. However, “accidental” cannot mean “temporally contingent”, changeable.¹⁷ So the conjunction of grace and action is at once essential as well as accidental.

15 see *Punctum III*, p. 455–456, especially § 1205.

16 Throughout the paper I use Plantinga’s well-known notion of broadly logical modality, see Plantinga, A., *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1974, p. 2.

17 This means that the implication “If there is a grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*” cannot change its truth-value over time. In any possible world it is either true in every time-instant

On Erath's view, the Thomist predicates in concrete, correctly maintaining the essential nature of the connection between grace and action. The concrete predication of grace could be brought out by the following statement:

(C1) For any world, either for every time instant if there is a grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*, or for every time instant it is not the case that if there is a grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*.

A note of clarification: In saying that *S* performs *A*, we assume that the performance of *A* takes place at a definite time-interval. This is something different from saying that the statement about *A*'s being performed is true at some time instant (or every time instant for that matter). The statement C1 excludes temporal contingency (changeability of truth value in time) of the implication "if there is a grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*". It states that in any world it is either temporally necessary, or temporally impossible. It does not change its truth value (true or false) in time. What would it mean for the implication "if there is a grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*" or its negation to change its truth value in some world? It would mean that there is a time instant at which the consequent is true in that world and a time instant at which it is false while the antecedent is true at both instants. The sole purpose of C1 is to exclude this scenario as possible. Hence, the unchangeability of truth value is broadly logically necessary (see "For any world..."). In contrast, the implication "for any *t*, if *x* is a wall, then *x* is white" is not broadly logically necessarily true: at one instant "*x* is a wall" and "*x* is white" are both true, at another the latter statement is false.

On the other hand the Molinist predicates in the abstract, correctly affirming the accidental status of the grace-action connection. This means that she affirms that the implication at stake is broadly logically contingent rather than necessary. In other words she denies the following statement:

(A1) For any world, if there is a grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*.

Since there can be worlds in which the antecedent is true, and the consequent false, the statement is false.

Although having some basis in Erath's writing, the interpretation just expounded has serious flaws. As it is denied that the implication "if there is a grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*" is broadly logically necessary,

or false in every time-instant. The falsity option is allowed by the implication not being broadly logically necessary on this interpretation.

the interpretation seems to uphold the position of the Molinist and denies that standardly attributed to the Thomist for whom the decree (grace) is a logical sufficient condition for the action. Thus it does not grant both parties their truth. Also, the interpretation does not seem to take seriously that the dichotomy between concrete and abstract predication is based on the way the decree (grace) is considered – with or without the terminus.

Interpretation 2

Let us try another interpretation based on the two distinct considerations of the divine decree. Take the sentence

“The white wall is white”.

In the concrete reading it is true in every world if it makes a statement in that world at all. It has the following tautological sense: “the wall, which is white, is white”. With this meaning, it is clearly true in every world in which “the wall which is white” refers. Since white walls are not necessary beings, there are worlds in which “white wall” does not refer, and no statement is made by the sentence. In contrast, the abstract reading might be true or false: “the wall, which is white in the actual world w , is white”. Supposing it makes a statement (the particular wall exists in the actual world as white and it also exists in the world in which the statement is evaluated), it might be true or false depending on the colour of the wall in the world in which the statement is made.

Let us bring the white wall sentence example closer to our implication above by converting the two readings of the sentence into implications:¹⁸

For any x , if x is the white wall, then it is white.

For any x , if x is the white wall in the actual world w , then it is white.

It is clear that the former statement is broadly logically necessarily true while the latter is contingent in the same sense. A thing, which could be characterized as the only white wall in the universe of discourse, in a particular world, is white in that world. In contrast, a thing which is the only white wall in the universe of discourse within the actual world, may turn out to have some

18 We might or might not preserve the referential status of “the white wall”. In other words, we could symbolize the sentence “ $\forall x \exists y ((x = y \wedge \forall z (Fz \rightarrow z = y)) \rightarrow Gx)$ ” or “ $\forall x ((Fx \wedge \forall y (Fy \rightarrow y = x)) \rightarrow Gx)$ ”. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, applies to the second statement.

different colour in some of the non-actual worlds. In such a case, the antecedent is true, but the consequent false.¹⁹

Now let us consider the parallel statements:

(C2) For any x , if x is the grace for S to perform A , then S performs A

(A2) For any x , if x is the grace for S to perform A in the actual world w , then S performs A

Both statements speak of grace. Let “ x ” be a variable ranging over graces. The former statement (C2) expresses the reading in concrete and is broadly logically necessarily true according to Erath. Any grace, specified in some possible world by a particular terminus, implies that the terminus exists in that world. This is true on account of unimpedable divine will. In contrast, the latter statement (A2) is not broadly logically necessary, but broadly logically contingent. A grace, specified by a terminus in the actual world w (or, more generally, in a world w_1) does not imply the existence of the terminus in some other world w_2 . So, according to Erath, in characterizing grace as essentially connected to the action, the Thomist speaks of grace in the sense C2. In contrast, the Molinist upholds the sense A2: grace is accidentally connected to its terminus.

Notice that in order for the distinction to be useful, i.e. for the statements to have different modal status, “the grace for S to perform A ” must be a non-rigid designator.²⁰ This means that any x , any grace in principle, could play the role of being the grace for S to perform A . What if the designator were rigid? In that case “the grace for S to perform A ” would refer to one particular grace being numerically identical in every world in which this grace exists. If this were so, then the implication would be broadly logically necessary also in the latter, abstract sense (if it is logically necessary in the concrete sense as Erath seems to hold).²¹ The two readings now become:

19 In case there is no x in the world of evaluation which would be the white wall in the actual world, then the antecedent is false (we are assuming a non-referential reading of “the white wall”) and so the implication as such is true regardless of the truth-value of the consequent.

20 The expression “rigid designator” originates with S. Kripke (Kripke, S., *Identity and Necessity*. In: *Identity and Individuation*. Ed. M. K. Munitz. New York, New York University Press 1971, p. 135–164; Kripke, S., *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press 1980). For introduction to the distinction between rigid and non-rigid designation and related literature see Joseph LaPorte, “Rigid Designators”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition). Ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/rigid-designators/>>.

21 The expression “the grace for S to perform A ” would logically behave as “ H_2O ” in Kripke’s theory of meaning of natural kind terms. “If there exists the grace for S to perform A , then S performs A ” would be broadly logically necessary as “if this is H_2O , it contains oxygen”.

Concrete

If there exists the grace for S to perform A , then S performs A

Abstract

If there exists an entity g which is numerically identical to the entity, existing in the actual world w , which is the grace for S to perform A , then S performs A

Thanks to the rigidity of “the grace for S to perform A ”, the entity g named by the expression (existing in some world) which is identical to the grace for S to perform A in the actual world is the grace for S to perform A . Since divine graces (as divine will) are unimpedable in their effectivity in Erath’s thought, S performs A in any world containing g .

Using current semantic distinction between rigid and non-rigid designator, Erath’s thesis that grace in relation to its terminus does not resemble particular animality combined with some specific difference but rather a white wall which could be non-white, might be stated in the following way: “the grace for S to perform A ” is non-rigid, so the abstract reading “if there is an entity which is the grace for S to perform A in the actual world w , then S performs A ” amounts to a broadly logically contingent statement.

There is a pretty convincing reason for Erath’s thesis that “the grace for S to perform A ” cannot be rigid in the form of *reductio ad absurdum*: Erath maintains that graces for subjects to perform actions are necessarily equivalent to divine decrees for the same. Then there is the implication of divine simplicity discussed above: divine decrees as divine volitions are necessarily identical with God himself. But God is a broadly logically necessary being. Therefore graces are ultimately necessary entities too (existing in every world). Assume that “the grace for S to perform A ” is rigid, then, as graces are necessary entities, “the grace for S to perform A ” is strongly rigid. This means that the grace for S to perform A exists in every world and thus S performs A in every world. But this is manifestly false. So the assumption must be denied, “the grace for S to perform A ” is non-rigid: graces are necessary entities, but they do not play the role of being the grace for S to perform A in every world.²²

22 The conclusion that graces (taken fundamentally) are broadly logically necessary entities seems to follow from Erath’s treating grace on a par with divine decree (as necessarily equivalent). This could ultimately constitute a *reductio ad absurdum* for Erath’s position as such (in case there cannot be created, causally active broadly logically necessary entities on Erath’s ontological framework). However, we shall not pursue this line of thought further.

Now let us ask whether Erath's solution is genuine in the sense of being faithful to both positions to be reconciled. The answer seems to be negative. The Molinist position appears to be seriously misrepresented here. For it seems that the Molinist cannot agree that the implication read in the concrete sense is broadly logically necessary. It does not solve his problem to say that the same grace as that which makes *S* do *A* could be combined with *S* not doing *A* if it plays the role of being the grace for *S* not to perform *A*. That is, the contingency of the abstract reading does not appear to be enough. What seems to be needed is contingency also in the concrete sense: the same grace as that which makes *S* do *A* may be combined with *S* not doing *A* even when it plays the role of being the grace for *S* to perform *A*. The Molinist allows there to be the possibility of "there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*" to be true and "*S* performs *A*" false. So, contrary to what Erath assumes, the Molinist predication of grace being accidentally related to the terminus does not appear to primarily concern the predication in abstract, but that in concrete (in the sense which "concrete" is given in Interpretation 2). Interpretation 3 will attempt to pursue this line of thought and devise a different interpretation of the concrete predication.

Interpretation 3

Even though I think Interpretation 2 comes close to what Erath has in mind (and we shall explore the question whether Molinism really gets misrepresented in Interpretation 2 below), perhaps one could stretch Erath's words and devise an interpretation which would solve the aforementioned Molinist requirement.

We know that according to Erath, the Thomist makes grace the subject of concrete predication and the Molinist the subject of abstract predication. The abstract sense of predication expresses that the connection of action to grace is accidental (contingent). So, it seems that if the Molinist view is to be represented correctly, the denial of necessity must involve the implication

For any *x*, if *x* is the grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*.

Recall that this very implication expressed the concrete sense of Interpretation 2, affirming the implication's broad logical necessity, but the abstract sense of Interpretation 1, denying its broad logically necessary status. Thus, once again, we return to Interpretation 1. In contrast to Interpretation 1, however, we must devise a different reading of the concrete sense; a reading more in line with the two contrastive considerations of decree (grace) lying behind the distinction in predication. Only by achieving this, the new inter-

pretation (let us call it Interpretation 3) could constitute a genuine advance over Interpretation 1 on which it is based. Let us embark on this task.

The kernel of Erath's solution consists in the distinction between the two senses of predication, the claim that while the Thomist predicates of grace in the concrete, the Molinist does so in the abstract, and the accompanying modal status: The concrete predication should be necessary in some sense and the contrastive abstract predication ought to be contingent in the *same* sense.²³ I suggest that the sense in which we use the modals is broad logical modality. While the concrete sense is broadly logically necessary, the abstract sense is broadly logically contingent. On the present interpretation, through the concrete sense the Thomist points to the rather trivial necessary fact that *utilized* graces imply the actions towards which they are intended (and not others). This might be the analogue to the trivial observation that a particular white wall is white (and not of some different colour). The expression "for *S* to perform *A*" in "The grace for *S* to perform *A*" refers to the function the grace essentially (i.e. broadly logically necessarily) has without implying that the function is necessarily realized. The grace with its essential function might or might not be utilized by the subject. Thus Interpretation 3 assumes that a particular grace, offered by God for the performance of a certain task, might be utilized or not. So what we need to express (as the concrete sense of the present Interpretation 3) is this essential relationship of grace to a particular action, not that the action necessarily takes place given the grace (the latter being the concrete sense of Interpretation 2 *prima facie* at odds with Molinism). We might do that by saying that, broadly logically necessarily, given the grace and any action of the subject (at the required time), it is the action for which the grace is given and not another:

For any *x* and any *Y*, if *x* is the grace for *S* to perform *A* and if *S* performs *Y*, then $Y = A$.²⁴

23 This was not the case in Interpretation 1. The abstract reading was contingent in the broadly logical sense, the concrete understanding was necessary in the temporal sense.

24 One might wonder whether the saying "utilized graces imply their actions" is correctly represented by the claim stating that given grace for a specific action and any action performed at the time, it is the specific action which is performed. More precisely, is "utilized grace" correctly represented here? Perhaps it would be more accurate to represent the idea by the trivial implicative statement that given the grace and the specific action, there is the specific action. "Utilized grace" as represented here means "grace which is accompanied by an action" which turns out to be the specific action of the grace.

This interpretation of the concrete sense divorces intentional terminus from the real one: there could be a grace to perform *A* (intentional terminus) in some world without *A* being performed (real terminus). Thus it does not match Erath's position.

While “A” is a constant, “Y” is a variable ranging over actions.²⁵

Recall that Interpretation 2 seemed to have misrepresented Molinism in order to resolve the contradiction between the two doctrines. Now it looks as though Interpretation 3 in turn misrepresents Thomism (as did Interpretation 1). Is it not essential for Thomism to regard the statement that grace implies its action as broadly logically necessarily true? In other words, is Thomism ultimately not theological compatibilism in which eternal divine decree or divine grace serve as a *sufficient* condition for human action in time? It looks as though we have reached an impasse here because it seems that a necessary condition for any successful reconciliation of two or more positions (i.e. showing that their inconsistency is only apparent) is a faithful representation of these positions. So if Erath's reconciliation has to have at least some value the only way out appears to be to show that, contrary to first appearance, one of the interpretations does after all represent the two competing theories (that of the Thomist and the Molinist) correctly. It will turn out that Interpretation 2 not only can accommodate the essence of Thomism (its being theological compatibilism), but also, rather surprisingly, to some degree the essence of Molinism.

Logical and Ontological Conditions

First, let us focus on the reversed implication: an action implies its grace. As it has been already stated at the outset, the grace for *S* to perform *A* is a necessary condition for *S*'s performing *A*. The following implication is broadly logically necessary:

If *S* performs *A*, then there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*.

This view, shared by both the Thomist and the Molinist, does not seem to be too controversial. So there are two types of worlds on Interpretation 2:

- (i) those that contain the grace and its action,
- (ii) those that contain neither the grace, nor its action.

Interpretations 1 and 3 also recognize:

- (iii) those that contain only the grace but not its action,

²⁵ In order to avoid ambiguity, one should index actions relative to time and assume for simplicity's sake that only one action can be performed at a time: For any *x* and any *Y*, if *x* is the grace for *S* to perform *A* at *t* and if *S* performs *Y* at *t*, then $Y = A$

because in these interpretations the implication “if there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*” is broadly logically contingent.

What the aforementioned non-controversial reversed implication excludes is a fourth category of worlds:

(iv) those that contain only action but not grace for it.

Now we have considered three interpretations of Erath’s attempted reconciliation. It seems that Interpretation 2 favoring Thomism is closest to Erath’s intentions. Is there any way to reconcile Molinism with interpretation 2 without giving up Thomism’s central tenet, i.e. the broad logical necessity of “if there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*”?²⁶ When one adds to this implication the reversed necessary implication just discussed, one can see that from the logical point of view “there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*” and “*S* performs *A*” are strictly equivalent. Thus the following are all broadly logically necessarily true on Interpretation 2:

If there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*.
 If *S* performs *A*, then there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*.
 There is the grace for *S* to perform *A* if and only if *S* performs *A*.

When one takes the controversial

If there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*

from the logical point of view, not only is “there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*” a sufficient condition of “*S* performs *A*”, but also “*S* performs” is a necessary condition of “there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*”. And, given the reversed implication,

If *S* performs *A*, then there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*.

not only is “there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*” a logical necessary condition for “*S* performs *A*”, but the latter is also a sufficient condition for “there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*”.

Now what is true from the point of view of logic might not be true from the ontological grounding point of view where an important distinction is to be made. While logical conditions involve relationships between truth-

26 In the following my interpretation is based on Punctum IV, p. 468 ff.

values, ontological conditions express dependence in being: the being of x is sufficient or necessary for the being of y . Take, for instance, the implication expressing the causal relationship between heat and boiling water (here the particular ontological grounding relationship is efficient causation): “if there is a specific degree of heat in close proximity to water, then the water boils”. It seems reasonable to say that from the ontological point of view a specific degree of heat is a sufficient condition of boiling water.

Now anyone acquainted with the analysis of causation in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions knows that there are well-known problems here. First, it seems impossible to identify or isolate the sufficient condition from a vast number of causal factors contributing to the being of the effect in some way. Apart from the heat, there is the fact that nothing impedes the causal action, that the physical laws are as they are, that there exist other things such as the source of the heat, air, the container holding the water, etc. It seems that the sufficient condition has to be identified with the potentially infinite aggregate of all these factors, the entire state of the universe prior to and at the time of the action. Another problem is whether any of these factors are really necessary for the being of the effect? It might not be clear whether a different set of existing factors, natural, preternatural or supernatural, could lead to the same effect, the boiling.²⁷ Many effects, say setting a fire on some occasion, could be undoubtedly brought about in various different ways.

The first problem can be dealt with in the following way: what we commonly call a cause is some important non-redundant factor within the set of causal factors which tips the scale as it were: when added to the set of other factors assumed to be present, whatever these might be (we are not required to identify all of them), the effect ensues, so the entire set becomes causally sufficient for the effect. While the set as such is the sufficient cause *sensu stricto*, the factor at stake is a cause sufficient in the circumstances in question, *ceteris-paribus*-sufficient cause. So the specific degree of heat is a sufficient cause in this “other things being equal” sense.

The second problem can be solved by distinguishing the type of effect and the effect as a singular event. While it is true that a particular kind of effect can be brought about in various ways, this is not true of a singular event. Here the causal factors are genuinely necessary.

In contrast to logical relationships above, the boiling water is definitely not a necessary condition for there to be the particular heat. In other words, the existence of the heat does not depend on the existence of the boiling

²⁷ For instance, if air pressure were reduced, the degree of heat necessary for boiling would change.

water but what does depend on it is the existence of the heat *actually acting as a cause*. If the boiling water did not exist, the heat would not be a cause. So while the logical sufficient condition has its ontological counterpart in our example, the logical necessary condition does not straightforwardly translate into ontological necessary condition.

A similar thing happens in the reversed implication: “if some water boils, then there is a specific degree of heat in close proximity to the water”. Here it is the logical sufficient condition which lacks its ontological counterpart: the cause (heat) is clearly necessary for the effect (boiling water), the being of the effect, however, is definitely not something on which the existence of the cause sufficiently depends. It depends on the effect in its being a cause, but not in existing *per se*.

The point of the preceding causal example is to show that logical conditions might not be automatically taken as ontological ones. In particular we are interested in the case in which a logical sufficient condition is not sufficient from the ontological point of view. I claim that this is the real point of contention between the Thomist and the Molinist in relation to the implication at stake

If there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*.

Say *S* is a particular will and *A* its volition. While the Thomist takes the antecedent “there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*” to be a condition both logically as well as ontologically sufficient, the Molinist does not. The Molinist denies that the logical sufficient condition (that there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*) has any ontological counterpart because her understanding of freedom is more robust than that of the Thomist. As is well known, the Molinist’s understanding of freedom is libertarian: any sufficient causal antecedent excludes freedom because it takes away the ability to do otherwise in the very same circumstances, which is a *sine qua non* for the libertarian notion of freedom. If the antecedent were also an ontological sufficient condition, then the resultant action *A* would not be free for the Molinist.

Now, as in the heat-boiling water example, what we mean by the term “sufficient condition” is a *ceteris-paribus*-sufficient cause. The circumstances in question which stay the same, *positis omnibus requisitis ad agendum*,²⁸

28 The common definition of freedom is the following: “... illud agens liberum dicitur quod positus omnibus requisitis ad agendum potest agere et non agere aut ita agere unum ut contrarium etiam agere possit”. Molina, L. de, *Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione concordia: Editionem criticam*, op. cit., I, d. 2, § 3 (14). “That agent is called free which, with all requisites for acting supplied, is able to act and not act, or so to act for one thing that he is able to also act for the contrary thing.”

include the readiness of the will for action, the absence of impediments, etc. For the Thomist the introduction of the grace makes the will produce the volition *A*, so the arrival of the grace for *S* to perform *A* brings about the effect, namely that the will issues the act *A*. Thus the grace is a cause sufficient in the circumstances in question. This is what it means for the grace to be intrinsically efficacious. In contrast, for the Molinist the inclusion of the grace is not sufficient in this way. What is required beside grace is the will's *voluntary* cooperation with or assent to the grace. It is this cooperation which renders the grace efficacious.²⁹

For the Thomist the antecedent (that there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*) is a logical sufficient condition precisely because there is the underlying ontological relationship: the antecedent is an ontological sufficient condition in the sense specified. What is more, the grace is given only if the other necessary requirements for *S*'s action are already in place.³⁰ The fact that the grace is given implies that there are these requirements and, consequently, the former also implies that the action takes place.

29 The upshot is that while for the Thomist the requisites for acting (*positis omnibus requisitis ad agendum*) in the definition of freedom do not include grace, they do contain grace for the Molinist. For the Molinist the *ceteris-paribus*-sufficient cause in these extended circumstances (including grace) is the human will assenting to grace; what I call *voluntary* cooperation. This is not some particular act of the will prior to the effect (the will's issuing a volition *A*), but the fact that the will self-initiates its own movement even though the movement itself cannot be carried out without the assistance of grace. It is like assisting my son unable to walk on his own to go for a toy. I hold him but it is he who determines and in a sense initiates the movement and does the walking. I know in advance where he wishes to go (what toy he wishes to take) and help him achieve this. It is altogether different thing when I "use" my son to fetch a toy I have chosen. He cooperates in the sense that he does not resist, does the walking, reaching and grabbing. The effect is the same in both cases – my son walking for a toy. Yet the manner is different. That there is this self-initiation, externally undetermined self-movement of the will, implies that there exists the fact of how the will would act in the particular circumstances which is entirely independent of the divine will.

Note that Molina and Báñez argue over the *adequate cause* for the volition. For Báñez this adequate cause does not exclude other causes (human will). This is because he understands adequate cause as a *ceteris-paribus*-sufficient cause where the circumstances include the action of the human will. In contrast, for Molina the adequate cause excludes other causes because for him it is the strict sufficient cause, not the *ceteris-paribus*-sufficient cause. This, I claim, is the source of disagreement over whether the grace is an adequate cause. See Matava, R. J., *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Domingo Báñez, Physical Premotion and the Controversy de Auxiliis Revisited*, op.cit., p. 175 ff.

30 This means that the necessary requirements for action are also necessary conditions of there to be grace. It is debatable whether besides being necessary for grace in the logical sense, they are also necessary in the ontological sense. It does not seem so. What we can say is that the grace implies that there are the other requirements, because these are necessary for the occurrence of grace at least in the logical sense. By the symmetry of logical conditions, the grace is therefore logically sufficient for the requirements to be present. It does not cause these other requirements, so it is definitely not ontologically sufficient for them.

Not only does the Thomist accept the truth of the implication, but he regards it as broadly logically necessary. This is because the ontological relationship is perceived as existent in all possible worlds on account of the unimpedability of the divine will. In other words, the antecedent is an ontological sufficient condition of the consequent in the specified sense in every possible world. There is no world in which there is the grace but the action does not follow.

How does it arise that the Molinist can accept the same implication (also in its broadly logically necessary status) and deny the underlying ontological relationship between grace and action? The answer is that the Molinist regards the implication as true based on a different ontological relationship.

Let us explore the Molinist stance a bit more. First of all, let us observe that there is a difference between “the grace for *S* to perform *A*” in which the phrase “for *S* to perform *A*” signifies an intentional terminus and the grace is not necessarily efficacious, and the same description in which the phrase “for *S* to perform *A*” signifies a relationship to the terminus as actual (real terminus). The latter denotes grace which is *de facto* efficacious and serves as a co-cause of the action. Consequently, one can make the following distinction

(I1) If there is the grace for *S* to perform *A* (intentional), then *S* performs *A*.

(I2) If there is the grace for *S* to perform *A* (real), then *S* performs *A*.

Now I assume that which graces with intentional termini there might be (say in the particular circumstances *C*) is determined by what people would do in those circumstances. In other words, whether God gives a particular grace in *C* (e.g. for *S* to perform *A*) depends on a particular possible future event (*futuribile*), e.g. that *S* would perform *A* in *C*, known by God by his middle knowledge prior to any divine decision about which graces will be given. Therefore, the occurrence of the grace for *S* to perform *A* (intentional) is (at least logically) necessarily conditioned on whether *S* would perform *A* if placed within the particular circumstances of the action *C*:

(I3) If there is the grace for *S* to perform *A* (intentional), then *S* would perform *A* (*futuribile*).

The assumption that graces with intentional termini (e.g. for *S* to perform *A*) are given only if the particular action would take place (e.g. *S* would perform *A*) can be defended by a kind of economy consideration founded on divine nature: God does not do things in vain, hence he does not give graces which are not cooperated with. This assumption rules out merely sufficient graces

in the following sense: merely sufficient graces (e.g. for S to perform A in C when S would not perform A in C) are never given in C , but there are sufficient graces in the counterfactual sense: say S would fail to do A in C , so it is not the case that God gives the grace for S to perform A in C . However, if it were the case that S would do A in C , then God would give S the grace to do A in C .

It also seems reasonable to assume, based on the same economy principle as above and the infallible divine middle knowledge, that as in Thomism “there is the grace for S to perform A (intentional)” implies that the other requirements for action are met. In other words, we take it that the grace arrives only if the remaining necessary conditions for the action are or will be met.³¹

So when a particular grace is given in C and all other requirements for action are or will be met too (namely, there exists S in C , the action of S will not be inhibited, there is going to be the voluntary cooperation on the part of the human will etc.), then

(I1) If there is the grace for S to perform A (intentional), then S performs A .

Given the assumption above, this implication is broadly logically necessarily true in Molinism as it is in Thomism. The principle of economy (God does not do anything in vain) stems from the divine nature and hence is true in every possible world. Thus in any world, in which God gives the grace for S to perform S (intentional), the action follows. However, as we already know, the antecedent, that there is grace for S to perform A , is not ontologically *sufficient* for there to be the respective action (*ceteris paribus*). Moreover, S 's actual performing of A in C does not seem to be an ontological *necessary* condition for there to be the grace for S to perform A (intentional) either. However, S 's performing A is a necessary condition for there being the grace for S to perform A (real) as *de facto* efficacious. Similarly, recall that boiling water is a necessary condition for the particular degree of heat to be a cause of boiling in the water, not for the existence of the heat as such. This last point is perfectly acceptable for the Thomist too: S 's performing A is ontological *sine qua non* for the grace to be efficacious in the sense of causing the action. So

(I2) If there is the grace for S to perform A (real), then S performs A .

31 One of the conditions implied (logically necessary conditions) is the condition that the will is going to voluntarily cooperate with the grace (as known by the divine middle knowledge and the free knowledge of that which will be realized). The realization of the condition, however, comes conceptually only after the grace is given.

is broadly logically necessary in both opposing views on conceptual grounds: Nothing can be dubbed a cause of some effect if the effect does not occur.

The fact that even the Molinist could accept the broadly logically necessary truth of

If there is the grace for *S* to perform *A*, then *S* performs *A*³²

means that she too can exclude the existence of grace worlds without the corresponding action listed under option (iii) above (contrary to Interpretations 1 and 3).³³ It appears that it is not essential for Molinism to uphold the possibility of these. What is essential to Molinism as opposed to Thomism on the other hand is the denial that the truth of the aforementioned implicative statement (in the sense (I1)) implies that the grace for *S* to perform *A* is an ontological sufficient condition (in the *ceteris paribus* sense) of *S* performing *A*. In other words, the occurrence of the grace is *not* ontologically sufficient for *S* to perform *A*.

Conclusion

So we have seen that Interpretation 2 does succeed in reconciling the Thomist and the Molinist. I maintain that this interpretation correctly reconstructs, using contemporary philosophical and logical tools and jargon, what Erath had in mind. Contrary to what has been stated at the end of the section expounding Interpretation 2, the Molinist need not get misrepresented by Interpretation 2 as we have just shown. She can accept the controversial implication. However, the reconciliation does not go deep enough, remaining on the surface as it were. As I tried to show in the final part, deeper down there are profound differences in ontological relationships between grace and its corresponding action in both theories. This is because Erath evades these by treating causal relationship (application) as a mere juxtaposition of grace and the corresponding action, focusing merely on modal and temporal variation in the juxtaposition.³⁴ The precise ontological relationships between grace and action, seriously different in both theories, are abstracted from. Erath's focus makes them invisible. In contrast, our treatment has uncovered

32 Also in the sense (I1).

33 Recall that both Interpretation 1 and 3 denied the implication under consideration, thus allowing the existence of possible worlds at which there could be the grace but not the consequent action.

34 Punctum IV, p. 467, § 1244; also p. 469, § 1247: "Nam si *to a solo Deo determinari et applicari nihil aliud significet, quam voluntatem nostram accipere decretum Divinum vel auxilium, habens annexam futuritionem vel existentiam exercitii liberi, seu actus nostrae voluntatis...*"

them. One can see that the proposed reconciliation has brought out similarities in the theories, enabled one to see common ground which perhaps was not appreciated before, but definitely has not resolved the differences and the contrary nature of claims between these theories. It is hard to imagine that this can ever be achieved.

SUMMARY

The paper interprets and reconstructs (using contemporary analytical tools) an interesting attempt at the reconciliation of two competing doctrines on divine causation (grace) and free will, Thomism and Molinism. The reconciliation comes from Augustin Erath, a largely unknown early modern scholastic theologian. It is based on an important distinction in predication concerning the divine decree (or divine grace): concrete and abstract. This distinction is supposed to resolve contradictory statements in both competing theories. The idea is that the proponents of the aforementioned controversies do not contradict each other as each party uses a different type of predication concerning grace in relation to free human action. Three possible interpretations are laid out. The reconciliation attempt is ultimately found wanting.

Keywords: free will, divine action, divine causation, grace