

The Shadow of Molinism: Reflections on Grace and Liberty in Maritain¹

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Seminal thinkers cast lengthy shadows. To come after such a thinker is often to stand in his shadow. But to work in the penumbra of another can either protect one from damaging rays or hide one from nourishing light. For, by its nature, the shadow can be either protective or obscurant (or perhaps at times a little of both). What complicates matters is that most of us stand in multiple overlapping shadows. More literally, standing in certain intellectual traditions may either protect one from certain errors or perhaps inhibit one from seeing the truth outside of one's own intellectual inheritance. Whether the shadows in which one stands are helpful or harmful depends on the qualities of the shadows themselves. These qualities, in turn, depend largely upon the wisdom of the original shadow-casters.

For Maritain St. Thomas Aquinas is a seminal thinker whose shadow is certainly protective. Maritain habitually follows St. Thomas in his writings and styles himself a Thomist. However, St. Thomas's shadow is not the only one in which Maritain stands. Indeed, in his *Existence and the Existent*,² Maritain radically parts company with St. Thomas while standing well within a shadow which resembles that of Luis de Molina. Despite the fact that Maritain, in his chapter "The Free Existent and the Free Eternal Purposes," claims to have "exorcised every shadow of Molinism"³ from his worldview, I

¹ This thesis was originally inspired by private discussions with Dr. Christopher Curry around 1997. I would like to extend my gratitude both to Dr. Curry and to Dr. James Hanink for their helpful criticisms, corrections, and suggestions on an earlier draft of this essay.

² Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Random House, 1948).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

will attempt to show that Maritain's views on predestination, as expressed in the same chapter, are metaphysically unjustifiable from a traditional Thomistic perspective and are essentially compatible with the theory of predestination advocated by Molina. That is, on the issues of grace, human liberty, and the divine *scientia* Maritain's views part company with St. Thomas's and fall victim to the very errors from which Maritain attempts to liberate them.

To defend my thesis I shall do three things. First, I will lay out what I take to be the essence of Maritain's view on predestination (which includes his views on grace, human liberty, and the divine *scientia*) as it is expressed in chapter four of his *Existence and the Existent*. Second, I shall offer a critique of Maritain's views on these matters from the perspective of Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange's works on predestination and grace. Third, I shall conclude my essay by briefly arguing that Maritain's views on predestination, as found in chapter four of *Existence and the Existent*, agree with the essential tenets of Molina's theory of predestination. This essay should be seen as a cordial challenge to some of Maritain's metaphysical presuppositions.

Written in 1948, Jacques Maritain's *Existence and the Existent* constitutes a significant display, within the Maritain corpus, of this great thinker's metaphysical views on the created existent and his eternal Exemplar and Cause, *Ipsium esse per se subsistens*. This work, says Maritain, can be described "as an essay on the existentialism of St. Thomas."⁴ Maritain is quick to note that there are two species of "existentialism." While they both affirm the primacy of existence, only the authentic (i.e., Thomistic) existentialism can be said to preserve essences or natures and, thus, manifest "the supreme victory of the intellect and intelligibility."⁵ The inauthentic existentialism, on the other hand, says Maritain, destroys and abolishes essences or natures and manifests "the supreme defeat of the intellect and of intelligibility."⁶ It is within this existentialist context that Maritain, in chapter four, takes up the question of the relation between created finite liberty and uncreated infinite Liberty. The question to be addressed here is, in Maritain's words, the following: "What is the situation of man and of his fallible liberty in face of the absolutely free and absolutely immutable eternal plan established by the Uncreated in respect of the created?"⁷

⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

What then is Maritain's answer to this question? He begins by affirming the absolute immutability of the divine nature, the perfect comprehension by the divine *scientia* of all possible and actual creatures and created states of affairs (past, present and future, from the point of view of time), and the sovereign causality of God as the immutable One who sovereignly moves all created agents and their powers to act, including the human will.⁸ In a word, Maritain holds that God, who is *Ipsum esse per se subsistens*, is the first exemplary, efficient, and final Cause of every iota of being and actuality in the created order.

But if *Ipsum esse* is the first efficient Cause of every iota of being and act in the created order, then it follows that He is the first Cause of every human act insofar as it has any ontological status whatsoever. Thus, Maritain says that in every morally good human act the given act proceeds wholly and entirely from God, as from the first efficient Cause, and wholly and entirely from the created agent, as from the secondary efficient cause, the latter being completely dependent upon and subordinated to the causal influx of the Former.⁹

Now, as Maritain points out, there is a "dissymmetry between the line of good and the line of evil."¹⁰ In other words, when the question of moral evil enters into the human act one must say that while God is the first efficient Cause of that action, insofar as it stands out from nothingness, nonetheless, the created agent is the first deficient cause of the very same human action insofar as it is morally deficient and, thus, morally evil. In morally evil acts, just as in morally good acts, the act *qua* act proceeds wholly and entirely from God, as from the first efficient Cause, and wholly and entirely from the created agent, as from the secondary efficient cause. However, this same morally evil act *qua* deficient or privative act proceeds wholly and entirely from the created agent as from its first deficient cause. As Maritain shows, since *Ipsum esse* is the first Cause of all being and act, the only "thing" that a created agent can cause, insofar as it attempts to act autonomously from *Ipsum esse*, is nothingness.¹¹ For since the created agent is by nature defectible, it follows that insofar as the created agent "strays" from *Ipsum esse* (who is the ultimate Source of all efficiency) it must fall into deficiency and nothingness. On this point Maritain maintains:

⁸ *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 105, a. 4 (hereafter cited as *ST*).

⁹ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, p. 88.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

It follows from this that whereas the created existent is never alone when it exercises its liberty in the line of good, and has need of the first cause for all that it produces in the way of being and good, contrariwise, it has no need of God, it is truly alone, for the purpose of freely nihilating, or taking the free first initiative of this absence (or "nothingness") of consideration, which is the matrix of evil in the free act—I mean to say, the matrix of the privation itself by which the free act (in which there is metaphysical good insofar as there is being) is morally deformed or purely and simply evil. "For without Me, you can do nothing"; which is to say, "Without Me you can make that thing which is nothing."¹²

After establishing this metaphysical vision of the human act and the causal relation that obtains between God and His created agent, Maritain addresses the doctrine of predestination, wherein he hopes to locate the resolution to his question regarding the situation of man and his fallible liberty in face of the immutable divine plan which God has regarding man and his actions. In addressing the doctrine of predestination Maritain first treats of what he terms the "divine activations" and thereafter takes up the nature of God's *scientia* and eternal plan. We shall briefly address each of these subjects in order.

By "divine activations" Maritain means those divine motions whereby God either makes the performance of a morally good act possible or actually produces a morally good act in the created agent.¹³ Accordingly, Maritain holds that there are two kinds of divine activations. There is the "shatterable divine impetus" (i.e., sufficient grace) and the "unshatterable divine impetus" (i.e., efficacious grace). As is suggested by their denominations the "shatterable" divine impetus can be resisted whereas the "unshatterable" divine impetus is never in fact resisted, but rather is always efficacious in bringing about the divinely intended production of a morally good act.

For Maritain the way in which the shatterable and unshatterable divine impetuses are related is key. He maintains that every unshatterable divine impetus, which is received by any created agent, is always preceded by (by a priority of nature, not time) a shatterable divine impetus. If this shatterable divine impetus is not shattered or resisted, it naturally fructifies into an unshatterable divine impetus and the morally good act is actualized. Maritain holds that the unshatterable divine impetus is virtually contained within the shatterable one as the fruit is virtually contained within its flower. Just as if the flower is not destroyed, it will naturally make way for its fruit, so too if

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 94.

the shatterable divine impetus is not destroyed or shattered, it will naturally fructify into an unshatterable divine impetus.¹⁴

Since, as noted above, the only "thing" that a created agent can do by himself (i.e., independently from God) is nothing, Maritain says that there are only two possible responses that a created agent can make to the prompting of a shatterable divine impetus. Either the created agent can nihilate (i.e., resist) the shatterable divine impetus and thus introduce nothingness and deficiency into his act, or the created agent can remain perfectly still and not do anything whatsoever under the influence of the shatterable divine impetus.¹⁵ If the agent nihilates the shatterable impetus, then he ultimately introduces sin into his act and destroys the possibility of receiving the unshatterable divine impetus, as regards his present act, since in destroying the flower he has robbed himself of its fruit. On the other hand, if the created agent remains perfectly still and does not do anything whatsoever under the influence of the shatterable divine impetus, then the shatterable divine impetus naturally flowers into an unshatterable divine impetus and, thus, the production of the morally good act is actualized.¹⁶

Maritain insists that, in the created agent's standing still under the shatterable divine impetus, the agent does not make even one iota of ontological

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 97. Maritain describes the relationship between the shatterable and unshatterable impetuses within the context of the Thomistic doctrine of the "non-consideration of the rule." Maritain holds that the shatterable divine impetus is the resistible divine initiative which governs the human person in the process of deliberation. For it is in the process of deliberation, Maritain claims, that the human agent either will not do anything whatsoever, that is, will not stir under the divine touch and will thus effectively consider the rule which can and ought to be considered in this present deliberative process or he will attempt to act autonomously from *Ipsum esse* and will thus fail to consider the rule which can and ought to be considered in this present deliberative process. If the human agent chooses this second option and thus nihilates and resists the shatterable divine impetus, he will thereby deliberate defectively and, consequently, will consent to an evil option. Maritain maintains that if the human agent chooses the first option and does not shatter or resist the shatterable divine impetus, then the human agent will consider the rule aright in the act of deliberation and the unshatterable divine impetus will flower out of the shatterable impetus thus moving the agent to consent to the good moral option which he has concluded to in the process of deliberation. On this point Maritain says: "If we consider what is most important in this dynamism, the act itself of free choice or *election*, we can give the name of shatterable impetus to everything that prepares the way for it, including the good acts which, while arising out of free will, are not yet election (for example, everything good that falls within the *deliberation* which precedes election). We will then reserve the name of "unshatterable impetus" for that impetus which produces the good election" (ibid., p. 95).

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁶ Ibid.

contribution to the efficacy of the fructification of the shatterable divine impetus into the unshatterable one. In his words Maritain says:

But what is important to set forth here with unmistakable clarity is that the created existent contributes nothing of its own, does nothing, adds nothing, gives nothing—not the shadow of an action or of a determination coming from it—which would make of the shatterable impetus an unshatterable impetus or an impetus that comes to grips with existence. Not to nihilate under the divine activation, not to sterilize that impetus, not to have the initiative of making the thing we call nothing, does not mean taking initiative, of the demi-initiative, of the smallest fraction of the initiative of act; it does not mean acting on one's own to complete, in any way whatever, the divine activation. It means not stirring under its touch, but allowing it free passage, allowing it to bear its fruit (the unshatterable activation) by virtue of which the will (which did not nihilate in the first instance) will act (will look at the rule efficaciously) in the very exercise of its domination over the motives, and will burst forth freely in a good option and a good act.¹⁷

Maritain knows that here the “stakes are high.” In order to preserve metaphysically *Ipsum esse*'s sovereign causality and to remain free from the errors with which the Thomists have historically accused Molina and his followers, Maritain must insist upon the fact that the created agent can contribute absolutely nothing of his own, to the efficacy of its good acts, which it has not wholly and entirely received, as a grace, from *Ipsum esse*. Indeed Maritain is convinced that he has avoided the Molinist errors and successfully stood in the protective shadow of St. Thomas on this issue of the divine activations. In conclusion to his main explication of the divine activations Maritain says:

[F]rom the moment we understand that the non-nihilating, which conditions the fructification of the shatterable impetus in unshatterable impetus, does absolutely not imply the slightest contribution made by the creature to the divine motion—from this moment we have beyond question exorcised every shadow of Molinism.¹⁸

Immediately following his treatment of the divine activations Maritain addresses the question of the divine *scientia*. As a Thomist, Maritain begins by affirming that God's act of knowledge is identical with *Ipsum esse*, that is, the divine essence itself.¹⁹ But the divine essence is wholly independent of everything in the created order. Therefore, it follows that God's eternal act of knowledge is also wholly independent of everything in the created order.²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Hereafter, Maritain makes the traditional distinction between God's *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* (wherein He eternally and perfectly knows all of the possible ways in which He can be imaged by creatures) and His *scientia visionis* (wherein God knows eternally and perfectly those creatures which He wills from all eternity actually to exist in the created order). It is Maritain's account of this latter type of divine knowledge, that is the *scientia visionis*, with which I am particularly concerned here. For God's *scientia visionis* is identical with His eternal plan and it is the eternal divine plan,²¹ in particular, which bears upon the question of the relation between created finite liberty and uncreated infinite Liberty. In describing the *scientia visionis* Maritain holds that God does not *foresee* anything. Rather, since the eternal One is above time and since every moment of time, in its presentiality, is eternally present to Him, God *sees* in His comprehensive vision everything which He wills to create in the created order.²² Citing a beautiful passage from St. Peter Damien, Maritain describes the *scientia visionis* as follows:

This divine today is the incommutable, indefeasible, inaccessible eternity to which nothing can be added, from which nothing can be taken away. And all things which here below supervene upon and succeed one another by flowing progressively into non-being, and which are diversified according to the vicissitudes of their times, are present before this today and continue to exist motionless before it. In that today the day when the world began is still immutable. And nevertheless, the day is already present also when it will be judged by the eternal judge.²³

Now that we have an idea of how Maritain envisions the *scientia visionis* let us ask him how exactly he thinks the free act of the created agent "enters into" God's eternal resolve to bring certain souls to glory in time. That is, how is it that the *scientia visionis* is related to the free acts of the elect which are actualized in time? There are at least three key texts in *Existence and the Existent* which well express Maritain's thought on this point. I cite them here in full:

1) The created existents which, according to the conception put forth by us, are ordained in all eternity to eternal life, *ante praevista merita*, by the primordial or "antecedent" will will be confirmed by the definitive or "consequent" will (from the moment they did *not* take the initiative of nihilating at the critical juncture) were by the definitive or "consequent" will *inscribed in the book of life before the world was created*.²⁴

²¹ *ST I*, q. 14, a. 16.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 86. From St. Peter Damien, *Opusculum De Divina Omnipotentia*, chap. 8. *P.L.* 145, 607.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

2) Let us suppose . . . that at that instant [i.e., a given instant in time which is seen by God from all eternity] the free creature has the initiative of the thing that is nothing. Then, this is seen from all eternity in the free existent by the “science of vision”; and from all eternity God’s definitive or circumstanced will (if it does not prevent the natural effect of this nihilating) permits the evil act of which this creature has the first initiative; and from all eternity the permission of this evil act, ordained to a better good . . . is immutably fixed in the eternal plan.²⁵

3) Suppose that the eternal plan were a scenario prepared in advance. Suppose that in that scenario it was written that Brutus was to assassinate Caesar. Then, when Brutus steps forth upon the stage of the world, either the Stage Manager will leave him truly free to have or not to have the first initiative of sin, in which case Brutus might not murder Caesar and might frustrate the eternal plan—which is absurd; or else the Stage Manager will arrange in one way or another, with antecedent permissive decrees or supercomprehensions of causes, that Brutus really assassinate Caesar but still commit the murder freely. How then and by what subtleties, can one avoid the conclusion that God had the first initiative of the sin, and, were it merely a slackening His hand, caused the creature to fall into it? It was Brutus who had the first initiative of the free nihilating by which, God permitting, the decision of murder entered into his will and into the history of the world. If, at that instant in time, eternally present in the eternal instant, he had not had the initiative of nihilating, the immutable plan would have fixed things in another way from all eternity.²⁶

From these texts two points become clear. First, Maritain holds that *antecedent* to His infallibly efficacious decree God sees from all eternity the nihilating or non-nihilating stances taken by His free creatures, whom He wills to bring into existence, in each set of their particular circumstances. Second, and as a consequence to this first point, Maritain says that God *does not* know the nihilating intentions of His created agents in His eternal permissive decrees. Rather, Maritain maintains that God’s permissive decrees are *consequent* to God’s knowing the nihilating intentions of His free creatures in their given circumstances.²⁷ It is God’s prerogative, though, Maritain holds, to permit or not permit, from all eternity, His free creatures from carrying out their nihilating intentions. So stands Maritain’s view of predestination and the way in which created liberty is related to uncreated Liberty and God’s immutable plan.

What could be wrong, from a traditional Thomistic perspective, with what

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 118–19.

²⁷ That this is indeed Maritain’s position can be seen in his *God and the Permission of Evil* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966).

Maritain has said? How can he be charged with contradicting, in his view on predestination, some of his most basic principles, as a Thomist, when his views *seem* so Thomistic? I answer that Maritain can be interpreted as holding to at least two fundamental metaphysical errors. One of these errors is found in his position on the divine activations and the other one is in his position on the relation of the *scientia visionis* and God's permissive decrees to human acts.

Let us first turn to the error in Maritain's view of the divine activations. We saw that Maritain holds that when the created agent receives a shatterable divine impetus this same agent can either take a nihilating or non-nihilating stance towards the impetus. By taking a non-nihilating stance towards the shatterable divine impetus, that is, by remaining perfectly still under its influence and by not doing anything whatsoever the created agent adds absolutely nothing to the shatterable impetus but merely allows it to fructify into an unshatterable divine impetus. According to Maritain, it "depends solely" upon the created agent's decision as to "whether he will or will not take the initiative of nihilating."²⁸

This view, however, is problematic for it attributes an unjustifiable ontological autonomy to the created agent. For is not the actual non-resistance of the shatterable divine impetus itself a good? Is not the created agent's actual continuation in the line of good itself a good?²⁹ For since the created agent's actual non-resistance is a mode of being, and since being and goodness are convertible,³⁰ it follows that the agent's actual non-resistance is a veritable good, albeit ontological and not moral.³¹ But if the agent's actual non-resistance or actual continuation in the line of good is itself a good, then it can only be accounted for ultimately by the first exemplary, efficient, and final Cause of all created goods, *Ipsum esse*. And if the good of actual non-resistance can only be ultimately accounted for in terms of *Ipsum esse*'s sovereign causality, then it follows that Maritain is mistaken in claiming that this actual

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁹ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Predestination* (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder, 1939), p. 332.

³⁰ *ST I*, q. 5. aa. 1, 3.

³¹ Here I call the good in question an ontological and not moral good because the good in question, namely, a correct deliberation, wherein the rule which can and ought to be considered in the present deliberation is actually considered, is prior to and presupposed by the consent of the will to the correct final practical judgement. The Thomists hold that it is at the point of the will's consent to this final practical judgement that morality, properly speaking, enters into the scenario in question. See *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, chap. 10 (hereafter cited as *SCG*).

non-resistance of the shatterable divine impetus “depends solely” upon the decision of the created agent. To say that the good of non-resistance depends solely upon the created agent’s decision is to maintain that there is a good which is accounted for ultimately by the causality of the created agent independently of *Ipsum esse*, who is infinite subsistent goodness itself. This, however, is to deny that *Ipsum esse* is the first efficient Cause of all things in the created order, which, of course, is absurd.

So, if in fact the created agent’s actual non-resistance to the shatterable divine impetus is a good, and if this good can only be accounted for ultimately in terms of *Ipsum esse* who, by His sovereign causality, preserves the created agent in the line of good and keeps him from defecting, then how are we to understand the relationship between God’s shatterable divine impetus (i.e., sufficient grace) and unshatterable divine impetus (i.e., efficacious grace)? Garrigou-Lagrange holds, as does Maritain, that in every sufficient grace granted by God efficacious grace is virtually contained therein as the fruit is virtually contained within its flower.³² But, according to Garrigou-Lagrange, whenever a created agent does not actually resist God’s grant of sufficient grace it is simply due to the fact that God’s efficacious grace, which is now actually (and not *merely* virtually) present within the agent, is preserving the agent in question from resisting the sufficient grace.³³ This in brief is how Garrigou-Lagrange accounts for the preservation of the created agent in the line of good without compromising the sovereignty of God.

Maritain, however, not only knew of this position but also seemed to have objected to it in one of our citations of his work above. His basic objection seems to be as follows: If God’s bestowal of efficacious grace is the cause of the created agent’s actual non-resistance of sufficient grace, then God’s refusal actually to grant efficacious grace to a given agent would seem to be the cause of the same agent’s actual resistance to sufficient grace in which case God would be the Cause of sin, which is absurd. In answer to this objection, though, Garrigou-Lagrange holds that:

It is true to say that man is deprived of efficacious grace *because* he resisted sufficient grace, whereas it is not true to say that man resists or sins *because* he is deprived of efficacious grace. He resists *by reason of* his own defectibility which God is not bound to remedy.³⁴

This text is highly significant, for it illustrates that God’s efficacious grace is the very reason for man’s actual non-resistance whereas man’s own de-

³² Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, p. 331.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 333. Emphasis mine.

fectible nature is the very reason for his actual resistance. Indeed this view follows from Maritain's own principle, noted above, that while God is the sole ultimate Cause of all moral efficiency in the created order, creatures are the sole ultimate cause of all moral deficiency in the created order. For as the Angelic Doctor maintains:

To sin is nothing else than to fail in the good which belongs to any being according to its nature. Now as every created thing has its being from another, and, considered in itself, is nothing, so does it need to be preserved by another in the good which pertains to its nature. For it can of itself fail in good, even as of itself it can fall into nothingness, unless it is upheld by God.³⁵

Having briefly addressed this first error in Maritain's account of the divine activations, let us turn to what I interpret to be an error in his doctrine of the relation the *scientia visionis* and permissive decrees have to human liberty. As was stated above, when speaking on the relation that the *scientia visionis* and the permissive decrees have to human liberty, Maritain makes two points particularly evident.

First, Maritain holds that *antecedent* to God's infallibly efficacious decree He sees from all eternity the nihilating or non-nihilating stance of his free creatures, whom He wills to bring into existence, in each possible set of particular circumstances. Second, and as a consequence to this first point, Maritain says that God *does not* know the nihilating intentions of His creatures in His permissive decrees. Rather, Maritain maintains that God's permissive decrees are *consequent* to God's knowing the nihilating intentions of His free creatures in their given circumstances. It is God's prerogative, though, to permit or not permit, from all eternity, His free creatures from carrying out their nihilating intentions. On both of these points, though, Maritain ends up contradicting traditional Thomistic doctrine and, ultimately, compromising *Ipsium esse's* sovereignty and absolute divine nature.

Garrigou-Lagrange says that it is impossible, both logically and ontologically, for God to see in the *scientia visionis*, from all eternity and antecedently to His efficacious decree, whether His created agents, in their particular circumstances, will to take a nihilating or non-nihilating stance towards the sufficient grace offered them.³⁶ This scenario is impossible precisely because it supposes that the *scientia visionis* is somehow independent from God's infallibly efficacious divine decree which, of course, is false.³⁷

³⁵ ST I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2.

³⁶ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, p. 209.

³⁷ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *God: His Existence and His Nature*, vol. 2 (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder, 1946), pp. 66–67.

Indeed, such a view, is a radical departure from St. Thomas himself who holds that God sees *in*, and not antecedently to, His infallibly efficacious decree those things which will infallibly come about in the created order.³⁸ This applies not only to those things which God wills directly (i.e., created goods) but also to those things which God wills indirectly (i.e., physical evils) and to those things which He wills merely to permit to occur (i.e., moral evils).

To hold that God knows what His creatures will do in their given circumstances *antecedently* to His efficacious divine decree and, thus, independently from His efficacious decree, as Maritain and the Molinists do, is tantamount to saying that God is a Spectator who views in His divine essence what His creatures will to do on their own and without reference to the divine will as the ultimate governing Standard of every iota of being and change in the created order. As a result, such a position denies that God's knowledge is the ultimate Measure of all things in the created order and alternatively holds that free creatures, who as yet do not even exist in the created order, are the measures of their Creator. But, as Garrigou-Lagrange shows, this view compromises the doctrine of God for it introduces a certain passivity into *Ipsum esse* Himself. He maintains that this view "ascribes passivity to Pure Act, that is, the divine intelligence is measured by the determination of our free will, which it must ascertain and wait upon."³⁹ But granted this, and granted that St. Thomas shows that God is Pure Act in whom there is no passive potentiality whatsoever,⁴⁰ it follows that this view of Maritain and the Molinists must be rejected as false.

Maritain's second point, which holds that God's permissive decrees are consequent to His knowledge of the nihilating intentions of his creatable agents, can likewise be shown to be false by the same argument just presented. That is, this second point of Maritain's which follows from his first also implies a passivity in the Pure Act that is *Ipsum esse*, which is impossible. This second point, though, raises an important question for Thomists. For, as we saw above, Maritain explicitly rejects Garrigou-Lagrange's position on this issue, which holds that God knows the nihilating intentions of his created agents from all eternity *in*, and not antecedently to, His permissive decrees.⁴¹ Maritain thinks that this traditional Thomistic view amounts to saying that God is the Cause of sin.⁴²

³⁸ ST I, q. 14, aa. 8–9.

³⁹ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, qq. 109–14* (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder, 1952), p. 255.

⁴⁰ SCG I, chap. 16.

⁴¹ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, p. 119.

⁴² *Ibid.*

How then, are traditional Thomists, like Garrigou-Lagrange to respond to this charge? Garrigou-Lagrange himself offers one such response. He holds that the position which Maritain espouses fails to distinguish between necessary conditionality and causality.⁴³ The notion of necessary conditionality is far broader than that of causality. For while the notion of necessary conditionality is contained in the notion of causality, the converse is not the case. Thus, Garrigou-Lagrange teaches that God's permissive decrees are necessary conditions for sin to occur in time, for if God did not permit certain agents to fall into sin, then they would not do so.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, these same decrees are in no way the causes of sin.⁴⁵ Rather, as we saw above, the cause of sin is to be found exclusively in the deficiency of the created agent. Hence, Garrigou-Lagrange maintains:

[A] man fails on his own account and he is sufficient unto himself when it comes to failing; but he requires the divine help preserving him in the good in order to persevere in it. To be preserved in goodness is a good and proceeds from the Source of all good; but to fall away from goodness presupposes only a deficient cause.⁴⁶

In this essay I have argued that Maritain's views of grace, liberty, and predestination, as presented in his *Existence and the Existent*, are metaphysically problematic. In particular I have argued that his views of the divine activations and of the divine *scientia* and permissive decrees presuppose an ontological independence or autonomy, on the part of creatures, which compromises *Ipsum esse*'s sovereignty as the first efficient Cause of all created being and *Ipsum esse*'s nature as *Actus Purus*. While attempting to exorcise "every shadow of Molinism" from his worldview, Maritain seems, unfortunately, to fall into what have been seen by some traditional Thomists to be two of the most significant errors of Molinism.

The first Molinist error is that efficacious grace is not required in order to accept sufficient grace and that efficacious grace is not in itself efficacious but becomes efficacious by man's God-independent acceptance of it.⁴⁷ But, as we saw above, this view is precisely what Maritain seems to maintain when he holds that the non-resistance of the shatterable divine impetus "depends solely" upon the created agent and not upon *Ipsum esse*'s conserving

⁴³ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, p. 222.

⁴⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 1.

⁴⁵ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, pp. 222–25.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴⁷ Maritain, *Predestination*, pp. 128–30. (For Molina's own words see the *Concordia*, q. 14, a.13, disp. 26.)

power and efficacious grace. This error ultimately denies that God is the first efficient Cause of all created good.

The second significant error of the Molinists, which denies God's nature as *Ipsum esse*, is that of the so-called *scientia media*.⁴⁸ The Molinists teach that "between" God's *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* and His *scientia visionis*, there exists the *scientia media* wherein God knows, from all eternity and *ante-cedently* to His infallibly efficacious divine decrees, what exactly His possible agents will do in all possible sets of determinate circumstances.⁴⁹ As we saw above, some traditional Thomists argue that this Molinist doctrine introduces a passivity into *Ipsum esse* for it implies that God's knowledge is actually measured by and thus determined by His possible creatures. Given the above texts from Maritain, it seems that he holds to this Molinist doctrine, albeit he attributes to the *scientia visionis* that which the Molinists attribute to the *scientia media*, thus fusing these two types of *scientia divina* into one. But to attempt to hold to both the Thomistic doctrine of the *scientia visionis* and the Molinist doctrine of the *scientia media* is to be in a state of contradiction since these doctrines are opposed as contradictories. As Garrigou-Lagrange holds,

There is no alternative between the *scientia media* and the doctrine of the divine predetermining decree. Either God infallibly knows contingent futures, even conditioned futures, in His predetermining decree, which extends even to the free mode of our choices, or else He does not know them in this decree, that is, before this decree, which is precisely the theory of the *scientia media*.⁵⁰

While meaning to exorcise the shadow of Molinism from his worldview Maritain seems to have essentially adopted it. While meaning to preserve both authentic human freedom and the sovereignty of *Ipsum esse* he seems to have compromised both. Garrigou-Lagrange often writes that every metaphysical or theological doctrine will end up affirming either that God determines all things in the created order or that God is determined by at least one thing in the created order.⁵¹ There is no other alternative. Maritain's views on grace, human liberty, and predestination unfortunately seem to fall into the latter part of this dilemma.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 131–33.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 131–32. Again, for Molina's own words see the *Concordia*, disp. 52, sections 9, 19, and 29. The best recent summary of the Molinist position is Thomas Flint's, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas's Summa Theologiae* (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder Books, 1946), p. 472.

⁵¹ Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature*, pp. 558–62.