

“*Ab uno simplici non est nisi unum: The Place of Natural and Necessary Emanation in Aquinas’ Doctrine of Creation,*”¹

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Contemporary scholars frequently bring to their reflections on Thomas’ treatments of creation a distinction based in the language of the book of Genesis between God’s particular kind of making and other forms. In Genesis 1, apparently, the word which both we and the Vulgate translate as “create” is used exclusively of God. However, the exclusivity is not reciprocated. Brueggemann informs us that, while the first chapter of Genesis “uses the remarkable word ‘create’” five times, it also “employs the more primitive word ‘make’ . . ., [b]ut God’s characteristic action is *to speak*.”² In any case, the question of what characterises God’s making was not settled for Christians by philological arguments, and, once Gnosticism appeared on the scene, “belief in creation became a theological problem, and out of the encounter with philosophical metaphysics arose the necessity of formulating conceptually the freedom and unconditioned character of God’s creative activity.”³

From the beginning to the end of his writing, Aquinas does teach that “creation is the proper act of God,”⁴ however, but his argument for reserving creation to God is never based on a survey of the biblical language, and indeed, in common with his master Albert the Great, is Thomas sometimes made bases it on the philosophical authority of what he finds in the *Liber de causis*.⁵ With contemporary scholars the distinction between creating and other makings often accompanies an opposition between the free act of the Biblical creative God and “the theory of emanation [which] means that it is necessary that creation occur.”⁶ In fact, for Aquinas *emanatio* is a term describing the activity of creative Wisdom, found by him in a portion of the book of *Wisdom* (Vulgate 7.25) which he quotes at least twice.⁷

¹ This paper began as part of a presentation to a Colloquium of the Institute of Medieval Philosophy and Theology of Boston College and was substantially completed when I was a Visiting Scholar there and at the Department of the Classics at Harvard University in 2001. I am grateful to my generous hosts in Chestnut Hill and Cambridge. It would have been impossible without the help of my friends who actually know about Arabic philosophy: Richard Taylor, Peter Adamson, Taneli Kukkonen, Cristina D’Ancona-Costa, and Robert Wisnovsky. For a *sine qua non* of this paper, I thank them. For the errors which remain after all this help, I alone am responsible.

² W. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 24.

³ G. May, *Creatio ex nihilo: The Doctrine of ‘Creation out of Nothing’ in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A.S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), 27.

⁴ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.45.1 (Ottawa, 1953): “Unde manifestum est quod creatio est propria actio ipsius Dei.” See also *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* lib. 2, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 3, corp. (Parma, 1856); *Summa contra Gentiles* 2.21, Editio Leonina, vol. 13 (Rome, 1918); *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* 27.3 s.c., Editio Leonina, vol. 22 (Rome, 1970-76); *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* 3.4 corp., ed. P.M. Pession, 10th ed. (Rome, 1965); *De substantiis separatis* 10, Editio Leonina, vol. 40/D (Rome, 1969); *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* 3.3.1 corp.

⁵ Thus *ST*, 1.45.5: *Unde etiam dicitur libro de causis, quod neque intelligentia vel anima nobilis dat esse, nisi in quantum operatur operatione divina*. The reference is to prop. 3. See also *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 3, co. where Aquinas uses *Liber de Causis*, prop. 4.

⁶ *Aquinas on Creation*, trans. S.E. Balder and W.E. Carroll, Mediaeval Sources in Translation 35 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1997), 21. For an even less successful endeavour to look at Augustine through categories derived from Biblical scholarship, see M.-A. Vannier, “*Creatio*”, “*Conversio*”, “*Formatio*” chez *S. Augustin*, 2^e Paradosis 31 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1997).

⁷ Aquinas, *De rationibus Fidei ad Cantorum Antiochenum* (Leonina, vol. 40) cap. 9: “Dicitur enim de divinae sapientiae participatione, in libro sapientiae, quod est *emanatio quaedam claritatis omnipotentis Dei sincera, et ideo nihil inquinatum incurrit in illam*.” Idem, *Super Epistolam ad Colossenses lectura*, in *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, ed. Cai (Turin/ Rome, 1953), cap.1, lect. 3: “Sed addit *claritatis eius*, id est Christi, qui est claritas patris, quia pergere ad

Nonetheless, among those working in terms of this opposition, Thomas will be counted among the Biblical party, where he is placed within the train of Moses Maimonides, represented as “particularly alert to what he considered to be the dangers of Neoplatonic emanationism in which the doctrine of creation and the eternity of the world are combined in such a way that would deny the free activity of God.”⁸

Among the problems with placing Aquinas in this context are what Thérèse Bonin tells us about the situation in which Albert thought about emanation. Not only was it prominent in the system of the condemned Eriugena but also, more importantly, in Dionysius who had the authority of an Apostolic Father, as well as playing a large role in the works of the highly respected Boethius.⁹ Indeed in the *Divine Names*, Aquinas encounters a treatment of emanation from the Good which requires considerable massaging to place it within an Augustinian unification of the divine being, intellect, and will. The Latin translation of the Dionysian text read:

Indeed just as our sun engages in no ratiocination or act of choice, but by its very being illumines all things, giving to each of them in their own way a participation in the light to the extent of their capacities, so it is with the Good, which exists far above the sun, an archetype separated beyond its obscure image, through its essence it sends the rays of its complete goodness to all existing things proportionately.¹⁰

In his exposition, Thomas insists that “the act of the divine being is his act of understanding and of willing, and therefore what he makes through his own being, he makes through intellect and will.” He was certainly happy to be able to explain that it was on this account that Dionysius said “distinctly” that God is distinguished from the sun in the way in which an archetype stands above an obscure image.¹¹ Despite such problems, Bonin notes that “many medieval philosophers not only accepted emanation but gave it a new prominence”¹² and that it was more common in their works than in those of the pagan Neoplatonists. She concludes that “Albert treats creation as the most perfect case of emanation and considers emanation a corrective to pantheism.” Albert does not suppose that this philosophical structure poses a problem for faith because “he judges that the best accounts of emanation at once uphold the unity of God’s effect and affirm that God touches the center of each being in its distinctness and individuality.”¹³

peccatum, est pergere ad tenebras. Sap. c. VII, 25: *vapor est enim virtutis Dei, et emanatio quaedam est claritatis omnipotentis Dei sincera.*”

⁸ Aquinas on Creation, 21.

⁹ Thérèse Bonin, *Creation as Emanation. The Origin of Diversity in Albert the Great's On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe*, Publications in Medieval Studies XXIX (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 1.

¹⁰ Aquinas, *In librum Beati Dionysii de divinis nominibus expositio* [herein after *In de divinis nominibus*], ed. Pera (Turin/Rome, 1950), cap. 4, lect. 1, p. 85, textus Dionysii, §96, Sarrazin’s translation: *Etenim sicut noster sol, non ratiocinans aut praeeligens, sed per ipsum esse illuminat omnia, participare lumine ipsius secundum propriam rationem valentia, ita quidem et bonum, super solem, sicut super obscuram imaginem segregate archetypum, per ipsam essentiam omnibus existentibus proportionaliter immittit bonitatis radios.*

¹¹ Ibid., cap. 4, lect. 1, p. 88, §271: “divinum esse est eius intelligere et velle et ideo quod per suum esse facit, facit per intellectum et voluntatem. Et ideo signanter dixit quod Deus segregatur a sole *sicut archetypum supra obscuram imaginem.*”

¹² Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 1.

¹³ Ibid., 2

What Thomas found in the Vulgate, and in Albert's position and its background, are essentials in setting the intellectual situation in which Aquinas thinks about emanation and require us to doubt whether he is really working with the hermeneutic of suspicion which an opposition of the supposed Biblical doctrine and Neoplatonism would require. In raising doubts about this opposition, I shall begin by looking at the use of the "emanationist" principle *Ab uno simplici non est nisi unum* by some Islamic, Jewish, and Christian thinkers from al-Farabi to Aquinas. I shall go on to consider some aspects of the understanding by which Aquinas could begin the final Book of the *Summa contra Gentiles* thus:

Because the most perfect unity is found in the highest summit of things, God, and because with each reality so much the more it is one, so much the greater is its power, and dignity, it follows to the extent that things are further away from the First Principle, so much greater would be the diversity and variety found in them. Therefore it is necessary that the process of emanation from God be united within this Principle itself, and be multiplied according to the lowliness of things, where it comes to its end.¹⁴

The Eleventh Chapter of the same Book views the whole of reality, created and divine, as a hierarchy of emanations. In consequence, for Thomas the processions of the Persons within the Trinity are called emanations, and, in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas defines creation as "the emanation of the whole actuality of being from the universal being."¹⁵ By reflections on what underlies these statements, I hope to contribute to the work of scholars like Jean Trouillard and Robert Crouse in breaking down false oppositions between Neoplatonism and Christian theology.

The old Hellenic "authentic neoplatonism"¹⁶ united philosophy and religion for the sake of civilized culture, an inclusive truth and spiritual life which it was confident would return once the currently ascendant novelties of a narrow barbarism had had their day.¹⁷ Like Dr Crouse, the Hellenic Neoplatonists were confident that "it's all foolishness and can't last," though the faith he has in a providential deliverance from contemporary Christian novelties, they had in respect to Christianity itself! The intimate relations between Hellenic religion and Platonism entailed that conflicts between it and the religions of the Book were inevitable. However, a great part of the attraction of Neoplatonism was that in it philosophy, mystic experience, and religion worked out their need for one another. In consequence, just as diverse relations between cult and philosophy resulted in diverse and even opposed pagan Neoplatonisms, there would come to be not only Islamic and Jewish developments of Neoplatonism in Arabic but also different Christian ones in Greek and Latin (not to

¹⁴ *ScG*, 4.1, prooemium: *Et quia in summo vertice Deo perfectissima unitas invenitur; et unumquodque, quanto est magis unum, tanto est magis virtuosum et dignius: consequens est ut quantum a primo principio receditur, tanto maior diversitas et variatio inveniatur in rebus. Oportet igitur processum emanationis a Deo uniri quidem in ipso principio, multiplicari autem secundum res infimas, ad quas terminatur.*

¹⁵ *ST*, 1.45.4 ad 1: "creatio sit emanatio totius esse ab ente universale"; also 1.45.1: "emanationem totius entis a causa universali, quae est Deus, et hanc quidem emanationem designamus nomine creationis."

¹⁶ A. de Libera, "Albert le Grand et Thomas d'Aquin interprètes du *Liber de Causis*," *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques*, 74 (1990): 347-78 at 350.

¹⁷ See A.Ph. Segonds, "Liminaire" in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13-16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink*, ed. A.Ph. Segonds and C. Steel, Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, De Wulf-Mansion Centre, Series 1, XXVI (Leuven / Paris: Leuven University Press / Les Belles Lettres, 2000), ix-xxv1 at xix-xxi. Segonds sets himself against the purple prose of G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, "Revealed Religion" [trans. George Lichtheim (New York: Torchbooks, 1967), 753].

mention Syriac).¹⁸ There are immensely important differences between the Christian Platonism in the Latin West emerging out of the decisive role in Augustine’s conversion played by Plotinus and Porphyry translated into Latin, and that in the Greek East, which, most notoriously in the Pseudo-Dionysius, went down the theurgic road taken by the Academy in Athens to its *telos* in Proclus and Damascius. Furthermore, within all of these religious and linguistic communities “Neoplatonism” is a word to be declined in the plural.

Something of this plurality will emerge in this essay. Understanding the differences between their Platonisms is crucial to openings or conciliations between the philosophical theologies of these religious traditions. It is exactly by showing how in the *Liber de Causis* “deux versions différentes de la doctrine nèo-platonicienne s’y sont entrecroisées, la version plotinienne et la version proclienne,” that Cristina D’Ancona-Costa demonstrates “une assimilation entre métaphysique nèo-platonicienne et théologie créationniste.”¹⁹

My treatment of necessity and freedom in emanation and creation is centred on how a group who identified themselves with the “Peripatetics”—Moses Maimonides, his Islamic predecessors, and Albertus Magnus—set up a conflict which Aquinas avoided, or, better, which Aquinas overcame by placing the opposed modalities in different places in his system. The philosophers and theologians in this Arab “Peripatetic” tradition united Aristotle, Plotinus, Proclus, and other Neoplatonists under the covering dominance of Aristotle. The Neoplatonism of Aquinas differs by privileging Dionysius; it thus remains more Greek. Alain de Libera judges that Albert stands at the end of the Islamic tradition as “la suprême représentant de la doxographie péripatéticienne arabe.” Aquinas, he contrasts as distinguishing “le ‘néoplatonisme authentique’ du ‘néoplatonisme chrétien’ tout en laissant à Aristote la place qui est la sienne.”²⁰ There is an important truth in these contrasts, but they have their limits. The Neoplatonists are determinative, not only, for how Dionysius constructs his Christianity, but also, for what the Arab Peripatetics and Aquinas make of Aristotle. Having read Aristotle until 1268 as if he were the author of the *Liber de causis*, in his *Super Librum De Causis Expositio*, written after he has discovered its Proclean origins by comparing it to Moerbeke’s translation of the *Elements of Theology* completed in that year, Thomas still unites Aristotle with the always-privileged Dionysius and Christian truth wherever possible.²¹ Thus, he continues in some measure his initial judgment in his *Commentary on the Sentences* about the similarity of their ways of thinking: *Dionysius autem fere ubique sequitur Aristotelem, ut patet diligenter inspicienti libros eius.*²² Dr Bonin demonstrates that the Peripatetic Albert identified the doctrine of the *Liber de causis* with “the position of

¹⁸ On the point of departure of the Arabic tradition, see G. Endress, “The New and Improved Platonic Theology. Proclus Arabus and Arabic Islamic Philosophy,” in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, 553-570; on the Christians, see R.D. Crouse, “*Paucis mutatis verbis*: St. Augustine’s Platonism,” in *Augustine and his Critics*, ed. R.J. Dodaro and G.P. Lawless (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 37-50.

¹⁹ C. D’Ancona-Costa, “La doctrine de la création ‘mediante intelligentia’ dans le *Liber de Causis* et dans ses sources,” *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques*, 76 (1992): 209-233 at 221 and 225.

²⁰ de Libera, “Albert le Grand et Thomas”: 350.

²¹ Aquinas, *Super Librum De Causis Expositio*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey, 2nd éd corrigée, Textes Philosophiques du Moyen Age, xxi (Paris: Vrin, 2002) [herein after *Super de Causis*], prop. 3, p. 24 lines 5-17; prop. 10, p. 67, line 19-p. 68, line 15; prop. 13, p. 83, lines 8-17; prop. 18, p. 103, lines 16-23; see Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes* [*Super Librum De Causis Expositio*], translated and annotated by V.A. Guagliardo, C.R. Hess, R.C. Taylor, introduction by V.A. Guagliardo, Thomas Aquinas in Translation 1 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), xxi. For a study of his “benign interpretation” of the *Liber*, see S.C. Selner-Wright, “Thomas Aquinas and the Metaphysical Inconsistency of the *Liber de causis*,” *The Modern Schoolman*, 72 (1995): 323-336.

²² *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, dist. 14, q. 1, a. 2.

Dionysius, and presents it as required by sound philosophy.”²³ Much the same must be said of Aquinas, even if, in my judgment, by way of both Dionysius and his growing knowledge of other Greek Neoplatonists, he moves closer to them and further away from the Arabic tradition through which he first learned his Aristotle.²⁴ Bonin may come closest to articulating the nature of this difference between Aquinas and his teacher when she writes about how they explain similarities between the *Liber de causis* and the *Divine Names*:

Thomas rightly attributes the similarities to the Platonism of both texts, whereas Albert believes that Peripatetic and Dionysian theology converge....Not that Albert failed to recognise Platonic traits in Dionysius, but such thinkers as Ibn Sina shared them while remaining basically Peripatetic.²⁵

In the same manner in which he avoided a head on collision between the *via Platonicorum* and the *via Aristotelica* by making of them complementary oppositions each contributing to the truth,²⁶ Aquinas stepped back from the kind of fatal conflict between philosophy and revealed theology which was actually fought to the death of an autonomous philosophy among Islamic intellectuals. When he deals with the conflict between the theology which is a part of philosophy and the one which is revealed, he keeps the two living in the same house by conceding at one level of *sacra doctrina* what he denies at another. This solution is not, however, an escape from what Neoplatonism demands. The case we shall examine will indicate that the requirements of Neoplatonic logic are not to be avoided. No one can be pushed out of the commodious mansion, those with different necessities occupy different floors. I close this essay by reminding us of one of the many places where Maimonides and Aquinas stand together—perhaps because Aquinas is standing on the shoulders of Rabbi Moses—: their opposition to the attempts by theologians to demonstrate a temporal beginning of creation. Collateral with this opposition is Thomas’ conviction that Plato and Aristotle taught the creation of all things by a single First Principle. For Aquinas creation was neither exclusively a Biblical nor characteristically a mediaeval doctrine.

AB UNO SIMPLICI NON EST NISI UNUM

There are many problems with the representation of Moses Maimonides as opposing a free creation to a necessary emanation labelled as Neoplatonic. We are alerted to these by Maimonides’ identification of this necessity with “the opinion of Aristotle.”²⁷ Latin mediaevals like Albert the Great, Siger of Brabant, his fellows in the Faculty of Arts at Paris,²⁸ and Aquinas,²⁹ as well as modern scholars, agree about the provenance of the

²³ Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 3.

²⁴ W.J. Hankey, “Aquinas and the Platonists,” in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, ed. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, with the assistance of Pieter Th. van Wingerden (Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 286-288, 310-325.

²⁵ Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 146, note 30.

²⁶ W.J. Hankey, “Thomas’ Neoplatonic Histories: His following of Simplicius,” *Dionysius* 20 (2002): 153-178 passim.

²⁷ Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), lib. 2, cap. 19, pp. 302-312; lib. 3, cap. 13, p. 449.

²⁸ See Albertus, *De Causis*, lib. 1, tract. 3, cap. 5, p. 40, lines 49-54; idem, *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus*, ed. P. Simon, *Opera Omnia*, 37/1 (Cologne: Aschendorff, 1972), cap. 2, section 42, p. 71, lines 28-29; Siger de Brabant, *Questions sur la Métaphysique*, ed. C.A. Graiff, *Philosophes Médiévaux* 1 (Louvain: L’Institute Supérieur de Philosophie, 1948), lib. 5, q. 10, p. 301; R. Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 mars 1277*, *Philosophes médiévaux* 21 (Louvain/ Paris: Publications Universitaires/ Vander-Oyez, 1977), 70-72; La

formula which defines this necessity: “from the one and simple comes nothing but unity.” They judge that it emerges from the Arabic Peripatetic tradition, as developed by al-Farabi and Avicenna, and as exposed and criticised by al-Ghazali and Averroes.³⁰ Although Albert also finds the principle in Plato’s *Timaeus*, in his “Aristotelian paraphrase” of the *Liber de causis*, the *De Causis et Processu Universitatis a Prima Causa*, “apparently composed between 1264 and 1271,”³¹ he says of its origin: *propositio, quod ab uno simplici non est nisi unum, ab ARISTOTELE scribitur in epistula, quae est DE PRINCIPIO UNIVERSE ESSE, et ab ALFARABIO et AVICENNA et AVERROE suscipitur et explanatur.*³² Albert’s paraphrase makes no use of Proclus; in contrast, Aquinas, writing at the beginning of the 1270s, because of his use of Moerbeke’s translation of the *Elements* agrees with modern scholars that this tradition has incorporated a great deal of Proclus. The most recent scholarship has also noted the places where Plotinus intrudes as well.³³ Those, like Albert and Siger, who identify themselves with the Peripatetics regard the law as indisputably true.³⁴ Albert claims that *omnes concesserunt PERIPATETICI, indeed, OMNES ANTE NOS PHILOSOPHI supposuerunt, scilicet quod ab uno simplici immediate non est nisi unum secundum naturae ordinem. Hanc enim propositionem nemo unquam negavit nisi AVICEBRON IN FONTE VITAE.*³⁵

However, from the beginning of his writing in the *Commentary on the Sentences* until its last stage in the *On Separate Substances*, Aquinas never identifies the emanation of creatures with this law.³⁶ He is far from rejecting emanation as a way of speaking about how things

Condamnation Parisienne de 1277, nouvelle édition du texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaire par David Piché, Sic et Non (Paris: Vrin, 1999), 167-168, note 3, and 175-176.

²⁹ See for example, Aquinas, *De Pot.*, 3.4 co.: *ut patet in Lib. de causis; et in Metaphys. Avicennae, et Algazelis, et movebantur ad hoc opinandum propter quod credebant quod ab uno simplici non posset immediate nisi unum provenire, et illo mediante ex uno primo multitudo procedebat. Hoc autem dicebant, ac si Deus ageret per necessitatem naturae, per quem modum ex uno simplici non fit nisi unum.*

³⁰ See Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers. A parallel English-Arabic text*, translated, introduced, and annotated by M.E. Marmura, Islamic Translation Series (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1997), “[A First] Introduction,” 4, and Discussion 3, Third Aspect, 65-78; Algazel, *Metaphysics. A Medieval Translation*, ed. J.T. Muckle, St. Michael’s Mediaeval Studies (Toronto: St Michael’s College, 1933), tract. 5, pp. 119-121; Averroes, *Destructio Destructionum Philosophiae Algazelis in the Latin Version of Calo Calonymos*, ed. B.H. Zedler (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961), Disputatio 3, pp. 173-178 and idem, *In Metaphysica*, lib. 12, comm. 44, in *Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis* (Venice 1562-1574, reprint Frankfurt 1962), tome 8, f. 344B.

³¹ Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 5; see on the character of the work Alain de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique, Albert le Grand, Problèmes et Controverses* (Paris: Vrin, 2005) 70-87 and 151-159, Albertus Magnus, *De Causis et Processu Universitatis a Prima Causa* [herein after *De Causis*], ed. W. Fauser, *Opera Omnia*, 17/2 (Cologne: Aschendorff, 1993), lib. 2, tract. 1, cap. 1, and lib. 2, tract. 5, cap. 24.

³² Albertus, *De Causis*, lib. 1, tract. 1, cap. 6, p. 13, lines 69-71; on Albert’s theory of the origin of the treatise see de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 74-87 and Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 120, note 5.

³³ D’Ancona-Costa, “La doctrine”: *passim*; A. de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age, Des Travaux* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 68-124; idem, “Albert le Grand et Thomas”: *passim*; A. Hyman, “From What is One and Simple only What is One and Simple Can Come,” in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L.E. Goodman, *Studies in Neoplatonism 7* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 111-135; R.C. Taylor, “A Critical Analysis of the Structure of the *Kalam fi mabd al-khair* (*Liber de causis*),” in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. P. Morewedge, *Studies in Neoplatonism 5* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 11-40.

³⁴ Albertus, *De Causis*, lib. 2, tract. 4, cap. 2, p. 157, line 7; lib. 2, tract. 4, cap. 14, p. 167, lines 15-21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, lib. 1, tract. 1, cap. 10, p. 22, line 3 and lib. 1, tract. 4, cap. 8, p. 55, lines 76-79.

³⁶ Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, dist. 2, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1; *Super Boetium de Trinitate* (Leonina, vol. 50), 4.1; *De Pot.*, 3.4, 3.16; *ScG*, 2.22-26 and 2.43-44 (in other places Thomas makes clear that the positions represented and refuted here are for him those of Avicenna and his followers); *Super de Causis*, prooemium; *ST*, 1.47.1 obj. 1, co. and ad 1, 1.47.2, 1.45.5; *De Sub. Sep.*, cap. 2, lines 180-183, cap. 10, *passim*.

come forth in and from God. The authority of Dionysius determined that: “*Emanatio, diffusio* and *effusio*, all characteristically Neoplatonist terms, are fully adopted and become part of the linguistic fabric of Aquinas’ thought.”³⁷ In company with Bonaventure, *Emanatio* is used by Thomas both for the coming forth of the Persons of the Word and of the Spirit within the divine essence, and also as equivalent to *creatio*.³⁸ For both of the Franciscan and the Dominican, the first of these emanations is, in fact, necessary. The second emanation is free. We ought not to leap from Thomas’ rejection of one Arab “Peripatetic” model of how the First Principle produces creatures to generalizations about Neoplatonism and his view of it. We will do better by looking at what is particular to the Islamic-Jewish understanding of emanation when its law is expressed as *ab uno non est nisi unum*. Then we can examine what in its logic Aquinas embraced and what he rejected. Or better, given the character of these systems in which everything has a place, we can find at what level of the theological hierarchy the law is true and where it is false.

In the *Guide* (2.13, pp. 281-285), Maimonides identifies the opponents of one of the fundamentals of the Law of Moses – namely, the creation of the whole world, including time, from absolutely nothing – to be as philosophers generally. “[A]ll the philosophers of whom we have heard reports and whose discourses we have seen” hold to the fundamental principle that ‘from nothing, nothing comes’ and to its co-relative: “it is not possible that a thing should pass away into nothing.” Those who belong to the “sect” of philosophers are “divided into several sects,” including the Platonists, the Aristotelians, and the Epicureans. In the view of Maimonides, there is no point in trying to reconcile the Law of Moses even with Plato, with whom some have tried to make common cause on account of his language in the *Timaeus* about the beginning of the sensible world, because Plato believes that the heaven “has come into existence and has been generated from some other thing.”³⁹ Aristotle is lumped with “his followers, and the commentators of his books.” In company with Albert, Maimonides judges about the law governing emanation: “It is impossible that anything but a simple thing should proceed from a simple thing” as “a proposition universally agreed upon, accepted by Aristotle and by all those who philosophized.”⁴⁰ Several factors contribute to these identifications. Many of them are common to the Islamic-Judaic reception of philosophy and the Latin Christian reception of Aristotle in the thirteenth-century. I list some.

³⁷ F. O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 239.

³⁸ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, text and translation by P. Boehner (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1956), cap. 6, para. 2, p. 89; Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, dist. 18, q. 1, a. 4; lib. 1, dist. 19, q. 4, a. 2, ad 3; lib. 1, dist. 27, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4; lib. 1, dist. 27, q. 2, a. 1, co. and ad 3; lib. 1, dist. 28, q. 1, a. 1; dist. 37, lib. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; lib. 3 dist. 2, q. 1, a. 2a; *De Ver.*, 4.2 obj. 7, 8.10; *De Pot.*, 10.1; *ScG*, 4.1; 4.11; 4.42; *In divinis nominibus*, cap. 2, lect. 2, pp. 45-46, §135; cap. 11, lect. 2, pp. 337-338, §912; *ST*, 1.34.1 ad 2; 1.34.2; 1.45; *In Octo Libros Physicorum Aristotelis Expositio* [herein after *In Physicorum*], ed. Maggiolo (Turin/ Rome, 1965), cap. 8, lect. 2; see W.J. Hankey, *God in Himself, Aquinas’ Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs/ Oxford Scholarly Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987/ 2000), 136-137. Aquinas equates *processio* with a series of Neoplatonic images at *ST*, 1.36.2. At *De Pot.*, 10.1 he defines *processio* in terms of *emanatio*. After *processio* his most used equivalent terms are derivations of *fluere*.

³⁹ Maimonides takes a more reconciling stance in respect to Plato at *Guide*, 2.25.

⁴⁰ Maimonides, *Guide*, lib. 2, cap. 22, p. 317. See H. A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 206-209, Davidson does not explain where this interpretation of emanation arises. On the important and unappreciated role of Maimonides in thought of Albert, see de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 83-86.

At *De generatione et corruptione* 2.10 (336^a27, *translatio vetus*) the Latin medievals found: “Idem enim et similiter habens semper idem innatum est facere” on which Thérèse Bonin (from whom I am quoting) comments “Who more than God is always the same and disposed in the same way, without variation of thought or power.”⁴¹ Aristotle in *Physics* 8.6 speaks about the simplicity of the unmoved mover and the continuity and uniformity of the motion it causes, thus our medieval authors found: “Illud autem, quod est non motum, quia est sicut diximus simplex, et permanens in eadem dispositione, movet uno motu simplici” (250^a18-19, *translatio Arabico-Latina*).⁴² In *Metaphysics Lambda*, (12.8) he argues against a plurality of heavens. Our writers associate the *de uno unum* law with these passages. Deborah Black is right to see a mixture of Neoplatonic metaphysics and cosmology at the origins of this tradition in al-Farabi. She tells us that his theory of emanation “rests upon the twin pillars of Ptolemaic geocentric cosmology and the metaphysics of the divine. The framework of emanation is provided by cosmology.”⁴³ Significantly, many of the arguments of Maimonides against *de uno unum* are cosmological, criticising it as inadequate to explain the composite nature and diverse motions of the spheres (see *Guide*, 2.19; 2.22; and 2.24); emanation or “overflow” is, however, a useful concept in some contexts (see *Guide*, 2.12). Certainly, as Black writes: “Many of the properties of al-Farabi’s emanational God are Aristotelian... [but], al-Farabi’s adoption of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of emanation provides the means whereby Aristotelian philosophy can be placed in a more systematic framework than the Stagirite’s own writings allow.”⁴⁴

Already in late Antiquity, it had proved easier to transmit Platonism, too identified with anti-Christian Hellenism to be tolerated in the Byzantine Empire, through commentary on Aristotle than by attributing it to those known as Platonists. For the Muslims, in consequence, Aristotle was the bearer of the Platonic tradition with which they were thoroughly imbued—more thoroughly than medieval Latins, because in contrast with them, the Arabs read Plato’s dialogues and, from the beginning of their philosophical education, had access to the Neoplatonic commentaries on the Aristotelian works, as well as to the *Enneads* of Plotinus and the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus.⁴⁵ The origins of philosophy in Islam after “receiving and transmitting the Neoplatonized Aristotle of the Alexandrian commentaries on the *De Anima*, went further along this way, by reading Aristotle as often as possible in the light of Plotinus, and Plato in the light of Aristotle.”⁴⁶ Among the Latins, the Proclean-Plotinian *Liber de Causis* and the Plotinian *Theology of Aristotle*, both of which contain passages congruent with the law we are discussing, and lie at its origins, are attributed to Aristotle. So mixed up together were the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions in the *péripatétisme arabe*⁴⁷ that Albert was never forced to give up the attribution of the *Liber* to Aristotle. As Dr Bonin puts it: “Albert thought not just that the *Liber* was in some sense Aristotle’s, but also that it was a very important Aristotelian text...[T]he *Liber de causis*

⁴¹ Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 36.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ D.H. Black, “Al-Farabi,” in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, Routledge History of World Philosophies, 1 (London/ New York: Routledge, 1996), 178-197 at 189.

⁴⁴ Ibid. See on al-Farabi’s need to supplement the metaphysics of Aristotle with Neoplatonic emanation, Thérèse-Anne Druart, “Al-Farabi and Emanation,” in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. J.F. Wippel, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, 17 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 23-43; idem, “Al-Farabi, Emanation, and Metaphysics,” in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, 127-148.

⁴⁵ Endress, “The New and Improved,” 556-557.

⁴⁶ C. D’Ancona-Costa, “Aristotelian and Neoplatonic Elements in Kindi’s Doctrine of Knowledge,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 73 (1999): 9-35 at 35.

⁴⁷ de Libera, *La querelle*, 117.

contains the final word of the Peripatetic school on the final part of metaphysics.”⁴⁸ According to Alain de Libera, Albert exhibited a “superb indifference” to its Platonism. Developing his own elaborate theory of its Peripatetic origins, he was able to maintain an *obstination herméneutique [...] frappante*.⁴⁹ De Libera is in accord with Bonin that, because of the important role the *Liber* plays in his conception of the theology of Aristotle and because of his commitment to his own theory of the origins of the *Liber*, “même après la traduction des *Éléments de théologie*, Albert n’a pas renoncé à sa thèse.”⁵⁰ Although Aquinas is clear about the Proclean origins of the *Liber de Causis*, he too mixes up Aristotle and Neoplatonism. To give one example from late in his writing when he is best informed about the history: in his *De Unitate Intellectus* (1270), Thomas cites the testimony of Simplicius in *Commento Predicamentorum* that “Plotinus, *unus de magnis*, counts among the commentators of Aristotle.”⁵¹

Al-Ghazali, having identified al-Farabi and Avicenna as “the most reliable transmitters and verifiers [of Aristotle] among the philosophers in Islam”⁵² demanded that the *ex uno non nisi unum* be applied strictly so that its limit might appear. Ironically, his *The Aims of the Philosophers*—translated into Latin as his *Metaphysics*—is both an exposition of Avicenna and a source of the knowledge of this doctrine. In fact, his intended destruction contains “a substantial Avicennian residue” which is exploited by Averroes in his *Destruction of the Destruction*—the name the Latins gave his *Incoherence of the Incoherence*.⁵³

Although Maimonides can be placed within the tradition of Saadya Gaon who pioneered Jewish religious philosophy in Arabic adopting “the Muʿtazilite Kalam,”⁵⁴ and although his criticism of emanation is that of al-Ghazali,⁵⁵ in contrast to al-Ghazali, Maimonides is genuinely committed to the philosophical tradition transmitted as Aristotle’s. The *ex uno unum* is for him the true law of intellectual procession. He interprets it strictly, not for the purpose of eliminating it, but so as to show that this law, by itself, is not able to explain the complexity, variety, and change of things. Intellectual emanation and its law need to be supplemented. Maimonides is convinced that even with “thousands of degrees [of emanation], the last intellect would indubitably still be simple” (*Guide*, 2.22, p. 318). Another cause is thus required, namely: “a purpose and a will directed toward this particular thing” (2.21, p. 316), “the will of the one who wills” (2.22, p. 319).⁵⁶ This solution owes something to al-Ghazali’s expansion of the distinction made by the Ashʿarites between the divine essence and the divine attributes like will.⁵⁷ However, Maimonides does not follow al-Ghazali to the voluntaristic occasionalism of the Ashʿarites. He is constantly attacking within

⁴⁸ Bonin, *Creation as Emanation*, 4.

⁴⁹ de Libera, “Albert le Grand et Thomas”: 351 and 362.

⁵⁰ de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 80.

⁵¹ Thomas d’Aquin, *L’Unité de l’intellect contre les Averroïstes suivi des Textes contre Averroès antérieurs à 1270*, texte latin, traduction, introduction, biographie, chronologie, notes et index par A. de Libera, 2^e (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1997), cap. 3, §74.

⁵² Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence*, 4.

⁵³ T. Kukkonen, “Possible Worlds in the *Tabaḥfut al-Falāsifa*: Al-Ghazali on Creation and Contingency,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 37:4 (2000), 479-502 at 480; the article explores some consequences of this residue.

⁵⁴ M.R. Cohen, “Medieval Jewry in the World of Islam,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 204. See Marvin Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides: Studies in Methodology, Metaphysics, and Moral Philosophy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 273-284.

⁵⁵ L.E. Goodman, *Jewish and Islamic Philosophy. Crosspollinations in the Classic Age* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 97.

⁵⁶ See Hyman, “From What is One,” 117.

⁵⁷ M.E. Marmura, “Al-Ghazali,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. P. Adamson and R.C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 137-154 at 141-143 and A. Hyman, “Maimonides on Creation and Emanation,” in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, 45-61 at 55-57.

his own intellectual world those who would dissolve cosmic order. The Mutakallimun, whose intentions he praises but whose solutions he finds radically flawed, like the Ash'arites, are atomists who "abolish the nature of that which exists" (2.19, p. 303). The result of their reduction of causation to particular acts of the divine will is endless particularization. Maimonides represents Aristotle as fighting opponents of the same kind: "those of his predecessors who believed that the world has happened to come about by chance and spontaneously" (2.20, p. 312). Balancing between the Kalam and Aristotle ultimately requires a Neoplatonic treatment of the divine attributes and the separation of will from essence as a concession to our way of understanding, which because only rational and not real can be both used for the necessities of reason and also withdrawn. This is a technique at which Aquinas and all scholastics are expert. Marvin Fox puts it this way:

The nature of the absolute unity of God requires that there be no multiplicity in Him, and thus means that there can be no separate attributes. "There does not exist in Him anything other than His essence in virtue of which object he might act, know, or will" ([*Guide*], 1.46, p. 102) "This essence has created everything that it has created and knows it, but absolutely not by virtue of a superadded notion" ([*Guide*], 1.53, pp. 122-23). His will is identical with His Wisdom and with all the other positive perfections that are his essence.⁵⁸

Arthur Hyman, equally concerned both to acknowledge what Maimonides owes to al-Ghazali and the Mutakallimun and also to show how he keeps his position from falling into their voluntarism, writes "Maimonides holds that 'will' and 'wisdom' are predicated of God according to complete equivocation, so that 'creation by will' and 'creation by wisdom' can only refer to effects produced by God, that is properties of the world."⁵⁹

Avicenna is the primary source for the Latins of our law, as well as being the principal subject of al-Ghazali's attack. The proposition on which we are centring our attention is found in the *Ilahiyat* of his *al-Shifa*. This is the Latin *Liber de Philosophia Prima*. There the Fourth Chapter of the Ninth Tractate, *De ordinatione esse intelligentiae et animarum caelestium et corporum superiorum a primo*, exposes the law. Whence the Latins took it: *Nosti etiam, quod ex uno, secundum quod est unum, non est nisi unum*.⁶⁰ It is also posited in his *Danish Nama-i 'ala'i*, the *Book of Science*.⁶¹ Al-Farabi's *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City* and *The Political Regime* teach what is fundamental to the doctrine, even when the formula is not found.⁶² In the first of these, the *Mabadi' ara' abl al-madina al-fadila*, al-Farabi describes the emanations from the First in a way which will remind us of the *proemium* to the Fourth Book of the *Summa contra Gentiles*. They begin with the ten immaterial intellects which follow in a line, one after the other, from the First:

⁵⁸ Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides*, 284.

⁵⁹ Hyman, "Maimonides on Creation," 57.

⁶⁰ Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de Philosophia Prima sive Scientia Divina v-x*, edition critique par S. van Riet (Louvain/Leiden: E. Peeters/ E.J. Brill: 1980), p. 481, lines 50-51; see Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing, A parallel English-Arabic text*, translated, introduced, and annotated by M.E. Marmura, Islamic Translation Series (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2005), 9.5, p. 330, line 24.

⁶¹ P. Morewedge, *The Metaphysics of Avicenna (ibn Sinā). A critical translation-commentary and analysis of the fundamental arguments in Avicenna's Metaphysica in the Danish Nama-i 'ala'i* (The Book of Scientific Knowledge), Persian Heritage Series 13 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), chap. 38, p. 78.

⁶² See Druart, "Al-Farabi, Emanation, and Metaphysics," at 140-142.

But the substance of the First is also such that all the existents, when they emanate from it, are arranged in order of rank [...] It starts with the most perfect existent and is followed by something a little less perfect than it. Afterwards it is followed successively by more and more deficient existents until the final stage of being is reached [...] [A]mong those which arise out of the First those which are neither bodies nor in bodies are altogether more excellent [...].⁶³

The like precedes the unlike.

Avicenna's God, the *necesse esse* who produces in accord with our law, differs in many ways from the Plotinian or Proclean Good or One.⁶⁴ Pre-eminently, there are its thinking and being. This may derive from Porphyry, if Pierre Hadot has correctly identified the author of the anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides* and its influence⁶⁵—though the origins of this characterization of the First in Arabic philosophical theology may not need such a specific source. Others derive it from Aristotle, as conveyed in the Peripatetic tradition and Middle Platonism, and modified by Plotinus.⁶⁶ We must also, however, account for the stress on its necessity and on the necessity of its causation.⁶⁷ The Greek Neoplatonists affirmed the freedom of the Good. Indeed, Plotinus has a treatise on the freedom of the One where he asserts, as Bonaventure will also do after him, a freedom for the First which is beyond the difference of freedom and necessity.⁶⁸ As Maria Gatti puts it: “The activity of the One is self-creative freedom, while the activity from the One follows necessarily from the First, but is a necessity *sui generis*, that is, a necessity that follows from an act of freedom.”⁶⁹ Proclus explicitly follows Plato in the *Timaeus* (29^c-30^a)—and follows Aristotle silently (*Metaphysics* 983^a)—in denying that the gods can be jealous. On this basis he teaches with Aristotle that the life-giving action of the Good is eternal and incessant. The Good is not sometimes good and sometimes not. Generosity is natural to it. This places its creativity beyond volitional choice between alternatives; a position in which, as we have

⁶³ *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State. Abu Nasr al-Farabi's Mabadi' ara' abl al-madina al-fadila*, a revised text with introduction, translation, and commentary by R. Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 1.2.2, p. 95 and 3.6.2, p. 112.

⁶⁴ D'Ancona-Costa, “La doctrine”: 213-214, 224 on differences between the *Liber de Causis* (with Avicenna) and Proclus. For the most extensive and exact study of the connection and differences between Greek Neoplatonism and Avicenna, see Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁶⁵ See R.C. Taylor, “Aquinas, the *Plotiniana Arabica*, and the Metaphysics of Being and Actuality,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59 (1998): 217-239, on the history, and D. Bradshaw, “Neoplatonic Origins of the Act of Being,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, 53 (1999): 383-401, on Victorinus as the author of the anonymous commentary. For the generally accepted view of the authorship see J. M. Dillon, “Porphyry's Doctrine of the One,” in M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, G. Madec, D. O'Brien (eds.), *SOPHIES MAIETORES, 'Chercheurs de sagesse': Hommage à Jean Pèpin*, Études augustiniennes, series Antiquité 131 (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1992), 356-366.

⁶⁶ See for example, Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, pp. 12, 334, and 336. D'Ancona-Costa would agree.

⁶⁷ A.L. Ivry, “Destiny Revisited: Avicenna's Concept of Determinism,” and M.E. Marmura, “The Metaphysics of Efficient Causality,” both in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honour of George F. Hourani*, ed. M.E. Marmura (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 160-171 and 172-187.

⁶⁸ Plotinus, *Ennead* 6.8; see Plotin, *Traité sur la liberté et la volonté de l'Un [Ennéade VI, 8 (39)]*, Introduction, texte grec, traduction et commentaire par G. Leroux, *Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique* 15 (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 50-51; idem, “Human Freedom in the Thought of Plotinus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. L. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 292-314 at 292-293.

⁶⁹ M.L. Gatti, “Plotinus: the Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 10-37 at 30 (drawing on *Ennead* 5.4.2).

seen, Dionysius followed him.⁷⁰ Proclus writes that “the cause of the All” makes “effortlessly” and “by its very being,” but his language is not that of necessity, which might imply something imposed upon the First.⁷¹ He and Plotinus will not permit anything to be in any way prior to the Good. Scholars are right, then, both to note the differences between Avicenna’s Neoplatonism and the Hellenic varieties, and also to raise doubts as to whether the Plotinian or Proclean Good is well described as necessitated in causing.⁷²

What moved Avicenna to turn the *bonum diffusivum sui* into the *necesse esse*? This simple unity—which is not interchangeably called the good—is characterised by necessity. It is not only called necessary in itself but also necessarily produces its effect. It gives what proceeds from it necessity so that what is created will be as much as possible like its source. Partly, at least, this emphasis on necessity stems from Avicenna’s engagement with a voluntarism similar to one which Maimonides agreed was destructive of reason and nature. Avicenna was also engaged positively with the Kalam generally and the Ash‘arites, among others, particularly.⁷³ Al-Ghazali explicitly identified himself with this theological party—though whether he needed to have done so or whether his denial of a logical connection between causes and effects can lead to less radical conclusions is debated.⁷⁴

The Ash‘arites rejected the view that the divine act proceeded as the necessary consequence of the divine essence. The divine act, they maintained, was the voluntary decree of the divine will, an attribute additional to the divine essence. They went further than this to deny that any act proceeds from an existent’s essence or nature. They denied natural causes, adopting the occasionalist doctrine that real causal efficacy resides with God alone.⁷⁵

In opposing theology of this kind, Avicenna followed al-Farabi. Beyond al-Farabi, however, in his use of the *ex uno non nisi unum* formula, Avicenna stresses the capacity of the *necesse esse* to convey not only its unity but also its necessity to what it produces. The effect, though possible in itself, is “necessary through its cause.”⁷⁶ By this means, Avicenna puts the emphasis on the likeness rather than upon the unlikeness between the participated and the participating.

If the emphasis were placed on the difference between the cause and the effect, a difference essential to Neoplatonism and worked out in terms of the greater division of the

⁷⁰ T. Kukkonen, “Proclus on Plenitude,” *Dionysius* 18 (2000): 103-128 at 109 citing *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* 1.362.20-21 and *Commentarium in Platonis Parmenidem* 786-87.

⁷¹ *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides* 3, trans. G.R. Morrow (Princeton, 1987), p. 159 (*Procli commentarium in Platonis Parmenidem*, ed. V. Cousin [Paris, 1864, reprint Hildesheim, 1961], p. 787).

⁷² See, for example, Endress, “The New and Improved,” 562-563; Goodman, *Jewish and Islamic*, 115, note 21; J. Owens, “The Relevance of Avicennian Neoplatonism,” in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, 41-50, especially 44.

⁷³ On how Avicenna tried to solve the problem created by the Neoplatonic unification of the One and Good as both a Platonic efficient cause and an Aristotelian final cause, and how this is connected to his treatment of necessity and possibility and to his complex relation to the Ash‘arites and other movements within Kalam, see Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics*.

⁷⁴ See G. Giacaman and R. Bahlul, “Ghazali on Miracles and Necessary Connection,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 9:1 (2000): 39-50; as well as surveying the literature, the authors argue that his position need not be identified with the Ash‘arites.

⁷⁵ Marmura, “The Metaphysics,” 183; see also Marmura’s Introduction to Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence*, xvi-xvii and xxiii-xxvi.

⁷⁶ Hyman, “From What is One,” 112. In accepting Hyman here I am bringing Proclus back into Avicenna at a point where D’Ancona-Costa correctly sees Plotinus also, “La doctrine”: 231. She regards any reference to Proclus as “on thin ice.”

lower as compared to its source, emanation would appear as immediately productive of multiplicity. Taneli Kukkonen writes: “A contrast drawn between Identity and Likeness allows Proclus to articulate what he sees as central in the overall process. Creation everywhere proceeds not by *identity*, but by *similarity*.”⁷⁷ Though for Proclus, the more like comes forth first, nonetheless, “since the producer is necessarily superior to the product, they can never be identical without qualification, or equal in potency.”⁷⁸ For an effect to be identical with the cause is “not possible nor lawful.”⁷⁹ In respect to the production of creatures, this diminution and the consequent multiplication of the principle because it is received according to the mode of a being at a lower hierarchical level will be stressed by Aquinas. This emphasis marks his doctrine of creation as characteristically Dionysian insofar as it is also Platonic.

Avicenna does have, however, some basis in Proclus for what serves his need. Proclus, probably following Syrianus, placed “henads” between the One and the intelligences. Though they are multiple (finitely), they “have the character of unity,”⁸⁰ and are “ones,” simple unities. Edward Butler writes:

Proclus contrasted the mode of the procession of the henads from the One to the “procession by difference” of the forms....Proclus speaks of different modes of procession, contrasting that “by way of unity [*henôsin*]” and that “by way of identity [*tautotêta*].”...The henads are the sole exemplars of procession “by way of unity,...[I]f every other cause constitutes a progeny similar to itself prior to that which is dissimilar,...so the One Itself must produce according to *unity* (*kat’henôsin*) things which primarily proceed from it.⁸¹

Kukkonen describes how the One produces:

The all-constitutive action of the One, Proclus next contends, is unitary by nature. [...] [I]his applies to the agent, the action, and the product alike. The One is indivisible in every way, it has a completely uniform action, and this action has the primary effect of bestowing unity upon its subjects.⁸²

In consequence, it belongs to its nature, most clearly manifest in its first emanation, that the One should produce “ones.” In explaining the law we are considering, Arthur Hyman is probably right to point us to where, in the *Elements of Theology*, “Proclus differs from Plotinus in that he interposes henads or gods between the One and the First Intelligence (Props. 113-165, esp. 115).”⁸³ However, we must be clear that neither here nor elsewhere in the *Elements* will we find Avicenna’s First Principle or the law of emanation we have been considering. The reasons for this are already evident: the Proclean One is above *esse*, it is the Good, Proclus does not characterise it as necessary, its first products, though henads, are multiple. Yet, there is evidently much in Proclus which might be drawn into Avicenna’s monotheism,

⁷⁷ Kukkonen, “Proclus on Plenitude,” 113 citing Proclus’ *Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides* 738-739 and the *Elements of Theology* prop. 28.

⁷⁸ Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E.R. Dodds, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), prop 28, p. 33.

⁷⁹ *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, book 2, p. 113, Cousin ed. 739.

⁸⁰ *Elements*, prop. 113, see prop. 149.

⁸¹ E.P. Butler, “Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold,” *Dionysius* 23 (2005): 83-104 at 94-95.

⁸² Kukkonen, “Proclus on Plenitude”: 105.

⁸³ Hyman, “From What is One,” 115.

including the distinction in Proposition 63 between contingent and perpetual participations. We must not be seeking identical repetitions in the transformations of Neoplatonism within the different religious communities, even when the same concepts or formulae are reiterated. We find rather elements and logical forms which reappear differently aligned and, in their new circumstances, they produce different results.⁸⁴

AQUINAS: OPORTET PROCESSUM EMANATIONIS A DEO UNIRI QUIDEM IN IPSO PRINCIPIO, MULTIPLICARI AUTEM SECUNDUM RES INFIMAS

Aquinas uses the place in Proclus at which Hyman points, Proposition 115 (*Omne Deus supersubstantialis est et supervitalis et superintellectualis*), in his discussion of Proposition 22 of the *Liber de Causis*.⁸⁵ As Alain de Libera shows us in respect to Proposition 21 of the *Liber* and Proposition 127 of the *Elements*, Thomas' interpretation of Proclus, which is fundamentally the same in the two places, is authentically Platonic. He does alter the whole schema: Aquinas refers simplicity to auto-sufficiency, thus, typically for himself, for the *Liber*, for Arabic and Christian Platonists generally, drawing what belongs to a lower level in the Proclean spiritual hierarchy into the unity of the First.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, self-sufficiency remains an overflowing richness. Thus, the simple self-sufficiency of the First is a richness and "an abundance of goodness flowing into other things."⁸⁷ In Thomas' *Super Librum De Causis*, there is no decline from Platonic superfluity into the aridity of the Albertine and Peripatetic rigid chain of efficient causes.

Aquinas adds in the comment on Proposition 22: "not all things receive his goodness in the same mode and equally, but each according to the mode of its own potentiality."⁸⁸ We arrive by this route at Thomas' characteristic treatment of the emanation of creatures, one directly contrary to that of Albert and the so-called Peripatetics. What proceeds out of God must be multiple, diverse and unequal. Only thus can what is outside the divine substance receive his goodness so that the universal order is both as good as it can be in itself and will also represent him as adequately as possible (*perfectius participat divinam bonitatem et repraesentat eam totum universum*).⁸⁹

Creation for Aquinas requires three emanations of two distinct kinds. First, there are the internal emanations or processions within the divine essence which produce real distinctions and relations within the Principle. These two emanations are necessary (*necessitate absoluta* – "with an absolute necessity" and natural.⁹⁰ They are emanations of the primary and most simple unities from the first and most simple unity, i.e., the emanation of the Word, which is the necessary and natural result of God's knowing himself, and the emanation of the Spirit, which is the necessary and natural result of the divine self-love. Aquinas tells us in *Summa contra Gentiles*, that "by necessity it must be that God always knows himself," that the necessary result of this self-knowledge is the "emanation" of the *Verbum conceptum*, and that

⁸⁴ On what is transmitted and what transformed here see Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics*, 99-112 and *passim*.

⁸⁵ Aquinas, *Super de Causis*, prop. 22, pp. 114-116. For the text he would have used see Proclus, *Elementatio Theologiae translata a Guillelmo de Morbecca*, ed. H. Boese, Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, De Wulf-Mansion Centre, Series 1/5 (Leuven: University Press, 1987).

⁸⁶ For Aquinas see Hankey, *God in Himself*, 153-156.

⁸⁷ See prop. 21, p. 114, lines 4-5: *propter abundantiam suae bonitatis influit in res alias*; see de Libera, "Albert le Grand et Thomas": 360.

⁸⁸ Aquinas, *Super de Causis*, prop. 22, p. 116, lines 16-17: "non omnia recipiant eodem modo et aequaliter bonitatem eius, sed unumquodque secundum modum suae potentiae."

⁸⁹ *ST*, 1.47.1, see Aquinas, *Super de Causis*, prop. 24; *ST*, 1.47.2.

⁹⁰ Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* lib. 1, dist. 6, q. 1, art. 1.

“it must be that he proceeds *naturaliter* from the Father” (*ScG*, 4.11). *Conceptio Verbi divini est naturalis* (*ST*, 1.41.2 ad 4). These emanations are natural precisely as determined; the natural is what is ordered to only one result (*ST*, 1.41.2: *natura determinata est ad unum*). If these processions were not necessary, but contingent so that they might or might not happen, what proceeds would be a creature, not a divine being. At *De Potentia*, 2.4, Thomas invokes Avicenna on behalf of this necessity in God: *per se necesse est esse* (at *ST*, 1.41.2 Avicenna is quoted without being named). The same necessity of the divine nature determines the emanation of the Spirit as love, and, as with the Son, it is necessary that what proceeds be equal to its principle (*De Potentia*, 10.2 ad 5). Equality as a characteristic is also especially appropriated to the Word as the first emanation from the Father who is the principle of the Trinitarian processions. *Aequalitas autem importat unitatem [...] Et ideo aequalitas appropriatur Filio, qui est principium de principio* (*ST* 1.39.8).

The first thing which proceeds from unity is equality and then multiplicity proceeds. And therefore, from the Father, to whom, according to Augustine, unity is proper, the Son processes, to whom equality is appropriate, and then the creature comes forth to which inequality belongs (*ST*, 1.47.2 ad 2).⁹¹

The multiplication of equals is the origin of the other kind of emanation, that of “all being from the universal being” (*ST*, 1.45.4 ad 1). From his *Commentary on the Sentences* through all his writing, as Gilles Emery has laboriously established, for Aquinas, the procession of the Son is the cause and reason of all subsequent emanations: “les processions des personnes sont la cause et la raison de la procession des créatures (dans l’*exitus* comme dans le *reditus*).”⁹² The characteristics *de la procession des créatures* are contrary to those of the first kind. The necessary emanations within the divine determine the character of emanation outside it (*ST*, 1.45.5). This procession is voluntary, because the divine being is necessarily willing.

In the end, Albertus Magnus arrives at the same starting point for creation by his own more laborious Peripatetic route. Having dealt with the unity of the intellectual emanation with the divine essence from which and in which it emerges, he determines:

In the First, will and essence are the same. As a result, as the first invariable is in respect to essence, so also the invariable is according to will. It is, then, a consequence of the rule “from the simple one nothing comes except a unity,” that, from a will which is not at all diversified by what it wills, there is nothing except unity. [...] Since, it follows that because [the First] knows himself as the principle of everything, he knows all which is, so also it follows that because he wills himself as the principle of all things, he wills all which is.⁹³

⁹¹ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.47.2 ad 2: “. . . primum quod procedit ab unitate, est aequalitas, et deinde procedit multiplicitas. Et ideo a Patre, cui, secundum Augustinum, appropriatur unitas, processit Filius, cui appropriatur aequalitas, et deinde creatura, cui competit inaequalitas.

⁹² G. Emery, *La Trinité Créatrice. Trinité et création dans les commentaires aux Sentences de Thomas d’Aquin et de ses précurseurs Albert le Grand et Bonaventure*, Bibliothèque thomiste XLVII (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 280.

⁹³ Albertus, *De Causis*, lib. 2, tract. 4, cap. 14, p. 167, lines 23-36: *In primo enim idem est voluntas quod essentia. Et sicut primum invariabile est secundum essentiam, ita invariabile est secundum voluntatem. Sicut ergo adhuc sequitur, quod ab uno simplici non est nisi unum, sic a voluntate, quae nullo modo diversificatur secundum voluta, non est nisi unum. [...] Quin immo sicut sciens se sicut omnis rei principium scit omne quod est, ita volens se ut omnis rei principium vult omne quod est.*

For Aquinas will is essential to creation. Because it is willed and not necessary, creation is not an emanation or a real relation *within* God. Rather it is a relation in the creature *to* God (*ST*, 1.27.1 ad 3; *ST*, 1.45.3). Because creation also originates in an intellectual principle (the divine self-love is a consequence of the divine self-knowledge), which as intellectual is filled with all the forms, the order created is of multiple, diverse and unequal beings.

Far from opposing necessary emanation which is determined by the nature of the principle, Aquinas incorporates it into the very life of God. By his situation at a conclusion of a debate among the Arabic Peripatetics, he is moved to separate necessary and free emanations. In a way we do not find among the Hellenic Neoplatonists, Aquinas places one within God, the other in his relation *ad extra*. Avicenna's God as *necesse esse*, who produces his like out of the necessity of his nature, has a very exalted place in the Thomistic theological hierarchy. Aquinas acknowledges his debt to Ibn Sina, both directly and by quoting him. The divine Henads have an equal exaltation in Thomas' divinity. Their manner of coming forth from the One is echoed in the *ab uno simplici non est nisi unum* and the procession of the divine Persons. The *ex uno non nisi unum* is most recognizable in the procession of the *Verbum* as *aequalitas*—an idea Aquinas credits to Augustine. The equality of the unities within the thearchy and the ordered unity of the divine being, knowing and loving distinguish this Christian Neoplatonism both from its pagan and from its Islamic and Jewish predecessors. Thomas' construction also differs in many ways from the Greek Christian Platonism of Dionysius on which he is so dependent.⁹⁴ They all, however, disclose the necessities of the logic within which all are working. Thomas understands this logic better as his knowledge of Platonism grows, and he grants a place in his system to what of its necessities each of his teachers discloses. However, he does not learn only from the later Platonists. Ultimately for him, what is necessary to the idea of creation can be learned both from Aristotle and from Plato—though probably their reconciliation to one another on creation, and the crediting to both of them a doctrine of creation, is an enterprise of the late Neoplatonic commentators. That remains another story.⁹⁵

CONCLUSION. CONCEDUNTUR A PHILOSOPHIS “RES A DEO CREATAE ET FACTAE”⁹⁶

Thomas insists that God could have made eternal creatures. In consequence, the Genesis images which seem to require a temporal beginning of creation do not describe for him what is logically necessary to its notion absolutely. Jan Aertsen puts the thesis of the *De Aeternitate Mundi* thus: “There is no mutual repugnance between the concepts ‘to be created’ and ‘to be eternal’ because an agent need not precede its effect in duration.” Aertsen shows that the *De Potentia* teaches the same.⁹⁷ In the *Commentary on the Physics*, we find Thomas' final view: *Plato et Aristoteles pervenerunt ad cognoscendum principium totius esse*.⁹⁸ From the beginning of

⁹⁴ See R. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters xlv (Leiden Brill, 1995), 265 on how Aquinas interprets Dionysian account of God's *esse* not as belonging to him *causaliter* but *substantialiter* so as to hold him as standard against the Platonists.

⁹⁵ See Hankey, “Thomas' Neoplatonic Histories”: 172-175; Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics*, 61-98; and R. Sorabji, “Infinite power impressed: the transformation of Aristotle's physics and theology,” K. Verrycken, “The metaphysics of Ammonius son of Hermeias,” idem, “The development of Philoponus' thought and its chronology,” in *Aristotle Transformed. The Ancient Commentators and their Influence*, ed. R. Sorabji (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 181-198; 199-231; 233-274, respectively.

⁹⁶ Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 5, ad s.c. 2.

⁹⁷ J.A. Aertsen, “The Eternity of the World: The Believing and the Philosophical Thomas,” in *The Eternity of the World in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas and his Contemporaries*, ed. J.B.M. Wissink, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 9-19, at 13 and 16.

⁹⁸ Aquinas, *In Physicorum*, cap. 8, lect. 2, p. 506, §975.

his writing Thomas attributes a doctrine of creation to Aristotle and, from the early 1260s, he also ascribes it to Plato and the *Platonici*.⁹⁹ He works out their positions (and those of the *Liber* and Dionysius) carefully in the *Super Librum de causis Expositio* (1272). There Proclus is included among the Platonists who teach that “being itself is the cause of existing for all things.”¹⁰⁰ Thomas’ own distinction between the characteristic divine act, which confers substantial being and determines our best name for God, and the operations of the other causes, which confer what is subsequent to *esse*, can be traced to a difference made by the Neoplatonists between what the One confers and what subsequent causes contribute.¹⁰¹

In his refusal to ascribe rational necessity to the doctrine that creation has a temporal beginning, Thomas reproduces exactly the position of Moses Maimonides against the Mutakallimun on this point. Aquinas shares his judgment that the endeavour of theologians to claim necessity for what cannot be demonstrated only serves to bring contempt on theology and to undermine trust in the rational demonstrations on which divine science does and must rely.¹⁰² However, Aquinas’ pains in his *De Aeternitate Mundi* did not prevent the condemnation of his position in 1277. Conservative Augustinians, feeling themselves increasingly threatened, pushed the Bishop of Paris to demand of reason more than Thomas thought it capable. Tempier required that philosophy must provide the reasons faith wished.¹⁰³

Attention to Thomas’ position on this issue and to his ascription of a doctrine of creation to his pagan Aristotelian and Platonic predecessors, to the stand of “Rabbi Moses”, as well as to the strong oppositions between the Islamic theologians and philosophers which caused both Christian and Jew such trouble, are helpful for the work of this present volume. They go to show that we could not have persuaded the mediaevals themselves to subscribe to the campaign of Carlos Bazán to have us employ “la notion de création [...] pour caractériser” mediaeval philosophy.¹⁰⁴ Such a characterisation is no more useful than is an opposition between free creation and Neoplatonic emanation.

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⁹⁹ L. Dewan, “St. Thomas, Aristotle, and Creation,” *Dionysius*, 15 (1991): 81-90; M.F. Johnson, “Did St. Thomas Attribute a Doctrine of Creation to Aristotle,” *New Scholasticism*, 63 (1989): 129-155; idem, “Aquinas’ Changing Evaluation of Plato on Creation,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 66:1 (1992): 81-88.

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *Super de Causis*, prop. 3, p. 22, line 14: *id quod est ipsum esse est causa existendi omnibus*.

¹⁰¹ Hankey, *God in Himself*, 103, note 23; 137; 165, Endnote 4.

¹⁰² Maimonides, *Guide*, lib. 2, cap. 15ff; Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib.2, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 5. The editors of the Leonine edition of the *De Aeternitate Mundi* judge that Aquinas follows the exact position of Maimonides whom he cites twice in the article but “semble bien présenter une thèse de théologiens latins, appuyée, dit-il, sur un texte de saint Grégoire” (Aquinas, *De Aeternitate Mundi* [Leonina, vol. 43], 55*). See T.B. Noone, “The Originality of St. Thomas’s Position on the Philosophers and Creation,” *The Thomist*, 60 (1996): 275-300 at 295-299.

¹⁰³ *La Condamnation Parisienne*, art. 89, p. 107; see W.J. Hankey, “Self and Cosmos in Becoming Deiform: Neoplatonic Paradigms for Reform by Self-Knowledge from Augustine to Aquinas,” in *Reforming the Church Before Modernity: Patterns and Approaches*, ed. C.M. Bellitto and L.I. Hamilton (Aldershot, England/Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Press, 2005), Chap. 3, 39-60 at 42-44; F.-X. Putallaz, R. Imbach, *Profession philosophe: Siger de Brabant*, Initiations au Moyen Âge (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 171-172 and J.F. Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas and the Condemnation of 1277,” *The Modern Schoolman*, 72 (1995): 233-272.

¹⁰⁴ C. Bazán, “Thomas d’Aquin et les transcendants: retour sur un livre de Jan A. Aertsen,” *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques*, 84 (2000): 93-104 at 103.