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ISSN 2150-9824



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Chillum, MD
20782-2321

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Printed in the United States of America

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TIW Vol. 11 | No. 1

May 2024

THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY AND THE NOTION OF
PARTICIPATION: DEEPENING INTO FABRO'S DEFENSE
OF THIS PRINCIPLE

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CAUSALITY IS A RELATION OF DEPENDENCE in being. Every effect depends on its cause; every effect has a cause precisely because it is an effect. Now, how do we realize that something is an effect? Why do we say that certain things must necessarily have a cause? What is it that allows us to say that something has necessarily been caused?

The importance of causality is that only through causality can we demonstrate the existence of God. The only way to demonstrate that there is a God is to demonstrate that the things we see must have a cause for their being. How do we demonstrate this?

Every demonstration proceeds from a universal principle, which we consider the major premise. When we demonstrate God's existence, the principle we employ is the principle of causality. How do we formulate this principle? It can be formulated in several ways, but some of them are not useful. For example, "every effect has a cause." This is simply true, but this way of enunciating the principle of causality is useless because it is a tautology. Effect is by definition that which has a cause. If one says, "that which has a cause, has a cause," one has said the same thing twice and, therefore, has said nothing.

The subject of the principle of causality cannot be "effect:" rather, it must be a term or a phrase that, on the one hand, does not include "having a cause" in its definition and, on the other hand, necessarily requires having a cause.

In other words, the predicate of the principle of causality ("having a cause") can neither be a synonym of the subject nor be explicitly contained in the idea of the subject. The predicate has to be a progress with respect to the original idea of the subject even if, once the principle is enunciated, the predicate is seen as a necessary attribute of the subject.

Fabro held that the best subject for the principle of causality was "being (or *ens*) by participation."¹ The best way

¹ Cf. Cornelio Fabro, "La difesa critica del principio di causa," in *Esesesi Tomistica* (Rome: Libreria editrice della Pontificia Università Lateranense,

to formulate the principle was, for him, “the being by participation must have a cause.” Now, why must a being by participation be caused?

For some, having a “participated” being means having a “received” being and, therefore, since what is received is necessarily received from another, a participated being has necessarily received its being from another, from the cause.² All this is true, at least in a certain sense, but it cannot be what Fabro meant. As you may notice, this is the same tautology as before: to say “having a participated being” would mean the same as to say “having one’s own being received from another,” and therefore it would also mean “having one’s own being caused by another.” If “being by participation” means “being caused by another,” then saying that being by participation must be caused is saying twice the same thing.

For Fabro, in the enunciation of the principle of causality, being by participation meant something different:

Imperfect, finite and therefore participated is the being that does not show fully realized in itself the act and form of being, but only a deficient likeness or some degree thereof: “participare, partem capere” [participating, part-taking].³

Participating, for Fabro, means to possess in a particular, limited, imperfect way that which in another is found totally, by essence: “according to St. Thomas, ‘to participate’ is a

1969), 1–48.

² This seems to me to be Mario Pangallo’s interpretation of Fabro’s critical difference. Cf. Mario Pangallo, *Il principio di causalità nella metafisica di S. Tommaso: Saggio di ontologia tomista alla luce dell’interpretazione di Cornelio Fabro*, vol. 46, Studi Tomistici (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), 22–23.

³ Fabro, “La difesa critica,” 40: “Imperfetto, finito e quindi partecipato è l’essere che non mostra realizzato pienamente in sé l’atto e la forma di essere, ma solo una similitudine deficiente o qualche suo grado: «participare, partem capere».”

‘being partially,’ a ‘partially possessing,’ which is opposed to ‘being, possessing, receiving... TOTALLY.’”⁴ “‘Participating’ is predicated of a subject which has a certain formality or act, but not exclusively and in a total way.”⁵

Why, then, does being by participation, understood in this way, necessarily require that it be caused? This is the main point we want to address. We want to justify the evidence and necessity of the principle of causality so that, when we use it to demonstrate the existence of God, the argumentation is solid and not based on tautologies.

There is another possible misunderstanding about the principle of causality in terms of participation. The notion of being by participation seems to imply the notion of being by essence or the notion of total, intensive being. Indeed, nothing is understood as a part unless in reference to a whole, which is therefore presupposed. Thus, it is clear that being by participation depends on being by essence *in order to be understood*. Now, could we move from this notional

⁴ Cornelio Fabro, *La Nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione secondo San Tommaso d'Aquino*, 4th ed., ed. Christian Ferraro, vol. 3, Opere Complete (Segni, Italy: EDIVI, 2005), 304–305: “Et ideo quando aliquid *particulariter* recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet universaliter dicitur participare illud» (*In l. Boëth. de Hebd., 1. c.*) [...] «Quod enim totaliter est aliquid, non participat illud, sed est per essentiam idem illi. Quod vero non totaliter est aliquid, habens aliquid aliud adiunctum proprie participare dicitur» (*Comm. in I Metaph., lect. 10, n. 154*). Secondo S. Tommaso adunque «participare» è un «partialiter esse», un «partialiter habere», che si oppone ad «esse, habere, accipere... totaliter».

⁵ Fabro, *NMP*, 309: “«Partecipare» si predica di un soggetto che ha una qualche formalità od atto, ma non in modo esclusivo ed in modo totale.” Fabro clarifies that this definition is appropriate for both predicamental and transcendental participation. In addition, he says that totally (*totaliter*) is the same as exclusively, but it is not the same as having *the whole* (*tota*) formality. In fact, in predicamental participation one has the whole participated form, but not totally; that is, one does not have it “according to all possible perfection,” “according to every mode of perfection.” Cf. SCG I, c. 32, “Amplius” 2: “Secundum omnem perfectionis modum,” quoted several times by Fabro, who considers predicamental participation as a Thomistic doctrine. Cf. Fabro, *NMP*, 174 and 148.

dependence to a real dependence? We cannot. In fact, when we say “being by participation,” we do not say it with respect to a real being by essence, but by reference to an intensive notion of being which is the product of a certain metaphysical reflection. In other words, we consider being (*ens*) as part, not by a comparison between this particular being and God (whom we have not seen), but by a comparison between this being and what, for us, “being” means. “Being” means many things, whereas this being, limited, is only a part of it. Being by participation depends on the notion of “being” in order to be understood, but it cannot depend on this notion in reality because this notion, as such, does not exist. The notion is presupposed, but not the actual existence of the notion. If it does not exist, it cannot be the cause of anything. Therefore, the mere notional dependence cannot justify the leap to a real dependence. We could put it this way: if the whole for which I say that this being is a part is not real, what would lead me to affirm that it must exist? And how can I affirm a relation of real dependence with something that does not exist?

Certainly, one can infer the existence of the cause departing from the being by participation, in the way that will be shown. But one must not confuse the necessity of a notional whole (the notion of “being”) with the real existence of the cause (the “Being” with capital letters), nor can one make the notional dependence coincide with the real dependence.⁶

That being said, in the first point, we will try to differentiate our problem from other questions connected with the principle of causality. Second, and this is the main point, we will propose

⁶ This confusion between notional and real dependence appears to be a possible reading of Fabro’s own defense in his first article, for which I thought important to clarify the distinction between those two kinds of dependence here. Cf. Fabro, “La difesa critica,” 41; also Andres Ayala, “La dependencia causal como exigencia del ser participado en el p. Cornelio Fabro” (Thesis, Angelicum, 2006), 24–26, 41–43, <https://philpapers.org/rec/AYALDC-2>. Fabro’s doctrine on this point is clearer in *La Nozione Metafisica di Partecipazione* (cf. for example, pp. 191 and 194).

a critical justification of the principle of causality following the doctrine of Fabro and St. Thomas, putting particular emphasis on the notion of “being which is not because of itself.” Third, we will attempt to justify our emphasis on this notion by resorting to some texts of St. Thomas.

I. THE CRITICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY AND OTHER RELATED ISSUES

As mentioned above, in this paper, we want to justify the evidence of the principle of causality so that, when we use it to demonstrate the existence of God, the argumentation will be solid.

- Now,⁷ it is not the same to justify the evidence of the principle of cause as to prove a conclusion starting from that principle. The former ends by affirming something about the principle of cause (i.e., that it is evident and necessary, that it is true, etc.) while the latter ends by affirming the cause of an effect (e.g., the demonstration of the existence of God, cf. *Summa*, I, q. 2, a. 3) or the being caused of an effect (e.g., what St. Thomas does in *Summa*, I, q. 44, a. 1).

- Moreover, the justification of the principle of cause ends in a formulation of it that is considered immediately evident and true. We thus obtain the affirmation of the principle of causality with absolute or general necessity, but at the same time a hypothetical necessity. In this sense, the principle of cause affirms something in general of every effect, but does not affirm it of any effect in particular or of all beings in general.

In other words, the principle of causality does not assert that, in fact, to this being or to these beings or to all beings there corresponds a cause but that, on principle, if a being is in a certain way, then a cause necessarily corresponds to it. Thus, when one affirms that “every being by participation is caused,”

⁷ For the remainder of this section, cf. Andres Ayala, “Brief Essay on the Nature and Method of Metaphysics,” *The Incarnate Word* 10, no. 1 (May 2023): 47–86, <https://philpapers.org/rec/AYABEO>.

one is not necessarily affirming that every finite being outside of God must be caused, unless one has already shown that God exists and that every being outside of God is a being by participation. When one asserts the principle of cause by saying that “every being by participation is or must be caused,” what one is asserting is that, if a being is by participation in some respect, then it must have a cause in that same respect.

- In metaphysics, the principle of causality is used in the reasoning *secundum rem*, both in the *resolutio* and in the *compositio*. That is, this principle guides us in the demonstration of God’s existence (*resolutio secundum rem*) and in the characterization of every finite being outside of God as caused (*compositio secundum rem*, in the *Summa*, I, q. 44, a. 1). In both cases, our reasoning ends in an affirmation of fact⁸ and according to extrinsic causes, which is proper to the *quia* reasoning.

Now it is not the same to prove that the fact that there are (some) beings by participation requires the existence of God as cause, as to prove that every finite being must be caused in its being by God. The subject of the first affirmation is God; the subject of the second affirmation is every finite being. The predicate of the first affirmation is existence; the predicate of the second affirmation is being caused.

Having distinguished these three problems, I intend to reflect on the first one, i.e., on the evidence of the principle of causality. I will offer a development of Fabro’s position, based on three of his main works on the topic: his article “La difesa critica” of 1936 and his books *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione* and *Partecipazione e Causalità*.⁹ My presentation

⁸ It could be clarified that the affirmations of the *compositio secundum rem*, especially those that refer to the composition essence - *esse* and to the being caused of every finite *ens*, in spite of being universal affirmations and of necessary predicates, are affirmations of fact. This is because such affirmations refer to particular and concrete beings, which are now understood in a new way.

⁹ See *Bibliography*, at the end of this paper, for complete bibliographical

could be taken as an interpretation of his original position in the light of his later works and as an attempt to deepen and reinforce Fabro's defense of the principle of cause.

II. CRITICAL DEFENSE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY

In the following lines¹⁰ it should be noted that, although direct reference is made to "being" only, as the most common act possessed by any *ens*, all expressions could be understood of "being such" also, that is, of possessing or participating in any other perfection. This means that these expressions must be understood in a universal way for all kinds of causality, not only for causal dependence with respect to being. Thus, for example, when we say "why does being by participation necessitate causal dependence?" the reasoning could be applied to the question "why does being *such* by participation necessitate causal dependence?" In the same way, the phrase "does not possess being for being what it is" would also be valid if one were to say, "does not possess being *such* for being what it is"; and so on in the other expressions, except when obvious reference is made to the act of being and to God.

Why does being by participation require causal dependence? The participated being shows that it does not have being for being what it is. Indeed, that which is common to many cannot belong to each one for being what it is, because each one is distinct from the others, and that which makes them distinct cannot be the principle of that which is possessed in common; therefore, being, which is common, cannot come to each one for being what it is.¹¹

Moreover, nothing can be deficient in that which it has as proper, that is, in that which it has for being what it is, because

references to these works.

¹⁰ Cf. Ayala, "La dependencia causal como exigencia del ser participado en el p. Cornelio Fabro," 75ff.

¹¹ Cf. Aquinas, *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, c., in Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputate*, vol. II, *de Potentia* (Rome: Marietti, 1965), 49.

it would cease to be what it is. Now, to have something partially is to be deficient in that very thing which one has. Therefore, nothing can have partially that which it has as proper. But every being (*ens*) by participation has being partially. Therefore, the being by participation does not have being as proper, that is, for being what it is.¹²

In summary, the analysis of the notion of being by participation leads us to say that such a being does not have being for being what it is.

Saying that a being is not for being what it is, is the same as saying that it is not by itself (or because of itself). If it is, but not by itself, then it must be by another. And this is so because if one denies that a being is by itself and also denies that it is by one other than itself, then one denies every possibility of its existence (there is no third possibility), and one arrives at the absurdity of denying the very being that was the starting point. In other words, if the being by participation is not by itself and is not by one different from itself, then it is not, which contradicts the very position of the being by participation.

Put in a more syllogistic way, one could say that,

All that is not in virtue of itself must be in virtue of another.

Now, the being by participation is not in virtue of itself.

¹² Having partially is “not having in a certain way,” that is to say, “not having totally.” Nothing can “not have in some way” that which it has as its own, because what one has as one’s own is either possessed or not possessed. If the individual Raphael has blue eyes, he cannot “not have blue eyes in a certain way.” If he is Raphael, then he has blue eyes; if not, then it is someone else. If man is rational, then man cannot “not be rational in a certain way.” What belongs to the formal realm is not given in degrees; now, if we still speak of degrees, this is in relation to being, not to the form itself. This is how we believe predicamental participation is to be understood according to Fr. Fabro, and how one resolves the apparent contradiction between the Thomistic texts that deny the more and less in the formal realm and those that affirm participation in the formal realm.

Therefore, the being by participation must be in virtue of another.

Saying that a being must be by another or in virtue of another is affirming that it depends on another in being, and this is causal dependence.

In this way, in my view, the necessity of causal dependence in the being by participation is clearly shown. This critical defense would apply to any kind of efficient causality, in general.

Allow us here a comparison which, although it refers particularly to divine causality with respect to being, may help us to understand the connection between being by participation and being which is not because of itself. Let us imagine a small water stream flowing in the woods. The water flows at this moment: the very movement of the water and the continuous appearance of new water necessitate the existence of the source. In the same way, the being (*ens*) which at this moment is in the act of existing, which is continually, in the present, “passing from nothingness to being,” necessitates a Source which is the reason for the act. For just as the water by itself does not provide a reason for its movement, so the being by participation does not provide a reason for its present act of being.¹³

As may be seen, we are far from a consideration of being as a result, as “already done.” That which exists is, is now, and this “being now” is what requires a cause now, because that which exists is, “moves,” “passes from nothingness to being,” but not by itself. There is like a “flow of being” that has no explanation in this *ens*, because this *ens* is not by itself; that is to say, being

¹³ I am assuming, without explaining it here for lack of space, that in the demonstration of God’s existence we employ an initial notion of *esse* as common act which is different from the *esse ut actus essendi* in the strong sense, the latter proper to the *composition secundum rationem*. I plan to discuss this issue in a future paper, but cf. Ayala, “Brief Essay on the Nature and Method of Metaphysics,” 78–81.

does not belong to it because it is *this* ens. And so it is necessary to put a primordial source of being, the cause.

In Aquinas' five ways,¹⁴ that which is presented at the point of departure as a fact of experience is always something whose present and actual perfection cannot be explained by the thing itself that possesses it. Thus, the thing passing from potency into act cannot pass into act by itself but in fact makes this passage and, therefore, must pass into act by another. The middle cause cannot be the cause of the ultimate effect by itself, but it is a cause and, therefore, it is a cause by virtue of the first cause. Contingent being cannot be explained ultimately by itself but by necessary being. Being by participation cannot be explained except by the being *per essentiam*. Ordered being is not explained except by ordering, intelligent being. In this sense, it could be said that all of the five ways are based on the perception of a being by participation, that is, of a being that possesses something (a perfection) but whose possession does not find its ultimate explanation in the subject itself and, therefore, forces us to look for a cause.

III. THE NOTION OF “BEING WHICH IS NOT BECAUSE OF ITSELF” IN FABRO AND IN ST. THOMAS

What is the relationship between the critical defense of the principle of cause proposed here and the doctrine of Fr. Fabro? In general terms, it is clear that these reasonings respect the main points of Fabro's teaching. What is added, in my opinion, is a special valorization of the notion of “being which is not *per se*” in the argumentation. In my opinion, the only thing that can demand the reference to another founding causality is the dialectic “one (itself) - other,” in which, if the “one” is denied as the principle of actual being (thanks to the notion of participation), then the “other” must be affirmed. As Fr. Fabro himself would say, “*ex hoc quod aliquid non est per se,*

¹⁴ Cf. ST I, q. 2, a. 3.

est per aliud" (from the fact that something is not because of itself, it follows that it is because of another).¹⁵

Now, do we follow Aquinas' doctrine when we emphasize the notion of being which is not *per se*? A text from *De Potentia*¹⁶ can enlighten us regarding how St. Thomas himself uses the notion of insufficient being, or being which is not *per se*, to prove the necessity of causal dependence in the being which manifests itself as participated.

1. In Aquinas' first argument, the word "participation" does not appear, but the argument is presented as the proof of creation taken from the Platonic school, that is, as the *ratio platonis*. Moreover, Fabro cites this text as one of the formulas of participation in his article "La difesa critica."¹⁷ Here is the text:

If in a number of things we find something that is common to all, we must conclude that this something was the effect of some one cause: for it is not possible that this common something belong to each one by reason of itself, since each one by itself is different from the others: and diversity of causes produces a diversity of effects. Seeing then that being is found to be common to all things, which are by themselves distinct from one another, it follows of necessity that they must come into being not by themselves, but by the action of some cause. Seemingly this is Plato's

15 Fabro, "La difesa critica," 47; Cornelio Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1961), 598.

16 Cf. *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, c.

17 Cf. Fabro, "La difesa critica," 39. Fabro quotes explicitly *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 4 (he obviously meant article 6; cf. *De Potentia* q. 3, a. 6, c.) where he says, "Whenever something common is found in diverse things, it is necessary that they be reduced to one only cause" and in the footnote refers to article 5 (always from *De Potentia*, q. 3), which is the article we will comment on in the following.

argument, since he required every multitude to be preceded by unity not only as regards number but also in reality.¹⁸

In this text we can see how the elimination of one member of the disjunctive forces us to affirm the other member: if they cannot be by reason of themselves, they must be by reason of another. Thus, the reason that a participated perfection (what is common to many) is caused is that a participated perfection does not belong to something for being what it is.

It could be objected that this text belongs to the *compositio secundum rem*, since it is a parallel to *Summa*, I, q. 44, a. 1, where St. Thomas wants to demonstrate that every finite being must be created by God and not that God exists. That is, this text wants to demonstrate the causal dependence of every finite being with respect to God, and therefore, God's existence is presupposed. This would mean that the principle of participation is not being used to demonstrate that there must be a cause, but rather that the cause of every *ens* which participates in being must be God.

Nonetheless, the major premise¹⁹ is a general principle that can be applied both to the demonstration of the existence of God and to the demonstration of creation, since it does not presuppose the existence of the cause. Moreover, the justification of the major premise, i.e., the reason why that

¹⁸ *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, c.: "Oportet enim, si aliquid unum communiter in pluribus invenitur, quod ab aliqua una causa in illis causetur; non enim potest esse quod illud commune utrique ex se ipso conveniat, cum utrumque, secundum quod ipsum est, ab altero distinguatur; et diversitas causarum diversos effectus producit. Cum ergo esse inveniatur omnibus rebus commune, quae secundum illud quod sunt, ad invicem distinctae sunt, oportet quod de necessitate eis non ex se ipsis, sed ab aliqua una causa esse attribuat. Et ista videtur ratio Platonis, qui voluit, quod ante omnem multitudinem esset aliqua unitas non solum in numeris, sed etiam in rerum naturis."

¹⁹ Cf. *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, c.: "If in a number of things we find something that is common to all, we must conclude that this something was the effect of some one cause."

which is common to many individuals must be caused, is that what is common cannot belong to any of the individuals in virtue of itself: being by participation (here, being as common) is explained through the notion of “being which is not by virtue of itself,” which is the point we want to emphasize about the text. Finally, the closing lines of the paragraph²⁰ show how the emphasis is placed on the fact that Plato sought unity behind the many, and, therefore, the Platonic principle takes the likeness of a *resolutio secundum rem*, that is, of going to the efficient cause starting from the effects (from the many to the one).

Now, if the Platonic principle refers to the *resolutio secundum rem* and, therefore, to the demonstration of the existence of the cause, then why does St. Thomas use it here, where the existence of the cause is presupposed? For two reasons. First, because St. Thomas wants to conclude that the universal cause is one, God, which has a certain resemblance to seeking unity behind the multitude. Second, because the fact that the principle of causality (which is this Platonic principle) is used in the *resolutio secundum rem* does not mean that it cannot be used in the *compositio secundum rem*, which is what St. Thomas is doing. Let us see how he does it.

The Platonic principle is the following: “If some one thing is found in many as common, then it must be caused in them by a single cause.” Now, what is said of that which is common to many can be applied to that which is common to all: in this case, what matters is not how many there are, but that they are more than one (that is, it doesn’t matter whether they are many or all). Now, St. Thomas affirms in the minor premise that being appears to be common to *all things*. Therefore, Aquinas is not demonstrating that there must be a cause for some: he is demonstrating that this cause is the cause of *all*

²⁰ Cf. *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, c.: “Seemingly this is Plato’s argument, since he required every multitude to be preceded by unity not only as regards number but also in reality.”

things, because all things possess being as common.

Thus, the minor premise, which attributes being universally to all things (even those which have not been seen), presupposes having demonstrated that the *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* can be only one (and, therefore, presupposes the demonstration of God's existence).²¹ If the being by essence can be only one, then *all* other beings (not just some) will have being by participation.

2. The text immediately following (still in *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5) is also helpful to see how St. Thomas explains causal dependence in the participated being by an appeal to the notion of "being which is not in virtue of itself."

The second argument is that whenever something is found to be in several things in various ways participated, it must be attributed to those in which it exists imperfectly in virtue of that one in which it exists most perfectly: because where there are positive degrees of a thing so that we ascribe it to this one more and to that one less, this is in reference to one thing to which they approach, one nearer than another: for if each one were of itself competent to have it, there would be no reason why one should have it more than another. Thus fire, which is the extreme of heat, is the cause of heat in all things hot. Now there is one being most perfect and most true: which follows from the fact that there is a mover altogether immovable and absolutely perfect, as philosophers have proved. Consequently all other less perfect beings must needs derive being

²¹ It could also be explained as an obvious generalization (applying what has been seen in many to all), but this would imply that St. Thomas is using the argument more as a rhetorical element than as an apodictic demonstration. It is beyond the purpose of this paper to explore the usefulness of rhetorical arguments in philosophy, which can be immense.

therefrom. This is the argument of the Philosopher (*Metaph.* ii, I).²²

Here, the **major premise** is a general principle that presupposes the existence of the maximum and, therefore, cannot be used to demonstrate the existence of God. However, the explanation following this premise is an even more general principle which can be used also for said demonstration: this is where we see, as in the previous paragraph, that what is something by participation (here, "*secundum magis et minus*") must have that very thing caused *because it cannot have it of itself* ("*si enim unicuique eorum ex se ipso illud conveniret, non esset ratio...*"). The **minor premise**, which follows, is the affirmation that, in fact, there is a maximum, an affirmation that can be demonstrated, clarifies St. Thomas. With this clarification, Aquinas seems to interrupt the syllogism but, in reality, his reference to the demonstration of God's existence is precisely the proof of the minor premise. The **conclusion** is that every less perfect being will be caused by the most perfect being.

The path to reach this conclusion was the following: in general, if something possesses a perfection at its maximum, then it is the cause of all others who possess this perfection by degrees; now, there is one who possesses being at its maximum; therefore, this being will be the cause of all those who possess being by degrees.

²² *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, c.: "Secunda ratio est, quia, cum aliquid invenitur a pluribus diversimode participatum oportet quod ab eo in quo perfectissime invenitur, attribuat omnibus illis in quibus imperfectius invenitur. Nam ea quae positive secundum magis et minus dicuntur, hoc habent ex accessu remotiori vel propinquiore ad aliquid unum: si enim unicuique eorum ex se ipso illud conveniret, non esset ratio cur perfectius in uno quam in alio inveniretur; sicut videmus quod ignis, qui est in fine caliditatis, est calor principium in omnibus calidis. Est autem ponere unum ens, quod est perfectissimum et verissimum ens: quod ex hoc probatur, quia est aliquid movens omnino immobile et perfectissimum, ut a philosophis est probatum. Oportet ergo quod omnia alia minus perfecta ab ipso esse recipiant. Et haec est probatio philosophi."

The principle of causality explained through the notion of being which is not in virtue of itself, in this demonstration, is simply an explanation of the major premise: however, he uses precisely here the vocabulary of more and less and the example of fire, as in the fourth way, and this shows that it is the same principle of causality used in the fourth way. My intention was to show how St. Thomas explains causal dependence in the being by participation through this notion of being which is not in virtue of itself.

CONCLUSION

That which necessitates causal dependence in the being by participation is that such a being is not in virtue of itself and, therefore, must be in virtue of another. The being by participation cannot be such in virtue of itself because one cannot have partially what one has for being what one is. One is not “partially” oneself. Now, if one possesses something, but does not possess it in virtue of oneself, then one must possess it in virtue of another. This possessing a perfection by reason of a being other than oneself is what we call causal dependence. In the being by participation, this dependence is necessary because, otherwise, the actual possession of the participated perfection could not be explained. That is, if one does not possess something in virtue of oneself and does not possess it in virtue of another either, then one does not possess it at all. Now, if it is in fact possessed, and not in virtue of itself, then it is possessed in virtue of another. This seems to be the doctrine of Fr. Fabro and of St. Thomas as well.

Even if this defense applies to the principle of causality in general, this paper has not explored *in what way* this principle could be applied to other instances of efficient causality (for example, in the predicamental realm).

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