

QUESTION 1: DOES GOD IMMUTABLY FOREKNOW FUTURE CONTINGENT EVENTS?

1 Concerning distinction 39 I ask first whether God immutably foreknows future contingent events.

It seems that he does not. For there is no passage from one contradictory to another without a change in one of the extremes. Now what God foreknows, he can not-foreknow. Therefore, [his going from foreknowing to not-foreknowing comes about] through a change in something: not a change in the thing he foreknows, since the thing does not have being in virtue of its being foreknown or not-foreknown.¹ In the divine intellect, by contrast, the thing does not have being in the same way when God foreknows it as when God does not foreknow it; therefore, it is the divine intellect that changes, because it goes from foreknowing to not-foreknowing. Therefore, etc.

2 Furthermore, whatever is not *a* and can be *a* can begin to be *a*. Now God is not-foreknowing-*a* and can be foreknowing-*a*. Therefore, he can begin to be foreknowing-*a* and thus undergo change.

3 Furthermore, suppose God does not foreknow *a* but can foreknow *a*. My question concerns this power: is it active or passive? If it is passive, then it is a power to receive a form, and every such passage of matter to form is a change. If, however, it is active, then it has to be a natural power, and a natural power does not begin to act unless it undergoes change. Therefore, etc.

4 Augustine [*De Trinitate* XV.13.22] argues for the contrary, and the Master [*Sentences* I d. 39 c. 1 n. 2] quotes almost the entire chapter, beginning with the word "*Inamissibilis*."

¹ By this Scotus means, not that the thing's existence doesn't depend on its being foreknown or not, but that its being foreknown or not makes no difference to the thing. Thus, its going from being not-foreknown to being foreknown is, as we would say nowadays, a mere Cambridge change.

QUESTION II: DOES GOD NECESSARILY FOREKNOW FUTURE CONTINGENT EVENTS?

5 Further, I ask, second, whether God necessarily foreknows future contingent events.

It seems that he does. For God foreknows immutably, so it follows that he foreknows necessarily. Proof of the inference: in God there is no necessity other than the necessity of immutability. Therefore, whatever is in God immutably is in him necessarily. Accordingly, whatever he foreknows immutably, he foreknows necessarily.

6 Furthermore, every immutable being is formally necessary; therefore, whatever is immutable as to its being-understood is necessary as to its being-understood. The antecedent is evident, because all entities that are possible with respect to being are mutable, either objectively or subjectively; therefore, all immutable entities are necessary. And from this the inference is evident.

7 Furthermore, whatever can be *in* God formally, can *be* God. Knowing-*a* can be in God formally; therefore, it is God formally. Now whatever is God formally, is necessary; therefore, knowing-*a* is also necessary.

8 On the contrary: If God were to know *a* necessarily, then *a* would necessarily take place, since what is known necessarily must necessarily exist. Therefore, what is known with absolute necessity will necessarily take place, and thus it is not contingent.

I. THOMAS AQUINAS'S VIEW

A. EXPOSITION

9 One view² on this question is that although certain things are necessary, and necessarily come about, in terms of God's knowledge, there is no such necessity in terms of their proximate causes. So they say that these contingents can be understood either in relation to their remote cause or in relation to their proximate cause: in the first way, with respect to God, they are necessary; in the second way, they are not.

²² Thomas Aquinas, *ST I* q. 14 a. 13 ad 1; *Sent.* I d. 38 q. 1 a. 5 in corp.

10 They confirm this by appeal to the authority of Boethius in (I believe) prose 6 of *De consolatione Philosophi* [Book V]: “One and the same event, with respect to God,” etc. Look it up in the first part of Thomas’s *Summa*.

11 They also confirm it by argument: One and the same effect can, *qua* imperfect, be from a secondary cause but it cannot at all, *qua* imperfect, be from the First Cause. For example, a bad action, *qua* sin, is from a human being, whereas it is from God *qua* act. Likewise in the present case: one and the same effect can be contingent in one respect and necessary in some other respect.

B. AGAINST AQUINAS’S VIEW

12 But I can’t make sense of this. For it follows from this view that *everything* happens necessarily, which is impossible. God, after all, is omnipotent. It follows, then, that all possibles are subject to the command of his will and to his causality. Therefore, if, in his own order, he causes necessarily, and all things are perfectly subject to his causality, it follows that everything happens necessarily. For the Omnipotent has the power to cause immediately everything other³ than himself; and he is—so you say—a necessary cause in terms of his own causality; therefore, he causes everything necessarily. Moreover, no other cause causes.

13 Furthermore, if the First Cause is necessary, it follows that there will be no other causes but necessary causes; for if a cause that moves because it is in turn moved is moved necessarily, it moves necessarily, and so on for every intermediate cause all the way to the final effect. Consequently, nothing will be contingent; rather, every effect will be necessary. Hence, it is impossible for any effect to be contingent with respect to a proximate cause unless there is contingent causality on the part of the First Cause with respect to its effect.

14 Furthermore, it follows that there will be no cause other than the First Cause, which is necessary. For God is a sufficient and perfect cause prior to any secondary cause, and his causing an effect is naturally prior to any secondary cause’s doing so; therefore, he exercises

³ Reading *omne aliud* with V for the edition’s *aliud*, “something other,” which makes Scotus’s argument a non-sequitur.

causality prior to any secondary cause. Therefore, in that prior moment the effect receives its being perfectly and as complete, and so it receives necessary being. Accordingly, a secondary cause will not give it contingent being in the subsequent moment; consequently, every secondary cause will be superfluous.

15 Furthermore, it follows that nothing in the universe will be caused contingently. But⁴ God produced the world, and grace in the soul, and many other such things; and it is perfectly obvious that he did so contingently and not necessarily.

QUESTION 3: IS IT POSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE PREDESTINATE TO BE DAMNED?

16 But in order to make the answer to these two questions more evident, I will add a third question, which concerns distinction 40: Is it possible for someone predestinate to be damned?

It seems that it is not, because this follows: “God predestined Peter to be saved; therefore, Peter will necessarily be saved.” The antecedent is evident because it is necessary: both (1) because it is eternal, and everything eternal is necessary, and (2) because it is about the past, and every truth about the past is necessary – as the Philosopher says in *Ethics* VI [1139b10–11], “God is deprived of this alone: to make what has been done not to have been done.”

17 Furthermore, every future event known by God will necessarily come to pass. And that one who is predestined by God will be saved is known by God. Therefore, necessarily, one who is predestinate will be saved. This is a good argument, because according to *Prior Analytics* I (30a34–36) if the major premise is a necessary proposition and the minor premise is a simple factual proposition, a necessary conclusion follows. Therefore, etc.

18 Furthermore, if someone predestinate can be not-saved, it’s because he can sin through an act of will, which would mean that a sin, an act of the human will, can thwart an act of the divine will, which is false.

19 On the contrary: We read in Revelation [3:11], “Hold on to what you have, so that no one else might seize your crown.” The Apostle would not have given this exhortation if someone

⁴ Conjecturing *sed* for the edition’s *quia*, “For.”

could not lose the crown that, nonetheless, was already his.

20 Furthermore, according to Augustine,⁵ in the Church's common prayer, which is meant for both the living and the dead, the Church prays that God will keep their names written in the Book of Life. Now if a human being could not be erased from the Book of Life, there would be no point in the Church's praying thus. Therefore, etc.

21 Furthermore, admonitions, commands, and other such things would have no point.

22 Furthermore, if this were the case, human beings could not sin and, consequently, could not be damned either, since they would be saved of necessity.

23 Furthermore, if people were saved necessarily, all civic order and human interaction would be destroyed, and many other such things would follow.

II. REPLY TO THE QUESTIONS

A. FOUR PRELIMINARY ISSUES

24 To answer these questions we must deal with four preliminary issues: first, whether there is contingency in things; second, given that there is, we need to determine the first cause of contingency; third, we must show how the primary basis of contingency can be found in God; and fourth, we need to clarify certain propositions that arise in this discussion.

1. CONTINGENCY IN THINGS

25 As for the first issue, it is important to note that there are two sorts of contingency in things, just as, by contrast, there are two sorts of necessity: there is necessity of immutability and necessity of inevitability. Necessity of immutability characterizes something that cannot be otherwise: for example, God is a necessary being in this way. By contrast, necessity of inevitability is the kind of necessity at issue when we say that some future event is inevitable, even though it is not immutable or necessary in itself: for example, that the sun will rise tomorrow is necessary with the necessity of inevitability, and other natural motions are

⁵ *Sermo* 172.2.

necessary in this same way; and yet they can be otherwise, and therefore they are not unqualifiedly necessary or immutable.

26 In the same way, there are, by contrast, two sorts of contingency in things. There is contingency of mutability, in virtue of which someone can in itself be otherwise: movable and corporeal things are contingent in this way. And there is contingency of evitability, which characterizes things whose outcome and existence can be avoided and impeded: all acts of will that are freely caused by the will are like this.

27 And these two contingencies are not the same, because not everything that is contingent in the first sense—for example, something generable, which is contingent in itself—comes about contingently and only seldom. Indeed, some things, such as generable and corruptible things, come about necessarily, even though in themselves they are not necessary, but contingent. By contrast, things that are contingent in the second sense come about contingently and are generated contingently, and they are not necessary in themselves. Thus both sorts of contingency are in things, since some things are produced contingently and are also contingent in themselves.

28 But I don't see how it's possible to prove the contingency of things *a priori*, since one can't prove it through the definition of the subject of contingency, namely being, since there is no order⁶ and therefore it is difficult to find a middle term for such a proof, or through the passions of being, or through a prior passion, because there is no passion of being prior to contingency, since *contingent* and *necessary* together are the most basic division of being. Nor could one prove contingency by supposing the other disjunctive passion of being, namely necessity, unless one stipulated that they are relative opposites in the way that cause and caused are—which is false. For it does not follow that if the more noble disjunct exists in the universe, the less noble disjunct does also. Now the converse inference does hold, but then you don't have an *a priori* argument.

29 Even the Philosopher,⁷ who affirms that there is contingency in things, did not prove

⁶ That is, contingency does not characterize being in virtue of some further feature of being that is intermediate between being and contingency (and therefore explains why contingent being is contingent); rather, contingency characterizes being immediately.

⁷ *De interpretatione* 9 (18b31–19a5).

this *a priori*, but *a posteriori*, on the grounds that if there is no contingency, there is no point in making any effort or deliberating. For it is at least as well-known to everyone, if not in fact better-known, that there is contingency in things as that there is a point in deliberating and making an effort.

30 So it can be proved *a posteriori*, on the grounds that otherwise there would be no need for virtue or commands, merits or rewards, punishments or honors: in short, all civic order and all human interaction would be destroyed. And to those who deny contingency one should respond with torments and fire and suchlike; they should be beaten until they acknowledge that it is possible for them not to be tormented and thus affirm that they are tormented contingently and not necessarily—much as Avicenna⁸ proposed doing to those who deny the first principle. They should be whipped, he said, until they knew that being tortured and not being tortured, being burned and not being burned, are not the same.

So if contingency cannot be proved *a priori*, even less so can one prove that some particular event takes place contingently.

2. THE FIRST CAUSE OF CONTINGENCY

31 Taking it as established, therefore, that there is contingency in things, we turn to an investigation of the second topic: what is the primary basis of contingency? My view is that the primary basis of contingency is in the divine will, or in its act, in relation to things other than itself.

32 Proof: If the divine will acted of necessity in causing things other than itself, (1) there would be nothing contingent in the universe; also, (2) there would be no secondary cause in the universe; and (3) third, there would be nothing bad in things—all of which are absurd.

33 I prove (1) as follows: if something that moves insofar as it is moved, is moved necessarily, it moves necessarily. The First Cause moves necessarily (so you say), and no secondary cause moves except insofar as it is moved. Therefore, every secondary cause moves and causes necessarily.

⁸ *Metaph.* I c. 8.

34 (2) follows, because the First Cause moves and causes naturally prior to a secondary cause, so if it causes necessarily and perfectly in that prior instant, it follows that it cannot not produce the effect, and thus a secondary cause cannot cause anything in the subsequent instant unless one and the same thing is caused twice, which is unintelligible.

35 (3) also follows, because there is nothing bad in things except because of a lack of some due perfection that can be possessed either by the whole universe or by a particular being. So if God caused necessarily, then given that he is a supremely perfect agent and the First Agent, he would cause in each thing as much perfection as he could cause, and thus each thing would have all the [perfection] possible for it to have.

So since these conclusions are all false, it is clear that the divine will is related to everything other than itself to which it is related immediately, and that the primary basis of contingency is found in the divine will. For if there were some other cause of contingency prior to the divine will, it would be the divine intellect; but the divine intellect can't be the primary basis of contingency, since the intellect and its act, as preceding the will and its act, is purely natural, and a contingent effect does not have its ultimate source in a purely natural cause (nor does the converse hold). Therefore, the divine will is the primary basis of contingency.

36 But there are two ways in which something can be said to be contingent by reason of its cause. For example, an act of my will has a twofold cause of its contingency: one on the part of the divine will as First Cause, and another on the part of my will as secondary cause. Other things are contingent only by reason of the First Cause, and necessary insofar as they are from their secondary and proximate cause. Things that can be impeded by the divine will are like this: for example, the coming-about of natural things from their causes. A third division—namely, something contingent by reason of its secondary cause but necessary by reason of the First Cause—is impossible, as I explained and proved above [n. 15]. A fourth division—namely, something that is contingent but not by reason of the First Cause or by reason of its secondary cause—is also impossible.

37 Having found the cause of contingency, we can say that things other [than the divine will] are moved contingently both on their own part and on the part of the First Cause. Hence, contingency in us, that is, in the will, derives both from our will itself and from God, whereas in

some other things there is necessity from the thing itself but contingency on God's part. But in fact there is unqualified contingency in all other things with respect to the First Cause, on which all causes, both necessary and contingent, depend. By contrast, the necessity found in things and in all effects is not unqualified necessity, but only necessity in a certain respect. For some effects—all natural effects—are necessary only in relation to their proximate causes; and there is no necessity at all, but only contingency, in all effects or things willed by us, as such.

3. THE DIVINE WILL AS FIRST CAUSE OF CONTINGENCY

SCOTUS'S VIEW

38 Now that we have seen how the divine will is the first cause of contingency, and consequently how our own will is a secondary cause, we need to see how the divine will can be the first cause of contingency in all effects, given that both the divine will itself and its effect are invariable.

My view is this. If we take whatever is a matter of perfection in our will with respect to its acts and eliminate whatever is a matter of imperfection, and then attribute the perfections characteristic of the human will to the divine will, the answer to the question at hand is immediately clear. For our will is indifferent, and related contingently, to diverse acts, and through those diverse acts it is also related contingently to diverse objects and to a plurality of effects. The first indifference is a matter of imperfection, but the second is a matter of perfection and should therefore be ascribed to God.

Therefore, indifference to [a plurality of] effects is not the first indifference, because there is another indifference [namely, indifference to diverse objects] that is prior to it with respect to what is willed or not willed. Nor is indifference with respect to diverse acts the first indifference, because such indifference in a will is a receptive power with respect to acts, and similarly for an act that concerns only one object. So let us remove these matters of imperfection from the divine will, which is not indifferent to [diverse] acts through which it has to do with diverse objects—for in us this [capacity for diverse acts] is a matter of imperfection. Instead, the act of the divine will is one and simple and indifferent to diverse objects. Nonetheless, it has its

first act necessarily; but through that act it is related contingently to other things.⁹ Thus, the divine will, as formally actually willing, is not indifferent to opposite acts; rather, it is indifferent [to diverse objects] through one act, because that act is unlimited and infinite.

Hence, it is on account of its unlimitedness that it can will *a* and it can not will *a* by a single simple act, whereas I [can will *a* and can not will *a*] by multiple acts, because in us willing and willing-against with respect to the same object are diverse acts.

39 There is another respect in which our will is like the divine will. There are two ways in which something can be understood to be a power for opposites: either it is a power for opposites simultaneously, at the same instant of time, or it is a power for opposites successively, at different moments.

40 A power for opposites successively—that is, a power for being changed from one thing to another, as we see clearly in the case of transmutations—exists only in mutable things. Our will is the other kind of power for opposites: it is related indifferently to each of a pair of opposites at a single instant—taken separately, of course, not together, because that would imply a contradiction.¹⁰

41 Proof that our will is such a power for opposites: it is obvious that our will is a power for opposites in the first sense, that is, a power for opposites successively.

42 Proof that our will is also a power for opposites in the second way, that is, to each of a pair of opposites at a single instant, taken separately: in the very instant in which a cause causes, it causes either necessarily or contingently. Hence, just as a being or an effect (when the effect is a being) is either necessary or contingent, so too the cause, when it causes, causes either necessarily or contingently. Now our will, in the instant in which it elicits willing, or (in other words) causes, wills contingently; and in that very instant in which it is the cause of that willing, it could will the opposite. Otherwise, it would be causing necessarily in that instant.

43 This is the way in which there is a power for opposites in the divine will. For God cannot will anything otherwise than in eternity or (in other words) in a single instant of eternity;

⁹ Alternatively, conjecturing *obiectum* for *actum*: “Nonetheless, it is related necessarily to its first object, but it is related contingently to other things through its first object.”

¹⁰ That is, at the same time I have both the power to will *a* and the power not to will *a*; I do not have the power both to will *a* and not to will *a* at the same time.

and through that one willing, in that one instant, he is contingently the cause of *a*. By way of analogy, if my will existed for only one instant of time, it would contingently elicit an act of willing in that instant—and it could attain merit [by so willing]—not because it existed in some prior instant, but because it freely and contingently elicits such an act of willing. So too in the case of the divine will, in that instant of eternity in which it produces *a*, *a* can not exist; otherwise it would follow that when the divine will is the cause of *a*, *a* would exist necessarily.

44 But what is this power? I say that the power does not precede its act in terms of duration, for if it did, it would be mutable. Rather, the power is naturally prior to its contingent act. Therefore, naturally—not durationally—prior to its act, the will is compatible with the opposite of that act.

A. OBJECTIONS TO SCOTUS'S ANSWER

45 Against this I raise the objection that “everything that is, when it is, necessarily is.”¹¹ Therefore, if, in that instant of eternity, God wills something, he wills it necessarily, because his willing exists when he wills. Therefore, etc.

46 Furthermore, if in that instant he wills *a* and in that very same instant he can not will *a*, it follows that in one and the same instant—simultaneously, in other words—he can will two opposites, which is impossible.

47 Furthermore, this power by which God can will exists either along with its act or prior to its act. If the power exists along with its act, then it is in God necessarily; therefore, in the very instant in which he can simultaneously will *a* and will-against *a*, according to you, he wills that opposites exist simultaneously, which is impossible. If, on the other hand, the power exists prior to its act, then it is possible for the act to follow the power in terms of duration; and consequently such a power cannot will something else—in other words, the opposite of what it in fact wills—in *the very moment in which it precedes the act*, contrary to what you claim.

48 Furthermore, granted that the false alternative is impossible in that very same instant,¹²

¹¹ Aristotle, *De interpretatione* c. 9.

¹² That is, granted that it is not possible for not-*a* to exist in the very instant in which God wills *a*.

it must be determinately true that that alternative maintained to be false in the time in which it is impossible is not in fact false in that instant. For the following should be taken as a rule: if it were false in that instant, then it is not possible, and therefore it should be denied; for it can become true only through some motion or change [and therefore is not possibly true *in that instant*].

B. SCOTUS'S RESPONSE TO THE OBJECTIONS

49 To the first objection [n. 45] I say that the proposition “everything that is, when it is, necessarily is” can be either categorical (or temporal) or hypothetical. If it is categorical, then the expression “when it is” does not qualify the whole statement but only “is.” In that case, the sense of the proposition “everything that is, when it is, necessarily is” is “every being, when it is, is necessary or exists necessarily.” If, on the other hand, it is hypothetical, then the expression “when it is” is a qualification that modifies the whole statement or predication, and the sense is this: “For every being, necessarily, when it exists, it exists.”¹³ So if from this proposition you draw an inference applicable to the present issue, you are committing the fallacy of inferring an unqualified statement from a qualified one.

50 So the Philosopher did not intend this proposition to be understood as meaning “everything that exists exists necessarily in the moment in which it exists.” The qualification “when it exists” qualifies the whole predication. For that reason, from the fact that a predicate as qualified is predicated of a subject, one cannot infer that the predicate is predicated of that subject without that qualification, or in an unqualified sense; for it is not licit to infer an unqualified predication from a qualified one.¹⁴ Thus, this does not follow: “Necessarily, if a

¹³ Translating word for word, this would be “Every being exists necessarily when it exists.” But in English that formulation remains—at best—ambiguous between *de re* and *de dicto* modality; indeed, it is more naturally read as expressing a *de re* modality (“For all *x*, when *x* exists, *x* exists necessarily”), rather than the *de dicto* modality that Scotus intends to express (“For all *x*, necessarily, when *x* exists, *x* exists”). A “literal” translation would therefore be a *mistranslation*. Accordingly, I have translated this and subsequent modal expressions according to our contemporary conventions regarding the syntax of modal expressions, not according to Scotus’s syntax.

¹⁴ More literally, “from ‘in a qualified sense’ (*secundum quid*) it is not licit to infer ‘in an unqualified sense’ (*simpliciter*).”

human being runs, an animal runs; therefore, necessarily, an animal runs.”

51 As for the second objection [n. 46], to the claim that if the power is conjoined with the act, it can will opposites simultaneously, I say that when two items are in relation to some third item, it never follows that they both have that relation to it simultaneously unless they are compatible with each other in relation to that item. Otherwise, one could evidently infer [the possibility of] items taken jointly from [the possibility of] items taken separately.

52 For example, from “This body can be in this place, and likewise another body can be in that same place” it does not follow that “therefore, two bodies can be in the same place at the same time,” for it is not possible for the two bodies to have that relation to the third item¹⁵ at the same time. Another example: when each of a number of items taken separately is within the scope of a power, it does not follow that they are within the scope of that power when taken together. For example, from “I can carry one stone at *t* and I can carry that other stone at *t*,” it does not follow that “therefore, I can carry the two stones simultaneously.”

53 Likewise in the present case: the inference from “I can will *a* at *t* and I can will-against *a* at *t*” to “therefore, I can will *a* and will-against *a* simultaneously” is not valid. For my power to will *a* is such that *if I should so will*, I cannot not will *a*; yet I can will both, taken separately. And so I can never will both simultaneously, because willing one alternative rules out willing the other.

54 As for the third objection [n. 47], to the claim that the power exists either along with its act or prior to its act, I say that when one thing is naturally, not durationally, prior to another, it can coexist with the opposite of what is [naturally] posterior to it (though not posterior in terms of duration). Hence, what is naturally prior can coexist with the opposite of what is naturally posterior; but because it is not durationally prior, it cannot exist simultaneously, in terms of duration, with the opposite of what is [naturally] posterior.

55 So to the form of the argument I say that this power neither exists along with its act nor is durationally prior to its act; it is merely *naturally* prior to its act, or (in other words) precedes its act by a priority of nature. Just as my will wills its effect and brings it into being contingently, in such a way that in the very same instant it has the power [to will and bring into

¹⁵ That is, the relation of *being present in* to that place.

being] the opposite of that effect, so too the divine will determines itself to x in this instant in such a way that it could determine itself to the opposite of x in that same instant.

56 As to the fourth objection [n. 48], to the claim that “granted that the false alternative is impossible,” etc., I say that the rule is false if taken in an unqualified sense. For when certain items are possible without one opposite’s succeeding another, the other opposite is possibly true in virtue of the power of its naturally prior cause, by which it can be made true. Thus, if there were only one instant of time, and in that instant everyone was engaged in disputation, I say that in the very same instant it is possible for them not to be engaged in disputation, so that in one and the same instant each alternative, taken separately, could be true and its opposite false. If, by contrast, the possibility requires that one opposite succeeds another—for example, through motion or change—I say that the fact that the opposite cannot be made true [at the same time] arises from the particular kind of possibility under discussion[, not from the nature of possibility itself].¹⁶ Accordingly, that rule is false if taken in an unqualified sense.

4. HOW CERTAIN PROPOSITIONS ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD

57 As for the fourth main topic, how certain propositions that arise in this discussion are to be understood, I say that the proposition “something willing a can not will a ” must be distinguished in terms of the divided sense and the conjoined sense. There is one sense, the divided sense—“my will, which is now willing a , can successively will the opposite”—that is manifestly true. Another sense, the conjoined sense—“[possibly,] what is willing a is simultaneously willing-against a ”—is manifestly false, for it says that what is in fact impossible is possible.

58 There is yet another sense that is not manifest: “my will, which is willing a now can not

¹⁶ This is a very expansive translation of *dico quod hoc accidit gratia materiae quod suum oppositum non potest verificari*, more literally, “I say that the fact that the opposite cannot be made true is accidental by reason of the matter.”

will *a*.”¹⁷ This proposition too must be distinguished in terms of the divided sense and the conjoined sense. One sense is this: “my will[, which is willing *a* now,] can not will *a* now”; this reading conjoins both actively willing *a* and actively not willing *a* with ‘now’ and states that this conjoining is possible. If the proposition is understood in this way, I say that it is impossible, since this conjoined sense predicates an opposite of its opposite. But there is another sense, the divided sense: “my will wills *a* now, and it is possibly true of my will that it does not will *a* now.” Understood in that way, the proposition is true. Accordingly the Master¹⁸ is right to insist that these propositions be distinguished and understood in terms of the conjoined and divided sense.

59 Here’s an example: “every human being who is white runs.” If my words ‘who is white’ modifies ‘human being,’ the sense is “every white human being runs,” and that would be true in the conjoined sense, even granting that black people run too. But another way to understand it is that ‘who is white’ does not delimit the subject of the main clause but instead is a copulative proposition that predicates [running] virtually of everyone included in the scope of the word ‘who.’ If the proposition is understood in this way, there are two categorical propositions: one is “every human being runs” and the second is “everyone who is white runs.” Similarly, taken in the divided sense, “my will, which is willing *a* now, can not will *a* now” (and likewise “my will[, which] does not will *a* now[, can will *a* now]) includes two categorical propositions: one proposition expresses the factual claim that one of the opposites is actually true of a subject, and the other expresses the modal claim that the other opposite is possibly true of that same subject.¹⁹ So understood, the proposition says of my will both that it in fact does not will *a* and that, if it not determined by that willing, that very same will of mine can will *a*. So when that modal claim is understood as included, it signifies, as the Master says,²⁰ no more than this: in

¹⁷ The ambiguity in the Latin is represented in English by the absence of a comma after the ‘which-’ clause. If the comma is placed after ‘*a*,’ we have the conjoined sense; if the comma is placed after ‘now,’ we have the divided sense. (Note that there is no punctuation to speak of the manuscripts.)

¹⁸ Peter Lombard, *Sent.* I d. 38 c. 2 n. 2; d. 49 c. 1 nn. 3–5.

¹⁹ Thus, in the divided sense, “my will, which is willing *a*, can not will *a* now” is understood as “my will is willing *a* now, and it is possible for my will not to will *a* now.” Scotus, oddly, goes on to state instead the divided sense of “my will, which does not now will *a*, can will *a* now.”

²⁰ Peter Lombard, *Sent.* I d. 38 c. 2 n. 2.

the very same instant in which one opposite is actually present, the other opposite is possibly present, in such a way that a power that is really one and the same is not [necessarily] determined to the opposite that is actually present, but only contingently so, and the other opposite can be present in it.

III. SCOTUS'S REPLY TO THE QUESTIONS

A. REPLY TO THE SECOND QUESTION

1. AQUINAS'S VIEW

60 Now I shall apply these observations to the questions at issue. In his answer to the second question, about the necessity of divine knowledge, a certain doctor says that "God knew a future contingent" is necessary; thus, according to him, "God necessarily foreknows that this—say, that you will sit down tomorrow—will occur" is true. For, in "God knew a future contingent," he says,

the contingency characterizes only the object of the verb; it is not a principal and formal part of the proposition. Thus the contingency or necessity of what God knows has no bearing on whether the proposition [stating that God knows it] is true or false, necessary or contingent. For "I said 'A human being is an ass'" can be true in just the same way that "I said 'God is God'" can be; and in this way one is just as contingent as the other.²¹

61 On the basis of these remarks one could make an argument along the following lines (though he does not make such an argument himself): a mental act is not modified by the subject-matter that it concerns. Therefore, neither God's knowing nor his willing is modified in such a way that it is called contingent just because it concerns something contingent. Now God's knowing is absolutely necessary; therefore, it is not prevented [from being necessary] when it concerns something contingent. An example: suppose I say "I understand that I am saying nothing." In that case, I both understand that I am saying "I am saying nothing" and also nonetheless say something.

2. SCOTUS'S OWN ANSWER

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *ST I* q. 14 a. 13 ad 2. (The quotation is fairly close but not exact.)

62 But I can't make sense of that. So I say that certain things are contingent in themselves, and God, accordingly, knows them contingently. Hence, he knows contingently that the soul of the Antichrist will come into being.

63 I prove this as follows. When two things are convertible as to truth, it cannot be the case that one is true contingently and the other is true necessarily, since the contingent one does not follow from the necessary one, given that one can be false and the other true. Now "God wills that the soul of the Antichrist will come into being" and "God knows that the soul of the Antichrist will come into being" are convertible, as I proved earlier [d. 38, qq. 1–2, n. 38], since God can know in advance that the soul of the Antichrist will come into being only because the divine will wills in advance that the soul of the Antichrist will come into being. Now "God wills that the soul of the Antichrist will come into being" is contingent, since God contingently wills that the soul of the Antichrist will come into being; therefore, God contingently knows that the soul of the Antichrist will come into being.

64 Furthermore, I offer a second proof as follows. What presupposes something contingent is not necessary. Now God's knowing that a future contingent will come to pass presupposes that that future contingent is willed by God, because before the divine will's acceptance of that future contingent, the divine intellect is altogether neutral with respect to it. And thus the proposition "God knows²² that *a* will come about" presupposes not merely what *a* is, but the fact that *a* is willed by God or (in other words) the fact that God wills *a*. Therefore, since God's will with respect to something contingent is contingent—otherwise one would have to deny any contingency in things—it follows that his understanding or knowledge with respect to something contingent is also contingent.

65 And that distinction that some people²³ make, that the necessity in the proposition "God necessarily knows that *a* will come about" can qualify the act of knowledge either in itself or in relation to its terminus, has no force; there is no genuine distinction here. For a transient or transitive act is such an act only insofar as it is understood as going out to its terminus, and so it cannot be disassociated from its terminus without ceasing to be that sort of act. Thus, when the

²² The edition is clearly correct in changing the reading of the MSS, *vult* (wills), to *scit* (knows).

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *ST I* q. 14 a. 13 ad 2–3.

terminus is contingent, the act of knowing that formally terminates at such a terminus will also be contingent. This is evident because a transitive verb that signifies a going out to a terminus is specified by that terminus. Therefore, in “God knows that this contingent will come about,” ‘knows’ is understood as modified by that terminus. Now that terminus is purely contingent, so it follows that God’s knowing that such a contingent will come about is also contingent, not necessary.

66 In reply to the argument against my view [n. 61] I say that if we are evaluating it purely as a transitive act, its necessity can be impeded (and yet an act of speaking is necessary, as is evident in the example given above [n. 60]). Therefore, [the necessity of] an expression signifying a mental act can be impeded. For the subject-matter does not prevent it from being an act, though it does prevent it from being necessary. Now in the proposition “I understand that I am not saying anything,” the ‘I am saying’ or ‘saying’ that is stated as the terminus [of the act of understanding] is contingent. Therefore, etc.

B. REPLIES TO THE PRELIMINARY ARGUMENTS OF THE SECOND QUESTION

67 So in reply the first argument of the second question [n. 5], which says that “whatever is immutable in God is necessary; therefore, what he foreknows immutably, he foreknows necessarily,” I say that this does not follow, because ‘necessary’ has a wider extension than ‘immutable.’ ‘Necessary’ excludes both kinds of possibility, both that which depends on succession and that which is with respect to opposites at the same time, taken separately, as I explained above [n. 40] in discussing the two kinds of power [for opposites].

68 As to the proof [n. 5], to the point that “in God there is no necessity other than the necessity of immutability” I say that ‘immutability’ does not convey the entire notion of necessity. The Philosopher conveys it better when he says that the contingent is what can be otherwise; he doesn’t say that the contingent is what is mutable, because “what can be otherwise” has a wider extension than “what is mutable,” and thus ‘impossibility’ has a wider extension than ‘immutability.’ I say that the attribute of immutability is uniquely applicable to God because immutability means not being able to be otherwise than before, and “not being

able to be otherwise” has a wider extension than “not being about to be otherwise through change” or “not being mutable.”

69 As for the claim in the second argument [n. 6] that “every immutable being is formally necessary; therefore, whatever is immutable as to its being-understood is necessary as to its being-understood,” I concede the antecedent and deny the inference. The first part—that the antecedent is true—is evident, because an immutable being is immutable in virtue of its form. Therefore, in virtue of its form it cannot be otherwise, and so such a being is unqualifiedly necessary. An object, by contrast, is immutable in virtue of the real immutability of the act [of understanding that object]; it is not immutable in an unqualified sense or formally, because it is not necessarily required for the act. Accordingly there need not be any formal necessity in a secondary object or in that object’s being an object, since there is immutability in it only by reason of the primary object, the divine essence; and thus there is no absolute necessity in such an object or in such an object’s being an object.

70 In reply to the third argument [n. 7], to the claim that “whatever can be *in* God formally can *be* God” I say that there are two ways in which something can be in God: formally and objectively. What is in God in the first ways is necessarily God in real being. But what is in God in the second way is not necessarily in God, because such a thing is a secondary object in God. Hence, God’s act neither requires nor presupposes such an object. Accordingly, the divine act, whether the act of understanding or the act of willing, is necessary with respect to its first object but not necessary either with respect to, or by reason of, a secondary object.

C. REPLY TO THE FIRST QUESTION

71 What should be said in reply to the first question [n. 1] is that God immutably foreknows every future contingent that will come about, because in God understanding and willing are identical with God himself, and thus they are immutable, as I proved in distinction 8.²⁴ Therefore, God immutably knows everything future that is contingent in itself.

Proof of the inference: an object that is an object of the intellect only in virtue of the

²⁴ Cf. *Reportatio* IA d. 8 p. 1 nn. 1–4, p. 2 nn. 29–31.

being that it has in an act of the intellect cannot be otherwise unless it is otherwise in an act of understanding. Now future contingents are objects only in virtue of the being they have in being understood, because they are constituted in understood being by an act of the intellect. Therefore, if they were mutable as objects for the divine intellect, the content of God's act of understanding would be mutable; therefore, God's act of understanding would be mutable (which is false), because from the opposite of one follows the opposite of the other. So it is the power for opposites that generates the difficulty in this question, and I explained that power above [nn. 41–44]; so this is enough to answer the question.

D. REPLIES TO THE PRELIMINARY ARGUMENTS OF THE FIRST QUESTION

72 I reply to the arguments. In reply to the first argument [n. 1], to the claim that “there is no passage from one contradictory to another without some change in one of the extremes,” one has to agree that the antecedent is true. But then you conclude, “Therefore, since God can know *a* and can not know *a*, one who is not knowing can become knowing; and thus this passage from one contradictory to another comes about through a change.” That, I say, does not follow. This is what follows: “Therefore, God cannot pass from not-knowing *a* to knowing *a* without change.” For God's power or potentiality [both to know *a* and not to know *a*] is not a power for one opposite after another, since whatever God knows, he knows in eternity.

73 In reply to the next argument [n. 2], to the claim that “whatever is not *a* and can be *a* can begin to be *a*” I say that the implication is not formal; it holds good because of the subject-matter in the case of things that can undergo change from privation to form. In eternity, by contrast, in which there is no beginning, God can have a form he does not have, without change.

74 In reply to the next argument [n. 3], to the point that the power by which God can know *a* and not know *a* is either passive or active, I say that it is not passive. So let's stipulate that it's active. Then I say that every operative power requires an object, and so if an object's being an object is contingent, so too is the act that concerns that object. Now the will is what brings it about that this contingently known thing is an object, or that this object is contingently understood. Nonetheless, it is an object immutably, though not necessarily, as I have explained

[nn. 62, 67–68]. Analogously, suppose I saw continuously and without any interruption in the act of vision. If, contingently, I had now this object before me and now that, I would always be seeing contingently and not necessarily, and yet immutably. For example, if through the beatific object, which is the divine essence, I were to see that Peter is blessed, although I would see immutably, I would nonetheless see contingently.

E. REPLY TO THE THIRD QUESTION

1. THE VIEW OF OTHERS

75 In reply to the third question, from distinction 40, which asks whether it is possible for someone predestinate to be damned, some say²⁵ that one sort of proposition requires a distinction and the other does not: the modal proposition—either “It is possible for someone predestinate to be damned” or “It is possible for someone predestinate to be saved”—requires a distinction, but the factual proposition —“God predestined Peter to be saved”—does not, because it is unqualifiedly true.

2. SCOTUS’S REPLY

76 But my reply to the question is that such propositions as “Someone predestinate can be damned” and the like must be distinguished in terms of the conjoined and the divided sense, because all participles imply, or can imply, either sense. And yet it must be said, as I said earlier [n. 57ff.], that in the divided sense there are two categorical propositions. One of them, “Peter will be saved,” is factual and states Peter’s [future] salvation; the other, “Peter will be damned,” is modal and states the possibility of his damnation. And both are true: “Peter will be saved” is true, and yet “Peter can be damned” is also true.

77 But how can it be true? I say that God’s knowledge is not incompatible with the character of the thing known, and vice versa. In the case of the proposition “Peter will be saved,” what is the character of the thing known? I say that it is a *contingent* character.

²⁵ Peter Abelard, *Comm. Rom.* I c. 3.

Likewise, there is a contingent character in the divine intellect's knowing this.²⁶ Therefore, contingency is not incompatible either with God's knowledge or with the willed or known object; on the contrary, contingency characterizes both. Therefore, both are compatible with the possibility of the opposite. Therefore, though it is true that someone predestinate can be damned, this is not incompatible with the knowledge that God has of those who are to be saved or with divine predestination. For the contingency on the part of what is known by God is itself known [by God]; therefore, it is not incompatible with divine knowledge or with the certainty God has concerning the predestinate.

F. REPLIES TO THE PRELIMINARY ARGUMENTS OF THE THIRD QUESTION

78 In reply to the first argument of this question [n. 16], to the claim that "God predestined Peter to be saved; therefore, necessarily, he is saved" I say that the antecedent is not necessary (as you claim in your argument), but contingent.

79 As for your proof—"because it is eternal"—I say that the eternal object that is the first object for his intellect, namely, the divine essence, is necessary; but a secondary object, though (as I have explained) it is eternally an object for his intellect, is nonetheless not necessarily an object in an act of his intellect. Rather, it is only contingently an object, because it is only contingently accepted by the divine will; and for that reason it can not be an object. Consequently, it is possible for any such secondary object not to exist.

80 In reply to the second argument [for the antecedent: n. 16], in which you appeal to the fact that it is about the past, I say that this divine act does not go out to the past in its real being, but only in our way of talking about it. For the act expressed by the verb 'predestined' is as present now as it was from eternity; in fact it is said to be present insofar as the "now" of eternity, in which God does all things, coexists with our present, and past insofar as it coexists with our past, and likewise for the future. These do not differ in God, but only in our way of

²⁶ More idiomatically, but less literally: "I say that it is *contingent*. Similarly, the divine intellect's knowing this is contingent."

speaking. For as Augustine says in *Super Ioannem* [tr. 99 n. 5]—look this up in distinction 10²⁷—in God “he will hear,” “he hears,” and “he heard” are all the same.

“But an act that in its reality has gone out into the past is necessary, and a true proposition about that act is necessary without any real pastness on the part of the act or the object.” Someone who says this imagines that God has been asleep up to now, and that God deliberates beforehand and only then can settle on his act of predestination. I say, therefore, that everything is as new to God today as it was from eternity, in that nothing has ever been new to God. Hence, if our will were to have its act in an instant, it would not derive any greater necessity from that instant; likewise, no necessity accrues to the divine act from the instant of eternity.

81 In the next argument [n. 17] you say this: “that one who is predestinate will be saved is foreknown by God; therefore, it will necessarily take place,” and then you prove this by invoking the principle “if the minor premise is a simple factual proposition,” etc. To this one should reply that that minor premise is not a simple factual proposition (and even if it were, the necessary conclusion would still not follow, though it would be true). The reason is that the divine power is a power for opposites in such a way that the will can will both *a* and not-*a* in and for the same instant, though not both simultaneously. In any event, a conclusion that follows from one necessary premise and one simple factual premise is not [always] necessary, and so the Philosopher’s rule is not universally true. This is clear in the case of a clod resting at the center of the earth. Yes, “Necessarily, everything that is at rest is not moved,” but “A clod at the center of the earth is at rest; therefore, necessarily, it is not moved, and indeed it is impossible for it to be moved” does not follow, even though the minor is a simple factual proposition.

82 To the form of the argument, therefore, I say that “necessarily”²⁸ can modify or qualify either (1) “will come to pass” or (2) the whole sentence. (1) If it qualifies “will come to pass,” it expresses a quality of the event: the meaning is that the event will be necessary. So understood,

²⁷ Actually d. 9 q. un. n. 9; cf. *Ord.* I d. 9 q. un. n. 16.

²⁸ Conjecturing *necessario* for the edition’s *necessario scire*. The argument that follows is about the necessity of events, not about the necessity of God’s knowledge of events; and the original argument [n. 17] likewise has nothing to do with the necessity of God’s knowledge, but only with the necessity of events.

the proposition is false, since in fact the event will take place contingently. And in that case, when it signifies or qualifies that the event expressed by the verb “will come to pass” is necessary, the proposition itself is not modal. (2) If, by contrast, “necessarily” qualifies the whole sentence, then the proposition is modal, and its meaning is this: “Necessarily, everything foreknown will come to pass.” Understood in this way, the proposition is true, but then I deny the conclusion.

83 As for the proof [the appeal to *Prior Analytics* I], fine, though I don’t believe it. I say that the minor premise is not a simple factual proposition; furthermore, it is not enough for the simple factual proposition to be true. Indeed, there needs to be as much necessity in the minor premise as if necessity or the modality of the necessary were explicitly added to it, as is evident in the example I have already discussed [n. 16]. The minor premise in that example is not merely a simple factual proposition: it has permanent truth, because that object at the center of the earth will not be moved for eternity. But it is not a necessary truth, which is why a false conclusion follows.

84 In reply to the last argument [n. 18], to the objection that an act of the human will can, through sin, thwart an act of the divine will, I say that the divine will is thwarted only when its volition remains but the effect of that volition does not follow. But that is not the case here, since just as our will can not will this (for example, Peter can sin), so too God can will not to save Peter; and thus God’s will is neither thwarted nor changed.