Aquinas on God’s infallible causation of contingent effects
Gloria Frost
University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Aquinas’ thought that God’s inability to fail in his causation of an effect does not obliterate its contingency. In explaining how this can be, he claims that secondary causes are the source of the contingent modality of certain effects jointly produced by God and creatures. Aquinas reasons that if both God and creatures are necessary causes of created effects, if even one of these causes is able to fail in providing its necessary causation, it is possible for the effect not to obtain and thus, the effect is contingent. Throughout his works, however, Aquinas raises a certain objection to this line of reasoning: God’s willing of an effect $x$ is incompatible with $x$’s failure to obtain. Thus, even $x$’s failure to obtain on account of a secondary cause’s failure is not possible if God wills $x$. In this paper, I present and analyze the various solutions that Aquinas proposes to this objection. I will pay particular attention to how Aquinas’s varying responses to the objection reflect a shift in his conception of the extent of God’s causal agency in governing the order of events in the created world.