

The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception  
of Avicenna's Physics and Cosmology

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# The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Physics and Cosmology

edited by

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## Preface

The studies of this volume are based on papers presented at a colloquium hosted by the Villa Vigoni in Menaggio, Italy, in 2013. We are grateful to the participants and chairs who do not contribute to this volume: Charles Burnett, Alnoor Dhanani, Silvia Donati, Heidrun Eichner, Lukas Mühlethaler and Ulrich Rudolph. This was the second colloquium on Avicenna's influence in Arabic, Hebrew and Latin. The results of the first Villa Vigoni conference on metaphysics were published in 2012 in the same series as the present volume. We would like to thank warmly Max Kinninger and, in particular, Katrin Fischer, who prepared the articles for copy-editing, and Jon Bornholdt, who revised the texts of those contributors who are not native speakers of English. We are very grateful for the funding of the colloquium and of the publication by the VolkswagenFoundation, as part of the Lichtenberg professorship grant to Dag Nikolaus Hasse. A final expression of gratitude goes to the staff of the Villa Vigoni, who created a most pleasant atmosphere and thus helped to foster an intense research discussion about Avicenna and his influence in physics and cosmology.

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# Avicenna's Influence on William of Auvergne's Theory of Efficient Causes

Katrin Fischer

William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris from 1228 until his death in 1249, was one of the first thinkers who had access to the Latin translation of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (*Metaphysics; Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*) and the *Kitāb al-Nafs* (*Book on the Soul; De anima*) of Avicenna's philosophical summa *Kitāb al-Šifā'* (*Book of the Cure*).<sup>1</sup> He discussed Avicennian theories especially in his *De trinitate*, *De universo* and *De anima*. These three works constitute the so called *primum magisterium*, that is, the first part of William's *Magisterium divinale et sapientiale*, which consists altogether of seven works. While the other works appeal to the Christian faith, the *primum magisterium* contains philosophical treatises in which the arguments do not rely upon authority and Scripture, but rather on reason.<sup>2</sup> William deals especially with Aristotle and the Peripatetics, who are according to him 'the followers of Aristotle and those who were best known from the nation of the Arabs in the doctrines of Aristotle'<sup>3</sup>. On one occasion, William explicitly names al-Fārābī, al-Ġazālī and Avicenna.<sup>4</sup>

There is a broad agreement that William usually refers to Avicenna when he speaks of Aristotle and his followers (*Aristoteles et sequaces eius*).<sup>5</sup> When dealing with the philosophers' teachings, William encounters several theories which are incompatible with the Christian doctrine. However, this does not lead him to adopt a generally dismissive attitude towards the philosophers. In *De anima* he summarizes his approach to them as follows:

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- 1 I am grateful for advice to Dag Nikolaus Hasse, Amos Bertolacci and Jörn Müller.
  - 2 See Teske's introduction in William of Auvergne, *The Universe of Creatures*, p. 15, and Teske, William of Auvergne on the Relation, esp. pp. 286–8.
  - 3 William of Auvergne, *De universo* Ia-iae, c. 24, p. 618bG: 'Philosophi maxime peripatetici, idest sequaces Aristotelis et qui famosiores fuerunt de gente Arabum in disciplinis Aristotelis'. (This translation into English as well as the following ones for *De universo* are drawn from Teske in William of Auvergne, *The Universe of Creatures*.)
  - 4 See William of Auvergne, *De anima*, c. V.2, p. 112b: 'Post haec autem incipiam destruere errorem eorum qui causas alias efficientes quam creatorem benedictum eidem posuerunt, ex quibus fuit Aristoteles et sequaces ejus, videlicet Alpharalius, Algaxel et Avicenna et plures alij qui post eum et per eum forsitan a via veritatis in parte ista deviaverunt.'
  - 5 See De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, pp. 20–22; Teske, William of Auvergne's Use of Avicenna's Principle, pp. 102–3, and id., William of Auvergne on the Individuation, pp. 124–6.

But though on many points one must contradict Aristotle, as is really right and proper—and this holds for all the statements by which he contradicts the truth—he should be accepted, that is, upheld in all those statements in which he is found to have held the right view.<sup>6</sup>

William decides case-by-case if and under which circumstances a theory is worthy of being adopted or must be rejected. Therefore, it does not surprise that evident parallels to Avicenna can be found in *De trinitate*, where William sets forth his ontology and the characterization of the first principle, that is, God.<sup>7</sup> Like Avicenna, William maintains the distinction of essence and existence,<sup>8</sup> and in combination with this he even calls the first principle, which alone is not subject to the distinction, a necessary existent in itself (*necesse esse per se ipsum*),<sup>9</sup> while every other being is only possible in itself (*possibile esse per se ipsum*). According to both Avicenna and William, a possible

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- 6 William of Auvergne, *De anima*, c. II.12, p. 82b: ‘Quamquam autem in multis contradicendum sit Aristoteli sicut revera dignum et justum est, et hoc in omnibus sermonibus quibus dicit contraria veritati, sic suscipiendus est id est sustinendus in eis omnibus in quibus recte sensisse invenitur.’ (The English translation of this quotation as well as the following ones of *De anima* are drawn from Teske in William of Auvergne, *The Soul*.) For a short interpretation of this quotation see e.g. Miller, William of Auvergne and the Aristotelians, p. 263, and Teske, William of Auvergne’s Use of Avicenna’s Principle, pp. 101–2.
- 7 For a general overview of Avicenna’s influence on William’s language, style and teachings, see Teske, William of Auvergne’s Debt to Avicenna. For an analysis of the influence concerning special topics, see the other articles in Teske, *Studies*.
- 8 See William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 1–3 and 6, esp. c. 6, p. 43, line 66–p. 44, line 70: ‘Quoniam autem ens possibile non est ens per essentiam, tunc ipsum et eius esse, quod non est ei per essentiam, duo sunt revera, et alterum accidit alteri, nec cadit in rationem vel quidditatem ipsius. Ens igitur, secundum hunc modum, compositum est et resolvable in suam possibilitatem sive quidditatem et suum esse.’ For Avicenna’s theories, see his *Šifā’*: *Ilāhiyyāt*, esp. I, 5–7 (ontology); VI, 1–2 and VIII, 1–2 (causes); VIII, 4–6 and IX, 1–5 (Necessary Existent and emanation).
- 9 The exact denomination of the first principle in *De trinitate* varies between *necesse esse*, *necesse esse per se ipsum* and *necesse esse per semetipsum*. See e.g. c. 6, p. 39, lines 32–3: ‘Per viam similem esse possibile deducet nos ad esse necesse per se ipsum’; c. 6, p. 40, lines 62–7: ‘Restat igitur esse aliquid, quod non sit possibile. Hoc autem ex necessitate erit necesse esse per semetipsum, opposita namque sunt affirmatio et negatio, possibile et necesse esse per se; est enim necesse esse quod in se ipso consideratum invenitur habere esse in effectu, et prohibens suum non esse’; c. 6, p. 42, lines 28–30: ‘Hae igitur propriae sunt intentiones et nominationes primi esse quibus et est et nominatur verissime esse, essentiale esse, cui idem est esse et id, quod est esse sufficientiae, esse necesse sive necessitatis’, and c. 14, p. 85, lines 95–9: ‘Quod si eius essentia non fuerit necesse esse per se ipsam, sed fuerit possibile esse in se ipsa, tunc prima emanatio in se ipsa nihil habebit omnino necessitatis sive actualitatis. Qualiter autem ex necesse secundum se sit tantum possibile in se, non est videre’. In *De universo* William even acknowledges that the philosophers have ‘most correctly’ called God the necessary existent in itself: IIA-IIae, c. 10, p. 853bA: ‘primum

existent, through itself, is not sufficient to obtain being in actuality; rather, it needs an external coexisting efficient cause in order to actually exist—in contrast with the necessary existent in itself.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, again like Avicenna, William emphasizes God's uniqueness, his indefinability, perfect simplicity and immutability.<sup>11</sup> Given this characterization of God, one might assume that William's cosmological theory too is very close to the Avicennian model, in which the world proceeds from God in an eternal cascade of emanation. Such a theory, however, is not an acceptable option for William. Quite the opposite: it is beyond all question for him that an eternal emanation from God is one of the issues that contradict the truth, which is why he considers it his duty to vehemently reject this theory. Lengthy rebuttals of the eternity of the world as well as of emanation theory can be found in *De trinitate* and more particularly in *De universo*.<sup>12</sup> William's main argument against these theories defends God's absolute freedom against the idea of a first principle acting with natural necessity, a doctrine which is, according to him, found in Avicenna. To illustrate God's exceptional status as a cause, William in a noteworthy comparison contrasts different kinds of efficient causes.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, three issues of his theory of efficient causality are influenced by Avicenna: the theory of potency (*potentia*), the characterization of natural causality, and the concept of sufficiency of cause (*sufficiencia causae*).

In what follows, I will expound Avicenna's influence on these issues. In the first section, I will compare Avicenna's discussion of the term potency (*quwwa*; *potentia*) in *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2 to William's discussion of the same term in *De trinitate*, chapter eight, in order to show the parallels between both thinkers. The theory of potency, and especially the distinction drawn by both authors between twofold and single potency, is important for William's classification of efficient causes, which I will expound in the second section. Natural causes only possess single potency and therefore act through necessity, or, as William preferably characterizes it, in the manner of a servant. I will point out that this

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principium, quod rectissime nominaverunt [sc. Aristoteles et omnes sequaces eius] necesse esse per se<sup>7</sup>.

- 10 See William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 2, esp. p. 24, lines 45–50: 'Quoniam autem omne causatum, intellige causatum quale determinavimus et causam similiter, habet esse acquisitum et de non esse eductum per causam suam in esse, quantum est in ipso (non enim est prohibens a se ipso suum non esse, nec est dans sibi ipsi suum esse, sed est sustinens et recipiens illud), est igitur possibile et susceptibile utriusque, quantum in ipso est.' For Avicenna, see his *Šifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 6, esp. p. 31, lines 1–2, and VIII, 3, p. 272, lines 1–4 (ed. Marmura); *Philosophia prima*, p. 44, lines 38–41, and p. 395, line 18–p. 396, line 23.
- 11 See Avicenna, *Šifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 6–7 and VIII, 4–6, and William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 3–6, 10 and 24.
- 12 See William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 10, and id., *De universo* Ia-Iae, c. 17–27; IIa-Iae, c. 1–11, and Ia-IIae, c. 9 and 25–30.
- 13 See id., *De universo* IIa-Iae, c. 9, p. 694aF–H.

characterization of natural causality, which William often attributes to Aristotle, originally stems from Avicenna. In contrast to natural causes, human beings and God act by will. God, however, differs from other voluntary causes, in that he is most free and immutable. To show the great difference between his acts and those of all other causes, William introduces the concept of sufficiency of cause (*sufficiencia causae*). In the third and last section of this paper, I will show on the one hand that this concept is inspired by Avicenna and on the other hand that William uses it to argue against Avicenna's emanation theory.

## 1 The Theory of Potency (*quwwa; potentia*)

William's classification of efficient causes in *De universo* part Ila-Iae, chapter nine is based on a theory of potency which is developed in detail previously in *De trinitate*. After expounding his ontology, which is mainly influenced by Boethius and, as already mentioned, by Avicenna,<sup>14</sup> William proceeds in chapter eight of *De trinitate* to analyse the terms potency (*potentia*) and possibility (*possibilitas*) with the aim of determining God's omnipotence.<sup>15</sup> In this chapter, as well as the following one, William obviously draws on Avicenna's discussion of potency (*quwwa; potentia*) and possibility (*imkān; possibilitas*) in *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2,<sup>16</sup> but his treatment is a considerable simplification thereof.<sup>17</sup> Since Avicenna's discussion, in turn, is deeply influenced by Aristotle's analysis of the term potency (δύναμις) and related terms in *Metaphysics* Delta, 12 and Theta, 1, 2 and 5, and even contains many quotations from those chapters,<sup>18</sup> it is evident that William's treatment is at least indirectly also influenced by Aristotle. Since William, who does not name his source, knew Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, one may suspect that Aristotle's discussion is his primary direct template. However, if one compares the statements of all three thinkers, it becomes apparent that William is closer to Avicenna than to Aristotle, with regard both to content and terminology. In fact, William is one of the authors of the thirteenth

14 For an overview of William's ontological treatise in the first chapters of *De trinitate*, see Teske's introduction in William of Auvergne, *The Trinity*, pp. 8–14. See also Caster, *The Distinction between Being and Essence*.

15 For an overview of this discussion, see Teske's introduction in William of Auvergne, *The Trinity*, pp. 15–25.

16 Both thinkers begin their treatise with an enumeration of different meanings of the term potency and proceed to the concept of possibility, which both of them relate to matter. Furthermore, William is inspired by Avicenna to differentiate the potencies according to the following pairs of opposites: rational—irrational, perfect—imperfect, proximate—remote.

17 As Teske also remarks in William of Auvergne, *The Trinity*, p. 93, n. 6.

18 See Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, pp. 330 and 355–7.

century whose interpretation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is deeply influenced by the *Ilāhiyyāt*.<sup>19</sup>

Inspired by Avicenna,<sup>20</sup> William starts his analysis by listing three main meanings of potency: active, dominating and resisting potency.

For the present, then, we shall say that potency [*potentia*] is called the principle of operations, and it is the overflowing or ray of being itself, from which operations come forth. This is also called capacity [*virtus*] and is called agent or active potency ... Secondly, superiority or domination is called potency. This happens only by the obedience or the consent of another will and is in common speech called power [*potestas*] ... Thirdly, we customarily call potency that quality by which a thing resists being modified, such as hardness in a stone. For a stone resists many actions upon it either partially or entirely.<sup>21</sup>

According to William, potency can be understood as agent or active potency (*potentia agens sive activa*) or simply capacity (*virtus*) to conduct an operation. Furthermore there is potency of rulership, in case of which the subjects follow the will of the ruler, whether voluntarily or not, so that the ruler is able to get his will. This kind of potency is commonly called 'power' (*potestas*). In *De anima*

19 See id., On the Latin Reception of Avicenna's *Metaphysics*, pp. 202–3.

20 Avicenna also starts his discussion of potency in chapter IV, 2 by listing different usages of the term potency, see his *Šifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, p. 130, line 9–p. 132, line 7; *Philosophia prima*, p. 193, line 72–p. 196, line 29. According to Avicenna, the term potency (*quwwa*) is used in (1.) non-philosophical, (2.) philosophical and (3.) geometrical contexts. The different usages are, in short: (1.) in non-philosophical contexts (common sense): potency as (1.1) an ability to perform arduous acts in the category of movement (*ḥaraka*; *motus*), as opposite to debility (*da'f*; *debilitas*) and as intensification of power (*qudra*; *fortitudo*), which simply is the ability to perform volitional acts; (1.2) a disposition to be not affected or to be only slightly affected (*infa'ala*; *pati*) either while performing arduous acts or during inactivity; (1.3) a disposition of not being affected at all; (1.4) being the principle of action or inaction in the sense of having power (*qudra*; *fortitudo*, see (1.1)); (2.) in philosophical contexts: potency as (2.1) every disposition which is a principle of change (*mabda' al-tagayyur*; *principium variationis*); (2.2) the possibility (*imkān*; *possibilitas*) of acting or not acting; (2.3) the potency to be acted upon (*quwwa infī 'āliyya*; *potentia passibilitatis*); (3.) in geometrical contexts: a more complex geometrical figure as potency of a simpler geometrical figure, when it is possible for the simpler one to be a part of the more complex one. For the division into the three contexts, see also Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, p. 330.

21 William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 8, p. 49, line 8–p. 50, line 25: 'Interim igitur dicemus, quod potentia nominatur principium operationum, et est exuberantia vel radius ipsius esse, de qua exeunt operationes; et hoc alio nomine dicitur virtus et nominatur potentia agens sive activa ... Secundo modo potentia dicitur superioritas et velut dominatio, quae tamen non est nisi oboedientia vel consensu alienae voluntatis et dicitur vulgato nomine potestas ... Tertio, potentiam nominare consuevimus eam qualitatem, qua resistitur passionibus, qualis est duritia in lapide. Ea namque repellit multas ex passionibus aut in parte, aut in toto'. (The translation into English as well as the following ones for *De trinitate* are drawn from Teske in William of Auvergne, *The Trinity*. The translation is slightly altered here.)

William calls the dominating potency in case of human rulership the ‘power of jurisdiction and principality’<sup>22</sup>. Finally, potency can designate the ability to resist—whether wholly or to a certain degree—external influences acting upon oneself.<sup>23</sup>

Of this enumeration, the first concept of potency, the agent or active potency (*potentia agens sive activa*), is most relevant to William’s theory of causality. It is described as a principle of operations, and one can infer that every efficient cause possesses certain potencies to act, regardless of whether the acts are proper acts or not.<sup>24</sup> With respect to terminology only, William’s potency as principle of operation (*principium operationis*) seems to correspond to potency as principle of action (*mabda’ al-fi’l; principium effectus*) in Avicenna’s list.<sup>25</sup> According to the common sense definition, however, which Avicenna quotes here, the principle of action is restricted to beings that act out of volition (*mašī’a; appetitus*).<sup>26</sup> This is not the case with William’s active potency, which

22 Id., *De anima*, c. III.6, p. 92b: ‘potestas inquam jurisdictionis et principatus.’ William states at the end of this chapter that while power as the human power of jurisdiction depends on the obedience of the subjects and ceases if their obedience ceases, God’s power does not depend on anything else. Therefore power in its truest and proper sense belongs to God.

23 While the second kind of potency lacks an equivalent in Avicenna’s enumeration of the usages of the term potency in chapter IV, 2 of his *Ilāhiyyāt*, the third kind of potency, i.e. potency as resistance, is a combination of two usages listed by Avicenna: potency signifying that something is only slightly affected by something else and potency signifying that something is not at all affected by something else. See Avicenna, *Šifā’*: *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, p. 131, lines 1–3; *Philosophia prima*, p. 194, lines 86–90: ‘Deinde imposuerunt eam nomen huius intentionis, ita ut, in quantum non patitur nisi parum, vocetur potentia, quamvis nihil agat. Deinde rem quae non patitur ullo modo posuerunt digniorem hoc nomine, et ideo dispositionem eius in quantum est sic, vocaverunt potentiam’. See also Teske’s remark in William of Auvergne, *The Trinity*, p. 94, n. 7.

24 In *De anima* William differentiates between potencies which are principles of proper acts, and those which are principles of non-natural acts. For that purpose, he analyses statements about both kinds of potencies. In our speech, potencies are expressed by the verb ‘can’ (*potest*). The verb following the term ‘can’, in turn, signifies the act one has a potency of. If we speak about potencies of proper acts, our statements do not predicate anything added to the essence of a subject, because subjects are able to perform their proper acts out of themselves alone. This is, for example, the case if one states that fire can heat or human beings can understand. Besides this, there are acts which subjects do not perform out of themselves (or out of their substances). Statements about potencies of those acts are statements about something different from the essences and added to them. William gives the example of a white body, which can differentiate what is seen. Differentiation of what is seen does not take place through the essence of the body; rather, it takes place through a potency added to the body, namely whiteness, whose proper act, in turn, is to differentiate what is seen. See William of Auvergne, *De anima*, c. III.5 and 6, pp. 90b–93a.

25 For Avicenna’s list see above, n. 20.

26 See Avicenna, *Šifā’*: *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, p. 130, lines 12–13, and p. 131, lines 3–5; *Philosophia prima*, p. 194, lines 77–8 and 90–p. 195, line 93: ‘fortitudo, videlicet cum animal est eius-

is also applicable to inanimate things, such as fire. Therefore, William's idea more closely corresponds to the philosophical concept of potency, which is broader, since, as Avicenna explains, the philosophers apply it to every disposition in a being that is 'a principle of change (*mabda' al-taḡayyur; principium variationis*) [coming] from some other, [acting] on another inasmuch as [the latter] is an other.'<sup>27</sup> This definition, in turn, corresponds to the definition of δύναμις in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Theta, 1: 'a starting-point of change [ἀρχὴ μεταβολῆς] in another thing or in the thing itself *qua* other'<sup>28</sup>.

Besides the enumeration of different meanings of potency, William adopts from Avicenna a further idea which is important for his classification of efficient causes, namely the difference regarding the extent of active potencies. In *De trinitate* he states:

A potency that extends only to (*est super*) one of two opposites is diminished in comparison to one that extends to both opposites. For example, fire only has power to heat and not to not heat. For it is not able to heat or not to heat, when it encounters what can be heated, but it necessarily has only the power to heat.<sup>29</sup>

William here differentiates between a twofold and a single potency. A twofold potency extends to both alternatives of the pair of opposites 'to act' and 'not to act', while a single potency is restricted to one of them. This distinction is already made by Aristotle<sup>30</sup>, from whom Avicenna adopts it. With respect to

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modi quod provenit ex eo actio quando vult [*idā šā'a*], et non provenit quando non vult ... Deinde fortitudinem ipsam quae est dispositio animalis, ex qua est ei ut agat, sed non agit, vel propter appetitum [*bi-hasabi l-mašī'a*] vel propter privationem appetitus et remotionem instrumentorum, posuerunt potentiam, eo quod est principium effectus [*mabda' al-fi'l*]'.

27 Ibid. IV, 2, p. 131, lines 6–8; *Philosophia prima*, p. 195, lines 94–8.

28 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Θ, 1, 1046a11. (This translation into English as well as the following ones for Aristotle's *Metaphysics* are drawn from Barnes in Aristotle, *The Complete Works*.) Aristotle here gives the definition of the basic kind of potentiality (δύναμις), from which the other kinds of potentialities are derived. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Δ, 12, 1019a15–16 and 19–20.

29 William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 9, p. 54, lines 41–6: 'Potentia autem, quae non est nisi super alterum oppositum, diminuta est comparatione eius, quae potest super utrumque, verbi gratia, ignis non potest nisi super calefacere, super non calefacere non potest; non enim est in eo, ut calefaciat vel non calefaciat, cum obviaverit calefactibili, sed necesse habet calefacere tantum.'

30 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Θ, 2, 1046b4–24: 'And each of those which are accompanied by reason [μετὰ λόγου] is alike capable of contrary effects, but one non-rational power produces one effect; e.g. the hot is capable only of heating, but the medical art can produce both disease and health. The reason is that science [ἐπιστήμη] is a rational formula [λόγος], and the same rational formula explains a thing and its privation, only not in the same way ... And so the things whose potentiality is according to a rational formula act contrariwise

terminology and content, William's citation is a mix of formulations from Avicenna and from the Latin translation of al-Ġazālī's *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*.

Avicenna: For each of these powers is a power over a thing and its opposite.<sup>31</sup>

al-Ġazālī: The potency to act is divided into two, i.e. either [the potency] merely to act and not to its opposite, like the potency of fire is [able] to burn, and not [able] not to burn, or [the potency] to act and to its opposite, i.e. to refrain [from acting], like the potency of man to move and to rest. The first is called natural potency, the second voluntary potency.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to Aristotle and Avicenna, William does not give the proper reason for having a twofold potency, namely that such a potency is associated to the rational faculty which is able to grasp a thing and its opposite.<sup>33</sup> Thus, while his predecessors causally link rationality to twofold potency and, consequently, irrationality to single potency, William focuses on the fact that having a twofold potency implies the existence of a determining instance which decides between both alternatives. According to Aristotle, it is desire or choice (ὄρεξις ἢ προαίρεσις), according to Avicenna, it is the decisive will (*irāda ġāzima; voluntas prompta*). Without such an instance, there would be no preponderance either toward action or toward refraining from action. Or, if the twofold potency itself were the determining instance, it would realize both contrary alternatives

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to the things whose potentiality is non-rational; for the products of the former are included under one principle, the rational formula.' See also Θ, 5, 1047b35–1048a8.

- 31 Avicenna, *Šifā': Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, p. 133, lines 11–12; *Philosophia prima*, p. 198, lines 64–5: 'unaquaqueque enim harum potentiarum est potentia super rem et super eius contrarium'. (Here, the English translation is based on the Latin text.)
- 32 Al-Ġazālī, *Algazel's Metaphysics*, pt. I, tr. I, 7, p. 45, lines 11–16: 'potencia agendi dividitur in duo scilicet vel ad agendum tantum, et non ad eius oppositum, ut potencia ignis est ad conburendum, et non est ad non conburendum; vel est ad agendum, et eius oppositum scilicet ad cessandum ut potencia hominis ad movendum, et quiescendum; primum vero vocatur potencia naturalis, secundum vocatur potencia voluntaria'. Cf. the Arabic text in al-Ġazālī, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, pt. 2, p. 52, lines 11–15. William also uses the term *oppositum* instead of *contrarium* and like al-Ġazālī explicitly formulates the restriction that fire does not have the power not to heat.
- 33 See Avicenna, *Šifā': Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, p. 133, lines 8–11; *Philosophia prima*, p. 198, lines 58–64: 'Haec autem potentia quae est principium motuum et actionum, quaedam est comes rationalitatis vel imaginationis et quaedam quae non est comes earum. Quae autem est comes [qārana] rationalitatis [nuṭq] vel imaginationis [taḥayyul], quasi fit eiusdem generis cum illis; paene enim una potentia potest sciri [ulima] homo et non homo, et quod delectat et quod molestat aestimare [tawahhama] unius virtutis est, et omnino aestimare rem et eius contrarium'. For Aristotle, see above, n. 30.

at the same time, which is against the principle of non-contradiction and therefore absurd.<sup>34</sup> William's version of his predecessors' thoughts is as follows:

Of these potencies there are some which are accompanied by deliberation [*deliberatio*] and will [*voluntas*], such as the power of walking in us, and these are called rational [*rationalis*], because they do not pour forth their acts and operations except by a command of another [power]. There are other potencies which are not accompanied by deliberation and will and are called irrational [*irrationalis*], such as the potency of fire, as we mentioned. For, when fire has set before it matter that is possible and suitable and fitting for its action, it pours forth into it, so to speak, the flow of its operation, as when it comes into contact with burnable wood, wax, lead or tin.<sup>35</sup>

In this quotation William brings in the issue of rationality by distinguishing rational from irrational potency, in obvious parallel to the distinction of twofold and single potency. He names deliberation (*deliberatio*) and will (*voluntas*) as determining instances and uses them as the criterion with respect to which rational and irrational potencies are differentiated, leaving the exact role of the rational faculty aside. William does so because in the context of causality, as will become clear in what follows, the concept of will is much more important for him than that of rationality.

## 2 The Classification of Efficient Causes

As already mentioned, the theory of potency in *De trinitate* is closely related to William's classification of causes. A key passage for this classification is found in *De universo* part IIa-Iae, chapter nine:

To it I reply that [1.] some causes work through necessity, and these are natural causes, and they do not have power [*potestas*] over their action or freedom or choice for both

34 See Avicenna, *Šifā': Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, p. 133, line 12–p. 134, line 5; *Philosophia prima*, p. 198, line 65–p. 199, line 87, and Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Θ, 5, 1048a8–15. In the passage concerning the irrational potencies, Avicenna's denomination of the determining principle is closer to the Aristotelian terminology: *Šifā': Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, p. 134, lines 4–5; *Philosophia prima*, p. 199, lines 85–7: 'Sed potentiae quae sunt in eis quae sunt extra rationalitatem et imaginationem, cum obviaverint potentiae patienti, profecto debet esse actio ibi, eo quod non est ibi voluntas [*irāda*] nec electio [*iḥtiyār*] quae expectetur.'

35 William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 8, p. 50, lines 27–36: 'Potentiarum autem istarum aliae sunt, quas comitantur deliberatio et voluntas—qualis est in nobis potestas gradiendi—et hae vocantur rationales, eo quod actus et operationes suas non exuberant, nisi alieno imperio; aliae sunt, quas non comitantur, et nominantur irracionales, qualis est potentia ignis, quam diximus, haec enim, cum habuerit obviantem sibi materiam possibilem et idoneam et congruentem actioni suae, exuberat in illam vel fluxum operationis suae, quemadmodum cum continget ligna combustibilia, aut ceram, aut plumbum, vel stannum.'

alternatives. For this reason Aristotle said that nature works in the manner of a servant. An example of this is fire; you know that it does not have power over heating and not heating, nor freedom to choose both of them; in fact, it must heat the material that comes into contact with it and is receptive of its action.

[2.] But other causes operate through will and choice, and among these are

[2.1] some which operate by a will that can change to the contrary, that is, to not willing. Likewise, some act by a will that is renewable by new counsel or a new persuasion or by one of the passions, such as love and hatred, sorrow and joy, hope and fear, anger and peace. For such a will is changed to the opposite. Or something new is produced in the one who wills, and it is undoubtedly true in such wills that, when they produce something new that they were not producing before, an innovation is necessarily produced in the agents or in one of the dispositions or relations that we have often mentioned ...

[2.2] The creator, however, acts through a will that is most free and most dominant and immutable in every respect, and on this account his effects are joined to him when he wills and are separated from him when he wills.<sup>36</sup>

It should be noted that William here categorizes only efficient causes; the other three kinds of cause are not considered. The reason for this lies in the context of this citation: the discussion of the eternity of the world. As main representatives of this theory William names Aristotle and Avicenna. In the preceding chapter he enumerates several arguments for the eternity of the world based on statements of Avicenna.<sup>37</sup> Now he invalidates these arguments, one after the other, in favour of the origin of the world with time. The second argument<sup>38</sup> discussed by William is based on Avicenna's statement in *Ilāhiyyāt* IX, 1, that if a cause is now in all its dispositions as it has been before when nothing proceeded from

36 Id., *De universo* IIA-Iae, c. 9, p. 694aF–H: ‘Respondeo quia causarum [1.] aliae sunt operantes per necessitatem et hae sunt causae naturales et non est eis potestas super operari, neque libertas aut electio ad utrumlibet, propter quod dixit Aristoteles, quia natura operatur per modum servientis. Exemplum autem huiusmodi est ignis, de quo scis, quia non est ei potestas super calefacere et non calefacere, neque libertas eligendi utrumlibet, immo necesse habet calefacere obviantem sibi materiam receptibilem actionis suae. [2.] Aliae vero causae sunt operantes per voluntatem et electionem et inter has sunt, [2.1] quae operantur per voluntatem mutabilem ad contrarium, videlicet noluntatem, similiter et renovabilem vel consilio novo vel suasionem nova, vel aliqua ex passionibus, quales sunt amor et odium, dolor et gaudium, spes et timor, ira et pax. Huiusmodi enim mutatur voluntas ad contrarium vel nova res generatur in volente; et indubitanter in huiusmodi verum est, quia cum novum aliquid operantur, quod prius non operabantur, necesse est ut innovatio aliqua fiat in ipsis agentibus, vel in aliqua ex dispositionibus et comparisonibus saepe dictis ... [2.2] Creator autem operatur per liberrimam ac dominantissimam atque per omnia immutabilem voluntatem et propter hoc coniunguntur ei causata sua cum vult et separantur ab eo cum vult.’

37 See *ibid.* IIA-Iae, c. 8, pp. 690bG–692bE.

38 For the presentation of the second argument and its Avicennian background, see *ibid.* IIA-Iae, c. 8, pp. 691bA–692aG.

it, then, consequently, now nothing proceeds from it either. On the other hand, if the cause now produces something and did not do this before, one must infer that there was some sort of change in the cause, which induced the procession of the effect by giving preponderance to production over non-production.<sup>39</sup> For both, William as well as Avicenna, such a scenario is excluded for the first principle, that is, God, since God is utterly immutable. Thus, according to William, the Avicennian argument for the eternity of the world can be formulated as follows: if God bestowed existence upon the world—as he obviously did—and if, moreover, God is immutable, then one must infer that God did the same ever before as soon as he existed. Hence, since he is eternal, he created the world from all eternity. The world is therefore eternal.<sup>40</sup> In his confutation of this argument, William levels criticism against the general assumption that there must be some sort of change concerning the cause if the effect changes or begins to proceed at all. He emphasizes that there is no such correlation with respect to God. God created the universe after not having created it without any change in himself.<sup>41</sup> In his role as the creator of the universe, God is understood as an efficient cause and moreover the only one which is capable of creation.<sup>42</sup> To illustrate God's exceptional status, William contrasts different kinds of efficient causes in the above citation. According to him, there are two main groups: on the one hand, causes that operate through necessity (*per necessitatem*); on the other hand, causes that operate through will (*voluntas*) and choice (*electio*).<sup>43</sup>

It is obvious that the members of the first group are causes possessing single, irrational potencies. According to William, such potencies are found

39 See Avicenna, *Šifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt* IX, 1, p. 302, line 18–p. 304, line 6, esp. p. 303, lines 5–9; *Philosophia prima*, p. 439, line 13–p. 442, line 56, esp. p. 440, lines 23–9: 'Intellectus autem purus et verus testatur quod essentia una sī, sicut erat ante cum non erat ab ea aliquid, modo etiam esset sic ex omnibus suis partibus, profecto modo etiam non esset ab eo aliquid. Si autem modo factum est ut fiat ab ea aliquid, tunc iam contigit in essentia illa intentio vel voluntas vel natura vel posse vel aptitudo vel aliquid aliud his simile quod non erat. Qui autem negaverit hoc, iam discessit a vero intellectu lingua'.

40 See William of Auvergne, *De universo* IIa-Iae, c. 8, pp. 691bD–692aE. The concrete argument is influenced by Avicenna's statement in *Šifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt* IX, 1, p. 300, lines 3–6; *Philosophia prima*, p. 435, lines 24–8: 'Et post hoc claruit tibi quod necesse esse per hoc est necesse esse omnibus suis modis, quod non potest esse ei aliqua dispositio futura quae non erat. Et adhuc etiam patuit tibi quod causa, quantum in se est, facit necessario esse causatum; quae, si fuerit semper, facit causatum necessario esse semper'.

41 See William of Auvergne, *De universo* IIa-Iae, c. 9, pp. 693aA–694bE.

42 See e.g. id., *De anima* c. V.2, p. 112b: 'anima humana non est nisi per creationem et propter hoc non habet causam efficientem nisi creatorem benedictum'. To be sure, in Aristotle, Avicenna, and the Christian tradition, God is also considered as the universe's final cause, but this aspect is irrelevant to the present discussion.

43 The combination of the terms *voluntas* and *electio* as an alternative to *voluntas* and *deliberatio* is also found in the Latin translation of the *Ilāhiyyāt*, see above, n. 34.

in natural causes like fire, which is mentioned in the passages already quoted. Natural causes do not have the capacity of will to make a decision about their operation. Rather, the performance of their operation is determined by external conditions. Once the conditions are fulfilled, a natural cause must produce its effect in the way determined by its nature. If, on the contrary, the conditions are not fulfilled, the cause does not operate. In the example of fire, the conditions are fulfilled if a burnable object is in contact with the fire for a certain amount of time. The fire then heats or even burns the object and has no possibility to refrain from this.

In the above citation as well as in *De universo* in general, William often employs the term *potestas* instead of *potentia* in the context of the discussion of causes. *Potestas*, as William uses it here, is the power to make a decision about one's act. Natural causes do not have such a power (*non est eis potestas super operari*). For this reason, as William remarks, 'Aristotle said that nature works in the manner of a servant (*per modum servientis*).'<sup>44</sup> A servant does not decide what to do nor how or when to act, but merely obeys his master's orders, without being able to refuse them. The case is similar with natural causes, as William states in *De trinitate*: 'nature really depends on the sign and will of the lordship that gives orders to (*imperantis*) all things.'<sup>45</sup> Nature's lord is God, who is the giver (*dator*) of being to all natural substances. Along with their being, these substances receive their particular power from God. Hence, 'the power of natures is only the will of the maker and ... they are able to do nothing against his will or beyond it or other than it.'<sup>46</sup> Therefore, natural causes merely act in a prescribed manner or, as William explicitly states, with necessity of servitude (*necessitas servitutis*).<sup>47</sup> This characterization of the action of natural causes, which William regularly attributes to Aristotle,<sup>48</sup> originally stems from Avicenna, who states in *Ilāhiyyāt* IX, 2: 'nature does not act by choice (*bi-ḥti-yār; per electionem*), but by way of subjection (*'alā sabīl al-tashḥīr; ad modum servientis*), and by way of what necessarily follows it essentially.'<sup>49</sup>

44 William of Auvergne, *De universo* IIa-Iae, c. 9, p. 694aF: 'dixit Aristoteles, quia natura operatur per modum servientis.'

45 Id., *De trinitate*, c. 11, p. 75, lines 6–7: 'natura ... revera pendet a nutu et voluntate omnibus imperantis dominationis.'

46 Ibid., c. 11, p. 76, lines 30–32: 'potestas naturarum sola voluntas est conditoris, nec aliquid contra eam, nec supra eam, nec praeter eam possunt'. See also Miller, William of Auvergne and the Aristotelians, pp. 264–6.

47 See William of Auvergne, *De universo* IIIa-Iae, c. 21, p. 788aH: 'in hoc sermone de necessitate, qua natura naturaliter operatur, sicut praedixi tibi, et haec est necessitas servitutis sive servilitatis.'

48 See e.g. ibid. IIIa-Iae, c. 3, p. 759bC; IIIa-Iae, c. 21, p. 787bD; Ia-IIae, c. 30, p. 833aB; IIa-IIae, c. 20, p. 863aC, and id., *De fide et legibus*, c. 20, p. 55bB–C.

49 Avicenna, *Šifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt* IX, 2, p. 308, lines 3–4; *Philosophia prima*, p. 448, lines 71–3: 'Naturalis [*tabī'a*] enim non agit per electionem, sed ad modum servientis [*tashḥīr*] et ad

While Avicenna does not repeat his statement about natural acts by way of subjection in the *Ilāhiyyāt*,<sup>50</sup> William frequently cites it, mostly in *De universo*, but also in *De trinitate*, *De anima*, *De fide et legibus* and *De virtutibus et vitiis*.<sup>51</sup> For him Avicenna's statement that nature acts in the manner of a servant is a principle perfectly suited to describe natural causality. It should be mentioned that besides inanimate natural substances animals too are subject to this kind of causality, since they comply entirely with their passions, which is why William even explicitly calls them servants.<sup>52</sup>

As opposed to the natural causes, causes that operate through will and choice do have power (*potestas*) over their operations, since they are able to choose whether to act or not to act. According to William, there are two subdivisions within this second basic group of efficient causes. The first subdivision comprises worldly voluntary causes (*causae operantes voluntarie apud nos*), that is, humans,<sup>53</sup> whose characteristic is that their will itself is changeable to opposites or renewable. Both change and renewal are induced by the

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modum eius quod comitatur per essentiam' (English translation slightly altered). In the context of this quotation, Avicenna analyses the circular movement of the celestial spheres. Marmura remarks that the term *tashīr* is 'used in the Qur'ān where the movements of the heavens, the clouds, and the winds are said to be compelled by God', see Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, p. 418, n. 4. For William's adaption of this Avicennian principle and its employment against Avicenna, see Miller, William of Auvergne and the Aristotelians.

- 50 The term *tashīr* can only be found one more time in the *Ilāhiyyāt*. It is again used in combination with nature, but the principle is not repeated, see Avicenna, *Šifā': Ilāhiyyāt* VI, 4, p. 219, lines 8–10; *Philosophia prima*, p. 325, lines 35–8: 'Videtur autem quod formae rerum naturalium sint apud causas praecedentes naturam aliquo modo; apud naturam vero sunt secundum solitum cursum suum [*alā tarīq al-tashīr*] aliquo modo'.
- 51 Besides the passages already mentioned above in n. 48, see William of Auvergne, *De universo* Ia-Iae, c. 9, p. 603aA; Ia-Iae, c. 21, p. 614bF; Ia-Iae, c. 26, p. 620aF; IIa-Iae, c. 21, p. 720bE; IIIa-Iae, c. 25, p. 793bD; Ia-IIae, c. 2, p. 808bF; Ia-IIae, c. 4, p. 811aD; Ia-IIae, c. 8, p. 816bE; IIa-IIae, c. 97, p. 951bD; IIa-IIae, c. 122, p. 974bF; IIa-IIae, c. 151, p. 999bC; id., *De trinitate*, c.11, p. 75, lines 5–6; id., *De anima*, c. V.22, p. 148a, and id., *De virtutibus et vitiis*, c. 19, p. 120aF.
- 52 See William of Auvergne, *De anima*, c. II.15, p. 85b: 'non enim est in libera potestate ipsorum [sc. canum et alium animalium] ut timori vel amori hujusmodi non cedant; modis enim omnibus servi sunt hujusmodi passionum non habentes eis contradicere, nec valentes eas avertere a se, vel reprimere ullo modorum ... Quemadmodum enim non est laudandus lapis ex eo quod descendit et movetur in deorsum, neque culpatur si moveatur in sursum, cum alterum faciat necessitate naturali, alterum vero violentia invincibili ... Quod si quis dixerit, quia secundum hoc non sunt culpandi homines pro his quae ex viribus inferioribus agunt, quoniam illa faciunt, ex viribus quas communicant cum animalibus brutis: Et propter hoc illa faciunt ut bruta animalia quod est dicere necessitate non libertate. Respondeo in hoc quia hujusmodi vires non sic se habent naturaliter in hominibus'. For the subjection of brute animals to their irascible and concupiscible powers, see also *ibid.*, c. II.14, p. 85a.
- 53 Angels are not discussed here.

occurrence or change of the dispositions that influence the will, although the will's act itself is not determined by them. The will simply reacts to altered dispositions: for example, to a new counsel, persuasion, passions and above all the acts of the rational faculty (*vis intellectiva seu ratiocinativa*). According to William, the will is the most noble power of the human soul, comparable to a king or an emperor. The state of the will in the soul is analogous to God's state in the universe or to that of a human king in a city.<sup>54</sup> According to Teske, it is William who first draws this influential analogy.<sup>55</sup> The analogy might be the reason for the mentioned preference of the term *potestas* to the more neutral term *potentia*. *Potestas*, as listed in the enumeration of different kinds of potencies in *De trinitate*,<sup>56</sup> is used to express the king's domination over his subjects. This idea can be transferred to the will. Whereas the will is the king, all the other powers—that is, the sensitive, irascible, concupiscible and motive powers as well as the rational power—are subject to it like ministers or servants.<sup>57</sup> According to William, the will is most free; that is, it is not determined by these lower powers, just as a king in a well-ordered kingdom is not dominated by his subjects. Nevertheless, the will commands an action by the counsel of the rational power. The act of willing, however, is freely willed by the will.<sup>58</sup>

### 3 The Concept of Sufficiency of Cause (*sufficiencia causae*)

While in worldly voluntary causes a change of the voluntary act is preceded by a change of the will, this is not true of the second group of voluntary causes, whose only member is God. His distinguishing feature is that his will is totally immutable and need not change to cause different effects. So despite his immutability, God is most free because of his most free will. To show in which way God's freedom of will differs from all other causes, and especially to show the difference between his acts and those of worldly voluntary agents concerning freedom, William introduces the term 'sufficiency of cause' (*sufficiencia causae*), a notion which is inspired by his reading of passages in Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt*. In *De universo* part IIa-Iae, chapter nine, William defines it as follows: 'the sufficiency of a cause

54 See William of Auvergne, *De anima*, c. II.15, p. 85b and III.8, p. 96a.

55 See Teske, *The Will as King*. Teske argues against the thesis of Stadter and Macken that the image of the will as the king of the soul was developed in the final third of the 13th century in the anti-Aristotelian movement. Teske shows that this image is already found in William of Auvergne; he discusses William's reason for using such an image and moreover for using the analogous image of God as the king of the universe.

56 For the list, see above, n. 20.

57 See William of Auvergne, *De anima*, c. II.15, pp. 85b–86a; c. III.8, p. 95a–b, and id., *De virtutibus et vitiis*, c. 3, p. 112aH.

58 See id., *De anima*, c. II.15, p. 85b; c. III.7, p. 94a–b, and c. III.9, p. 96b. For an analysis of William's understanding of the freedom of human will, see also Teske, *Freedom of the Will*.

[*sufficiencia causae*] is the cause which produces [*efficit*] the inseparable conjunction [*coniunctio inseparabilis*] between the cause and the effect.<sup>59</sup> This definition means, as William already states in the previous chapter, that once *sufficiencia causae* is present, if you posit the cause, you must posit the effect.<sup>60</sup> At the moment of *sufficiencia causae* nothing can step between cause and effect; the cause simply produces the effect. The production of the effect is only possible if all conditions for the cause's operation are fulfilled, the internal as well as the external ones. On the internal side, the cause generally must have the potency—either singular or twofold—concerning the operation, there must not be any defect in it, and it has to be prepared to operate. This fulfilment of the conditions on the part of the cause does not suffice for the presence of the sufficiency of cause and with it for the procession of the effect. On the external side, sufficiency of cause must imply or at least presuppose the fulfilment of the conditions external to the cause, such as the lack of an external impediment and the presence of the object which is receptive for the effect. In *De trinitate*, William summarizes this as follows:

We call a sufficiency that to which nothing is lacking, neither a part, nor a mode, nor an operation, nor any other of those things which in some way aid the operation insofar as the operation requires it for its being.<sup>61</sup>

William here only uses the term sufficiency (*sufficiencia*), but from the context it is clear that his statement can be squarely applied to sufficiency of cause.<sup>62</sup> If all the conditions are fulfilled, or, as William formulates it, if the whole sufficiency (*tota sufficiencia*) required for the existence of the effect is present, then the effect is present.<sup>63</sup>

William's concept of sufficiency of cause is inspired by Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 1 and 2. There is a passage in IV, 1 which contains the key words adopted by William in his discussion of the sufficiency of cause, namely *sufficere*, *coniunctio*, *dispositio* and *necesse*:

59 William of Auvergne, *De universo* IIa-iae, c. 9, p. 694aE–F: 'sufficiencia causae causa est, quae efficit conjunctionem inseparabilem inter causam et effectum, quod quidem probabile est et eius probabilitas multos decipit'.

60 See *ibid.* IIa-iae, c. 8, p. 692aF: 'Ut causa et effectus conjuncta sint inseparabiliter, ita ut posita ea, necesse sit poni et effectum, non facit nisi sufficiencia causae'.

61 William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 10, p. 71, line 20–p. 72, line 23: 'et vocamus sufficientiam, cui nihil deest, nec pars, nec modus, nec operatio, nec aliquid aliud eorum, quae adiuvant operationem quoque modo, dum tamen illud exigit ad esse suum illa operatio.'

62 The context again is the discussion of the eternity of the world.

63 See William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 10, p. 71, lines 19–20: 'aut igitur tota erat sufficientia eorum, quae exigebantur ad esse a, aut non', and p. 72, lines 26–7: 'Si vero non erat tota sufficiencia haec, igitur ad esse eius deerat aliquid'.

But, if the condition of its being the cause is not its very self, then itself by itself is something from which it is possible for a thing to be generated and for it not to be [generated]—neither alternative having precedence over the other ... Therefore, the mere fact of [the cause’s] being capable of generating it is not sufficient [*kāfin; sufficiens*] for a thing’s coming into being from it ... Indeed, sound reason necessitates that there should exist a state [*hāl; dispositio*] that differentiates between [the thing’s] existence from it and its nonexistence [from it]. If this state [*hāl; dispositio*] also necessitates this distinction, [and] if this state [*hāl; dispositio*] occurs to the cause and exists, then, together, the “entity” and what has joined it become the cause. Prior to this, the “entity” was the subject of causality and the thing that appropriately could become the cause. [Prior to this,] that existence would not have [constituted] the existence of the cause, but, rather, an existence, which, when another existence is added to it, would [constitute] the cause [through] the combination [*maǧmū’; coniunctio*] of the two. The effect would then proceed from it necessarily [*yaǧibu ‘anhū; debet esse per illam*], regardless of whether [the added existence] is a will, an appetite, an anger, some nature that has come into existence, some other thing, or some external thing awaited for the existence of the cause. If, then, it becomes such that it is appropriate for the effect to proceed from it and no causal condition is left unsatisfied, the effect must necessarily exist [*waǧaba wuǧūd al-ma ‘lūl; debebit esse causatum*]. Hence, with the existence of the cause, the existence of every effect is necessary [*wāǧib; necessario*]; and the existence of its cause necessitates the existence of the effect.<sup>64</sup>

In this passage, Avicenna describes the transition from a cause in potentiality to a cause in actuality. In short, he explains that if a thing is not the condition for being the cause of another thing in virtue of its essence alone, it is merely a cause in potentiality and is not sufficient (*sufficiens; kāfin*) to produce an effect. Rather, it is indifferent towards operation, and therefore a disposition (*dispositio; hāl*) is needed that induces a preponderance towards producing an effect. This disposition can be internal, for example a passion or an act of volition, or it can be external, such as the fulfilment of external conditions. In both cases

64 Avicenna, *Šifā’*: *Ilāhīyyāt* IV, 1, p. 126, line 14–p. 127, line 18; *Philosophia prima*, p. 187, line 66–p. 189, line 00: ‘Sed, si ipsa sua essentia non fuerit condicio ipsum essendi causam, tunc ipsum per se est sic quod possibile est rem esse ex eo et possibile est non esse, et neutrum eorum dignius est altero ad hoc ...; hoc enim quod possibile est per ipsum fieri aliud non est sufficiens ad hoc ut res sit per illud ... Sed certus intellectus facit debere hic esse dispositionem qua discernatur suum esse per illam a suo non esse per illam. Si autem fuerit illa dispositio etiam quae faciat debere esse hanc discretionem, et haec dispositio fuerit attributa causae et habuerit esse, tunc totalitas essentiae et eius quod adiungitur ei erit ipsa causa; ante hoc autem, essentia erat subiectum causalitatis et erat talis quod posset vere fieri causa. Et ideo hoc esse non erat tunc esse causae, sed cum adiungitur ei aliud esse, ex eius coniunctione fit causa; et tunc causatum debet esse per illam, sive illud adiunctum sit voluntas, sive voluptas, sive natura contingens et similia, sive aliquid extrinsecum parans esse causalitatis; et cum fuerit eiusmodi proveniet ex ea causatum sine diminutione condicionis et debebit esse causatum. Igitur esse omnis causati necessario est cum esse suae causae, et propter esse suae causae necessario est esse sui causati’ (English translation slightly altered).

the disposition bestows causality; or more precisely, the conjunction (*coniunctio*; *maǧmū*) of disposition and thing constitutes the cause, that is, the cause in actuality. Therefore, Avicenna states in the passage just quoted that, since the cause is 'such that it is appropriate for the effect to proceed from it and no causal condition is left unsatisfied, the effect must necessarily exist'<sup>65</sup>, that is, the cause must act. This is exactly what William postulates, and the sentence just quoted describes what William for his part designates with the concept of sufficiency of cause. Avicenna's influence will become even clearer in what follows. If one compares William's discussion of this concept to the present passage, it is obvious that Avicenna is the source, although we do not find in Avicenna the term 'sufficiency of cause' explicitly. There are further differences. For example, William does not use the term *coniunctio* for the coming together of disposition and thing, as does Avicenna; instead he uses *concurrere*<sup>66</sup> and transfers the concept of *coniunctio* (specifically, *coniunctio inseparabilis*) to the relation between cause and effect.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the opinion that a cause necessarily acts if all conditions are fulfilled, is identical in both authors.

William, however, refines his theory of sufficiency of cause. After defining this concept, he proceeds to the already discussed classification of efficient causes and then compares the different kinds of causes with regard to the stage at which sufficiency of cause occurs:

[1.] In natural causes, then, which act through necessity, as I told you, such sufficiency suffices for the previously mentioned conjunction [i.e. the inseparable conjunction between cause and effect].

[2.1] The same is true in those beings which act voluntarily among us, and the reason is that it is not in their power that they do not begin to act once the power, knowing, willing, and other dispositions concur.

[2.2] But in the creator on account of a will that is most free and most dominant and on account of his immutability, it is not necessary that he act or begin to act, except when he wills. And notice that it is possible that the creator now will something, but he could

65 See n. 64.

66 See William of Auvergne, *De universo* IIa-Iae, c. 9, p. 694aH: 'quia non est in potestate eorum, postquam posse, scire et velle caeteraque dispositiones concurrerint, ut non incipient operari.' For the context, see below, n. 68.

67 See *ibid.* IIa-Iae, c. 8, p. 692aF: 'Ut causa et effectus conjuncta sint inseparabiliter, ita ut posita ea, necesse sit poni et effectum, non facit nisi sufficientia causae', and IIa-Iae, c. 9, p. 694aE-H: 'sufficientia causae causa est, quae efficit conjunctionem inseparabilem inter causam et effectum, quod quidem probabile est et eius probabilitas multos decipit ... In causis igitur naturalibus, quae per necessitatem, ut praedixi tibi, operantur, sufficientia huiusmodi sufficit ad praedictam conjunctionem'.

have not willed it without any change of his will. In us, however, just the opposite is necessarily the case.<sup>68</sup>

First, William analyses the natural causes: here sufficiency of cause is present simply if the cause free of defect is present and the external conditions are fulfilled. So in the case of fire, sufficiency of cause is given if the fire is present and in contact to a burnable object, so that an inseparable conjunction between cause and effect results: that is, fire instantaneously and necessarily produces its effects, i.e. it heats or burns the object.

According to William, such a model of causality, in which it is necessary that the cause begins to act or acts, is transferable to the worldly voluntary agents. Of course, with the latter, no necessity of a servant can be found, since the aspect of will has to be considered. Therefore, the simple presence of voluntary agents and their objects is not enough for the occurrence of the sufficiency of cause. Instead, a further step is interposed, namely the act of volition. As soon as the will wills in actuality, that is, as soon as it freely chooses an act, sufficiency of cause is present. From that moment on, the process runs in parallel to that of the natural causes: the voluntary agent is inseparably conjoined to its effect. William explicitly states that after the act of volition, the agent has no power not to operate (*non est in potestate eius, ut non incipiat operari*); that is, he does not have a twofold potency anymore, but is determined to one of the opposites, namely to act or not to act, depending on which alternative the will has chosen. Thus, at the moment of the sufficiency of cause, the agent is not free anymore but necessarily begins to act if action has been chosen. This is exactly the case with natural causes, although at an earlier stage. Compared to the natural causes, in worldly voluntary agents the presence of sufficiency of cause is just delayed by one step. Although in the end both kinds of causes act with necessity,<sup>69</sup> the difference between them is that natural causes at no time possess any freedom in terms of power over their action. Worldly voluntary agents, by contrast, are free up to the point at which the act of volition has taken place and with it sufficiency of cause occurs. This kind of freedom ensures that voluntary agents, i.e. humans, do not act with natural necessity;

68 Ibid. Ila-lae, c. 9, p. 694aH–bE: ‘In causis igitur [1.] naturalibus, quae per necessitatem, ut praedixi tibi, operantur, sufficientia hujusmodi sufficit ad praedictam conjunctionem [sc. conjunctio inseparabilis inter causam et effectum], similiter et in [2.1] operantibus voluntarie apud nos et hoc est, quia non est in potestate eorum, postquam posse, scire et velle caeteraeque dispositiones concurrerint, ut non incipiant operari. In [2.2] creatore vero propter liberrimam ac dominantissimam ejusdem voluntatem, atque immutabilitatem non est necesse, ut operetur vel incipiat operari, nisi cum velit. Et attende, quia possibile est, ut creator velit modo aliquid, poterit tamen non velle illud absque ulla mutatione voluntatis suae. In nobis autem e converso se habet ex necessitate’.

69 Cf. Miller, William of Auvergne and the Aristotelians, p. 274, n. 10.

that is, they do not follow their passions which result from the original sin, but possess freedom of action, since they are able to act as they will.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, they are morally responsible for their actions and hence subject to praise and blame, which is important for William as a Christian thinker.<sup>71</sup> With his theory of freedom of human action William endorses a voluntarist position.<sup>72</sup>

The idea that causes in the end act with necessity is parallel to Avicenna's theory of causation.<sup>73</sup> In *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, Avicenna explains that causes with single potency necessarily act, as soon as they meet an object suitable for their acting upon it, provided that there are no impediments:

As regards the powers that are present in things not possessing reason and imagination, when these meet the passive power, then action necessarily [takes place] [*wağaba hunāka l-fi 'lu; debebit esse actio ibi*].<sup>74</sup>

By contrast, a cause with twofold potency does not act as soon as it meets a suitable object. Rather, it needs the act of will, as already mentioned. It is only then that all conditions are fulfilled and the cause necessarily starts to act:

In general, from their meeting the passive power, it does not follow necessarily that [these] powers would enact that [effect] ... Rather, if they became [conjoined with the decisive will], as we have stated, they would then act by necessity [*fa-imahā taf'alu bi-l-darūrati; tunc aget necessario*].<sup>75</sup>

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- 70 See William of Auvergne, *De anima*, c. II.15, p. 85b: 'Respondeo in hoc quia hujusmodi vires non sic se habent naturaliter in hominibus, sed ex corruptione originali factae sunt effraenes atque praecipites, ipsique nobili imperativae ac superioris suae rebelles. Praevalet autem et dominatur eis imperativa nobilis superior et possibile est ei coercere eas et fraenare impetum earum et avertere hominem quominus sequatur eas'.
- 71 See *ibid.*, c. II.15, p. 85b: 'Voluntas autem, quoniam in se est, liberrima est, suaeque per omnia potestatis quantum ad antedictam operationem suam et propter hoc suae correctionis est, atque directionis. Quapropter merito requiritur ab ea rectitudo in operatione sua quae est velle, meritoque culpatur in ea peccatum quod est contrarium rectitudini: hinc est quod cum brutis animalibus non agitur de moribus aut virtutibus.'
- 72 See also Teske, *The Will as King*, p. 70. According to Teske, William 'anticipates the voluntarism of members of the Franciscan school later in the century'.
- 73 Furthermore it is already found in Aristotle, see his *Metaphysics* Θ, 5, 1048a5–7: 'as regards potentialities of the latter kind [i.e. non-rational potentialities], when the agent and the patient meet in the way appropriate to the potentiality in question, the one must act and the other be acted on', and 1048a13–15: 'Therefore everything which has a rational potentiality, when it desires that for which it has a potentiality and in the circumstances in which it has it, must do this.'
- 74 Avicenna, *Šifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 2, p. 134, lines 4–5; *Philosophia prima*, p. 199, lines 85–7: 'Sed potentiae quae sunt in eis quae sunt extra rationalitatem et imaginationem, cum obviaverint potentiae patienti, profecto debebit esse actio ibi' (English translation slightly altered).
- 75 *Ibid.* IV, 2, p. 134, lines 1–3; *Philosophia prima*, p. 199, lines 80–84: 'et omnino, ex eo quod obviat potentiae patienti, non sequitur ut agat ... Cum autem fuerit sicut diximus, tunc aget necessario'.

In contrast to his predecessor Avicenna, William formulates an exception. As is not difficult to guess, the case is completely different with God, even if a form of *sufficere* is applicable to him. In the long passage quoted from *Ilāhiyyāt* IV, 1 Avicenna uses the negation of the participle *sufficiens* to express the deficiency of a cause to act solely out of its essence: ‘its merely being capable [of generating it] is not sufficient [*laysa kāfiyan; non est sufficiens*] for a thing’s coming into being from it’<sup>76</sup>. In the context of causality in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, Avicenna normally makes no positive use of *sufficere* (*kafā*); the positive use is found in a more ontological context to indicate that a thing can acquire existence or non-existence out of itself alone.<sup>77</sup> William likewise uses the negation of the participle *sufficiens* to indicate the deficiency of beings and causes. There is, however, another form of *sufficere* used in an ontological as well as causal context: what can exist out of itself, as well as what is in itself a cause, is a sufficient being (*esse sufficientiae*).<sup>78</sup> This exclusively applies to God. For William—and according to him for the Peripatetics including Avicenna—God is at any time in himself the most sufficient cause of the universe. However, this does not at all imply that there is any sufficiency of cause in him, and this is what the Peripatetics failed to see, argues William. They concluded from God’s being the most sufficient cause that he necessarily has to create the universe from all eternity.<sup>79</sup> With this they negate God’s most free will, and although

76 Ibid. IV, 1, p. 127, lines 1–2; *Philosophia prima*, p. 188, lines 74–5: ‘hoc enim quod possibile est per ipsum fieri aliud non est sufficiens ad hoc ut res sit per illud’.

77 See Ibid. I, 6, p. 31, lines 6–8; *Philosophia prima*, p. 45, lines 47–50: ‘tunc, ad appropriandum sibi utrumlibet [sc. esse vel non esse], id quod ipsum est [*māhiyyat al-amr*] vel est sufficiens [*takfī*] vel non sufficiens. Si autem id quod est sufficiens est ad appropriandum sibi utrumlibet illorum duorum, ita ut sit aliquid illorum duorum, tunc illud est necessarium sibi ipsi per se’.

78 See e.g. William of Auvergne, *De trinitate*, c. 6, p. 38, line 19–p. 39, line 32: ‘Esse igitur indigentiae non potest solum esse, sive finitum sive infinitum ponatur, nec sufficere solum ad hoc, ut aliud sit. Necessse igitur est, ut sit esse praeter esse indigentiae, et hoc est quod nominamus esse sufficientiae ... Item, quia esse indigentiae necessario eget esse sufficientiae ... necesse est, ut primum causetur per esse sufficientiae. Esse igitur indigentiae necessario inducit inquisitionem diligentiae ad esse sufficientiae, et huius ratio est esse, quod nullo eget’, and c. 13, p. 80, lines 44–5: ‘Et iam quidem claruit ex his, quae praecesserunt, quod essentia altissima est esse sufficientiae per seipsam’.

79 William adds to the already discussed Avicennian argument for the eternity of the world a further argument which the Peripatetics could have urged. This argument concludes from God’s being the most sufficient cause that he must necessarily create the universe from all eternity. See William of Auvergne, *De universo* IIa-Iae, c. 8, p. 692aF–G, esp. the statement on p. 692aG: ‘Manifestum igitur est, quia omnimoda sufficientia causalitatis creator est per semetipsum solum causa sufficientissima universi, quare conjunctissima cum ipso; quare ex necessitate eo posito, ponitur universum. Hujusmodi autem conjunctio prohibet separationem inter causam et causatum. Non fuit igitur creator nec in aeternitate, nec in tempore separatus ab universo, quod est dicere sine universo.’

Avicenna in *Ilāhiyyāt IX*, 4 points out that God does not act by way of nature,<sup>80</sup> William reproaches the Peripatetics for even putting God on a level with the causes acting out of natural necessity.<sup>81</sup> He emphasizes that any aspect of a necessary operation is totally alien to God's acting to the outside.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, he categorically differs from both kinds of worldly cause. He indeed acts voluntarily as do human beings, but in a completely different way. In man, sufficiency of cause occurs with the act of volition, so that there is not a twofold potency anymore; that is, the power over the action is lost, and instead the action takes place necessarily. Unlike man, God is not at any moment determined by his own act of volition. He does not lose his power, but has twofold potencies at every moment<sup>83</sup> and could always act differently. Therefore, we do not find any aspect of *sufficientia causae* in God and consequently—despite his being the most sufficient cause of the universe—no necessary conjunction between him and the creatures. Although God, according to William, is most sufficient in himself for being a cause and his power is in the ultimate degree of sufficiency

80 See Avicenna, *Šifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt IX*, 4, p. 327, lines 1–2; *Philosophia prima*, p. 477, lines 56–60: 'Omne enim esse quod est ab eo non est secundum viam naturae ad hoc ut esse omnium sit ab eo non per cognitionem nec per beneplacitum eius: quomodo enim hoc esse posset, cum ipse sit intelligentia pura quae intelligit seipsum?'

81 See William of Auvergne, *De universo Ia-Iae*, c. 21, p. 614bF–G: 'His etenim et similibus respondebo tibi in sequentibus videlicet in destructione antiquitatis sive aeternitatis mundi et stabilitione novitatis ipsius. Et etiam in hoc capitulo aliqua tibi ostendam super his, quorum primum et radicale est voluntas liberrima ac potentissima creatoris, quam libertatem multi non intelligentes erraverunt. Et non solum necessitatem, immo naturalem servitutem imposuerunt creatori existimantes ipsum operari ad modum naturae, qui modus est, ut jam saepe praedixi tibi, modus servientis et modus servilis ... et propter hoc ex necessitate inducti fuerunt in illud inconueniens, ut opinari cogerentur creatorem neque aliud, nec aliter facere potuisse ... Creator autem sic habet bonitatem suam, sic potentiam, sic sapientiam, ut ex ea non exeat nisi quod voluerit et cum voluerit et quomodo voluerit', and c. 26, p. 620aF: 'Si non esset operatus in creatione per electionem suam, et libertatem supereminetissimam, sed per ordinem, quem isti hic opinantur, esset operatus proculdubio per modum naturae. Hic autem modus, prout didicisti, modus est servientis et non libertate ultima et modum operandi et operationem suam eligentis.'

82 While William denies any sufficiency of cause concerning the creation with the aim of securing God's freedom and a world that is not coeternal to him, things are different when it comes to the inner-Trinitarian realm. William claims in *De trinitate*, c. 15, p. 96, line 94–8: 'Quoniam autem prima potentia non eget eductore alio, quo educatur ad actum, sed ipsa est sibi sufficiens per omnia, manifestum est ipsam nec fuisse nec posterius umquam fore, nisi in actu. Quare aeterna est prima generatio et coaeternus aeterno patri primus filius.' This is quite typical for William: when describing the inner-Trinitarian structure, he applies principles and theories deriving from Avicenna—such as the *ex-uno*-principle—which he vehemently rejects for the explanation of God's external action. To this topic, see my article: Avicenna's *ex-uno*-Principle.

83 Similar to the synchronic contingency later found in Duns Scotus.

and fullness,<sup>84</sup> it is still in no way necessary that he acts. Therefore, ‘his effects are joined to him when he wills and are separated from him when he wills.’<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, creatures have power only over particular things, and there must be a change in the conditions or dispositions and in the will in order to begin or change actions. God, by contrast, has absolute power over everything possible, and he himself is the only condition for his willing. Therefore, nothing need change in him in order that he might will another thing, not even the will itself:

[I]n the creator on account of a will that is most free and most dominant and on account of his immutability, it is not necessary that he act or begin to act, except when he wills. And notice that it is possible that the creator now will something, but he could have not willed it without any change of his will. In us, however, just the opposite is necessarily the case ... On account of this Avicenna was mistaken on this point, and so too was Aristotle, for they did not see that the creator could will something and could not will it without any change of his will, just as is the case with his knowledge.<sup>86</sup>

According to William, even if Avicenna’s treatment did justice to God’s power, wisdom and will—and indeed Avicenna does mention these properties in *Ilāhiyyāt* VIII, 7 and IX, 4<sup>87</sup>—all three would, for Avicenna, be identical with God’s essence, and Avicenna would have to claim that the essence, being immutable, is restricted to one alternative, which would be a denial of God’s freedom of will. William, by contrast, emphasizes that even although God had always willed that there would be the creation of this actual universe, he could have willed something different, without any change in him. God is not restricted to one thing willed and therefore to one procession from him.

But what about God’s immutability with respect to action? The assumption of the world’s origination would seem to imply that God started to create the

84 See William of Auvergne, *De universo* Ia-Iae, c. 42, p. 641aD: ‘virtus creatoris in ultimitate est sufficientiae et copiositatis.’

85 Ibid. IIa-Iae, c. 9, p. 694aG–H: ‘propter hoc coniunguntur ei causata sua cum vult et separantur ab eo cum vult’. Cf. also Miller, William of Auvergne and the Aristotelians, p. 272.

86 William of Auvergne, *De universo* IIa-Iae, c. 9, p. 694aH–bE: ‘Et attende, quia possibile est, ut creator velit modo aliquid, poterit tamen non velle illud absque ulla mutatione voluntatis suae. In nobis autem econverso se habet ex necessitate ... Et propter hoc erravit Avicenna in hoc, similiter et Aristoteles, qui non viderunt, quod creator posset velle aliquid et posset non velle illud, absque voluntatis suae mutatione, quemadmodum et de scientia se habet’.

87 See Avicenna, *Šifā’*: *Ilāhiyyāt* VIII, 7, esp. p. 294, line 14–p. 296, line 2; *Philosophia prima*, p. 428, line 81–p. 429, line 20 where Avicenna shows the difference between the will of the Necessary Existent and that of human beings. See also ibid. IX, 4, p. 327, lines 13–15; *Philosophia prima*, p. 478, lines 78–82: ‘Certitudo autem intellecta apud eum [sc. primum] est ipsa, sicut nosti, scientia [*‘ilm*], potentia [*qudra*] et voluntas [*irāda*]. Nos enim ad exsequendum quod imaginamus, indigemus intentione, motu et voluntate ad hoc ut sit; in ipso autem hoc [non] est conveniens [*lā yaḥsunu fihi*], nec potest esse [*lā yaṣiḥḥu lahū*] propter suam immunitatem a dualitate’.

universe with the beginning of time; furthermore, as William acknowledges, God did not create everything at that moment, but continues to create beings at different moments of time. Here change must take place, even if in God's will there is no change. To prohibit such a change was the core of the argument for the eternity of the world discussed above. William's answer to this is that there indeed is no change in God although there is creation, because 'creation does not signify something in the creator, but something from him, nor does illumination signify something in the sun, but rather something from it. For creation is merely the newness of existing or of being from the will of the creator without any means.'<sup>88</sup> With this, the creation of the world with time is saved in William's eyes.

#### 4 Conclusion

Even if William is in vehement disagreement with Avicenna concerning this most important issue of causality, namely God's acting as the universe's efficient cause, he does not hesitate, as has been shown, to draw widely on Avicenna concerning other issues of causality which are compatible with Christian faith. Inspired by Avicenna, William develops a theory of potency which is important for his theory of efficient causes. He begins his discussion, as Avicenna does, by listing the main usages of the term potency (*potentia*), although his enumeration is a simplified version of Avicenna's list. William then concentrates on the active potency (*potentia agens sive activa*), since this kind of potency is relevant for the classification of efficient causes. He understands active potency as a principle of operations (*principium operationis*), an interpretation which is close to the definition of potency as principle of change (*mabda' al-taḡayyur; principium variationis*), listed by Avicenna as the philosophers' usage of the term. Furthermore, from Avicenna (and indirectly from Aristotle), William takes over the distinction between single and twofold active potency; these correspond to the two basic kinds of efficient causes: natural and voluntary causes. Natural causes possess only single potency and therefore act through necessity, or, as William prefers to characterize it, in the manner of a servant. This characterization, which William regularly repeats, is taken over from Avicenna. In contrast to natural causes, voluntary agents, i.e. human beings and God, have twofold potencies and act by will. God, however, differs from other voluntary agents in that he is most free and immutable. To show the great difference between God's acts and those of all other causes, William

88 William of Auvergne, *De universo* Ia-lae, c. 23, p. 618bF: 'quia creare non dicit aliquid in creatore, sed ab ipso, neque illuminare dicit aliquid in sole, sed ab ipso. Et propter hoc creare non est aliquid in ipso creatore, vel apud ipsum, sed magis ab ipso. Creatio enim non est nisi novitas existendi vel essendi ex voluntate creatoris absque medio.'

introduces the concept of sufficiency of cause (*sufficiencia causae*). God, who is the most sufficient cause, is the only one who is utterly free from *sufficiencia causae*. This concept too is inspired by Avicenna, but William uses it to pursue his own aim: showing God's absolute freedom in the act of the creation of the world with time, contrary to the Peripatetic model, in which—at least according to William's interpretation—God necessarily causes an eternal emanation of the world.

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