

[Lelbmi 2 [1678?]]

4. The Author of Sin¹

A VI:iii

[1673?]

150 Concerning the important question of *the author of sin*, it is commonly believed that one may avoid the difficulty by claiming that sin in its essence is nothing but a pure privation without any reality, and that God is not the author of privations.² To that end, the famous distinction between the physical aspect and the moral aspect of sin was introduced, a distinction that has been abused somewhat, although it is good in and of itself. For example, the physical or real aspect of a robbery is the object or the plunder that irritates the thief's sense of poverty, the visual rays that strike his eyes and penetrate to the depths of his soul, or the imaginings, the uneasiness, and the deliberations that arise thereby, which finally terminate in the conclusion to take advantage of the situation and commit the crime.³

It cannot be denied that all of that is real, and it is even necessary to assert that the last determination of the will, after it has been balanced for a long time and it has examined all the circumstances, is a real act, which is in the category of action, just as much as the thought and the movement. Nevertheless, it is this final determination that renders us criminal.

151 Where then is this moral aspect of sin of which so much is said? Perhaps it will be said that it consists in anomie, as holy Scripture calls it, or in the lack of conformity of the action with respect to the law, which is a pure privation. I agree with that, but I do not see what it contributes to the clarification of our question. For to say that God is not the author of sin, because he is not the author of a privation, although he can be called the author of everything that is real and positive in the sin—that is a manifest illusion. It is a leftover from the visionary philosophy of the past; it is a subterfuge with which a reasonable person will never be satisfied.⁴ I am going to make it clear by an example. A painter creates two paintings, one of which is large so that it may be used as a model for a tapestry, while the other is only a miniature. Consider the miniature. Let us say that there are only two things to consider with respect to it, first its positive and real aspect, which is the table, the background, the colors, the lines; and then its privative aspect, which is the disproportion with respect to the large painting, in other words, its smallness. Now it would be a joke to say that the painter is the author of everything that is real in the two paintings without, nevertheless, being the author of the privative aspect, i.e., the disproportion between the large one and the small one. For by the same line of reasoning, or rather by stronger reasoning, it could be said that a painter can be the author of a copy, or of a portrait, without being the author of the disproportion between the copy and the original, i.e., without being the author of this fault.

le privatif n'est rien qu'un simple resultat ou consequence infallible du positif, sans avoir besoin d'un auteur à part. Je m'estonne que ces gens ne passent plus avant, et ne tachent de nous persuader, que l'homme même n'est pas auteur du peché, par ce qu'il n'est auteur que du physique ou reel, la privation estant une chose dont il n'y a point d'auteur.

Je conclus de ce que je viens de dire, que ceux qui disent que Dieu est auteur de tout ce qu'il y a de reel ou de positif dans le peché; et qui avouent, que Dieu est l'auteur de la loix, et qui nient pourtant, que Dieu est l'auteur du resultat de ces deux choses, c'est à dire, de la difformité entre la loix et le positif du peché; ne sont eloignez de Calvin, que dans la façon de parler; et qu'ils font Dieu auteur du peché, sans le dire, quoyque ils protestent de faire le contraire.

**Conversatio cum Domino Episcopo Stenonio
de libertate**

A VI^{iv}

1375

CONVERSATIO CUM DOMINO EPISCOPO STENONIO DE LIBERTATE

7. Decembar. 1677

Ajo Dei existentiam non posse demonstrari, sine hoc principio, *nihil esse sine ratione*. Id principium non locum habet tantum in mechanicis, quando scilicet agitur, utrum ex data magnitudine figura et motu sequatur alia magnitudo, figura, motus, sed etiam in rationibus, quas necesse est mechanicas non esse, quod sic ostendo. Series rerum potuit aliter esse, absolute loquendo, seu non implicat contradictionem ipsam esse aliter, hinc etsi causa una in aliam resolvatur in infinitum, v.g. ego sum talis, ob talem causam, quae rursus talis ob talem, etc., et ita in infinitum, tamen, semper utcumque progrediamur nova manet quaestio, nec uspiam in serie reperitur ratio sufficiens. Ergo ea debet esse extra seriem. Haec ratio non est corporea, alioqui intra corpora ista seu in serie fuisset jam comprehensa. Ergo necessarius est usus hujus principii etiam extra mechanica.

Nihil est sine ratione, intelligitur de causa efficiente, materiali, finali, finali. Causa formalis est ipsa rei essentia, seu si ratio cur res aliqua sit, vel talis sit, sit intra rem ipsam. Causa materialis et efficiens, ut in motu movetur quid semper eodem modo, nisi ratio sit mutationis, vel in re, vel in alio in rem agente. In finali, ut ratio debet esse eligendi ex duobus hoc, vera vel apprens.

150 Touchant cette grande Question de l'*Auteur du Peché*, on croit communement esquiver la difficulté, en disant, que le Peché dans son essence n'est qu'une pure privation sans aucune réalité; et que Dieu n'est pas l'auteur des privations. Pour cet effect, on a introduit cette fameuse distinction entre le physique, et le moral du peché, dont on abuse un peu, quoyque elle soit bonne en elle même.

Le Physique ou reel du Vol, par exemple, est l'object, ou la proye qui irrite l'indigence du Voleur, les rayons visuels qui frappent ses yeux, et qui entrent jusque au fond de son ame; les imaginations, les inquietudes et les deliberations qui se forment là dessus, et qui se terminent en fin à la conclusion, qui est de profiter de l'occasion, et d'entreprendre l'execution du crime.

On ne scauroit nier que tout cela ne soyent des réalitez, et il faut même avouer que la dernière determination de la volonté, apres avoir balancé long temps, et examiné toutes les circonstances, est un acte reel, qui est dans le Predicament de l'Action, aussi bien que la Pensée et le mouvement: et pourtant cette dernière determination est ce qui nous rend criminels.

Où est donc ce Moral du Peché dont on parle tant? On dira peut estre, qu'il consiste dans l'Anomie, comme la sainte Écriture l'appelle, ou dans la difformité de l'Acte à l'égard de la Loix; qui est une pure privation. J'en demeure d'accord, mais je ne vois pas, ce que cela contribue à l'éclaircissement de nostre question. Car de dire que Dieu n'est pas l'auteur du peché, par ce qu'il n'est pas auteur d'une privation: quoyque il puisse estre appellé auteur de tout ce qu'il y a de reel et de positif dans le peché, c'est une illusion manifeste; c'est un reste de la philosophie visionnaire du temps passé, c'est un faux-fuyant dont un homme raisonnable ne se laissera jamais payer. Je m'en vay le declarer par un exemple. Un peintre fait deux tableaux, dont l'un est grand pour servir de modelle d'une tapisserie, l'autre n'est qu'une petite miniature. Prenons la miniature et disons qu'il y a deux choses à considerer là dedans; premierement son positif et reel, qui est, la table, le fonds, les couleurs, les traits; et son privatif qui est la disproportion au grand tableau, ou sa petitesse. Ce seroit donc se moquer du monde, que de dire, que le peintre est l'auteur de tout ce qu'il y a de reel dans les deux tableaux, sans estre pourtant l'auteur du privatif, ou de la disproportion qui [est entre] le grand et le petit, car par la même raison ou plus tost par plus forte raison on pourroit dire, qu'un peintre peut estre auteur d'une copie, ou d'un pourtrait, sans estre l'auteur de la disproportion entre la copie et l'original, ou sans estre l'auteur de sa faute. Car en effect

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For, in fact, the privation is nothing but a simple result or infallible consequence of the positive aspect, without requiring a separate author. I am amazed that these people did not go further and try to persuade us that man himself is not the author of sin, since he is only the author of the physical or real aspect, the privation being something for which there is no author.⁵

I conclude from what I have just said that those who say that God is the author of everything that is real and positive in sin, and who claim that God is the author of the law, and who nevertheless deny that God is the author of what results from these two things, i.e., the lack of conformity between the law and the positive aspect of sin, are removed from Calvin only in a manner of speaking; and they make God the author of sin without saying so, although they claim to do just the opposite.⁶

5. Conversation with Steno Concerning Freedom¹ A VI, iv

1375

CONVERSATION WITH STENO CONCERNING FREEDOM

7 December 1677

I claim that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated without this principle: *nothing exists without a reason*.² This principle holds not only in mechanics, where it concerns whether from a given magnitude, figure and motion, another magnitude, figure and motions, follows, but also in matters that of necessity are not mechanical, which I show as follows. The series of things could have been otherwise, absolutely speaking (i.e., its being otherwise does not imply a contradiction). For this reason, even if one cause is resolved into another to infinity, e.g., I am such because of such and such a cause, which in turn is such because of such and such a cause, and so on to infinity; nevertheless, however far we proceed a new question always remains, and a sufficient reason cannot be found in the series. Hence, it must be outside the series. This reason is not corporeal, otherwise it would have been among those bodies already included, i.e., in the series.³ Hence, this principle must be employed outside mechanics also.

Nothing is without a reason is understood concerning efficient, material, formal, and final causes. The formal cause is the very essence of the thing, i.e., if the reason why something exists or is such and such is in the thing itself. It holds for the material cause and the efficient cause so that anything that begins in motion always continues in the same way unless there is a reason for change either in the thing itself or in another acting on it. It holds in the case of a final cause, so that there must be a true or apparent reason for choosing this one from among two things.