

Aquinas - God works through secondary causes



For everything to sound right the player has to be good and the piano has to be good too.

God is like the piano player, and the piano is like something God uses to make a difference in the world.

Although it is the piano that actually makes the music, the player is the one who causes it to do so.

The piano is the "secondary cause" of the music. Although it can affect the final outcome it has no direct input apart from the pianist.

So, if God is the "primary cause " (or Prime Mover) in these situations, can you identify possible secondary causes? (There may be more than one)

- An earthquake
- A tree being chopped down
- A book being written
- Manchester United winning the Premiership
- Barack Obama being elected

Try to think of situations of your own and identify their secondary causes

A. N. Whitehead (1861-1947) - Process Theology



If God is like a pianist in the Thomist way of looking at things, then in process theology God is more like a football manager.

In process theology God is not outside of the universe pulling strings, but part of the process and encouraging the universe forward.

The universe is in a constant state of change (or "process") and God is part of this change. The universe is never static, but in a constant state of "becoming" in which everything affects everything else.

A. N. Whitehead (1861-1947) - Process Theology



God is in many respects like everything else in the universe. The main difference is that God is imperishable, while everything else only exists temporarily. Therefore, God has a much bigger picture of what is going on.

God does not work in the world by imposing his will on creation. He works by encouraging and persuading creation. God keeps the rules of the process and acts within it.

Just like a football manager helps his team to win by encouraging on the sidelines, God affects the world by persuasion. God is affected by what he does: "The fellow sufferer who understands".

Theodicy and the different ways of looking at the world

Thomism

Secondary causes are imperfect tools. Can the pianist be blamed if the music doesn't sound great when the piano is out of tune?

On the other hand, if God is said to create the imperfect secondary causes isn't God still responsible for the outcome?

Process Theology

God limits himself to the rules of the process. According to process theology God can only persuade - is it God's fault if people ignore what is said to them?

Shouldn't God act more decisively to combat evil? Just because people are ignoring God doesn't absolve God from responsibility.