

Rostislav Tkachenko

PETER LOMBARD ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE: SENTENTIAE, BOOK I, DISTINCTIONS 35-39, AS THE BASIS FOR LATER THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

A medieval student had to officially become a theologian through the process of composing and presenting a commentary on the Bible, while being a *baccalaureus biblicus* (the first level of theological studies in medieval universities), and, later, on the *Book of Sentences* of Peter Lombard, while being a *baccalaureus sententiarius* (the second level of theological study) [see Marenbon 2007: 207-208; Leinsle 2010: 99]. Thus, the major oeuvre of a twelve-century professor of theology from the Northern Italy was “the door through which every aspiring theologian in the scholastic tradition had to enter. It was the immovable textbook of a scholastically unified Christendom” [Southern 2001: 143]. Thus, many traditional philosophical discussions – for instance, over such controversial topics as God’s (fore)knowledge, God’s will, human freedom, and others – were conducted on the basis of Lombard’s famous textbook.

Currently the global “Lombard research” continues and leads to new publications.¹ But still, there is a need for detailed analytical theological and philosophical reading of the classic medieval text. Therefore, this article is intended to analyze the selected parts of the *Book of Sentences* with the purpose of looking at how Peter Lombard handled the issue of God’s knowledge, and what it meant for the developing scholastic thought. So far, the best exposition and analysis of these sections in recent scholarship was offered by M. Colish [Colish 1994: 263-302] and, in a very concise fashion, by P. Rosemann [Rosemann 2004: 77-82]. But both of them omit some aspects of Lombard’s theory of God’s knowledge or present them somewhat superficially, since their foci and goals are different (as it is the case with other scholars) [e.g. Kitanov 2014; Larson 2013, 2014]. Therefore the topic deserves more scrutiny and careful (re)reading because of its value for the study of the medieval philosophical theology. To achieve this goal I will offer a description and analytical exegesis of the pertinent chapters (*distinctiones*) of the *Sentences*: namely, distinctions 35-36 and 38.

1. A brief introduction to the *Book of Sentences*

The *Book of Sentences* (*Libri quattuor sententiarum*, alternatively *Sententiae in quattuor libris distinctae*), or simply the *Sentences*, is a work, composed ca. 1154-1158² by Peter

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¹ It started with [Colish 1994], and continued more recently with [Clark 2005; Finn 2008; Kitanov 2014; Larson 2013, 2014; McMullin 2007; Rosemann 2004, 2007; West 2007]. Of particular importance is the multivolume project entitled “Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Current Research” [Evans 2002; Rosemann 2009, 2015].

² For the dating see [Colish 1994: 25; Rosemann 2004: 55].

Lombard (ca. 1095-1160), a Parisian lecturer (*magister*) in theology, a canon of Notre Dame de Paris and later the bishop of the city.³ The *Sentences* are considered to be Lombard's *magnum opus* and was recognized as a work deserving attention and esteem immediately after its composition and circulation. Already Peter's contemporaries and students valued it as a high-quality sourcebook for theological studies and even "a most excellent book" (*opus excellentissimum*) [Colish 1994: 30-31; Southern 2001: 144-145].

It was in fact a collection of authoritative saying, quotes, and thoughts. But these were systematically arranged, catalogued, and accessibly presented. This key feature of Lombard's book as aptly captured in Atria Larson's words:

On the surface, very little of these distinctions came from the renowned master himself, but Peter Lombard's genius lay in adopting and refashioning the sources in front of him, both patristic and more contemporary, in order to create his own unique composition and let his ideas shine through. Such was the nature of a book of sentences, and Peter Lombard composed the best sentence collection of the twelfth century, thus ensuring its reception as the textbook of theology for centuries to come [Larson 2014: 316].

Later, in the 13th century, Alexander of Hales (ca. 1185-1245) promoted the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard as *the* theological textbook. It happened at the University of Paris around 1222 [Slotemaker 2011: 951; Finn 2008: 560; Leinsle 2010: 99 (original: Leinsle 1995: 92)]. Such a decision of Alexander, who at the time was Regent Master, in a sense followed and reflected the ecclesiastical approbation that Peter Lombard and his collection of theological statements finally gained at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, when his name was freed from the charges of heresy and heterodoxy. Joseph de Ghellinck calls this posthumous success at the university and the church a "triomphe définitif du «Liber sententiarum»" and "la victoire du Lombard" [Ghellinck 1914: 150, 163].

Since then, that is the second quarter of the 13th century, the *Sentences* gradually became the second major resource and textual basis (after, and along with, the Bible) for theological education on master level in intellectual centers of the western Europe: in the universities of Paris (ca. 1222-1227), Oxford (ca. 1245) and later throughout the network of *studia generalia* and *universitates* of France, England, and other countries. Despite some resistance (for example, from Robert Grosseteste and Richard Rufus), it won the day and became "the standard theological textbook in western Europe up until the sixteenth century" [Slotemaker 2011: 951-952]. Yet, the wide acceptance and use of the *Sentences* should not be overstated and overestimated, since, as Russel Friedman points out, "while there were commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* even before Alexander of Hales' early effort of 1223-27, nevertheless by the time Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas read the *Sentences* at Paris, the genre was still in its beginning stages" [Friedman 2002: 44]. Thus, it took some time for this formative text to be formed or transformed into a standard textbook for the study of theology. But it did happen and here is the reason why:

The greatness of Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences* – its unequalled *Wirkungsgeschichte* ["history of effect" or history of reception] that we are still trying to explain – can be attributed to the fact that it folded the tradition back into the unity that it needed by the twelfth century: a highly differentiated unity, in which the voices of the Bible itself, of its earliest interpreters – the Fathers of the Church – and of the medieval theo-

³ For detailed overviews of his life and career see [Brady 1971: 85-45; Ghellinck 1914: 126-130; Espenberger 1901: 1-11; Protois 1881: 27-56] and recent [Colish 1994: 15-32; Rosemann 2004: 34-53; Southern 2001: 133-141].

logians retained their distinctness while being woven into a harmonious composition of systematic theology. [Rosemann 2007: 17]

Having presented a general introduction to the *Book of Sentences*, I proceed now to a more focused and detailed treatment of the selected sections of the book I. The questions pertaining to the doctrine of God's knowledge find their place in the distinctions 35-41 or, as the work was divided initially, chapters 150-180. But I will concentrate on distinctions 35-36 and 38 as most fundamental for our discussion.⁴

2. Distinction 35: introducing the divine knowledge

For Lombard, God's knowledge is one of the essential divine properties (*quae secundum substantiam de Deo dicuntur*) [PetL 2007: 193-197; 2014: 597-598; 1882: 597-598; 1971: 254-258]. In fact, he identifies the knowledge of God with the wisdom of God: they are one and the same thing, so that one is allowed to speak of "God's wisdom or knowledge" (*sapientia vel scientia Dei*) (*Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 1, no. 1; cap. 6 (or cap. 1-6, no. 2 according to an alternative numeration)). Such a conclusion follows from the Lombardian "trinitarian essentialist" approach to the doctrine of God. Even the structure of the *Sentences* 1 reveals the order of priorities its author has in discussing the Godhead: (1) the trinity of persons and (2) the perfect unity of essence. Whereas the intra- and extratrinitarian relations and mysteries hold the place of honor in faith and theology par excellence, the doctrine of God's *essentia* is the next all-encompassing aspect of theology proper, which colors and determines the whole range of divine properties. With regard to the doctrine of God's knowledge it means the following.

God's knowledge is identical to God's wisdom, and both are the one and the same quality of God. Moreover, since God is absolutely simple – his essence has no parts, accidents, or any multiplicity and, thus, is perfectly whole (*Sent.* 1, dist. 8, cap. 3) [cf. Bertola 1956: 142] – his properties such as knowledge, simplicity or power "inhere, coincide with God's essence" [Rosemann 2004: 78]. In other words, ontically God is one and indivisible, albeit He also *is* three persons. His various "qualities" are actually the linguistic and conceptual significations, which refer to some aspects of one and the same nature *as they relate to something external for God and as we see them*. This nature is so perfect, multifaceted, and immense that it is inevitable to use a range of terms and ideas to describe it to a certain extent.

Thus, Peter Lombard solves this conundrum semantically by distinguishing between the signification and the signified: God's nature is the latter and our notions of the divine attributes are the former. He states: "Here it is to be diligently noted why, although Augustine says that God alone is truly simple, yet he says that God is called in many ways... Although the names are manifold, yet they signify one thing, namely the divine nature."⁵ Thus, there is only one signified object – God's essence – and a number of significations ascribed to it by other nouns or adjectives.

At the same time, on the metaphysical plain Peter adds that these names are not just terms or deliberately picked ideas in the human mind – they are words that signify God's essence

⁴ Hereafter I will cite the Lombard's Latin text from [Petrus Lombardus 1971] and in comparison to the earlier [Petrus Lombardus 1882]. I will abbreviate them as PetL 1971 and PetL 1882, accordingly.

As for the English translation I will primarily use G. Silano's [Peter Lombard 2007], although at times I will refer to A. Bugnolo's [Peter Lombard 2014]. I will abbreviate them as PetL 2007 and PetL 2014, accordingly. My choice of the translation will depend on its supposed closer rendering of the Latin original in my view.

⁵ *Hic diligenter notandum est, cum dicat Augustinus, solum Deum vere simplicem esse, cur dicat eundem multipliciter dici. ... quae licet [nomina] multiplicia sint, unum tamen significant, scilicet divinam naturam* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 8, cap. 5) [PetL 2007: 48; PetL 1882: 148].

qua connected to “the varying states of things and (its) different effects.”⁶ It means that although the *essentia Dei* is absolutely one, yet it acts differently, interacts with different things or objects, and, thus, obviously discloses its own richness of being and manifoldness of its activity. God relates himself to the world and acts in the world. As a result, the different objects and effects of his involvement require a number of terms and concepts to rightly express what is going on. Hence, Lombard explains the diversity of the attributes of God on two levels: on the level of language and logic (here *properties are names*) and on the level of metaphysics and ontology (here *properties are expressions of real actions and real qualities*).

It is a good example of the terminist logic and complex thinking that developed in the middle ages. As L.M. de Rijk rightly summarizes this phenomenon,

Thought was considered to be linguistically constrained by its very nature; thought and language were taken to be related both to each other and to reality in their elements and their structure. In the final analysis, language, thought, and reality were considered to be of the same logical coherence. Language was taken to be not only an instrument of thought, expression, and communication but also in itself an important source of information regarding the nature of reality. In medieval thought, logico-semantic and metaphysical points of view are, as a result of their perceived interdependence, entirely interwoven [Rijk 1982: 161; cf. Rijk 1962].

When it comes to the doctrine of God’s knowledge per se it appears that this notion not only designates a specific aspect of the same divine essence, but also implies a number of subaspects of the *scientia Dei*. In particular, it can be understood as simple knowledge, foreknowledge, disposition, predestination or providence. Each of these aspects refers to, and concerns, a specific action of God:⁷

- foreknowledge or foresight (*praescientia sive praeventia*) is the knowledge that “concerns only future things, but all of them, namely good and evil ones” (*de futuris tantum, sed de omnibus: de bonis scilicet et malis*);
- disposition (*dispositio*) is the aspect of divine knowledge that “concerns things that are to be done” (*de faciendis*);
- predestination (*praedestinatio*) is the knowledge of “all who are to be saved, as well as the good things by which these are freed in this life and will be crowned in the future” (*de hominibus salvandis, et de bonis quibus et hic liberantur et in futuro coronabuntur*); it implies the act of election and that of preparation of some goods for those predestined;
- providence (*providentia*) is the aspect of knowledge that “concerned with governance” (*gubernandorum*), which sometimes can be similar either to disposition (when it deals with God’s active involvement with the world), or to foreknowledge (when it is taken for its literal meaning – *pro-videre*, “see beforehand”);
- wisdom or “simple” knowledge (*sapientia vel scientia*) is the knowledge of “all things: namely good and evil, and present, past, and future, and not only temporal things, but also eternal ones” (*de omnibus est: scilicet bonis et malis, et de praesentibus, praeteritis et futuris, et non tantum de temporalibus, sed etiam de aeternis*).

Thus, the divine knowledge is indeed manifold. But it is interesting that under this rubric Lombard lists not only the qualities that have been traditionally associated with strictly

⁶ ...*varios status rerum et diversos effectus* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 1, no.1) [PetL 2007: 194, 2014: 597; PetL 1971: 254-255]. Here I prefer Bugnolo’s translation over that of Silano.

⁷ *Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 1, no. 2-6 (or, alternatively, cap. 1-6, no. 2) [PetL 2007: 194; PetL 1971: 254-255; cf. Colish, 2006a: 180-181].

cognitive abilities (knowledge, wisdom, foreknowledge) but also the properties that could have been put under a different “umbrella doctrine” – that of divine will (providence, predestination, disposition). He lists all of them in his distinction dedicated to wisdom, thus following Honorius Augustodunensis and the author of *Summa sententiarum* and loading the doctrine of God's knowledge with much meaning [Colish 1994: 285]. But the definitions given do not exhaust the Lombardian theo-epistemology and theo-gnoseology.

He continues and introduces the old idea of God's perfect awareness of absolutely everything. God “knows all things that are known” (*scit ipse omnia quae sciuntur*), which means that his eternal mind, being one with God's immutable essence, used to know and knows right now every single thing that was, is or will be – whether in the eternity or in the temporal world. “Therefore from eternity, God knew eternity and all that was going to be, and he knew it immutably. He also knows past or future things no less than present ones.”⁸

Here Lombard emphasizes the all-encompassing nature of the Trinity's knowledge. Even if there had been no future or some other “segments” of spatiotemporal continuum, his wisdom would still be perfect and exhaustive. But such a theorizing about possibility of the non-existence of the future raises a serious question, for had there been no future, there could not have been such things as foreknowledge, predestination and disposition (*Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 7) [PetL 2007: 194-196; PetL 1971: 255-257]. And Peter Lombard answers it again by means of the linguistic-metaphysical thinking (that is, terminist logic and speculative theology).

Metaphysically and theologically speaking, the question is about the fullness or completeness of the divine knowledge. And here the response must be simple: it is possible that there would be no future, “yet neither he nor his knowledge would be less thereby.”⁹ Linguistically or “terministically” speaking, the question is about the meaning of the terms “foreknowledge,” “disposition,” and “predestination.” The double crucial thing here is that, firstly, behind every term there is a *raison d'être* of its existence, which needs to be taken into consideration,¹⁰ and, secondly, the just mentioned words are relative, that is, they are meaningful only when they are “said with regard to something” (*ad aliquid dici*).¹¹ Thus, the reason to speak of foreknowledge is that God is a knowing agent “related” to the future, and what is at stake here is not the fullness of his knowledge but the possible non-existence of the object of his action. If there is no future, the terms related to the future vanish or lose their meaning. Since they are relative and signify *relation*, it is inevitable. But since what is lost here is nothing but an object of God's activity, the divine agent and his abilities remain intact.

In other words, the relative terms such as *praescientia* or *praedestinatio* have a double reference: they indicate the property of the agent who performs the described action – the divine knowledge per se – and the thing(s), which serve as object(s) of the action, that is, the things “subject to his knowledge” (*ejus scientiae... subjectae*).¹² Thus, these idiosyncratic terms make sense and have meaning only when the double referring power is retained. But it might be retained if and only if the two referents of the term exist. When any one of them is lacking, the word loses its sense and cannot be used at all [Cf. Luscombe 1969: 265; Silano

⁸ *Scivit ergo Deus ab aeterno aeternum et omne quod futurum erat, et scivit immutabiliter. Scit quoque non minus praeterita vel futura quam praesentia* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 8) [PetL 2007: 194-196; PetL 1971: 255-257].

⁹ *...non eo tamen ipse minus esset vel eius scientia* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 7, no. 6) [PetL 2007: 194-196; PetL 1971: 255-257].

¹⁰ *...quia varia est ibi causa dicendi, distingui oportet rationem dicti* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 7, no. 5) [PetL 1971:256].

¹¹ *Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 7, no. 4 [PetL 2007:195; PetL 1971:256].

¹² *Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 7, no. 6 [PetL 1971:257; PetL 2007:196].

2007: 43-44]. This linguistic-metaphysical distinction helps Master Peter to defend and clarify his thesis about the essential totality and perfection of God's cognition, which is entirely independent of the known objects, yet naturally connected to them if/when they exist. Quantitatively his knowledge could have been different (hypothetically); qualitatively it is always the same – full, exhausting, comprehensive. It is “the infinite reservoir of knowledge He possesses,” as Colish dubs it. This is the double solution that Lombard formulates for the posed question.

It shows implicitly what will be laid out explicitly in the following distinctions: God is not dependent on, and thus exists outside, the temporal order.¹³ His knowledge and he himself is eternal (*aeterna*), and therefore he knows what he knows eternally and immutably (*ab aeterno, immutabiliter*). Yet, the subject matter of his knowledge is double: it includes both eternal (*aeternum*) and temporal things (*quod futurum erat*), which means that his cognizing activity fully embraces (a) God himself as the *internal eternal thing* knowable to himself, (b) spiritual or angelic reality as the *external eternal object* of his *scientia*, and (c) the real world with its time-space continuum, (in)animate creatures, and all the events as the *external temporal object* of knowledge. Thus, the wisdom of God is as eternal as he himself, while the objects it acts upon can be either eternal (in two senses) or temporal.

Yet, there is something else important about this distinction of the *Book of Sentences*. The fact that God permanently and immutably knows absolutely everything and his knowledge is identical with his essence leads to a conclusion that the things known have always been and will be in God's essence. In other words, even “before these things were made, they were and were not: they were in God's knowledge, they were not in their own nature.”¹⁴ It can be interpreted as a statement about their essential presence in God or their integration into the divine essence.

However, what is meant here is the permanent presence of all the known things in God's knowledge. No identification or mixture is implied: what is known is not the same as knowing ability per se; therefore the things are not – and never can be – integrated with God's essence. Rather, they are but information or “virtual content” of the divine mind. Lombard lacks words to express this idea clearly, but he employs a few expressions, some of which are borrowed from Ambrose¹⁵ and Augustine.¹⁶ When it is said that God permanently and eternally knows everything, it means that every single thing is “present to him” (*ei praesentia*), is “in him or before him” (*in eo vel apud eum*), and “with him” (*cum illo*).¹⁷ Hence, the things known are in God in the sense that they form the content of his knowledge, being the information – the “ideas” – known and not the essence knowing. As E. Bertola aptly expressed it, it means “to be in his presence and not in his essence” (*essere nella sua presenza, non nella sua essenza*) [Bertola 1956: 146].

3. Distinction 36: describing the character of God's knowledge

The question of the previous chapter leaves open an important distinction [PetL 2007: 197-202, 2014: 617-618; PetL 1882: 617-618, 1971: 258-263]: are the things known by God only as *ideas* present to him or also as *existing objects*?¹⁸ Although the metaphysical part seems to be clearly presented and nailed down, the question of the mode of speaking

¹³ See *Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 8 [PetL 2007: 196; PetL 1971: 257; cf. Colish 1994: 286].

¹⁴ *Proinde antequam fierent, et erant, et non erant: erant in Dei scientia, non erant in sua natura* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 9, no. 1) [PetL 1971: 257-258; PetL 2007: 196-197].

¹⁵ Ambrose, *De fide*, book 5, cap. 16, no. 36.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, on Ps. 49, 11, no. 18; *De Genesi ad litteram*, 5, cap. 18, no. 36.

¹⁷ *Sent.* 1, dist. 35, cap. 9, no. 2. [PetL 1971: 258; PetL 2007: 197]. Cf. *Sent.* 1, dist. 36, cap. 1.

¹⁸ *Sent.* 1, dist. 36, cap. 1 [PetL 2007: 197-198; PetL 1971: 258-259].

remains: should one speak not only of the presence of things known to God but also of their existence in him – that is, in his essence?

The answer is entailed by the metaphysical structure presented above: from the true statements (a) “God’s cognition is certainly his essence” and (b) “his presence, in which are all things, is his cognition”, it does not follow (c) that therefore “all things which are in his presence or cognition should be said to be in his essence.” Logically, *non sequitur*. Metaphysically, it is wrong because, firstly, it is impossible for any thing that is not God to be in his essence, for his essence is he himself, and, secondly, the created things are better to be said to be in God *through* his essence, and not literally *in* his essence (*esse per essentiam, quod est divina*).¹⁹ Thus, it has been established once again that the known things are but the information or content that is “virtually” in God’s cognizing mind, which is far from being “really” identical with God’s nature. What God has (knowledge *of* something) is not what God is (knowledge *as* something – an aspect of God’s nature) [Colish 1994: 286].

But then the *magister sententiarum* unfolds this problem even further and asks a question: how there could be both good and evil things *in* God’s knowledge, that is, his essence? For, indeed, even if everything known is present *to*, or *in*, God as a content of his wisdom, the good and the bad cannot be contained there in the same sense and measure. This is why, as Lombard argues, only good things should be properly said to be in God (*esse in Deo*): he is their creator (*auctor*), and therefore they exist “through him” (*per ipsum*) and “from him” (*ex ipso*). So, it is logical to say that this type of things and events was and is in the mind of God in full sense of the word.²⁰ The bad things are known as perfectly as the good ones but there is a difference in what is meant by “knowing” here. The quantity is the same – full and exhaustive cognition – but the quality of the knowledge is different – “God does not know evil things entirely in the same way as good ones.”²¹

Master Peter makes an interesting twist here and introduces a new distinction: that between knowledge as *pure or simple knowledge* (*noscit... tantum per scientiam*) or knowledge as knowledge with approbation and good pleasure attached (*noscit... etiam per approbationem et beneplacitum*). The former is identified with awareness or acquaintance (*scientia, notitia tantum*), which is analogously or metaphorically called the distanced or detached knowledge, the knowledge “from far away” (*quasi de longe*) on the basis of Ps. 137, 6. The latter has certain preeminence over this “awareness alone” and therefore must be dubbed the “near” or close knowledge (*prope*), since God is the creator and doer of good things, which originate in him.²²

Thus, it appears that there are two types of God’s cognizing activity: (1) knowing or comprehending *alone* and (2) knowing or comprehending *plus* some kind of approval and pleasure. We could say, that the first type of action is cognitively full and emotionally empty or neutral while the second is both cognitively and emotionally loaded with one short notice: by “emotions” here I mean nothing but approval, pleasure or other emotion-like activity on God’s side. Peter Lombard evokes the authorities of Cassiodorus²³ and Augustine²⁴ and then repeats this dictum in the next paragraph as an established fact: “God knows good things in some way in which he does not know evil things. He knows both

¹⁹ *Sent.* 1, dist. 36, cap. 1, no. 2 [PetL 2007: 198; PetL 1971: 259].

²⁰ *Sent.* 1, dist. 36, cap. 2, no. 2 [PetL 2007: 199; PetL 1971: 260].

²¹ *non omnino ita noscit Deus mala ut bona* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 36, cap. 2, no. 3) [PetL 2007: 199; PetL 1971: 260].

²² See *Sent.* 1, dist. 36, cap. 2, no. 3 [PetL 2007: 199; PetL 1971: 260] and dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 8 [PetL 2007: 215; PetL 1971: 277].

²³ Cassiodorus, *In Psalterium*, on Ps. 16, 16.

²⁴ Augustine, *Epistola 169 (Ad Evodium)*, cap. 1, no. 2.

equally and in the same way as regards knowledge, but he knows good things also by approbation and good pleasure.”²⁵ It is not clear yet, whether the divine approval and pleasure are extra parts of the cognizing activity per se or they are external “attachments” to knowledge belonging to the realm of actions of God’s will. But nevertheless, the differentiation between two types of knowledge is founded.

After it the author of the *Sentences* closes up this section with a few clarifications. He states that God’s knowledge does not function in isolation from God’s other attributes, and when one speaks of God the knower, he also speaks of God the “willer” who (dis)approves and takes decisions or God the creator and governor who acts and causes things to happen [Colish 1994: 286]. Such a combination of qualities is again determined by the essential unity of the Trinity whose acts are indivisible, so that this kind of essentialism necessarily requires to retain the difference between the good and the bad as known and (not) performed by God. On the one hand, it helps to avoid any identification of the content of God’s knowledge with God’s essence, which would lead to pantheism [Rosemann 2004: 80]; on the other hand, it excludes any form of direct causation that could possibly be ascribed to the divine wisdom. Yet, the last idea is explained by Lombard in the *distinctio* 38.

4. Distinction 38: analyzing the causalities and possibilities of God’s knowledge

At this stage [PetL 2007: 212-217; PetL 2014: 666-668; PetL 1971: 275-279] Master Peter returns to the *loci communes* of the doctrine of God’s knowledge and embarks on a triple discussion of (1) the allegedly causal character of the foreknowledge, (2) the mechanism and causes of the *scientia divina*, and (3) its supposed infallibility. I will present the *Sentences*’ interpretation of the first two questions and will omit the third one, since the answer itself is predictable: the divine knowledge must be infallible.²⁶

Concerning the causation topic, Peter Lombard offers the classic theory of the causal power of divine foreknowledge. He writes:

For it seems that God’s foreknowledge is the cause of things subject to it and necessitates their coming into being because there would not be any future things if God had not foreknown them, and they cannot not come to pass once God has foreknown them. But if it is impossible for them not to come to pass because they have been foreknown, then the very foreknowledge by which they have been foreknown appears to be the cause of their coming to pass.²⁷

The crucial thing here is that God’s necessary knowledge of future events seems to necessitate (*necessitatem facere*) their happening, which entails the impossibility of their non-happening. The strict logical reasoning behind this scheme is well captured by John Marenbon in his discussion of the same problem as analyzed by Boethius [Marenbon 2007: 43], although the argument itself must be traced back to Augustine [Bok 1995]:

²⁵ *quodam modo cognoscit Deus bona, quo non cognoscit mala. Pariter quidem utraque eodemque modo noscit quantum ad notitiam, sed bona etiam approbatione et beneplacito cognoscit* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 36, cap. 2, no. 4) [PetL 2007: 200; PetL 1971: 261].

²⁶ Lombard’s treatment of the issue is relatively sophisticated but it can be treated in detail elsewhere, in another article.

²⁷ *Videtur enim praescientia Dei causa esse eorum quae ei subsunt ac necessitatem eveniendi eis facere, quia nec aliqua futura fuissent, nisi ea Deus praescisset; nec possunt non evenire, cum Deus ea praesciverit. Si autem impossibile est ea non evenire quia praescita sunt, videtur igitur ipsa praescientia qua praescita sunt eis esse causa eveniendi* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 3) [PetL 2007: 213; PetL 1971: 275].

- (1) God knows every event, including all future ones.
 (2) When someone knows that an event will happen, then the event will happen.
 (3) The proposition (2) is true as a matter of necessity, because it is impossible to know that which is not the case.

(4) If someone knows an event will happen, it will happen necessarily, which is entailed by (2, 3).

(5) Every event, including future ones, happens necessarily, which is entailed by (1, 4).²⁸

But Peter Lombard denies the conclusion without any actual dismantling of the philosophical-theological reasoning. Vice versa, he points out to the *further* implications of this line of thinking and applies the *reductio ad absurdum* method, so loved and frequently used by Anselm of Canterbury.²⁹ If the divine foreknowledge has causative power, then it leads to some “anomalies” (*inconvenientia*), the most important of which is the following: “But if this is so, then it is the cause of all evils, since all evil things are known and fore-known by God.”³⁰ Hence, according to Lombard, the propositions (1), (2) and (4) lead to new theses, presented in cap. 1, no. 5:

(6) Both good and evil things and events will happen necessarily, as entailed by (5).

(7) Therefore, God's knowledge and foreknowledge of all events causes and necessitates evil things, which is implied by (1, 4, 6).

(8) Consequently: God is the author and doer of the evil things (*Deus auctor malorum*).

And here lies the evident problem: God is not – and cannot be – the creator of evil, because of his perfect essential goodness. Hence, (8) is obviously false. Then, by *modus tollens*

(9) If the premise (7) leads to the conclusion (8);

(10) but (8) is false;

(11) then (7) is false, too.

Therefore, as Lombard concludes, “God's knowledge or foreknowledge is not the cause of all things subject to it.”³¹ I suggest that he could have gone even further and elaborated a more detailed refutation and philosophical analysis, like the following:

(9*) If the *combination* of $(1 \supset 4 \supset 6 \supset 7)$ leads to the conclusion (8);

(10*) but (8) is false;

(11*) then the logical chain of $(1 \supset 4 \supset 6 \supset 7)$ is false, too.

The question would be where exactly this chain of arguments failed to give valid implications. But Lombard avoids Abelardian games with formal logic and does not work with philosophical material of Aristotle and Boethius [Colish 1994: 287]. Rather, he remains totally satisfied with a simpler refutation by means of the *reductio*. But does it lead to an alternative thesis (*e converso*), that the future things are the causes of God's foreknowledge and the totality of known things is the cause of God's knowledge?

²⁸ In Peter's own words this logical chain sounds a bit differently but leads to the same conclusion both about the divine foreknowledge and divine knowledge. See *Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 3 [PetL 2007: 213; PetL 1971: 275-276].

²⁹ “[A] *reductio ad absurdum* [is] the type of argument in which it is shown that, from a certain premiss *p*, and other premisses the truth of which is supposedly unquestionable, using valid reasoning, there follows a contradictory conclusion. If this is really so, it must be the case that *p* is false (because a valid argument with true premisses must have a true conclusion)” [Marenbon, 2007: 125]. Anselm brilliantly employs it in *Proslogion*, 2-3.

³⁰ *Quod si ita est, est igitur causa omnium malorum, cum omnia mala sciuntur et praesciuntur a Deo* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 5) [PetL 2007: 214; PetL 1971: 276-277].

³¹ *non igitur scientia vel praescientia Dei causa est omnium quae ei subsunt* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 5) [PetL 2007: 214; PetL 1971: 277].

Peter responds in negative. He agrees, that when God knows that when an event will happen, the event will happen (proposition 2), and denies that the future things are known by God because there *are going to happen* (*non tamen ideo praesciuntur quia futurae sunt*).³² It is not true due to a purely theological problem: the hypothetically causative character of the future events, be it the reason for God knowing them, would end up in a heretical idea of God's dependence on creatures. If God knows certain events because they have happened, are happening, or are going to happen, then his knowledge is influenced by the creatures, which is false, because of the essential perfection whereby he is characterized. His knowledge must be perfect by nature, independently of any possibly created worlds and their chains of events.

But then, what is the actual mechanism of the divine wisdom, which is the second topic announced in the beginning of the section? It seems that Lombard denies both lines of causations: neither the actually happening events cause God's knowing of them, nor God's knowledge causes these events happening. But in fact, there is a possibility to clarify the issue at stake. To do that, it is needed to take heed to the authorities Master Peter evokes and the statements he himself makes.

His key authorities here are Origen and Augustine, and he compares their two contradicting dicta. The former's one is this: "It is not because a thing will be that God knows it will be; but because it will be it is known to God before it happens,"³³ and the latter's citation reads: "For created things are not known by God because they have been made; it is rather the case that they have been made because they are immutably known by him."³⁴ Meanwhile, the key statement that Lombard has made so far – and its particular formulation is important – is this (*italics mine*): "God's knowledge or foreknowledge is not the cause of *all* things subject to it."³⁵ Within the parameters of these three statements, Lombard resolves the problem of God's knowledge in the following manner.³⁶

Firstly, God's (fore)knowledge can be interpreted either as simple knowledge or awareness *alone* (*notitiam tantum, notitia sola*), or as knowledge *and* certain disposition or good pleasure (*nomine scientiae includitur etiam beneplacitum atque dispositio*). This is why the divine knowledge (*cognitio vel scientia Dei*) can be both said to *cause* some events when it functions as knowledge with some voluntary, as I interpret it, disposition, and at the same time to have *no causative power* when the pure awareness or acquaintance is implied. Thus, the distinction 38 implicitly clarifies the double notion (*duobus modis accipitur*) of God's knowledge as understood by Peter Lombard: (1) sometimes it "behaves" as awareness of something, wherein there is no voluntary action, and (2) sometimes it functions as awareness and simultaneous causal action of God's good pleasure (*notitia simul et beneplacito*). The former type of God's involvement in the world is of merely epistemological and essential character, but the latter includes both epistemological and voluntary elements.

³² *non tamen ideo praesciuntur quia futurae sunt* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 6) [PetL 2007: 214; PetL 1971: 277].

³³ *Non propterea aliquid erit, quia id scit Deus futurum; sed quia futurum est, ideo scitur a Deo antequam fiat.* Origen, *In Epistolam ad Romanos*, book 7, no. 8, on Rom. 8, 30. Quoted in *Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 7 [PetL 2007: 214; PetL 1971: 277].

³⁴ *Non enim haec quae create sunt, ideo sciuntur a Deo quia facta sunt; potius ideo facta sunt quia immutabiliter ab eo sciuntur.* Augustine, *De Trinitate*, book 6, cap. 10, no. 11. Quoted in *Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 4 [PetL 2007: 214; PetL 1971: 276].

³⁵ *non scientia vel praescientia Dei causa est omnium quae ei subsunt* [Ibid.].

³⁶ *Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 8 [PetL 2007: 214-215; PetL 1971: 277-278].

Secondly, there are two types of things and events: good ones and evil ones. They are not known by God in the same manner, as was shown in distinction 36. Therefore st. Augustine's words are to be interpreted as speaking of good things alone, which cannot happen without God's involvement, and Origen's words as having a broader scope and implying evil things as well. For theologically it is necessary to say that God knows evil things but does not create them, and so his knowledge of evil things is but a simple knowledge, awareness alone – "so he foreknew those evils by awareness alone, not by the good pleasure of authorship."³⁷ But it is equally correct to state that God knows good things and at the same time (*simul*) causes or does them – whether directly or indirectly. This is why, "God conversely foreknows good things as his own, as those things which he will do, so that in foreknowing them his awareness and good pleasure of authorship have [simultaneously] joined together."³⁸ Hence, with this "simul" and the denial of the direct causation the text of *Sentences* seems to imply the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and (voluntary?) activity such as disposition or approval on the one side and the contingency of the created order and the rational creatures' free will on the other side. The details remain unspoken but the implication is possible.

Hence, Master Peter definitely establishes the exhaustive knowledge and infallible foreknowledge of God. He guards the possibility for created things and events to be otherwise than they are, yet without giving any detail about the nature of this possibility: what does the possibility mean? It can mean the things' potency or power to act or happen otherwise, or a simple logical – in other words, hypothetical – option that it could possibly have been different. But it also can refer to the diachronical contingency, which implies that something might happen otherwise at another time [See Vos 2006: 225-226]. However, although Lombard does not present such a deep analysis of the problem, he leaves a very rich material for his successors. It will be elaborated on by his commentators like Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas a century later.

Conclusion: towards the Lombardian theology of God's knowledge

After this analytical overview of three distinctions of the *Book of Sentences*, which deal with the issue of God's knowledge, it is time to summarize our findings so far.

Firstly, it must be always remembered that according to Peter Lombard such concepts as *scientia divina* and *voluntas divina* have to be put into the "Trinitarian essentialist" model, according to which the Trinity of God means that all three Persons of the Godhead share one simple essence. This essence has no parts or separate properties, and therefore such things as knowledge, wisdom, or will are actually one and the same thing in God: they are one essence. Yet, neither God's knowledge nor God's will ever functions in isolation from God's other attributes.

Secondly, for Lombard God's knowledge (*scientia Dei, cognitio Dei*) is God's awareness of and acquaintance with everything knowable. It can be a purely cognitive act as awareness alone (*notitia tantum, notitia sola*) or a double cognitive and voluntary act as awareness and simultaneous volition in the form of approbation or good pleasure (*notitia simul et beneplacito; nomine scientiae includitur etiam beneplacitum atque dispositio*).

Thirdly, and quite logically, Lombard says that God's foreknowledge is God's awareness of and acquaintance with everything knowable that is still (in) the future (from the human

³⁷ *Praescivit ergo illa sola notitia, non beneplacito auctoritatis* (*Sent.* 1, dist. 38, cap. 1, no. 9) [PetL 2007: 216; PetL 1971: 278].

³⁸ *Unde datur intelligi quod Deus e converso praescit bona tamquam sua, tam quam ea quae facturus est: ut in illa praesciendo simul fuerint ipsius notitia et auctoritatis beneplacitum* [Ibid.]

perspective). This kind of knowledge can have a simple, unitary, or a twofold nature (cognitive and/or voluntary) just like the broader knowledge of God. Hence, depending on the context and the specific theological situation foreknowledge means either the awareness and perfect cognition of future events, or the awareness and actual willing of future events. Hence, Lombard seems to allow for a confusion between God's knowledge and God's will.

At the same time, he solves the problem of the alleged causal power of God's knowledge by denying both lines of causations: neither God's knowledge causes these events to happen, nor are the actually happening events causes for God knowing them. Instead, Master Peter asserts that God's knowledge can be said to cause a thing to happen in a narrow sense and, at the same time, to have no causal power in broader sense. Sometimes it "behaves" as awareness alone, with no voluntary action. But sometimes it functions as awareness and simultaneous causal action of God's good pleasure.

The former type of God's involvement is of merely epistemological or cognitive character, but the latter includes both epistemological and voluntary elements. The second option is reserved for good things only, but the first for evil things as well, for God creates and causes whatever is naturally good but God simply knows and never does whatever is morally bad. Hence, God's knowledge in general is not causative, but God's knowledge of the good is causative, because he simultaneously knows and wills what is good. This "simul" and the denial of the direct causation in the text of *Sentences* seems to imply the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and voluntary activity on the one side and the contingency of the created order and the rational creatures' free will on the other side. But the details of this conception remain unrevealed.

In the last analysis, it goes without saying that Peter Lombard's (philosophical) theology is interesting, systematic, and rigorous, but quite unfinished. On the one hand, he shies away from long metaphysical discourses and uses densed, but not fully unfolded arguments. On the other hand, he does not simply quote the Bible and church fathers: his own thinking and opinions are clearly seen in the text. However, it is exactly this overt humility, systematic presentation of the material on God, rich use of authorities, and principal refusal to give "dereminations" in a number of *quaestiones*, that helps us see why the *Sentences* inspired many medieval thinkers and allowed them to develop the Christian metaphysical tradition in different directions. Even Lombard's theory of *scientia divina* leaves enough room for further thinking and theorizing. Yet, some things have to remain firmly established: God is the Unity of Three Persons who share one essence, which expresses itself differently in relation to various external objects and entities; and his knowledge is exhaustive, having a universal grasp of all the knowable things, but non-causative.

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Rostislav Tkachenko

Peter Lombard on God's Knowledge: *Sententiae*, Book I, Distinctions 35-38, as the Basis for Later Theological Discussions

Since the mid-90's the figure of Peter Lombard and his *Book of Sentences* has regained the importance in scholarly world and been studied from both historical-theological and historical-philosophical perspectives. But some aspects of his thinking, encapsulated in the written form, which was to become the material basis for the thirteenth- through the fifteenth-century theological projects, remained somewhat insufficiently researched. Therefore this article analyzes the select parts of the *Book of Sentences* with the purpose of looking at how Peter Lombard handled the issue of God's knowledge. The article shows that for Peter Lombard God's knowledge is God's awareness of everything knowable. It has no causal power which belongs to the divine will. Nevertheless, this knowledge is able to function in two different modes: it can be either a purely cognitive act as awareness alone, or a double cognitive and voluntary act as awareness and simultaneous volition in the form of approbation. Hence, God's knowledge in general is not causative, but God's knowledge of the good must be causative because he simultaneously knows and wills what is good. The article reasonably suggests that Lombard's logic implies the compatibility of God's (fore)knowledge and voluntary activity, on the one hand, and the contingency of the created order and the rational creatures' free will, on the other hand. But the details of this conception remain unrevealed as Lombard's presentation of the problem is to be declared underdeveloped.

Rostislav Tkachenko, ThM, PhD candidate at *Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven*; Adjunct Professor of Historical Theology at *Odessa Theological Seminary of Evangelical Christians-Baptists*, Adjunct Professor of Historical Theology at *Lviv Theological Seminary*.

Ростислав Ткаченко, магістр богослов'я і релігієзнавства, аспірант у Протестантському (Євангелічному) Богословському університеті, м. Льовен (Бельгія); позаітатний викладач історичного богослов'я в Одеській богословській семінарії ЄХБ, позаітатний викладач історичного богослов'я у Львівській богословській семінарії ХВС.

Ростислав Ткаченко, магістр богословия и религиоведения, аспирант богословия в Протестантском (Евангелическом) Богословском университете, г. Лёвен (Бельгия); внештатный преподаватель исторического богословия в Одесской богословской семинарии ЕХБ, внештатный преподаватель исторического богословия в Львовской богословской семинарии ХВЕ.

e-mail: rostislavtkachenko@gmail.com
