

Disputation 20

On the First Efficient Cause and on His First Action, Which Is Creation

In metaphysics the consideration of God the most glorious is twofold: namely, (i) insofar as he is the First Cause and (ii) insofar as he is the First Being. Even though the latter notion is prior in itself, it is nonetheless the former that first comes under consideration by us and in keeping with the order of inquiry we are following here – both because it is through his effects that we come to a cognition of God, and also because the present disputation is required for a comprehensive treatment of the causes of being as such.¹ /745b/

Therefore, we will say nothing at present about the First Cause as he is in himself or as regards those perfections that exist in him. In fact, we will not even say anything about his existence; rather, for the time being we are presupposing God's existence, which we will demonstrate below.² We are likewise presupposing that he himself has no cause; for it is necessary to stop at some unmade being, since there cannot be an infinite regress.

Accordingly, we will be talking about the efficient causality of this First Being with respect to other things and about the dependence of other things on him. This dependence can be, or can be thought of as being, threefold: namely, (i) dependence in being-made, (ii) dependence in being-conserved, and (iii) dependence in operating. And these are the three types of dependence we will be discussing in this disputation and the next two disputations.

Now dependence in being-made consists principally in creation, both because creation is a dependence that is proper to a being insofar as it is a being (which is what we are inquiring into here), and also because it is in the action of creation that the primordial production (as I will put it) of makeable beings consists. And so it is this action that we will be discussing in the present disputation; for the other modes in which the First Cause is able to produce entities present no difficulty and will be adequately dealt with in the following disputations.³

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- 1 Disputations 12–27 deal with the causes of being, whereas it is only in Disputations 29 and 30, after he has expounded the distinction between finite and infinite being, that Suarez discusses the existence and nature of the First Being.
 - 2 See DM 29. In section 1 of that disputation Suarez takes up the question of whether sound proofs for God's existence are to be found in physics or in metaphysics or in both. Then in section 2 he lays out an *a posteriori* argument for the claim that there is at least one necessary being that is an efficient cause of other things and is not itself caused by anything; and in section 3 he uses *a priori* arguments to establish that there is at most one such being, which accordingly is God.
 - 3 All the other modes involve the production of an entity through action on a pre-existent subject which has an intrinsic capacity or potentiality to take on the form (acci-

SECTION 1

Whether It Can Be Known by Natural Reason That the Creation of Any Being Is Possible or Even Necessary; or (What Amounts to the Same Thing) Whether a Being Insofar As it Is a Being Can Depend Essentially on Another Being As on an Efficient Cause

1. We must first of all lay down what the term ‘creation’ signifies. (For what the reality itself is will be explained later.⁴) As theologians define it, ‘creation’ signifies the production of an entity *ex nihilo*. So as to distinguish this action from others, the phrase ‘*ex nihilo*’ rules out any concurrence on the part of a material cause and any dependence of the entity that is created on a subject, as Anselm correctly explains in *Monologion*, chap. 8 – so that ‘*ex nihilo*’ expresses the same thing as ‘out of no subject’ (*ex nullo subjecto*). And this is how the action in question is distinguished from the other sort of action, which involves the eduction [of a form] from the potentiality of a subject. For these two sorts of action exhaustively divide all efficient causality; and so just as the phrase ‘*ex nihilo*’ is sufficient to distinguish creation from eduction, so too it is sufficient to convey the nature of creation.

Theologians infer from this that whatever is created must be subsistent or must at least be made in the manner of something subsistent. For it must be made apart from a subject, that is, without dependence on a subject; /746a/ but that which exists without dependence on a subject either subsists or else behaves in the manner of something subsistent. I mention the latter because of accidents; if an accident were made by God separate from a subject, it would truly be created, since it would have a mode of being similar to subsistence. On the other hand, the rational soul, even though it comes to be in the body, is nonetheless truly made *ex nihilo*, since it is not made from the body itself. For it is not educed from the body’s potentiality, and it does not depend on the body for its esse.⁵ So it truly

dental or substantial) that the agent’s action communicates. By contrast, as we will see shortly, creation is not an action on a subject.

4 See *DM* 20.4.

5 See *DM* 31.4. The *esse* of a creature is that which constitutes it intrinsically as a true and actual being. Suarez acknowledges a conceptual distinction, but neither a real nor a modal distinction, between the *esse* and essence of an actual creature.

On the types of distinction according to Suarez, see *DM* 7.1. Briefly, there is a *real* distinction between two created entities just in case each of them is able, at least by God’s power, to exist without the other, whereas there is a *modal* distinction between two created entities just in case exactly one of them (a substance or accident) is able to exist without the other (a mode). Both of these are distinctions “in



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subsists even when it comes to be in the body, as we will explain below when we treat subsistence.⁶

Arguments For the Negative Position

2. *First argument.* Given this explanation of the term ‘creation’, it seems that it cannot be known by natural reason that creation is possible.

First of all, anything that Aristotle, Plato, and the other great philosophers did not know about is probably such that it cannot be known by the natural light [of reason]. But these philosophers were unaware of creation to such an extent that they took it as a first and *per se* evident principle that nothing is made *ex nihilo* – as is clear from Aristotle, Physics 1. Therefore, etc.

3. *Second argument.* Second, it cannot be demonstrated with respect to any being that that being is created; therefore, neither can it be demonstrated that creation is possible.

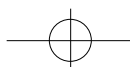
The antecedent is evident. For every being is either a substance or an accident. But an accident, if it exists in a subject, neither is nor can be created, even if it is a maximally supernatural accident, as was shown above;⁷ moreover, natural reason cannot ascertain that an accident exists separate from a subject or is made separate from a subject.⁸ Next, a substance is either spiritual or material. As regards the former, natural reason can scarcely investigate whether it exists, no less demonstrate what it is like or where it comes from; therefore, it cannot be evidently known that any spiritual substance is made by another and, consequently, it cannot be demonstrated by appeal to such substances that creation is either necessary or possible. A material substance, on the other hand, is always made out of matter; but it cannot be demonstrated that matter itself is made or

reality” (*ex natura rei*), since they involve two distinct positive realities, either substances or accidents or modes. By contrast, a merely *conceptual* distinction (or distinction of reason) involves just one reality conceived of in two distinct ways.

6 See *DM* 34.5.30–34.

7 See *DM* 16.2.12. Suarez’s argument for the claim that supernatural accidents are not created is that even though human beings do not have a *natural* capacity or potentiality for the supernatural gifts of grace, we nonetheless have an *obediential* potency for such gifts. That is, the potentiality for receiving such gifts is essential to our nature, despite the fact that no natural agent can actualize that potentiality by its own power. Consequently, such grace is, strictly speaking, conferred or “infused” through education rather than through creation.

8 Medieval theologians all agreed that we know at least by divine revelation that an accident can exist without inhering in any subject – namely, in the Sacrament of the Altar. Most of them taught that the quantity of the bread and the quantity of the wine remain without a subject of inherence after the bread and wine have themselves been converted into the body and blood of Christ. On this view, the qualitative accidents of the bread and wine have the quantity as their sole subject after the conversion. By contrast, the nominalists, because they denied that a substance’s quantity is a positive entity distinct from the substance itself, claimed that after the conversion, all the qualitative accidents of the bread and wine remain without a subject of inherence.





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that it requires the efficient causality of another in order to be able to exist. This is why Plato and many of the philosophers claimed that matter is eternal and unproduced, and there does not appear to be a natural middle term by which the opposite claim could be demonstrated. For if there were such a middle term, it would surely be the imperfection and potentiality of matter. But why can't one claim that matter has its own being from itself, even if that being is minimal and imperfect? For it is not known *per se* that this imperfection of passive potentiality has a necessary connection with that other imperfection /746b/ of *objective* potentiality, which is the kind of potentiality had by an entity that stands in need of being effected or created.⁹

4. *Third argument.* Third, an infinite power is required in order to create; but it cannot be demonstrated that an infinite active power is possible; therefore, neither can it be demonstrated that creation is possible.

The major premise is supported *a posteriori* by the fact that if it were not true, then a creature could have the power to create – since if the power to create is not repugnant to a creature because of [the fact that creation requires] an infinity of power, then there is no reason for it to be repugnant to a creature. But this consequent is of itself wholly absurd.

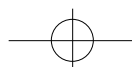
The minor premise, on the other hand, is proved by the fact that there is no natural middle term for demonstrating an infinite power of acting. For Aristotle tried to demonstrate it by appeal to motion, but, as I will show below,¹⁰ he did not succeed; and the same assessment holds for every other natural argument. Hence, it is by appeal to creation that many have tried to demonstrate that there is some infinite power of acting; however, this is circular, or at least begs the question, in the matter we are now discussing.

5. *Fourth argument.* It is impossible for a being to be made insofar as it is a being;¹¹ therefore, it is impossible for anything to be created.

9 Objective potentiality is, roughly speaking, the potentiality an entity has to the extent that it is capable of being produced by some actually existing agent. However, this way of putting it is misleading, since Suarez insists in many places that entities have no being or ontological status unless they actually exist. So it is better to say that the locution '_____ has objective potentiality', where the blank is replaced by some name or description, is an abbreviation for 'Some actual existing agent has the power to produce _____', where the blank is replaced by the same name or description. Passive potentiality, on the other hand, is an actual being's intrinsic potentiality for, and receptivity to, the various positive perfections or forms it might acquire. Thus, such potentiality has real being in its own right. (See *DM* 31.3.1–4.) So the present argument amounts to this: From the fact that matter is capable of taking on an indefinitely wide range of perfections or forms, it does not follow that it itself is capable of being produced. Suarez takes up the question of whether matter is created in §§17–20 below.

10 See *DM* 30.1.2–14.

11 As will shortly become clear from the defense of this antecedent, the argument assumes that something is made 'insofar as it is a being' only if it is made *ex nihilo*.





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The consequence is obvious from the definition of creation. For if something is made *ex nihilo*, then it is made *per se* and primarily with respect to the nature of being as a whole; therefore, it is made *per se* and primarily insofar as it is a being.

The antecedent is proved, first, by the fact that if a being were makeable insofar as it is a being, then *every* being would be makeable – since if something belongs to a nature *per se* and primarily and insofar as it is that nature, then it belongs to each thing in which that nature is found. But it is plainly false [that every being is makeable], since there must be some being that cannot be made. Otherwise, there would be an infinite regress among the beings that produce and are produced – which is impossible.

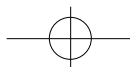
The same antecedent is proved, second, by the fact that being-insofar-as-it-is-being abstracts from being-as-*esse existentiae* and being-as-*esse essentiae*;¹² but it is impossible that any being should come to be with respect to this *esse* as a whole; therefore, it is impossible that it should be made insofar as it is a being. From this it follows further that it is impossible for a being to be made *ex nihilo*. For it is impossible for a thing to be made with respect to its *esse existentiae* unless its *esse essentiae* is presupposed; but the *esse essentiae* is not altogether nothing, since it is through it that real entities are distinguished from imaginary and chimerical entities; therefore, etc.¹³

Various Opinions

6. On this topic many theologians have been of the opinion that it cannot be demonstrated that any entity has been made or can be made through creation. This is the position held by Gregory of Rimini in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 2, near

So, for instance, when a pig comes to be through the normal process of generation, it is made insofar as it is a pig and insofar as it is an animal, but not insofar as it is a being. The reason is that the pig is made out of something that is preexistent and hence already a being. When Suarez replies to this fourth argument in §29 below, he discusses the various senses of the proposition *Through creation a being is made insofar as it is a being*.

- 12 That is, being-insofar-as-it-is-being is, as it were, a determinable that has being-as-*esse-existentiae* and being-as-*esse-essentiae* as determinants.
- 13 This argument assumes that each actual thing has being or *esse* both insofar as it actually exists and insofar as it is of a certain actualizable kind or essence. According to the argument, nothing can have actual existence (*esse existentiae*) unless it previously had the sort of being (*esse essentiae*) that defines its essence and can be thought of as receiving the existence. Given this distinction, one can mark off real from merely possible beings by holding that while all possible beings have *esse essentiae*, only real beings have *esse existentiae*. And merely possible beings are distinguished from ‘impossible things’ such as chimeras by the fact that they have *esse essentiae*, whereas ‘impossible things’ do not. In §30 below, Suarez identifies the “*esse essentiae*” of a thing that has not yet been created with its status as an object of God’s intellect, and he denies that this sort of “*esse*” counts as something real out of which the thing in question is made.



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the end; and Gabriel Biel leans toward it in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 2, a. 2. John of Bassolis holds it in *Sentences* 1, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 3.

A fortiori, these authors presume that it cannot be demonstrated /747a/ either that every being distinct from God is made by him, or that there cannot be more than one unproduced real being. For even though, having granted the creation of some entities, one may not at once infer evidently that it is impossible for there to be two uncreated natures or that every being distinct from God is made by him – for this requires its own proper demonstration – still, if creation were not possible, then it would be altogether impossible for all beings distinct from God to be made by him. For it is evident that there are many beings which, if they have to be made, cannot be made except through creation. Examples are (i) all spiritual entities, which, since they do not have matter, cannot be made from a presupposed subject; likewise, (ii) celestial bodies, as long as we assume that they cannot be made through generation – as their nature, activity, and motion, as well as what experience we have of them, seem clearly enough to show¹⁴ – and, again, (iii) primary matter, which cannot be made from any prior matter.

7. The second position is that the truth in question can indeed be demonstrated by natural reason. This position is the more common one among theologians, and it is held by St. Thomas in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 2 and presupposed by him in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 44, a. 1 and *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 2. In addition, it is held by Alexander of Hales in his own *Summa Theologica* 2, q. 6, a. 6; by Scotus in *Sentences* 1, dist. 8, q. 1; by Thomas of Argentina in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 1; by Hervaeus Natalis in *Quodlibeta* 2, q. 1; and by Henry of Ghent in *Quodlibeta* 8, q. 6. This position is also more in conformity with the divine Scriptures. For they teach that on the basis of this visible world it can be shown that God exists, since the creatures themselves proclaim that they have an author or maker distinct from themselves; we will lay out the relevant passages below when we demonstrate God's existence.¹⁵ In addition, the holy Fathers, whom I will cite below in the same place, speak in the same way.

This is without a doubt the true position, and it cannot be proved in any better way than by adducing the middle terms by which the truth in question can be demonstrated.

Resolution of the Question

8. Accordingly, there are two theses we can prove: The first is that creation is possible; the second is that creation actually exists, that is, has been effected or is exercised in the universe by some efficient cause. From these two theses we will elicit a third, namely, that in the universe there is and exists a single necessary First Cause such that through creation all other beings having esse are traced back to him as to the first source of their *esse*.

14 Suarez here endorses the common, though by no means universal, scholastic view that the celestial bodies are ingenerable and incorruptible, having a matter that is subject only to local motion and to no other sort of change.

15 See *DM* 29.2.6.



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It is Shown That Creation is Possible

9. First, then, we can prove *a priori* that creation is possible, as long as we assume /747b/ that it has been proved on other grounds that God exists and is as fully perfect as is possible or conceivable within the range of being. For, as I will explain below in the place already cited,¹⁶ even though, absolutely speaking, we cannot know God or his perfections *a priori*, nonetheless, once we presuppose that a given principle or attribute has been demonstrated *a posteriori*, we can infer some other principle or attribute from it *a priori* – for example, immortality from immateriality. So, then, in the present context we are presupposing, as having been demonstrated, that there is a single supreme being who is absolutely perfect – indeed, absolutely powerful as well, as we will prove below not by appeal to creation (lest we beg the question) but instead by appeal to other middle terms.¹⁷

Given this, I now argue as follows:¹⁸ To effect something through creation is not impossible in the sense that it involves within itself some incoherence or contradiction; therefore, neither is the power to act in this manner impossible in itself, involving either an incoherence or an imperfection; therefore, such a power in fact exists in some being, at least in the First Being; therefore, by virtue of this power creation is possible.

This last consequence is obvious.¹⁹ However, a distinction must be drawn with regard to the word or denomination ‘possible’. In one sense, it is taken negatively, so that it is equivalent to ‘not incoherent’; in a second sense, it is taken positively for that which is able to be or come to be, and in this sense it expresses a denomination derived from some power, either active or passive.²⁰ Thus, in the antecedent ‘possible’ is being taken in the first sense, whereas in the consequent it is being taken in the second sense. For in order for creation to be possible, two things are necessary and [together] sufficient, namely, (i) that creation not be incoherent in itself, and (ii) that it be possible through some power. And so once the antecedent [of the last consequence] is assumed, the inference is evident.

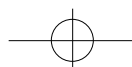
16 See *DM* 29.3.1–2.

17 See *DM* 30.17.3–5. In this place, Suarez does use an appeal to creation as one of his arguments for the infinity of God’s power. However, his main argument for God’s omnipotence is based on God’s absolute perfection within the realm of being, which has itself been previously proved by appeal to God’s status as a necessary and uncaused being.

18 The full defense of this argument, which is divided into three consequences, lasts until the end of §13.

19 The last consequence has as its consequent ‘Therefore, by virtue of this power creation is possible’ and as its antecedent everything that precedes this consequent.

20 Suarez will argue in Disputation 30 that, in virtue of God’s infinite power, whatever is possible in the first sense is also possible in the second sense. Still, it is important to see that these senses are distinct, since it is at least conceivable that for some non-contradictory object of thought, there is no power capable of effecting that object.



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10. Now the first antecedent²¹ is proved, first of all, from the fact that no incoherence can be shown to be involved in something's being made *ex nihilo* in the correct sense that we explained above. For one should not imagine, as some have thought, that nothingness itself would be the matter out of which a created being is made; this is plainly absurd. For in this context the particle 'out of' (*ex*) expresses a relation to a terminus *a quo* and not to a material cause.²² But given this, it is not incoherent for that which was of itself nothing to begin to be something by being effected by another. Alternatively, if we insist that the particle 'out of' be understood as expressing a relation to a material cause, then it has to be expounded negatively rather than positively, so that what is said to be made *ex nihilo* is that which does not come to be from any material cause. No incoherence can be proved here, either. After all, why shouldn't it be the case that just as something that was previously possible comes to be actual through an active power and a passive power taken together,²³ so too something can come to be actual that is /748a/ possible solely through the power of an agent – a power that is more eminent and more efficacious?

11. *An objection is answered.* You will object: "Just as it is incoherent for something to become actual which was previously possible through a passive power alone without an active power, so too, conversely, it is incoherent for something to come to be actual which is possible only through an active power without a passive power. For why should it be impossible for an effect to come

21 The first antecedent is: 'To effect something through creation is not impossible in the sense that it involves within itself some incoherence or contradiction'.

22 For something to be made *ex nihilo* is for some agent to make it without acting on any subject or material cause, so that every part of it (or every aspect of its being or every reality that belongs to it) is made by the agent's action. (See St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 1, ad 3.) More generally, the phrase *ex nihilo* in the proposition *Aliquid fit ex nihilo* (*Something is made out of nothing*) can be understood in one of two ways:

a. *Ex nihilo* can be thought of as designating the role of the *privation* and thus as affirming that total nothingness is the *terminus a quo* of the action. (Compare Aristotle's "From the non-musical the musical comes to be.") In the case of creation, the privation is a privation of all being – that is, the absence of all potentiality – and not just the privation of an accidental or substantial form with respect to which some subject is in potentiality. On this reading the proposition affirms the ordering of *terminus a quo* to *terminus ad quem* and nothingness is designated as the *terminus a quo*. That is, as St. Thomas puts it, on this reading the preposition *ex* has the negation *non* within its scope: *fit ex non-esse* (*comes to be from nothing*).

b. Alternatively, *ex nihilo* can be thought of as designating the role of the *material cause* and thus as denying that the action in question has a material cause. (Compare Aristotle's "From the man comes the musical"). As St. Thomas puts it, on this reading the negation *non* has the preposition *ex* within its scope: *fit non ex aliquo* (*comes to be not out of anything*).

23 The passive power in question is just the patient's intrinsic potentiality for taking on the form or perfection communicated by the agent.



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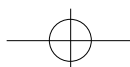
from a receiving power without an acting power, if it is possible for an effect to come from an acting power without a receiving power?"²⁴

The reply is that there is a perspicuous enough reason for the difference in question. For an action *qua* action bears an essential relation to an efficient cause, and so it implies a contradiction for there to be an action without an agent. By contrast, an action *qua* action does not bear an essential relation to a *patient* or to a *passion*, if we are speaking of action in its entire range; rather, an action *qua* action bears a relation to the *effect* that is produced through it and that depends on the agent cause.²⁵

Similarly, a passive power bears an adequate relation to an active power, since it cannot receive anything unless it receives it from something.²⁶ By contrast, as we will explain more fully below in its own place,²⁷ an active power does not bear an adequate relation to a passive power, since it pertains to the nature of an active power not that it be able to *act on* something, but that it be able to *effect* something. For this reason something can be possible simply through an active power alone, but not through a passive power alone.

Furthermore, a passive power is incomplete and is not by itself absolutely capable of an effect unless it is perfected through an active power. In contrast, an active power is by its genus complete; and so it involves no incoherence for some active power to be so perfect within its own order that by itself alone, and without dependence on a passive power, it virtually contains within itself both the effect and the action.

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- 24 The force of the objection is that there is a symmetry between active and passive powers or potentialities, so that the production of an entity requires *both* the exercise of an active power by an agent or efficient cause *and* the actual reception of a form or perfection by some appropriate material cause, that is, by some intrinsically disposed preexistent patient or subject which is acted upon by the agent. In short, the objection is that the production of an entity in the absence of a preexistent subject is just as incoherent as the production of an entity without an active producer.
- 25 Suarez is claiming that what is essential to an action as such is that it produce an effect – and not that it be directed toward a patient or involve a passion (that is, an instance of something's *being acted upon*). Thus the bare notion of an action implies by itself only that if there is an action, there is also an effect – and not that if there is an action, there is also a passion. This is so, even though it is a fact that all the actions of our ordinary experience do involve a patient and thus a passion; Suarez contends that this fact must have an explanation from some source other than the bare notion of an action.
- 26 To say that *x* bears an adequate relation to *y* is to say that *x* as such, or insofar as it is *x*, bears a relation to *y*.
- 27 See *DM* 48.4.11–15 and *DM* 49.1.2–10. Suarez's position is that not every action is an action on a patient and, consequently, not every action has a corresponding passion. However, when a given action is indeed an action on a patient and does have a corresponding passion, then that action and the corresponding passion are distinct from one another only conceptually and not in reality.





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And thus we have simultaneously proved the first consequence,²⁸ which is likewise absolutely evident once the antecedent has been granted. After all, can one conceive of some greater incoherence in the relevant power than in the corresponding mode of acting? Or can one conceive of any imperfection here – and not, rather, the height of perfection?

12. Both [the antecedent and the consequence] can be confirmed if we take the particle ‘*ex nihilo*’ to signify that the whole entity that is effected *per se* and primarily as the action’s adequate terminus (this is called the ‘terminus *ut quod*’) comes to be *completely* and with respect to *all* its being, without any of its parts or realities being presupposed.²⁹ (For all these meanings [of ‘*ex nihilo*’] are correct and amount to the same thing.) But here, too, a great perfection is indicated on the part of the active power; and there is no incoherence on the side of the effect or its production. For what problem is there with the notion that the entirety of an entity that did not previously exist should receive *esse* with respect to all of itself? /748b/ Surely, on the basis of the terms themselves there seems to be no more of a problem than there is with the notion that a thing which was merely inchoate in one of its parts should be brought to completion by the addition of another part that did not previously exist – except that the former case requires a greater power of acting. Thus, there is no incoherence, but only a greater perfection, in a power or action of the sort in question.

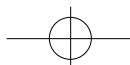
The only thing that could give one pause is the question of what sort of action this might be without a subject, or how it is that there is no incoherence here. But in what follows we will explain all of this straightforwardly. For the present – especially in light of the fact that some think of creation as not involving a *transeunt* action – it is enough that no incoherence has been proved to exist here.³⁰

13. What remains to be proved is the second consequence, which is the heart of the argument – namely, that if the power [to create *ex nihilo*] does not in itself involve an incoherence or imperfection, then it should be posited in reality, at least in the First Being.

28 The first consequence is this: ‘To effect something through creation is not impossible in the sense that it involves within itself some incoherence or contradiction; therefore, neither is the power to act in this manner impossible in itself, involving either an incoherence or an imperfection’.

29 By ‘parts’ Suarez means the entity’s essential parts (matter and form) as well as its integral parts; and by ‘realities’ he presumably means the entity’s accidents and modes. So an entity is produced *ex nihilo* only if all the elements of being that enter into it in any way at all come into existence with it. Thus, to create is, as it were, to give *esse* to an entity from the bottom up.

30 A *transeunt* action is an action whose effect exists outside of the power or faculty that proximately effects that action. By contrast, an immanent action – for example, an act of intellect or will – is one that produces a modification in the acting power or faculty itself.





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This can be proved, first of all, by appeal to the general principle that every absolutely simple perfection exists formally in the First Being – a principle that we will demonstrate below when we discuss the First Being’s perfection.³¹ For the power [to create *ex nihilo*] bespeaks in its proper objective concept an absolutely simple perfection, since it bespeaks a perfection that is not incoherent in itself and that does not involve an imperfection. From this it plainly follows that within the range of being it is better to have this power than not to have it – which is what the notion of an absolutely simple* perfection consists in. Therefore, such a power must necessarily be attributed to the First Being.

A nearly identical argument goes as follows: The power [to create *ex nihilo*] is necessarily included within omnipotence, since omnipotence extends to everything possible, that is, to everything that is not of itself incoherent; but it is part of the nature of the First Being to have omnipotence; therefore, it is also part of his nature to have this power.

The whole of the antecedent will be demonstrated below when we discuss the First Being’s attributes.³²

14. These arguments are complemented by others that are of themselves highly probable, given that this mode of acting without dependence on another cause outside oneself, be it an efficient cause or a material cause, is fully consonant with the First Being’s essential perfection.

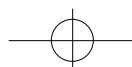
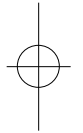
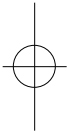
First, a thing’s mode of acting is commensurate with its mode of being; but the First Being’s mode of being includes every kind of independence; therefore, his proper mode of acting will likewise be independent of every cause, including every material cause.

Second, an active power that is confined to producing effects in a subject and from a subject is highly restricted and limited; therefore, such a power should not be attributed to the First Being, since within the First Being there is no ground for the possibility of his having such a /749a/ limitation. For one’s power to act is commensurate with one’s essence, and so just as, by reason of the fact that he is Pure Actuality, the First Cause’s essence is not a ground for his having any limitation, so neither is his power.³³

31 See *DM* 30.1.1–9. Suarez, along with other medieval theologians, holds that all the perfections found in creatures exist in God in some way or other. However, many creaturely perfections (for example, quantitative dimensions and qualities such as colors) cannot be straightforwardly attributed to the divine nature. Instead, God is said to possess them *eminently*, and this entails at least that he is able to produce them. However, the ‘pure’ perfections which Suarez has in mind here (for example, power, knowledge, freedom) are said to exist *formally* in the divine nature and so can be literally (albeit analogically) attributed to God.

32 See *DM* 30.17.1–5.

33 Within a broadly Thomistic metaphysics, the principal Aristotelian description of God is ‘Pure Actuality’. This description implies, among other things, a lack of passive potentiality, that is, of any principle of perfectibility. So unlike many of our perfections, God’s perfections cannot be thought of as being distinct from his essence





12 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

Third, it is consonant with reason that God's power should be of a higher type than is found in all the other agents that are natural or created agents; but all the other agents need a subject in order to act; therefore, the divine power should not be so impoverished. Rather, to the extent that it is more perfect, it should be more unfettered in its acting, especially given that it exceeds [all other powers] in degree and in every possible perfection.

It is Shown that Creation in Fact Exists

15. *The thesis is proved for the case of the celestial bodies.* Second, one should add (and this will make the preceding thesis even more evident) that creation is necessary for the beings that now in fact exist, so that they could not have existed without it. This is proved primarily by induction, beginning with material entities.

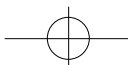
First of all, regarding the celestial bodies, I ask whether they are made or unmade.

The latter answer cannot be given. This is so, first, because of the nature common to all finite entities, which I will explain in a moment, and, second, because many entities that are more noble than the celestial bodies do not exist without efficient causality, as is especially obvious in the case of human beings. Again, the celestial bodies are imperfect to such a degree that they need motion in order to bring their actions to completion and, further, they need an extrinsic mover to move them, since they cannot have that motion from themselves; therefore, it is all the less likely that they should have their esse from themselves. Again, we see that in all their powers, positions, appearances, and motions, the celestial bodies were constituted in a way that contributed to the conservation of lower entities and to generations and corruptions among those entities; therefore, this is an evident indication that the celestial bodies do not exist of themselves, but were instead produced by the common author of all things. (We will pursue this line of reasoning at greater length below when we demonstrate God's existence.³⁴)

If, on the other hand, the celestial bodies are made, then I ask in turn whether (i) they are composed of the matter of the elements and were thus made from that matter, in which case the same argument that applies to generable entities will apply to them, or whether instead (ii) they are simple beings or else composed of matter of a higher type, in which case one may conclude that they were made only through creation. For if they are simple beings, then they could not have been made in any other manner, as is manifest *per se*. On the other hand, if they

and as bringing to completion or perfection various potentialities that are constitutive of that essence. Instead, God's actual perfections themselves must be thought of as constitutive of the divine essence. This is part of the basis for the doctrine that the divine nature is altogether unified and simple. See Parts 2 and 3 of the Introduction to this volume.

34 See *DM* 29.2.15–20.



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are composed of a higher type of matter, this is because they are ungenerable and so could have been made only through creation. In addition, the arguments by which we will presently prove that the matter of generable entities cannot be unmade will be equally probative with respect to the matter of the celestial bodies. /749b/

16. *The thesis is proved for the case of lower bodies.* Accordingly, I now move on to the lower world insofar as it includes the elements and mixed bodies, and I ask whether or not this mass [of bodies] was made.

One cannot reply that it was not made. For all the species of things that exist within this mass are made in their individuals;³⁵ therefore, in none of the species of these things can there be an individual that is not made, that is, an individual that has its *esse* from itself. For this would constitute an enormous and altogether essential difference between such an individual and the other individuals, and, consequently, they would not belong to the same species. Hence, just as Aristotle argues repeatedly against Plato that there is no human being apart from individual human beings – since that separated human being would be incorruptible, whereas the individuals are corruptible, and so they would not belong to the same species – so, too, we ourselves are claiming that there is no singular human being that has *esse* from himself apart from the efficient causality of some cause, since otherwise that human being would not be of the same species as other human beings. And the same argument applies to all the remaining species and even to the whole corporeal mass of elemental entities. For although philosophers are wont to say that the elements are incorruptible with respect to themselves as wholes and corruptible with respect to their parts, this should not be understood as an intrinsic incorruptibility that the elements have through the constitution of their nature, since on this score the nature of the whole is the same as the nature of the parts, especially homogeneous parts; rather, it should be understood as an incorruptibility that stems from the power and mode of acting had by natural causes, since in this regard the elements can never be corrupted with respect to themselves as wholes.³⁶ Absolutely speaking, however, the elements are generable, and so they could not have had their *esse* from themselves without any production. Therefore, this mass of bodies is not unmade.

17. *Those who asserted that matter was not made, but is instead coeternal with God.* Accordingly, I next ask whether this mass of bodies was made *ex nihilo* or out of matter. If the former, then I have what I intended to prove; if the latter (which is what almost all the philosophers have thought), then I ask, in turn, whether or not matter itself was made.

35 Suarez's meaning here is that each species of material entities is such that within that species there are individuals that are made.

36 The philosophers mean that even though this quantity of, say, water can be corrupted and transformed into one of the other elements, it is nonetheless naturally impossible for *all* water to be thus transformed, with the result that no water at all should remain.

14 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

And, to be sure, almost all the philosophers denied that matter was made, but asserted instead that it is coeternal with God and has its esse from itself and altogether necessarily. In *Contra Hermogentem*, chaps. 1 and 8, and *Contra Valentinum*, chaps. 15 and 16, Tertullian reports that the Stoics and the Pythagoreans, along with Plato himself and Hermes Trismegistus, subscribed to this error.³⁷ Irenaeus indicates the same thing in [*Adversus Haereses*] 2, chap. 19, while Epiphanius, *Haereses* 7, adds the Peripatetics as well. And in *De Origine Erroris* 2, Lactantius claims that both the poets and the philosophers held this same view, and he specifically singles out the Academics, and especially Cicero in *De Natura Deorum*.

These philosophers /750a/ have been emulated by many heretics – for example, Hermogenes, Manichaeus, and others. This is clear from Tertullian in the places just cited; from Augustine, *De Haeresibus*, nos. 46 and 59; from Gregory of Nyssa, *De Opificio Hominis*, chap. 23; and from Eusebius, *De Praeparatione Evangelii*, chaps. 8 and 9, where he attributes the error in question to Sabellius as well.

18. *The preceding claim is impugned.* Nonetheless, in addition to what was said in the preceding thesis, and over and beyond those considerations that are common to all created beings, one can show that this position is incongruous with all natural reason, first, by appeal to the imperfection of primary matter.³⁸ For given that primary matter is the lowest of all substances, including corruptible substances, it is incredible that it should have that supreme perfection which consists in a thing's having its esse from itself – a perfection that all the other species of generable entities, along with their forms, are incapable of.

From this one can derive a second argument: If matter is coeternal with God and has its esse from itself, then as such it either (i) lacked every substantial form or else (ii) had some substantial form from itself.³⁹ The first answer cannot be given, since it is repugnant to the nature of matter; for even though this answer

37 'Hermes Trismegistus' is the name assigned to the authors of an ancient compilation of learned texts attributed to the god Hermes.

38 In the present context 'primary matter' is being thought of especially as that out of which the elements are made and as the material basis for the possibility that the elements should be transformed into one another.

39 The question being posed is whether matter, as existing eternally in the past, was formed or unformed. Suarez does not believe that the existence of unformed matter is a metaphysical impossibility, since on his view matter has its own essence and is capable – though only by God's power – of existing without any form. Still, by its essence matter has a disposition for form; and thus, as Suarez says below, it would exist "in a preternatural state" if it were unformed. (See *DM* 13.4.8–17, *DM* 15.8.7–21, and *DM* 15.9.3–8.)

Notice, by the way, that whatever assessment one might make of it, the argument is not weakened if we hypothesize that matter was eternally divided into parts. For in that case the same argument can be brought to bear with respect to each of the parts.

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does not imply a contradiction, it is nonetheless incongruous with the natural order of things, and so it is unlikely that matter should have its being from itself and yet have it in a preternatural state without any formal perfection and hence without any use or usefulness. On the other hand, if matter did have some substantial form from itself, then it is no longer the matter alone but some complete substance that has its *esse* from itself – from which it follows further that this whole substance is absolutely necessary and just as incapable of not existing as the primary matter itself, since that which does not depend on another for its *esse* cannot lose that *esse*.⁴⁰ Hence, it will also follow that this matter cannot play a role in other generations, since it will always remain under the form in question.

19. Perhaps someone will reply that (i) matter has its own perpetual being from itself and that (ii) it also had a perpetual form, but from God rather than from itself.⁴¹

But this reply likewise cannot be given, both because (i) a contradiction is involved in the claim that matter has its *esse* from itself but does not have from itself everything that is necessary for its *esse*, and also because (ii) if this were so, then the form in question would emanate from God by a necessity of nature. (After all, if the form were effected freely, then how would one establish that it is eternal?) But it is contrary to natural reason to claim that God effects something outside himself by a necessity of nature. What's more, it follows further that God conserves this form by the same necessity by which he effects it and, consequently, that the matter is necessarily always under this form and so cannot /750b/ play any role at all in the generations or corruptions of things.

20. Thus, what remains is that matter, since it does not exist from itself, needed an efficient principle by which to be made. But it could not have been made except through creation, since it could not have been made from any prior matter. Therefore, the creation of some entity is altogether necessary in order for the material entities here below to be able to exist.

You will object: "The production of matter could not have been a creation, since, as we said above,⁴² what is created is a subsistent entity, whereas matter is not a subsistent entity because it is not a 'that-which-is'."

Some reply that even though, for the stated reason, matter is not created properly speaking, it is nonetheless created in at least an improper or extended sense.

40 Notice that this consequent is already inconsistent with the previous conclusion that no material substances are unmade.

41 By 'perpetual form' the respondent means a form that the matter had for an infinitely long time extending into the past. The reply articulates an alternative to the two possibilities Suarez has just dispatched with. According to this alternative scenario, (i) matter existed eternally in the past, and (ii) even though it had a form eternally in the past, this form was conferred extrinsically by God and did not emanate from the essence of the matter itself. (Once again, it is irrelevant whether we think of the matter as uniform or as divided into parts, each with its own form.)

42 See §1 above.



16 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

My own reply, however, is that there are two ways in which matter can be thought of as being made.

In the first way, it is made *per se* and primarily by itself and separated from any form, and in this case there is no doubt that it would be created in the most proper sense. For it would indeed be subsistent, and it would be made in the manner of a whole, even though it is of itself a part. After all, the rational soul is likewise a part, and yet it is created in the most proper sense. Indeed, if a quantity were made separately [from any substance], then, according to the opinion held by everyone, it would be created in the proper sense.⁴³

In the second way, by contrast, matter can be made (and this is how we believe that it was in fact made) as existing under some form, and in this case it is the whole composed of the matter and the given form that is said to be created, properly speaking. For it is the composite that properly exists, and being-made is properly attributed to that which *esse* is likewise properly attributed to. The matter, on the other hand, is said to be “co-created” in such a case – and this is sufficient for the demonstration we had in mind. For the concept *production ex nihilo* applies to the action in question, since something is made as a whole through that action and nothing is presupposed by it. Moreover, if we wanted to divide this composite action precisely into the several partial actions of which it is composed, we would find that all the markings of creation that it contains stem from the part that is the production of the matter *ex nihilo*. (This was touched on above when we explained the eduction of a form from the potentiality of matter.⁴⁴)

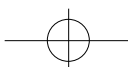
This is the sense in which the Fathers and Doctors of the Church teach and establish – absolutely and without any qualification – that matter was created by God. One can see this in Tertullian, Irenaeus, Lactantius, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine, in the places cited a short while ago,⁴⁵ as well as in Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 1, chap. 14, and *Confessiones* 12, chap. 4; in Ambrose, *Hexameron* 1, chap. 1; and in Athanasius, *De Incarnato Verbo*, at the beginning and in other places here and there.

21. To complete the present induction, we still have to talk about the intelligences, that is, immaterial entities. However, no special argument can be made in their case over and beyond the general argument derived from the principle that (i) it is impossible for there to be more than one unproduced being, /751a/ and that (ii) an unproduced being, or being *a se*, is infinitely perfect within the genus of being. For the intelligences’ specific natures, differences, and proper

43 Suarez is thinking of the quantity involved here as an individual accident that subsists without inhering in a substance. Since he and other scholastics (excluding the nominalists) agree that the quantity of the bread subsists without a substance in the Sacrament of the Altar, they can also reasonably affirm that God has the power to create such an accident *ex nihilo* without a substance to inhere in.

44 See *DM* 15.2.10–17.

45 See §17 above.



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effects – by appeal to which we might demonstrate that they have their *esse* from another and not from themselves – are all unknown to us. I mean demonstration in the unqualified sense, since some reasonable inferences can be drawn from the motion of the celestial bodies, as I will show below while demonstrating the God exists.⁴⁶ In that same place the principle in question will also have to be demonstrated explicitly; for now, however, it is simply being assumed.

Still, from the assumption that the intelligences have an efficient cause, one may infer evidently that creation is necessary in order for them to exist. For since, as was mentioned above,⁴⁷ they do not have a material cause, they cannot be made through any other mode of production.

This is best confirmed by the production of the rational soul. This production cannot be anything other than a creation, since, as was also shown above,⁴⁸ it is not an eduction from the potentiality of matter. This argument proves that creation is necessary in order for human beings to be generated, since creation is always mixed in (as I will put it) with their generation. Hence, the exercise of creation is as frequent as the exercise of human generation – unless one were so foolish as to claim that rational souls preexist their bodies, which would be not only erroneous from the point of view of the Faith but also contrary to natural reason. This will be shown in its own place below,⁴⁹ since in the present context it makes no difference. After all, even if [rational] souls did preexist their bodies, they would still not exist *a se* and without an efficient cause; for, in addition to the other arguments already mentioned, given that a rational soul is the natural form of a body, if it existed necessarily from itself, then it would exist from eternity as informing a body. For an entity that has *esse* from itself cannot have it in a preternatural and, as it were, violent state – which is what the state of a soul outside its body is. Therefore, regardless of whether the soul begins to exist along with the body or prior to it, it must have an efficient cause and, consequently, it must be made through creation.

A First Creating Cause is Demonstrated

22. Third, one should assert (and this may be inferred from what has already been said) that there must exist in the universe a single First Efficient Cause that has effected the other entities through creation.

This is clear enough from the line of reasoning presented in the preceding assertion. The necessity for this First Efficient Cause with respect to all the other beings will have to be demonstrated at more length in the place already cited.⁵⁰ Still, given such a necessity, the claim that this First Cause could not have given

46 See *DM* 29.3.21–36, *DM* 30.10.8–13, and *DM* 35.1.13–20.

47 See *DM* 13.14.14.

48 See *DM* 15.2.10–12.

49 See *DM* 35.3.10–15.

50 See *DM* 29.2.

rise to the other entities without creation is clear from the definition of creation laid out above. For the First Cause could not have /751b/ produced the entities out of any matter, since (i) not all the things produced have matter and (ii) in those which do have it, the matter itself also had to be produced.

The only thing to notice is that the species of generable entities could have been made in their first individuals from a matter that had previously existed in time, and in that case they would not have been made through creation in the most rigorous sense. Nonetheless, to the extent that they necessarily presuppose the creation of matter, we say that creation is necessary for their production. And for this reason the term ‘creation’, especially as it is used by the holy Fathers, is often wont to be extended to a new production out of preexistent created matter – as is clear from Augustine, *Contra Adversarium Legis et Prophetarum* 1, chap. 24.

Refutation of the Arguments, and What the Philosophers Thought about Creation

23. *Reply to the first argument.* I will now reply to the arguments. The first of the arguments⁵¹ invites us to explain what the philosophers, and especially Aristotle, believed with regard to the truth in question – a topic on which Eugubinus had many things to say in *De Perenni Philosophia* 7, chaps. 3ff.

As far as the other philosophers are concerned, they do, to be sure, often teach that this world was created by some first author. Yet if they are correctly expounded, what they are attributing to this first author is not a genuine creation, but rather a fashioning out of preexistent matter, which they also call chaos. This is clear from what is reported by Tertullian and the other authors cited above (see Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 11, chap. 4 and *De Civitate Dei* 12, chap. 17), as well as by Lactantius in [*De Origine Erroris*] 7, chap. 3.

This, of course, is what they said about the production of the sensible world. For as regards the higher and intelligible world – that is, the angels – they spoke very obscurely. Nor is this surprising. For given that they could not have fashioned the angels out of *chaos*, it is not clear how they could have thought of them as having been produced by God – unless perhaps they were to make them material, too, though more ethereal than bodies. For they took it for granted that God cannot produce anything except as a craftsman who operates on preexistent matter. This is what was meant by Anaxagoras, whom Aristotle praises in *Metaphysics* 1, chap. 6, text 18 for having claimed that all things other than Mind are mixed and that Mind alone is pure and free from all admixture. This is also why Galen, *De Usu Partium*, chap. 10, rebuked Moses for having said that God produced all things by his command.

24. *What Aristotle thought.* But even leaving aside these other philosophers, there are many who insist that Aristotle /752a/ did not know of creation. See, for example, Gregory of Rimini, *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 1; Henry of Ghent,

51 See §2 above.

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Quodlibeta 8, q. 9; John of Jandun, *Metaphysics* 2, q. 5; Marsilius of Inghen, *Sentences* 2, q. 1, a. 2; and John Bessarion, *Adversus Calumniatorem Platonis* 2, chap. 6. The Commentator seems to be of the same opinion in *Physics* 8, comment 4, and Simplicius, too, in the same place.⁵²

There are some not insignificant indications of this opinion in Aristotle's principles. For, first of all, he everywhere accepts and upholds the principle that nothing comes to be *ex nihilo*. Second, he defines all actions by their relation to a passive power, and he believes that every action has a corresponding passion and motion (that is, change) – as is clear from *Physics* 3, at the beginning.⁵³ And if someone replies that in these places Aristotle is talking only about the action and efficient causality of natural causes, the point still stands, since he never – not even in the *Metaphysics* – extends his teaching to any other type of action. To the contrary, in *Metaphysics* 5, chap. 12 he defines an active power by its relation to a passive power, claiming that it is a power for transforming another insofar as it is other. And, in the same way, in *Metaphysics* 5, chap. 2 he defines an efficient cause by its relation to motion. Therefore, he did not know of any other mode of production.

This is also confirmed by the fact that he held that incorruptible entities are eternal, alleging that they are necessary *per se*. That is why, in *Metaphysics* 2, chap. 1, he says in the plural, “The *principles* of sempiternal things do not have causes.” And by ‘sempiternal things’ he seems to mean the motions of the celestial bodies and the perpetual succession of generations and corruptions, the principles of which are the celestial bodies and the intelligences.

25. Still, there are others who believe that Aristotle knew of creation and knew that God is the creator of all things. This claim is made by Averroes in *Metaphysics* 2, comment 4, and *Metaphysics* 12, comment 44, as well as in *De Substantia Orbis*, chap. 2; by Alexander of Aphrodisias in the same places; by St. Thomas in the same places and also in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 44, and *Contra Gentes* 2, chap. 15, and *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 6, and *Physics* 8, lect. 2; by Scotus in *Quodlibeta*, q. 7, and *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 3; by Thomas of Argentina in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 4; by Hervaeus Natalis, in the tract *De Aeternitate Mundi*, q. 4; and by other authors as well.

This opinion is supported by the fact that in *Metaphysics* 2, chap. 1 Aristotle says that there is a being, the most true and most perfect of all, which is the cause of all other beings. And he is obviously talking about an efficient cause – as the Commentator likewise explains in that place – and he says that the First Being alone is *per se* a being and *per se* true, whereas all other beings acquire their truth from him. Thus, by the plural expression ‘the principles of sempiternal things’ Aristotle seems to mean God alone, [and he uses the plural] either because of God's eminence or because of his several types of causality.

52 The Commentator is Averroes.

53 See §11 and note 23 above for Suarez's assessment of this principle.

20 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

Furthermore, in *On the Heavens* 1, chap. 9, text 100 he posits a certain immortal and divine nature “on which all other things – some more clearly, some more obscurely – depend for their being and life.” /752b/ And in *On Generation and Corruption* 2, chap. 10, text 59 he explains that it does not belong to all things to exist forever because some of them are too far removed from the principle itself: “So God, settling on a less perfect alternative, completed the universe by instituting continuous generation.” Again, in *Physics* 8 and *Metaphysics* 12 he concludes that there is one First Being and ruler of all things; but he would not be the ruler unless he were the principle of all things. Hence, in *Metaphysics* 12, text 38 Aristotle says that the heavens and nature depend upon God.

In these same places he also teaches very clearly that there is a single end of all things, from which it plainly follows that there is a single efficient cause as well; for, as we will explain below, there cannot be final causality without efficient causality.⁵⁴ But, as was proved above, there cannot be a single efficient cause of all things unless there is creation.⁵⁵ Furthermore, in *Metaphysics* 2, chap. 2 Aristotle proves the principle by which we most effectively come to a cognition of the First Cause, namely, that there cannot be an infinite regress among efficient causes. Finally, he seems to teach this with utmost clarity in *On the Universe to Alexander*: “In a discussion of the things in the world it would be disgraceful to omit that which is highest in the world. And thus the ancient and, as it were, hereditary tradition of all mortals is that all things have been established for us by God and through God. Nor is any nature sufficient of itself if deprived of the well-being he provides for it.”

26. There are others who invoke a distinction, claiming that Aristotle did not know of creation as involving a newness of being, but that (i) he did know of creation in the sense of a natural and eternal emanation from the First Being and that (ii) in this way he posited that incorruptible things emanate from God eternally.

However, even if this claim could be sustained with regard to other entities, it cannot be sustained with regard to the rational soul. For in *On the Generation of Animals* 2, chap. 3 Aristotle says that the rational soul comes from without – that is, is not educed from the potentiality of matter and, consequently, is made through creation. Moreover, a specific rationale can be assigned for this creation, since it occurs only if the creation of the body has already occurred, and it occurs only for the sake of the composite. After all, it is unlikely that Aristotle held that the soul was unmade, given his acknowledgment that all other things besides God are made. Nor can one claim that he thought that all souls were eternal and that they were united to bodies later on in time; for in *Metaphysics* 12, chap. 3, text 16 the selfsame Aristotle makes the general claim that a form does not exist prior to its being united to matter, and he is obviously including the rational soul, since he adds that what is peculiar in the case of the rational soul is that /753a/ it remains afterwards, that is, after the dissolution of the composite. But he admits

54 See especially *DM* 23.4.8–17.

55 See §22 above.

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no exception as regards its beginnings, that is, as regards the fact that it begins to exist at the same time as the composite.

The [second] opinion, then, is the more likely, despite its being undeniable that Aristotle had very scanty knowledge of this matter and so discussed this sort of efficient causality very sparingly – although in *Metaphysics* 9, chap. 1 he did sufficiently intimate that he countenanced an active power that does not need motion or change in order to act.

27. *Reply to the second argument.* As for the second argument,⁵⁶ the contrary induction has shown how one might demonstrate that there are some beings that cannot be made except through creation. This is especially clear to us in the case of material entities, whereas in the case of immaterial entities we are only arguing hypothetically that (i) if there are such entities besides God, then they can be made only through creation and, in addition, that (ii) they cannot exist unless they are made. Now as regards the question of whether or not natural reason proves that there are substances of this sort besides God, in the case of rational souls we are assuming from the science of the soul that it does, while as regards the other immaterial entities, we will look into the matter below,⁵⁷ since at present it makes no difference.

28. *Reply to the third argument.* As for the third argument,⁵⁸ in the next section we will be discussing the major premise – namely, that an infinite power is required in order to create.

At present we are claiming only that it is sufficiently proved by appeal to other middle terms both that creation exists and that there exists in reality a power that serves as a sufficient principle of creation – regardless of whether this power has to be infinite or whether a finite power suffices. Hence, if it is satisfactorily proved on other grounds that an infinite power is required in order to create, then one will appropriately infer from the necessity for creation that an infinite power exists in reality.

Nor will this involve a begging of the question or a vicious circle. For either (i) we do not prove that creation is possible by appeal to the infinity of the relevant power, but instead conclude on other grounds to the necessity of creation and to the non-incoherence of both creation itself and the power that serves as its principle, all the while leaving aside the question of whether this power is finite or infinite; or, alternatively, (ii) if we do infer from the infinity of the power to the conclusion that creation is possible, then we are taking the power's infinity itself as having been demonstrated by appeal to the infinity of the divine essence and perfection, which, as we will see below,⁵⁹ we infer from still other principles.

29. *Reply to the fourth argument; the sense in which through creation a being is made insofar as it is a being.* As for the fourth argument,⁶⁰ I reply that

56 See §3 above.

57 See *DM* 35.1.

58 See §4 above.

59 See *DM* 30.16.3.

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the proposition *Through creation a being is made insofar as it is a being* can have several readings.

One reading results when the particle ‘insofar as’ is taken reduplicatively and applied to that concept of being /753b/ which is the most abstract and is common to both God and creatures; and this reading is false, since what it signifies is that a being is, by virtue of that precise concept, the terminus of an act of creation – which is false.⁶¹ This is the reading presupposed by the fourth argument, and the argument sufficiently impugns it.

However, this does not at all count against the truth of creation, since, as is obvious, the proposition on this reading does not follow from the definition of creation. For if a being is made [insofar as it is a being], where what is reduplicated is just the concept *finite being* or *makeable being*, then this will be sufficient for the notion of creation, since it is enough that the entity be made entirely *ex nihilo*. This is the second possible reading of the proposition in question, and it is true; and all that follows from it is that every *finite being* is creatable – which is also true.⁶²

However, the final – and proper – reading is one on which the particle ‘insofar as’ is taken only specifically⁶³ And on this reading the proposition is

60 See §5 above.

61 When the particle ‘insofar as’ is taken reduplicatively, the proposition implies that the predicate of the proposition (‘is made’) is true of the subject precisely by virtue of the fact that the reduplicated term (‘being’) is true of the subject. Hence, it follows that the predicate is true of everything of which the reduplicated term is true. Since on the present reading the reduplicated term ‘being’ has the widest possible range, the proposition in question entails that *every* being, including God, is made; for what is asserted is that the predicate ‘is made’ is true of something precisely by virtue of the fact that it is a being. Suarez agrees that this assertion is false and to that extent endorses the fourth argument. However, as he goes on to make clear, (i) the particle ‘insofar as’ has other readings, and (ii) even on the present reading the concept *being* need not be taken to range univocally over all beings whatsoever. (Note, by the way, that Suarez is using the term ‘proposition’ to designate sentences rather than abstract entities expressed by sentences.)

62 On the second reading the particle ‘insofar as’ is still being taken reduplicatively, but the concept being is now ranging just over finite or makeable beings. Hence, the proposition is being read as equivalent to ‘Through creation a being is made insofar as it is a finite being’. This implies only that every *finite being* is made through creation. However, even though the proposition comes out true on this reading when we take ‘creation’ in the broad sense indicated at the end of §22 above, Suarez does not think that this is the most appropriate reading.

63 When the particle ‘insofar as’ is taken specifically rather than reduplicatively, the term following the particle indicates the respect in which the predicate is true of the subject, but the proposition as a whole does not entail that the predicate is true of every entity of which that term is true. In the present case, the proposition asserts that when an entity is created, that entity is made in its entirety, that is, with respect to all

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absolutely true, since through creation an entity is made *per se* and primarily with respect to the entire nature of being, given that creation does not presuppose within the entity any sort of being at all. For, according to Aristotle's teaching, what is said to be made *per se* and primarily is that which is in no way presupposed within the entity that is made; therefore, for a being to be made insofar as it is a being is nothing other than for the very nature of being to come to be *per se* and primarily within the relevant effect through the relevant action.

However, from this reading it does not follow that *every* being can terminate an act of creation with respect to the sort of being it has within itself. For, as is clear from logic, the particle 'insofar as', when taken specifically, does not carry with it a universal or distributive meaning, since it does not denote the predicate's adequate explanation or cause, but instead merely designates a part or aspect [of the subject] with respect to which [the predicate] belongs to [the subject]. On the other hand, it is correct to infer from this reading that the very nature of being as such is not found univocally in entities that can terminate an act of creation and in an uncreated entity. We will explain this below when we clarify the this distinction [between created and uncreated entities].⁶⁴

30. As for the last proof,⁶⁵ which is based on the claim that the *esse essentiae* of entities is presupposed for their creation, those who believe that the *esse essentiae* is in itself something eternal might perhaps reply that creation is *ex nihilo* as far as existence is concerned, but not as far as essence is concerned.⁶⁶

By contrast, as Waldensis reports in [*Fasciculi Zizaniorum magistri Johannis Wyclif*], vol. 1, chap. 17, John Wycliffe claimed that creation is not a production *ex nihilo* absolutely speaking, but is rather a production out of intelligible-*esse* into *esse*-outside-of-God.⁶⁷ Likewise, in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 2, Scotus claims that (i) creation is a production *ex nihilo* in the sense that it is not out of anything as far as either the *esse existentiae* or the *esse essentiae* is concerned, but that (ii) it is not a production *ex nihilo* if one means by this that it is not out of being in any sense at all, either absolutely or *secundum quid*; instead, he assumes that entities /754a/ have "cognized-*esse*" before they are made.

The truth is, however, that neither the *esse essentiae* of a creature nor its intelligible-*esse* or cognized-*esse* is anything real outside of God before creatures

its being. By contrast, when a being is generated from a preexistent subject, it is made with respect to, say, its species, but not with respect to all its being.

64 See *DM* 28.3.

65 See the last paragraph of §4 above.

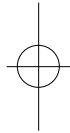
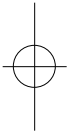
66 On this view, a creature's essence is an eternally existing abstract entity and creation consists in God's "instantiating" or "actualizing" or "giving real existence to" that preexistent essence.

67 On this view, what preexists is not the creature's essence but instead the being which the creature has as an object of God's act of intellect. This "intelligible-*esse*" is then conceived of as the "stuff" or "matter" out of which the entity, with both its essence and existence, is produced outside of God's mind through creation.



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are made; we will explain this at length below, in the disputation on the essence and existence of a creature.⁶⁸ Consequently, this sort of “*esse*” does not at all count against the idea that through creation a creature is made *ex nihilo* and insofar as it is a being.



68 See *DM* 31.2.

