

## SECTION 5

### Whether a Newness of Being Belongs to the Nature of Creation

1. There are two ways to consider the eternity of the world: the one focussing on the world's substance, the other on its motion. The latter sort of consideration is proper to physics and so should be passed over in the present science – even though we will not be able to avoid mentioning it below when we demonstrate that God exists and that there cannot be an infinite regress among efficient causes, regardless of whether they are ordered *per se* or *per accidens*.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the former sort of consideration is proper to metaphysics, since it pertains to the causing of beings insofar as they are beings; and it is necessary for clarifying the nature of creation and so fits nicely into the present discussion.

#### Arguments for an Affirmative Answer to the Question

2. We have claimed that creation is a production *ex nihilo*; therefore, it is necessary for an entity that is created to have been nothing beforehand; therefore, it belongs to the nature of creation that it be preceded by the absolute and complete non-being of the entity that is created; therefore, a newness of being belongs to the nature of creation.

This last consequence is clear, [first], from the fact that if anything has *esse* after not having had *esse*, then at some time it had a beginning of its being, and this is just to have a newness of being.

Second, in keeping with what will be said in the next disputation, it belongs to the nature of creation that it be distinct from conservation, at least conceptually and denominatively.<sup>2</sup> But creation is distinct from conservation only by virtue of the fact that creation bespeaks a newness of being that conservation does not bespeak; after all, the reason why an angel who is now being conserved by God through the same action through which /780a/ he was created is not now being created is that he does not now in the present have a newness of being. Therefore, etc.

The major premise is clear from the fact if there were some effect in which creation is not distinct from conservation, then such an effect would never have been created but would always have been conserved – which seems plainly to

- 
- 1 See *DM* 29.1.25–40. Causes that are ordered *per se* toward a given effect must all act directly and simultaneously, each within its own order, in order to bring about that effect, whereas this is not true of causes that are ordered *per accidens*.
  - 2 That is, even if creation and conservation turn out to be the same reality or action, it must at least be the case that the concept *creation* differs in content from the concept *conservation*, and that the term (or denomination) 'creation' differs in connotation from the term (or denomination) 'conservation'.

involve a contradiction. For how will something that has not been made or created be conserved?

Third, it belongs to the nature of a creature that it not be eternal; therefore, it belongs to the nature of creation that it not be eternal; therefore, a newness of being belongs to the nature of creation.

The two consequences are obvious. The antecedent, on the other hand, can, first of all, be proved theologically. For the holy Fathers infer that the Word is true God from the fact that he was produced from eternity;<sup>3</sup> and the reason they believe it to be adequately proved that this production is not a creation is that it is eternal; therefore, they are presupposing that eternity is repugnant to creation.

The consequence is obvious, and the antecedent is proved from Athanasius, *Contra Arianos*, oration 2; from Nazianzen, *Oratio* 32, along with Nicetas's *Scholium*, no. 58; from Basil, *Contra Eunomium* 4, section beginning *Quod filius non sit creatura*; from Cyril of Alexandria, *De Trinitate*, dialogue 4; from Damascene, *De Fide Orthodoxa* 1, chaps. 8 and 9; from Ambrose, *Hexameron* 1, chap. 3; and from others whom we will cite below.

The original antecedent<sup>4</sup> is proved, second, by a philosophical argument: Whatever is eternal is immutable; but immutability is repugnant to a creature; [therefore, etc.].

The antecedent is obvious from the fact that what is eternal must endure for an infinite duration in just the way it has existed from eternity; otherwise, there would be something eternal that endured for only a finite duration – which entails an obvious contradiction. But whatever endures of necessity in the same way and in the same state for an infinite duration is immutable.

This is confirmed by the fact that if a creature were eternal, then God would be forced to conserve it for an infinitely long time or duration. For the same reason, and with the same necessity, he would always conserve it in the future, since the argument is no stronger for the one duration than for the other.<sup>5</sup>

### Contrary Opinions are Noted

3. In light of these and similar arguments, some theologians have asserted that it belongs to the nature of creation that what is communicated through it is *esse* after non-*esse*, in the sense that the *esse* follows the non-*esse* by a real succession or after a real duration.<sup>6</sup> This is the opinion held by Albert the Great in

3 The Word is the Son of God, the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

4 The original antecedent is: "It belongs to the nature of a creature that it not be eternal."

5 The two durations in question are backward-looking eternity (*aeternitas a parte ante*), that is, eternity as corresponding to a real or imaginary infinite past time, and forward-looking eternity (*aeternitas a parte post*), that is, eternity as corresponding to a real or imaginary infinite future time.

6 Here a 'real' duration is opposed to an 'imaginary' duration of the sort one might posit 'before' the beginning of time if time has a beginning.

*Does a Newness of Being Belong to the Nature of Creation?* 95

*Sentences* 2, dist. 1, a. 6 and a. 10 and in *Physics* 8, chap. 1; by Bonaventure in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, a. 1, q. 1; by Richard of Middleton in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, a. 3, q. 4; by Marsilius of Inghen in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 2; and by Henry of Ghent in *Quodlibeta* 1, q. 7 and *Quodlibeta* 9, q. 17. On this basis all of them teach that it is impossible for created entities – even ones that are substantial /780b/ and incorruptible – to have existed from eternity. In addition, there are some philosophers who have thought the same thing, for example, Philoponus in chap. 3 of the book in which he replies to Proclus’s arguments for the eternity of the world. And many arguments on behalf of this position are brought together in *Physics* 8, chap. 2, q. 2 by Toletus, who likewise embraces the position.

4. The contrary position is presupposed by Aristotle in *Physics* 8 (if it is indeed true that he knew of creation). But its principal defenders are St. Thomas in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 46, a. 2, followed by his disciples: Cajetan, in the same place; Ferrariensis, in *Physics* 8, q. 3; Hervaeus, in the tract *De Aeternitate Mundi*, q. 2; and Hervaeus, Capreolus, and Deza in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1. Likewise in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, see Giles of Rome, Ockham, Gabriel Biel, Thomas of Argentina, and especially Gregory of Rimini (q.3) and Durandus (q.2), who restricts this position to the creation of incorruptible entities. On the other hand, Scotus (q.8) takes the matter to be an enigma.

### Resolution of the Question

5. St. Thomas’s opinion seems true to me as far as this aspect of the question is concerned. However, in order to clarify and resolve the matter, I note that there are two possible ways in which an entity or production can be eternal. The one way is by its own intrinsic necessity, in the way that the generation of the divine Word is eternal. The other way, without any necessity at all, is by the freedom of the cause that wills to effect the entity or production from eternity.

6. *First assertion; creation is not necessarily eternal.* Accordingly, I assert, first, that (i) it is repugnant to creation that it be intrinsically\* eternal, and hence that (ii) one can claim that newness of being belongs to the nature of creation *either actually or at least dispositionally*.<sup>7</sup>

This assertion follows, first of all, from the Faith – both because (i) it is part of the Faith that no act of creation was actually eternal and thus, *a fortiori*, that no act of creation is eternal by necessity; and also because (ii) it is part of the Faith that God does not effect anything outside himself by a necessity of nature. From here the argument reaches its conclusion as follows: Every creature (under which description, as we saw above, even creation itself can be included) is such that it does not of itself have *esse* and thus is also such that it does not have a necessity of being; therefore, creation cannot of itself have this sort of necessity,

---

7 The force of the term ‘dispositionally’ is this: Creation is the sort of production that by its nature could and, in some sense, should involve newness of being, even though this disposition can be overridden by God’s free choice. As we will see below, Suarez believes that if any entities were indeed created from eternity, they would have to be atypical and, to put it bluntly, rather odd.

either; but neither does creation have necessity from an extrinsic cause; therefore, it cannot be eternal in the sense in question.<sup>8</sup>

From this the second part of the assertion follows – namely, that a newness of being belongs at least dispositionally to the nature of creation. For this newness is not repugnant to creation by virtue of the nature of creation; nor, again, is it repugnant on the side of God, since, as we will show below,<sup>9</sup> God does not effect anything outside himself by a necessity of nature; therefore, etc.

7. *No natural argument proves that the world /781a/ has existed from eternity.* And on the basis of this conclusion it is clear in passing that one cannot demonstrate by natural reason that the world existed from eternity. For I am assuming that, as was proved above,<sup>10</sup> it is clear to natural reason that the world had its esse through creation. From here the argument reaches its conclusion as follows: There is demonstration only with regard to what is necessary; but the proposition that the creation of the world always exists is not necessary either because of any intrinsic necessity on the part of creation or because of any extrinsic necessity on the part of the agent; therefore, the proposition is indemonstrable.

I will not take the time to reply to Aristotle's arguments, a task that other writers have worked at skillfully enough, both because of this very fact and also because the philosophical arguments either carry no weight or are aimed mainly at proving that the world did not begin through natural generation – which is absolutely true, no matter how efficacious the arguments are.

However, we will now deal with a metaphysical (or theological) argument that may indeed pose a problem or carry some weight.

8. *A problem is dissolved.* For one might have doubts about the proof of the present assertion, given that we seem to be grounding a claim that is certain in a principle that is uncertain and moot, namely, that the act of creation is something created and exists outside of God. For, as is clear from the last section, this principle is uncertain.

One may reply that for the argument proposed above it is sufficient that passive creation – that is, the creature's being-made (regardless of whether it is distinct in reality or only conceptually from the act of creation) – should exist outside of God and thus lie beyond any necessity of being.

You will object: "Well, then, if we assume that active creation exists within God and not within the creature, it will have a necessity of being and will be intrinsically eternal; therefore, it will necessarily imply an eternal passive creation."

---

8 In order for creation to be intrinsically eternal, it would have to be either necessary by its own nature or necessary because of an extrinsic cause – that is, necessary because God must by his nature create. But these alternatives are both ruled out by the Faith.

9 See *DM* 30.16.20–36.

10 See *DM* 20.1.15–21.

*Does a Newness of Being Belong to the Nature of Creation?* 97

The common reply is to draw a distinction with regard to the antecedent, namely, by claiming that the action in question will be eternal as regards the entity that it posits within God, but not as regards the relation of reason it connotes with respect to the creature. For this relation is not conceived of as existing until the creature exists.<sup>11</sup>

And if you object that the action is an action not because of what the relation of reason adds to it (for that is nothing) but because of the being and reality it has within itself, then the reply should be that within the action itself there are two things that can be thought of. One is the *esse* of the action, and the other is its actual efficacy, that is, its actual introduction of a passion.<sup>12</sup> As regards the former, the action is eternal; as regards the latter, however, it is not at all eternal, since the action has such nobility and perfection that it introduces or posits its terminus only when the agent wants it to. And because an action *qua* action not only bespeaks the being of the action /781b/ in itself but also connotes the actual addition or passive emanation of the terminus, it follows that, absolutely speaking, the action is not necessarily eternal, but can instead be temporal.

9. And, to be sure, this teaching is true; nonetheless, one who ponders it carefully will come to see that whatever exists in the manner of an act and is thought of as eternal within God is not a true action, since 'action' signifies the actual path and outflow that emanates from the agent and tends toward the terminus. An action in this sense is not separable in reality from its terminus, since it just consists in the actual outflowing of that terminus. Therefore, whatever is thought of as eternal within God exists in the manner of an act which is a *principle* of acting – regardless of whether (i) it is a principle in the sense of being the very faculty or form from which the action emanates in time, or whether instead (ii) it exists in the manner of an immanent act that applies the executive power to the introduction of the action at the relevant time. In this way, the act of will by which God wills to create exists within him *from* eternity, but the act is not *for eternity* itself; instead, it is for the time or moment that he himself has willed to designate.

10. On this basis one may easily reply to the following argument, which may have especially influenced the philosophers: "If creation exists in time, then God must have changed, at least by reason of his willing to create. For if he creates within time, then it is within time that he wills to create; therefore, he changes."

The first consequent must be disambiguated: It is either on the part of the *act* or on the part of the *object* that within time he wills to create. The first reading is false\*, while the second is true\*. That is, if the consequent means that within time he begins to have the act by which he wills to create, or that within time he

11 The relation of reason in question here is God's relation to the creature, and it has as its counterpart the creature's real relation to God.

12 This is a minor slip on Suarez's part. For he has made clear above that since the action of creation is not an action on a subject, it has a terminus but no corresponding passion. Below he uses the more correct term 'passive emanation'.



## 98 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

begins to have his free determination, then one may deny the consequence, since he was able, through an eternal act, to will from eternity the creation that he effects in time. On the other hand, if it means that he wills, as an object, to *create within time* – that is, that to create within time was the object of the divine act of will – then the consequent is true. (In order to make this point clear, it is commonly claimed that it is more true and proper to say ‘God willed to create within time’ than to say ‘Within time he willed to create’. For in the first way of speaking the particle ‘within time’ is conjoined to the verb ‘to create’, whereas in the second way of speaking it seems to be conjoined to the act of willing itself.) However, from this true reading it does not follow that there is any change, since the act of willing this temporal object is itself eternal.

Now the question of what this eternal act of willing is, or what the free determination of a temporal object adds to the act of willing within eternity itself, is going to be discussed below when we treat the attributes of God.<sup>13</sup> For in the present context it makes no difference, since the problem is the same even if /782a/ we conceive of God’s free determination as being directed toward an eternal creation.

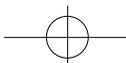
11. *Second assertion. It is not repugnant to creation that it be exercised from eternity; how the particle ‘ex nihilo’ is to be understood in the definition of creation.* I assert, second, that actual newness of being – that is, not being effected from eternity – does not belong to the nature of creation.

This is proved from the fact that (i) a newness of being is not included in the definition of creation, correctly understood, and that (ii) there is no other basis for its being necessary or for its opposite being impossible.

The first part of this claim is proved as follows: When creation is said to be a production out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), the particle ‘out of’ does not signify a succession of one thing after another, as when we say that evening emerges out of morning. For beyond the fact that this manner of speaking is rather improper and unsuitable for a definition, it denotes a *per accidens* ordering, except in the case of successive beings insofar as they are successive.<sup>14</sup> But creation is not of itself a successive emanation; instead, it is an instantaneous emanation, that is, a simultaneous whole. Therefore, either (i) the phrase ‘out of nothing’ is taken negatively, in which case it signifies the absence of a material cause, and on this score there is no necessity for a newness of being, since even if creation were eternal, it could have been independent of a material cause; or else (ii) the phrase

13 See *DM* 30.9.

14 A successive being is such that by its very nature it cannot exist all at once as a whole. So, for instance, intervals of physical time are themselves successive beings, as are actions, changes, and events that take time to occur. In *DM* 50.8 Suarez also includes among successive beings (i) *immaterial* (or spiritual) time, which is the duration of the continuous motions of spiritual creatures, and, by extension, (ii) *imaginary* time, which is the successive duration, unlimited with respect to past and future, that we can imagine as a measure of other durations.



*Does a Newness of Being Belong to the Nature of Creation?* 99

‘out of nothing’ denotes a relation to a terminus a quo, which has to be non-being absolutely speaking, and in that case it denotes merely an order of nature and not an order of duration – as Avicenna likewise noted in his own *Metaphysics* 6, chap. 2. This order of nature consists merely in the creature’s having of itself no *esse* at all unless that *esse* is communicated by another through creation, and so of itself the creature is nothing taken negatively, that is, it does not of itself have *esse*. For this reason, even if it were created from eternity, it would still be created out of nothing, since from not having *esse* of itself it becomes something that has *esse* from another – so that the very *esse* itself (which, if it were not made, would be nothing) is made through creation. Accordingly, even if there is no real duration during which it is true to say ‘The creature does not exist’ or ‘The creature is nothing’, it is nonetheless true to say that it is nothing prior in nature to being something. For this priority of nature does not positively rule out [the creature’s] existing in a given real duration, but instead has to be explained negatively as follows: Without the causality that comes through creation, the entity would be nothing.

Scotus correctly noted this in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 2, when he distinguished between two types of priority of nature, namely, positive and privative. For example, a privation is said to be expelled at the very same instant [of time] at which the form enters the matter; this privation is said to exist in the matter prior in nature to the form’s being introduced – not formally or positively [prior in nature], but rather causally or negatively, in the sense that if the form were not introduced, there would be a privation there.<sup>15</sup> This, then, is how one should understand the case presently under discussion. /782b/

12. The second part of the claim<sup>16</sup> is proved from the fact there is no other basis on which the impossibility in question can be demonstrated.

This will become readily obvious when we reply to the problems posed at the beginning. For now, however, it may be briefly confirmed as follows. [The absence of an actual newness of being] is not impossible on the side of God, as is obvious, given that he is omnipotent. Nor is it impossible on the side of the created *esse* itself as such, since even if it were effected from eternity, it would

15 The introduction of the form is instantaneous and yet simultaneous with the expulsion of the privation. So one and the same instant is both the first instant of the form’s existing in the matter and the last instant of the privation’s existing in the matter. (This can be so because the privation is not a real entity but is just the absence of the form.) Suarez’s point is that one must nonetheless conceive of the privation as being prior to the form *within that very instant*. The priority is thus a priority of nature rather than a priority of time, and in this case it is conceived of counterfactually. Analogously, in an entity created from eternity the privation of *esse* – that is, nothingness – is naturally prior from eternity to the having of *esse*.

16 The second part of the claim is that outside of an appeal to the definition of creation, there is no other basis for the assertion that a newness of being is necessary for creation.



## 100 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

still be truly created and truly dependent. For it does not belong to the nature of such created *esse* that it has not existed at any time in the past, just as it does not belong to its nature that it will not exist at any time in the future; thus, all that belongs to its nature is that (i) it does not exist from itself and that (ii) it does not have an absolute necessity of existing. But it would fulfill both conditions even if it were effected from eternity, since it would both (i) emanate from another as from an efficient cause and (ii) depend on that other's free determination.

Nor, again, is the eternity of the effect incompatible with the cause's freedom. For just as the divine will's determination is eternal and nonetheless free – since the will is thought of as indifferent with respect to willing this or that object outside itself conceptually prior to its being thought of as determined in its eternity – so, too, even if the divine will were to create from eternity and for eternity itself, it would, conceptually prior to this, be indifferent with respect to creating or not creating.

Again, it is not because of the mode in which creation is effected that it is impossible for it to be eternal. For creation is not effected successively, but is instead effected as a simultaneous whole and indivisibly; and so even though eternity is itself conceived of as indivisible, creation can coexist with it.

13. *An objection is answered.* Some authors object that even though creation as such is effected as a simultaneous whole, conservation is nonetheless effected successively; but eternal creation necessarily has conservation and infinite successive duration as adjuncts; therefore, since (as we are presupposing) it is impossible for a succession to be eternal, it will likewise be impossible for creation to be eternal, at least because of the conservation adjoined to it.<sup>17</sup>

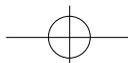
This objection would, to be sure, be relevant to the opinion of Bonaventure and those others who believe that there is real succession in the *esse* of incorruptible entities or in their duration, that is, their aeviternity. But this position is false, as we will show below when we discuss durations.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is also false that a real succession is necessary in the perpetual conservation of these entities; for, as I will explain in the next disputation,<sup>19</sup> they are conserved in one and the same permanent *esse*, and in one and the same indivisible duration, and by one and the same indivisible action. It is only in our way of conceiving it that this conservation or duration is apprehended /783a/ in the manner of a succession. For we are unable to measure or conceive of that duration in any way other than through its coexistence, as it were, with an imaginary infinite succession.

---

17 A necessary condition for an entity's being eternal or aeviternal is that it have a permanent (or non-successive) intrinsic duration. According to Suarez, all substances, both corruptible and incorruptible, along with many accidents, have a permanent intrinsic duration. Further, he argues that an entity's intrinsic duration is identical with its *esse*, and so there is no real succession in the *esse* of either corruptible or incorruptible substances. See especially *DM* 50.1 and 50.5–7.

18 See *DM* 50.5.3–11.

19 See *DM* 21.2.12.



*Does a Newness of Being Belong to the Nature of Creation?* 101

14. *An entity created from eternity is not infinitely perfect.* And in this way one also readily comes to see that no real infinity within the created entity follows from eternal creation. For even though an eternal duration is called infinite by virtue of the fact that it lacks a beginning, nonetheless, this is merely either (i) a sort of extrinsic denomination of coexistence with respect to God's eternity, given that [the duration in question] lacks a beginning, or else (ii) (and this seems more accurate) a sort of denial of a beginning of existence. However, what is adjoined to the creature in reality is not an infinite perfection, but rather one and the same perfection existing forever. In the same way, an angel's coexisting with or enduring for a thousand years of celestial motion is not, within the angel, a greater physical perfection than his existing for a single moment; rather, it is the very same perfection enduring as a whole without interruption.

So, then, there is no basis for the impossibility of creation's being eternal.

15. *Permanent corruptible entities could have been created eternally.* From this I infer further that the restriction Durandus adds about incorruptible entities is unnecessary. For even the creation of permanent corruptible entities, if it is effected as a simultaneous whole without succession (as the status of permanent entities demands of itself), does not by its intrinsic nature require a newness of being; nor is there any reason why an eternity of being should be intrinsically repugnant to such a creation. For the whole of the argument just presented can be applied in the same way to entities of this type.

Durandus, however, claims that an infinite duration, even in the sense just explained, is repugnant to a corruptible entity. For a corruptible entity cannot endure for an infinitely long time; but an entity made from eternity must endure for an infinitely long time.

The common reply is this: What the argument proves is that a corruptible entity cannot be created from eternity and *left to its own nature*, since from this a contradiction follows, namely, that the entity both endures and does not endure for an infinitely long time. Nonetheless, it cannot be proved that it is *absolutely* impossible for entities of this sort to be created from eternity; for God was able not to leave them to their own natures, but instead to conserve them for an infinitely long time.

16. My own judgment, however, is that the following alternative reply should be given: Corruptible entities are able to endure for an infinitely long time even when left to their own natures, as long as contrary agents are absent, or as long as such agents are affected or disposed in such a way that they are unable to act on those entities – since, speaking *per se*, no entity destroys itself. But if corruptible entities were created from eternity, then they would be incapable of being acted upon from eternity by contrary /783b/ agents, since they could not be acted upon except through a successive motion, which is ruled out by their having existed from eternity.<sup>20</sup>

20 This is in keeping with the principle, enunciated above, that no succession or successive alteration is eternal. For an illustration, see the reply to the second answer below for an argument on behalf of the claim that no successive alteration can be



## 102 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

I say “by contrary agents” because we are talking about *corruptive* action; for a *perfective* action, such as illumination, vision, or intellection, can very well be eternal, since it can be effected as a simultaneous whole without any resistance, and, once effected, it can endure of itself for an infinitely long time. This is the sense in which Augustine claimed in *De Trinitate* 6, chap. 1 that the brightness of a fire (or of the sun) would be coeternal with the fire (or sun) if the fire (or sun) were eternal. By contrast, as Durandus himself teaches and as we ourselves are presupposing, a corruptive action, which occurs when the contrary is being resisted, requires motion and succession, and thus it cannot exist from eternity. And so it follows that corruptible entities which are created from eternity and which are left to their own natures – that is, which are offered no special protection by God over and beyond his general influence – could endure for an infinitely long time because of the absence of the action of a contrary agent.

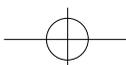
Thus, even if a fire and a piece of flax were created from eternity close to one another, the fire would be unable to act on the flax in eternity and, consequently, it would be unable to act on the flax throughout an imaginary infinitely long time. This is proved by the fact that if the fire acted on the flax, either (i) it would corrupt it and transform it into itself by an instantaneous and indivisible action, or else (ii) it would alter it successively.

The first answer cannot be given, both because it exceeds the fire’s efficaciousness and also because it is incompatible with what has been presupposed. For if an eternal fire immediately generated another fire by an indivisible action, the generated fire would be as eternal as the generating fire is; but in order for a fire to be generated out of flax, the flax must once have existed; therefore, the flax and the fire generated out of the flax will be simultaneous with one another in eternity – which is plainly impossible.

The second answer likewise cannot be given, since (as is being presupposed) a successive alteration cannot be eternal. This can be easily seen if we expound upon the argument just made above: A successive alteration is effected out of a contrary, and through the alteration the patient\* is deprived of a disposition that preexisted in it; therefore, if a successive alteration is eternal, then the patient, along with the disposition that is contrary to that alteration, is likewise eternal; therefore, in eternity itself the patient simultaneously had that disposition and was deprived of it through the contrary alteration – which is an obvious contradiction.

---

eternal. The idea seems to be this: An entity created from eternity, call it *e*, is created at an instant and, as with any entity created at a temporal instant, *e* does not change at the very instant of creation. To be sure, as Suarez notes below, God can determine the first moment in time at which *e* will change or be altered. But at that moment *e* will already have existed from eternity. (Notice that the accidents that Suarez invokes in the next paragraph – namely, illumination, vision, and intellection – are, he maintains, intrinsically permanent rather than intrinsically successive entities.)



*Does a Newness of Being Belong to the Nature of Creation?* 103

In addition, there is an *a priori* argument: An entity created from eternity is created in some real state, and so it must endure in that state throughout an infinitely long time; therefore, in the whole of that infinitely long time no contrary alteration can be effected; therefore, such an alteration must have a beginning in time.<sup>21</sup>

In light of this same argument, if a human being were created from eternity, even in a purely /784a/ natural state, he would be unable to undergo any intrinsic alteration throughout an infinitely long time. For the same argument that applies to altering any other agents or patients applies as well to changing one part [of the same substance] into another, or to changing natural heat into humors or nourishment; and so such a human being would not need food throughout an infinitely long time, and not only would he not die throughout that same time, but he would not even be able to die.

17. You will object: “All these things are preternatural to corruptible entities and to agents and patients that are contrary to one another; therefore, it is no longer the case that the entities in question are being left to their own natures, as was assumed.”

The reply is that these and similar arguments and inferences make clear, at least *a posteriori*, that eternal creation is not consonant with the natures of these entities. For by its nature each entity needs to exist – as well as to come into existence – in a state and measure [of duration] in which it is capable of exercising its actions in a way appropriate to its nature. But corruptible entities that have been made in eternity for eternity itself would not be able to do anything appropriate to themselves at all. Hence, even later on they could not of themselves begin to act and be acted upon. For the imaginary infinitely long time during which they would necessarily endure in the state in which they had been created would not have a fixed future terminus; instead, that state could be terminated prior to any designated instant, and so the creature’s action could likewise be initiated prior to any given instant. Therefore, the creatures could not of themselves initiate an action by determining the instant at which the action would be initiated; instead, this would be up to God – which is likewise preternatural.<sup>22</sup>

---

21 As Suarez makes clear below, it is possible for an entity to be created in eternity and then to *begin* to undergo alterations at some point in imaginary time. The present set of arguments implies only that it is impossible that such alterations should themselves be eternal. The claim is that at any given point in imaginary time prior to the beginning of the alterations, the entity would have endured for an infinitely long time in its original state. See note 20 above.

22 That is, when God creates an entity from eternity, he alone can antecedently choose a point in imaginary time at which that entity would be capable of either effecting or undergoing alterations. But, as noted above, the entity would at that time have endured for an infinitely long time in its original state.

## 104 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

Despite all this, however, we claim that once eternal creation has been posited, all these things follow by *natural necessity*; and given this supposition of eternal creation, we claim that even if, in all other respects, entities of the sort in question were left to their own natures, they would endure for an infinitely long time.

18. *Incorruptible substances would not exist altogether conaturally if they were created from eternity.* However, I add further that this sort of disproportionateness or (as I will put it) preternaturalness is present to almost the same degree (though not altogether equally) in the case of the eternal creation of *incorruptible* entities. For any entity whatsoever that is created from eternity must remain unchanged throughout an infinitely long time, both in its substance and in all the accidents with which it was created, because all such things are eternal, and so on that score they are infinite in duration with respect to the total reality or real mode with which they were created from eternity. Therefore, they must remain unchanged for an infinite duration. /784b/ But every creature, no matter how incorruptible, is mutable with respect to place or with respect to other operations. And so it is preternatural even for a creature of this sort to be made in a state in which it cannot exercise or alter its natural motions or operations throughout an infinitely long time; nonetheless – and this is what we intended to prove – it is not *absolutely* impossible or repugnant.

### Refutation of the Arguments at the Beginning

19. The first argument presented at the beginning<sup>23</sup> is already adequately answered by what has been said. For we have shown that it does not belong to the nature of creation that nothingness should precede it within some real duration; rather, it belongs to the nature of creation only that nothingness should precede it in the conceptual and causal orders.

And it is no problem that in *Monologion*, chap. 8 Anselm, too, endorses the explication [set forth in the first argument], namely, that what is created is said to be effected out of nothing because it was previously nothing and has become something through creation. For prior to the place cited he sets forth the true interpretation proposed above, namely, that what is ruled out by the phrase [*ex nihilo*] is any subject or any matter out of which creation might be effected. However, he later presents the other interpretation not as a necessary interpretation, or as an interpretation that is appropriate to creation precisely in virtue of what creation is, but rather as a clarification of creation as it has *in fact* been effected.

20. As for the second argument,<sup>24</sup> one may reply, first of all, that, as we will

---

23 See §2 above.

24 See §2 above. The argument is this: “It belongs to the nature of creation that it be distinct from conservation, at least conceptually and denominatively. But creation is distinct from conservation only by virtue of the fact that creation bespeaks a newness of being that conservation does not bespeak .... Therefore, etc.”

*Does a Newness of Being Belong to the Nature of Creation?* 105

soon explain,<sup>25</sup> it is wholly unproblematic to concede that an entity is created by the same action by which it is conserved.

Next, one may claim that even in the case of an eternal creation it is possible to draw a conceptual distinction between creation and conservation. For insofar as this creation is said to exist absolutely in eternity itself as a simple participation in created *esse*, it has the nature of creation, whereas insofar as we envision within it a certain imaginary succession, it has the nature of conservation for any designated instant of that succession. This is something we apprehend in almost the same way in the case of the generation of the Eternal Word.<sup>26</sup> For insofar as that generation exists in its eternity, it is a true production and generation, whereas insofar as it is conceived of as coexistent with the instants of our time or with imaginary instants, there is a certain permanence (as I will put it) in that same generation. (For the term ‘conservation’, which denotes an imperfection, is not to be attributed to this generation; see St. Thomas, *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 14, ad 10.)

21. *The way in which the Saints prove the Word of God’s divinity from his eternal existence.* As for the third argument,<sup>27</sup> one may deny the antecedent, namely, that eternity is repugnant to the nature of a creature.

To the citations from the Fathers, one can reply, first, that the Fathers are speaking from the perspective of the Faith, which teaches that no creature is /785a/ created from eternity. From this they correctly infer that if the Word is eternal, then he is not a creature. The fact that they sometimes suggest that coeternity with God is repugnant to a creature should be understood in light of the first assertion above.<sup>28</sup> Thus, in *De Civitate Dei* 12, chap. 15 Augustine said that even if the angels had been created from eternity, they would nonetheless not have been coeternal with their creator, “since he has always existed with an immutable eternity, whereas they were made.”

As for the argument,<sup>29</sup> one may reply that what is intrinsically eternal is intrinsically immutable, but that what is extrinsically made in eternity does not have to be intrinsically immutable; rather, it is enough if it remains unchanged for eternity itself or for an infinite duration that is conceived of within eternity.

---

25 See *DM* 21.2.3.

26 According to the Catholic faith, the Eternal Word (that is, the Son or second person of the Blessed Trinity) is eternally generated, though not created, by the Father.

27 See §2 above. The argument is this: “It belongs to the nature of a creature that it not be eternal; therefore, it belongs to the nature of creation that it not be eternal; therefore, a newness of being belongs to the nature of creation.”

28 See §6 above. The first assertion is this: “It is repugnant to creation that it be intrinsically eternal, and hence one can claim that newness of being belongs to the nature of creation *either* actually *or* at least dispositionally.”

29 See §2 above. The relevant philosophical argument is this: “Whatever is eternal is immutable; but immutability is repugnant to a creature; [therefore, etc.]”



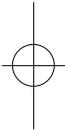
## 106 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

22. Hence, as far as the confirmation is concerned,<sup>30</sup> I concede that by the very fact that God creates something from eternity he must of necessity conserve that thing for an imaginary infinitely long time, in the sense explained above.

Nor is this problematic. For the necessity in question is not absolute necessity, but rather necessity on a supposition – the sort of necessity that, *mutatis mutandis*, has a place in every one of God's actions. For if he wills to produce an entity in time, he must conserve it at least for that time. Therefore, if he wills to produce an entity in eternity, what wonder is it that he necessarily conserves it for eternity?

However, this necessity is only backward-looking; that is, if one keeps going back toward the beginning, a terminus is never found in that duration. However, the necessity is not forward-looking. For at any designated instant in that eternity God could stop conserving the entity in question; and prior to any designated instant he could by his own choice stop conserving the entity at any instant that is still designatable.

The rest of this material we reserve for *Physics* 8.



---

---

30 See §2 above. The confirmation is this: "If a creature were eternal, then God would be forced to conserve it for an infinitely long time or duration. For the same reason, and with the same necessity, he would always conserve it in the future, since the argument is no stronger for the one duration than for the other."

