

## SECTION 2

### **Whether an Infinite Power of Acting Is Required in Order to Create and, thus, Whether Such a Power Is a Proper to God to Such an Extent That It Cannot Be Communicated to a Creature**

1. *Creatures have never created anything.* There has been no shortage of philosophers who would claim not only that it is possible for the power to create to be communicated to creatures, but also that this power has in fact been communicated to them, and that [each] higher angel created the next lower angel, and that the lowest angel created corporeal entities. This was maintained by Avicenna, whose opinion we touched upon above while discussing the education of forms and will encounter again below when we discuss the active power of the created intelligences.<sup>1</sup>

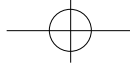
However, true and certain doctrine teaches that no creature has in fact created anything. For the true Faith acknowledges God alone as the creator of all things, and all the saints teach this as well, especially St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 12, chap. 24; Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*; Damascene, [*De Fide Orthodoxa*] 2, chap. 3; and Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Julianum* 2, near the end. Lastly, this doctrine was defined in *De Summa Trinitate et Fide Catholica*, chap. beginning 'Firmiter'.<sup>2</sup>

2. From this firm principle one may infer with almost the same degree of certitude that no creature in fact has the power to create. For it is unlikely that God has given this power to some creature and yet does not allow or permit that creature to exercise it – both because it is part of God's providence to allow creatures to exercise their proper motions or actions, and because otherwise such a power would exist in reality without any purpose. Likewise, what has never been done by any natural cause is justifiably judged to be impossible by means of natural causes. Accordingly, in just the way that they deny that one creature has created another, all the Fathers and theologians deny, with the same certitude, that any creature has a natural power to create.

3. But even though these claims are certain to us from revelation, we are now asking (as is proper to our present task) whether they can be compellingly argued for and established by natural reason. This, we believe, depends entirely on the question proposed [in the title of this section]. For if we prove that, because of the infinite perfection it requires, the power to create is incommuni-

1 See *DM* 15.2.9 and *DM* 35.6.2.

2 Suarez is referring here to an important dogmatic decree promulgated by the ecumenical council Lateran IV. See H. Denzinger and A. Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, (hereafter: Denzinger) 32nd edition, (Freiburg, 1963), #800 (new numbering), p. 259.



cable to a creature, /754b/ then we will have demonstrated what the Faith teaches to be true in fact. On the other hand, if the power to create does not essentially involve this infinity, and if it is thus not impossible for it to be communicated to a creature, then reason will be unable to prove that the power and its exercise have not in fact been communicated to a creature. For this will depend on God's free will, the decree of which, if not manifested by its effects, can be made known to us only through revelation.

**An Argument for the Negative Answer is Presented, along with an Explanation of the Meaning of the Question**

4. The reason why there is a problem with the present question is that no sufficient argument – not to mention demonstration – has thus far been discovered that establishes convincingly that an absolutely infinite power is required in order to create. (I am speaking here of a *principal* power, one that is able to produce the effect by its own strength; for we do not wish to argue explicitly about an *instrumental* power, since this is a purely theological matter.)<sup>3</sup>

Now a principal power of creating can be conceived of in various ways. First, it can be conceived of as a power which is universal within the order [of creative powers], that is, which is adequate to the object *creatable being*.<sup>4</sup> And it is absolutely obvious that this power cannot be communicated to a creature; nor, as far as I know, has this claim been called into question by any author.

The reason is clear. Such a power has an object that is infinitely perfect syncategorematically, since, within the range of that object, for any assignable being with a given degree of perfection, there is another being with a greater degree of perfection that could be created, and so on *ad infinitum*; therefore, an absolutely infinite power and perfection is required in a faculty that contains this object as a whole within its power.<sup>5</sup>

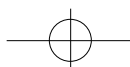
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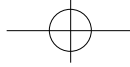
3 Despite what he says here, Suarez does devote Section 3 below to the question of whether an instrumental power to create is possible. For Suarez's discussion of the distinction between a principal agent and an instrumental agent, see *DM* 17.2.7–19. After reviewing four alternative explanations of this distinction, he concludes that an instrumental agent is an agent that concurs in producing an effect that lies beyond its own proper power to produce. An instrumental cause is in this sense 'elevated' by its relation to the principal cause.

4 A power is 'adequate to' (*adaequata*) a given object or concept just in case it extends to all and only the things included under that object or concept.

5 If the term 'infinitely perfect' is taken categorematically in the proposition 'All creatable beings are infinitely perfect', the proposition implies that each creatable being, taken singly, is itself infinitely perfect. Hence, the proposition is false.

By contrast, when the term 'infinitely perfect' is taken syncategorematically, the proposition does not have this implication. Instead, as Suarez makes clear, it implies that there is an infinite ordering of creatable beings, each of which is exceeded in perfection by some other creatable being. Thus, there is a straightforward sense in which a power capable of creating any assignable creatable being has an infinite-





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For a power that is actually finite cannot suffice; otherwise, it could be equalled and exceeded by some part of its object.<sup>6</sup> Nor can the power in question be syncategorematically infinite, since it possesses the entirety of its existing strength and perfection all at once and actually.<sup>7</sup> Nor, again, will it suffice for it to be relatively infinite, that is, infinite within a given order of beings.<sup>8</sup> For, first of all, what is relatively infinite is absolutely and actually finite; and, furthermore, the range of the object under discussion is not confined to any particular genus or order of entities, but instead embraces without qualification the entire range of creatable being. Therefore, a power that contains and exceeds the whole of that object cannot be just relatively infinite, but must instead be infinite absolutely and within the whole range of [creatable] being.

5. A second argument can be put forth: It is impossible for any productive power /755a/ to include itself within its own adequate object, since it is impossible that anything should create itself; but every creature is contained within the object *creatable being*, as is evident *per se*; therefore, a creature cannot have *creatable being* as such for the adequate object of its power, since otherwise it would include itself within its own object. (It is for this reason that no generable entity can possess a generative power that has generable being for its adequate object. Nor can any individual [of a given species] have a power whose adequate object is that very species.)

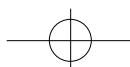
These arguments, then, sufficiently demonstrate that the power to create, conceived of in the way in question, is infinite and thus proper to God and incommunicable to creatures.

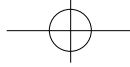
ly perfect object and, consequently, must be unlimited in perfection and hence infinite.

- 6 An 'actually finite' power to create is one that has a fixed upper limit of perfection. Thus, given that the object *creatable being* is syncategorematically infinite in the sense described above, there will be some creatable being that exceeds an actually finite power in perfection and hence cannot be created by that power. It follows that such a power cannot have *creatable being* as its adequate object.
- 7 Apparently, a syncategorematically infinite power is a power that, while not absolutely infinite, is nonetheless of an indeterminately high degree of perfection; that is, for any assignable finite degree you please, the power is of a higher degree of perfection than that. Thus, the argument goes, a power to create can be finite without being 'actually finite' in the sense described in the previous note.

In reply, Suarez insists that no finite power can be indeterminate in this way. (The last paragraph of §22 below sheds a bit more light on this insistence.) Hence, the power in question, as possessed all at once by some agent, must be either (i) absolutely infinite, in which case Suarez has what he wants to prove, or else (ii) 'actually finite', in which case the previous argument against an actually finite power applies to it.

- 8 The idea here is that the power would extend to all creatable beings of one or more given kinds, but not to all creatable beings *simpliciter*. For instance, we can at least imagine, say, a being that is capable of creating any possible aardvark but incapable of creating any other kind of animal.





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6. Again, a power to create can be conceived of in a second way as a power that has the strength to produce something *ex nihilo* all by itself and without dependence on, or concurrence from, another.

On this conception, too, I believe, it can be sufficiently proved that such a power is infinite and incommunicable to a creature – not just insofar as it extends to *every* creatable being, but even insofar as it is directed toward creating *any* particular being. We will be discussing this below in Disputation 22.<sup>9</sup> On this score the same argument holds for the power to create as holds for any created power to act on a presupposed subject. For no created power can be independent of the First Cause in its acting, and the sort of independence in question requires an infinite perfection – as we will see in the place just mentioned.

7. To continue, a power to create can be conceived of in a third way merely as a proximate principal cause that (i) depends in its acting on the First Cause and (ii) is restricted to creating a set order or species of entity – for example, bodily entities, or certain species of angels, or something similar.

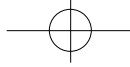
As far as this sort of power is concerned, there does not seem to be a sufficient argument for why it should require an absolutely infinite perfection, or for why it could not be communicated to a creature. For such a power does not involve an infinity either (i) on the part of the object, since it is posited as restricted to an object of finite perfection, or, again, (ii) in its mode of acting, since it is posited as dependent on the concurrence of another.

8. And it is unsatisfactory to argue, as many do, that an infinity can be inferred from its mode of acting – not, [as above], by reason of the action's lack of dependence on a higher agent cause, but instead by reason of the action's lack of dependence on a material cause. More specifically, [their argument is this]: It requires power to reduce something from potentiality to actuality, and the more distant a given potentiality is from actuality, the greater the power required in the agent; therefore, that which is so far distant from actuality that it is not contained within any passive potentiality requires /755b/ an infinite power in the agent in order for it to be able to be made.

This argument, I repeat, is unsatisfactory. For, first of all, an action's lack of dependence on a subject does not seem to be of such great importance, or to imply such great perfection, that it requires an absolutely infinite power in the agent. Why should it? After all, the matter's contribution is something finite. Why, then, couldn't it be supplied by the power of an agent of a higher and more perfect order, even if that power is not infinite?

Second, the scale or proportional calculus [invoked by the argument] is [merely] informal, both because (i) it entails at most an active power of a higher order than any power limited to acting on a passive potentiality, whether remote or proximate – that is, more or less distant from actuality – and also because (ii) the progression in question must be thought of as relative to the same thing and

<sup>9</sup> See *DM* 22.1 for a defense of the thesis that no created being can act without God's immediate causal concurrence.



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with all else being equal.<sup>10</sup> For it can happen that a greater perfection is required to produce a more perfect form out of a proximate potentiality than to produce a low-level form out of a remote potentiality. So, then, it could be the case that all that is needed to create a lowest-level entity – say, primary matter – is a finite power, though one distinct in species from every generative power.

9. The problem is compounded by the fact that there are two ways in which a principal power of acting can be attributed to a creature: first, as a power that is connatural and owed to it, that is, as a power that emanates from the principles of its nature, in the way that heat exists in fire; or, [second], as a power that is superadded to or conferred upon its nature, in the way that the light of glory exists in one who is beatified.<sup>11</sup> Thus, even if we granted for the sake of argument that, because of the incommensurability alleged above, no power that is *connatural* to created things can extend to the act of creation, still, that argument proves nothing with regard to a power that is *superadded* to the nature. For such a power can be supernatural and thus of a higher order, and therefore sufficient to overcome the incommensurability in question.

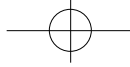
After all, this is the way theologians reply when the following comparable argument is made: An intellectual light of a certain perfection is required to see an intelligible object that has a mixture of actuality and potentiality, and the more actuality and less potentiality such an object has, the more perfect the light

- 10 The ‘proportional calculus’ Suarez is alluding to here is that embodied by the principle that the more distant a given potentiality is from actuality, the greater the power needed to reduce that potentiality to actuality.

Suarez’s first reply is that even if we grant this principle, it does not follow that an infinite power is needed in order to create, since the calculus seems to be inapplicable to a case in which no patient or passive potentiality is involved. At most what follows is that the power to create is distinct from, and differs in species from, any power that is limited to producing effects from preexistent patients.

Second, even if we treat nothingness as, in effect, the most remote potentiality, the principle still does not warrant the claim that an infinite power is required for creation *ex nihilo*. For the principle must be thought of as relativized to a given sort of effect, so that the most plausible version would presumably go something like this: ‘Assuming that all else is equal, for any effect *E* and real potentiality *P* (no matter how remote) with respect to *E*, the power required to produce *E ex nihilo* is greater than the power required to produce *E* from *P*.’ But far from entailing that an infinite power is required to produce *E ex nihilo*, this principle entails only that more power – or a higher type of power – is required to produce *E ex nihilo* than to produce *E* from any given preexistent potentiality. If, as Suarez points out, *E* is a very low-level and unimpressive effect, there is no obvious reason why an infinite power should be required in order to produce it *ex nihilo*.

- 11 Suarez is speaking here of the beatific vision of God granted supernaturally to the blessed in heaven. According to scholastic ontology, this vision is a certain intellectual quality that is gratuitously bestowed by God upon the blessed and that cannot be thought of as emanating from their nature.



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required to see it; therefore, if an object is Pure Actuality and has no potentiality at all, then an infinite light is required to see it.<sup>12</sup>

The theologians, I say, reply by denying the consequence and asserting that all that is needed is a light of a higher order. Why, then, can't we respond in the same way regarding the power to create? /756a/

### Various Opinions

10. For these and similar reasons, a few theologians claim that there is no sufficient argument showing that the power to create is absolutely repugnant to a creature. Gabriel Biel plainly thinks this way in *Sentences* 1, dist. 1, q. 4, art. 3. For even though he teaches straightforwardly that a creature is unable to create, nonetheless, when he seeks an explanation for this fact, he replies that none can be given except that this is the condition the creature has received from God, the order of which it cannot transcend. And the fact that creatures have received this condition of operating is clear, he says, only from experience.

First of all, however, this experience is had at most with respect to material agents and effects. How, then, does Gabriel know from experience that angels do not produce and never have produced anything except from a patient? Again, how does Gabriel know from experience that when one human being generates another, he does not attain to the latter by producing the soul itself?

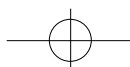
Second, his reply seems to be grounded only in the condition and order which the creature has *in fact* received from God. Therefore, either Gabriel believes that God was able to have granted the creature a different condition or mode of acting, or else he is not replying adequately to the question.<sup>13</sup>

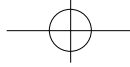
This same position is held more clearly by Durandus in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 4, where he denies that an infinite power is required in order to create, and where he immediately thereafter (i) denies that it is repugnant to a creature to effect something without a change in a subject and (ii) replies to all the arguments that are ordinarily adduced to prove such a repugnance.

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12 According to the argument alluded to here, the standard conception of the beatific vision is incoherent because it implies that beatified human beings must receive an infinite act of understanding in order to see God, who is Pure Actuality, in his essence. But, the argument goes, a finite intellect cannot be endowed with an infinite quality. (On the question of how a finite intellect can see God in his essence, see St. Thomas, *De Veritate*, q. 8, art. 1 and *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 12.)

13 Recall that the question at hand is whether the power to create *can* be communicated to a creature. If Gabriel believes that no demonstration can be given for the claim that such a power cannot be communicated, then he must believe that, as far as we know from reason and experience, God could have communicated this power, even if he has not in fact communicated it. If he does not believe this, but believes instead that God was unable to communicate this power to a creature, then his reply is inadequate because he has not provided an argument for this stronger claim.





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11. Nonetheless, it is the contrary position that is common among the Scholastics. This position is held by the Master in *Sentences* 4, dist. 5;<sup>14</sup> by St. Thomas in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 5 and in many other places, and by all of his followers; by Scotus, who is likewise emulated by his followers, in *Sentences* 4, dist. 1, q. 1; by Ockham in *Sentences* 2, q. 7,<sup>15</sup> even though he thinks that the position cannot be fully demonstrated, and in *Quodlibeta* 2, q. 9; by Henry of Ghent in *Quodlibeta* 4, q. 37; and by Giles of Rome in *Quodlibeta* 5, q. 1.

**Resolution of the Question**

12. To my mind, this second position seems true and certain; yet I think it is extremely difficult to come up with a cogent demonstration to confirm it. An indication of this is that authors who agree on the conclusion utterly disagree about what argument should be given, and each impugns the arguments of the others.

Because of this, the most efficacious argument, as I see it, is the one based on the principle of the Faith, and that is why I said that the assertion is to my mind *certain* rather than *evident*. For just as from the fact that no creature has ever created anything we rightly conclude that no creature ever made has had the power /756b/ to create, so too from the fact that no creature ever made has had the power to create, it may be correctly inferred, I believe, that no makeable creature is capable of having this power.<sup>16</sup>

I confirm this latter consequence, first, as follows: If such a creature were possible, it would surely constitute a different order and grade of creature over and beyond those that now exist, since it would have a distinct and higher mode of operating; therefore, it would have pertained to the perfection of the universe that such an order or grade of creatures should exist in it; therefore, conversely, since God established the universe without any such creature, this is an indication that (i) no such creature is contained within the order of creatures or is possible, and, consequently, that (ii) this sort of creature is irrelevant to the completeness of the universe.

We will shore up this argument below in Disputation 35\*, when we show by means of a similar line of reasoning that there are created intelligences in the universe.<sup>17</sup>

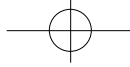
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14 The Master (of the Sentences) is Peter Lombard.

15 In the critical edition of Ockham's theological works, this question is numbered 6 rather than 7. See pp. 88–98 in Gedeon G-l and Rega Wood, eds., *Guillemi de Ockham: Quaestiones in Librum Secundum Sententiarum (Reportatio)* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 1981).

16 Recall that in §2 above Suarez had identified it as a doctrine of the Faith that no creature has the power to create. He is now using this doctrine as a premise to argue that no creature *can* have the power to create.

17 See *DM* 35.1.5.



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13. Second, the same argument is unpacked more fully as follows: Among creatable substances there can be no higher grade than that of the angels or intellectual entities; on the other hand, among accidents, if we are speaking as philosophers, none is better than the accidents that are connatural to those highest substances, whereas if we are speaking as theologians, none can be better than the accidents that pertain to the order of grace and the beatific vision; therefore, if the power to create is not found within these highest orders of entities, then there is no creature in which it is possible. For the fact that within the grade of angels there could be other angels more perfect in species than all those that have been made is not itself sufficient for their having a mode of operating that is so diverse in order and type. That is why Augustine, *De Trinitate* 3, chap. 8, takes it for granted that if the angels, both good and evil, are unable to create, then no creature can create.

### Consideration of an Argument of Scotus's

14. Third, Scotus tried to provide an explanation for the inductive or experiential [principle] we are presupposing here<sup>18</sup> and to infer from that explanation the reason why no makeable creature can be a creator. We can lay out and amplify his line of reasoning as follows:

Every creature is either material or spiritual; but neither of these types of creature can create; therefore, etc.

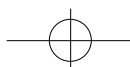
The consequence is obvious, since the two disjuncts, which involve an immediate and contradictory opposition, encompass all possible creatures.

The first part of the minor premise, which has to do with material creatures, is proved as follows:<sup>19</sup> A material substance would create either (i) through its matter or (ii) through its form or (iii) through its accidents.

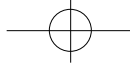
Not through its matter, since this matter /757a/ is not and cannot be active; after all, being active is intrinsically incompatible with its being and imperfection, since it is essentially a pure passive potentiality. Hence, since this argument is common to all creatable matter, there cannot be a primary matter that is a principle of creating. This indeed seems evident *per se* and from the terms themselves; for so great a perfection as creation implies is plainly incompatible with so great an imperfection as primary matter brings with itself.

18 The principle in question is that no creature that has in fact been made has the power to create.

19 The defense of the minor premise begins here and goes on to the end of §19. More specifically, the defense of the first part of the minor premise, which deals with material substances, runs to the end of §17. Within this section, the treatment of matter occupies the rest of §14, the treatment of form occupies §15 and §16, and the treatment of accidents is found in §17. The defense of the second part of the minor premise, which deals with spiritual substances, is found in §18, while §19 contains some reflections on whether the argument as a whole should be taken to apply to instrumental causal principles as well as to principal causal principles.







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15. Nor can a material [substantial] form – which is the sort of form we are now talking about – be a principle of creation. For, first of all, a thing's mode of acting corresponds to its mode of being; but the sort of form in question has within its *esse* a connatural dependence on a subject; therefore, it also has such a dependence in every action of which it is a proper and connatural principle.

Second, such a form is not producible in a connatural way through creation properly speaking, but is rather produced either by eduction or by being co-created with the whole composite; therefore, it cannot itself be a principle of creating. The consequence is obvious from the fact that the form can at most be a principle for producing a form that is similar to itself, and in a manner that is likewise proportioned to itself and connatural to the form to be produced.

Third, I clarify the point just made as follows: A form of the sort in question would be a principle for creating either the matter or the form or the composite. Not the matter, since such a form is posterior to matter, and in the order of nature it presupposes matter in order to be able to exist and so also presupposes it in order to be able to act. This is so mainly because a form that is so imperfect cannot eminently contain matter itself, and so it cannot procreate an entity that is so dissimilar to itself.

Nor can it create the form. For it cannot produce a spiritual form, since it cannot exceed its own order; and it cannot produce a material form except in a way that is connatural to the form to be produced, since it cannot alter the order that is connatural to the entities themselves. But when such a form is not co-created with matter, it is makeable only through eduction and not through creation, since it is incapable of having its own *esse* without a dependence on matter.

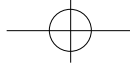
16. Hence, it also follows that such a form cannot be a principle for creating the whole of a material substance. For this sort of substance cannot be created except by one who is able to create matter. (It is being taken as evident that such a form is all the less able to create a spiritual substance, since it cannot transcend its own order in acting.)

Moreover, by the same line of reasoning one may straightforwardly infer that a material substance cannot be /757b/ a principle of creation through itself as a whole, or *per se* and primarily – both because (i), as has been said, its matter cannot be a principle of acting, not to mention creating, and also because (ii) the composite as a whole cannot have a power to act except from the parts out of which it is essentially composed. Therefore, if the power to create – or a commensurability with respect to such an action – cannot exist in either the matter or the form, then it likewise cannot exist in the composite.

17. We still have to talk about the accidents of a material substance, which constituted the third disjunct proposed in [the confirmation of] the first part of the minor premise. However, in a moment we will be making several points about accidents in general;<sup>20</sup> so for now we will take this disjunct as having been

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<sup>20</sup>See §§18–20 below.



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sufficiently proved by what has already been said about the substantial form. For if the substantial form cannot be a principle of creating because of the natural dependence it has on matter, then a material accident, which is even more dependent and less perfect, will be even less capable of being a principle of creating, especially given that we are now talking about a principal cause.<sup>21</sup>

This line of reasoning about material entities does indeed seem to me to be compelling and to apply equally well both to substances that have already been made and to possible substances. For it is grounded in the proper nature and imperfection of a material substance as such and in the connatural commensurability between acting and being, a commensurability that cannot be altered. For even though God is able to produce in a creature, or through a creature, something other than what is connatural to it, nonetheless, he cannot make it the case that something which is incommensurable with a given creature's nature should be connatural to it.

18. I come now to the second part [of the minor premise] proposed in the main argument, the one having to do with spiritual substance. Scotus proves it in no way other than this: A created spiritual substance cannot effect anything except by means of an accident; but it cannot create anything by means of an accident; therefore, no angel can have the power to create.

He proves the major premise from the fact that an angel cannot effect anything except by means of acts of intellect and will; but these acts are accidents, and there cannot be an angel in whom such acts are the substance and not an accident – as he argues at length in that same place and as we ourselves will grant for the time being, whatever the case might be as regards the efficaciousness of his arguments for this claim, a matter that we will address below when we treat the created intelligences.<sup>22</sup>

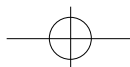
The minor premise, on the other hand, Scotus proves as follows: An accident could only be required for creating either as (i) the very action that terminates in the created entity, and this cannot be said in the present case, since an action of this sort exists in the terminus itself, as we will see below,<sup>23</sup> and so such an action cannot be an act of intellect /758a/ or will on the part of the angel; or else an accident could be required as (ii) a principle of that action. Scotus proves that the latter cannot be the case just by appeal to the general premise that an accident cannot be a principle for producing a substance. To be sure, everyone concedes this premise as it concerns a *principal* principle, and in this sense it

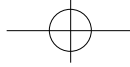
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21 That is, as opposed to an instrumental cause.

22 See *DM* 35.4.10–15. The issue here is whether an angel's acts of understanding and willing should be thought of as constitutive of his substance or individual nature, or whether instead – as almost all the scholastics hold – such acts should be thought of as accidents that proceed from and perfect his nature.

23 See *DM* 48.4.





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seems sufficient for our present purposes, since, as we said above, we are now talking only about a principal principle.

19. Still, Scotus himself extends the proposition in question even to an *instrumental* principle, and, as we saw above, on this interpretation it is not universally true – though I will address below the question of whether it might be true for some special reason as regards an instrument of creation.<sup>24</sup>

Now this argument of Scotus's with respect to the last part [of the confirmation of the minor premise] presupposes that if a creature could create, it would have to create a substance. This presupposition is justifiable because, as we said above,<sup>25</sup> nothing can be created except either as a subsistent entity or in the manner of a subsistent entity. But a creature cannot create an accident in the manner of a subsistent entity, that is, as separate from a subject. For this mode of being cannot be connatural to an accident, and a creature cannot have the power to produce an entity in a preternatural mode or in the absence of the other causes on which the entity's nature necessarily depends. Moreover, an accident that inheres in a substance and is unable by its nature to exist in any other way cannot by its nature be a principle for creating an accident that is per se separated, since such a mode of acting exceeds the mode of being that is connatural to this sort of accident.<sup>26</sup>

20. *What is missing in Scotus's argument.* There is just one respect in which this argument of Scotus's seems to be incomplete, namely, the disjunctive claim that an accident could be required for creating only as either the action itself or as a principle of the action. For in addition to these, there could be a third disjunct, namely, that an accidental act might be required antecedently in order to apply or direct the proximate power of acting. After all, acts of intellect and will are required in this way, too, for the works of a craft and for local motion.

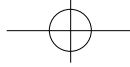
Thus, someone could claim that (i) an angel can create another angel proximately and immediately through his substance as through a principle of acting, and yet that (ii), in order for that principle to act in a free and intellectual manner, an act of will is required to apply the principle – that is, to set the power in motion toward its operation – and an act of intellect is required to direct it, and thus that (iii) in this sense there is nothing problematic about an accidental act's being required for the creation of a substance. After all, it is in this way /758b/ that the power to generate is applied to its operation by the appetitive faculty in the case of animals and by the will in the case of human beings. What's more, even though the intellect is a more perfect power than the will, it is subordinat-

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24 See *DM* 20.3 below. In *DM* 18.2 Suarez has already concluded that certain active accidents of material substances can, as instruments, have a newly generated substance as their proper causal terminus.

25 See *DM* 20.1.1.

26 Since acts of intellect and will cannot – even by God's power – exist without a subject, they fall under this stricture.



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ed to the will as regards its exercise, that is, its application to its act. In the same way, then, even if the power to create were substantial and more perfect, it could still be subordinated to the will and applied to its action by an accidental act of the will.

21. *What has to be added to Scotus's argument.* For this reason, then, I do not think that the argument in question is completely compelling as far as spiritual and intellectual creatures are concerned. However, one could bring to bear here the assumptions by appeal to which we will prove below that angels cannot by the command of their will transmute matter with respect to its form. For if this claim is true, then *a fortiori* they will be unable to make something *ex nihilo*. We will be discussing these arguments below.<sup>27</sup>

Further, it is certain that no finite intelligence can create another finite intelligence more perfect than itself, since this lies beyond the power of a principal cause. Nor, again, is there any reason why a finite intelligence should be able to create material substances; for it does not eminently contain such substances, since it is limited to a fixed species and has no commensurability with corporeal things. On the other hand, it is related to other [lower] spiritual substances in such a way that within the same grade [of being] they are distinguished from one another as complete species, in the same way that the species or genera of animals are distinguished from one another. Hence, just as, speaking *per se*, one animal cannot generate another animal of a diverse species, even one of a less perfect species, so, too, neither could an angel create a lower angel.

Therefore, all that remains to be proved is that an angel cannot even create another angel similar to himself in species. An argument for this claim would be easy to give if it were true that the intelligences cannot be multiplied in number within the same species.<sup>28</sup> But given that this opinion is not true, one can at least claim that the multiplication of individuals [within a given species] is intended by nature not *per se* but only for the sake of conserving the species, and that for this reason it is not connatural to incorruptible individuals that they should have their own power to produce entities similar to themselves in species.

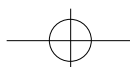
As a final adjustment to Scotus's argument, one can add the conjecture that since in the operations that are especially proper to them, as are operations of intellect and will, created intellectual substances cannot effect anything except from a presupposed subject, it is likely that they cannot have the natural power to effect an action that is completely substantial and independent of a subject.  
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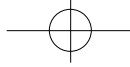
### Examination of an Argument Used by Ockham

22. Here is another argument, adduced by Ockham in the aforementioned q. 7:

27 See *DM* 35.6.2–14.

28 This, of course, is St. Thomas's position.





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Every creature acts either naturally or freely; but a creature cannot have the power to create in either of these ways; therefore, etc.

The first part of the minor premise is proved as follows: If such a cause acted naturally, it would create all at once whatever it was able to create, since it would not be dependent on the disposition or receptivity of a patient; therefore, the things it created would be infinitely many, either in species or as individuals, since no finite number can be designated as the number it would be able to cause.

The second part of the minor premise, the one having to do with a free cause, is proved from the fact that even though such a cause would not necessarily create all the things [it was able to create], it would at least be able to will to create all of them at once and, consequently, it would be able to create all of them at once – which is absurd.

This argument, however, is less compelling than the preceding one, since neither of the disjuncts [denied in the minor premise] is sufficiently impugned. For even if such a cause acted naturally, it would still be dependent on God's concurrence in its acting, and it could be limited by that concurrence to producing finitely many things and these particular ones rather than others – just as even now a natural agent, when applied to a patient, is of itself indifferent with respect to producing this or that individual form from among infinitely many [possible forms], but is nonetheless delimited by God's concurrence.<sup>29</sup>

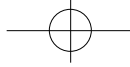
Ockham, though, replies that it is absurd for such a creature to be suspended from its action if it is able to produce infinitely many things. Yet the same argument can be made in the very same way about God's power; therefore, it is not absurd at all, given that infinitely many things cannot all be actually produced at once.

Moreover, the proof of the second part [of the minor premise] is refuted in just the same way, since it, too, can be applied to the divine will. Therefore, the sort of creature in question could not will to create infinitely many things at once, since the object [of that act of will] would be impossible – or if he did will it, he would will it in vain and inefficaciously. Therefore, all he would be able to create by his [free] choice are these or those particular things from out of the infinitely many [possible ones].

Yet the argument does correctly prove that such a creature could create, within the same species or the same genus, a syncategorematic infinity – that is, for any number of things you please, more than that – at least successively. Ockham judges this to be absurd as well, but it is not. For the sun is likewise able

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29 The background assumption here is that in producing a certain perfection or form, a finite agent produces one particular individual form rather than another exactly similar one. So, for example, this fire produces this individual accident (say, *this* heat) in this patient, even though by its nature it could have produced some other exactly similar accident. The question then arises: What accounts for the fact that it produces just this form rather than another exactly similar one? For Suarez's discussion of this issue, see *DM* 5.3.31–32 and *DM* 22.1.12 below.



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to generate infinitely many things successively, even though the things that it can make or conserve all at once at any given instant are not only finite but also of some fixed number and quantity, since a power, at least a finite power, requires a terminus of this sort.<sup>30</sup> But one could say the very same thing about a creature's power to create, once it were posited. /759b/

### Consideration of St. Thomas's Arguments for Why An Infinite Power is Required for Creating

23. Bypassing arguments that deal in particular with this or that type of creature, as well as arguments that employ completely extrinsic middle terms, St. Thomas tried, by appealing to the proper object of creation and to the mode of creation, to adduce two general arguments in light of which it is true without exception that any act of creation is repugnant to any possible creature.<sup>31</sup>

The first of these arguments is contained in the body of *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 5 and can be formulated as follows: The effect or terminus of an act of creation is proper to the most universal cause in such a way that it cannot belong to any other cause; therefore, both the act of creation and the power to create are proper to the First Cause in such a way that they cannot be communicated to another.

The consequence is obvious, since the action and the power can belong only to that which the effect can belong to.

The antecedent, on the other hand, is proved as follows: *Esse* as such is the proper effect of the most universal cause; but the proper terminus or effect of an act of creation is likewise *esse* itself as such; therefore, the proper terminus of an act of creation can be the effect only of the First Cause.

The major premise [of this proof] is clear from the fact that effects that are more universal must be referred back to causes that are more universal, and so the most universal effect must be referred back to the most universal cause; but *esse* is the most universal effect; therefore, etc.

The minor premise, on the other hand, is proved from the fact that through creation a being is produced insofar as it is a being;<sup>32</sup> therefore, what is communicated through an act of creation is *esse* as such according to its absolute nature, that is, the nature in accord with which it is the most universal effect and the proper effect of the First Cause.

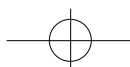
This argument is attacked by Scotus in the place cited above and by other

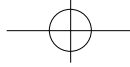
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30 This claim helps illuminate the argument explained in note 7 above.

31 Suarez is here contrasting St. Thomas's argument with Scotus's, which 'deals in particular with this or that type of creature,' and Ockham's, which employs middle terms that are not proper to, but are instead 'completely extrinsic' to, creation – namely, the mode of acting naturally and the mode of acting freely.

32 For Suarez's previous discussion of this claim, see *DM* 20.1.29 above.





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Scotists in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1. And it is defended at length by Cajetan in *Summa Theologiae* 1, same place; by Ferrariensis in *Contra Gentes* 2, chap. 21; and by Capreolus in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 3 – and, to be sure, there are correct and straightforward replies to some of Scotus’s objections.

24. *The sense in which esse is called God’s proper effect.* For, first of all, Scotus attacks St. Thomas’s proposition that *esse* is God’s proper effect as if it meant that God alone effects *esse* itself in every creature and that secondary causes do not concur actively in effecting the *esse existentiae*. But this reading [of the proposition] is indisputably false, as I will show below in discussing the existence that belongs to a creature,<sup>33</sup> and it is not the reading intended by St. Thomas. Rather, he calls *esse* the proper effect of God only formally and *per se* and primarily – either because God alone is able to effect *esse* out of utter non-being, or else because God alone can effect within each entity everything that is required for its *esse*.<sup>34</sup> These two readings are true, /760a/ but they are of no use in the present context, since they beg the question. For this is the very thing to be proved.

Another reading will be that God alone is related to *makeable esse* in such a way that it serves as the adequate object of his power. The proposition is true on this reading, too, as is obvious in itself as well as from what was said at the beginning of this section;<sup>35</sup> nor do Scotus’s arguments go through against it. The way in which this proposition contributes to the present argument will become clear from what is said below.

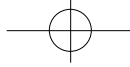
25. *A more universal effect must be traced back to a more universal cause.* From this it is easy to ascertain the meaning expressed by the second proposition, namely, that a more universal effect is traced back to a more universal cause. Scotus attacks this proposition, too, as follows: Either (i) we are talking about a universality of *perfection* on the part of both the cause and the effect, and in that case even if the general proposition is true, it is nonetheless false that being or *esse* is the most universal effect, since\* it is not the most perfect effect, but is instead the most imperfect of all, given that it is the most common; or else (ii) we are talking about a universality of *predication*, and in that case the proposi-

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33 See *DM* 31.9.

34 In the place cited in the previous note, Suarez claims that the differences between God’s production of *esse* and a creature’s production of *esse* are these: (i) God is able to produce any creatable being, whereas this is not true of any creature; (ii) within every creature, material or immaterial, there is some type of being that can be effected by God alone (or, alternatively, God alone is able to effect *everything* required for the existence of a creature); and (iii) God produces *esse* from no preexistent being, whereas creatures can produce *esse* only out of a presupposed subject. It is (ii) and (iii) that Suarez mentions here, though, as he points out, these two claims are in dispute in the present context.

35 See §§4–6 above.



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tion would be irrelevant and its application [to God] untrue, since this is not the sense in which God is the most universal cause.<sup>36</sup>

However, there is a simple reply to this objection. For we are talking about universality as proportioned to the effect and universality as proportioned to the cause. Hence, on the part of the cause we are talking about a universality in *causing*; by contrast, on the part of the effect we are talking about an effect that is universal in its multiplicity and, consequently, about an adequate conceptual object that is more universal in *predication*.<sup>37</sup> And, given this interpretation, it is absolutely true that a more universal or common effect (that is, concept *being* or *such-and-such being*) is, to the extent that it is more universal, related to a more universal cause as the *per se* and primary and adequate conceptual object of that cause's power.

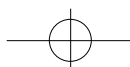
The reason for this is clear. For even if a universal cause is simple in itself, it is nonetheless called universal by reason of its relation to the many things it eminently contains and is able to effect. Therefore, the more universal it is, the more things it will contain and be able to effect. Therefore, it will have a conceptual object which is more universal in predication, that is, contains more things under itself; and, conversely, the more universal an effect is in the relevant sense, the more universal will be the cause to which it must be traced back, if it is to correspond to that cause adequately and *per se* and primarily.

Nor does it count against this claim that natures which are more universal in predication are less perfect. For even if this is true when those natures are considered with mental precision, it is nonetheless not true insofar as they include all the things that fall under them.<sup>38</sup> But it is in this latter sense that being or any other /760b/ comparable nature is said to be adequate with respect to a given active power. For an active power does not attain to the nature considered precisely, but instead attains to all that is contained under that nature; and it is in this sense that *creatable being* is said to be the adequate object of the divine power. All of these points are abundantly clear.

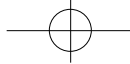
36 On this second reading the proposition asserts that the more universal the term designating the effect is, the more universal the term designating the cause must be. For instance, to use Aristotle's example, *this sculptor* is the cause of *this statue*, but a *sculptor* is the cause of *a statue*. However, this is not the sense in which God is the universal cause of being, since the term *God* is less universal in scope than the term *being*.

37 The conceptual object – or 'objective concept' or 'objective nature' (*ratio objectiva*) – is a nature insofar as it serves as the object of, or terminus aimed at by, an agent's action.

38 Suarez here invokes the distinction between a concept's intension and its extension. For instance, the concept *being* has the least intension or formal content of any concept, and so when it is considered 'with mental precision,' it expresses less perfection than any other positive concept; however, it has the widest extension of any positive concept, since it applies to all things and in this sense includes all the perfections of all things.







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Others reply that *esse* as such, even when taken in general for the *esse existens*, is the highest perfection of all things. We will discuss the meaning of such talk later, in the disputation already mentioned,<sup>39</sup> for our present purposes, however, this way of talking is unnecessary.

26. *A problem with St. Thomas's argument.* A much more serious problem arises from the use made of these general principles to derive the intended conclusion. For the most that can be inferred from them, it seems, are the two claims which we asserted above to be certain.<sup>40</sup>

The first is that a creature cannot create independently of the First Cause. However, it may not at all be inferred, it seems, that a creature cannot create [even] with the concurrence of the First Cause. For giving *esse* is proper to the First Cause only in conjunction with the independence just mentioned. That is why in the *Liber de Causis* it says (St. Thomas also quotes this): "A secondary cause does not give *esse* except in the power of the First Cause and except insofar as it participates in the operation of the First Cause" – which is true for no reason other than that a secondary cause can act only through a power received from the First Cause and only insofar as it is dependent in its action on God's actual operation. Therefore, a creature can communicate *esse* in this way – even through creation, as far as the force of the relevant principle is concerned.

Second, from the general principles in question one may very well infer that a power of creating which has *creatable being* as its object – that is, *esse* itself insofar as it includes the whole range of possible participated being – is incommunicable to a creature. But from this it cannot be inferred that all *participation* in this universal creative power is incommunicable to a creature, where such participation is limited and restricted to a certain genus or species of creatable entities, or even to certain individuals. For a power of this sort, thus restricted, (i) involves no contradiction in the terms themselves and (ii) cannot be shown to be impossible just on the basis of the principles in question.

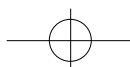
The first of these points is clear from the fact that the creation of, say, a lion is distinct in species from the creation of a human being;<sup>41</sup> therefore, it is not impossible, just on the basis of the terms themselves, that there should be a created power that is commensurate with the creation of a given species and yet not commensurate with creation taken in its full range. This is obvious in the case of the generative power – that is, the power to educe [a form] from the potentiality of matter – which, insofar as it extends to every possible generable thing, is proper to God alone, especially in conjunction with independence, /761a/ but which,

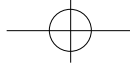
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39 See *DM* 31.13.21–23.

40 The two claims Suarez has in mind are that (i) a creature cannot create without God's actual concurrence and that (ii) no creaturely power to create can have the nature *creatable being* as its adequate object.

41 This claim is based on the principle that in order for two actions to belong to the same species, their termini must belong to the same species.





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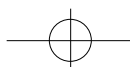
insofar as it is limited to a certain species of generation, can be communicated to a creature in conjunction with dependence on the First Cause.

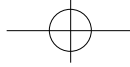
The second point is clear from the fact that a created power of this sort, even if it is a power to create, will have a limited and particular effect as its object, and not an absolutely universal effect. Hence, St. Thomas's assumption – namely, that through creation *esse* is produced absolutely and not insofar as it is *this-esse* or *such-esse* – is, while true of creation taken generically, not true of *this* creation in particular.<sup>42</sup> For what is actually produced through *this* particular creation is *esse* insofar as it is *such-esse*, for example, the *esse* of a human being or of an angel. And so a power that corresponds adequately to a certain sort of creation, rather than to creation as such, need not be absolutely universal; therefore, it is not necessary that such a power should be proper to the First Cause.

27. *First attempt to solve the problem.*<sup>43</sup> The first possible reply to this problem is to grant that the stronger conclusion is not proved by the line of reasoning in question, and [to argue] that this does not count against St. Thomas's authority because he does not seem to have intended to infer the stronger conclusion from that line of reasoning. This is clear from the fact that immediately after the argument in question he refers to the opinion of those who claim that it is possible for a creature to create by means of a power that is received from God; and even though in the relevant passage St. Thomas calls this "creating instrumentally," nonetheless, he in fact seems to be taking the word 'instrumentally' only in the broad sense in which even principal secondary causes are called instruments of the First Cause. This can be proved by the fact that he immediately refers in the same way to the opinion of Avicenna, who asserted that one intelli-

42 That is, when we are talking of creation in general and attempting to formulate a characterization that applies to all instances of creation, we say that creation as such is not limited to having this or that sort of *esse* as its proper terminus. Rather, it has *esse* as such as its proper terminus. However, any particular act of creation will produce *esse* of a certain determinate sort (*such-esse*).

43 The problem, then, is this: Even though many, including Suarez, believe that the act of creation requires an infinite power and hence cannot be communicated to a creature, the arguments so far presented do not establish this conclusion. More specifically, they do not rule out the possibility that some creature should have a principal (as opposed to instrumental) power to create which (i) is exercised only with God's concurrence and which (ii) has a restricted adequate object. This power would be analogous to the power of animals to generate other animals of their own species. For such generative power is limited in scope and, as we will see in Disputation 22, it cannot be exercised without God's concurrence. Accordingly, we can at least imagine a creature who could, as a principal secondary cause aided by God's concurrence, effect pigs *ex nihilo* – by, say, uttering the words 'Let there be a pig here now' – but who could create only pigs. (Interestingly, even though having this power entails being able to create a pig as whole with all its parts, it does not seem to entail being able to create the parts without creating a pig.) It may be that, given Scotus's arguments above, that a created creator of this sort would itself have to be an intelligence or angel.





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gence created another; yet Avicenna claimed that an intelligence creates as a principal secondary cause and not as an instrument in the strict sense.

However, there are two troublesome elements in this reply. One is that the argument itself is not defended and the conclusion remains unproved. The second, which has to do with St. Thomas's intention, is that the argument by which he proves immediately afterwards that a creature cannot be an instrument of creation is also applicable to the case of a principal secondary cause; but this presents a problem, as we will explain below when we discuss that argument.<sup>44</sup>

28. *Second attempt to solve the problem.* Here is a second way in which we can reply: The original argument's efficacy consists in the fact that from the formal object and mode of creation it elicits the conclusion that there cannot be a power to create that does not of itself have as its adequate object *esse* insofar as it ranges over all possible participated being. (For it is participated being that should be understood whenever the expression 'being insofar as it is being' is used in the present discussion – unless, as I said above, the particle 'insofar as' is being taken specifically).<sup>45</sup> St. Thomas seems to locate the force of the argument in /761b/ this proposition: 'It pertains to the nature of creation to produce *esse* absolutely, not *esse* insofar as it is *this-esse* or *such-esse*'. And the deduction can be formulated as follows:

What is made *per se* and primarily through any act of creation is *esse*, not just *esse* insofar as it is *such-esse*, but also *esse* insofar as it is *esse*; therefore, any power from which such an action emanates has as its formal and adequate object *esse* itself, not just insofar as it is *such-esse* but, absolutely, insofar as it is *esse*; therefore, such a power must necessarily be universal and embrace every possible participated being.

The consequence is clear from the fact that every power embraces all the things that are included under its adequate and formal object.

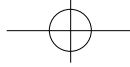
The major premise is likewise obvious from the Philosopher's teaching, mentioned above,<sup>46</sup> in *Physics* 1 – a teaching that is also explained well by Cajetan in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 44, a. 2. For an effect is said to be made *per se* and primarily with respect to that nature which did not antecedently exist on the part of the effect, since if a given nature did exist antecedently, then it will be said to be made *per accidens* and no longer *per se*. For example, when fire is generated out of air, what is made *per se* is not a body or an element; rather, it is a fire that is made *per se*.<sup>47</sup> In the same way, then, what is made *per se* in every act of creation is a being, that is, *esse*, not just insofar as it is *such-esse* but simply inso-

44 See *DM* 20.3.4–5.

45 See *DM* 20.1.29.

46 *ibid.*

47 That is, the proper and *per se* description of the nature of the effect will employ a concept that did not apply beforehand to the subject acted upon. In the example Suarez gives, the concepts *body* (or *material substance*) and *element* were truly predicated of the air before it was transformed into fire.



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far as it is *esse*. For no *esse* or nature of being is presupposed by creation, since creation is *ex nihilo*.

29. The minor premise,<sup>48</sup> on the other hand, is proved by the fact that the nature according to which a power attains to its effect *per se* and primarily seems to be the formal conceptual object under which the power attains to that effect. Hence, it follows that, in its causing, the power is as universal and abstract as is, within its own order, the formal conceptual object that the power attains to *per se* and primarily.

30. *A second argument from St. Thomas, which expounds on the previous one, is laid out.* Further, in order to confirm this same deduction, we can add another argument of St. Thomas's from the same article, in the reply to the first objection:

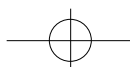
Whatever creates something creates a being absolutely and not just by applying *esse* – that is, the nature of a being – to *this* being; therefore, as far as [the agent] itself is concerned, it is able to create any creatable being.

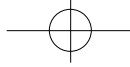
The antecedent is explicated as follows: It is impossible for one who participates in a given nature to produce that nature absolutely; rather, he produces it by applying it to something. For example, Peter cannot be a cause of human nature absolutely, since otherwise he could be a cause of his very self; hence, he can be a cause only of human nature's existing in Paul or Francis. But each created being participates in the nature of a being in the same way that this human being participates in the nature of a human being. Therefore, a created being cannot produce the nature of a being absolutely, but /762a/ [can produce it only] by applying it to *this* being. Therefore, just as a human being cannot by his action or production apply the nature of a human being to *this* individual except by presupposing something which makes the common nature determinate with respect to *this* individual, so too, in general, a being-through-participation cannot communicate the nature of a being except by presupposing something which makes the nature of a being determinate with respect to *this* individual – which is incompatible with creation.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, conversely, every power that is able to produce a being absolutely, without presupposing anything at all, produces the nature of a being absolutely and not just by applying it to *this* individual. Therefore, every power that is able to produce in this manner is a universal power; hence, such a power cannot be a being-through-participation, but must instead be a being-through-its-essence.

31. *Some objections against St. Thomas's two arguments.* However, the mind is still restless, and it discovers a number of problems with these two arguments.

48 By 'the minor premise' Suarez means the first consequent, namely, 'Therefore, any power from which such an action emanates has as its formal and adequate object *esse* itself, not just insofar as it is such-*esse* but, absolutely, insofar as it is *esse*.'

49 A 'being-through-participation', which receives its *esse* from another (*ens ab alio*), is being contrasted with a 'being-through-its-essence', which has its *esse* from itself (*ens a se*). God alone is a being-through-his-essence or *esse*-through-his-essence.





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In the first argument,<sup>50</sup> the assumed proposition, in which the whole force of the argument lies – namely, ‘Every power that attains *per se* to a given nature of being in a given effect is of itself universal with respect to all the things that fall under that nature’ – does not seem to be true without exception. For when, say, wheat is generated, it is not only wheat that is generated *per se* but also a *living* thing, since the nature living is not presupposed. After all, wheat (or an herb) is generated out of non-living earth, and yet from the fact that earth has the power to generate wheat it does not thereby follow that it has the power to generate *every* living thing. The same is true when a horse generates a horse not only out of a non-horse but even out of a non-animal, namely, semen. For in that case what is generated *per se* is both a horse and an animal, and yet the generative power in question does not have the nature *animal* as an adequate object, and it cannot effect the generation of all animals.

Again, [if the proposition in question is true without exception], then it also follows that God is able to create himself, since when a being is created, what comes to exist in it *per se* is not just the nature *creatable being* but also the nature *being* at its most abstract. For no nature of being at all is presupposed on the part of the effect. Therefore, if the relevant implication holds without exception, then the adequate object of a creative power will not be just *creatable being*, but *being* absolutely and precisely. Therefore, it will include under itself absolutely every being, even God himself.

Nor can one reply that because the nature of a being is presupposed at least in the creator, it is not abstract being as such that is created *per se*. For this does not block *per se* production; after all, fire generates fire *per se* even though the nature *fire* is presupposed in the generating thing. This is why I said above /762b/ that the nature which is made *per se* must not be presupposed on the part of the effect;<sup>51</sup> for on the part of the agent it poses no problem.

32. Someone might reply that it does not follow [that God is able to create himself], because the power to create does not attain to the abstract nature *being* taken precisely as such, but attains to it to the extent that it is included within the nature *creatable being*. For, as we put it above in logical terms, it attains to that nature specifically rather than reduplicatively.<sup>52</sup>

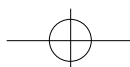
This is indeed the best response, and yet it weakens the whole force of St. Thomas’s argument and line of reasoning. For in the same way someone will claim that (i) what is made *per se* through a power of creating that has been com-

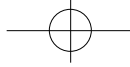
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50 The first argument, from §28 above, is this: ‘What is made *per se* and primarily through any act of creation is esse, not just esse insofar as it is *such-esse*, but also esse insofar as it is *esse*; therefore, any power from which such an action emanates has as its formal and adequate object *esse* itself, not just insofar as it is *such-esse* but, absolutely, insofar as it is *esse*; therefore, such a power must necessarily be universal and embrace every possible participated being.’

51 See §28 above.

52 See *DM* 20.1.29.





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municated to a creature is not the nature *creatable being* as such, except to the extent that it is included within the nature of a being of a certain sort, and thus that (ii) this sort of power, too, attains specifically rather than reduplicatively to a being insofar as it is a being, and that therefore (iii) it is incorrect to conclude that such a power must be absolutely universal and must include every creatable being.

Hence, for the sake of clarity we can distinguish between (i) being made *per se* and (ii) being made *per se* and primarily. And we can assert that for the former it is sufficient that the entity in question, taken according to that nature by which it is said to be made *per se*, is not presupposed on the part of the effect, whereas the latter requires in addition that the entity, taken according to that nature, is made as the proper and, so to speak, formal terminus of the agent's power and not just as a terminus that is included within the formal terminus. Therefore, (i) a being insofar as it is a creatable being is made *per se* through creation, but (ii) it cannot be proved from the notion of creation that this being must be made *per se* and primarily according to the transcendental nature [creatable being].<sup>53</sup> Instead, it can be created *per se* and primarily by a given power insofar as it is a being of a certain [genus or species].

Moreover, even if the proposition that is the foundation of [St. Thomas's first] argument is granted for the case of an effect that is *per se* and primary, it is still possible not to grant it for the case of every effect that is *per se*, as the arguments just made establish; therefore, this proposition is not sufficient for deriving the intended conclusion.<sup>54</sup>

33. What's more, the problem with the second argument is no less great and may perhaps be greater.

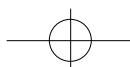
For the proposition 'It is impossible that one who participates in a given nature should produce that nature absolutely; rather, he produces it by applying it to something (or to this individual)' is true on the following reading: He is unable to produce that nature absolutely, that is, *in all the things in which it*

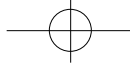
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53 Suarez calls *being* and *creatable being* transcendental natures because they transcend the division of beings into the Aristotelian categories.

54 The foundational principle in question is *Every power that attains per se to a given nature of being in a given effect is of itself universal with respect to all the things that fall under that nature.*

Suarez is reminding us here that the question at hand is whether any creature can create *ex nihilo* and that up to this point we have not ruled out the possibility that there should be a creature which, dependent on God's concurrence, can create a limited range of beings as a *per se* principal cause. This is so even if St. Thomas's foundational principle is true as applied to effects that are primary as well as *per se*. For in that case the principle entails only that if a creature has the power to create, say, a pig *per se* and primarily, then it has the power to create any possible pig, that is, anything that falls under the formal conceptual object *pig*. It does not follow that it has the power to create any possible creatable being.





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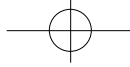
*exists*; more particularly, if the nature in question is a species, then he is unable to produce it in all the individuals in which it is apt to exist, whereas if it is a genus or a transcendental nature, then, analogously, he is unable to produce it in all the lower natures contained under it. And the argument establishes this reading quite well; for otherwise\* such a being would be able /763a/ to effect his very self.

However, on this reading it is either not true or at least assumed without argument that if anything creates, it creates a being absolutely. After all, why shouldn't it be able to create certain beings and not others, as we have been arguing all along?

But the proposition can have a second reading, which seems to be more in line with what the argument in question intends, namely: One who participates in a given nature is unable to produce that nature absolutely, that is, *according to itself as a whole and according to every part of it*; rather, he can produce it only by presupposing some part of it and applying another part to that part.

On this reading it is absolutely true that if anything creates, it creates a being absolutely. Yet the proposition taken in this sense, regardless of whether it is true or false, is not proved by the argument in question. For even if someone produced a nature similar to himself absolutely (in the present sense), it would not follow that he could be a cause of his very self. For he might be able produce the relevant nature according to itself as a whole in one or another individual, but not in all the individuals – or in one of the species (if the nature is a genus), but not in all of the species. And, by a parallel argument, he might be able to create *some* being absolutely in the present sense – that is, according to its whole being – but not *every* being.

34. Further, it is true, on the correct interpretation, that one who participates in a given nature does not make that nature exist absolutely, but is rather a cause of its existing in *this* individual or in *this* being. However, it is wrong to infer from this that some individuating principle is presupposed by the action through which such an individual or being is made, since it is possible for the whole entity, including its whole individuating principle, to be made through that action. For when a specific nature is said to be made in an individual, or to be applied to an individual, it should not be imagined that the one entity, which is made, is applied to a preexisting entity; rather, the specific nature is said to be 'applied' only because it is made in a singular individual and not in its own abstractness. Hence, even when God created Adam, he did not create the whole of the species *human being* – that is, the abstract nature – absolutely. Instead, he created that nature by applying it (to use the present manner of speaking) to *this* individual – yet not by presupposing in it, on its own part, the principle of individuation, but rather by creating that principle at the same time. So, then, even if one angel were to create another angel similar in nature to himself by applying his own specific nature to such an individual, he would not have to presuppose for his action any principle that individuated the other angel; rather, he would simultaneously produce that principle. This is so especially in light of the fact that the individuating



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principle in singular natures is nothing other than the very being of the nature (in the case of a simple nature) or the principles /763b/ by which the nature is intrinsically constituted (in the case of a composite nature).<sup>55</sup>

This is confirmed by the fact that otherwise the argument in question would prove that if one angel is presupposed, God cannot create another angel similar to him. For either (i) through his action he creates the relevant specific nature absolutely, and this is not so, because he is not creating the antecedently existing angel through that action, or else (ii) he produces it by applying the specific nature to this individual, in which case such an action would have to presuppose the individuating principle.

And if at this point someone were to claim, as must indeed be claimed, that the relevant nature is applied to this individual by producing all of his being *ex nihilo*, then precisely the same claim would be made even if one angel were to create another angel similar to himself in species or in genus. For the fact that a similar nature is presupposed in the agent himself poses no obstacle to creation, as has already been noted above.<sup>56</sup>

35. *Assessment of these objections.* I confess that I do not know how to resolve all these problems. For the objections to the second argument seem to me to establish positively (as I will put it) that it is not a sound piece of reasoning, while the objections to the first argument show at least that it is not compelling, since not all the principles assumed in it are sufficiently proved, even if it is not clear that they are false.

All these principles boil down to the claim that any power to create must necessarily be such that it extends to every creatable thing. But this claim does not seem to be adequately proved by what we have said thus far and by just concentrating on the *terminus ad quem* of creation. It remains to be seen whether it can be more effectively established by adding in the *terminus a quo*, the specific relationship between these two termini, and the mode of acting that is commensurate with them.<sup>57</sup>

36. *A last argument of St. Thomas's for proving the assertion.* Accordingly, here is a final argument of St. Thomas's, taken from the previously cited a. 5, ad 2:<sup>58</sup> The power to create must necessarily be infinite; therefore, it cannot be a created power.

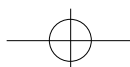
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55 The whole of *DM 5* is devoted to a treatment of individuality and individual unity. Suarez here summarizes his main conclusions concerning the individuation of spiritual substances, which are simple, and of material substances, which have matter and form as their constitutive principles.

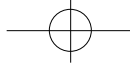
56 See §31 above.

57 Notice that Scotus's argument, the discussion of which is found in §14-§21 above, concentrated on the *terminus a quo* of creation and tried to show inductively that no creature of any sort could possess a causal principle suitable for creation *ex nihilo*.

58 The full reference is *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 5, ad 2.







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And one can infer in the same way that this power necessarily extends to every creatable thing. For an absolutely infinite power is also maximally universal, and its object must be as unlimited as possible within the nature *makeable object*.

St. Thomas proves the antecedent as follows: The strength of a power is indicated not only by the entity effected by it but also by the mode [in which it effects it]; but the mode of producing something *ex nihilo* implies an infinite force of acting, since a great power is required to produce something out of a remote potentiality, and a greater power is required to produce something out of a more remote potentiality; therefore, an infinite power is required to produce something out of no potentiality at all – that is, *ex nihilo*.

The same argument /764a/ is found in Albert, *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, a. 7, and in other authors as well.

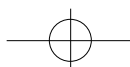
37. Some authors ground this argument in the claim that there is an infinite distance between a being and nothingness.<sup>59</sup> (See Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibeta* 4, last question; and Richard of Middleton, *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, a. 4, q. 4.) However, it is wrong to do so, since, as Scotus retorts in the place cited above, a given being is distant from nothingness only in proportion to the degrees of being that it has within itself. That is why, in *Sentences* 4, dist. 5, q. 1, a. 3, ad 5, St. Thomas likewise denies that there is an infinite distance, on the part of a given being, between itself and non-being except when the being in question is infinite; for one of two opposites is distant from the other only to the extent that it participates in what is left over [by the other]. Thus, matter, because it is as imperfect as can be, is said by Augustine to be close to nothingness, whereas an angel is said to be close to God; and to the extent that any given being is more perfect, it approaches closer to God and recedes farther away from nothingness.

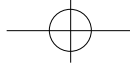
Now nothingness itself can in a certain sense be said to be infinitely distant – or, better, indefinitely or indeterminately distant – from being, because nothing can be more distant from being than nothingness itself or, alternatively, because nothingness does not have a single determinate distance, but instead can have greater and greater distances corresponding to the various degrees of being. But this point is irrelevant in the present context, since what is traversed (as I will put it) by creation is not this whole distance that nothingness has, with its entire range of degrees, but only a distance commensurate with those degrees of being received by the entity that is created.

38. Thus, other authors commonly ground the inference in the utter incommensurability that obtains between being and nothingness:

A greater power is required to effect something out of a potentiality that is more distant from actuality; therefore, in the measure that the potentiality from which a given effect will be produced is more remote, a commensurably greater power will be required; therefore, where the distance of the actuality from the

<sup>59</sup> As is clear from what follows, Suarez (plausibly) takes this claim to mean that any arbitrarily chosen being is infinitely distant from nothingness.





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potentiality has no measure, an incommensurably greater power will be required; but this power can only be infinite, since every finite power is commensurable with another finite power. (This type of argumentation is recurrent in Aristotle, as is clear from *Physics* 4 and 8.)

On the basis of this correlative commensurability Cajetan argues as follows: If a finite power were sufficient to produce something *ex nihilo*, then it would follow that there is some matter such that the power required to produce something out of that matter is equal to the power required to produce something *ex nihilo*. For suppose that there is a finite power to create which is of degree four, and suppose that there is a power of degree two that produces something out of a remote matter; then a power of at least degree three will be necessary to produce something out of a matter that is twice as remote; therefore, in order to produce something out of yet another matter that is twice again as remote, /764b/ a power of degree four will be necessary; therefore, there is a matter such that as much power is required to produce something out of that matter as is required to produce something *ex nihilo*.<sup>60</sup>

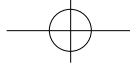
39. *Objections to the foregoing argument.* In the places cited above, Scotus and Durandus raise many objections against [St. Thomas's] argument. However, all these objections are aimed at proving that there is either no distance at all between a being and nothingness or at least not an infinite distance. Yet this is irrelevant to the argument made [by St. Thomas], since we have already shown that (i) the infinite distance in question need not be conceived of as a proper and positive distance, and that (ii) the argument is not based on such a conception, but is instead based on an incommensurability that points to a mode of operation requiring the greatest possible efficacy in the agent.

Still, the objection we posed above does seem to weaken the argument quite a bit. For even though the argument aptly proves that a creative power, by the very fact that it is creative, is incommensurable with a power that educes [a form] from the potentiality of matter, it is wrong to infer from this that it will be an absolutely infinite power. For it will be enough if\* it is a power of a different order – likewise often called “infinite,” relatively speaking – which it is not absurd to countenance. And this suffices for its being the case that the power in question is incommensurable with any power that can operate only through the education of a form from the potentiality of matter; for commensurability is present only between things that are of the same type or quantitative order.

This point is further elucidated by the very argument itself. For when it claims that a greater power is required to produce something out of a more remote potentiality, it is talking about passive potentiality and about a greater or

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60 Cajetan takes this consequent to be an absurdity and concludes that the power to create must be an infinite power. Suarez also takes the consequent to be false, but argues below in §39 that what follows is not that the power to create must be infinite, but only that this power must be of a different order from, and incommensurable with, any power to educe a form from the potentiality of matter.



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lesser distance from actuality that stems from the absence of dispositions or from contrary dispositions; consequently, the comparison is likewise being made among powers that act only through the eduction [of a form] from a passive potentiality. But when the argument then infers that a greater power is required in order to produce something *ex nihilo*, the particle '*ex nihilo*' does not designate a passive potentiality that is maximally remote from actuality or completely indisposed; rather, it designates the absence of any passive potentiality at all. Therefore, one cannot conclude that a power which produces something *ex nihilo* is greater – or infinite – because of a surplus of educative power (as I will put it); rather, one can conclude only that a power that acts in this way – namely, [by producing something] *ex nihilo* – is of an order different from, and superior to, any merely educative power, even an educative power that can educe a form from a maximally remote real potentiality. And so the [alleged] absurdity, namely, that a creative power is equal to some educative power, does not follow, since the powers are incommensurable. /765a/

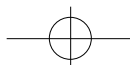
What's more, if all else were not equal and the powers were instead being compared vis-à-vis diverse and unequally perfect effects, then, as we also claimed above in the arguments at the beginning, the allegedly great absurdity would disappear.<sup>61</sup>

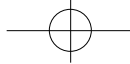
40. *A summary of all that has been said and a proof of the assertion; the thesis is corroborated by the authority of the Saints.* It was in light of these problems that I said above that the truth under discussion is more certain to us on the basis of those things that have in fact been made than on the basis of any argument that effectively demonstrates and establishes that it cannot be otherwise.<sup>62</sup> In the same way, I believe that on the basis of the things that have been made it can be shown with a very high degree of probability that an absolutely infinite power is required for the creation of any entity whatsoever. For despite the fact that a great number of very excellent substances have been made by God, none of them has received the power to create even the least entity, one that is close to nothingness. This, then, is an indication that [the lack of creative power] stems exclusively from a limitation that belongs to all these creatures, no matter how excellent they might be. Otherwise, one could not explain why the surpassing perfection found in the angels – or at least in the Seraphim – is not sufficient for [such a power].<sup>63</sup>

61 See the last paragraph of §8 above. The claim is that if we compare the creation of a relatively unimpressive effect with the generation (eduction) of a relatively impressive effect, then it is not obvious that more power is required for the former than for the latter.

62 See §12 above, where Suarez claims that the strongest argument for the conclusion in question is a non-demonstrative inference from the fact that no actual creature has the power to create to the conclusion that no possible creature has the power to create.

63 The Seraphim constitute the highest order of angels according to the hierarchy sug-





And from here one may further conjecture that the higher order to which a creative power must necessarily belong is none other than the order of *esse-through-its-essence* itself. For within participated *esse* one cannot find a new order or grade [of being] beyond those that have in fact been made. Therefore, when one concludes by enumeration that the power to create must be of a different order, one is [in effect] concluding that such a power is infinite. For the order in question is none other than that in which one finds *esse-through-its-essence* itself. This is what Athanasius suggested in *Contra Arianos*, sermon 3, when he said: “To administer belongs to creatures and servants, but to establish and create belongs to God alone and to his Word and wisdom.”

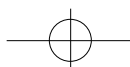
Moreover, the same point can be elucidated more fully as follows: The very mode of efficient causality through creation suggests a certain supreme efficacy and independence in the creator. For when acting presupposes no *real* potentiality outside oneself, it requires only *objective* potentiality, that is, possibility by virtue of non-incoherence; but this implies the greatest possible strength in the relevant active power. Perhaps this is why, in *Contra Julianum* 2, Cyril of Alexandria said, “The ability to operate efficaciously as a creator and to produce things that at one time did not exist is one of the characteristics proper only to the preeminent and highest substance of all.”

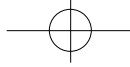
41. Further, creation is the first of all the actions through which participated *esse* can be communicated, and it is in this sense that it aims *per se* and primarily at producing the whole of a being insofar as it is a being. Hence, it is very likely that this action /765b/ is such that by its very nature it must essentially emanate from *esse-through-its-essence* itself, and so there cannot be a participated entity that has the power for such an action.

42. On the basis of the same principle one sees it to be highly likely that (i) the scale invoked above – namely, that more perfection is required to produce something out of a more [remote] potentiality – should be understood to apply not only within a given genus of being but absolutely over the full range of being, and that therefore (ii) what is required in order to create is not a power of just any given higher order but a power of the highest order that can be conceived of within the whole range of being or active power.

Further, on this basis the principle that the power to create necessarily extends to every creatable thing becomes highly probable, since such a power expects nothing (as I will put it) on the part of the object except the non-incoherence of the effect’s existing or being made. And because the principle of the primordial emanation and of participation derives from *esse-through-its-essence* itself, it also follows that such a power can be nothing other than a power identical with *esse-through-its-essence* itself, which is the most universal power and which is of itself capable of producing every participated *esse*. Perhaps this is why, in *De Genesi ad Litteram* 9, chap. 15, Augustine said, “An angel cannot create any entity whatsoever – any more than he can create himself.”

gested by St. Paul and elaborated on by Pseudo-Dionysius in *De Celestis Hierarchibus*.





*Is an Infinite Power of Acting Needed to Create?*

53

43. In these ways, then, we see that even though the arguments laid out above are not absolutely compelling demonstrations, they nonetheless contribute greatly toward exhibiting the loftiness of the power to create and the reason why it is impossible for that power to be a created power.

44. Finally, even though Scotus scorns it, I do not find altogether displeasing another conjecture made by Giles of Rome (see *Quodlibeta* 1, q. 1 and *Quodlibeta* 5, q. 1), namely, that because every creature is mutable and in some way composed of actuality and potentiality, it is likely that every creature is incapable by its nature of having the power to act in any way other than through motion or change and by introducing an actuality into a potentiality.<sup>64</sup>

The consequence is obvious from the principle that a thing's mode of acting imitates its mode of being. From this it follows, conversely, that the ability to create belongs to God insofar as he is Pure Actuality and *esse*-through-its-essence itself – and, in short, insofar as he has infinite power.

**Refutation of Arguments Set Forth at the Beginning**

45. *First reply.* These remarks have adequately countered the main argument for the negative answer posed at the beginning.<sup>65</sup>

As for what was added in order to compound the problem,<sup>66</sup> /766a/ concerning a principal power that is not innate but is instead superadded, there are two ways in which it, too, can be easily taken care of by what has been said.

The first reply is based on what we believe to be the case *de facto*. For no such superadded principal power of creating has in fact been communicated to created substances, and yet powers and qualities of the most perfect order have been superadded to them; therefore, this is an indication that no power which is a principal power of creating can be superadded to the natures of things.

Hence, in my judgment, those who claim that all the supernatural qualities infused in us are created are speaking neither correctly nor very sensibly; otherwise, supernatural acts, such as the beatific vision, would also be created, since they are true qualities and just as supernatural as the habits themselves are. And from this it would follow that, for example, the light of glory, which is the principal principle effecting the beatific vision, is also a principal power of creating – which is absurd.<sup>67</sup>

46. *Second reply.* The second reply is that the arguments presented above are probative not only with regard to any connatural power, but with regard to any created power as such. For they aim at showing that no power of creating can be

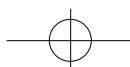
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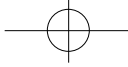
64 This is similar to an argument used by St. Thomas in *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 4.

65 See §§7–8 above.

66 See §9 above.

67 See notes 11 and 12 above. The wider implications of the view that all infused supernatural qualities are created *ex nihilo* will become clearer in the next section. See *DM* 20.3.5ff.

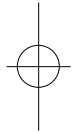
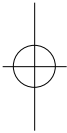




## 54 FIRST EFFICIENT CAUSE AND FIRST ACTION (CREATION)

a created or limited power – a conclusion that applies just as much to a power infused into a nature from without as it does to a power that arises from within. For a power that is superadded from without has to be a created power.

This gives rise to another argument as well: A power that is added over and beyond an entity's nature must necessarily be an accidental power; for a substance can neither be added to itself nor be supernatural with respect to itself, and so the superadded power is necessarily accidental. But an accidental power cannot be a principal power of creating. This can be adequately inferred from the power's mode of being, in keeping with what we said above in explaining the first argument from Scotus.<sup>68</sup> For since every accident is by its nature dependent for its *esse* on a subject, it is impossible that it should have a connatural mode of acting outside of a subject – that is, independently of a subject – which is what the mode of creating is like; therefore, it cannot be a principal power of creating. Indeed, one must keep firmly in mind that even if a form that is a principal power with respect to a given act is supernatural in relation to its subject, and even if its mode of acting is thus likewise supernatural in relation to that subject, nonetheless, the form has its own proper essence and nature, which is connatural to itself, and so the relevant mode of acting is connatural to the form itself. Since, therefore, the mode of acting without a subject cannot be connatural to an accident, the power to create cannot be connatural either to the subject or to the accidental form itself; /766b/ and so such a form cannot be a principal power [of creating].



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<sup>68</sup>See §§18–19 above.

