

## SECTION 4

### Whether Creation Is Something Within the Creature That Is Distinct in Reality From the Creature Itself

1. So far we have been talking almost exclusively about the power to create, and we have at the same time explained the *effect* of that power to the extent that this effect is the object or terminus to which the power bears a relation, at least in our way of conceiving it. What remains to be explained is what the *action* itself is, that is, what the act of creation is.

#### Various Positions

##### *First Position*

2. On this topic I find that there are three possible explanations. The first is that creation, conceived of as an action, is not something in the creature but is instead, within the creator himself, the very act of the divine will or divine sovereignty by which he produces entities outside himself. I say “conceived of as an action,” because insofar as creation is conceived of as a relation which presupposes that the action has already been terminated and /770a/ which results from the action’s terminus, it is said to be something within the creature, namely, a certain real relation to the creator.

This is thought to be the position of St. Thomas in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 3 – a position that Cajetan and other Thomists expound in the above way. St. Thomas’s argument is this: Creation is not a change; therefore, creation cannot be anything within the creature except a relation.

The antecedent is obvious from the fact that a change involves some subject, as is clear from the definition of motion, whereas creation does not involve a subject, as is likewise clear from the definition of creation mentioned above.<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas proves the consequence, first\*, in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 2, [ad 2], from the fact that an action and [corresponding] passion agree in the substance of the motion and differ from one another [only] in their diverse relations to the agent or the patient – this according to *Physics* 3, text 20.<sup>2</sup> Therefore,

- 
- 1 See *DM* 20.1.1.
  - 2 According to the standard Aristotelian picture, in any given instance of motion or change the action and the passion are the very same entity – namely, the motion that exists within the subject and hence outside the agent. This entity can be looked at in two ways. Insofar as it emanates from the agent, it is called an action; insofar as it is received within the patient, it is called a passion (or an instance of being-acted-upon). Thus, given that there is no passion where there is no motion or change, it follows that where there is no motion or change, there is no action outside the agent.

Suarez will challenge this standard picture by claiming that (i) it holds only for actions which are also changes, and that (ii) in the case of creation *ex nihilo* there is an action outside the agent even though there is no passion.



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

given that motion is denied of creation, nothing can remain except a relation – either a relation of the creature to the creator or a relation of the creator to the creature.

3. Second, creation cannot be a formally *transeunt* action; therefore, it is a formally immanent action within the creator, and it can be called a virtually or eminently *transeunt* action because it has the capacity to posit an outside effect – something that well befits an act of the divine will or sovereignty.

The consequence is clear from the fact that there is no middle ground between the two disjuncts, [namely, *transeunt* and immanent].

The antecedent, on the other hand, is proved by the fact that a *transeunt* action is an accident and so necessarily requires a subject;<sup>3</sup> but an act of creation does not require a subject; therefore, an act of creation cannot be an accident; therefore, it cannot be a *transeunt* action.

4. From here I argue, third, as follows: Every action is prior in nature to its own terminus; therefore, an act of creation is likewise prior in nature to the entity created; therefore, it cannot exist within the created entity, but must exist within the creator.

This last consequence is obvious from the fact that creation cannot be conceived of as an action that is both outside of God and prior to the entity created. For it is unclear how this action exists as something prior, or what it exists in; and an action *qua* action cannot be conceived of as subsisting by itself alone and, as it were, *per se*.

5. Fourth, the Thomists argue as follows: It is impossible not only for creation, but for any action of the divine power related to creation, to be a *transeunt* action, and there can never be an action, distinct from God's power, mediating between God's power and its effect; therefore, *a fortiori*, there cannot be any such action in the case of creation.

The antecedent is proved, first, by the fact that the divine power is intimately present in each of its effects; therefore, it produces each of its effects immediately and *per se* and without the mediation of any action.

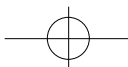
Second, if this were not the case, then God's power would be the principle not only of its own effect but also of its own /770b/ action – something that St. Thomas, however, denies in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 25, a. 1, ad 3.

Third, a *transeunt* action is the fulfillment of an active power;<sup>4</sup> but God cannot have the fulfillment of his active power in a creature, since otherwise he would be dependent upon that creature; therefore, etc.

---

3 On the standard view, a formally *transeunt* action exists outside the agent and within the patient. The present argument concludes from this that a *transeunt* action is an accident. See §§26–28 below for Suarez's reply to this claim.

4 Since active powers have the production of effects as their end, some scholastics claimed that these powers are 'completed' or 'fulfilled' or 'perfected' in their actions. See §21 below for Suarez's reply to this claim.



*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 67*Second Position*

6. The second position is that the act of creation is something outside of God, but that it is not something distinct in reality from the creature that is created; and so, properly speaking, it does not exist ‘within’ the creature except conceptually, but is instead really and essentially the very creature itself. For example, the act of creating a human being is the very essence of that human being, and the act of creating an angel is the essence of that angel, and so on for the others.

Insofar as this position situates the act of creation within the entity created, it is grounded in the claim that an action *qua* action must necessarily exist in its terminus, either by being identical with that terminus or in some other way. For an action is nothing but the effect’s dependence on and emanation from its cause; but a dependence must necessarily exist in the entity that is dependent. (We will prove this principle at length below;<sup>5</sup> for it is absolutely true.)

On the other hand, insofar as this position affirms that the act of creation is not distinct from the entity created in any way other than conceptually, it can be grounded, first, in the general proposition that every action is distinct only conceptually, and not in reality, from its terminus. On this score the present position can be attributed to the Nominalists, who do not think of an action as mediating in reality between the effect and the cause. See Ockham, *Sentences* 2, q. 9,<sup>6</sup> and Gregory of Rimini, *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 4 and q. 5; Gregory adds in q. 6 that the act of creation exists within the creature or, better, just is the very creature itself.

7. Second, this position can be grounded as follows in the specific definition of creation: Creation is an action [that effects something] *ex nihilo*, and so it cannot be an accident, but must instead be a substance or at least exist in the manner of a substance (if what is created happens to be a separated accident – see William Rubio, *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 1).

In confirming this argument, the present position can be aided by the arguments for the first position, especially the third argument.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the argument is confirmed as follows: If the act of creation were something within the creature which is distinct from the creature itself and mediates, as it were, between the creature and God, then whatever that thing might be, it would [itself] be something created and made, since it would be distinct from God and issue forth from him; therefore, in the case of that thing one would have to distinguish its creation from it itself, and thus there would be an infinite regress – or, alter-

5 See §11 below. Also, for a more general discussion of the nature of an action as such, see *DM* 48.1–5.

6 In the critical edition of Ockham’s works, this question is numbered 7 rather than 9. See pp. 99–151 in Gedeon G-I and Rega Wood, eds., *Guillemi de Ockham: Quaestiones in Librum Secundum Sententiarum (Reportatio)*, *op. cit.*

7 The third argument, found in §4 above, was this: “Every action is prior in nature to its own terminus; therefore, an act of creation is likewise prior in nature to the entity created; therefore, it cannot exist within the created entity ....”



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

natively, if the regress is to be stopped anywhere, then it should be stopped at the first creature.

This can be effectively confirmed by the arguments with which Scotus, in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 5, tries to prove that passive creation (he means /771a/ the relation) is not an entity distinct from the creature. (Capreolus alludes to these arguments and responds to them in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 2.)

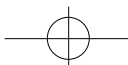
8. The present position can be grounded, third, in the essential nature of a creature as such: It belongs to a creature's essence that it depend on the First Being; therefore, the dependence by which it depends on the First Being exists within the creature itself and is nothing other than its essence; but this primary and essential dependence that a participated being has on [that which is] being-through-its-essence is just the act of creation; therefore, the act of creation exists within the creature itself and is nothing other than its essence, and hence the act of creation can no more be distinct from the creature than the essence of any given entity can be distinct from the entity itself.

The first antecedent<sup>8</sup> is evident from the fact that just as it belongs to the First Being's essence that he exist through his essence and thus that he exist *a se* and not from another, so too it belongs to every other being's essence that it be a being-through-participation and hence that it be dependent upon another.

The first consequence,<sup>9</sup> on\* the\* other\* hand\*, is proved as follows: Being dependent is something intrinsic to a creature; therefore, it belongs to the creature through something intrinsic; but it belongs to it through a dependence. Again, if a formal effect is essential, then the [corresponding] form is likewise essential; but being dependent is, as it were, the formal effect of a dependence; therefore, if a creature is essentially dependent, then the dependence itself belongs to its essence.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, this is especially true in the case of a first

- 8 The first antecedent is: "It belongs to a creature's essence that it depend on the First Being."
- 9 The first consequence is: "It belongs to a creature's essence that it depend on the First Being; therefore, the dependence by which it depends on the First Being exists within the creature itself and is nothing other than its essence."
- 10 This form of argumentation may sound puzzling to philosophers unacquainted with scholastic philosophy. It is important to understand that, for the scholastics, states of affairs involving individuals must be formally grounded in entities that exist either in those individuals or in other individuals. In the case at hand, the state of affairs *A's being dependent on the First Being* must be grounded either in *A's* essence itself or in some entity – say, an individual dependence – that is appropriately related to *A's* essence.

The present argument concludes that the dependence a given creature has on the First Being is essential to that creature and should not be viewed as a distinct entity added to the creature's essence. In §32 below, Suarez will counter that (i) what is essential to a creature is just the condition of requiring some individual dependence or other on the First Being, that (ii) this condition is satisfied at any given time by some individual dependence that is added as a mode to the creature's essence, but that (iii) no such individual dependence is itself essential to the creature.



*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 69

and maximally immutable dependence; but creation is a dependence of this sort, since, as we explained above,<sup>11</sup> creation is the first emanation of a participated being from being-through-its-essence, and it is through creation that every creature can come from God alone.

9. Moreover, from this ground one may infer – reasonably so, if we are speaking in accord with the present position – that within every created entity there is a some [individual] dependence on God which is altogether immutable and inseparable from the created entity itself, because that which is essential is immutable, and likewise because that which is not distinct in reality is not separable as long as the relevant [created] entity remains in existence. (For this is the way in which we are now using [‘not separable’]<sup>12</sup>).

Hence, it follows, second, that this dependence is on God alone, since every dependence of one creature on another is separable from the creature, especially if we are talking about the entities that are created and not about the modes of entities. For this is the sense in which it is true that God can produce by himself alone whatever he produces through or with or in or out of a creature. And so every sort of dependence on a creature, in any genus of causality whatsoever, is accidental and mutable, whereas a dependence on God alone is something essential and immutable.

Third, one may infer that this dependence on God alone is creation in the most proper sense, since it involves no relation to a material cause.

Fourth, /771b/ on this basis one can, it seems, construct an excellent argument for why no creature can contribute to creation, even as an instrument. For by the very fact that [the putative act of creation] would depend upon a second creature, it would not be essential to the first creature, and so it would no longer be creation.

*Third Position*

10. The third position is that the act of creation is something within the created entity – not, to be sure, something really distinct from it as a possessor of its own proper being, but rather something distinct in reality from it as a mode of it.<sup>13</sup>

This position, as regards the part about the act of creation’s existence within the creature, is fairly common. It is held by Gabriel Biel in the place already

11 See *DM* 20.2.41.

12 Suarez adds this qualification because there are two distinct senses of inseparability. In the first sense, *x* is inseparable from *y* just in case *x* cannot exist without *y* (even if *y* can exist without *x*). It is in this sense that modes – for example, particular shapes – are inseparable from their subjects. In the second sense, *x* is inseparable from *y* just in case *x* cannot exist without *y* and *y* cannot exist without *x*. This is the sense that is relevant here.

13 That is, the act of creation does not have its own proper and independent existence, and so there is no real distinction between it and the created entity. Nonetheless, it has being as a mode of that entity and hence there is a modal distinction between them. All of this will become clearer in the discussion of the third assertion (§§15–16 below). For more on Suarez’s theory of distinctions, see *DM* 20.1, note 5 above.



cited; by Peter Aureoli in the place cited by Capreolus, *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 2, argument against concl. 1; by Ockham in *Sentences* 1, dist. 43, q. 1; by Thomas of Argentina in *Sentences* 2, dist. 19, q. 1, a. 1; and by Giles of Rome in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 3, a. 2 and in *De Esse et Essentia*, q. 7. All these authors also adequately explain and make clear that the act of creation is not an entity altogether distinct from the entity created. Sometimes they even call it ‘passive creation’ and ‘the creature’s dependence on God’; and sometimes they also call it ‘active creation’, that is, a *transeunt* action. However, they do not adequately explain what a modal distinction is. In fact, Giles and a few others seem to disavow such a distinction.

On behalf of this position one could cite St. Thomas in *Sentences* 1, dist. 40, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1, where he calls creation a *transeunt* action and compares it to the act of producing heat. However, St. Thomas talks rather ambiguously in this passage. For in the case of every *transeunt* action he seems to locate the action formally within the agent, whereas within the patient he posits it only as an effect, that is, in the manner of a passion;<sup>14</sup> this is the way Deza interprets him in *Sentences* 1, dist. 27, q. 1, notabile 1. Thus, in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 25, a. 1, Cajetan likewise claims that (i) if God’s executive power is conceptually distinct from his intellect and will, then one cannot deny that creation is a *transeunt* action, and yet that (ii) this action is not something distinct from God’s essence. For he holds that a *transeunt* action, without exception, exists formally within the agent. Consequently, we must be wary of this ambiguity of expression.

### Resolution of the Question

#### *First Assertion*

11. Of these positions, it is the last one, as it has just been proposed, that seems true to me.

In order for us to clarify the matter and to start with what seems more certain, we should assert, first of all, that a creature’s dependence on God is something that really and intrinsically exists within the creature.

This assertion seems to have been sufficiently proved in [the discussion of] the third position; I have read no one who denies it as expressed in these very terms, /772a/ and everyone grants it as expressed in equivalent terms. For everyone concedes that passive creation exists within the creature, not only insofar as ‘passive creation’ signifies a relation that *results from* [the act of creation] – for that is irrelevant here – but also insofar as it expresses the creature’s *passive emanation* from God, that is, its being-made, regardless of whether the creature and the passive emanation are distinct from one another in reality or only conceptually; for we are not now addressing that point. But the dependence – meaning the primary dependence on God alone that we are now discussing – is nothing other than the passive emanation or passive creation.

14 On this score, what St. Thomas says here is more in accord with the first position outlined above than with the present position. This is the sense in which his words are ambiguous.

*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 71

The reason is this: The fact that the creature depends [on God] is not an extrinsic denomination in the creature; rather, the fact that the creature depends on him is an extrinsic denomination in God.<sup>15</sup> But the creature is called 'dependent' because of the dependence. Therefore, the dependence is something within the creature itself and not just something within God.

Again, the dependence that light has on the sun is something within the light itself, and the same holds for every effect in relation to its created cause in accord with the type of dependence it has on that cause, whether it be dependence just in its being-made or dependence in its being-conserved as well. For the same reason, if God were to illuminate the air by himself alone, then that light's dependence on God would be something within the light itself, since the same argument (or perhaps a stronger one) applies here as applies in the case of light's dependence on the sun; so, too, the dependence by which a creature depends on God with respect to itself as a whole is something within the creature itself.

The consequence is obvious. For if in the case of other effects the dependence is something within the effects themselves, this is because the dependence bespeaks a mode or condition of the effect and not of the cause; but this explanation holds just as much, and even more, in the case of a total dependence.

*Second Assertion*

12. *A creature's dependence on God is distinct in reality from the creature itself.*<sup>16</sup>

Second, I assert that this dependence of a creature on the creator is not wholly identical with the creature that serves as the terminus of the dependence, that is, as the terminus of the act of creation; rather, it is something within the creature that is distinct in reality from the creature itself.

This is proved, first, by a parity of reasoning once an induction has been made over all the other types of dependence that effects have on their efficient

15 Consider the following analogy. The fact that the apple on Martha's desk is seen by Martha is grounded in her cognitive acts rather than in the apple. For the apple itself is not altered by the mere fact that she sees it. Hence, the predicate 'is seen by Martha' is an extrinsic denomination with respect to the apple. (By contrast, the fact that the apple is red is grounded in an accident that inheres in the apple itself, and hence the predicate 'is red' is an intrinsic denomination with respect to the apple.)

In the same way, Suarez contends, the fact that a creature depends in the way in question on God alone does not signal any modification of the divine being, but is instead grounded in something outside of God, namely, the emanation of the creature.

16 Throughout the discussion that follows Suarez is assuming that if the dependence in question is distinct from the created entity's essence, then it is an individual accidental entity – either an accident properly speaking or a mode. This is why, in the examples which follow, it is sensible to ask whether an entity's earlier dependence is identical with its later dependence, or whether the dependence it has when it is created by God alone is the same dependence it would have had if God had used an instrument in creating it.



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

causes. For in all these cases the action – and, consequently, the dependence as well – is distinct in reality from its terminus, as was noted above and will be discussed explicitly below in [the disputation on] the relevant category.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, in the case of creation the dependence will likewise be distinct in reality from the terminus. For this dependence differs from the others only because it is a dependence on something that acts without the concurrence of matter or of a subject; but, as will become clear from what is to be said below, this difference does nothing to undermine the distinction in question.

The assertion is proved, second, by the fact that the dependence under discussion is mutable and variable within the creature, even while the same entity which is made remains in existence; therefore, the dependence is distinct in reality [from that entity].

The consequence is grounded /772b/ in the principle that was discussed above in Disputation 7, Section 2, where we showed that it is a sure sign of a distinction – either a real distinction or at least a modal distinction – if one of two real extremes is able to exist in reality without the other. This is the principal mark by which we prove, in the case of other actions, that the action is distinct in reality from its terminus.

The antecedent, on the other hand, is proved by the fact that the dependence by which God now conserves the quantity without a subject in the Sacrament [of the Altar] is distinct from the dependence by which he was previously conserving that same quantity in the substance of the bread. For the first dependence depended on the matter [of the bread], whereas the second dependence in no way depends on matter but instead exists in the manner of an act of creation.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, if God were to create a quantity that existed outside a subject from the beginning, and if he later united that quantity to a subject and conserved it with a dependence on that subject, then the very same quantity would remain in existence without the dependence of creation that it previously had. For, as I will show below,<sup>19</sup> it is unlikely that two total dependences would simultaneously remain in such a case. Thus, what is evident in this example should be understood to apply to every instance of creation, both because (i) the argument is the same, and also because (ii) if any problem seems to arise in this example, then it will arise in every instance of creation, whereas if there is some case in which no problem is present, then there will likewise be no problem in any of the cases.

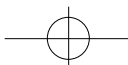
13. *The conclusion is proved through examples.* However, we cannot adduce any examples from the ordinary mode of the creation of substances. For creation of the latter sort always and by its very nature comes from God alone and, as will

---

17 See *DM* 18.10 and *DM* 48.2. To reiterate a terminological point made above in note 5 of *DM* 20.1, Suarez uses the locution ‘distinct in reality’ (*a parte rei distinctum*) to cover both *real* distinctions and *modal* distinctions.

18 For an explanation of this example, see *DM* 20.1, note 8 above.

19 See §34 below.





*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 73

be explained below,<sup>20</sup> whatever is properly created by God *ex nihilo* is continuously conserved by that very same action, since this is what the nature of the entity requires.

Nonetheless, one cannot derive from this an argument for the total identity and inseparability [of a created entity and its dependence on God alone]. For it is enough that it be *possible*, by means of an intervening miracle or supernatural work, for the dependence to vary with respect to one and the same creature, since this would not be possible without some distinction in reality.

The claim that this is indeed possible through a miracle can be made evident (over and beyond the argument already given) if we hold to the plausible opinion that a creature can be an instrument of creation.<sup>21</sup> For if this is so, then God can create the very same entity either by himself alone or else through an instrument, and in the two cases there are different dependences involving the very same entity. For when he creates the entity through an instrument, the dependence is far different from what it would be if the entity were from God alone, since through this dependence the entity depends on both God and the created instrument together – which is inconceivable without a new and distinct dependence. For as we will show in the course of the present section and will repeat time and again in the next two disputations, when an effect is made by God through a principal or instrumental secondary cause, it is not the case that there are two /773a/ dependences – one on God alone, which always remains, and the other on the creature, which varies. Therefore, it must be that the dependence varies as a whole as regards one and the same entity.

Thus, since it is probable that when worms or flesh are generated out of the consecrated species, numerically the same primary matter that existed beforehand in the bread is created once again under [the form of the worms or of the flesh], and since it is likewise probable that this matter is created through the mediation of Christ's human nature as an instrument, it follows that even though the primary matter that is created is the same matter that existed beforehand, its dependence is nonetheless different for the reason just explained.<sup>22</sup>

20 See *DM* 21.2.

21 See *DM* 20.2.6–11 above for Suarez's argument in favor of the claim that a creature can be an instrument of creation.

22 For more on what happens when the consecrated species are corrupted, see St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* 3, q. 77, a. 5. Worms or other vermin are generated if the species are corrupted without being consumed by a communicant, whereas if they are consumed by a communicant, then, like other types of nourishment, they are corrupted and transformed into the communicant's flesh.

St. Thomas deems it at least plausible to hold the position that Suarez invokes here, namely, that these transformations have as their subject the very same matter which had entered into the constitution of the bread before it was consecrated but which was absent after the conversion of the bread into the body of Christ. Hence, this matter must be created anew when the consecrated species are corrupted; and



Finally, if God annihilated a given angel and afterwards created him again, the [later] dependence would not have to be numerically the same dependence that existed beforehand. For even though God could bring it about that [it was indeed numerically the same dependence], there is no reason for us to claim that this is necessary. After all, if the same light successively depends on different agents through different dependences, then why can't God bring it about that the same angel successively depends on him through different dependences?

Thus, all these examples adequately prove that there is some distinction in reality between a creature's dependence and the terminus of that dependence, [namely, the creature itself].

14. *An a priori argument for the conclusion.* Third, there is the *a priori* consideration that the dependence in question does not belong to the essence of a dependent substance, quality, or quantity, but is instead a sort of path to that essence.<sup>23</sup>

This is clear from the very definition of a substance, and so, too, for the others. For a substance, even if it is a created substance, is in its essence something absolute, and it essentially includes only *per se* being; and within the various species of [the genus] *substance* the essential nature is thought of as being completed by similar *differentiae* that are absolute – without the sort of transcendental relation that an actual dependence essentially includes.<sup>24</sup>

---

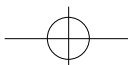
Suarez claims that the new dependence the matter has on its total efficient cause is different from the dependence it had on its total efficient cause when it was created for the first time.

Interestingly, St. Thomas himself adopts a different position in the end – namely, that when the bread is converted into the body of Christ, the quantity of the bread, which remains after the consecration, is endowed with the properties of the now absent matter and so can take the place of the matter in the generation and constitution of the new flesh or worms.

23 This is in keeping with Suarez's general position that the dependence in question, which is just an action or instance of efficient causality, is a "path" to a terminus. See especially *DM* 18.10.

24 Suarez's point here is that if we consider precisely what it is to be a substance, we see that the concept *substance* is an absolute, and hence non-relational, concept. Further, if we consider precisely what it is to be a member of a given species contained under the generic concept *substance*, we see that each of the species-concepts in question, composed of the genus *substance* and some specific difference, is itself an absolute, and hence non-relational, concept. So a substance is as such an absolute, and hence non-relational, being; for the *metaphysical* components (genus and differentia) that enter into its definition are absolute. (Metaphysical components are here being distinguished from the *physical* components, namely form and matter. See Introduction, Part 2.)

By contrast, a dependence of the sort under discussion is by definition a relational entity. Hence, even if every created substance necessarily depends on God for its being-made and being-conserved, it does not follow that this dependence is part



*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 75

This could be confirmed by the claim that actual *esse* does not belong to a creature's essence; therefore, being actually dependent does not belong to a creature's essence, either. This inference is compelling, given the position that distinguishes an entity's existence from its essence-as-actually-created; it is less compelling, though, on the position that we ourselves hold.<sup>25</sup>

Below, however, in the arguments against the second position, the claim that this actual dependence is not essential will be proved more deeply and effectively from the absurdities that follow from the second position because of its incorrect explication of the essential dependence a creature has on the creator.<sup>26</sup>

*Third Assertion*

15. *A creature's dependence on God is a mode distinct in reality from the creature itself.* I assert, third, that (i) this dependence which exists within the creature is not an entity that is altogether really distinct from the terminus of /773b/ the act of creation, and that (ii) it is not just a relation that results from the terminus of creation, but instead that (iii) it is a certain mode that is distinct in reality from the terminus itself.<sup>27</sup>

In all [three of] these [parts of the assertion] we compare creation with all the other types of dependence, in regard to which the claims are all nearly certain; and from these types of dependence we derive a sufficiently compelling argument by induction and analogy. For the difference between an action's being an action on a subject and its not being an action on a subject is irrelevant to all these claims, as is readily clear from what has already been said and as will

---

of its essence as a substance. (For more on the notion of a transcendental relation, see note 48 below and Introduction, note 42.)

- 25 For Suarez's treatment of the distinction between *esse* and essence, see *DM* 31. In brief, he claims that within an actually existing creature, there is no more than a conceptual distinction between its existence and its essence-as-actual.
- 26 See §§31–34 below. It is important to remember in this context that according to the second assertion, what is distinct from the created entity is the actual and particular dependence which that entity has on its creating cause. Later, Suarez will grant that every participated being must by its essence have, at each moment of its existence, some particular dependence or other on the cause that gives it *esse* for that moment. However, he will insist that this condition can be satisfied by distinct dependences at different times, with the result that no particular dependence is essential to the entity that has it.
- 27 Having shown, against the second position, that any particular dependence of the sort in question is distinct in reality from the creature's essence, Suarez now explains that the relevant distinction is a modal distinction rather than a real distinction. In addition, he is at pains to show, against the first position, that the dependence that *constitutes* creation is something over and beyond the real relation of dependence that *results from* the act of creation and inheres in the created thing. The present discussion, then, will help to flesh out the third position that was introduced in §10 above.



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

become even clearer from the replies to the arguments [for the first two positions].<sup>28</sup>

Further, I will now briefly prove [the parts of the assertion] one by one. The first part is uncontroversial, because it is superfluous to concoct an entity [which is really distinct from the thing created], given that a distinct mode is sufficient for all the points we have explained; and also because the second ground for the second position effectively disproves such an entity.<sup>29</sup>

Lastly, the entity in question cannot be a substance that is *per se* distinct [from the thing created]. After all, who could conceive of or imagine such an entity, or who would claim that God cannot create a substance by itself alone? What's more, other absurdities just like these can be readily inferred from such a claim. Nor is it a proper entity which is an accidental form; for (i) it does not exist in a subject, and (ii) an accident cannot be intrinsically terminated in the conferral of a substance's *esse*.<sup>30</sup> What remains, then, is that it is a mode – which is what we intended to prove.

16. As for the second part [of the assertion], the one concerning a resultant relation: Whether or not this sort of relation is an entity or mode distinct in reality from the creature, by the very fact that it is said to be *resultant*, it cannot be the dependence that we are now discussing, since it itself is grounded in that very dependence. For it can have no other foundation, or grounding principle, from among those enumerated by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 5, chap. 15, text 20.

This is clear from the fact that the creature is related to God [by the resultant relation] precisely because it depends on him.

Again, the [resultant] relation is posterior in nature to the entity created and is rooted in that entity as in a proper subject; by contrast, the dependence is prior in the order of nature not only to the relation but also to the created entity itself, at least in a certain way – namely, in the way that a path is prior to its terminus and in the way that being-made is prior to having-been-made.

Finally, third, the relation in question is said to result after its ground and terminus have been posited; the dependence, by contrast, does not result from the terminus, but is instead the path to that terminus, that is, the emanation of that terminus from God; therefore, what remains is that the dependence is just a certain mode that is modally distinct from the dependent creature.

In the end, this is best confirmed by that sign of a distinction in reality which

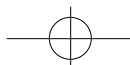
---

28 See §§24ff. below.

29 See §7 above.

30 As we have already seen, the dependence in question is a “path” that terminates in the substance that comes into existence through it, and so it cannot be an accident that already presupposes the substance and inheres in it. In general, since an accident of a given substance presupposes the existence of that substance for its own existence, it cannot confer existence on the substance.

In this paragraph, then, Suarez has argued that the dependence in question cannot be either a substance or a proper accident. What remains is that it is a mode.



*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 77

we adduced above.<sup>31</sup> For even though the creature and its dependence are related in such a way that it is possible for /774a/ the very same creature to remain even if the dependence or act of creation varies, this [individual] creation or dependence cannot, conversely, remain without bringing its own intrinsic terminus along with it, since by its essence it is just that terminus's being-made or being-conserved. This, then, is a sign that there is only a modal distinction here.

*Fourth Assertion*

17. I assert, fourth, that (i) this dependence does not have the true nature of a change, but that (ii) it does have the true nature of a path, or of the creature's being-made, and in this sense is called a 'passive creation', and that (iii) it also has the true nature of an emanation from God and, insofar as it is from God, it can truly and properly be called the formally *transeunt* action of God himself by which he produces the creature.

So that the whole assertion might be understood, I am assuming that in an action effected on a subject there is a conjunction of three things – things that we distinguish relatively and denominatively but not in reality, not even by means of a modal distinction – namely, (i) the terminus's being-made, (ii) the agent's action, and (iii) the passion or change within the subject. For one and the same mode of dependence is [variously] called (i) the being-made of, or the path to, the form (relative to the form it induces), (ii) the agent's action (relative to the agent), and (iii) the change or passion (relative to the patient).

Of these three things, the last one has no place in creation. This is the first part of the assertion. St. Thomas taught this straightforwardly when he denied that creation is a change; and Gregory of Rimini proves it at length in the place cited above, concl. 2, where for this very reason he justifiably claims that even though every passion is an action or has an action conjoined to it, it is nonetheless not the case, conversely, that every action involves a passion.<sup>32</sup> For an action is not always directed toward a subject or patient, whereas a passion cannot be conceived of without a patient, and a change cannot be conceived of without a thing that is changed. Therefore, since in the case of creation the dependence does not presuppose any subject out of which it comes to be, it cannot have the true nature of a passion or change.

18. You will object: "The creature itself changes when it is created, since it is different from the way it was before. Hence, it is related to God by a new relation – not, of course, because of a change belonging to God, but because of a change belonging to the creature itself, according to Augustine's teaching in *De Trinitate* 5, last chapter."

The ready reply is that 'change' is sometimes used properly, in which case it is predicated only of a subject which preexists in temporal duration (or in the

31 See §§12–13 above.

32 This is a position that Suarez argues for at length in *DM* 48.4. Since a passion is just a subject's being acted upon, it necessarily involves an action. But action as such does not necessarily involve a passion, since, as was argued above, there can be an action without a patient – namely, creation.

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

order of nature, according to some authors) and which because of the action is now different from the way it was before. This is the interpretation on which we are denying that creation is a change, and it would be clearer to say that creation is not a passion. By contrast, 'change' is sometimes predicated more widely of any action or production that posits something new in its effect, and, in this sense, what will be said to change in a case of generation /774b/ is not just the matter but the generated entity as well. On this interpretation, creation can be called a change, though less properly so [than generation]; for an entity that is created is not properly said to be different from the way it was before, since it was nothing before; rather, one should say that it has *esse*, which it did not have at all before.

19. From this objection and reply one comes to see that there is room in the case of creation for that relation of a path to its terminus which is often called 'passive being-made'. For, first of all, this sort of path or being-made bespeaks a relation only to the terminus and not to a subject; therefore, it is not by its precise nature incompatible with creation. Second, in other cases of efficient causality, this being-made is nothing other than the effect's dependence on the cause, since it is a sort of reaching out toward the effect; but all of this is [likewise] found in the dependence associated with creation. Further, in each thing that has been changed there was a being-changed; therefore, in each thing that has been made, there was a being-made. This is so especially in light of the fact that this very thing, namely, to have been made *de novo*, is in some sense to have been changed – at least broadly speaking, as we explained above.

20. *The active nature of creation truly belongs to the creature's dependence on God.* Finally, from this one may easily prove the last part of the assertion, namely, that the proper nature of an action – that is, active creation – belongs to the creature's dependence insofar as this dependence bespeaks a relation to the divine power from which it flows.

It is in this part of the assertion that the disagreement among the authors regarding the present question seems mainly to be situated (though one must make sure that the dispute is not just over the term ['action']).<sup>33</sup> For the present question depends on the philosophical question of whether a *transeunt* action exists formally within the agent or within the patient – a question that we will be treating below in our discussion of the relevant category.<sup>34</sup>

For now I note only that among those who locate a *transeunt* action within the agent, some take an action to be a sort of absolute mode which (i) involves a transcendental relation, (ii) comes *de novo* to an active power when the latter acts, and (iii) actuates that power.<sup>35</sup> Those who think of a *transeunt* action in this

33 Recall that the "present question" is whether the act of creation is something in the creature that is distinct in reality from the creature itself.

34 See *DM* 48.4.

35 The idea is that this mode bears to the relevant active power a transcendental relation analogous to the relation that form bears to matter in the composition of a com-



*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 79

way speak reasonably enough when they deny that such an action exists in God, since this would involve a great imperfection.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, this way of explicating a *transeunt* action not only goes against Aristotle and the more important philosophers, but is also patently implausible, since, having been concocted without any ground or reason, it is scarcely intelligible.

Accordingly, others who locate a *transeunt* action within the agent claim that it is nothing within the agent except a real relation /775a/ that results in the agent because of the production of the effect. Consequently, these authors, too, deny *transeunt* action of God, since real relations do not result in God because of his effects (though perhaps these authors might claim, consistently with their position, that in the case of God an action is a [mere] relation of reason – a claim whose implausibility is sufficiently obvious *per se*). Once again, this position stands on an insufficiently plausible foundation. For if the relation in question *results* within a created agent, then it presupposes that the effect has already been produced. How, then, will that relation be the action? On the other hand, if the relation does not result but is instead said to be produced *per se* and primarily, as it were, by the active power itself (as certain Scotists imagine), then it is a pure fiction and has no foundation.

Finally, others who likewise locate a *transeunt* action within the agent claim that (i) a *transeunt* action is not any new thing, absolute or relative, that is distinct in reality from the [active] power and added to it, but that instead (ii) it is the active power itself insofar as it is actually conjoined to its effect, that is, the active power together with the connotation that the effect is actually dependent on it. These authors will not hesitate to admit that *transeunt* action exists even within God himself; indeed, it will be reasonable for them to say this. Yet it is in name only that they locate a *transeunt* action within the agent, and so we are not going to argue with them at present.

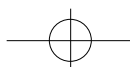
21. *An objection is answered.* Accordingly, we ourselves assume with Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9, text 16, that actions which have a terminus produced outside the acting cause exist within the patient or terminus itself, and not within the agent. And in keeping with this position we claim that a creature's dependence, insofar as it is a certain outflow from God, has the true nature of a *transeunt* action.

This is proved, first, as follows: In a fire's production of heat, and in all similar actions, the only reason why the dependence by which heat is produced in the patient is the action of the heat that exists in the fire is that this dependence is a sort of outflow of heat emanating from the fire; but the dependence by which

---

posite substance. That is, the mode actualizes – or, better, just is the actualization of – the agent's power or potentiality to produce the effect. (For more on the notion of a transcendental relation, see note 48 below and Introduction, note 42.)

36 Such a mode would “involve a great imperfection” because it would complete or actuate or perfect the divine power, which would thus be conceived of as standing in need of completion or actuation or perfection.





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

a creature is made by God is a sort of outflow emanating from God himself; therefore, this dependence has the true nature of an action.<sup>37</sup>

Some authors object that in order for something to have the nature of an action, it is not enough that it be an outflow from an active power; rather, it must be the actualization and fulfillment of that power.

However, this objection seems to be merely verbal, since no active power, as such, *receives* its fulfillment or actuality from its action; rather, it only exercises its own actuality. But this *exercise* is not the actualization of *itself*; rather, it is the reduction of *another* to actuality – something that likewise belongs to God. For in any purely active power [this exercise] is only an extrinsic denomination.<sup>38</sup> To be sure, active powers actualize themselves by means of immanent action, yet not insofar as they are active only, but insofar as they are also passive. /775b/

22. Hence, I argue, second, as follows: What is there to prevent this outflow of creation, insofar as it is from God, from having the true nature of an action?

Might the obstacle perhaps be the lack of a subject, given that an action must be prior in the order of nature to the entity produced? But this is no obstacle. For on this score the same reasoning applies to the dependence insofar as it is a passive being-made. Hence, just as [the dependence], insofar as it is a path or relation of dependence, can be prior within its own genus [to the entity produced] even though it does not exist in a subject, so too it can be prior insofar as it is an action. Both points will become clearer in the replies to the arguments [for the first two positions].<sup>39</sup>

Or might the obstacle perhaps be the perfection of the divine power? But this is no obstacle. For a *transeunt* action does not perfect the power from which it flows; to the contrary, the action receives whatever perfection it has from the

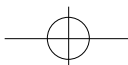
---

37 The use of the term ‘outflow’ (*influxus*) should not be taken to suggest that the forms which are produced migrate from the agent to the patient. Rather, given that it is obvious that the heat produced in the patient is an effect of the heat present in the fire, one needs to assign an ontological connector between the agent and the patient, a connector by virtue of which the patient’s potentiality for heat is actualized. On Suarez’s view, this is the precisely the role played by the action, that is, by the effect’s dependence on the agent for as long as the effect is being produced.

To be sure, some philosophers – al-Ghazali and Hume come immediately to mind – have denied or at least doubted that the patient’s heat is effected by the fire’s heat, and this partly because they claim to be unable to detect the connector in question. The scholastic reply is that the connector is presupposed by what is obvious – namely, that the fire’s heat makes the patient hot – and is to that extent itself obvious, even if it is not itself independently observable. For more on this issue, see Introduction, Part 3.

38 That is, the term ‘is acting’, as predicated of the agent, has its immediate ontological ground in the effect rather than in the agent or the agent’s power.

39 See §§24ff. below.





*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 81

power. Therefore, it no more detracts from the perfection of the divine power that a *transeunt* action should flow from it than that the very effects themselves should flow from it. What's more, the fact that an action mediates between the effect and the power no more detracts from the perfection of God's power than does the fact that a dependence mediates between them – and both these facts stem from the limitation and potentiality of the effects themselves.

Finally, even if we grant for the sake of argument that, in the case of one or another created power, a *transeunt* action can be called its extrinsic fulfillment by reason of the fact that the power in question is by its nature ordered toward and instituted for the sake of such an action, it is still not necessary to attribute this feature to an action that emanates from God's power. For God's power is such that it is not of itself ordered toward any [*transeunt*] action; rather, it can have such an action just out of the plenitude of its perfection – a feature that likewise belongs, through a sort of participation, to certain created principles of acting, as was mentioned above and will be explained at more length below when we discuss powers.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, it does not belong to the nature of a *transeunt* action, as such, that it should perfect an active power, even in the extrinsic and improper sense in question.

23. I argue, third, as follows: As we will prove below when we discuss the divine attributes,<sup>41</sup> God's active power with respect to outside things is not, formally speaking, either his intellect or his will, but is rather an executive power that is conceptually distinct from his intellect and will; therefore, the action of this power cannot be a formally immanent action, since in an immaterial entity it is only the intellect and will that act immanently, whereas the executive power is immediately productive of outside things.

Thus, the act of God's will is not itself the action by which he acts outside himself, since it is only the application of the executive power to acting. Indeed, even if someone holds that God's will is indeed the proximate power for acting outside himself, it will be wrong for him to claim that God's volition, as regards that /776a/ which really exists in it, is the *action* by which he produces outside things; rather, the volition is the very principle of acting outside himself, since it is the formal perfection of God's will, which exists in him in the manner of an act rather than in the manner of a faculty that is receptive of its own act.<sup>42</sup> But a *principle* of acting outside oneself never enters into (so to speak) the action itself, since the sort of action in question flows from such a principle. Moreover, the nature of a real action cannot be had by the relation of reason that is conceived

40 See *DM* 19.2 and *DM* 43.6.9–26.

41 See *DM* 30.17.37–50.

42 In finite intellectual beings, the will has both an active and passive aspect, since a finite will is in its essence a power or faculty that perfects itself by its own immanent acts, which are themselves accidents. In God, by contrast, the act of will is itself constitutive of the divine essence; so God's will is not properly conceived of as a faculty.



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

of as being added to the free act of God's will insofar as he wills an entity that he produces outside himself. For this relation of reason is nothing, whereas the action is a true and real production or making by virtue of which God is denominated as the maker of heaven and earth.<sup>43</sup>

The same argument can be applied to [God's] intellect, even if the executive power is posited within it. Hence, in *Sentences* 4, dist. 1, q. 1, section beginning *Ista ergo*, Scotus correctly proves in general that it is only as a principle, and not as an action, that an act of intellect or will can be productive of a terminus, since a productive action and that which is produced exist in one and the same thing. (In the place just cited he explicitly endorses this position, even though he seems to think otherwise in *Sentences* 2, dist. 1, q. 5 and other places.)

### Refutation of the Grounds for the Other Positions

#### *Refutation of the First Position*

24. *Whether an action includes a motion plus a relation.* As for the first argument of the first position,<sup>44</sup> one may reply by conceding the antecedent, namely, that creation is not a change, while denying the consequence, namely, that it is not an action. For the consequence proceeds in the negative from a logical inferior to a logical superior, since *action* is clearly a wider notion than *change*.

As for the claim that an action involves the substance of a *motion* plus a relation, if, as the argument seems to require, this claim is meant to apply to the precise nature of an action, then it is false. For [an action, taken precisely as such,] involves only the substance of an *outflow or dependence* along with a transcendental relation to the principle from which the action flows.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, if the proposition in question is meant to apply to an action that involves a motion or presupposed subject, then with regard to both its parts it can be interpreted either correctly or incorrectly.<sup>46</sup> For if we are talking

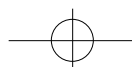
---

43 This third argument, then, is meant to convince us that God's *transeunt* action is a finite entity and not identical with God's infinite act of will. Once we see that it is finite, we are less likely to balk at identifying it with the effect's dependence upon God as an agent.

44 See §2 above. The argument is this: "Creation is not a change; therefore, creation cannot be anything within the creature except a relation."

45 This invocation of the notion of *substance* is meant to characterize the ontology of successive entities like motions and actions by analogy with the ontology of permanent substances such as plants and animals. So the substance of an action or a motion is that which is essential to it as such, and these entities may also have features super-added to them that are analogous to the accidents of permanent entities. For instance, Suarez here characterizes the dependence or outflow as the substance of an action, whereas the fact that an action is or is not identical with a passion is accidental to it. See *DM* 20.1, note 24 above.

46 The two parts in question are (i) that an action involves the substance of a motion and (ii) that it involves a relation.





*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 83

about the [action's] reality – that is, about its identity – then it is true that an action of this sort is identical with the very substance of the motion. However, it has this character not from the fact that it is an action but from the fact that it is *this* sort of action – more precisely, from the fact that it is an action on a subject. By contrast, if we are talking with precision and in accord with the relevant formal concepts, then this part of the proposition is not true, since a motion as such is an act of a thing that is being moved – which is not what an action *qua* action is. And so even if the nature of a motion or change is taken away, the substance of an outflow or dependence, which is sufficient for the nature of an action, can still remain.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, the claim that the relation conjoined to the substance /776b/ of the motion belongs to the nature of an action can be interpreted as applying to a *cat-egorial* relation that results [from the action], whether within the agent cause or within the effect produced. So understood, the proposition is false. For an action is not an aggregate of a categorial relation and a motion. Again, the action is prior [to a relation of this sort] insofar as it is the grounding principle of the relation.<sup>48</sup>

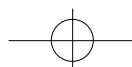
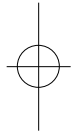
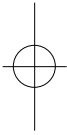
47 That is, a motion has the thing that is being moved as its ontological subject, whereas an action, taken precisely as such in its formal concept, prescind from the question of whether there is a subject that is being acted upon. This is why creation can count as an action even though it is not a motion or change.

Suarez is claiming in effect that the formal concept of an action, which involves only the “substance” of an outflow or effluence, can be realized in ontologically distinct ways. If in a given case the action is on a subject, then the outflow or dependence is ontologically identical with a motion (a ‘being-moved’) that has the patient as its subject. In such a case the action is identical with the passion, and the terms ‘action’ and ‘passion’ signify the same reality or “substance” (namely, the dependence) but differ in connotation. ‘Action’ connotes the agent from which the outflow or dependence originates, whereas ‘passion’ connotes the subject which receives the outflow or dependence. By contrast, if the action is not on a subject, then there is no subject that receives the outflow and hence no motion or passion. In such a case the action is still identical with the “substance” of the outflow or dependence but is not identical with a passion or motion.

48 The relevant resultant relation is the relation *having been caused by*, which the effect as already produced bears to the agent that produced it. This relation is clearly categorial – that is, belongs properly to the category of relation – since (i) it is posterior to and inheres in the entity effected and (ii) it is grounded in the prior relation of causal dependence that terminates in that entity and exists only as long as the agent is giving it *esse*.

On the other hand, this prior relation of causal dependence, which Suarez identifies with the action itself, is a transcendental relation that properly belongs to the category of action and also (where the action is on a subject) to the category of passion.

For Suarez’s division of real relations into categorial relations and transcendental relations, see *DM* 47.4. In short, a categorial relation, which is a true accidental form, requires (i) a real and absolute ground in its subject, (ii) a really existing



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

Alternatively, the claim in question can be interpreted as applying to the *transcendental* relation that the emanation or dependence itself bears to its principle. On this interpretation, the assumed proposition is true, but it is incorrect to infer from it that if change is taken away, all that remains is a *categorial* relation, either of the effect to the cause or of the cause to the effect. For the *transcendental* relation of the dependence itself to its principle can still remain, even though in such a case the dependence would exist without a subject and without a change properly speaking.

All these points seem so evident in themselves that it is scarcely believable that St. Thomas should have used the argument under discussion to prove that creation is only a categorial relation that results within the creature produced. This is why some commentators try to interpret the argument as having to do with a *transcendental* relation, so that what St. Thomas meant by ‘relation’ is just the dependence on the creator that we ourselves have claimed to exist in the creature. Indeed, this way of talking is not unusual for St. Thomas; for in *Summa Theologiae* 3, q. 2 he repeatedly calls union a relation and never distinguishes between a categorial relation and the mode of union, even though it is undeniable that this mode includes a transcendental relation to the things that are united.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, this interpretation is plausible – though, as is clear from the replies to the objections in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45\*, a. 3, it cannot be made to fit all of St. Thomas’s ways of speaking.

25. *Creation is a formally transeunt act.* As for the second argument,<sup>50</sup> one may deny the antecedent. For creation is indeed a formally *transeunt* action – not

terminus, and (iii) a real or at least modal distinction between its ground and its terminus. A transcendental relation, on the other hand, does not of itself require any of these three conditions and is best thought of as an incomplete entity that falls into the same ontological category that its subject falls into. Examples of transcendental relations are the relation of the divine act of knowing to the divine essence as its object and, in general, the relation of a cognitive act to a fictional or non-existent object; and the relation of matter to the form that actuates it.

49 The context for these remarks by St. Thomas is a treatment of the so-called ‘hypostatic union’ by which the second person of the blessed Trinity is united to his human nature. This union cannot be a categorial relation because it lacks an absolute ground in the things united; that is, there is no absolute entity in either the person of the Son of God or his human nature that serves as the ground for the relation in the way that, say, whiteness can ground a relation of similarity. For if the mode were grounded in some absolute entity within Christ’s human nature, then that absolute entity would have to be part of that nature’s substance or essence, and hence Christ’s ‘human’ nature would differ essentially from all other human natures – a result which would threaten the Christian doctrine that the Son of God is truly human. Rather, the union is a certain mode of the human nature by which it is united as a whole to the person or hypostasis of the Son of God in such a way that all its attributes are “communicated to” the divine person.

50 See §3 above. The argument is this: “Creation cannot be a formally *transeunt* action; therefore, it is a formally immanent action within the creator, and it can be called a

*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 85

that it passes from one subject to another (which is what Deza seems to be arguing against in the place cited above), but that it is from the agent as an efficient cause and exists in the terminus, and is in this sense said to 'pass' to the terminus.<sup>51</sup>

The argument [for the antecedent] begs the question of whether this creative action is an accident.<sup>52</sup> Giles of Rome and others answer this question in the affirmative. Creation, [they claim], is univocally an action and, consequently, it belongs to the category of action, which is one of the categories of accidents. And, [they claim], it is not impossible for an accident to be a path to a substance, since substantial generation likewise has this feature; and by the very fact that creation is called a 'path', it is designated as something incomplete and as a being of a being.<sup>53</sup> And if someone asks what the subject of this accident is, they reply that it is the very terminus itself. For even though the *terminus* is posterior [to the action] within one genus – namely, the genus terminus – nonetheless, it can be prior in nature [to the action] within the genus *subjective cause*.<sup>54</sup>

This last claim, however, /777a/ I find hard to believe. For, first of all, I do not think that the act of creation has a material cause; therefore, neither can it have a subjective cause, since they are the same thing. The antecedent is obvious from the fact that the most salient difference between a creative action and all other kinds of action is that a creative action proceeds solely from the power of the agent without the concurrence of any matter or subject.

Second, I do not see how the terminus of a path can be prior to the path itself under any description that entails real existence. (I add "that entails real existence" because of the description *end*, under which a terminus is prior in nature [to its path], given that a final cause does not as such have real existence as a prerequisite.) But [the description] *subjective cause* intrinsically requires a prior real existence. Therefore, the terminus cannot be thought of as prior in the order of

---

virtually or eminently *transeunt* action because it has the capacity to posit an outside effect."

- 51 Cf. note 37 above.
- 52 Suarez now begins a more exact discussion of the ontological status of the action of creation. If this action is a full-fledged accident, it requires a subject to inhere in. But it is unclear what that subject might be. It cannot, it seems, be the entity created through the action. For an accident presupposes the existence of its subject, whereas creation constitutes, and does not presuppose, the entity created through it. On the other hand, if the action is not an accident, then what is its ontological status? This discussion goes on to the end of §28.
- 53 'Being of a being' is Aristotle's classical characterization of an accident.
- 54 Giles' claim is that the effect of an act of creation falls under two generic descriptions, namely, *terminus of the action and subject (or subjective cause or material cause) of the action*; when it is thought of as the terminus of the action, it is posterior to the action, whereas when it is thought of as the subject of the action, it is prior to the action.

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

nature to its path under that description, since the terminus has no real esse which does not come to it through that path.

26. *Whether creation is an accident, and what its subject is.* For this reason it seems more straightforward to reply that an action *qua* action requires a principle to flow from and not a subject to inhere in. For an action *qua* action bespeaks a relation to that *from which* it exists rather than to that *in which* it exists, and from this it follows that an action *qua* action confers a formal denomination only on the agent and not on a patient.

Still, even though this reply could suffice for the action [of creation] insofar as it is an action, a problem still remains with regard to passive creation, that is, with regard to the dependence as such. For being-made, as such, bespeaks a relation not to the principle but to the entity that depends or is made; and so one has to make clear, with regard to this latter relation, what subject it exists in. And then the problem can once again be pressed with regard to the action; for [it can be argued that] even if the action *qua* action does not implicate a subject of inherence, nonetheless, it must in reality always have some subject of inherence.<sup>55</sup>

27. *The category in which creation is found.* Accordingly, many authors deny that this dependence, which is creation, is an accident, and they assert instead that it is a substantival mode of the entity that is created – a mode that belongs by reduction to the category of substance because it is nothing other than the very substance itself insofar as it is being made and exists in an incomplete state, as it were.

This assertion can be confirmed by the fact that it is for this very reason that Aristotle does not place motion in any category but instead reduces it to the category of its terminus. This has to be understood of a motion taken precisely insofar as it is a path to its terminus; for insofar as a motion is a [categorical] action or passion, it is located in their respective categories, since as an action or passion it is related to the agent or the patient in the manner of a form. Still, a motion *qua* path is properly related to its terminus not as a form, /777b/ but only in the way that what is incomplete is related to what is complete.

Accordingly, then, passive creation, insofar as it is a path to a substantival terminus, is reduced to the category of substance; moreover, it does not have the nature of a passion, since it does not exist in a patient. Hence, insofar as this being-made is conceived of as prior in nature to its terminus, it should be granted that it does not exist in a subject; rather, it is being thought of in itself, as it were. This is not problematic; to the contrary, it is the singular excellence and modality of a creature's dependence. On the other hand, at the very instant of time at which [this dependence] comes to be, it exists, through an intimate con-

---

55 This argument presupposes, of course, Suarez's previous claim that the action is in reality identical with the effect's dependence on the agent. For in that case it follows that if this dependence has a subject of inherence, then so does the action which is identical with it.

*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 87

joining and sort of identity, in the terminus itself – not as in a subject, but in accord with the special and peculiar relation by which a path is related to its terminus. In this relation a priority of nature is not required on the part of the terminus, since [a path] requires mere termination and not true [subjective] causality.

By way of example, the action of producing heat exists both in the entity which is heated and in the heat which is produced – in the former as in a subject of inherence which [the action] presupposes, and in the latter as in a formal terminus which [the action] is tending toward and thus does not presuppose, but which it instead brings along with itself and is identified with. Therefore, in the case of a creature's dependence, since the ordering to a subject (which this dependence lacks) is taken away, all that remains is the relation to the terminus – a terminus in which the dependence exists not as in a subject, but rather, in another special and peculiar way, as a certain mode of that terminus. After all, it is common to many other modes to have their own peculiar way of modifying [their termini]; this is obvious with the mode of union and, as we will see below, with the mode of subsistence.<sup>56</sup>

28. Hence, one can reasonably claim that this creative dependence, insofar as it has the nature of an action, is not an *accidental* action, which is the sort that requires a subject, but is instead a *substantial* action;<sup>57</sup> and thus it is not found in the category of action but is instead reduced to the category of substance.

Alternatively, one could go on to add that the categories of accidents contain not only true and proper accidents, which have true inherence in a subject, but also many things that imitate the manner of accidents in their denomination and in the way that they intrinsically and extrinsically “inform”, as it were, [their subjects] – for example, havings,<sup>58</sup> containing places, and similar things – and perhaps an action *qua* action is always like this. So, then, in the present context one could claim that (i) even though the dependence of creation is in itself a certain substantial mode, nonetheless, it takes on the manner of an accident through its relation to the agent, and that (ii) this is sufficient for it to be placed in the category of action.

This second reply is plausible, but the first one seems more accurate, as I explained in vol. 3, disp. 50, sect. 5 of [my commentary on] *Summa Theologiae* 3.

---

<sup>56</sup> See *DM* 34.4.

<sup>57</sup> That is, there is just a modal distinction, and not a real distinction, between the dependence in question and the substance created through it.

<sup>58</sup> The term translated here as ‘havings’ is *habitus*; what Suarez has in mind is the category *having*, in which Aristotle includes items like the relation clothes bear to the subject wearing them. (The term *habitus* can also signify habits of action such as moral virtues and vices; unlike havings, habits of this latter sort are accidents properly speaking.)

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

What has been said also constitutes a reply /778a/ to the third argument of the same first position.<sup>59</sup>

29. *Every transeunt action belongs to God.* As for the fourth argument,<sup>60</sup> the reply is that the antecedent – namely, that there is no *transeunt* action relative to God – is false. To the contrary, every *transeunt* action is an action of God himself. For if an action is from a creature, then it is from God via his general concurrence in such a way that one and the same indivisible action belongs both to the creature and to God.<sup>61</sup> It follows not only that (i) every *transeunt* action of a created agent is also a transeunt action relative to the Uncreated Agent, since it flows outside of both agents, but also that (ii) every immanent action of a created agent is a *transeunt* action relative to God, since insofar as it is from God, it flows outside of him.

Nor can one claim that these actions are related to God as effects rather than as actions.<sup>62</sup> For (i) this claim is gratuitous, since the [action's] relation to both agents is of the same type; and (ii) the action is directed toward a further terminus and so proceeds from both agents as a certain outflow toward that terminus, and this is just what it is to be an action; and, finally, (iii) there is no action that terminates in an action.

Moreover, by these same arguments one may infer *a fortiori* that when God acts by himself alone on a presupposed subject, there is a *transeunt* action on God's part in such a case. After all, who would believe that a heating (or illumination) produced by a fire (or by the sun) is an action, but not a heating or illumination produced by God alone? Or that the latter has less reality than the former? Or, if it has no less reality, that it is not equally a genuine action?

30. *When God acts, he always acts by the mediation of an action.* As for the first proof of the antecedent in question, the reply is that from God's intimate presence one may infer only that God acts in all things by an immediacy of power and suppositum, but not that he acts without a mediating action. For such an action intercedes not because of the agent's distance [from the effect], but

---

59 See §4 above. The third argument is this: "Every action is prior in nature to its own terminus; therefore, an act of creation is likewise prior in nature to the entity created; therefore, it cannot exist within the created entity, but must exist within the creator." Suarez's reply is that an action exists in its terminus not in the way that a proper accident exists in its subject, but in the way that a substantival mode can be thought of as "existing in" that of which it is a mode.

60 For the argument in question, as well as the three proofs dealt with in §30 below, see §5 above.

61 This claim will be taken up in detail in *DM 22*.

62 Suppose one believes that God's creative action is immanent to him but that in the case of creation there is also a *transeunt* action terminating in the created substance. Then one might be tempted to think that God's immanent creative action has this second action as its direct effect and the created substance as its remote effect. (This second action is, after all, itself a creature.)



*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 89

because the action is formally the agent's causality, which must always exist within the effect.

To the second proof one may reply by conceding the inference. For God's executive power is truly a principle of his effect and of his action. After all, it belongs to the nature of a *transeunt* action that it really flows from its [corresponding] power. Moreover, in the place cited [in the proof] St. Thomas is either talking from the perspective of the first position or else he is talking about God's power with respect to an immanent act which is also a cause of outside effects.

As for the third proof, it has already been explained why an action as such is not an active power's true fulfillment – or how it is that, even if this feature is indeed attributed to some actions in a broad sense, it still does not belong to the nature of an action as such.<sup>63</sup>

*Refutation of the Second Position*

31. As regards the grounds of the second position,<sup>64</sup> to the extent that they urge that the dependence is not distinct in reality from the terminus one should reply, first of all, /778b/ that this claim, when taken universally to apply to every action and its corresponding terminus, is false. This was touched upon above when we explicated the causality of an efficient cause, and it will be explained below when we discuss the category of action.<sup>65</sup>

Second, one may deny that (i) there is anything peculiar about creation on this score, and that (ii) in creation the dependence is less distinct from the terminus than in other actions. This was sufficiently proved above; in addition, it was made clear how the fact that creation is [a production] *ex nihilo* poses no obstacle to this distinction.<sup>66</sup>

Nor does an infinite regress follow from this.<sup>67</sup> After all, the same regress could be inferred in the case of any action whatsoever. For every action is in its own way an effect of the agent from which it flows; yet it is not effected, nor does it flow, by means of another action, since it flows not as an effect, but as the very outflowing and dependence itself. So, then, in a broad sense an act of creation can be called a creature, since it itself is also effected by God *ex nihilo*. Yet it is not a creature absolutely speaking, in the way that the entity which is made and serves as the terminus of God's production is; rather, it is a creature in the way that a dependence or production itself is – and so no other act of creation is required for it. For its essential nature is to be a dependence, and so no other dependence is necessary for it. (This reply is found also in St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 3, ad 2.)

63 See §22 above.

64 See §§7–8 above.

65 See *DM* 18.10 and *DM* 48.

66 See §§12–14 above.

67 What follows is a reply to the confirming argument found in the second paragraph of §7.



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

From this it follows that even though a creature can change its dependence on this or that agent, nonetheless, within a given dependence itself the relation to this or that agent cannot change without the dependence itself being changed. For it is through itself, and not through another dependence, that it bespeaks an intrinsic relation to the relevant agent.<sup>68</sup>

32. Hence, to the third section of the arguments in question<sup>69</sup> one may reply that there are two possible ways to interpret the claim that a creature is a being essentially dependent on God. On one interpretation, it means that the actual dependence itself belongs to the creature's essence. So interpreted, the claim is true only when applied to the actual dependence itself – which, as is obvious, is its very own essence as a mode. But the dependence itself does not belong to the essence of the creature whose mode and dependence it is, since it has been shown that the dependence is something separable from that creature.<sup>70</sup> The argument in question proceeds under this present interpretation, and so it does not prove anything.

Accordingly, the claim under discussion should be understood in a second way to mean that a creature is a being essentially dependent on God by virtue of the fact that it is a being with a nature and essence of such a kind that it cannot exist without some dependence or other on God. And on this interpretation the claim is absolutely true, and it is best proved by appeal to the nature of a participated being. However, it does not follow from this that the very dependence it actually has belongs to the creature's essence; rather, it follows that what is essential is just the condition or imperfection by reason of which such a nature requires a dependence. /779a/

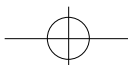
This is obvious from the fact that even though it belongs to a creature's essence that it depend on God, it nonetheless does not belong to its essence that it should depend on God *alone* or (what amounts to the same thing) that it should depend through a dependence that bespeaks a relation to God *alone* – even though it is, of course, *possible* for it to depend sufficiently through such a dependence. Therefore, a creature does not essentially define for itself any particular dependence [on God]; rather, it essentially defines for itself only a requirement or need for [some such] dependence.

68 That is, each such dependence, taken in itself as an individual, is essentially related to its own total agent. (Of course, this total agent may be either a single substance or a group of cooperating substances.)

Hence, in this paragraph and in the discussion that follows in §32 it is important to keep in mind that each causal dependence is an individual entity – more specifically, a mode of the dependent thing – which has its own intrinsic source (or agent) and terminus. Hence, when a creature's actual dependence changes, one such dependence is replaced by another. In §32 Suarez will claim that no individual dependence is essential to any substance; what is essential is the general condition of requiring some individual dependence or other.

69 These are the arguments found in §8 above.

70 See the arguments in §§12–14 above.



*Is Creation Distinct in Reality from the Creature Itself?* 91

33. *Certain of the second position's inferences are disproved.*<sup>71</sup> From this it is clear, first of all, that the first thesis inferred from the second position is false.<sup>72</sup> For, as we have proved, an entity that is created, properly speaking, does not define for itself any determinate dependence that is altogether immutable and inseparable.

Second, it is clear that the second and third theses inferred from this position are also false.<sup>73</sup> For it is likewise true that a dependence on God *alone* is not essential or entirely immutable in the case of every created thing. Otherwise, all entities, including substantial forms and accidents, would now and always depend on God through some essential and immutable dependence that relates to God alone. For (i) [substantial forms and accidents] are of themselves capable of being dependent in this way, and (ii) it would be possible for this sort of dependence to be sufficient for their existence, and, finally, (iii) they are true creatures producible *ex nihilo*. From this it follows, first, that – contrary to what was proved above and contrary to what St. Thomas teaches in *Summa Theologiae* 1, q. 45, a. 8 – real creation is mingled in with *every* production of a form.<sup>74</sup> Second, it follows that (i) created agents either (a) do nothing at all, or (b) do what has already been done, or at least (c) do not attain as efficient causes to the forms themselves, whether substantial or accidental, but attain at most to the modes or unions of those forms, and that (ii) God creates all the forms by himself alone. Hence, it further follows, third, that there is no natural explanation for why forms other than rational souls cease to exist by being separated from a subject.<sup>75</sup>

All these implications are contrary to true philosophy and sound doctrine, as

- 
- 71 In §§33–34 Suarez refutes the four inferences drawn from the second position in §9 above.
- 72 The first inferred thesis is: “Within every created entity there is a some [individual] dependence on God which is altogether immutable and inseparable from the created entity itself.”
- 73 The second inferred thesis is that the dependence in question is a dependence on God alone, while the third thesis is that this dependence on God alone is creation in the most proper sense.
- 74 As we saw above in *DM* 20.1, every material being has a component – namely, its matter – that depends essentially on God alone for its production. However, secondary causes are able, with God’s concurrence, to effect substantial forms through generation and to produce accidental forms through the various types of accidental change. Such instances of efficient causality presuppose the creation of matter, but are not themselves instances of creation. Similarly, even though created immaterial beings depend on God alone for their substantial *esse*, they can effect accidental changes within themselves and in each other. Once again, such instances of efficient causality presuppose creation but are not themselves instances of creation.
- 75 This implication follows from the fact that the *esse* of such forms would, on the position under attack, depend on God alone and not at all on natural efficient and material causes. And so there would be no natural reason – that is, a reason related to their natures – why God should cease to give them *esse* when they lack a subject.

I have explained at length in [my commentary on] *Summa Theologiae* 3, vol. 3, disp. 9, toward the end of sect. 1.

34. From what has already been said in various places it is abundantly clear that the fourth claim inferred from this position is also false.<sup>76</sup> For the argument, which infers from an essential and immutable dependence that there cannot be an instrument of creation, rests on a false foundation. Indeed, it patently begs the question, since it assumes that it belongs to the nature of creation that the dependence be on God *alone* – which is what had to be proved.

What's more, the authors of this position are forced to posit two simultaneous dependences for generable entities – one an essential dependence on God alone, and the other a quasi-accidental (albeit connatural) /779b/ dependence on their created causes. It follows that even though ingenerable entities have an essential dependence on God and do not have a connatural dependence on any created agent, God could nonetheless bring it about supernaturally that they are made by a created agent through a dependence which is, as it were, accidental and preternatural.<sup>77</sup> (For it is in this way that grace is effected supernaturally through the sacraments, even though, according to the position under discussion, it has the aforementioned essential dependence and does not have any other connatural dependence.<sup>78</sup>) Therefore, as far as the force of the argument goes, the same thing could be said in the case of an angel. But since this second dependence would be an action, it would be a true creation – unless it were claimed that such an angel is effected out of himself [as a subject], which is implausible. Therefore, the argument in question is ineffective in many ways and has a false foundation.

---

76 The fourth inferred thesis is that on the basis of a creature's essential dependence on God alone one can construct a compelling argument for the conclusion that no creature can causally contribute to creation, even as an instrument.

77 The present dialectic goes as follows: Suppose the proponents of the second position try to evade the consequence that secondary causes do nothing in the generation of generable entities. Their most plausible move is to hold that there are two dependences in the case of such entities, one on God alone and one on the natural causes of their generation. Suarez attempts to show that this move, far from ruling out the possibility that there might be an instrument of creation, actually makes it easier to see how there could be an instrument of creation with respect to ingenerable entities like angels. For if there are two dependences in the case of generable entities, then God could supernaturally make it the case that there is a second dependence in the case of ingenerable entities as well. But this second dependence would have to be an act of creation, since it is only by creation that an ingenerable entity can come into existence. So the proponents of the second position actually defeat their own purpose if they countenance two dependences in the case of generable entities.

78 That is, on the assumption that the sacraments are true instrumental causes of grace and not just signs of God's unilateral action, it follows that there would be two dependences in the case of sacramental grace, one on God alone and a second – and preternatural – dependence on the total agent composed of God and the sacrament.