
EXCERPTA E DISSERTATIONIBUS IN PHILOSOPHIA

CUADERNOS DOCTORALES

DE LA FACULTAD ECLESIASTICA DE FILOSOFÍA

PUBLICACIÓN PERIÓDICA DE LA FACULTAD
ECLESIASTICA DE FILOSOFÍA
UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA / PAMPLONA / ESPAÑA



Universidad
de Navarra

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The Act of Being, Free will & Intelligence
and Relation as the First Principles
of Creation: A consideration
of some Aquinas writings

VOLUMEN 24 / 2014

SEPARATA

Universidad de Navarra
Facultad Eclesiástica de Filosofía

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The Act of Being, Free will & Intelligence
and Relation as the First Principles of
Creation: A consideration
of some Aquinas writings

Extracto de la Tesis Doctoral presentada en la
Facultad Eclesiástica de Filosofía de la Universidad de Navarra

Pamplona
2014

Ad normam Statutorum Facultatis Philosophiae Universitatis Navarrensis,
perlegimus et adprobavimus

Pampilonae, die 22 mensis octobris anni 2013

Dr. Henricus Robertus MOROS

Dr. Agustinus Ignatius ECHAVARRÍA

Coram tribunali, die 4 mensis decembris anni 2012, hanc
dissertationem ad Lauream Candidatus palam defendit

Secretarius Facultatis
D. nus Eduardus FLANDES

Cuadernos Doctorales de la Facultad Eclesiástica de Filosofía

Vol. XXIV, n. 3

Presentation

Abstract: This research work focuses on the First Principles of the Metaphysics of Creation in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. We establish the Principle of the Metaphysical Act as the First Principle of the Metaphysics of Creation through the study of various Aristotle's axioms in order to demonstrate that the concept of creation is metaphysical. The present-day study regarding the origin of the Universe is extensively oriented towards the rationality of the material nature. It is falsely concluded that the material or visible world is the ultimate explanation of all reality. In this light, Cosmological Science interprets the metaphysical notion of *creatio ex nihilo* as that which affirms that the World originates from «nothing» which is absurd because it is well known that nothing can come from nothing. So as to arrive at the Principle of Free and Intelligent Creation, we have brought into our consideration the idea of the Transcendental Good especially in Neo-Platonism. The Avicenna thesis of the necessary emanation of the Universe from God has also been of interest. This is because Aquinas heavily borrows from the mentioned schools of thought. Our research work also analyses the relation that exists between the Divine Being and the created being. The notion of relation in the Metaphysics of Creation is, in our view, a First Principle because it explains the relationship that subsists between the two very distinct acts of being. Indeed, the very rationale of *creatio ex nihilo* is the basis of the real relation that any creature possesses with respect to God.

Key words: the act of being; Intelligence, free will; Relation.

Resumen: Este trabajo se centra en los primeros principios de la metafísica de la creación sobre todo en el pensamiento de santo Tomás de Aquino. Se establece el principio del acto de ser como primer principio de la metafísica de la creación, analizando varios axiomas para demostrar que la noción de la creación es propiamente metafísica. Los estudios actuales del origen del mundo versan sobre todo en la racionalidad de la materia del mundo. En esta racionalidad resta toda explicación sobre lo que es, eso es lo que tiene ser. En la misma línea la ciencia cosmológica ha llegado a interpretar –erróneamente– la idea metafísica de *creatio ex nihilo* como aquella que afirma que el mundo proviene no de la nada sino de nada. Para alcanzar el principio de la creación libre e inteligente que es el segundo principio de la metafísica de la creación, hemos considerado el concepto del bien trascendental en el neo-platonismo y la tesis de la creación necesaria en el pensamiento de Avicena. Tanto el neo-platonismo como la visión de Avicena aportan de modo significativo a la reflexión de santo Tomás. El presente trabajo también trata de la asociación que subsiste entre el ser divino y el ser creado. La noción de la relación en la metafísica de la creación es un primer principio porque es la noción que sostiene el vínculo entre dos actos de seres radicalmente distintos. En efecto, la misma racional de la creación *ex nihilo* es el fundamento de la relación real que existe en la criatura.

Palabras clave: el acto de ser; inteligencia; libertad; relación.

The present Abstract of the Doctorate Dissertation titled: «The Metaphysics of the Divine Creation: A consideration of the First Principles of Creation in Aquinas» contains excerpts from the three different chapters of the Dissertation. We have decided to combine all the chapters partially selecting certain

sections from each. We have, for example, omitted the historical overview of the origin of the Universe, the concepts of Causality and the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*. Though historical development of the notion of Creation is important for the coherence of the entire Dissertation, the Abstract can do away with it without losing the general logic of the research.

At a preliminarily consideration of the Universal reality in pursuit of the Truth, action or movement is what calls the attention of inquisitive man to ask: *How and why do things move?* It is this very question that defines the principal philosophical debate at the nativity of this science. This question is intimately associated with the One-Multiple Dialectic that defines the Philosophical Inquest into the original cause of the Universe. Indeed, the Universal Movement is what characterises the diversity of the material existence as we know it. The definitive basis of this movement is therefore generally considered the ultimate rational justification of the original cause of the Universe. The debate regarding the study of the Universal Movement remains as compelling today as ever. The reason for this is that the decisive original foundation of reality provides enlightening insights into the Notion of the Divine Creation –the true and appropriate description of the universal origin or reality–¹.

Contemporary studies robustly reveal the rationality of the material constitution of the Universe. So articulate is this revelation that the Cosmological Science simply cannot concur with the incorrectly-interpreted metaphysical idea of *creatio ex nihilo* which affirms that the World originates from *nothingness*². Nevertheless, the Aquinas recourse to the traditional study of the Universal Movement is not *per se ipsa* but rather so as to demonstrate that the very rationality of this movement encloses certain metaphysical tenets that guide us to the Original *Divine* Attribution of such motion. God is the author of all being. The Principle of the Metaphysical Act, for example, is fundamental

¹ The science of Metaphysics is the most stable rational science. Unlike Mathematics and to an even greater extent, Physics, Metaphysics is not subject to frequent modification. The metaphysical progress is therefore generally characterised by a vertical advance (constant and more profound distinction of perennial terminologies) rather than a horizontal one (acquisition of more information). Only a higher knowledge can impel Metaphysics to re-think its proposals. This complementary science is the *Revealed Truth* from which, for example, the notion of the Creation *ex nihilo* originates.

² Cfr. ŻYCIŃSKI, J., «Metaphysics and Epistemology in Stephen Hawking's Theory of the Creation of the Universe», *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science*, 31/2 (1996) 275.

so as to explain the fact that the Universe owes its origin to God the Creator precisely through action³.

Aristotle, at least in what is traditionally attributed to his metaphysical deliberation⁴, sustains the thesis that the Universe exists eternally. This eternity is an *ontological* one because the Universe is in perpetual motion and the Prime Mover sustains this movement. The Prime Mover, however does not account for the origin of the existence of the Universe. Nonetheless, the so called Aristotelian Theology (the science of the First Mover) is neither incompatible with the already developed Theory of the Heavenly Beings nor is it contrary to the Theology of the Transcendent Being. The thesis of the Prime Mover is founded upon the fact of the Universal Movement that is our daily experience. «[The Aristotle thesis of the Prime Mover] aims at explaining that movement exists and must exist eternally (this is a condition of the eternity of time which is a characteristic of movement)»⁵.

The eternity of the Universe according to Aristotle is not only that of its *being* (ontological eternity) but also that of its chronology. The Universe is *atemporal* because it is in constant and perpetual *–timeless–* movement. Time, as we know, is simply the measure of this movement⁶. Therefore if the movement of the Universe is eternal, so is time, its measure.

One of the first challenges that face Aquinas' Metaphysics of Creation, in our view, is the question of the ontological and chronological eternity of the Universe. Another concern, albeit closely associated with the thesis of an eternal Universe, that calls the attention of any thinker is the centrality of the Natural Action postulate: *Ex nihilo, nihil fit* in the Aristotle Physics and Metaphysics⁷. This postulate, in Aristotle, firmly establishes that the process by which real beings arrive at existence and perish is one *exclusively* character-

³ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

⁴ Regarding the current debate about the authenticity of the works attributed to Aristotle see BERTI, E., *Struttura e significato della Metafisica di Aristotele*, Edizioni Università della Santa Croce, Roma 2006; AUBENQUE, P., *El problema del ser en Aristóteles*, Escolar y Mayo Editores S.L., Madrid 2008.

⁵ AUBENQUE, 2008, p. 300.

⁶ Cfr. ARISTOTLE, *Physics*, IV, 11, 219 b1: «Hence time is not movement, but only movement in so far as it admits of enumeration... Just as motion is a perpetual succession, so also is time» (The revised Oxford translation of *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. I and II, edited by Jonathan Barnes, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1984) All direct citations of Aristotle will henceforth come from the same source.

⁷ Cfr. *Physics*, I, 4, 187a28.

ised by the Generation and Corruption. In this respect, the Principles of the Primary Contraries govern the speculation regarding the cause of the Change and Motion in the Eternal Universe⁸. This is the second challenge brought out in our study.

However, as we shall see in the First Chapter of this Dissertation, the Principle of the Primary Contraries becomes a positive affirmation that supports the fact that *ex nihilo* in the Divine Creation cannot be interpreted as «nothingness». Put in other words, the Aristotle maxim, *ex nihilo, nihil fit* actually concurs with the fact that *being* must originate from the *Being*. The latter fact is the truth held by the Notion of the Divine Creation (*creatio ex nihilo*).

Omne agens agit sibi simile also called the Law of Similitude is a postulate that is crucial in the Aquinas Metaphysics of Creation⁹. St. Thomas makes frequent recourse to this metaphysical postulate in his Creation Thesis. In fact, the Law of Similitude becomes one of the principal bridging maxims of the Aristotle Theory of the Universal Movement and the fact that the substantial being of the Universal Reality is produced by God through the Divine Creation. The underlying principle that sanctions the valid analogical induction of any knowledge of God from the Natural Universe is founded on the fact that God is the First Efficient Cause of the Universe and that *the effect, in some way, bespeaks its cause* which is the colloquial wording of the metaphysical Law of Similitude.

The metaphysical Principle of the Natural Action: *Omne agens agit secundum quod in actu* founds any possible description of the nature of God as an Active Agent. The real beings act because they are fundamentally in *act*; the act of being (*esse*). The above mentioned Principle is therefore decisive so as to explain the fact that the creatures, prior to their movement, are constituted in act through the Divine Creation. The Universal Movement, observable to us, actually pre-supposes, the metaphysical Divine Creative Action. The Supreme Perfection and Act is the *Act of Being*. It is the foundation of all other pure perfections. It is in its very existence that the First Cause acts or causes goodness in other realities. As such to say that an agent acts insofar as it is in act really means that an agent acts insofar as it has the act of being. Existence is the foundation of the Universal Causal Action.

⁸ Cfr. *Physics*, I, 4, 188a19.

⁹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

The Principle of the Natural Action establishes the act of existence as the fundamental causal act¹⁰.

The Second Chapter of the Doctorate Dissertation takes up a question again very closely related to the thesis of the eternity of the Universe. This is the enquiry into whether the World is a necessary or contingent reality. Here, Aquinas comes out as a novel thinker because he affirms that the Universe has been created *freely* and *intelligently* by God¹¹. Indeed this Thesis is so original that its nucleus is incorporated into the First Principles of the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation. Through the Principle of the Free and Intelligent Creation, Aquinas not only marks a breakthrough but also a break off with the Aristotelian Tradition which did not arrive at such conception as Personhood and Freedom of God, the First Cause.

For Aristotle, the Universe cannot but be necessary, both ontologically as well as temporally as we have seen above. Aquinas, on the other hand, guided by the Christian Doctrinal Truth is adamant that the World has a *real* beginning. Moreover, this commencement of the Universe is by the Free Choice of God. Avicenna sustains the Thesis of the Necessary Divine Creation. The latter manifests strong roots in Aristotle. According to the Law of Singularity which grounds the position of Avicenna, *each one and simple cause can only produce a unique effect*. A single cause cannot produce multiple effects. In the discourse of the Universal Creation, God is simply a natural efficient cause. The Divine Creation is interpreted at the hands of efficient causality because it is either the causality of the form of an entity or the composition of matter and form in existence. The unique effect of the efficient causal power of God is the First Intelligence.

In order to further appreciate the originality of the Aquinas philosophical position, it is necessary, as we shall see in the Second Chapter, to analyse the Platonic and the Neo-platonic metaphysical heritage that Aquinas demonstrates. The axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui* affirms that the perfection of Goodness naturally diffuses itself. Given that God is identical to the Divine Goodness means that the Universal Creation is the natural propagation of the Transcendental Good. This led the Neo-Platonists to the conclusion that God is not free to create or not to. He does so in a natural and spontaneous (diffusive) way.

¹⁰ *Q.D.P.*, q. 2 a. 1 co.

¹¹ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15.

In this Chapter we shall see how Aquinas, in the various sources in which he seeks out the Neo-platonic axiom, presents us different manners of interpreting his thought; at times according to a natural necessary propagation and at other times as free and intelligent creation. A fundamental problem that one has to juggle with when analysing of the writings of the Angelic Doctor is this: If the Divine Goodness is identical to the Divine Essence (God Himself) means that the object of the Divine Will is this Essence¹². It therefore seems that the *Bonum diffusivum sui* is everything but the exteriorisation of the Divine Self. Quite the contrary, it is an entirely immanent state of being. How then can we speculate about the production of the Universe, eternal nature to God, using this axiom?

Of definitive importance is the distinction that Aquinas makes between the perfections of *being* and *goodness*. It is true that the will is direct to the good. God wills the Ultimate Good, but this is not incompatible with the fact that he wills other good as is the creature. However to will the goodness that is the creature already pre-supposes the existence of such. The existence of the Universe is thus subject to the Absolute Creative Freedom of God. «God in willing His own goodness wills things other than Himself *to be* in so far as they participate in His goodness»¹³: The distinction that God wills the creatures in so far as they exist becomes decisive. Here Aquinas introduces an all-important paradigm shift which is the ontological order. God only wills the Divine Goodness in a necessary and direct way. He wills the goodness of the created Universe not directly but in so far as its *existence* (of the created Universe) participates in perfection of the *good*. However, the only way in which the created Universe participates in goodness is through its very existence and this is what is willed by God¹⁴.

The Third Chapter deals with the Notion of Relation in the Divine Creation. What is creation in God its Agent and what is creation in the creature its effect? Is creation a substantial or an accidental attribute? Is the created being any reception of being by a receiving subject? These are some of the puzzling questions that are associated with the Notion of the Divine Creation in relation with its agent and effect. St. Thomas Aquinas argues that the Cre-

¹² Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 73 n. 2; lib. I cap. 74 n. 1.

¹³ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 81 n. 4.

¹⁴ As such the maxim *Bonum et ens convertuntur* is still maintained.

ation attribute is only *real* in the creatures. It is however simply a rationally or logically attributed to the Divine Agent who is free to create or not to create and as such is not in any way ontologically dependent upon the creature¹⁵. That the Divine Creation is *ex nihilo* is the very foundation of the real relation of the creature to the Creator.

The critique of the idea of the *Esse Commune* in the Aquinas heritage from Platonism becomes a worthwhile undertaking. In the Classical Doctrine of Participation, the being of the creatures is not radically distinguished from the Being of God since the Participation is attributed to both the agent and the effect¹⁶. In the radical real distinction between the *Esse Divinum* and the *esse creatum* is founded the idea of Createdness. Is then the *Creatural Character* attributable to all reality distinct from God? Aquinas affirms the positive. The Supreme Being according to Aristotle does not mean the most perfect in the scale or gradation of reality but rather an entirely different order of reality¹⁷. The principal attributes that surround the question of Relation in the Divine Creation are: The novelty of being, the relation of the creature to the Creator and the permanent and stable dependence that is this relation.

In this Abstract we have put together the salient sections of each of the three chapters described above in order to give a complete perspective of the Dissertation.

¹⁵ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 co.

¹⁶ Cfr. GUERRERO, J., *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1996, p. 18; *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

¹⁷ Cfr. SELNER, S. C., *The metaphysics of creation in Thomas Aquinas' De potentia Dei*, UMI Dissertation Services, Michigan 1998, p. 36.

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The Act of Being, Free will & Intelligence and Relation as the First Principles of Creation: A consideration of some Aquinas writings

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE METAPHYSICAL ACT

1. AN ANALYSIS OF THE NATURAL ACTION MAXIM: *EX NIHILO, NIHIL FIT*

In the study of the Metaphysical Act as the fundamental base of all being, the very earliest thinkers depended heavily on the observable reality that makes up the Universe. In order to arrive at solid commencement into the speculation regarding the nature of act, the study of physical movement is indispensable. That is why the Greek philosophers, on their path towards Metaphysics, arrive at certain postulates in the Cosmological science that provide the necessary stepping stones between the two sciences.

The postulate: *Out of nothing, nothing comes to be (ex nihilo, nihil fit)* has its earliest formulation in Aristotle¹. Its discussion is found within the context of the problem of the correlation between the One-Multiple in the rationalization of the original cause of the Universe. Ancient thinkers sustain that multiple universal reality has one common original explanation (indeed this is the essence of any philosophical reflection about the origin of the Universe –to explain the multiplicity of real beings with respect to their commonness–)². There is an ultimate unity of universal being. This is the explanation of the *One*. On the other hand, observable movement: the coming into being of such and such kind of thing is simply a change of quality, combination and separation of particular beings or things. Multiplicity in universal movement is thus explained.

¹ Cfr. *Physics*, I, 4, 187a28.

² See section 2 below.

Two key ideas regarding *ex nihilo, nihil fit* become palpable in the first book of *Physics*:

a) *The Rule of the Contraries v. abstract Nothingness*

The First Principles that found the philosophical deliberation of the original cause of the Universe are the Primary Contrary Principles: the fact that the contraries come into being from each other³. It remains established thereby that the process of change observable in the Material World is guided by laws of contrary attributes. Preliminarily, therefore, the idea of the *Non-being* is refuted as a possible causal factor of the Universe because the impossibility of something arising from *what is not* (the non-being) is evident. Only one alternative remains consequently: things come into being out of existent things, i.e. out of things already present.

What underlies the above affirmation is that the rational explanation of the original cause of universal reality does not admit that particular beings arise from the *Nothingness*. Rather, all existence must be attributed to that which already exists: All such things are already present in one another and do not come into being but are constituents which are separated out. This affirmation becomes vital to the *positive perception* of the *ex nihilo* expression which actually negates the possibility of *nothingness* as an original source of anything existent⁴. Not only is there a concord between the original discernment of the *ex nihilo, nihil fit* postulate and the Aquinas position of *creatio ex nihilo*, but to a certain extent there is an concurrence of view with the present-day cosmological refutation of an *ex nihilo* postulate incorrectly understood as: «the cosmos is the product of arbitrary *nothingness*»⁵.

³ Cfr. *Physics*, I, 4, 188a19.

⁴ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 ad 7. Here Aquinas offers a linguistic analysis (which he attributes to St. Anselm) of the expression: «something is said to come from nothing». The negation intrinsic in the word *nothing* can be understood in 2 senses: 1) not *from something* or 2) from *not something*. In case 1, there are 2 further possibilities: the negation can include the verb 'to come' (1a) or no (1b). In (1a) *something is said not to come from nothing* which means that it *does not come to be*. This is the same conclusion as that of the postulate *ex nihilo, nihil fit* and as Aquinas illustrates: «In this way we say of a silent person that he speaks of nothing» or that God comes to be from nothing. In (1b) the negation only affects the preposition and in this sense something is said to come from nothing if it lacks any pre-existing substratum. In conclusion, that *something comes to be from nothing* can be interpreted either as *ex nihilo, nihil fit* or *creatio ex nihilo*.

⁵ See ŻYCIŃSKI, J., «Metaphysics and Epistemology in Stephen Hawking's Theory of the Creation of the Universe», *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science*, 31/2 (1996) 275: «Though I do not share

b) *The Eternity of the Substance: the Nothingness is accidental (qua), not substantial*

Aristotle explains that the problem of the One-Multiple of the universal consideration of reality is resolved by the fact that there are only 2 principles that explain the original cause of the Universe: the Substance (One) and the dual Primary Contrary Principles (Multiplicity). The existent reality cannot unconditionally be said to come from *nothingness* because the Substance eternally exists (in the citation above 'the doctor' illustrates the Substance which is always present and is in fact the substratum of the universal action). As a consequence, the *Non-being* or *nothingness* cannot be an absolute value. It is considered in a qualified sense, that is, accidentally, or as the relative privation of the Substance.

In the *ex nihilo, nihil fit* postulate therefore, *nothingness* is understood not in an absolute sense but rather as an accidental privation that the Substance temporally experiences. What is *nothing* is actually *something* different from what is desired. For this reason, *nothing* is really a privation or *qua* what is not. «Our explanation on the other hand is that for something to come to be from what is or from what is not, or what is not or what is to do something or have something done to it or become some particular thing, are in one way no different from a doctor doing something or having something done to him, or being or become something from being doctor»⁶.

In Aristotle, therefore, movement is essentially characterised by the regular transformation of the Eternal Substance through contrary principles.

c) *The Limitation of the Notion of the Natural Causality w.r.t. the Divine Creation: Ex nihilo, nihil fit*

The difficulty of properly comprehending the power of God in the Divine Creation according to the classical view of the Natural Causality is most explicit in the First article of the third question of *Q.D.P.* The latter view not

the terminological preferences of Gruenbaum, I do agree that in none of the models of creation proposed by Hawking can we find a counterpart of the metaphysically conceived *creatio ex nihilo*. This objection does not stem from epistemological differences between metaphysics and quantum cosmology. Such differences would be obvious and natural. The basic problem remains, however, that in none of Hawking's models is the very notion of nothing (*nihilum*) accepted in the sense in which it was classically understood in a metaphysical description of *creatio ex nihilo*. *When nothing denotes something, the so called creation, in a physical sense of this term, can denote anything».*

⁶ *Physics*, I, 8, 191a35.

only presents a difficulty in the conception of how God acts but becomes an almost unsurpassable hurdle when it comes to describe the fact that Divine Creation has occurred in the absence of any pre-existing substratum, *ex nihilo*.

The axiom *from nothing, nothing comes to be* (in Latin, *ex nihilo, nihil fit*) is taken to mean that every new substance is generated from certain pre-existing constituent elements. A statue becomes a reality according to its underlying components. The most basic is its *material*, say bronze, from which the sculptor carves out the image or idea that he possesses. This idea is what is known as the *form* and constitutes the *formal* cause. The action of carving out the statute from raw bronze is the *efficient* causality of the statue. As such the final bronze statue is said to *come from* original bronze material that has suffered a transformation by the sculptor.

The material, formal, efficient and final causes are the distinct aspects of the Natural Causality⁷. In the deliberation of the Divine Creation by St. Thomas Aquinas, these aspects are not altogether absent. According to Te Velde, the *production* of the *created being* is somewhat analogous to the efficient cause, while the *distinction* of the multiple forms among creatures likens the formal causality and the permanent *conservation* or *government* of the Universal Creation by God is what Aristotle understands as the Final Causality⁸.

Nonetheless, the ultimate maxim that governs the natural causes in the material universe is that from nothing, nothing comes to be⁹. It is a principle of Physics and Natural Philosophy. It is a principle founded upon the observation of the Material Universe. It however has less influence when it comes to the science of Metaphysics which is our present concern.

Therefore the preliminary inquiry into the Universal Causality must unambiguously affirm that *ex nihilo, nihil fit* is not a first principle of Metaphysics of Divine Creation. According to the said postulate, it is impossible to comprehend that the substantial being can come from nothing. The Creation of God, on the other hand, does not transform anything pre-existing but rather *creates* from scratch. Towards this quest, Aquinas in *Summa contra Gentiles* makes a notable distinction between the Philosophy of Nature and

⁷ See ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, I, 8, 988b25.

⁸ Cfr. TE VELDE, R., *Aquinas on God: The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2006, pp. 123-125: The three fundamental pillars of Divine Creation are *producere in esse, distinctio* and *conservatio et gubernatio*.

⁹ Cfr. *Physics*, I, 4, 187a29, 33-34

Metaphysics. The former pertains to the nature of the created universal while the latter is a much profound outlook and cannot omit the scientific inquiry into the Divine Creation because «the origin of the *entire being* from one first being cannot be understood as the transformation of being into another»¹⁰.

The fundamental reason why the notion of being cannot solely be considered within the precincts of the Physical Universe is because being is the ultimate explanation of the universal reality. It is that which explains the reality of both the physical and immaterial. As we shall see further ahead, given that the notion of being lacks any material foundation, it is best understood as *an act*. It is the act of being. This act gives the perfection to all reality.

Our deliberation on the Metaphysics of Divine Creation therefore has a considerable recourse to the notion of the Act of Being. Furthermore, the said Metaphysics elevates the notion of causality to the *Transcendental Causality* so that it can be adequately applied to the Divine Action which results in an extrinsic reality in the absence of previous substratum, *ex nihilo*.

d) *The Non-being with respect to the Universal Creation*

Inherent to the conception of the Divine Creation within the context of natural causality is the misunderstanding of the idea of the Non-being. The latter concept is taken for an existent subject. This misapprehension is unambiguous in the objections of the First article of the third question of *Q.D.P.*¹¹. Aquinas is categorical that the Non-being is simply an entity of the imagination. It does not have any real existence¹². It is not any material subject but the absolute absence of a passive material, substance or subject. Millán-Puelles elaborates the fact that understanding and being (existence) are identical in the sense that it is only possible to understand that being

¹⁰ S.c.G., lib. II cap. 37 n. 2 (*Et hanc quidem factionem non attigerunt primi Naturales, quorum erat communis sententia 'ex nihilo nihil fieri'. Vel, si qui eam attigerunt, non proprie nomen 'factionis' ei competere consideraverunt, cum nomen 'factionis' motum vel mutationem importet, in hac autem totius entis origine ab uno primo ente intelligi non potest transmutatio unius entis in aliud, ut ostensum est (c. 17). Propter quod nec ad Naturalem Philosophum pertinet huiusmodi rerum originem considerare: sed ad Philosophum Primum, qui considerat ens commune et quae sunt separata a motu*)

¹¹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 obj. 10: «That which is made from nothing has being after non-being. Therefore we can consider an instant which is the last of its non-being, from which point it ceases not being, and an instant which is the first of its being, from which point it begins to be. These are either, one and the same instant or distinct instants...».

¹² Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 ad 10.

which is possible. Put in other words, it is impossible to understand that which cannot possibly exist¹³.

Contemporary thought has developed the notion of the so-called beings of reason (*entia rationis*). These, as opposed to the real beings, are those that not only lack the act of existence (or act of being) but are also deficient of any possibility of possessing it¹⁴. They are existential impossibilities. An opportune question: How then can these existentially impossible beings be present in the Reason while, as we have seen above, the intellect cannot understand that which cannot possibly exist? The *beings of reason* are really intelligible because though, they lack the objective value in an absolute way; they nevertheless possess an intellectual objectivity¹⁵.

Aquinas explains the *Non-being* in the *S.Th.* as follows: «If one considers the emanation of universal being with respect to its first principle, it is impossible to presuppose any being to this emanation. Now then, *non-being is the same as negation of all beings*»¹⁶.

In the new maxim that explains the Divine Creation, ‘creation from nothing’, the preposition ‘from’ does not have a causal connotation¹⁷. It does not mean that *Nothingness* is the subject from which God produces created being. Furthermore, there is a distinction of order between being and the Non-being. It is the difference between the existential and non-existential order¹⁸. This distinction is radical in the sense that there cannot be any passage from one order to another except by the action of a unique subject, an omnipotent agent who is God.

¹³ Cfr. MILLÁN-PUELLES, A., *Teoría del objeto puro*, Rialp, Madrid 1990, p. 179.

¹⁴ Cfr. MILLÁN-PUELLES, 1990, p. 454.

¹⁵ Cfr. MILLÁN-PUELLES, 1990, p. 454. The author explains that ‘intelligibility’ here is understood as the *form* of the objects of the intellection rather than their content or the matter.

¹⁶ Cfr. AQUINAS, T., *S.Th.*, I^a q. 45 a. 1 co. (*Unde, si consideretur emanatio totius entis universalis a primo principio, impossibile est quod aliquod ens præsupponatur huic emanationi. Idem autem est nihil quod nullum ens... ita creatio, quae est emanatio totius esse, est ex non ente quod est nihil*)

¹⁷ The non-causal connotation of the preposition in ‘from nothing’ is well explained here. ‘Nothing’ cannot be a material or efficient cause (*Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 obj. 7). Nevertheless the same objection perceives the order from non-being to being as certain analogy or hierarchy which would imply certain likeness and dissimilarity between Being and the Non-being (Boethius). This view is refuted by Aquinas (and Avicenna earlier) who insists that there is not any order of definite proportion or real relation between being and non-being (See *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 ad 7). There is only an order of existential rational speculation between the two.

¹⁸ The *Non-being* is the absolute lack of the act of existence. It is an abstract concept that facilitates the explanation of the notion of Divine Creation (*creatio ex nihilo*).

Aquinas presents a new outlook here. He provides a linguistic interpretation of the *creation from nothing* in which he demonstrates that the preposition cannot have any causal meaning in the expression. To *create from nothing* means either to *create not from anything* which negates the existence of a substratum at the Divine Creation; or *not to create from anything* which negates the Divine Creation if this entails a pre-existent subject «... for non-being can in no way be the cause of being»¹⁹.

The apparent procession of being from non-being is an inaccuracy of what in reality is. This error is resolved when non-being is considered to simply have a natural and temporal precedence to created being²⁰. Indeed the term *ex nihilo* means that creative action of God encounters a natural absolute lack of existence a part from Himself.

2. THE PRINCIPAL THESES OF THE AQUINAS METAPHYSICS OF CREATION

When one studies the Aquinas description of the expression *creatio ex nihilo* in the commentary of *Q.D.P.* 3 a. 1, it is important to highlight the approach he takes. He does not approach the justification of this expression from a so-called bottom-up inductive argument but rather from top-down deduction. *Creatio ex nihilo* is principally the metaphysical description, not of the nature of the *nothingness* as if this were the base of action, but rather of the nature of acting of the Being which is the Pure Act, God Himself. Aquinas describes God as the subject of the creative act rather than nihilum as a sort of object that is the departing point of the action of God. Hence he says: «On the other hand, *God is all act*, both in comparison to himself, since *he is pure act* without any admixture of potency, and in comparison to things which are in act, since in him is found the perfection of every being as the most complete and first source of those beings. Thus, through his action he produces the

¹⁹ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 ad 7.

²⁰ According to Kretzmann, the notion of the Non-being can be understood as anterior to (created) being with a natural and temporal precedence. The Being is the very first positive act. The Non-being is therefore naturally prior to it because creatures can be said not to derive from but to follow non-being in a certain sense because they are brought to being by God. The Divine being, on the other hand, does not have anything that is naturally anterior to it. God is the First and Pure Act (See KRETZMANN, N., *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra gentiles II*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999, p. 75).

whole subsistent being, without anything pre-existing, since he is principle of all beings and acts according to his whole being. And because of this he is able to make something from nothing and this action of his is called creation»²¹. It therefore becomes crucial for us to analyse the Notion of Action so to appreciate the Principle of Act as a First Principle in the metaphysics of the Divine Creation.

The key to a proper interpretation of the idiom *creatio ex nihilo* lies in the rationale of the nature of the Divine Action. Only when the latter is appreciated (within the limits of human intellection) can we understand that: «God creates from nothing and not that nothingness is the origin of universal being». The distinction is minute but decisive. As Aquinas attests, the reason why God creates from nothing is that the nature of His action is that of a subject which the Pure Act is: «And *because of this* he is able to make something from nothing».

Aquinas' commentary of article 1 cited above shall therefore guide our study of the Principle of Act as a First Principle of the Metaphysics of Divine Creation.

The third question of the *Q.D.P.* outlines the fundamental tenets of this question²²:

- The truth that God brings the universality of creatures into being in the absence of any pre-existing basis (*ex nihilo*) is the rationale behind the Divine Creation;
- *Ex nihilo* production of being is absolute and is what is called creation. This is the description of Creation;
- The Divine Creation is solely attributable to God;
- This is explained by the fact that Divine Creation is the universal justification of the being of all reality distinct from God;
- This is because only God can act in the most universal way that characterises the nature of the Divine Creation;
- Aquinas argues that the action of natural agents is restrained in particularity by the fact that these are composed of an act and a limiting potency (matter in material realities) which makes them *per se ipsa* particular beings: «... no natural thing includes the acts and perfections of everything which is in act, but each has act confined to one genus and

²¹ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

²² Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

one species... And so the action of a natural agent does not produce being absolutely, but determines pre-existing being to this or to that»²³. God is the Pure Act «since in him is found the perfection of every being as the most complete and first source of particular beings»²⁴; «Thus, through his action he produces the whole subsistent being, without anything pre-existing, since he is the principle of all beings and (acts) according to his whole being»²⁵.

- The Divine Creative Action is causation of being. God is the first universal cause and foundation of all secondary causality.

Aquinas' Metaphysics of Creation is greatly guided by two chief principles:

a) *Every agent acts in so far as it is in act*²⁶; b) *An agent produces its resemblance*²⁷.

a) *The Law of Similitude: Omne agens agit sibi simile*²⁸

Aquinas seeks recourse to the Law of Similitude (or Similarity) when he 'endeavours'²⁹ to describe the nature of act in God *in analogy* to the nature of physical, observable movement or action. The underlying principle that

²³ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

²⁴ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

²⁵ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

²⁶ The capacity to act of God is the Pure Act of Being.

²⁷ The effect of the creative action of God is the universal community of being because God produces the semblance of Himself which is being.

²⁸ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

²⁹ The nature of God is incomprehensible to the human intellect due to the fact that God is the Infinite being while man is a finite creature. Consequently it is impossible to know God in a quidditative way (conceptually). The latter is the natural way by which man knows i.e. through the essences of things (*S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 25 n. 5 & 10). Nevertheless, the philosophical science can extrapolate its knowledge of the being of the Universal reality so as to affirm that God *is*; that He exists: «Deus autem est *Ipsum Esse*» (*S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 25 n. 10); «Hoc nomen, *Qui est*, est maxime proprium nomen Dei» (*S.Th.*, I^a q. 13 a. 11 co.). This affirmation is fundamentally based on the fact that real being *is*; its original cause must therefore possess the act of being because an effect bespeaks its cause. Christian Divine Revelation further confirms this truth when God describes Himself as «I am Who *I am*» (Exodus 3:14); «Thomas responds that in this life, God can be known by us only by means of forms found in effects. But effects are of two kinds. Some are equal to the power of their cause. Through such an effect the power of its cause can be fully known. Another kind of effect falls short of the perfection of its cause. By knowing such an effect we cannot fully grasp the power of its agent and, consequently, neither can we know its essence. We can however know for sure that its cause exists. Because every created effect enjoys only the latter kind of relationship to god, by reasoning from effect to God, we can know of him only that He is (WIPPEL, J. F., *The Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2007, pp. 155-156)».

sanctions the valid analogical induction of any knowledge of God from the Universe is founded on the fact that God is the First Efficient Cause of the Universe and that *the effect, in some way, bespeaks its cause* which is the colloquial wording of the metaphysical Law of Similitude. The analogical predication of a certain perfection in a positive way (not simply knowledge of God through negation of what is creatural) in creatures and in God is only attributed to the fact that there is a similarity, similitude or likeness of this perfection between both creatures and God³⁰.

It is important to note, preliminarily, that the axiom *omne agens agit agens sibi simile* is a metaphysical explanation in se of universal action. For this reason, this Law governs the nature of universal action in a proper sense. Both God and creatures act naturally but separately according to the Law of Similarity. The Natural Trinitarian Generative Action which is natural action within the Divine Essence (as opposed to creative) is *sibi simile*³¹.

Nevertheless, we are obliged to clarify what *sibi simile* strictly means. This clarification is made necessary by the two variant positions regarding the metaphysical implication of the maxim *omne agens agit sibi simile* in Wippel and Rosemann. Does the maxim merely justify the «philosophical predication of certain names of God» in a proper sense (Wippel)³² or is it a fundamental metaphysical tenet of the nature of agent action, «a principle which ensures that even the greatest degree of difference or dissimilitude between diverse elements of the cosmos can never become an absolute otherness» (Rosemann)³³?

According to Wippel, the Law of Similitude in Aquinas justifies the fact that our cognition of God though imperfect, can be real and positive because the names that designate pure perfections such as wisdom, goodness and being³⁴, are names that are attributed to God properly and not meta-

³⁰ Cfr. WIPPEL, 2007, p. 154.

³¹ Cfr. AQUINAS, T., *In I Sent.*, d. 7 q. 1 a. 1: «God also acts according to these two ways (natural and rational powers). In effect, something proceeds from God in similarity to His Nature, receiving all the Divine Nature; not only essentially but numerically... For this reason, there is a generative power in God, in likeness to the Natural Productive Power».

³² Cfr. WIPPEL, 2007, p. 154.

³³ Cfr. ROSEMAN, P., *Omne agens agit sibi simile*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1996, pp. 22-23.

³⁴ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 30 n. 2: «Since it is possible to find in God every perfection of creatures, but in another and more eminent way, whatever names unqualifiedly designate a perfection without defect are predicated of God and of other things: for example, goodness, wisdom, being, and the like».

phorically, through the similarity to their human connotation. The proper divine attribution of these names is explained by the fact that these pure perfections apply to God as *res significata* (real and positive) though not according to the *modus significandi*³⁵ (imperfect)³⁶. In the quest to apply the Law of Similitude in the knowledge of God (albeit imperfectly), there is a prerequisite affirmation: that an effect is similar to its cause. The similarity of the effect to its agent cause is founded on the fact that through the Principle of the Natural Action (everything acts insofar as it is in act), the agent infuses a form, analogical to self, in its effect³⁷. All agent causes (God and creatures) act in a similar manner.

Given that form found in the creatures is «like» but not «the same as» the Divine Form, the names attributed to God as pure perfections properly signify their «res significata» which is form (essence) *per se ipsa*, but imperfectly or deficiently apply to God with respect to the *modus significandi* because the form of the creature is analogical to the Divine Form.

For Aquinas therefore, «likeness» means «sharing the same kind of form»³⁸.

If we (validly) reformulate the *ex nihilo, nihil fit* postulate as follows: «From existence, existence proceeds», we see how the original explanation of universal movement plays testimony to the Law of Causal Similitude, «a principle which ensures that even the greatest degree of difference or dissimilitude between diverse elements of the cosmos can never become an absolute otherness»³⁹. The

³⁵ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 30 n. 3: «I have said that some of the aforementioned names signify a perfection without defect. This is true with reference to that which the name was imposed to signify; for as to the mode of signification, every name is defective. For by means of a name we express things in the way in which the intellect conceives them... As a result, with reference to the mode of signification there is in every name that we use an imperfection, which does not benefit God, even though the thing signified in some eminent way does benefit God».

³⁶ Cfr. WIPPEL, 2007, p. 155: «While there is no explicit citation of our principle here [*omne agens agit sibi simile*], it is implied in that Thomas rests the justification for predicating names of pure perfections of God on our recognition that, insofar as we find these perfections in creatures, they depend on God as their exemplar cause. In other words, *they imitate him*. If one has established this, one can reason in reverse fashion and apply such names to him in some non-metaphorical way».

³⁷ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 29 n. 2: «The form of an effect, therefore, is certainly found in some measure in a transcending cause, but according to another mode and another way».

³⁸ Cfr. KRETZMANN, N., *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra gentiles I*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997, pp. 145-150.

³⁹ Cfr. ROSEMAN, 1996, pp. 22-23.

Non-being or *nothingness* cannot be a real participant in the coming to existence of the Universe because it does not hold any existence whatsoever. It is the radical conceptual opposition to being.

b) *The Law of the Act*: *Omne agens agit secundum quod in actu*⁴⁰

An agent acts insofar as it is in act. The Universal Action is attributable to the possession of act, fundamentally understood as the act of being (*esse*⁴¹). Consequently, the Principle of the Natural Action is based upon the fact that all agents, by their simple real existence, act according to their possession of *esse*⁴². The Principle of the Natural Action precedes the Law of Similarity because in order to produce *sibi simile*, an agent must first be able to produce or to act and this is only possible if the agent *is*, that is, *exists*. This is our interpretation of the sequential logic that the medieval thinker derives of the Law of Similarity from the Principle of Natural Action when he says: «since it belongs to the nature of action that an agent produces its like, since each thing acts according as it is in act»⁴³.

Nevertheless if the purpose of the Law of Similitude is exclusively to achieve certain knowledge of God based on our knowledge of the pure perfections (as Aquinas holds), then we encounter an apparent problem in the logical sequence of the Law of Similitude from the Principle of the Natural Action. This apparent dilemma has also been identified by Wipfel⁴⁴. There

⁴⁰ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

⁴¹ For example, we can compare the use of *esse* in: *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 15 n. 6 (*Unde, cum in infinitum procedi non possit, oportet quod sit aliquid necessarium quod sit causa omnium possibilium esse et non esse*) –here employed as ‘the act of existing’– and *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 15 n. 2 (*Esse autem dicitur de omni eo quod est*) –employed as ‘perfection’–. This absence of distinction between ‘being’ and ‘existing’ when Aquinas uses the term *esse* is also attributable to the somewhat diverse translation of *esse* in different languages. *Esse* is the Latin indicative form of the verb ‘to be’. The present participle or gerund, *ens* (*ens, entis*), refers to ‘being’ while *actus essendi* is ‘the act of being’ as the most fundamental act or reality of any existence. St. Thomas Aquinas states that ‘being’ refers to the act of being as the most fundamental act and not to the manner of being. (*Ens autem non dicit quidditatem, sed solum actum essendi, cum sit principium ipsum*) (I Sent., d. 8 q. 4 a. 2 ad 2). In practice, *esse* is loosely used to mean ‘to be’, ‘being’, ‘the act of being’ and even ‘to exist’.

⁴² Cfr. WIPPEL, 2007, p. 166: «that each and every thing acts insofar as it is in act – Thomas seems to base this on the common sense view that if something is to produce something else in actuality, it must itself exist in actuality».

⁴³ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 29 n. 2.

⁴⁴ Cfr. WIPPEL, 2007, pp. 166-169.

is not any rational consequence in: the fact that «the perfections present in the effect are similar to those of its agent cause» from the fact that «an agent acts because it is in act». The two facts, it seems, are unrelated! However if we bear in mind that one of the pure perfections mentioned by Aquinas is precisely *being (esse)*⁴⁵, then we reach not only a logical but an ontological conformity of the maxims: *The perfection of being or existence present in the effect is similar to that of its agent cause because an agent acts insofar as it possesses the act of being or exists.*

The Aquinas' position that the Law of Similitude proceeds from the Principle of the Natural Action finds its foundation in the fact that the possession of the act of being (*esse* or *actus essendi*) is the most fundamental explanation of the pretext under which agents act, produce or cause; and the reason why their effect (another existence) is alike to them.

In the Proposition 20 of the *Liber De Causis*, we come across one of the initial articulations⁴⁶ of the Principle of the Natural Action: *Omne agens agit secundum quod in actu.* The proposition affirms: «The first cause rules all created things without being mixed with them... And it rules all created things and infuses them with the power of life and goodness... *The first goodness infuses all things with goodness only through one mode because it is goodness only through its existence*, being and power, so that it is goodness, and both goodness and being are one thing»⁴⁷.

The Supreme Perfection and Act is the act that enables *existence*⁴⁸. It is the foundation of all other pure perfections. It is through existence that the first cause acts or causes goodness in other realities. As such to say that an agent acts insofar as it is in act really means that an agent acts insofar as it exists. Existence is the foundation of the Universal Causal Action. The Principle of the Natural Action establishes the act of existence as the fundamental causal act. Indeed, «it is in the nature of every act to communicate itself as far as possible. Wherefore every agent acts forasmuch as it is in act: while to act is nothing else than to communicate as far as possible that whereby the agent

⁴⁵ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 30 n. 2.

⁴⁶ Footnote 14: AQUINAS, T., *On Creation*, trans. Selner-Wright, S. C., The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2011, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Cfr. *In De Causis*, proposition 20 (*Commentary of the Book of Causes*, trans. Guagliardo, V., Hess, C., Taylor R., The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 1996, p. 120).

⁴⁸ *Actus essendi* or *esse*.

is in act»⁴⁹. The agent is primarily in act according to its existence. The agent therefore acts by communicating existence.

The commentary of Aquinas to the above Proposition provides further insight into the nature of the action of the first cause. He says: «But the first cause acts through its being, as was proved. Hence it does not act through any additional relation or disposition through which it would be adapted to and mix with things. And such a ‘relation’ is called here a connecting link or mediating thing because through such a disposition or relation an agent is adapted to a recipient, and is a certain sense a mediating thing between the essence of the agent and the patient itself. So, because the first cause acts through its being, it must rule things in one manner, for it rules things according to the way it acts»⁵⁰.

Given that the act by which an agent exists is the fundamental propeller of its action enables us to affirm that an agent acts in a singular manner because it acts insofar as it exists. This singularity of act further sustains the claim that the effect produced by an agent must reflect in some way the singular act by which the agent has produced it for the simple reason that the agent act is singular. And here lies the missing link between the *Omne agens agit secundum quod in actu* and the *Omne agens agit sibi simile*: The fact that the agent cause fundamental acts in a singular way, that is, according to *existence* means that its effect is a similitude of it by the mere fact that it exists! The very production or causation of an existent effect by an agent incorporates the two maxims (act and similarity) in one real action. Precisely in this explanation we find a bridge to the position of Rosemann that the Law of Causal Similitude is «a principle which ensures that even the greatest degree of difference or dissimilitude between diverse elements of the cosmos can never become an absolute otherness»⁵¹. The perfection of existence is the necessary link between the Natural Agent Causality and its effects.

⁴⁹ *Q.D.P.*, q. 2 a. 1 co.

⁵⁰ Cfr. *In De Causis*, proposition, 20 (*Commentary of the Book of Causes*, trans. Guagliardo, V., Hess, C., Taylor R., The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C., 1996, pp. 123-124).

⁵¹ Cfr. ROSEMAN, 1996, pp. 22-23.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE FREE AND INTELLIGENT CREATION

1. *BONUM DIFFUSIVUM SUI* V. THE FREE AND INTELLIGENT CREATION
OF THE UNIVERSE

In this Chapter, we focus on the study of the «how» the created reality proceeds from the Divine Author who is God. Aquinas affirms the fact that the Universe has been created freely and intelligently by God. This affirmation, as we shall see, is closely associated with the Law of Similitude, *Omne agens agit sibi simile*. In the Fifteenth article of *Q.D.P.*, question 3, Thomas Aquinas makes a reflection of whether the Universe was created necessarily, «by natural necessity», or out of the free choice of God, that is, «by the decree of his will»⁵².

The argument presented by Aquinas brings with it a long philosophical tradition drawing back to Plato and especially the Neo-Platonism regarding the attribute of the Divine Goodness. The founding principle of the Neo-Platonic view of the Divine Goodness is *Bonum diffusivum sui*⁵³, that is, that goodness is self-diffusive. It is so understood in this philosophical tradition that the nature of the Transcendental Good is to naturally diffuse itself into other beings or realities. This natural diffusion forms the basis of the explanation of the Divine Creation as an act of emanation of God in other realities. Platonism holds as true the postulate that the existence of this Universe is the product of the necessity arising from the final causality of the Divine Goodness. The nature of the Transcendental Good is such that is self-diffusion (and hence efficient productive capacity) is necessary.

St. Augustine, and in this demonstrates his Neo-Platonist heritage, translates the philosophical axiom as the following: «Because God is good, we are»⁵⁴. The universal created reality ultimately proceeds from the Good, since

⁵² *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15.

⁵³ *The good is diffusive of itself* is a Neo-Platonist philosophical axiom regarding the nature of good as perfection. See WIPPEL, 2007, pp. 218-223 regarding the Platonic and Neo-Platonist origins of this axiom.

⁵⁴ AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *De Doctrina Christiana*, I, 32: «But He does not use a thing as we do. For we refer the things that we use to the enjoyment of the goodness of God; but God refers His use of us to His own good. Because He is good, we are; and in so far as we are, we are good» (*On Christian Doctrine*, translated by D.W. Robertson Jr., The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis 1958, p. 27).

the Divine Goodness, natural and essential to God, is the cause that produces creatures, naturally and essentially as well⁵⁵.

Moreover, and here we see the influence of the Law of Similitude, given that the created reality, an effect of the Divine Action, is intrinsically good⁵⁶, it follows that its origin must be good because an agent acts in its likeness. This is how the Law of Similitude is sought to explain the Transcendental Goodness of God and the Created Universe in the Scholastic Metaphysics. Rosemann elaborates the fact that the Principle of Similitude in the Scholastic Metaphysics is characterised by 3 aspects: pre-containment, influx and similarity. Causality is the metaphysical principle that ensures that there is a connection between the Universe and its Creator. The goodness of the created being is therefore *pre-contained* in the Divine Goodness. Nevertheless, the Pre-Containment Maxim fundamentally affirms that the agent is the efficient cause of similar attribute in the effect because to 'pre-contain' means that the agent must have a capacity or power to produce the said effect⁵⁷.

This is how we arrive at the nucleus of the problem regarding the free and intelligent creation of the Universe by God. If the Good is naturally diffusive of itself as sustained by the principle *Bonum diffusivum sui* and at the same time the intrinsic goodness of the created reality bears testimony to the Law of Similitude and its Pre-containment viewpoint which alludes to an efficient causality of the existence of the similarity in the effect, does it not follow that that the Divine Goodness in its natural self-diffusion, necessarily or naturally (as opposed to freely) produces the created effect? This is the central dilemma of article 15 and 16 of *Q.D.P.*, question 3.

According to the Aquinas Tradition, God is free to create the present Universe or any other that He so pleases. God has created the Universe out of his absolute freedom. God could have created the Universe or not. He freely chose to create it: «I answer that without any doubt we are to hold that God produced creatures in being by the free decree of his will with no natural necessity»⁵⁸.

Nevertheless Aquinas does not completely circumvent the necessary emanative implications of the axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui*. Take the thesis devel-

⁵⁵ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15 obj. 5.

⁵⁶ This view not only is sustained by the Platonic Philosophical Tradition, but also is fundamental to the Christian Doctrine (see St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, I, 32).

⁵⁷ ROSEMAN, 1996, p. 24

⁵⁸ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15 co.

oped in chapters 73 through to 75 of *S.c.G.* that God's will is identical with His very essence⁵⁹ and this is the Divine Simplicity. The principal object of the Divine Will is the Divine Essence⁶⁰. The good that is understood is the object of the will⁶¹. The primary object of God's understanding is the Divine Essence. It therefore follows that the Divine Essence is the primary object of the Divine Will.

The consequential implication of this identification of the object of God's will in the Divine Essence is made clear when Aquinas affirms that were God to will anything other than His Essence, then this other (an external object) would be the cause of God's volition⁶². Now then since the Principle of Identity governs the Divine Being (*Esse*) and the Divine Will, there is not any external object from God that can provoke his volition towards it.

According to the thesis of the Perfect Identification of the Divine Essence and Will as developed by Aquinas in *S.c.G.*, one could conclude that Aquinas philosophically sustains the fact that the Divine Will moves itself in a natural and necessary fashion towards the Divine Essence. This conclusion would of course not leave any room for the rational sustenance of the free-willing by God of an eternal reality to Him as is the case of the created Universe.

Moreover, Aquinas in chapter 75 of the cited work affirms that God, through his natural and necessary willing of self, also wills other things⁶³. Is this not a contradiction to God's impossibility to will anything external to self as demonstrated above?

God is the Final Causality of the created Universe because only He can will the most ultimate end which is God Himself⁶⁴. But what does God naturally will? He wills his own existence⁶⁵. In this way, Aquinas unites the conceptual distinction between the will and being into a unique ontological reality. By willing His own existence, God wills the existence of all that exists and this explains how the created Universe comes to be. In this manner therefore, God

⁵⁹ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 73 n. 2.

⁶⁰ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 74 n. 1.

⁶¹ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 72 n. 2.

⁶² *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 73 n. 3: «But the understanding of God is His being (cap. 45). For since the divine being is in itself most perfect, it admits of no superadded perfection».

⁶³ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 75 n. 1.

⁶⁴ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 75 n. 2: «God Himself is the ultimate end of things»

⁶⁵ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 72 n. 2: «Hence, because he wills himself *to be*, He likewise wills other things which are ordered to him as to the end».

can be said to will creation in willing himself. His will in the same way as the created Universe tend to the same object who is God. The universal created reality through the unique act of God's willing therefore definitively tends towards God.

This Aquinas postulate could be interpreted as a thesis of the Necessary Divine Creation⁶⁶. For this reason Kretzmann criticizes this position of the medieval thinker which presents the Divine Will as purely determined to act in a certain fashion. God's will is therefore not like the will of a person but rather «more like the earth's naturally necessitated, utterly non-personal, static appetite for remaining at the centre of the Aristotelian Cosmos»⁶⁷. Building up on the Aquinas affirmation that God *in* willing Himself also wills other things⁶⁸, Kretzmann comes to the conclusion that God must necessarily will the existence of the created Universe because the will of God is perfect which means that he lacks the deficiency of willing a certain end without will all other things directed to this end as is the created Universe.

On the other hand, he continues, it cannot be held that things external to God can be a means in order to attain, sustain or enhance the end who is God Himself. A further dilemma is the fact that in the general understanding of the human will, the things that are directed towards an end are considered as means. Applying the common understanding of the operation of the human will to God, it remains to be seen how things external to God could in any sense at all be willed by God as a means to the end⁶⁹.

Based on the Aquinas wording: «*in willing Himself*, God also wills other things»⁷⁰, Kretzmann argues that the created Universe occurs *within* the necessary, choice-less divine willing. The single act of the divine will⁷¹ therefore appears contradictory to a free-choice act. The Aquinas conception of God,

⁶⁶ See the Thesis of Avicenna below.

⁶⁷ KRETZMANN, 1997, p. 218.

⁶⁸ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 75 n. 1.

⁶⁹ KRETZMANN, 1997, p. 219.

⁷⁰ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 75 n. 1.

⁷¹ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 76 n. 2: «Every power is directed to its object and to the formal notion of the object by one operation or one act. For example, by the same sight we see light and colour, which becomes visible in act through light. Now, when we will something solely for the sake of the end, that which is desired for the sake of the end derives the nature of something willed from the end; and thus the end is to it as the formal notion of the object is to the object, for example, as light is to colour. Since, then, God wills other things for His own sake as for the sake of the end, as has been shown, he wills himself and other things by one act of will».

goodness, creation and free-choice, Kretzmann insists, enfold an understanding of necessity⁷². Moreover, as we have seen, the Omnipotent Agent is not served of any means in order to reach its end. We cannot therefore attribute any sort of selection by the Divine Agent of how best to act. In the operation of the human will as we know it, selection is achieved only through free choice⁷³. Through free choice⁷⁴, the voluntary agent selects among the means known by the intellect and ordered according to utility⁷⁵ in order to achieve the desired end.

Kretzmann employs the following argument: We cannot apply this logic to God because he is not motivated to act by any utility whatsoever. The question therefore remains pertinent: What motivates God to create anything at all? It is true, as Aquinas affirms that, the volition of other realities by God is founded on the fact that *goodness* is found in them and God wills all *good*⁷⁶.

He however fails to take note of the fact that Aquinas, in this point, affirms that God wills, not the goodness found in other realities but rather wills other realities *to be*⁷⁷. The *goodness* found in these realities pre-supposes their real existence and God gives this existence through the free and intelligent creation. The question as to why God would give real existence to these realities (to create) consequently does not remain unanswered.

S.c.G., lib. I cap. 76 n. 3: «Moreover, what is perfectly known and desired is known and desired according to its whole power. But the power of the end is measured not only according as it is desired in itself, but also according as other things become desirable for its sake. Hence, whoever desires an end perfectly desires it in both ways. But there is not act of will in God by which he wills Himself and does not do so perfectly, since there is nothing imperfect in Him. Therefore, by whatever act God wills Himself, he wills Himself absolutely and other things for His sake. But He does not will things other than Himself except in so far as he wills Himself. It remains, then, that God does not will himself and other things by different acts of will, but by one and the same act».

⁷² KRETZMANN, 1997, p. 223. Kretzmann comes to the conclusion that the Aquinas position that God is free to create or no is heavily overwhelmed by his explanation singular way of acting of the Divine Will because God's goodness which is the object and cause of God's willing, is «also the very willing itself».

⁷³ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 88 n. 2: «Free choice is said in relation to the things that one wills, not of necessity, but of his own accord».

⁷⁴ Aquinas argues that God has free choice in so far as this, in the human intellectual operation, involves the inclination of the will to the judgment of reason as opposed to the pure natural instinct of sensible animals. (*S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 88 n. 3)

⁷⁵ KRETZMANN, 1997, p. 221.

⁷⁶ KRETZMANN, 1997, p. 222.

⁷⁷ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 81 n. 4: «God in willing His own goodness wills things other than Himself *to be* in so far as they participate in His goodness».

In conclusion, Aquinas sustains various theses that need to be placed side by side if one is to arrive at his overall perspective regarding the freedom of God to create:

- In the common understanding of the intellectual operations, the object of the faculty of the will is the good;
- There is perfect identity between the Divine Essence or Goodness and the Divine Will. God wills Himself as the most ultimate good;
- The principal object of the Divine Will therefore is the Divine Essence;
- God cannot will anything a part from Himself since this external reality would become the object of the Divine Will and this is in contrary to the perfect simplicity due to the identity in God;
- God's volition cannot therefore have any external cause;
- Given the perfect identification in God, the Divine Will moves in a natural and necessary way;
- Nevertheless Aquinas also affirms that God in willing himself, wills other things;
- Moreover Aquinas says that there is a singular act of the Divine Will;

Well then, in order to arrive at reconciling position in the Aquinas standpoint, the argument of *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 81 n. 4: «God in willing His own goodness wills things other than Himself *to be* in so far as they participate in His goodness» becomes decisive. Here Aquinas introduces an all-important paradigm shift which is the ontological order. God only wills the Divine Goodness in a necessary and direct way. He wills the goodness of the created Universe not directly but in so far as its *existence* (of the created Universe) participates in perfection of the *good*. However, the only way in which the created Universe participates in goodness is through its very existence and this is what is willed by God.

Our interpretation of the Aquinas position is as follows: the Divine Will moves through a single act which at the same time is the Pure and Absolute Act⁷⁸. The Pure Act is universal by definition. For this very reason,

⁷⁸ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co. Aquinas argues that the action of natural agents is restrained in particularity by the fact that these are composed of an act and a limiting potency (matter in material realities) which makes them *per se ipsa* particular beings: «... no natural thing includes the acts and perfections of everything which is in act, but each has act confined to one genus and one species... And so the action of a natural agent does not produce being absolutely, but determines pre-existing being to this or to that». God is Pure Act «since in him is found the perfection of every being as the most complete and first source of particular beings».

it accounts for both the necessary and the contingent. In the single act of the Divine Will which is the Pure Act, therefore, God wills His being in a necessary manner, and contingently wills the existence of other beings in so far as they are good.

The contingency that attributable to the Pure Act can only be true if God is free and intelligent. God's freedom therefore enables him to create or not the present Universe or whichever other that he freely desires.

It is our view, therefore, that Aquinas' standpoint regarding the divine will is not deterministic at all. When Aquinas identifies the divine will to the divine being, he does so from the perspective of the final causality rather than the efficient causality. This is obvious from the fact that in the movement of his will towards his existence, 'God does not produce God'. The intra-Trinitarian Existence is eternally persistent. The three Persons of the Trinity are not efficiently produced. They co-exist eternally. Therefore when Aquinas affirms such identity of the Divine Will to its being it is understood that the divine will is 'intended' for the divine being and vice versa.

Consequently, one cannot argue that the Divine Will is determined to produce the universal creation. On the other hand, it is true that the universal creation is ultimately 'intended' or destined to its author, the Divine Being.

Kretzmann is also of the view that only the production of the created being by the Divine Will can account for any «personifying choice anywhere in the divine volition»⁷⁹. Nevertheless, he errs in this affirmation. It is not the operation of the Divine Creation that gives God personal attributes. The intra-Trinitarian Generation is precisely the specification of the Divine Persons in God. It is in this action that the Perfect Intelligence and Will of God is realised since the Trinity is the perfect comprehension of the Ultimate Truth and the Perfect Love or Will of this truth, God Himself.

The Intra-Trinitarian Being is a personified and dynamic relationship. It is the self-reflexive circularity of the substance and relations. Rosemann holds that the principle *Omne agens agit sibi simile* guarantees that the created Universe possesses a real revelatory quality of its Divine Agent Cause who is incomprehensible in se. «All the dynamism of creation, all its life, arises from the irreducible split which characterises it: a split whereby the principle and 'origin' of the created being remains barred, hence becoming the object of an

⁷⁹ KRETZMANN, 1997, p. 218.

interminable quest»⁸⁰. Precisely the Trinitarian doctrine sustains that in God *to be* and *to be in relation* are one and the same thing⁸¹. This is a breakaway from the tradition of the distinction between the substance and the relations in the Categories of Aristotle.

2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSARY DIVINE CREATION IN AVICENNA

Preliminarily, we state that the thought of the major Muslim philosophers contemporaneous to the Scholastic period, namely: Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā and al-Farabi demonstrates strong Neo-Platonist traits. As a consequence, there is an underlying dualistic vein that interprets universal reality through the Essentialism and the Materialism. This dualism is founded upon the distinction of Plato between the real world of forms or essences and the degradation of the same in the material universe. The Neo-Platonist vision of the absolute transcendence of God (a truth) is contrasted with the material nature of the universe (resulting in dualism). Henceforth, philosophical study struggles to explain the creation of the physical cosmos and inevitably ends up in the introduction of the doctrine of the intermediary beings or intellects so as to explain the procession of material reality from immaterial God.

According to the Arab tradition, God is the Supreme Essence who possesses various attributes including intellect, will and causal power. The Islamic Theology differs in view of the relationship between essences and attributes from the Islamic Philosophy which maintains a distinction between the Divine Essence and divine attributes. However there is a relationship of necessity between essence and attributes. The Islamic Theology advocates the comprehension of God as a unity of essence and attributes. This is done so as to

⁸⁰ ROSEMANN, 1996, p. 342.

⁸¹ Cfr. ROSEMANN, 1996, pp. 346-347: «The Christian doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that the split between substance and function is healed in *esse* as it is in itself. In God, the ‘other’ functions no longer as a principle of alienation, so that the mediation of the self through an ‘other’ is in God, and in God alone, a process which does not involve any loss of self. Substance and function are no longer opposite, though co-constitutive, poles; rather, in God substance *is* function (or relation)»; also pp. 347-348: «The divine essence, which is thoroughly *relational* –indeed, which is nothing else than the three persons, who are their relationships–, still is in no way *relative*. At the summit of being, substance and relation (function) lose their contradictory character. This is the essence of St. Thomas’ teaching on the Trinity». Aquinas is of the view that the Divine Persons of the Trinity are the very subsistent relations (*S.Th.*, I^a q. 40 a. 2 ad 1).

preserve the fact of the Divine Unity and Simplicity. The Arab Philosophers –Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā and al-Farabi– interpret the Christian Teaching as polytheistic because this sustains the doctrine of the Trinitarian God while Islam contrarily maintains a radical oneness in God⁸².

It is our view that a new approach to the notion of causality is well desired in the Islamic philosophical deliberation, especially if one is to apply this notion to any worthwhile Metaphysics of the Divine Creation. Thanks to the Platonism and the thought of Aristotle certain important tenets have found stable dwelling in mainstream Philosophy. They are: the absolute transcendence of God, the Principle of Causality and the notion of Participation. Nevertheless, in the study of the Metaphysics of Divine Creation, one comes to term with the impediments of the unqualified application of the said tenets. The study of the Principle of Causality in Arab tradition firmly maintains the naturalistic vision of Aristotle save for a slight distinction. The Muslim philosophers take up the thesis of the four causes of the Greek thinker and apply this thesis to the creation of the Universe. Nevertheless there is an attempt to go beyond the Aristotelian notion of the First Mover which seeks to explain changes manifested in the processes of existence, the Generation and Corruption. These thinkers endeavour to present a more theological point of view regarding the question of existence. They therefore consider God the «Unique Originator»⁸³.

A simple naturalistic view of causality in God presents yet another hurdle, this time for Islamic theology. This is the question of dependence of creatures upon God, a postulate upheld by this theology. According to the principle of the Natural Causality, an agent produces an effect in a procedural manner, that is, the effect is produced in motion with a determined beginning and end. God therefore must be involved in a continuous re-creation of the Universe. How else would we explain the stable existence and constant change that characterizes material universe?

Contrary to this ‘Theistic vision’ of creation, the Arab Philosophy, when considering the cause of the Universal Creation, does not distinguish between God and immaterial creatures. The latter are intermediaries in the

⁸² Cfr. BERTI, E., *Struttura e significato della Metafisica di Aristotele*, Edizioni Università della Santa Croce, Roma 2006, p. 130.

⁸³ This paradigm shift is motivated, above all, by the desire to be faithful to the writings of the Qur’an (God is the supreme author of all creation).

creation of the world⁸⁴. Avicenna picks up the theory of the ten intelligent agents that participate in the creation of the universe as outlined by al-Farabi so as to formulate his thesis that creation is limited to immaterial intellects (the ‘givers of existence’) while physical bodies are the preparatory agents for new forms of objects and effects: Avicenna divided agents into two kinds: the Divine Agent who bestows existence; and natural agents that cause movement and change in bodies... However, al-Farabi and Avicenna also considered other immaterial beings to be creative causes along with God. So as to facilitate the application of the creative cause to immaterial creatures, Avicenna defines ‘cause’ as that which comes to existence by itself or by means of other causes and then becomes a source for the existence or continued existence of others⁸⁵.

The error of the reflection of Avicenna regarding the concept of causality can therefore be found at various fronts: 1) in the definition of causality in such a way that it applies to universal reality, that is, the application of causality to God as the Divine Agent who is *causa sui*, and 2) in the very concept itself which he claims imperceptible by the senses which only perceive simple sequence of events.

When Avicenna sets out to reflect upon the concept of the Divine Creation, he affirms that there are two existential causes: the agent and the purpose. The agent is God as the creator of existence while the purpose is the finality of the Divine Action. The principal motivation of the action of God is his existential will. God creates in an arbitrary manner.

According to Avicenna, the Divine Creation is the necessary external causal action of God. Indeed the guiding principle of Avicenna is that attributes are necessary consequences of the essence. The causal attribute in God is a necessary consequence of the Divine Essence. In the critique we hereby make of the thesis of Avicenna, one must make a distinction between necessity in the subject who is God and the object which is the creature. Avicenna, faithful to the doctrine of the Qur’an, admits the contingency of the cosmos or created universe. However it is the view of Arab thinkers that the laws of causality rule over every universal existence including the essence, attributes, and actions of God. Given that God *must* create, divine

⁸⁴ The pure forms or essences contribute to the creation of material universe (Neo-Platonism).

⁸⁵ Cfr. YASREBI, Y., «A critique of causality in Islamic philosophy», *Topoi*, 26 (2007) 259.

knowledge is founded on the awareness of effects⁸⁶. The Divine Knowledge is fundamentally that of the effect, that is, the recognition by God that he is creative cause.

«Of course the reason why, for Avicenna, whatever comes to exist is preceded by matter is precisely because, for him, the existence of anything that comes to exist is preceded by the possibility of its existence, and, as has just been argued, there would be no possibility if there were no matter *qua* subject in which that possibility inheres. Consequently for Avicenna it is simply absurd to claim that God created matter, and so the world, at some first moment in time before which it did not exist. This is because if only what is possible can be created, and matter is supposed to be created after not existing, then the possibility of creating the matter must have existed prior to the matter; but again for Avicenna, this possibility requires the existence of matter as substrate in which it inheres»⁸⁷.

The erroneous thesis of the Divine Creation through intermediary intellects must be comprehended within the scope of naturalistic causality in which the Arab Philosophy navigates. According to the *Law of Singularity*, each one and simple cause can only produce a unique effect. A single cause cannot produce multiple effects. In the discourse of the Universal Creation, God is simply an efficient cause. The Divine Creation is interpreted at the hands of efficient causality because it is either the causality of the form of an entity or the composition of matter and form in existence. The unique effect of the efficient causal power of God is the First Intelligence⁸⁸.

How then do the material beings come to existence? The Tenth Intelligence (*dator formarum*) is the ‘provider of forms’ which are infused into the

⁸⁶ Cfr. YASREBI, 2007, p. 262. Yasrebi attributes the subordination of God to causal laws in Islamic philosophy to the influence of Greek thought where all existence is subject to destiny. There is a subordination of Divine will to Divine knowledge.

⁸⁷ MCGINNIS, J., «The Ultimate Why Question: Avicenna on Why God is absolutely necessary», in *The Ultimate Why Question: Why is there anything at all rather than nothing whatsoever?*, John F. Wippel (ed.), The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C. 2011, pp. 81-82.

⁸⁸ The *Hypothesis of the Intelligences* originates from Neo-Platonism. Philo of Alexandria affirms the absolute transcendence of God and consequently demonstrates the need for intermediary beings in the creation of the universe. These are the *Logos* and the *Nous*. God did not create the material world immediately. First he created the intelligible world (*kósmos noetón*) which is the universe of archetypes and intelligent ideas (*noetón idéa*). The material universe is a subsequent copy of the intelligible universe (See PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA, *De Opificio Mundi*, IV, 16).

Prime Matter, pure potentiality. Given that matter is the principle of individuation, the same form can be found in a plurality of individual concrete objects. Firstly, the Prime Matter is taken out of its state of in-determination through acquisition of its specific form (*forma corporeitatis*). The act of an external cause then predisposes this matter to acquire one particular form. Avicenna, in this thesis, is able to fuse the notion of God as the Unmoved Mover, who, according to Aristotle is absolutely dissociated from the origin of the material world which subsists through the laws of causality⁸⁹, and the *active agent* of material universe which is the Tenth Intellect.

According to Avicenna, the Universal Creation is not simply explained off as the direct or immediate procession from the Divine Act. There must be a chain of events that result in the final material Universe⁹⁰. The Hylemorphic (matter and form) composition of material reality, a natural occurrence according to Aristotle, is based on the cohesive and repulsive forces that are existent in the composite entity. They ensure the stability of the material substance.

The comprehension by Avicenna of the fact of *creatio ex nihilo* is dubious given that he is convinced that an entity cannot exist without pre-existing matter and every contingent being needs the Prime Matter and time. Matter is therefore eternal and ‘creation from nothing’ is only a theoretical perception⁹¹. The position of Avicenna is that the metaphysical *creatio ex nihilo* is made up of 3 stages: non-existence, existence and the fact of the passage from one to the other. The necessity of the causal power pertains to the existence of the created effect. All created effect necessarily must exist. There is not any ‘possibility of existence’ or passage from potentiality to actuality. As such, there is not any constant dependence of an effect upon its cause which acts in a certain distinctive moment. The philosophical pursuit of Avicenna arrives at

⁸⁹ Although Aristotle demonstrates the need for creation of the universe when he pursues the question of the origin of universal existence and movement, we cannot affirm that he may have comprehended the notion of «*creatio ex nihilo*» as the Christian era has. His view on the eternity of matter and the constant emphasis on the autonomous nature of causal laws in the universe leave little room for the truth of Divine Creation which is the production of universal created being in the absence of any substratum, distinction of the multiple forms or creature and the constant and indispensable governance (dependence) of creation by God.

⁹⁰ Causality is one of the secondary intelligible that describes objects in the external world.

⁹¹ This is the constant danger of pushing Metaphysics to pure abstraction lacking any reference to the reality.

the conviction that matter is infinite and eternal. Therefore so as to avoid a never-ending and consequently illogical regression of causes we must affirm that there is an efficient cause, the Necessary Existence, as the fountainhead of all other existence. God the Creator is the efficient cause.

The ‘doctrine of the intellects’ does not provide a satisfactory explanation of how material beings can originate from immaterial ones especially if we are to maintain the sequence of causality and the Law of Singularity. «If we can thus consider Allah –with his infinite names and attributes– as the source of all phenomena and the cosmological order, why should we make Him depend on intermediaries for the creation of this? Why do we taint the monotheistic cosmological order with the hue of polytheism?»⁹² Moreover God is deprived of an active status with respect to creation. Islamic Philosophy lays undue emphasis of the role of the Divine Knowledge at creation (rooted in Greek deliberation⁹³) at the expense of the Divine Will.

The Principle of Causality cannot be an independent concrete reality to which the Universal reality, including God, is the object. Nevertheless, it is not a pure abstraction of the relationship between external events by the human mind. Common everyday experience or common wisdom tells us that ‘Fire burns’ and not ‘I can perceive that when fire is put next to a piece of paper, this begins to burn’. We can truthfully conclude that it is the nature of fire to burn. If fire did not burn, it would not be fire! In fact, the Principle of Causality goes beyond mere observation and describes the very nature of a being. What is said of a subject as cause is said of the very nature of that subject. For this very reason, one must be very precise in the application of the Principle of Causality to God as the Divine Being. This is the big dilemma of Avicenna and the Islamic Philosophy. God cannot be the object of causality. He is the Uncaused Cause. For this very reason, the Principle of Causality originates from the perception of the created reality as an effect and not from the perception of the nature of God as cause.

Aquinas provides a more than worthwhile deliberative response.

⁹² Cfr. YASREBI, 2007, p. 261.

⁹³ The concept of the *Nous* initially derives from the Pluralist philosophy and especially from Anaxagoras. Socrates discovers it in his quest into possible non-cosmological explanations regarding the original cause of the universe. Through Socrates, the principle of the *Nous* (νοῦς) or the Mind as the cause of all natural law and order in the cosmos find its place in the History of Philosophy (See *Metaphysics*, I, 3, 984b15).

3. ARGUMENT ONE: GOD IS THE FINAL CAUSE OF THE CREATED UNIVERSE. GOODNESS IS PERFECTIVE NOT PRODUCTIVE

In the first argument that Aquinas employs to sustain his position, he affirms that the Universe must have some final causality or purpose since it did not come to being by chance, «there is an intended end in God's production of creatures».

Aquinas makes a subtle introduction of the intrinsic relationship between the intellect and the will in an agent of intellectual nature as is God. The will or free action is contra-posed to natural or necessary action. Both the will and nature act towards an end but in distinct ways. The natural action takes place in a determined or 'blind' fashion. Aquinas says: «For since nature does not know its end or have any notion of an end for itself or the relation of means to an end, it cannot determine an end for itself or move or order or direct itself toward an end»⁹⁴. The natural action of an agent is pre-determined by a free agent who knows and wills the determined end of this natural agent. Aquinas demonstrates this thesis with the example of an archer and an arrow. The archer is the voluntary agent who knows what his target is and will to hit it. The arrow on the other hand is a natural agent whose movement is totally determined by the aim of the archer⁹⁵.

Aquinas demonstrates the intrinsic relationship between the intellect and the will in a different manner in *S.c.G.* Here he goes forth to assert that if God is intelligent, he must also have a will given the conceptual nature of the intellect and will. The *good* is the proper object of the will. Nevertheless this good must be understood as such in order for it to become an object of the will. This is because the will as a faculty in itself lack the power to perceive the good. It is the intellect that previously knows or understands what is good and consequently presents this to the will which is the appetite which moves towards this *known good*⁹⁶.

⁹⁴ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15 co.

⁹⁵ Aquinas makes reference to Aristotle who comes to the conclusion that certain operations of vegetative and animal life such as the reproductive process demonstrate an intelligent design. Aristotle concludes that: «In all this nature acts like an intelligent workman» (*Generation of animals*, I, 731a24). The citation by Aquinas of this text, however, erroneously points not to the imitation of intelligence in the plant and animal kingdom but rather to the fact that the operations of plants and animals bespeak their intelligent cause.

⁹⁶ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 72 n. 2: «From the fact that God is endowed with intellect it follows that he is endowed with will. For, since the understood good is the proper object of the will, the

A free or voluntary agent on the hand *knows* and *understands* the finality for which it acts. It acts for a certain purpose towards which it moves itself and this by ordering its actions to this set end.

The rational proof that God is intelligent is dutifully undertaken by Aquinas in *S.c.G.* Our objective here is simply to highlight how this thinker founds the Final Causality Argument of the created Universe on the fact that God acts intelligently and thus freely. In the sixth argument that demonstrates the intelligence of God, Aquinas sustains that all created being that tends to a determined end which is either inherently placed in the self (naturally) or by another (rationally). Now then, given that the natural beings do not know the rationale of their finality, they cannot determine their own finality. The latter must necessarily be set by another being. This one is the Creator of all nature. And hereby we have the clear demonstration that he who gives finality to created being is whom we call God. He would otherwise not be able, lacking intelligence, to order the finality of created being. God therefore is intelligent⁹⁷.

In order for Aquinas to tackle the problem of the Necessary Divine Creation that arises from the deliberation of the axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui*, he first notes that this axiom has a efficient-causality connotation. That the Good is diffusive of itself means the *Good* necessarily produces the *good*. However, as Wippel remarks, Aquinas is quick to show the broader meaning of the verb *diffuse*. This verb may refer to the fact of producing a reality in another, as for example a black drop of ink diffuses colour in a glass of water. But it may also refer to the fact of a reality becoming the finality of another, as for example

understood good is, as such, willed. Now that which is understood is by reference to one who understands. Hence, he who grasps the good by his intellect is, as such, endowed with will. But God grasps the good by His intellect. For since the activity of His intellect is perfect, as appears from what has been said, he understands being together with the qualification of the good. He is, therefore, endowed with will»

⁹⁷ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 44 n. 7: «Again, that which tends determinately to some end either has set itself that end or the end has been set for it by another. Otherwise, it would tend no more to this end than to that. Now, natural things tend to determinate ends. They do not fulfil their natural needs by chance, since they would not do so always or for the most part, but rarely, which is the domain of chance. Since, then, things do not set for themselves an end, because they have no notion of what an end it, the end must be set for them by another, who is the author of nature. He it is who gives being to all things and is through himself the necessary being. We call Him God, as is clear from what we have said. But God could not have set an end for nature unless he had understanding. God is, therefore, intelligent».

wisdom diffuses itself to a keen mind. Therefore *diffusion* in *Bonum diffusivum sui* can be understood as final causality⁹⁸.

This is the breakthrough of St. Thomas Aquinas in order to sustain that God is free to create or not to. The nature of good is such that it perfects the will that which participates in it rather than produce it in being. For this reason we can say that the *Transcendental Good* is perfective rather than productive⁹⁹.

Affronted with the thesis that the Good is naturally productive according to the axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui*, Aquinas makes another important distinction. This is the conceptual difference between the transcendental notions of *being* (*ens*) and *good* (*bonum*). Indeed by sustaining that the *good* produces *good*, the mentioned philosophical axiom cuts across two metaphysical conceptual planes, that of Goodness and that of Existence. It is true that the transcendental notions are inter-related in the sense that in reality these notions converge upon what exists where they are identical¹⁰⁰. Nevertheless, conceptually, while *ens* refers to the possession of the actuality, *bonum* is the object of the appetite of the will¹⁰¹.

In the turn of events, Aquinas arrives at such affirmation that: *Bonum diffusivum sui in bona re*¹⁰². That is: *good* is perfection that is said not of itself but of real things insofar as they possess it. Aquinas, guided by the Law of Similarity, understands that the created reality is said to be good because it is the effect of the Divine Causal Agent. According to the cause-effect

⁹⁸ WIPPEL, 2007, p. 227: «Therefore whatever shares in the nature of an end shares in the nature of good... Thomas' emphasis on the causality of the good as pertaining to the order of finality is crucial to his defence of God's freedom to create».

⁹⁹ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 72 n. 3: «Everyone desires the perfection of that which is willed and loved by him for its sake». *Good* is this perfection while the *will* is the productive faculty that realizes this perfection. St. Thomas demonstrates the productive nature of the will when he says: «Hence, because *he wills himself to be*, He likewise wills other things which are ordered to him as to the end» (*S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 72 n. 2).

¹⁰⁰ The being is both the truth and the good.

¹⁰¹ *S.Tb.*, I^a q. 5 a. 1 co. (*Bonum et ens sunt idem secundum rem: sed differunt secundum rationem tantum... Ratio enim boni in hoc consistit, quod aliquid sit appetibile... Manifestum est autem quod unumquodque est appetibile secundum quod est perfectum: nam omnia appetunt suam perfectionem. Intantum est autem perfectum unumquodque, inquantum est actu: unde manifestum est quod intantum est aliquid bonum, inquantum est ens: esse enim est actualitas omnis rei*).

¹⁰² The perfection *goodness* is said to be diffusive in so far as this perfection is found in the created reality (*good* things). *Goodness* in itself therefore does not produce the created reality but is simply found in them or perfects them.

relationship of the principle *Omne agens agit sibi simile*, there is a *pre-containment*, *similarity* and *influx* of the effect in the cause. The good must therefore pre-exist in God for it to be said of created being; the perfection present in an effect is a certain likeness of its agent because *Ever agent produces something its likeness*. Indeed it is the Law of Similitude that provides a guiding principle in order to affirm that good in itself does not produce as an efficient causality but rather that an agent which possesses *goodness* transmits this perfection to its effect.

Now then given that *goodness* is not productive in itself but rather is perfection that is possessed by real beings, Aquinas can well conclude that God who is all-good is free to create the Universe or not. If and when He chooses to create the Universe, in this very act of creation, he infuses *goodness* in the created being.

4. ARGUMENT TWO: THE NATURAL TRINITARIAN GENERATION AND THE FREE CREATION

This tenet which Avicenna earlier uses so as to justify his position that the Divine Creation is both necessary and emanative¹⁰³ Aquinas now employs so as to construe the axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui*: That «nature is determined to one thing» is founded upon the principle *Omne agens agit simile sibi*¹⁰⁴. Ever agent produces its like and this is the determination that characterises the natural agent action.

In the Divine Being, it is essential to distinguish the natural action from the free action. Indeed the Avicenna tenet is applicable to God in so far we consider the Intra-Trinitarian Action. God the Father necessarily generates God the Son. The Trinitarian Generation plays testimony to the Law of Similitude in so far as this is understood as a sort of physical resemblance of which natural propagation is the best example.

Without a doubt, the Pre-containment maxim is not attributable to the Trinitarian God because God the Father does not pre-contain the Divine Filiation but rather eternally and necessarily generates Him. Nonetheless, the

¹⁰³ GILSON, 2002, p. 150.

¹⁰⁴ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 16 co.

voluntary creative action of God also plays testimony to the Principle of Similarity thanks to the said maxim. The fact that God creates in infinity and diversity that manifests His freedom as opposed to the Natural Trinitarian Propagation is also borne out by the principle *Omne agens agit sibi simile*. This is the basis of his third argument as seen below.

5. ARGUMENT THREE: THE PRE-CONTAINMENT MAXIM IN THE *OMNE AGENS AGIT SIBI SIMILE*

It is the search for a more ample view of *Omne agens agit sibi simile* that draws Rosemann to ask: «In what way for example, could a cat be said to ‘resemble’ the vase that is has knocked to the ground?» The Law of Similarity not only governs the physical likeness between the agent and its effect but sustains too the *pre-containment* of the effect in the cause¹⁰⁵.

In this argument, Aquinas demonstrates the far-reaching implications of the Law of Similitude when he uses it to explain the fact that an effect somehow pre-exists in its cause because *every agent produces its like*. The existence of perfection in an effect is in accordance with the nature of that effect. In this sense, perfection is said to be transcendental with respect to the effect which solely limits the manner in which this perfection is found in it but does not affect the nature in which the perfection exists in the causal agent of the effect. This, Aquinas explains with the thesis: «Now everything which is in something is in it according to the mode of that in which it is»¹⁰⁶. This thesis originates from an earlier one found in *De Causis* which affirms that «anything receives what is above it only through the mode according to which it can receive it, not according to the mode according to which the received thing [itself] is»¹⁰⁷.

How then does the created effect pre-exist in the Divine Agent? It is a foregone conclusion that God is intelligent. We have seen in the first argument how Aquinas draws an intimate connection between the will and the intellect in a free agent cause. Now the Pre-containment maxim of the Law of

¹⁰⁵ Cfr. ROSEMAN, 1996, p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15 co.

¹⁰⁷ *In De Causis*, proposition 10.

Similarity leads us to affirm that the created being must in some way be present in the Divine Agent Cause. Aquinas explains that precisely because God is intelligent, the created nature is *intelligibly* pre-conceived in Him. Moreover, the relationship between the intellect and the will is such that what is willed must be known and what is known is what moves the will to act. Therefore, the intelligible pre-existing created reality in the Divine Intelligence is the motor of the voluntary creation of the Universe by God. The intimate interplay between the intellect and the will is what comprises the Free Intelligent mode of acting.

The doctrine of *Pre-containment* serves Aquinas in order to reason out that an agent which wills something in itself and for its own sake (as opposed to that which will for a certain external finality) wills and loves all those things in which this thing is found. Such is the case of God who wills his own being in and for itself: «Every other instance of being is a certain participation in the divine being by way of likeness»¹⁰⁸.

6. THE DIVINE CREATIVE ACT: FREE, INTELLIGENT AND *IMMANENT*?

As earlier explained, the *Pre-containment* maxim that affirms the pre-existence of the effect in the causal agent totally excludes the Intra-Trinitarian Action from the causal-effect relationship. This is not so however for that action by God that involves the intellect and the will. This is the case of the Transitive Creative Action. The latter is an action of the free and intelligent Divine Causal Agent. Aquinas' Metaphysics of the Divine Creation is articulated by the *Createdness* of the Universe which intrinsically implies the production of things into being. In order to create, therefore, God who is the purely actual being must act as an efficient causality of the existence of the Universal Creation.

As such the axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui* cannot be the fundamental principle that explains how creatures come to be. *Goodness* is perfection that ultimately makes metaphysical reference to *being*. The Metaphysics of the Divine Creation revolves around the principles by which the Universe is an actual reality. The discourse around the created being rather than excluding the no-

¹⁰⁸ WIPPEL, 2007, p. 230.

tion of Goodness actually includes it. Indeed something is said to be good in so far as it is real or actual. Aquinas demonstrates the intimate relationship that exists between the good and the being:

«Furthermore, *the good is that which all things desire* but all things, each according to its mode, desire to be in act; this is clear from the fact that each thing according to its nature resists corruption. To be in act, therefore, constitutes the nature of good»¹⁰⁹.

Here Aquinas is testimony to the fact that the transcendental properties of reality are convertible among them: *Bonum et ens convertuntur*. Goodness is a transcendental property of the being. Goodness is being in so far as this is desired as an end by a particular will. Moreover that good which all reality fundamentally desire or will is their actuality or being. This, *esse*, is the ultimate desirable perfection. *To be* is the essential nature of the good. For this reason, the Principle of the Free and Intelligent Creation of the Universe by God reaches its base in the metaphysical consideration of how the created being comes to be. God is the Pure Act devoid of any potency. When he creates, therefore, he does not seek to fulfil any intrinsic potency. Aquinas maintains that the Creator and the creature pertain to two distinct orders of reality.

We now arrive at the question that attempts to take account of the self-diffusive nature of good which at the end of the day is the being and the fact that creatures are *really* radically distinct from their Creator. In this question is concealed the clue to the fact that the Divine Creation must be free and intelligent. Is God *really* related to creatures as the axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui*, understood as an efficient causality, would contemplate? And if not, then how would the goodness which is the being, then, diffusive itself?

In the order of the cause-effect relationship, the agent cause is really present in its effect because it is somewhat ordered to it; firstly because *an agent produces its likeness* and so perpetuates its species in what Rosemann denotes as the Law of Synonymy¹¹⁰, secondly because the agent is itself moved

¹⁰⁹ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 37 n. 4.

¹¹⁰ Cfr. ROSEMAN, 1996, pp. 52-57. «Finally, we should not forget that the law of synonymy is the transposition upon the level of efficient causality of all-pervasive finality of the universe, namely, to mirror and imitate the eternal and divine» (p. 62)

by another and thirdly because the agent perfects itself in producing the effect. Nevertheless Aquinas asserts that creation is not anything real in the Creator but a rational relation¹¹¹. This is possible because: «There are some things to which others indeed are ordered, and not conversely, because they are wholly outside that genus of actions or virtues which such order follows»¹¹².

Given the fact that God only possesses a rational relation to the created Universe, it can then be concluded that the action by which this Universe comes to be is not a transitive action by God. How can this be? Aquinas employs the example of the act of knowing so as to demonstrate that they are actions which, although making reference to the world external to the agent (in this case the knowing soul), do not and cannot however come into material contact with this agent. The soul and the real object pertain to different orders of being¹¹³.

God does not have a real relation with the created Universe. At the same time, the very act of the Divine Creation as we have seen is immediate, instantaneous and direct. In *Q.D.P.*, question 7 article 10, Aquinas, upon affirming that God act without any intermediary¹¹⁴, effectively denies any transitive action in God¹¹⁵. But then he adds: «But *what God does outside himself*, he understand and wills».

¹¹¹ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 co: «Whence it must be that the relation by which the creature is referred to the creator is real, but in God it is only a logical relation».

¹¹² *Q.D.P.*, q. 7 a. 10 co. [*Le relazioni che affermano tra Dio e la creatura non sono reali in lui. Per aver chiaro questo bisogna sapere che una relazione reale consiste nell'ordine di una cosa ad un'altra, come si è detto. Si trova una relazione reale solo in quei casi nei quali l'ordine dell'uno all'altro dipende dalla stessa ragione... Nelle relazioni che si stabiliscono a partire dall'azione e dalla passione o dalla virtù attiva e passiva non sempre l'ordine del movimento è univoco... Dio non agisce attraverso un'azione mediata da intendersi come promanante da Dio e tesa a terminare nella creatura: il suo agire è la sua sostanza e tutto ciò che è in esso è del tutto fuori dal genere della creazione, in forza del quale la creatura si relaziona con Dio*] (Source: *La Potenza di Dio*, translated by Angelo Campodonico, a cura di, Nardini Editore, Firenze 1995, pp. 196-198)

¹¹³ *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 12 n. 3: «God stands in relation to other beings as the knowable... But although a thing is said to be knowable in relation to knowledge, the relation is not really in the knowable but only in the knowledge».

¹¹⁴ *Q.D.P.*, q. 7 a. 10 co. (*Dio non agisce attraverso un'azione mediata da intendersi come promanante da Dio e tesa a terminare nella creatura: il suo agire è la sua sostanza...*)

¹¹⁵ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15 co: «The fourth argument is that, according to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics IX*, action is twofold: one which remains in the agent itself, and is the perfection and act of the agent, as for example, to understand, to will, and the like; and another which issues from the agent into an extrinsic patient, and is the perfection and act of the patient, as for example, to

According to Aquinas, therefore, the fact that an agent acts in an immanently is substantiation that this agent is free and intelligent because the constituent elements of the immanent action are to understand and to will. But that an agent acts immanently does not exclude the possibility that it may act extrinsically as is the case of the human person. Nevertheless, Aquinas is quite explicit that God does not act in a transitive manner¹¹⁶. The action of God is neither ordered towards the created Universe as if this would benefit him in any way nor is He moved by another to create. The analogy of the knower-known object in order to describe the immanent nature of the act is not sufficient in the case of God. This is because in the Divine Subject, there is a perfect identity between the knowing subject and the known object¹¹⁷. God, in knowing his essence, knows all things. The intrigue of the Aquinas position regarding the uniquely immanent action by God is truly noteworthy.

Therefore if the Divine Action is by nature immanent, that is non-transitive, how does Aquinas resolve the question of the Divine Creation which by definition involves the production of being distinct from God's? In order to resolve this dilemma, Selner, reverts to Aristotle's account of the immanent and transitive natures of action. She notes that the denial that the Divine Creation is the result of a transitive action directly denies the fact that created being is produced¹¹⁸. In this very denial is an implicit claim that the creative act is not ultimate ordered to the production of creatures, but rather for sake of the Divine Goodness. This is the finality of the creative act whose author is God. «Creatures are indeed a result of this activity, but God's act is not ordered to them as such, but to his own goodness... God is his own end. As a purely actual being he and his activity can be ordered to only one thing, and that is himself. His activity may be productive of something other, but that

heat, to move, and the like. Now God's action cannot be understood to be of the second kind of action because, since his action is his potency, it does not issue forth from him. And so his action must be understood as the first kind, which is found only in intelligent and voluntary agents».

¹¹⁶ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15 co: «Now God's action cannot be understood to be of the second kind of action because, since his action is his potency, it does not issue forth from him. And so his action must be understood as the first kind, which is found only in intelligent and voluntary agents».

¹¹⁷ *S.Th.*, I^a q. 14 a. 6 co. (*Et sic omnia in Deo praeexistunt, non solum quantum ad id quod commune est omnibus, sed etiam quantum ad ea secundum quae res distinguuntur*)

¹¹⁸ Cfr. SELNER, 1998, pp. 249-250.

other is not in itself the end of this activity. Further, in creation there is no 'other' which *receives* God's act and is perfected by it, as in a transitive act. The other is rather wholly constituted by this act»¹¹⁹.

This position regarding the deliberation of the immanent and transitive actions in God is a commendable synthesis of: 1) the original Aquinas vision of *Bonum diffusivum sui* as only making reference to the Final Causality of the Divine Goodness with respect to creatures, and 2) the blatant Efficient Causality explanation of the created goodness which the Universe is testimony of. Our conclusion from the above consideration is that the created Universe is simply an *accidental effect* of the Divine Creative Action. Nevertheless, that the creative act should produce creatures only accidentally and not substantially still remains mind-boggling! Why then would it be called *creative* if its principal finality is not the universal production of creatures? Selner gives the following response: «»Based on Thomas' understanding of God as infinitely actual, we must hold that 'the teleological relation' of creation terminates in his infinite actuality and so it can be understood as an immanent act, though one which is so rich as to produce effects beyond the action which are able then themselves to be»¹²⁰.

«And so we see that because the Createdness of things demands that the causal role of the first cause be expanded over that envisioned by Aristotle, his understanding of immanent and transitive action must also be 'expanded' to encompass the activity of creation¹²¹. By distinguishing between the logical relation of God to creature and the real relation of creature to God, by maintaining the 'immanence' of God's activity, Thomas avoids the 'contamination' so feared by Avicenna... Thus God's radical otherness is preserved and our understating of it is enhanced by facing up to the challenge it seems to come under in holding for creation»¹²². Therefore, the Divine Creative Act does not fall within the Aristotelian description of the Transitive action.

¹¹⁹ SELNER, 1998, pp. 250-251. Selner makes reference to the definition of the Transitive action as «any action which *consists in* the production of an effect» whereby *consists in* necessarily means *finalised in*. Therefore to deny that the creative action is transitive is to deny that it consist in the production of creatures as this were the unique rationale of this Divine Action.

¹²⁰ SELNER, 1998, p. 251.

¹²¹ Cfr. *Metaphysics*, IX, 8, 1050a24.

¹²² SELNER, 1998, p. 252.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RELATION IN THE DIVINE CREATION

1. THE CREATED ACT OF BEING: BONA FIDE EFFECT
OF THE ACT OF THE DIVINE CREATION

In this sub-chapter we study the implications of the traditional notions of Participation and *Esse commune*, two concepts closely related to each other and commonly employed so in the description of the Divine Creation¹²³. Present-day authors are of the view that the concept of *Esse commune* fails to bring out adequately the radical distinction between the Divine being and the created being¹²⁴. Thomas Aquinas affirms that the fact that the created being is the effect of causality makes it radically different in nature from the being of God¹²⁵.

a) *From the conceptual Esse Commune towards the Esse Creatum*

The very possibility of attributing any common property to reality means that each entity of reality must possess this property but only partially. If any particular being were to possess it fully, then this property would no longer be common. Here in lies the magnificent and fine distinction between the notions of Commonness and Participation. If a certain being, A, fully possess a certain property, P, and another being, B, also possesses the same property, then P is not common to A and B given that A does not share in P but possesses it fully. It is B therefore that participates in P. The distinction between Commonness and Participation is so radical that it can be truly affirmed that the nature of P in A is completely distinct from the nature of P in B¹²⁶.

According to Llano, the notion of Participation is so intimately linked to the Divine Creation that in the created being (*esse creatum*), the two notions are identical. Creation is not a mere «factum» –an ontological state or occurrence– but rather a *stable* and *positive situation* or *condition*, in the same way as the participated *actus essendi* that confers existence upon each created reality is stable and positive¹²⁷.

¹²³ See *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

¹²⁴ PÉREZ GUERRERO, 1996, pp. 27-29.

¹²⁵ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 15 n. 2.

¹²⁶ For this reason when we speak of the dissimilarity between the being of God and that of created reality, it is proper to speak of 'distinction' rather than 'difference' so as to further highlight this infinite disparity in order of reality between God and creation.

¹²⁷ Cfr. LLANO, A., *Metaphysics and Language*, Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, New York 2005, p. 297.

Referring to the distinct nature between God and creation, Aquinas makes the following parallelism: «It is therefore impossible that a certain property be a predicate of two realities and that in neither of them be predicated in the form of cause. Rather it is necessary that (the property) in one of the realities be the cause of the other. However, being is the predicate of all that is. It is therefore impossible that there be two realities that do not have the cause of being; rather it is precise that one of them be the cause of the other»¹²⁸. The nature of divine being is absolutely different from that of the created being because God is the cause of the created being which subsists only as an effect.

The blend between the ideas of the divine necessity and the created contingency in the Divine Creation, as sustained by the notions of the Divine Transcendence and the Participation of the created being, has not always been well understood. Propositions such as the Process Theology find contradiction in the fact that the Necessary God can *know* and *cause* contingent creation¹²⁹. Thanks to the doctrine of Participation, the notion of the Divine Creation properly associates with the Neo-Platonic Philosophy according to which the creature, due to its *esse creatum*, participates, though imperfectly, in the Divine Being. For this reason, *creatio ex nihilo* denotes the very relation of this new being to God¹³⁰.

Being is the most fundamental aspect of universal reality. It pertains to both God the Creator and creatures. However the being of God is radically distinct from the created being. God is that reality whose essence is *to be*. He is *Actus Essendi Purus*, the Pure Act of Being. The created being, on the other hand, is *graduated* according to an ontological hierarchy. We therefore speak of the *analogy of being* in a two-fold way: Firstly, in the sense that *being* is a property that all reality or existence possesses, be it God or creation; and secondly, within created reality or *esse creatum* which exists in the hierarchy of existence. The latter hierarchy, by which certain created beings participate in a more intense manner in *esse creatum* than others, is non-existent in the

¹²⁸ S.c.G., lib. II cap. 15 n. 2. (*Impossibile est igitur aliquod unum de duobus praedicari ita quod de neutro per causam dicatur, sed oportet vel unum esse alterius causam 'Esse' autem dicitur de omni eo quod est. Impossibile est igitur esse aliqua duo quorum neutrum habeat causam essendi, sed oportet utrumque acceptorum esse per causam, vel alterum alteri esse causam essendi*)

¹²⁹ Cfr. LAUGHLIN, P., «Divine Necessity and Created Contingency in Aquinas», *The Heythrop Journal*, 50 (2009) 648-649.

¹³⁰ Cfr. SOTO-BRUNA, M., «Causalidad y manifestación en el Neoplatonismo Medieval», *Anuario Filosófico*, 44 (2011) 25.

analogy of being between God and creature. This is because God is absolutely transcendent.

The notion of *being* is the same in definition but distinct in sense or nature between God and creation. As we have seen, even among particular creatures there is a hierarchy. For this reason, Aertsen affirms that the conception of ‘commonness’ in St. Thomas is complex. The distinctive feature of his transcendental way of thought is that it is bi-directional –toward the transcendental of being and toward that which is common by causality–¹³¹.

According to Laughlin, there is not any contradiction with respect to the co-presence of the divine necessity (owed to the Transcendental) and the contingency (due to Participation) in Aquinas’ *Metaphysics of Creation* according to whom the divine necessity should be understood as ontological necessity. The very existence of contingent *esse creatum* pre-supposes the ontologically necessary being that is uncaused. It is important to realize that the argument shifts from the logical order to the existential one –the order of causality–. The introduction of an ontological hierarchy in effect *qualitatively* separates the God (cause) from the created being (effect). God is distinct from the created being not because of magnitude or any comparison with creature but according to his existence (essence)¹³².

Though harmonized by the analogy of being, *esse creatum*, as portrayed by Aertsen, is necessarily and radically distinct from the being of God. *Esse creatum* is not simply a logical concept (a Platonic tendency) but is eventually realized in individual and particular real beings (the approach of Aristotle). It is a metaphysical principle. The distinction, therefore between *Esse*, the transcendent Being of God, and *esse commune*, the created being, pertains to the order of causality¹³³. God causes the created being. Being, on the other hand, can only said to be ‘common’ because nothing can be called an existent unless it possesses it.

In the words of Ocariz, the *esse* of creatures is participated because the Divine Creation is not only an extrinsic causality (manifested in its transcendence) but also an intrinsic one. God, as efficient cause, acts *ab intra* unlike other efficient causes that necessarily act outside the effect. Both natures of

¹³¹ Cfr. AERTSEN, 1996, p. 394.

¹³² Cfr. LAUGHLIN, 2009, p. 650.

¹³³ Cfr. AERTSEN, 1996, p. 389.

causality –intrinsic and extrinsic– are mutually contemporaneous in the Divine Creation¹³⁴.

It is a long-standing argument that the proper finality of the act of the Divine Creation is the Created being (*esse creatum*). Aquinas argues that from an agent of a particular nature proceeds the effect of similar nature. This thesis is governed by the postulate: *Every agent produces its likeness*. However, as we have seen in the previous chapter above, the Aquinas position as to whether the Divine Creative Act is totally immanent or transitive remains open to a two-fold interpretation: Creatures act in immanent and transitive manner but distinctly. In an immanent way, for example when man thinks or produces ideas. Creatures act transitively because they cannot give origin to what they produce in the fundamental sense of being; they always produce things from other things. The single creative act of God combines both the immanent and transitive natures of act because in creating the Divine being produces being in the most fundamental sense (immanence); at the same time the effect of the creative act in an external product, the *esse creatum* (hence a transitive action). While some of the present-day Thomist philosophers hold that God's action is totally immanent and as such the created being is only a by-effect of the Divine creative action¹³⁵, Aquinas also categorically states that the effect of the creative action is the production of the *esse creatum*. He calls this the *proper effect* of the Divine Action of creation in the words he employs in the Second article of the seventh question of *Q.D.P.*¹³⁶.

Furthermore, and in perhaps the strongest terms so far regarding the principal efficient causality of the act of the Divine Creation, Aquinas adds that the very definition (*ratio*) of the Divine Creation is the production of

¹³⁴ Cfr. OCÁRIZ, F., *Naturaleza, Gracia y Gloria*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2000, pp. 23-24. For this very reason St. Augustine says that God is more intimate to creatures than the creatures themselves.

¹³⁵ SELNER, 1998, p. 251.

¹³⁶ *Q.D.P.*, q. 7 a. 2 co. (Source: <www.corpusthomicum.org/qdp7.html>, 27, Apr-2011): «A cause must therefore exist, one that is higher than all other causes, a cause from which these receive *being* and whose proper effect is *being itself*. This cause is God»

[*Inoltre l'effecto proprio di una qualunque causa procede da essa stessa second la similitudine della sua natura. Bisogna allora che quanto è essere sia sostanza o natura di Dio. In forza de ciò il Libro delle cause afferma che intelligenza non dà l'essere se non in quanto è divina e che il primo effecto è l'essere e prima di lui non c'è alcuna realtà creata*] (Source: *La Potenza di Dio*, translated by Angelo Campodonico, a cura di, Nardini Editore, Firenze 1995, pp. 137-138)

being as such, not the production of this or that other particular being¹³⁷. Fabro corroborates this position: «*Esse* is the act of all essence and form, and in the same manner as the form is the act of matter, and the production of the act is the finality of all action of the agent. The most supreme act is *esse*, by means of which all other act is actualized, substantial or accidental, which is the proper and immediate effect of God»¹³⁸.

As we have seen in the First chapter above, the Divine Creation is an act whose unique agent is God. He is the Pure Act of Being. He therefore acts according to the fullness of being. The proper effect of the Pure Act is being itself (*esse proprium*). The cause-effect relationship that arises from the Divine Creative Act abides by the metaphysical axiom, *Omne agens agit sibi simile*, at least in so far as this plays testimony to the Law of Synonymy by which an agent perpetuates its species through the efficient causality¹³⁹. According to a conceptual distinction, in order for an effect to be ‘something’, it first of all has ‘to be’. For this reason, we say that the first *conceptual* effect that is unreservedly above all other effects and included in them all is ‘to be’. According to Aertsen, created *being* as act of existence is not identical to a created object –«but the proper aspect (ratio) of the object of creation–. For a thing is called created because it is a being (*ens*), not because it is this being (*hoc ens*)»¹⁴⁰.

Indeed, St. Thomas in the Fourth approach of demonstrating the existence of God as the First Universal Cause (*Prima Causa Universalitatis Rerum*), bases his thesis on the fact that the participated or created being is immediately caused by God who is the Pure Act of Being (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*). God brings to existence the Universe in so far as he directly causes its being¹⁴¹. The Universal Created Being is what Aquinas refers to as *esse commune*. He describes *esse in commune* as follows:

«If something is found to be common to many things, it is necessary that it be caused in them by one cause, for it is not possible that the common feature belong in common to each one in itself, since each one, according

¹³⁷ *S.Th.*, I^a q. 45 a. 5 co. (*Producere autem esse absolute, non in quantum est hoc vel tale, pertinet ad rationem creationis*)

¹³⁸ FABRO, C., *Participación y Causalidad según Tomás de Aquino*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2009, p. 331.

¹³⁹ Cfr. ROSEMAN, 1996, p. 62.

¹⁴⁰ AERTSEN, 1996, p. 390.

¹⁴¹ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, A. L., *Teología Natural*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2008, p. 223.

to what is in itself, is distinct from the others, and diversity of causes would produce diverse effects. Therefore, since *being is found to be common to all things*, which are in themselves distinct from one another, it necessarily follows that it is to be attributed to them not as from them in themselves, but from one cause»¹⁴².

Creatures participate in *esse commune* in the sense that each creature merely shares in it without *fully* possessing it. *Esse commune*, though it does not exist apart from the particular or individual beings, cannot be uniquely attributed to any one of them¹⁴³. The postulate of Plato (*ratio Platonis*) is the *Unity-Multiplicity Dialectic*. In it the Greek thinker affirms that what is common to many must necessarily have a single cause extrinsic to each of the individual members of the multiple. A common essential attribute cannot pertain to the individuals of distinct natures in the same manner. Each individual must possess *this one* attribute according to its nature. For this reason, the common attribute must originate from a unique cause. With this postulate, Plato introduces us to the notion of the Common Being or *esse commune*. The Platonic argument considers the Universe as unity of perfection in a diversity of subjects¹⁴⁴.

b) *The concept of Createdness & the speculative distinction between the Divine Being and the Created being*

In Platonism, 'being' is perfection separate from the material reality. It therefore concludes that «... since being is found to be common to all things, which are in themselves distinct from one another, it necessarily follows that it is to be attributed to them not as from them in themselves, but from one cause»¹⁴⁵. As a consequence, the two ideas of Platonism that have profoundly influenced the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation are hereby perceptible:

- 1) The notion of *Esse commune*, and
- 2) The idea of *being* as a separated perfection (*perfectio separata*).

¹⁴² Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

¹⁴³ Cfr. SELNER, 1998, p. 22.

¹⁴⁴ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, A. L., *Ser y Participación: Estudio sobre la cuarta vía de Tomás de Aquino*, Eunsa, Pamplona 1979, p. 126: «The dialectic of the one and the multiple supposes two things in the Aquinas formulation – diversity of subjects and unity of perfection»

¹⁴⁵ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

These are nevertheless widely assumed by St. Thomas Aquinas, especially when he speaks of *being* as that which is common to all things¹⁴⁶. It is in fact very difficult to make out when Aquinas employs *being* as *perfectio separata* or when he employs it as simply ‘the act of existing’.

Is the notion of the *Esse Commune* sustainable in a *realistic* Metaphysics of the Divine Creation? Our view is the negative. Reality does not exist in commonness because God does not create any commonness. Were the contrary true, then there would have to be a further agent (creation through mediation) that apportions this common being to the individual creatures of which the Universal creation is composed. We know, however, that the Divine Creation is direct and immediate¹⁴⁷. Nevertheless, while creatures owe their existence directly to God, we must steer clear of the position that views God as a continual efficient cause of every single aspect of reality. God is the ultimate source of all existence. In this sense, each creature ultimately depends upon God for its existence. It is an *eventual* dependence not sequential one; as if God were the first in a chain of causes. Creatures cannot in se give account of their existence. They ultimately depend upon God for their being. This is what the Divine Creation means.

Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* well expresses the fact that while each and every creature is the product of the creative act, the Divine Creative Action is nevertheless not a persistent intervention of God in reality. The Divine Creation is closely associated to the sustenance of the Universal creation in existence: «Creation is the production of *being as such*, not the production of this or that other particular being»¹⁴⁸. A similar observation is made by Jan Aertsen when he says that the created being as act of being is not identical to

¹⁴⁶ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 15 n. 4. (*Omnibus autem commune est esse*)

¹⁴⁷ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 19 n. 6. Aquinas notes that the act of the Divine Creation is instantaneous and immediate: «Succession in the production of things is necessary owing to defect of the matter which initially is not sufficiently disposed for the reception of the form. Hence, when the matter is perfectly disposed for the form, it receives it in an instantaneous manner. Thus because a diaphanous or transparent medium is always in final disposition for light, it immediately illuminates in the presence of actual light... However in creation nothing is prerequisite on the part of matter, nor is anything wanting in the agent so as to act that it acquires posterior through this movement... It then follows that creation takes place instantaneously. A creature is at once in the act of being created and is created, as (the diaphanous) illuminates as it is being illuminated»

¹⁴⁸ Cfr. *S.Th.*, I^a q. 45 a. 5 co. (*Producere autem esse absolute, non in quantum est hoc vel tale, pertinet ad rationem creationis*)

the created object, «but the proper aspect (*ratio*) of the object of creation. For a thing is called created because it is a being (*ens*), not because it is *this* being (*hoc ens*)»¹⁴⁹. Consequently, the thesis of the *esse commune* as an explanation of the universal product of the creative act of God proves insufficient. We nonetheless affirm that the Divine Creation is not an act of particularisation of being into individuals because the Divine Potency is universal. Rather, the creative act is the metaphysical ascription of the Universal existence to God.

In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the Unity-Multiplicity Dialectic takes a different stride. Here Aquinas argues that an attribute cannot concur in distinct realities equivocally, but solely *analogically*¹⁵⁰. This argument attributes unity of cause to real being or reality. Indeed the analogical view is one that does not sustain the conception of a ‘commonness of being’. Analogy refers to similarity and distinctness according to different manners of speaking; *never sameness*, it follows that the Divine Being cannot be in any way identified with the created being; not even *hierarchically*. Employed to our present concern, the analogical argument affirms that the *natures of existence* of two distinct realities must be as cause in one and effect in another¹⁵¹. The unity of existence between these two realities, incorrectly called the *Esse Commune*, is simply analogical. It is the unity of the created being in the relation of real inherent dependence upon the Divine Being.

The analogical argument is very useful in the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation because it eludes the misconceptions of the ideas of the *esse commune* and the ‘hierarchy of the perfection of being’ bring with them while at the same time attesting to a *real unity* or *relation of the Universal existence*, God and the Universe. While Platonism cannot be said to directly embrace a pantheistic stand whereby the Universal reality is a hierarchy of unique perfection which is *being*, common to all that exists but perfectly so in God; it is very ambiguous regarding how God can be *perfectio separata* and at the same time share in the nature of universal existence through a hierarchy of perfection. This lack of distinction may result in a pantheistic understanding of the Uni-

¹⁴⁹ Cfr. AERTSEN, 1996, p. 390.

¹⁵⁰ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 15 n. 2.

¹⁵¹ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 15 n. 2 (*Esse autem dicitur de omni eo quod est. Impossibile est igitur esse aliqua duo quorum neutrum habeat causam essendi, sed oportet utrumque acceptorum esse per causam, vel alterum alteri esse causam essendi... Non enim de multis æquivoce dicitur, sed per analogiam: et sic oportet fieri reductionem in unum*)

versal creation. As González observes, «That God be the One, pure and unadulterated, does not exhaust the rejoinder, speculatively speaking, to the enquiry into why this One is God, but as Gilson remarks, it is undoubtedly part of the response; the (common) perfection of being participated in a hierarchy leads, through the Unity-Multiplicity Dialectic, to the most pure one, from which flows out the being and other perfections»¹⁵². It is therefore critical, as we shall see, to make a radical distinction between God and the creatures at the most metaphysical echelon, that is, at the order of the *esse*. This is the basis of our critique of the concept of the *Esse Commune*. The most fundamental attribute of any reality cannot admit gradation because each change of what is the most essential results in a completely different reality altogether.

Indeed it is proper to the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation to make a speculative distinction between the two realities, namely the Divine Being and the created being. We observe that the absence of this elemental distinction results in the consideration of one unique being (*esse simpliciter*) as that sole act of being by which each and every real being (*ente*) is. This *esse simpliciter* is subsequently classified as limited-unlimited; participated-non-participated; finite-infinite or imperfect-perfect depending on whether it is referred to God or the creatures. As a consequence, the lack of distinction between the Divine Being and the created being in the conception of the *esse simpliciter*, the creature has been incorrectly comprehended as *habens esse*. This is interpreted to mean that the created reality is not identical to *esse* but rather *has or possesses esse*, while God the Creator is this *esse* by essence. «The *ente* (the Created being), therefore, is not its *esse* but rather it is *habens esse*. The *esse* of the *ente* is partial given that it is not the plenitude of being, either intensively given that it is the *esse* of something particular (*quidditas*), or extensively because there are other beings that possess this *esse*. It can therefore be said that *ens habet esse partialiter*, that is, *ente* is by participation»¹⁵³.

If the act of being is the most fundamental element that constitutes any reality, it cannot merely be possessed. It is what confers reality to any being. Therefore, to say that a creature ‘has’ *esse* implies that there must be a prior subject that is capable to *receive* this possession; a hypothesis that is contrary to the fact that the act of being is the most fundamental metaphysical constituent

¹⁵² Cfr. *Ser y Participación: Estudio sobre la cuarta vía de Tomás de Aquino*, pp. 129-130.

¹⁵³ *Ser y Participación: Estudio sobre la cuarta vía de Tomás de Aquino*, p. 180.

of any real being. For this very reason, the creature is constituted in and by its own being which identifies itself with the creature. The creature does not possess partiality of *esse* (*esse partialiter*)¹⁵⁴. Consequently, the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation must affirm that the created act of being (*esse creatum*) is *really and speculatively* distinct from the Divine Act of Being (*Esse Divinum*). Creatures do not simply possess the created being but are constituted in it through the Principle of Causality.

The idea of Createdness in the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation has certain unprecedented repercussions upon Aquinas' speculation of the act of being-essence composition (*compositio esse-essentia*) of the Universal created existence. The Act of being (*actus essendi*) is, in the metaphysical conception, the most fundamental order of reality. The Essence is the second metaphysical order of existence. It is an attribute of all realities distinct from God¹⁵⁵. The concept of the act of being is a higher metaphysical principle in comparison to the essence¹⁵⁶. The created existence is a metaphysical composition between *esse* and *essentia*. «The essence and the act of being are not two entities but rather two principles that constitute particular reality»¹⁵⁷. The Divine Being is *really and therefore speculatively* distinct from the created being –means that *Esse Separatum* cannot merely be explained away as the disunion of *esse* from the essence–¹⁵⁸.

c) *The Metaphysical Implications of the Paradigm Shift*

Esse Separatum is so because it does not depend upon any other reality for its being. It is the Independent Being: «what is of interest at the moment

¹⁵⁴ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, 2000, p. 120.

¹⁵⁵ Cfr. AQUINAS, T., *El ente y la Esencia*, traducción, estudio preliminar y notas de Eudaldo Forment, Eunsa, Pamplona 2011, pp. 71-72: «Aquinas considers the act of being (*esse*) as: the 'act of the essence', the act of act of the essences or forms. An act which, though not 'essential act', is nevertheless possessed by those acts that constitute the essence... The first function of *esse* is to bring to existence or realize a particular being (*ente*) in reality»

¹⁵⁶ Forment notes that the essence and the act of being do have the same relationship as that between matter and form or even that of substance-accident because the two constituent principles of *ente* are not only different but moreover pertain to distinct orders of reality (See *El ente y la Esencia: Traducción, estudio preliminar y notas de Eudaldo Forment*, p. 73).

¹⁵⁷ *El ente y la Esencia*, traducción, estudio preliminar y notas de Eudaldo Forment, Eunsa, Pamplona 2011, p. 72.

¹⁵⁸ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, 2000, p. 119.

is to establish whether it is correct to sustain as real truth the fact that the unity of a perfection can be found in a separated and composed manner, or, viewed differently, if we can consider the separation and composition as different states of the *same perfection*. It is our position that such a postulate is not acceptable within the margin of the Aquinas Philosophy. A perfection that can be multiplied among distinct subjects, can only be considered as separated in the intellect given that were it real existence it could not be multipliable... Participation comprehended in this manner is contrary to reason when speaking of predicament participation, that is, the participation of diverse species by their inferiors. Moreover this hypothesis is contrary to the Christian Doctrine when reference is made to the participation of the divine perfection by creatures»¹⁵⁹.

It is more congruent to the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation to affirm that the created being is *dependent* than to affirm that it is imperfect (according to Platonic Participation) with respect to the Divine Being. Dependence is more proper a characteristic of that reality that is distinct from the Divine Nature. God does not work imperfections, but yes, He is the sustenance of all that exists. This is a propinquity to the perpetual speculation of the creative action of God and its implications upon Metaphysics. It is therefore incorrect to affirm that the created act of being, though being the most elemental act of all creatures, can subsist separated from God¹⁶⁰. Only the Divine Act of Being possesses the characteristic of total independence.

In the quest to bring the notion of Createdness to the forefront of metaphysical speculation regarding the Divine Creation, we need to draw certain distinctions between intricate terms, views and propositions. If such distinctions are not made, language itself may prove an obstacle to such science. For this reason, there is a demand for a general appraisal of the notion of Participation, an indispensable principle in the explanation of that Divine Action which is creative in character.

¹⁵⁹ PÉREZ GUERRERO, 1996, pp. 27-29.

¹⁶⁰ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, 2000, p. 119. Here González adopts the reflection of Fabro who, in conformity with the Classical Pure Metaphysics, affirms that the act of being is the unique act among the various species of act such as the form or essence that can exist in a separate manner. While this affirmation is true in a distinction between *esse* and *essentia*, it becomes problematic in the speculation of the Divine Creation.

2. THE NOTION OF PARTICIPATION IN AQUINAS' METAPHYSICS OF CREATION: AN APPRAISAL

It is necessary to make evermore present the notion of *Createdness* as the fundamental proposal of the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation. The radical real distinction between the Divine Being and the created being deters any tendency to comprehend *being* as a certain perfection whose commonness is not only pertinent to creatures but applies to God as well in the most perfect manner. Te Velde well explains the understanding by the classical Platonism of *Participation*: «What is the meaning of 'participation'? Thomas begins with a kind of etymological explanation: «to participate is, as it were, to take a part of something» (*partem capere*). This is what the term 'participation' means. We may therefore speak of participation, Thomas goes on, when something receives (or: has) in particular fashion what belongs to another universally. Thus when a characteristic or perfection is possessed by a subject in only a partial or particular fashion, such a subject can be said to participate in that perfection. The subject in question is not identical with the perfection it possesses, which leaves the possibility open for other subjects to share in that same perfection»¹⁶¹.

The above view which advances an understanding of certain «commonness of the perfection of being» and consequent participation of the perfection of being by creatures through deterioration has a strong Neo-platonic heritage especially in Boethius. Elements of this thought-position are heavily adopted by St. Thomas Aquinas. Some of the clearest manifestations of the Platonic Participation include the distinction of the existence of God from that of the Universal creation as the following:

- Infinity: finitude of being.
- Perfection: imperfection of being.
- Unlimited: limitation of being.

We see, though in a subtle manner, how the argument of the distinction of *real being* normally reduces itself to one of perfection-imperfection if the Divine Being is not speculatively separated from the created being in the most preliminary stages of Metaphysics. The pure perfection as such, that is to say, perfection in so far as it is pure perfection, the perfection of being considered

¹⁶¹ TE VELDE, R., *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, E.J. Brill, New York 1995, p. 11.

in se, with the proper rationale of its nature *as act*, cannot be but unique. Nevertheless the perfection of being, the unique pure being (*esse*) cannot simply be a theoretical conception but must exist as such because this *esse* is the act of all acts and forms. The Pure Act of Being (*Actus Purus*) is the unique act that exists separately. The subsistent separate act is God¹⁶².

«The proper rationale of its nature *as act*» makes *esse* perfect. This is the foundation of the perfection of the act of being. *Esse* is perfect by its nature of act, which is the radical contrary of potency, and this is the most fundamental metaphysical distinction of perfection from imperfection. The Unique Divine Being (*Esse Divinum*) is pure and perfect because its proper nature is act. It is *separated* from all other realities because it is uncreated. The created act of being (*esse creatum*) is, in the same way, perfect because it is act. However it is not separated but rather dependent upon *Esse Divinum*, the Creator.

It is not the idea of perfection but rather the idea of *Createdness* that metaphysically distinguishes God from universal creation. Consequently, the view that the pure Separated Perfection (*Esse Separatum*) or the notion of *perfectio separata* is founded upon the absolute and pure perfection of the act of being¹⁶³ is not satisfactory and to a certain extent is inaccurate distinction of God from the Universal creation in the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation. Both the Divine Act of Being and the created act of being take pleasure in certain «absolute and pure perfection» given that they are the first fundamental metaphysical acts of Divine and created realities respectively. The «separateness of *Esse Divinum*» is therefore ultimately argued out by the notion of *Createdness* –that this being is the *Uncreated Being*–.

In reality, as we have seen, there is not any commonness of being between God and creatures. The Divine Being is the Unique Separated Substance while created being is an intrinsic dependence of subsistence upon God. Between God and creature there is not any relation of commonness but rather of *dependence*. This is a fundamental preliminary distinction. Moreover the Universal creation is not any limitation, finitude or imperfection given that it is radically distinct from the Divine Being in nature. The Christian Doctrinal Teaching plays testimony to the inherent dependence (at the same time as the intrinsic perfection) of creatures when it affirms that the creature lacks reason

¹⁶² Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, 2000, p. 119.

¹⁶³ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, 2000, p. 119.

its being (annihilates) without its Creator¹⁶⁴. Furthermore, the *ex nihilo* fact of the Divine Creation is, as we shall see, crucial in order to sustain the thesis that creatures are all but a shortfall of that which God possesses in plenitude.

What therefore is the problem with a classical Platonic distinction between God and creatures? Any sort of distinction between the two realities must not insinuate any *degradation of being*¹⁶⁵. God is the author of the Universal Creation. It is not proper for God to produce imperfection. Any and all procession from the Divine Nature must be perfect, as perfect as can be. The *realistic* Metaphysics of Creation pursued by Aquinas and presently advanced, irrefutably highlights the positive nature and sense of the created Universe. God does not act by negatives but rather by positives. For this reason, the argument by Pérez Guerrero –that the act of creation *ex nihilo* means that the Universal creation is *absolute gain*– is most sound¹⁶⁶.

a) *The Idea of Createdness and the Classical Notion of Participation*

In the Fifth article of *Q.D.P.*, question 3, St. Thomas Aquinas responds to the dispute regarding whether there can be anything uncreated apart from God. This is a crucial question since it goes right down to the crux of the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation. It is a question that seeks to inquire *whether Createdness is in real sense the universal attribute of all reality distinct from God*. For this reason, this question becomes our point of departure for an evaluation of the notion of Participation. In his response, the Angelic Doctor predominantly borrows from the thought of three philosophers –Plato, Aristotle and Avicenna–. More importantly, however, are their respective arguments.

According to the order of human knowledge, the human person knows reality by the initial *sensory* contact with it. Nevertheless sensory knowledge is not only insufficient but somewhat <useless> for man if it does not acquire an

¹⁶⁴ Cfr. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Gaudium et Spes* – Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, n. 36. (*Ex ipsa enim creationis condicione res univesæ propria firmitate, veritate, bonitate propriisque legibus ac ordine intruuntur... Creatura enim sine Creatore evansescit*)

¹⁶⁵ The erroneous view of creatures as a degradation of the being which is perfectly found in God is a constant peril throughout the History of Philosophy. The fundamental problem that this error makes manifest is the lack of comprehension of that the metaphysical notion of Createdness, a principle that marks a universal and metaphysical distinction between God and creatures, is real and inherent in the very nature of creatures.

¹⁶⁶ Cfr. PÉREZ GUERRERO, 1996, p. 35.

intellectual character. It is for this reason that it can be affirmed that: *The universal (intellectual) knowledge is prior to particular (sensory) knowledge in finality while sensory knowledge is anterior to intellectual knowledge in effect.* This premise is demonstrated by a simple illustration. Through my senses I acquire certain perceptions of Socrates –for example, his height, weight, skin colour, etc.–. I therefore have effective and immediate sensory knowledge of Socrates. Nevertheless, for a truthful intellectual affirmation or judgment (understanding) such as «Socrates is a man», I require the universal awareness of the general notion of ‘man’ to which I attribute Socrates.

Is the real Socrates any degradation of the pure universal concept of ‘man’ in my mind? Certainly it is not. The sensory perception of Socrates is an important and indispensable *simultaneous* complement of the universal conception of ‘man’. The combination of these two attributes, the particular and the intellectual, facilitates the acts of judgment, understanding and reflection of human rationality.

We present this simple model of the Theory of Knowledge so as to demonstrate that the particular reality is not in any way inferior to the Universal reality. Our underlying argument is the following: reality as the *real* perfection is concrete and particular while concepts such as ‘being’ and ‘existence’ are universal and abstract. There cannot, therefore, be any participation by the individual real being of an abstract, pure concept. If the Divine Creation by participation is real as the notion of Participation asserts, we must be able to explain that:

- 1) The Divine Being is the source of all creation, and
- 2) Participation is not an association of the abstract with the real but rather real being with real being.

As far as the idea of Perfection is concerned, both the Divine Being and the created being are perfection in their own accord. For this reason, the distinction between the perfection of God and that of creation is principally marked by the idea of Createdness. The Divine perfection is uncreated while perfection of creatures is created¹⁶⁷. Consequently, the Createdness

¹⁶⁷ To be perfect is *to posses in fullness* that attribute which is proper to a particular subject; Infinity is highly associated with that absence of limits or boundaries as regards a certain attribute, that is to say, unlimited. Now then, of both Divine Being and created being can be said ‘is perfect’ or ‘is infinite’. Created being is absolutely diverse and dynamic and is in this sense infinite. It is at the same time perfect because a fundamental aspect of its perfection is that *inherent dependence* upon the Creator.

is the most radical metaphysical distinction between God and the created reality.

God is perfect according to the Uncreated Being, while creatures are perfect according to *esse creatum*. What distinguishes God from creatures is not perfection but rather the Createdness. As such creatures are not any degradation of being which finds its perfection or fullness in God. To affirm the contrary, one would have to demonstrate that creatures lack certain attribute which they merit as creatures¹⁶⁸.

In the commentary to the Fifth article of *Q.D.P.*, question 3: Whether *Createdness* is really the universal attribute of all reality distinct from God, Aquinas draws attention to the speculative or abstractive viewpoint of the Pre-Socratic philosophers that all real substance is matter while the substantial forms are accidents because they are caused through the «principles of substance». These thinkers do not take into consideration the complementary relationship between the particular knowledge and universal conception. According to them, all human knowledge proceeds from sensible being and gradually progresses to the intellectual. Nevertheless, sensory knowledge cannot make any progress towards any universality if it is unaided by the universal conception of which the human mind is capable (unarguably due to its spiritual nature)¹⁶⁹. As a consequence, the ancient thinkers draw an erroneous conclusion that matter alone is the substance and unique cause of the Universe reality¹⁷⁰. If matter therefore is the unique cause of sensible reality, it is falsely concluded that *matter is uncreated*.

St. Thomas Aquinas makes a critical contribution to the argument when he distinguishes between the substantial and the accidental forms. While it is true that the accidental forms do not sustain the real existence of matter and are contingent to it, the material substance *subsists* due to its *information* by a

¹⁶⁸ We can speak of the real *Creatural Character* that is the distinctive of the Universal existence different from God.

¹⁶⁹ For this reason, for example, the non-rational animals cannot achieve any universal conception or intellectual reflection.

¹⁷⁰ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co. The Pre-Socratics proceeded to examine the nature of sensible reality in which they were engrossed. This they did through the abstraction of forms from this reality. The error of the ancient philosophers, however, was the identification all forms with the sensible or accidental nature. Their human knowledge was therefore apparently attributed initially to the senses and only posteriorly to the intellect. Aquinas, on his part, distinguishes between accidental and substantial forms. The former are sensible while the latter are intelligible and absolutely inseparable from the true knowledge of the substance.

substantial form. The Prime Matter cannot therefore be said to be uncreated because:

- 1) The formless Prime Matter does not *really* exist. The Prime Matter is *con-created*¹⁷¹;
- 2) Matter necessarily requires a simultaneous *infusion* by a substantial form in order to subsist.

This infusion is an action inevitably extrinsic to the Matter itself. This means that the material substance has a *cause* external to it. The Material substance is created. The creation of matter involves the production in existence of the material substance whose nature is a composition of the matter and the substantial form. The matter may subsequently change its substantial form through the natural active causes in which case a new material substance is generated, notwithstanding the fact that the original matter is created.

The Pluralist philosophers such as Empedocles take account of the material substantial change. Nevertheless they are unable to arrive at the creation of matter because, as Aquinas remarks, they are unable to attain the knowledge of this greater universal causality, the Divine Creation, which surpasses the natural generation and degradation. They only perceive the generation of one particular form or another upon the *eternal* matter.

The Pre-Socratic philosophers are ultimately overwhelmed by the analysis of matter and do not attain the universal knowledge of the origin of the real material existence. We consequently see here that the consideration of the *immaterial being* is fundamental so as to achieve the true universal knowledge of the created reality. The Metaphysics of the Divine Creation, through the idea of Createdness, endeavours to emphasize this.

- b) *The Ontological Distinctiveness of the Supreme Being (Ens Maxime):*
Plato, Aristotle & Aquinas

Plato and Aristotle achieve a consideration of the universal causality of creatures. For this reason, Aquinas adopts their metaphysical reflection because in it he does not find any contradiction with the Christian Doctrinal

¹⁷¹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 ad 12; q. 3 a. 5 ad 3; also KRETZMANN, 1999, p. 79 (Footnote 19): «Prime matter has substantial being through a form, and so it must be the case that it would be created under some form. Otherwise it would not be in actuality. However, while existing under one form, it is potentiality to others»

Teaching¹⁷². Well enough for the medieval thinker to seek guarantee of his philosophical doctrine in the Revealed Truth. However our present task is to make an evaluation of the philosophical position held by St. Thomas Aquinas.

In a different manner, in Aristotle, we find an argument of the universality of the idea of Createdness in all real being distinct from God. We cannot know a truth without knowing its cause. Certain perfection belongs in a higher degree to a particular subject if in virtue of it a *similar quality* belongs to another subject. Aristotle gives the example of fire which is the cause of heat in all other things and for this very reason is the hottest of things. He therefore concludes that the agent who *causes* derivative truths to be true is most true¹⁷³.

With respect to the thesis of Aristotle one fact remains quite clear. He speaks about similarity of quality, *not sameness* of quality. In the example illustrated, he does not attribute «fire-ness» to subjects other than the universal cause of heat. This is what is called fire. The Strategite employs the example of 'heat' which is a semblance of the essence that is fire. We therefore firmly conclude that the highest agent cause produces only its resemblance, not its identity. Indeed the postulate of Aristotle can be employed to the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation without facilitating any predisposition to an untrue 'commonness of being'.

Nevertheless, there is an apparent ambiguity in the discussion. This ambiguity is the argument of the Hierarchy of Perfection found in the Fifth article of *Q.D.P.*, question 3. He says that a quality participated by many things in various ways must be attributed to all those in which it is found *more imperfectly* by virtue of that in which it is found more perfectly¹⁷⁴. In the original wording, Aristotle does not insinuate any derogation of the effect of the agent cause as if it were less perfect or even imperfect. He attributes perfection (in this case truth) to both cause and effect.

¹⁷² Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

¹⁷³ Cfr. *Metaphysics*, II, 1, 993b20.

¹⁷⁴ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co. (*Secunda ratio est, quia, cum aliquid invenitur a pluribus diversimode participatum oportet quod ab eo in quo perfectissime invenitur, attribuaturs omnibus illis in quibus imperfectius invenitur. Nam ea quae positive secundum magis et minus dicuntur, hoc habent ex accessu remotiori vel propinquiore ad aliquid unum: si enim unicuique eorum ex se ipso illud conveniret, non esset ratio cur perfectius in uno quam in alio inveniretur; sicut videmus quod ignis, qui est in fine caliditatis, est caloris principium in omnibus calidis. Est autem ponere unum ens, quod est perfectissimum et verissimum ens: quod ex hoc probatur, quia est aliquid movens omnino immobile et perfectissimum, ut a philosophis est probatum. Oportet ergo quod omnia alia minus perfecta ab ipso esse recipiant. Et haec est probatio philosophi*)

The reading by Aquinas of this deliberation of Aristotle is without a doubt influenced by the Platonic Heritage. Through the latter, Aquinas makes reference to a perfection-imperfection distinction absent in the reflection of Aristotle. Furthermore, by making this slight but nonetheless significant alteration, Aquinas, in our view, lends the reader the capacity to conclude that he is in fact speaking about a *common attribute* which is most perfect in the agent cause and less perfect in its effect. This is confirmed by what he subsequently says: «For those things which have something predicated of them to a greater or lesser degree, have this in reference to one thing which they approach, one nearer than another, because if it belonged to each one in itself, there would be no reason why it would be found more perfectly in one than in another»¹⁷⁵.

In the *Summa Theologiae*, on the other hand, Aquinas accurately adopts the reflection of Aristotle. Plato regards the need for unity in multiplicity (as proof of the universality of the idea of Createdness in all reality distinct from God) as resolutely based on the notion of Participation of the perfection of unique common being according to a hierarchy of perfection. Aristotle, on the other hand, holds that the real being which is the Supreme Being who is the Supreme Truth is the cause of all other beings and truths¹⁷⁶.

Regarding the concept of the Supreme Being (*Ens Maxime*) in the Aristotle Metaphysics and later taken up in the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation, Selner affirms that this Being cannot be comprehended according to a hierarchy of perfection; as the culmination in a grading of common perfection of being. The Supreme Being does not mean the most perfect in the scale or gradation of reality but rather an *entirely different order of reality*¹⁷⁷.

I do not aim here to reproduce her argument but simply to draw attention to it because it is imperative for our metaphysical study of the Divine Creation. «Those things which have being ‘more or less’ must have it from

¹⁷⁵ Q.D.P., q. 3 a. 5 co. (*Est autem ponere unum ens, quod est perfectissimum et verissimum ens: quod ex hoc probatur, quia est aliquid movens omnino immobile et perfectissimum, ut a philosophis est probatum. Oportet ergo quod omnia alia minus perfecta ab ipso esse recipiant*)

¹⁷⁶ Cfr. S.Th., I^a q. 44 a. 1 c. (*Et iterum ostensum est quod esse subsistens non potest esse nisi unum: sicut si albedo esset subsistens, non posset esse nisi una, cum albedines multiplicentur secundum recipientia. Relinquitur ergo quod omnia alia a Deo non sint suum esse, sed participant esse. Necessse est igitur omnia quae diversificantur secundum diversam participationem essendi, ut sint perfectius vel minus perfecte, causari ab uno primo ente, quod perfectissime est. Unde et Plato dixit quod necesse est ante omnem multitudinem ponere unitatem. Et Aristoteles dicit quod est maxime ens et maxime verum, est causa omnis entis et omnis veri...).*

¹⁷⁷ Cfr. SELNER, 1998, p. 36.

that which has being in the highest degree». From this postulate of Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, Book II, and adopted by Aquinas in the Fifth article of *Q.D.P.*, question 3, Selner asserts that its interpretation demonstrates the absence of a hierarchy of the perfection of being in reality. There is a radical distinction between the Divine Being (the Creator) and the created being (the creature). Fire is the highest degree of heat because it is the universal cause of heat in hot things and merely the hottest among hot things. This is pure empirical knowledge. Aquinas however, as Selner notes, applies the same postulate to *being*, a metaphysical principle. Since creatures cannot account for their own being (as evidenced by their contingency), it follows that this being is caused by another subject which on its part must be able to cause being. It must be its own being which it cannot merely possess according to a degree «more or less». Just as fire is heat in itself (*per se ipsa*), in the same way the Supreme Being that *is* to the maximum degree, *Ens Maxime*, is being *per se ipsa*. It is the Divine Being which is a different order of reality. It is what the science of Metaphysics calls God¹⁷⁸.

c) *The Fourth Way of St. Thomas Aquinas in this respect*

In the Fourth Way of the *a posteriori* proofs of the existence of God (*via metaphysica* par excellence¹⁷⁹), St. Thomas Aquinas affords us a demonstration of the necessary and real radical distinction between the Divine Being and the created being. This demonstration becomes interesting for our study not only because it is argued out from the proposition of the *Ens Maxime*, but also because in it we observe the employment of the Platonic notion of Participation (God as the pure and *separate* perfection) alongside the complementary metaphysical reflection of the Ontological Being by Aristotle (God as the *cause* of all being, truth, goodness).

In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas, adopting the thought of Aristotle, affirms that the reality which is the supreme truth must necessarily be the Supreme Being. This being must *really* exist given that it is the foundation of the observable hierarchy of things. The comparison according to «more or less» is thus the approximation to the essence of this Supreme Being (the Highest

¹⁷⁸ Cfr. SELNER, 1998, p. 36.

¹⁷⁹ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, 2000, p. 114.

Truth; *simpliciter*)¹⁸⁰. It is therefore deduced that there can exist other beings apart from the Supreme Being (what we call God)¹⁸¹. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas argues that the Fourth Way is founded upon the ontological hierarchy of goodness and truth of real things. Nevertheless any hierarchy makes implicit reference to the proximity to that which is the Utmost. There necessarily exists that Supreme Truth and consequently the Supreme Being given the fact that *truth inevitably implies being*. This Supreme Reality is the cause of all that belongs to the genre of reality. Therefore there exists a *cause* of truth, goodness and being of all things¹⁸².

The demonstration by Aquinas of the existence of the Supreme Being who belongs to a different order of reality from the created Universe is therefore hinged on the fact of the *Participation by Causality*. The Platonic Participation is complemented by the truth of creation as the Transcendental Causality of God that produces the creatures. For this reason, it is incorrect to metaphysically consider the creatures as inferior perfections of the hierarchy of a common being, truth or goodness because this is a conclusion exclusively founded in the Platonic Participation whose premise is that the only real and true perfection is the *perfectio separata*. The creatures are distinct and novel beings of the Divine Action. In their own right, they are being, truth and goodness (and this fact is based on the Principle of Causality). As Te Velde puts it, «In receiving itself from the divine agent *the creature is totally new*; (...) Creation is not like the past origin of a thing's

¹⁸⁰ Aristotle affirms that there is a «more and less» in the nature of things, contrary to which it would be impossible to, say, compare two things or even to distinguish numerical values and calculations. «If, then, that which has more of any quality is nearer to it, there must be some truth to which the truer is nearer». (Cfr. *Metaphysics*, IV, 4, 1008b31-1009a1)

¹⁸¹ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 13 n. 34 (*Potest etiam alia ratio colligi ex verbis Aristotelis. In II enim Metaphys. ostendit quod ea quae sunt maxime vera, sunt et maxime entia. In IV autem Metaphys. ostendit esse aliquid maxime verum, ex hoc quod videmus duorum falsorum unum altero esse magis falsum unde oportet ut alterum sit etiam altero verius; hoc autem est secundum approximationem ad id quod est simpliciter et maxime verum. Ex quibus concludi potest ulterius esse «aliquid quod est maxime ens». Et hoc dicimus Deum*)

¹⁸² Cfr. *S.Th.*, I^a q. 2 a. 3 c. (*Quarta via sumitur ex gradibus qui in rebus inveniuntur. Invenitur enim in rebus aliquid magis et minus bonum, et verum, et nobile; et sic de aliis huiusmodi. Sed magis et minus dicuntur de diversis secundum quod appropinquant diversimode ad aliquid quod maxime est: sicut magis calidum est, quod magis appropinquet maxime calido. Est igitur aliquid quod est verissimum, et optimum, et nobilissimum, et per consequens maxime ens: nam quae sunt maxime vera, sunt maxime entia, ut dicitur II Methapsys. Quod autem dicitur maxime tale in aliquo genere, est causa omnium quae sunt illius generis: sicut ignis, qui est maxime calidus, est causa omnium calidorum, ut in eodem libro dicitur. Ergo est aliquid quod omnibus entibus est causa esse, et bonitas, et cuiuslibet perfectionis: et hoc dicimus Deum*)

physical existence; it is the permanent condition of any form of existence in the world»¹⁸³.

In point of fact there is a considerable difference between the excerpt of the *Summa contra Gentiles* and that of the *Summa Theologiae* regarding the Fourth Way of the demonstration of the existence of God. In the former citation, the notion of the Transcendental Causality is absent. Its argument therefore remains within the realm of the Platonic Participation and inevitably adheres to the Hypothesis of the «hierarchy of the perfection of common being»¹⁸⁴. We observe the lack of a clear-cut metaphysical distinction between the Highest Being (*Esse Simpliciter* or *Maxime Ens*) and the created being. The conclusion: *Ex quibus concludi potest ulterius esse aliquid quod est maxime ens* merely affirms that there exists other beings distinct from the supreme being and not necessarily that this is radically distinct from them ontologically speaking. The absence of the notion of Causality in the excerpt of *Summa contra Gentiles* is also observed in the adoption of the Aristotle reflection by St. Thomas Aquinas in the Fifth article of *Q.D.P.*, question 3¹⁸⁵. The exclusion of the notion of Causality in the rationalization of the Divine Creation deters the proper employment of the Platonic Notion of Participation in the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation. On the other hand, in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas introduces the notion of the Transcendental Causality. Through this, he is able to describe God, the Divine Being, as the Supreme Being not because He is simply the highest in a hierarchy of perfections, but rather because *Ens Maxime*, the Uncreated Being, is the «principle and cause»¹⁸⁶ of the Universal Creation¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸³ TE VELDE, 2006, p. 126.

¹⁸⁴ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 13 n. 34 (... *esse aliquid maxime verum, ex hoc quod videmus duorum falsorum unum altero esse magis falsum unde oportet ut alterum sit etiam altero verius; hoc autem est secundum approximationem ad id quod est simpliciter et maxime verum. Ex quibus concludi potest ulterius esse aliquid quod est maxime ens*)

¹⁸⁵ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co. (*Secunda ratio est, quia, cum aliquid invenitur a pluribus diversimode participatum oportet quod ab eo in quo perfectissime invenitur, attribuat omnibus illis in quibus imperfectius invenitur. Nam ea quae positive secundum magis et minus dicuntur, hoc habent ex accessu remotiori vel propinquiori ad aliquid unum: si enim unicuique eorum ex se ipso illud conveniret, non esset ratio cur perfectius in uno quam in alio inveniretur; sicut videmus quod ignis, qui est in fine caliditatis, est caloris principium in omnibus calidis. Est autem ponere unum ens, quod est perfectissimum et verissimum ens: quod ex hoc probatur, quia est aliquid movens omnino immobile et perfectissimum, ut a philosophis est probatum. Oportet ergo quod omnia alia minus perfecta ab ipso esse recipiant. Et haec est probatio philosophi*)

¹⁸⁶ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, A. L., *Teología Natural*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2000, p. 115 (Footnote 139).

¹⁸⁷ Cfr. *S.Th.*, I^a q. 2 a. 3 c. (*Quod autem dicitur maxime tale in aliquo genere, est causa omnium quae sunt illius generis: sicut ignis, qui est maxime calidus, est causa omnium calidorum, ut in eodem libro dicitur. Ergo est aliquid quod omnibus entibus est causa esse, et bonitas, et cuiuslibet perfectionis: et hoc dicimus Deum*)

Our appraisal of Aquinas' position of the notion of Participation in the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation has therefore taken up two fronts:

- 1) The idea of a «hierarchy of perfection», and
- 2) The idea of a «common attribute» (*esse commune*).

We nevertheless remain inquisitive in the study of the various excerpts of the writings of Aquinas: Is the proposition of the Hierarchy of Perfection and the Common Attribute appropriate for the explanation of the Ontological Existence?

It is one thing to affirm that the most superior perfection is *being*, and quite another to conclude that God is the highest perfection *within* the hierarchy of 'being'. The metaphysical speculation is quite unanimous about the fact that *esse* (an act per se devoid of all potencies) is the mother of all perfections. As Fabro puts it, «*Esse* is the act of all essence and form, and in the same manner as the form is the act of matter, and the production of the act is the finality of all action of the agent. The most supreme act is *esse*, by means of which all other act is actualized, substantial or accidental, which is the proper and immediate effect of God»¹⁸⁸.

The real act of being is the unique undetermined act because it can be without any restriction whatsoever. *Esse* is what ultimately confers all actuality. It is the very intimacy of any reality. It is the fixed and stable that constitutes the real being¹⁸⁹.

It is indubitable that the real being is perfection because it is *act* of being. Aquinas himself, though at this moment commenting on the correlation of act-potency, affirms that *being* is the most perfect of all things¹⁹⁰. He further says: «what I call *esse* is the actuality of all acts, and on account of this, is the perfection of all perfections»¹⁹¹. Selner, analysing this proposal of Aquinas, says that the determination of *esse* by the predicamentals is not an instance of the actualisation of certain potentialities of *esse*. Rather *esse* is the *foundation of actuality and the base of subsequent possible perfections*¹⁹².

¹⁸⁸ FABRO, 2009, p. 331.

¹⁸⁹ Cfr. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, J., «Analogía de la noción de acto según santo Tomás», *Anuario Filosófico*, 6 (1973) 164-165.

¹⁹⁰ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 7 a. 2 ad 9 (*Ad nonum dicendum, quod hoc quod dico esse est inter omnia perfectissimum: quod ex hoc patet quia actus est semper perfectior potentia*)

¹⁹¹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 7 a. 2 ad 9 (*Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum*)

¹⁹² Cfr. SELNER, 1998, p. 153.

However, *Esse* is not only the Ultimate Perfection but also the *Real* Perfection. It is what in *Metaphysics* merits the name God. The Divine Being (*Esse Divinum*) is however not the highest of a hierarchy of the perfection of being. It is the unique perfection that *subsists in and by itself*. All other beings (*esse creatum*), and as such perfections, subsist or exist by virtue of *Esse Divinum*. According to our view, the nucleus of the metaphysical realism in the discussion of the Divine Creation lies in the fact that there is not any hierarchy of being either between God and the creature or within the created being.

If we take the literal connotation of the definition by Aquinas of *Esse* as the «actuality of all acts, and on account of this, the perfection of all perfections», we have not much remedy but to conclude that this *Esse* is not only unique but real because it is actuality. It can only be said of God. The created being cannot be the actuality of all acts because it is not the actuality of the Pure Act. It therefore falls short of the universality that solely pertains to the Divine Act of Being.

Therefore there is not any hierarchy of perfection between the Divine Being and the created being. The two realities are radically distinguished by the idea of *Createdness*. According to this notion, there is not any common being between God and the created Universe. What can be said is that the created being or the created existence is a *semblance* of God who is Existence *per se ipsa*. The characteristic of universal creation that is similar to God who is its cause is existence *but created*, what is called the *created being*¹⁹³. This is in fact an employment of the original postulate of Aristotle¹⁹⁴.

Pérez Guerrero, corroborating the radicalism of the distinction between the existence of God and that of creation, affirms that the Divine Being is separated while created being is dependent: «It is one thing to say that the *Divine Being is separated* and another to say that the Divine Being is the separated being. When one says that the Divine Being is separated, it is not necessarily considered as capable of any union or composition, while when one says that the Divine Being is the separated being, yes one foresees the possibility of union or composition, given that, in any other manner, this expression loses

¹⁹³ Cfr. *S.Th.*, I^a q. 44 a. 1 c. (*Et iterum ostensum est quod esse subsistens non potest esse nisi unum: sicut si albedo esset subsistens, non posset esse nisi una, cum albedines multiplicentur secundum recipientia. Relinquitur ergo quod omnia alia a Deo non sint suum esse, sed participant esse*)

¹⁹⁴ Cfr. *Metaphysics*, II, 1, 993b20.

its meaning»¹⁹⁵. This author continues to say that according to the misguided doctrine of the Separated being, the perfection of being is internally divided into the Divine being and the created being. The two *beings* are solely distinguished by a limitation which is the effect of composition.

One question now begs a response: Can there be any metaphysical speculative discussion around the hierarchy of perfection given that the Divine Being and the created being are absolutely separate? We affirm the positive save for the fact that the metaphysical science in which the Divine Being and the created being are considered two separate realities is *primordial* with respect to the speculation of the hierarchy of perfection. The metaphysical debate regarding the notion of 'being' is beyond that of the predicamentals¹⁹⁶. For this reason, Metaphysics distinguishes between the two natures of existence before we can apply any categories to any one of the two. Aquinas does not obstinately maintain the position that 'being' is certain perfection to which God and creatures can be attributed variably. He recognizes the *causal* relationship that exists between God and the creature. He, for example, says that though God as the first cause does not enter into the essence of the creatures, the being which is in creatures cannot be understood except as *derived* from the Divine Being¹⁹⁷. He qualifies this statement which, at first glance demonstrates certain pantheistic elements¹⁹⁸, by affirming that the relationship between God and the creatures is properly speaking one of cause and effect¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁵ PÉREZ GUERRERO, 1996, p. 35.

¹⁹⁶ The metaphysical discussion regarding the notion of 'being' goes beyond that of the predicaments. For this reason, Metaphysics must clarify what 'being' is before we can apply any categories to it. According to Aristotle there are 10 real manners of being into which universal reality is reduced –the substance and nine accidents–. The ten genres are what we call predicaments or categories. The nine accidents are: quality, quantity, relation, place, position, possession, time, action and passion. Given this classification of the nature of being of universal reality and the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation based upon the idea of Createdness that we hereby put forward, we conclude that the predicaments of Aristotle *cannot apply* to the Divine Being as they apply to the created being (See *Metaphysics*, V). These predicaments must therefore be studied under the subject of the *Created being*, which implies, taking into consideration the inherent notion of Createdness.

¹⁹⁷ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 ad 1: «Although the first cause, which is God, does not enter into the essence of creatures, yet the being which is in creatures cannot be understood except as derived from the divine being, just as a proper effect cannot be understood except as derived from its proper cause».

¹⁹⁸ By making a contrast between the premise, that the Divine Essence does not enter into that of creatures, and the conclusion, that the being of creatures derives from divine being, he seems to imply that divine being does in some way enter into the being of creatures.

¹⁹⁹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 ad 1.

The arguments in favour of the metaphysical hierarchy of universal reality are preceded by the distinction between the *Esse Divinum* and the *esse creatum*. The pure perfections such as being, life, will, intellect, unity, truth, goodness and beauty²⁰⁰, cannot express the nature of God in the same manner as they describe the created reality. The transcendental nature of these perfections in the created Nature is really pre-defined by the idea of Createdness.

d) *The Ens per se and the ens per aliud of Avicenna*

The third argument alluded to by Aquinas in the *Q.D.P.*, question 3 article 5 is that of Avicenna. It is our view that this is perhaps the most outstanding argument that argues for the idea of Createdness as the most universal attribute of all reality distinct from God. Here Avicenna presents the speculation of *two distinct real beings* of which the Universal reality is made up:

- 1) That being which is through self (*Ens per se ipsa*), and
- 2) That which is through another (*ens per aliud*).

He says that the real being whose existence depends upon another is reduced as to a cause to that which is through self. The causal being, by definition, subsists «*through itself*»²⁰¹. The argument of Avicenna presents a novelty to the notion of Participation. He brings together the Platonic Participation perspective and the Aristotle notion of Causality. He employs the example of heat to illustrate this: «If there were one heat existing *per se ipsa*, it would be necessary that it be *the cause* of all hot things which have heat *by way of participation*». As a consequence, is formulated the notion of the *Participation by Causality*.

To say that the First Causal Being is «its own being» implies that it must be: the Pure and Simple Act (non-composed). All other beings distinct from the First Being are therefore not their own being but, through participation, are *by*²⁰² that one being. Furthermore, Avicenna cements the

²⁰⁰ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, 2000, p. 117.

²⁰¹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

²⁰² The use of the preposition 'by' is critical. The participation spoken of by Avicenna is not a participation 'of' the being of the First Being. It is rather participation in a *semblance* which is *caused by* the First Being. It is therefore participation 'by' which makes implicit reference to the Principle of Causality.

ground for the universality of the idea of Createdness when he, as Aquinas gives evidence, says: «Hence it is necessary that all other beings which are not their own being, but have being by way of participation, are by that one being»²⁰³.

The Universal reality consequently is distinctly either the Divine Being or the created being. The relationship between these two realities is not according to a hierarchy or order of perfection but rather through a participative association. This participation is however not a continuum but a discrete relation because it is participation by causal action. The created being participates in *its own existence* because the Divine Being, Existence per se, causes this created existence to be. As Aquinas explains in *Summa contra Gentiles*, that attribute which is proper to the nature of a particular subject per se cannot be separated from this subject because this separation would de-substantiate it. On the other, if in a particular subject is found an attribute which, though separated from it, does not affect the integrity of this subject, it follows that this attribute is not essential to the nature of this subject²⁰⁴. Applying this logic to the Divine Creation we see that the *creatural attribute*, that is the *created being* or *created existence* is essential to creatures but not to God, while the Existence of God is essential to both God and the creatures. For this reason, we affirm that the attribute by which God and creatures exist must essentially (metaphysically) be distinct because what is said of creatures as regards being or existing cannot be said of God; that creatures *intrinsically depend* upon the Other in order to be.

We have begun this sub-section of our Dissertation with two principal objectives. Firstly, we have desired to bring the idea of Createdness to the fore-front of the discussion around the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation through a appraisal of the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. This debate around the idea of Createdness is the central theme of the Fifth article of the third question of *Q.D.P.* Indeed Createdness, a novel concept, acquires a universal connotation in Metaphysics. Through Aristotle and Avicenna we see how the new principle is supported by two *inseparable conceptual pillars* –Participation and Causality–.

²⁰³ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

²⁰⁴ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 15 n. 3.

In contrast, the Platonic view of Participation cannot stand on its own in the *Metaphysics* of the Divine Creation. Our second objective for that matter has been to demonstrate this. The Notion of Participation according to Plato and the Neo-Platonism considers 'being' a common perfection which pertains to the Divinity in plenitude and to the Universal creation *by defect*. However this degradation of being is contrary to the realism stipulated by the metaphysical truth. Createdness does not in any way imply imperfection. It rather makes reference to the state of existence of creatures which is fundamental dependence upon their Creator. The created being is not perfect in a derogatory manner but properly so according to its own existence. The postulates of Aristotle and Avicenna are therefore a solid foundation for an advance in the Aquinas *Metaphysics* of the Divine Creation.

3. THE DIVINE CREATION AS RELATION

The Divine Creation does not pertain to the predicament (category) of action – passion. Rather it is a relation «of the creature to the Creator from whom it receives *being*». Properly speaking, the effect of the Divine Creation is not any created entity but an inherent aspect of the reality of the creature. Aquinas affirms that the Divine Creation no more than realizes a relation with the Creator.

The exposition and demonstration of the creature fundamentally as a relation, therefore, becomes the objective of this sub-chapter. Corresponding to this objective is the exposition of the limitations and errors that arise from a conception of the creature as merely a 'thing', an entity or object, concepts which entail such particularity that they become inadequate for a proper comprehension of the effect of the Divine Creation. Two traditional philosophical errors intimately connected with the comprehension of the creature as certain particularity, become objects of study in this sub-chapter.

- 1) The Problem of the Unconditional Transcendence rooted in Platonism;
- 2) The View of the Universal Reality as mere transformation in the metaphysical tenets of Aristotle.

As earlier mentioned, these errors largely draw from the view of the creature as a particular entity. Bound to this is the lack of comprehension of the

nature of the Divine Act of creation which is a Perfect Act without any intermediary stages. It consequently becomes necessary to:

- 1) Study the nature of this relation which is the creature;
- 2) Distinguish 'relation' from 'entity', and
- 3) Demonstrate the limitation of the view of the creatures as a mere particularity for the correct metaphysical justification of the notion of the Divine Creation;

a) *Passivity in the Divine Creation*

The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the Divine Creation has a real and lasting or permanent metaphysical effect upon the creature. Aquinas defines 'creature' as the general name of the real relation of that which proceeds from God²⁰⁵. The effect of the Divine Creation is of a metaphysical nature. It is fundamentally the Created Relation. This means that the creature, in the absence and without sustenance of the Divine Creation, naturally annihilates into the Non-being. «The idea of creation corresponds to the idea of a total dependence, transcendental and extra-temporal in nature, of being in relation to its cause. This very idea is termed relation»²⁰⁶. Indeed it is our opinion that the study of the question of Relation in the Divine Creation holds the key to the comprehension of this Divine Act. Small wonder why St. Thomas Aquinas dedicates the Third article to the question of «Creation as relation»²⁰⁷.

We have already seen that the Divine Creation is the production of substantial being by God. This substantial being is through an act of existence, the created act of being. We shall now study what kind of relation this created being possesses with respect to God its Creator. Indeed one may informally ask: To whom belongs the acknowledgment of attribute of creation, to God or to the creature? Moreover, is the relation between God and the creature direct or mediate? The questions posed are not straightforward. Philosophical

²⁰⁵ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 ad 2 (*Haec autem relatio, creatura quaedam est, accepto communiter nomine creaturae pro omni eo quod est a Deo*)

²⁰⁶ OSUNA FERNÁNDEZ-LARGO, A., «Cuestión sobre la creación: Introducción», in *Santo Tomás de Aquino. Opúsculos y cuestiones selectas (III)*, A. Osuna Fernández-Largo (ed.), Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 2005, p. 264.

²⁰⁷ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 tit. 1

errors have arisen due to the unreserved attribution of the reality of the Divine Creation to God –what we hereby called the problem of the *Unconditional Transcendence*–.

Two false conclusions made as a result of the error of the Unconditional Transcendence with respect to the interpretation of the Divine Creation are:

- a) The exclusive attribution of the reality of the Divine Creation to God with total disregard of the creature results in unsatisfactory justifications regarding the original relationship between God and the creature. As a consequence, there is a rational imperative to introduce the hypothesis of semi-creative beings that preserve the mentioned relationship.
- b) On the other hand, when the Divine Creation is attributed uniquely to the creature not only does the metaphysical error of the Eternal Creation become very imminent, but also there is also the disregard of the divine origin of creation²⁰⁸.

Nevertheless it must be affirmed that the truth of the Divine Creation not only is compatible with the transcendence of God as well as the reality of the creature. St. Thomas Aquinas outlines various arguments to demonstrate this compatibility:

- The direct and immediate relation extant in the Divine Creation.
- The Activity and Passivity of the Divine Creation.
- The con-creation of relation in the Divine Creation.

b) *The Provider – Recipient Argument*

A postulate in *Liber de Causis* asserts that from an entity another cannot receive that which is greater than the original provider:

- Be it according to the means according to which the power or capacity itself is bequeathed, or
- According to the manner in which the recipient receives this capacity²⁰⁹.

²⁰⁸ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 arg. 2.

²⁰⁹ Cfr. AQUINAS, T., *In Liber de Causis expositio*, Marietti Editori, Turin 1955, p. 67.

Basing itself upon this postulate, one argument affirms that the creative act of God is consequently received into the Pure Non-being which is the only possible recipient of this act. It is subsequently and erroneously concluded that the Divine Creation does not establish any real relation in the creature²¹⁰. In his response to this argument, Aquinas affirms that the Pure Non-being is not the recipient of the Divine Creation rather «that which is created»²¹¹. As Aquinas argues, the notion of the Divine Creation presents a great difficulty for the finite human intellect which by its nature requires sensitive material reality for the acquisition of knowledge²¹². The Provider-Recipient postulate happens to be strongly founded on the supposition of movement in the Material Universe.

Consequent to this error, the Non-being is viewed as a recipient of the act of Divine Creation. «Divine Creation marks the commencement of being as well as the establishment of the relation with the Creator from whom the creature receives being. Therefore the Divine Creation is nothing more than a certain relation to God together with a novelty of being»²¹³ affirms St. Thomas Aquinas regarding the nature of the Divine Creation. In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, our author uses similar terms when he describes the Divine Creation as: «(...) the very dependence of created being on the principle which originally causes it; for this reason creation pertains to the category of *relation*»²¹⁴.

Therefore the principal attributes that surround the question of Relation in the Divine Creation are:

- 1) The Novelty of being;
- 2) The relation of the Creator to the creature;
- 3) The permanent and stable dependence of this relation.

²¹⁰ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 arg. 1.

²¹¹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 ad 1 (*Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod in creatione non ens non se habet sicut recipiens divinam actionem, sed id quod creatum est, ut supra dictum est*)

²¹² Cfr. AQUINAS, 1955, p. 69 (Propositio 10, n. 249).

²¹³ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 co. (*unde in ipsa creatione non importatur aliquis accessus ad esse, nec transmutatio a creante, sed solummodo inceptio essendi, et relatio ad creatorem a quo esse habet; et sic creatio nihil est aliud realiter quam relatio quaedam ad Deum cum novitate essendi*)

²¹⁴ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. II cap. 18 n. 2 (*Non enim est creatio mutatio, sed ipsa dependentia esse creati ad principium a quo statuitur. Et sic est de genere relationis*)

In the Divine Creation, creatures neither act nor receive an action, but rather attain a relation with God who is the principle of their being. The essence of Divine Creation is this relation²¹⁵.

With regard to the category of relation, the Angelic Doctor confirms the real nature of the relation between God and the creature established in the Divine Creation. This relation is direct and immediate. For this reason, there is not any incessant sequence in this relation²¹⁶.

c) *The Divine Creation as a perfect realized act*

«This relation that is a creature... does not proceed to infinity because the relation of creation does not refer to God through another real relation but rather in se. A relation does not make reference to anything through another relation»²¹⁷. In this section of the Doctorate Dissertation, it is once again important to highlight the fact that the Divine Creation is not movement. It is an instantaneous and immediate act. It is for this reason called the Perfect Act because it lacks any intermediary stages. It is worth noting that if the instantaneous nature of the Divine Creation fails to be underscored, the real and direct nature of the relation established by this act cannot properly be explained.

- 1) The Divine Creation in the active sense makes reference to the active power of God as its subject. The act of the Divine Creation here understood cannot be but uncreated and therefore transcendent.

²¹⁵ Cfr. POPE, S., «Neither enemy nor friend: nature as creation in the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas», *Zygon*, 32 (1997) 223.

²¹⁶ Cfr. S.c.G., lib. II cap. 18 n. 4 (*Ex hoc autem apparet vanitas impugnantium creationem per rationes sumptas ex natura motus vel mutationis: utpote quod oportet creationem, sicut ceteros motus vel mutationes, esse in aliquo subiecto; et quod oportet non esse transmutari in esse. Non enim est creatio mutatio, sed ipsa dependentia esse creati ad principium a quo statuitur. Et sic est de genere relationis. Unde nihil prohibet eam in creato esse sicut in subiecto. Videtur tamen creatio esse mutatio quaedam secundum modum intelligendi tantum: inquantum scilicet intellectus noster accipit unam et eandem rem ut non existentem prius, et postea existentem. Apparet autem, si creatio relatio quaedam est, quod res quaedam est: et neque increata est; neque alia relatione creata. Cum enim effectus creatus realiter dependeat a create, oportet huiusmodi relationem esse rem quandam. – Omnis autem res a Deo in esse producitur. Est igitur in esse a Deo producta. – Non tamen alia creatione creata quam ipsa creatura prima quae per eam creata dicitur. Quia accidentia et formae, sicut per se non sunt, ita nec per se creantur; cum creatio sit productio entis: sed, sicut in alio sunt, ita aliis creatis creantur. – Praeterea. Relatio non refertur per aliam relationem, quia sic esset abire infertur, quia essentialiter relatio est. Non igitur alia creatione opus est, qua ipsa creatio creetur, et sic in infinitum)*

²¹⁷ Q.D.P., q. 3 a. 3 ad 2 (*Haec autem relatio... nec oportet procedere in infinitum, quia creationis relatio non referetur ad Deum alia relatione reali, sed ipsa*)

- 2) In the passive sense, the Divine Creation can only fall attribute to real passive power of the creature which experiences a novelty of being because God does not possesses any passive power which can acquire such innovation which resembles the process of change by reason of novelty²¹⁸.

CONCLUSIONS

«Without wonder, men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal», says Blessed John Paul II in *Fides et ratio* (1998, 4). The initial glimmer of knowledge arises from wonder. Wonder is not that of any innate or primordial mental notions or ideas as the Cartesian philosophers thought. It is rather the marvel and the contemplation of the Universal Reality. It is the intellectual acknowledgement of the fact of the Creation; that the World does not fully explain itself. The question of the Universal Creation marks the foremost commencement of the intellectual inquisition of man.

One of the most excellent materializations of the contribution of the Christian Doctrine upon the Rational Speculation is the truth of the Divine Creation. With St. Thomas Aquinas, the philosophical study of the Notion of Creation, a concept born within the precincts of the Truth of the Divine Revelation, reaches unprecedented heights (and probably unsurpassed since then!). It, in effect, achieves the status of a metaphysical notion. We thus speak of the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation.

In the First Chapter of this Dissertation we have seen how a possible compatibility can be achieved among:

- 1) The Physics and Metaphysics of Aristotle guided by the postulate – *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*;
- 2) The negation by the Cosmological Science of the thesis that the Universe, the rationally-structured Cosmos, can come from the *Nothingness* (according to a misunderstanding of the Divine Creation maxim – *Creatio ex nihilo*), and

²¹⁸ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 ad 2. St. Thomas Aquinas, as he frankly admits, cannot totally avoid demonstrating such analogy that exists between the Divine Creation as an *aquisition* (the novelty of being) and the Change as an acquisition of a form. (*Si vero consideretur secundum suam rationem, prout ex actione agentis inascitur praedicta relatio, sic est quodammodo prior subiecto, sicut ipsa divina actio, est eius causa proxima*)

- 3) The Creation Thesis forwarded by Aquinas that describes the Divine Creation of the Universe *from nothing* as the manner of acting by God who is the Pure Act and as such (in the absence of any potency whatsoever) naturally produces existence.

The axiom: *From nothing, nothing comes to be* comes to bear the affirmative testimony to the fact that the created Universal Being must actually proceed from what *is*. It cannot come from what is not. The idea of the *Non-being*, therefore, is rejected as a possible causal factor of the Universe because the impossibility of something arising from *what is not* (the Non-being) is evident. Only one alternative consequently remains: «things come into being out of existent things, i.e. out of things already present»²¹⁹. Consequently, the universal existence must be attributed to that which already exists. This affirmation becomes vital to the positive perception of the *ex nihilo* dictum which negates the possibility of the *Nothingness* as the original source of anything existent²²⁰.

On the other hand, Aristotle's Thesis of the Eternal Existence of the Substance is an impediment to the employment of his *Metaphysics* in the description of the Divine Creation. Indeed according to Aristotle the Non-being is only an accidental principle. In the *Ex nihilo, nihil fit* postulate, the *Nothingness* is understood not in an absolute sense but rather as an accidental privation that the Substance temporally experiences. What is *nothing* is actually *something* different from what is desired. For this reason, *nothing* is really a privation or *qua* what is not. Nevertheless when Aquinas describes the Divine Creation, his is unambiguous that this involves the production of the Universality of the Creatures in their most fundamental existence²²¹.

How then does Aquinas bridge the deficient Aristotle *Metaphysics* with the new Christian Truth Elements that implore a metaphysical explanation? The Law of Similarity, *omne agens agit sibi simile* is what metaphysically describes *how* any active agent acts. God is an active agent; he is the Pure Act. Through the use of *analogy*, therefore, we can arrive at a somewhat reasonable understanding of the nature of the Divine Action. Nevertheless, there are two variant positions regarding what *sibi simile* actually means.

²¹⁹ Cfr. *Physics*, I, 4, 188a19.

²²⁰ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 ad 7.

²²¹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

According to Wippel, the Law of Similitude in Aquinas justifies the fact that our cognition of God though imperfect, can be real and positive because the names that designate pure perfections such as wisdom, goodness and being, are names that are attributed to God properly and not metaphorically, through the similarity to their human connotation²²². For Rosemann, *omne agens agit sibi simile* is «a principle which ensures that even the greatest degree of difference or dissimilitude between diverse elements of the Cosmos can never become an absolute otherness»²²³.

Reformulating the *Ex nihilo, nihil fit* postulate as follows: From existence, existence proceeds; we see how the explanation of the Universal Action plays testimony to the Law of Causal Similitude.

The Law of the Natural Action, *omne agens agit secundum quod in actu*²²⁴, is the other governing maxim of the Universal Active Agent Action. *An agent acts insofar as it is in act*: The Universal Action is attributable to the agent's possession of the act, fundamentally understood as the act of being or existing (*esse*). Consequently, the Law of the Natural Action is based upon the fact that all agents, by their simple real existence, act according to their possession of *esse*²²⁵. The fact that the agent cause fundamental acts in a singular way, that is, according to *existence* means that its effect is a similitude of it by the mere fact that it exists! This explains the fact that the Universe has an ontological dependence upon God precisely through the Divine Creation. The World is therefore not ontologically eternal as Aristotle affirmed.

Does God possess power to create the Universe or not? Having established that the World, through the Divine Creation is sustained in an ontological dependence upon the Creator, we have now come to focus on the nature of the Creative Power in God. Aquinas affirms that God has created the Universe not by *natural necessity* but rather «by the decree of his will»²²⁶. From this declaration arises the Principle of the Free and Intelligent Creation as a First Principle of the Divine Agent Action. The Principle of the Metaphysical

²²² Cfr. WIPPEL, 2007, p. 154.

²²³ Cfr. ROSEMAN, 1996, pp. 22-23.

²²⁴ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 1 co.

²²⁵ Cfr. WIPPEL, 2007, p. 166: «that each and every thing acts insofar as it is in act – Thomas seems to base this on the common sense view that if something is to produce something else in actuality, it must itself exist in actuality».

²²⁶ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15 co.

Act (that God is an Active Agent through *omne agens agit secundum quod in actu* and *omne agens agit sibi simile*), though successful explains the Divine Potency to create, does not in anyway insinuate that this action is contingent to God. Moreover the Classical Neo-platonic axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui* sustains the thesis that the Goodness naturally propagates itself. As St. Augustine puts it, «Because God is good, we *are*»²²⁷.

Consequent the act of the Divine Creation is mistakenly understood as a necessary emanation from God. The Latin Avicenna takes up this thesis and, incorporating the Law of Singularity (that each one and simple cause can only produce a unique effect) arrives at the conclusion that the Divine Creation is the necessary external causal action of God. Indeed the guiding Principle of Avicenna is that attributes are necessary consequences of the essence. The causal attribute in God is a necessary consequence of the Divine Essence.

Aquinas, fortified with the knowledge of the Revealed Truth that holds that God is the Free and Personal Being, navigates through the metaphysical synthesis of the Free Creation and the fact that the Good is self-diffusive. He does not always and in a clear-cut manner circumvent the necessary emanative implications of the axiom *Bonum diffusivum sui*. The Divine Simplicity means that God's will is identical with His very essence. The principal object of the Divine Will is the Divine Essence²²⁸. The primary object of God's understanding is the Divine Essence. It therefore follows that the Divine Essence is the primary object of the Divine Will. According to the thesis of the Perfect Identification of the Divine Essence and Will Aquinas philosophically sustains the fact that the Divine Will moves itself in a natural and necessary fashion towards the Divine Essence. This conclusion of course does not leave any room for the rational sustenance of the free-willing by God of an eternal reality to Him as is the case of the created Universe.

Nonetheless, we read further ahead in the *Summa contra Gentiles* that that God wills, not the goodness found in other realities but rather wills other realities *to be*²²⁹. The *goodness* found in these realities pre-supposes their real existence and God gives this existence through the free and intelligent crea-

²²⁷ *De Doctrina Christiana*, I, 32.

²²⁸ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 74 n. 1.

²²⁹ *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 81 n. 4: «God in willing His own goodness, wills things other than Himself *to be* in so far as they participate in His goodness».

tion. The question as to why God would give real existence to these realities (to create) consequently does not remain unanswered.

The Transcendental Goodness is perfection, but it is always an attribute of *being*. For this reason, *Bonum diffusivum sui* describes the perfective nature of the Good upon the reality but does not explain how this reality comes to be. Aquinas can therefore truly sustain that, through the Divine Creation, the Universe comes to be intelligently and freely.

In the turn of events, Aquinas can be said to arrive at such affirmation that: *Bonum diffusivum sui in bona re*²³⁰. That is: The *Good* is perfection that is said not of itself but of real things insofar as they possess it. Aquinas, guided by the Law of Similarity, understands that the created reality is said to be good because it is the effect of the Divine Causal Agent. According to the Cause-effect relationship of the principle *omne agens agit sibi simile*, there is a *pre-containment*, *similarity* and *influx* of the effect in the cause. The good must therefore pre-exist in God for it to be said of the Created being; the perfection present in an effect is a certain likeness of its agent because *every agent produces something its likeness*. Indeed it is the Law of Similitude that provides the ultimate guiding principle in order to affirm that good in itself does not produce as an efficient causality but rather than an agent which possesses *goodness* transmits this perfection to its effect.

Nevertheless, in the order of the Cause-effect relationship, the Agent Cause is really present in its effect because it is somewhat ordered to it:

- 1) Because *an agent produces its likeness* and so perpetuates its species in what Rosemann denotes as the Law of Synonymy²³¹;
- 2) Because the agent is itself moved by another, and
- 3) Because the agent perfects itself in producing the effect.

Given the fact that God only possesses a rational relation to the created Universe²³², it can then be concluded that the action by which this Universe comes to be is not a transitive action by God. How can this be? God does not have a real relation with the created Universe. At the same time, the very act of the Divine Creation as we have seen is immediate, instantaneous and direct.

²³⁰ The perfection *goodness* is said to be diffusive in so far as this perfection is found in the Created reality (*good things*). *Goodness* in itself therefore does not produce the created reality but is simply found in them or perfects them.

²³¹ Cfr. ROSEMAN, 1996, pp. 52-57.

²³² Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 3 co.

When Aquinas, affirms that God acts without any intermediary²³³, he effectively denies any transitive action in God²³⁴. Therefore if the Divine Action is by nature immanent, that is non-transitive, how does Aquinas resolve the question of the Divine Creation which by definition involves the production of being distinct from God's?

Selner notes that if Divine Creation is not the result of a transitive action then the Created being is not produced at all²³⁵. In this very denial is an implicit claim that the Creative act is not ultimately ordered to the production of creatures, but rather for sake of the Divine Goodness: «Creatures are indeed a result of this activity, but God's act is not ordered to them as such, but to his own goodness... God is his own end. As a purely actual being he and his activity can be ordered to only one thing, and that is himself. His activity may be productive of something other, but that other is not in itself the end of this activity. Further, in creation there is no 'other' which *receives* God's act and is perfected by it, as in a transitive act. The other is rather wholly constituted by this act»²³⁶.

«By distinguishing between the logical relation of God to the creature and the real relation of the creature to God; by maintaining the 'immanence' of God's activity, Thomas avoids the 'contamination' so feared by Avicenna... Thus God's radical otherness is preserved and our understating of it is enhanced by facing up to the challenge it seems to come under in holding for creation»²³⁷. Therefore, the Divine Creative Act cannot be incorporated in the Aristotelian definition of the Transitive action.

The Divine Being is a radically distinct *thing* from the created being. God is not simply the separated nature of a common being (*esse commune*) while creatures are this being but in a composition of *esse* and *essentia*. No, the Divine Being is separated while the created being is composed. They are two totally different manners of existence. Pérez Guerrero highlights this radicalism of the distinction between the Existence of God and that of the Creatures:

²³³ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 7 a. 10 co.

²³⁴ *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 15 co.

²³⁵ Cfr. SELNER, 1998, pp. 249-250.

²³⁶ SELNER, 1998, pp. 250-251. Selner makes reference to the definition of the Transitive action as «any action which *consists in* the production of an effect» whereby *consists in* necessarily means *finalised in*. Therefore to deny that the creative action is transitive is to deny that it consist in the production of creatures as this were the unique rationale of this Divine Action.

²³⁷ SELNER, 1998, p. 252.

«It is one thing to say that the *Divine Being is separated* and another to say that the Divine Being is the separated being. When one says that the Divine Being is separated, it is not necessarily considered as capable of any union or composition, while when one says that the Divine Being is the separated being, yes one foresees the possibility of union or composition, given that, in any other manner, this expression loses its meaning»²³⁸. At the heart of this distinction is the foundation of a critique of the thesis that the Universal Reality is a mere hierarchy of the Perfection of the Common being²³⁹. Between God and the creatures there is dissimilarity in the nature of existence. This is what is meant by the Absolute Transcendence of God from the created Universe.

However the classical notion of Participation becomes an impediment in order to articulate the Unconditional Transcendent Existence of God. In Platonism, the ideas of *Commonness* and *Participation* seem to go hand in hand. This is because the very possibility of attributing any common property to reality means that each entity of reality must possess this property but only *partially*. If any particular being were to possess it fully, then this property would no longer be common. In fact precisely in this lies the magnificent and fine distinction between the notions of *Commonness* and *Participation*. If a certain being, A, *fully* possess a certain property, P, and another being, B, also possesses the same property, then P is not common to A and B given that A *does not share* in P but possesses it fully. It is B therefore that *participates* in P. The distinction between the Commonness and the Participation is so radical that it can be truly affirmed that the nature of P in A is *completely distinct* from the nature of P in B²⁴⁰.

It is necessary to make evermore present the notion of *Createdness* as the fundamental proposal of the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation. The radical real distinction between the Divine Being and the Created being deters any tendency to comprehend *being* as a certain perfection whose commonness is not only pertinent to creatures but applies to God as well in the most perfect manner. Te Velde well explains the understanding by the classical Platonism of *Participation*: «What is the meaning of ‘participation’? Thomas begins with

²³⁸ PÉREZ GUERRERO, 1996, p. 35.

²³⁹ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

²⁴⁰ For this reason when we speak of the dissimilarity between the Being of God and that of the created reality, it is proper to speak of ‘distinction’ rather than ‘difference’ so as to further highlight this infinite disparity in order of reality between God and the Creation.

a kind of etymological explanation: «to participate is, as it were, to take a part of something» (*partem capere*). This is what the term ‘participation’ means. We may therefore speak of participation, Thomas goes on, when something receives (or: has) in particular fashion what belongs to another universally. Thus when a characteristic or perfection is possessed by a subject in only a partial or particular fashion, such a subject can be said to participate in that perfection. The subject in question is not identical with the perfection it possesses, which leaves the possibility open for other subjects to share in that same perfection»²⁴¹.

The above view which advances an understanding of certain «commonness of the perfection of being» and consequent participation of the perfection of being by creatures through deterioration has a strong Neo-platonic heritage especially in Boethius. Elements of this thought-position are heavily adopted by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Regarding the concept of the Supreme Being (*Ens Maxime*) in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and later taken up in the *Metaphysics* of the Divine Creation, Selner affirms that this Being cannot be comprehended according to a hierarchy of perfection; as the culmination of the common but ordered perfection of being. The Supreme Being does not mean the most perfect in the scale or gradation of reality but rather an *entirely different order of reality*²⁴². «Those things which have being ‘more or less’ must have it from that which has being in the highest degree» demonstrates the absence of a hierarchy of the perfection of being in reality. There is a radical distinction between the Divine Being and the Created being.

In point of fact there is a considerable difference between the excerpt of the *S.c.G.* and that of the *S.Th.* regarding the Fourth Way of the demonstration of the existence of God. In the former citation, the notion of the Transcendental Causality is absent. Its argument therefore remains within the realm of the Platonic Participation and inevitable adheres to the Hypothesis of the «hierarchy of the perfection of common being»²⁴³. We observe the lack of a clear-cut metaphysical distinction between the Highest Being (*Esse Simpliciter* or *Ens Maxime*) and the Created being. The absence of any reference to

²⁴¹ TE VELDE, 1995, p. 11.

²⁴² Cfr. SELNER, 1998, p. 36.

²⁴³ Cfr. *S.c.G.*, lib. I cap. 13 n. 34.

the Notion of Causality in the excerpt of *S.c.G.* is observable in the adoption of the Aristotle reflection by Aquinas²⁴⁴. The exclusion of the Notion of Causality in the rationalization of the Divine Creation deters the proper employment of the Platonic Notion of Participation in the Metaphysics of the Divine Creation. On the other hand, in the *S.Th.* Aquinas introduces the Transcendental Causality. Through this, he is able to describe God, the Divine Being, as the Supreme Being not because He is simply the highest in a hierarchy of perfections, but rather because *Ens Maxime*, the Uncreated Being, is the «*principle and cause*»²⁴⁵ of the Universal Creation²⁴⁶.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the philosophical works of St. Thomas Aquinas cannot be considered unimpeachable. The absence during the Medieval Ages of the modern-day advancements in the science of Cosmology as well as the present-day profound study of the Personhood etc. is an obvious limitation of the intellectual quest of the Middle Ages. As such, the written thought of Aquinas does not lack deficiencies and shortcomings, even errors! Nevertheless, the philosophical foundations and the outlook of the Angelic Doctor, as well as his exemplar realistic, synthetic and harmonious search for the Truth is a perennial step forward for the *Inceptum Philosophiæ*.

²⁴⁴ Cfr. *Q.D.P.*, q. 3 a. 5 co.

²⁴⁵ Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, 2000, p. 115 (Footnote 139).

²⁴⁶ Cfr. *S.Th.*, I^a q. 2 a. 3 c.

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