Durand and Suárez on
Divine Causation

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Durand of Saint-Pourçain (1270/1275–1334) and Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) endorse distinctive and historically important accounts of divine causation.[1] Durand accepts what is sometimes called "mere conservationism," and Suárez accepts "concurrentism." This paper defends an interpretation of these two theories that highlights their relative dialectical advantages and disadvantages, and clarifies some of the ways in which Suárez's concurrentism is influenced by Durand.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section discusses Durand's theory. Durand, a Dominican priest and bishop of Meaux, was a controversial figure best known for his attacks on a number of Thomistic theses in theology and in philosophy of mind.[2] Perhaps the most notorious of these attacks was on the Thomistic doctrine of divine concurrence. In keeping with much of the Christian tradition, Thomists had argued for three important theses about divine causation: that (i) God creates the world ex nihilo; that (ii) God sustains or conserves every creature throughout its existence; and that (iii) God cooperates or concurs in each instance of causal interaction among creatures. Like the Thomists, Durand endorsed (i) and (ii). However, he insisted that (iii) is false: on Durand's view, God does not intervene in the ordinary course of nature beyond creating and conserving creatures; more specifically, God does not cooperate or concur in the causal interactions among creatures. Durand's endorsement of mere conservationism is well-known, but his theory of divine causation is typically presented as little more than a foil for the views of other thinkers. Moreover, treatments of Durand's theory, both by subsequent Scholastic figures and by historians of philosophy, are largely unsympathetic.

Accordingly, the first section of the paper aims not only to clarify Durand's views about divine causation, but also to shed light on the philosophical motivations for mere conservationism.[3]

The second section discusses Suárez's concurrentism. By endorsing (i)–(iii), Suárez located himself within the mainstream of Christian theology and philosophy. In this respect, his views are not particularly original or controversial. Nevertheless, his treatment of divine concurrence is probably the most detailed and sophisticated in the history of philosophy. Suárez presents a series of arguments against Durand's account. This section reconstructs and evaluates three of these arguments, and examines whether Suárez is able to persuasively answer Durand's challenge to concurrentism. I argue that, although Durand's challenge to concurrentism is stronger than is usually appreciated, Suárez does make a persuasive case for his own version of concurrentism.[4]

The third and final section briefly addresses the significance of Durand's and Suárez's accounts of divine causation.

Before turning to the views of these two thinkers, it will be helpful to make an observation about the scope of the paper. Scholastic treatments of divine causation often pay close attention to specialized issues connected to freedom of will, and especially to the causal role that God plays in sinful actions. Indeed, both Durand and Suárez devote considerable effort to clarifying these issues.[5] However, because such specialized questions have already been addressed by a significant body of literature, both in medieval scholarship and in contemporary philosophy of religion, I do not focus on free will or sinful action here. Instead, my aim is to identify the most general considerations that motivate Durand and Suárez to adopt their respective accounts.

1. Durand's Mere Conservationism

Durand's most detailed treatment of divine causation can be found in Book 2 of his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. In Distinction 1, Question 5, he considers the disputed question "whether God acts immediately in every action of a creature."[6] Before turning to Durand's own answer to this question, it will be helpful to make three brief observations by way of background.

First, it is important to note why Durand frames a question about divine causation in terms of action. Following what appears to be Aristotle's view, many medievals understand action to be the causality (*causalitas*) of an efficient cause. That is to say, they take action to be that by which an efficient cause makes or produces its effect. Or, put in a slightly different way, we might say that action *just is* efficient causation.[7] Not surprisingly, this appears to be Durand's view as well. So by posing the question whether God acts in the action of a creature, Durand is inquiring whether God shares in the relationship whereby a creature efficiently causes its effect.

A second, related observation concerns how agents or efficient causes perform their actions. Again, following Aristotle, medieval philosophers think that efficient causes possess active causal powers that explain how they act in the ways that they do. As an example, consider a case in which a pot of water is placed over a fire, which gradually heats the water and causes it to boil. Medievals think that in such a case, the fire's action of heating is to be explained by appealing to an active power that belongs to the fire---namely, its power to heat. Importantly, they think that it is precisely by exercising active powers that efficient causes perform their actions. Indeed, they insist that an action *just is* the manifestation of its corresponding active power.[8]

Third, it bears emphasizing what Durand means when he asks whether God acts immediately (*immediate*) in the actions of creatures. In keeping with others in the Christian tradition, Durand accepts that God creates the world from nothing, and moreover that each created thing requires God's continuous causal activity in order to remain in existence. Indeed, Durand takes himself to have established these claims earlier in his *Sentences* commentary.[9] Because of these results, Durand is already committed to saying that there is a sense in which God participates or concurs in the actions of creatures---namely, by conserving those creatures and their causal powers as they act.

Consider again our case of the fire heating a pot of water. In analyzing such a case, Durand would say that in order for the fire to act, God must preserve it and its power for heating. Were God to stop conserving the fire and its power, these things would be annihilated, and accordingly the water would cease to undergo being heated as well. So we might say that there is an indirect way in which God shares in the fire's action, because God's preservation of the fire and its power is a pre-requisite for the fire's acting at all.

However, this indirect sort of causal cooperation is not what Durand is asking about in the disputed question. Indeed, Durand and his opponents all accept that God does cooperate with creatures' actions in this way. What the disputed question asks is whether, in addition to this indirect cooperation, God also directly cooperates in the creature's causal activity. Although exactly what such cooperation would amount to is part of what is at stake in the debate between Durand and his concurrentist opponents, Durand takes it that to act immediately in the action of a creature, God would have to do something more than to simply sustain the creature and its power.

Durand presents his main argument as a dilemma against the concurrentist position. The dilemma is meant to show that there is no plausible way of spelling out the metaphysical details of divine concurrence. Durand observes that, if God acts immediately in the action of a creature or secondary cause, as the concurrentists think, then God's action will either be identical to the creature's action, or distinct from it. He then offers a series of reasons for thinking that neither of these options can be sustained. Accordingly, he insists, God does not directly cooperate or concur with secondary causes.[10]

The argument can be formulated as follows:

(1) God's concurrence must be construed as either identical to the secondary cause's action, or distinct from it.

(2) If God's concurrence is construed as identical to the secondary cause's action, then concurrentism is false.

(3) If God's concurrence is construed as distinct from the secondary cause's action, then concurrentism is false.

(4) Therefore, concurrentism is false.

Premise (1) identifies two ways of spelling out the concurrentist thesis. As we have seen already, Durand appears to endorse the standard medieval view that action is the causality of an efficient cause. Accordingly, if God does contribute to efficient causation in the ordinary course of nature, he must do this by performing an action. We can then ask whether God's action will be numerically identical to the action of the relevant secondary agent, or numerically distinct from this agent's action. Let us call these two versions of the concurrentist thesis *one-action*

concurrentism and *two-action concurrentism*, respectively. These two versions of concurrentism appear to be both exclusive and exhaustive.

In defense of premise (2), Durand offers two arguments against one-action concurrentism. The first appeals to considerations of parsimony. Outlining this argument, Durand writes:

> A creature can have that action without God's special influence (*influxu*) (supposing the conservation of its nature and its active power), because an action that does not exceed the power of the agent's species is sufficiently elicited by the power of the species alone. Therefore, it would be useless (*frustra*) to posit another immediate principle eliciting such an action.[11]

In order to appreciate Durand's point, it will be helpful to revisit our example of the fire heating the water. As we have seen already, Durand acknowledges that one prerequisite for this causal interaction is that God conserve the fire and the power for heating that is characteristic of its natural kind. However, Durand insists that once the fire and its power are posited, we do not need to posit any additional agent whose power is manifested in the action of heating. The fire and its power adequately explain on their own the change that the water undergoes, so it would be gratuitous to suppose that God's power must also be manifested in the heating of the water.

Durand's second argument against one-action concurrentism attempts to show that there is no coherent way of spelling out how God and a creature could cooperate in the same action. Durand formulates this argument by examining the causal contributions that God and a secondary cause would be expected to make according to the one-action concurrentist theory.

Because this argument is complicated, and has been misunderstood in the scholarly literature, I shall consider it in detail here. Durand's own presentation of the argument is as follows:

> It is impossible that numerically the same action (*eandem actionem numero*) be from two or more agents in such a way that it is immediately and completely (*perfecte*) from any of them, unless there is in them numerically the same power (*eadem virtus numero*). But in God and a creature there cannot be numerically the same power, therefore it is impossible that numerically the same action be from both of them immediately and completely. But the action of a creature is immediately and completely from the creature, since it does not exceed the power of its species. Therefore the same action is not immediately from God.[12]

Durand begins the argument by articulating a general principle governing the cooperation of two or more agents in the same action. However, for ease of exposition, I shall confine my discussion to cases that involve exactly two agents. Let us call this "Durand's Principle." Durand's Principle tells us that if two agents do perform the same action, it must be the case that either (i) one agent's action is immediate, and the other's is mediate; or that (ii) the agents each act in an imperfect or incomplete way; or that (iii) the agents share numerically the same active power. We can thus think of conditions (i)--(iii) as constraints Durand is imposing on joint or cooperative action. On his view, at least one of these constraints must be satisfied in order for the action to be performed.

Durand attempts to motivate his principle by considering cases that illustrate how each of these constraints might be satisfied. As an example illustrating (i), he notes that the same action can be from a "universal" cause mediately, but from a "proximate" cause immediately. Although

Durand does not offer a specific example of a universal cause here, one standard medieval example is the sun, which is thought to be a universal cause in the sense that it has an influence on the entire natural world. So a case of joint efficient causation that would satisfy (i), and which would be in the spirit of what Durand is proposing here, would be a case in which the sun heats a sidewalk on a very hot day, and in which the sidewalk is then used to cook an egg. It should be clear that in such a case, the sidewalk is acting immediately, since it is not heating the egg in virtue of producing some other agent or its power. On the other hand, the sun is cooking the egg only mediately, since it cooks the egg only by virtue of supplying the sidewalk with its heat---that is, with the power it exercises when it cooks the egg.

As an illustration of how (ii) could be satisfied, Durand considers two cases: one in which two men are hauling a boat, and another in which two candles produce the same light. Durand emphasizes that in both of these cases, each of the pair of agents is acting immediately, and he takes it that they are performing the same action. However, he observes further that in these cases, neither of the agents is what we might call a *total* or *complete* efficient cause of its effect. As Durand puts it:

> The hauling of the boat is not completely (*perfecte*) from either person, and neither is the illumination of the air from either candle by itself and completely, for in such cases two incomplete agents supply the power of one complete agent.[13]

What Durand has in mind here is that neither agent is by itself powerful enough to produce the effect that it does produce---or at any rate, neither is powerful enough to produce it to the degree to which it is actually produced. So, in the case of the boat, let us suppose that neither

person has the strength to haul it on his own. Similarly, although each candle has the power to illuminate the air on its own, neither has the power to do so to the degree that they do when they cooperate. That is to say, the light is brighter than it would have been had there been only one candle.

Finally, Durand addresses condition (iii). This condition may initially seem puzzling because it is not immediately clear how two distinct agents could exercise numerically the same active power. However, it becomes clear later in his discussion that Durand has in mind the theological case of the Trinity, in which the Father and the Son together spirate the Holy Spirit. Durand appears to interpret this relation of spiration as an instance of efficient causation, and he claims that in their production of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son exercise numerically the same power.[14]

Although Durand does not explicitly say so, part of what he seems to have in mind in formulating this principle is causal overdetermination. Each of the conditions he has identified appears to be a way in which agents can cooperate without overdetermining their effect. Thus, in his discussion of the cooperation of a universal and particular cause, Durand emphasizes that, although each of the causes is complete or total, this is not a problem because one is immediate and the other mediate. Using the language of some other Scholastics on Durand's behalf, we might say that the sun and the sidewalk are total causes within a different order. This is significant, because it permits us to say that the cooperation between the sun and the sidewalk is not overdetermining. Another way of framing this point is in terms of the contemporary language of transitive relations. If we are prepared to accept that efficient causation is transitive, then we can say that, although the sun and the sidewalk each make a complete causal contribution to the cooking of the egg, they nevertheless occupy different positions in the causal sequence that

culminates in its cooking. But this is not over-determining any more so than is any other causal sequence.

Durand's discussion of the men hauling a boat and the candles illuminating the air likewise seems oriented toward avoiding overdetermination. As he notes, although these cases involve only immediate causes (or causes in the same order), this is not problematic because the causal contribution of each agent is indispensable. Thus, neither man could haul the boat on his own, and neither candle alone could produce the specific brightness that they produce together. Because such cases do not involve any duplication of causal work, they do not appear to involve overdetermination either.

The case illustrating condition (iii) is more obscure, but the thought seems to be that when two agents share numerically the same power, any duplication of the agents' efforts must be impossible. Recall that, according to Scholastic Aristotelians, actions just are the manifestations of active powers. But in a case in which a single active power is being shared between two agents, the question never arises whether the manifestation of a *second* active power is gratuitous. Thus, because the Father and the Son spirate the Holy Spirit via numerically the same power, it should be clear that overdetermination is ruled out.

In light of these considerations, Durand's Principle seems plausible. If we are committed to avoiding causal overdetermination, it is difficult to see how two agents could cooperate in the same action without satisfying one of these three conditions. If two agents each perform the same action immediately, and each of their contributions is in itself sufficient for the production of their effect, and their action manifests numerically distinct powers, it seems clear that their contributions would be overdetermining.

Now that we have seen what motivates Durand's Principle, let us turn to the details of the argument in which it figures. Durand evidently aims to show that one-action concurrentism cannot satisfy any of the conditions (i)--(iii). Accordingly, one-action concurrentism must be rejected, and premise (2) of the dilemma is sustained.

Because Durand thinks it is self-evident that God and a creature cannot share numerically the same power, he quickly rules out (iii). This leaves conditions (i) and (ii).

Although Durand never explicitly says why he thinks one-action concurrentism cannot satisfy condition (i), this should be clear enough upon reflection. For Durand's opponents to satisfy this condition, they would need to say that in instances of divine concurrence, God causes the effect only indirectly or mediately, while the secondary cause acts immediately. This would presumably happen as a result of God conserving the secondary cause and its power, while the secondary cause directly produces its effect. Returning to our example of fire heating water, if one-action concurrentists take this route, they will end up saying that God indirectly produces heat in the water in virtue of sustaining the fire, while the fire is the only immediate cause of the heat. However, this approach simply collapses into Durand's mere conservationist position.

So the remaining option for Durand's opponents is to argue that their account satisfies condition (ii). In other words, they would need to say that in divine concurrence, both God and the secondary cause function as immediate efficient causes of their effect, via the performance of the same action. Moreover, they would also need to say that neither God nor the secondary cause does all of the work in the performance of the action. They must cooperate in such a way that neither's contribution is sufficient by itself to produce the effect.

Durand objects to this way of formulating one-action concurrentism by insisting that “the action of a creature is immediately and completely from the creature, since [that action] does not

exceed the power of [the creature's] species."[15] This objection is difficult to interpret because of its brevity. However, it is clear that Durand is emphasizing a point he raised earlier in his presentation of the argument from parsimony---namely, that created substances evidently have the capacity to produce their effects on their own. Indeed, as we saw in our discussion of that argument, this is part and parcel of the program of Aristotelian philosophy of nature, according to which each substance has a range of active powers characteristic of its species or natural kind.

Here, Durand appears to be using this observation to show that it is implausible to think natural agents can be only partial or incomplete efficient causes, as the opponents' position requires. One way of framing this point is to say that there is no obvious reason to expect that secondary causes must be systematically deficient in their power to produce effects that are characteristic of their natural kinds. For example, we should not expect that fire be systematically unable to produce heat in an appropriate patient, so that it can accomplish this only via the help of an agent with an altogether different sort of power.

Durand thus takes himself to have refuted one-action concurrentism. First, such concurrentism gratuitously posits supernatural intervention in the natural world. Second, Durand has also argued that no matter how the view is formulated, it will run afoul of Durand's Principle, and thereby fall into overdetermination among efficient causes.[16]

Let us now consider Durand's defense of premise (3) of the dilemma, and his attack on what we have been calling two-action concurrentism. Durand's most important objection to two-action concurrentism likewise poses a dilemma for the theory. If God cooperates with secondary causes via a distinct action, then his performance of that action will be either at a different time than the secondary cause's action, or at the same time. Let us begin with the first horn of the dilemma. Durand argues that if the cooperating agents perform their actions at different times, then the

agent that acts first will have already produced the effect before the other agent acts. As a result, the second agent will not produce the effect after all, and so the two agents will not actually be cooperating in the way the opponents are supposing.[17]

In order to appreciate the force of this objection, it is important to bear in mind that Durand thinks that to perform an action just is to produce the effect that is the end-point of that action. Thus, to heat some water just is to produce a quality of heat in the water. But if that very quality of heat has already been produced via one agent's action, it cannot be produced again via a separate action performed by a different agent. To be sure, that very quality of heat could presumably be conserved via a different action performed at a later time, but this does not explain how it is that two agents are supposed to have produced that quality together at an earlier time.

Durand considers a potential response according to which two agents can cooperate by performing their actions at different times, because they produce different effects. However, what makes their separate actions cooperative is that together their distinct simple effects compose a complex effect.[18] Durand describes such an account earlier in the same disputed question, where he criticizes an account of concurrence according to which God produces prime matter, and secondary causes produce substantial forms.[19]

The thought seems to be that, because substances are composed of prime matter and substantial form, a complete substance can be attributed both to God and to a secondary cause in virtue of their separate production of prime matter and substantial form. Durand is happy to grant that God creates and conserves prime matter. However, he emphasizes that this account does not provide an adequate explanation of how substantial forms are produced. This is because we can ask the same question about them that we originally asked about the complete substance: Does

God cooperate immediately in the production of substantial forms, or not? If so, then the opponent must again answer Durand's dilemma against concurrentism. If not, then it must be granted that concurrentism is false.

Suppose that the opponent then chooses the second horn of the dilemma, and insists that God and secondary causes simultaneously perform distinct actions that result in the same effect. Durand points out that, in this case, it appears that one of the two actions will be superfluous.[20] Again, it is helpful to bear in mind that according to Durand, an action just is the production of an effect. But if that is correct, it is difficult to see why we should posit *two* simultaneous productions of the same effect.[21]

This concludes our presentation of Durand's argument against concurrentism. It is perhaps fair to point out that this argument is a bit unwieldy. This is a by-product of the unenviable task Durand has assigned himself, which is to anticipate the logically available ways of developing a concurrentist theory, and to rule out each available formulation. However, by explicitly identifying what he takes to be the dialectical options for concurrentists, Durand makes an important contribution to Christian philosophical and theological debate about divine causation. Moreover, Durand's argument against concurrentism is stronger than is sometimes claimed in the literature. The argument seems to be driven, on the one hand, by standard commitments of Aristotelian metaphysics; and on the other hand, by plausible methodological considerations, including Durand's commitment to avoiding causal overdetermination.

In the next section, we shall consider how Suárez develops his own concurrentist theory in response to Durand's powerful challenge.

2. Suárez's Concurrentism

Like many other scholastic figures, including Durand, Suárez's interest in divine causation is partly motivated by theological questions about God's role in human affairs. Accordingly, he discusses God's causal activity in a variety of contexts throughout his corpus. However, his most general treatment of divine causation is found in his great philosophical work, the *Metaphysical Disputations*. Here I rely on this work.

Suárez devotes Disputation 22 of the *Metaphysical Disputations* to the topic of divine concurrence.[22] His discussion there is noteworthy because of its exceptional detail, as well as the fact that it is situated within what is probably the most comprehensive treatment of efficient causation in the history of philosophy. For our purposes, it is also important to note the prominent role that Durand plays in DM 22. Suárez mentions Durand by name 18 times in the course of this disputation, and it is clear that he regards Durand as an important dialectical opponent.

Suárez's overarching project in DM 22 is to offer a coherent, theologically satisfying account of the metaphysics of divine concurrence. It bears emphasizing that there is not space to offer anything like a comprehensive treatment of this account here. Instead, I reconstruct Suárez's three most important arguments for concurrentism, and then offer a brief summary of his own concurrentist theory.

Like Durand, Suárez regards mere conservationism and concurrentism as the two main dialectical options in the debate about God's causal role in the ordinary course of nature.[23] For this reason, it is not surprising that a number of his arguments for concurrentism take the form of objections to mere conservationism. One such argument concerns what in the literature have

come to be called "*contra naturam* miracles."[24] As we shall see, exactly what is supposed to happen in such miracles is controversial. However, a fairly neutral way of characterizing *contra naturam* miracles is to say that they are cases in which God obstructs a natural agent from exercising one of its characteristic powers; this is the sense in which such a miracle is `against nature.'[25]

The miracle that Suarez discusses is found in chapter three of the book of Daniel, in which three men are thrown into a blazing furnace but are preserved from being burned. Suárez regards this and other examples of *contra naturam* miracles as part of the causal data that a theory of efficient causation must accommodate. He argues that although concurrentists can readily explain such cases, mere conservationists cannot. But if this is correct, then we ought to reject mere conservationism and endorse its dialectical rival. Briefly describing this argument, he writes:

> [The truth of concurrentism] is evident enough from supernatural effects. For God deprived the Babylonian fire of its action, without putting any extrinsic impediment in the way. Therefore God accomplished this by the subtraction of his concurrence; for in what other way could he have done it?[26]

Suárez thinks that, in a *contra naturam* miracle, God prevents a natural agent from producing its effect by withholding his concurrence from the agent's action. Thus, in the case of the three men in the furnace, God simply declines to cooperate in the action of burning that otherwise would result in the incineration of the three men. Importantly, on Suárez's view, natural agents retain their power in such cases. The fire still possesses the power to burn, as

evidenced by the additional details in the story that the righteous men's bonds are destroyed, and the soldiers who drop them into the furnace are burned to death. However, because created powers depend on God's immediate cooperation for their manifestation, the fire cannot harm the men unless God participates in its action.

Although Suárez's own explanation of this miracle seems clear enough, his insistence that mere conservationists cannot explain it is puzzling. Suárez thinks the mere conservationist must hold that God performs the miracle by performing an additional action. In addition to conserving the fire and its power, and the three men in the furnace, God must perform an additional action that prevents the men from being burned.

To my knowledge, Durand never explicitly considers this objection. Indeed, in his own presentation of the same objection to mere conservationism, Durand's contemporary Peter of Palude (c. 1275--1342) suggests that perhaps "the angel of the Lord turned the middle of the furnace into something like a wind, a blowing of moisture."[27] Let us call this the "cool wind" account of the miracle, with the understanding that this does not exhaust the ways in which God could counteract or impede the fire from exercising its power. Crucially, Suárez does not offer any specific reason for thinking that this account of the miracle is not viable, and in the absence of such a reason, the objection is not persuasive.

Some scholars have tried to salvage this type of objection by emphasizing what they take to be other disadvantages of the cool wind account. For example, in one recent paper, Zita Toth argues that this account "seems to entail a practical contradiction and thus surpasses even divine power." In support of this objection, Toth claims that on the cool wind account, God simultaneously conserves a power and blocks its manifestation, so that "God acts with two contrary actions at the same time on the same creature."[28]

However, it is not correct---or at least, *need not* be correct---that in simultaneously acting to conserve a power and block its manifestation, God is performing two contrary actions. There are two reasons for this. First, it is not clear that the cool wind theorist is committed to saying that by interposing something between the fire and the three men, God is thereby acting to destroy the fire or its power. To be sure, one presumably could envision such a scenario, and this actually seems to be what Palude has in mind by his suggestion that God may have interjected a moist wind into the center of the fire. Presumably this would shield the men by diminishing the fire's intensity, which would amount to diminishing it and its power. And it does look like in such a scenario, God would be performing two contrary actions---one to preserve the fire and its power, and the other to destroy them.

However, it is not obvious that this is the only way God could have shielded the men. For example, following another suggestion Toth makes, he could have surrounded the men with something akin to asbestos, that would insulate them without diminishing the heat of the fire. One way of characterizing this suggestion would be to say that in interposing the protective material, God thereby removes what medieval Aristotelians call a *sine qua non* cause or condition for the fire's acting.[29] Such a cause or condition is generally understood as a prerequisite or catalyst for a cause's producing its effect. Although medieval philosophers identify a range of conditions that they take to be *sine quibus non* causes, some standard examples are proximity between the agent and a suitable patient, and the absence of any impediment that would interfere with the agent's acting on the patient. Indeed, the introduction of insulating material between a fire and a patient that would otherwise be burned seems like a straightforward example of the interruption of the second of these types of *sine quibus non* causes. The important point to emphasize is that the interruption of a *sine qua non* cause does not

necessarily involve the destruction or diminution of a potential agent or its power. Instead, a potential agent might fail to act simply because some of the prerequisite conditions are not in place.

However, even if the cool wind solution does require that God counteract the fire by diminishing its heat, it is still not clear that God will be performing contrary actions in any way that is objectionable. In order to appreciate this, recall that according to mere conservationism, God does not directly act in the ordinary course of nature. Rather, God may be said to cooperate with creatures' actions only in virtue of conserving them and their powers. Thus, although it may be true that God conserves substance A and substance B, and that the proximity of A and B results in their diminishing one another's powers, it does not follow that God would be engaged in a practical contradiction by simultaneously conserving some fire and a cool wind in the same vicinity. After all, substances routinely interact and diminish one another's powers in the ordinary course of nature, so it does not appear especially troubling if this happens in the context of *contra naturam* miracles as well. Or at any rate, if it is troubling, it should be equally troubling for Durand's concurrentist opponents, who also accept that God conserves every contingent being throughout the course of its existence.

For these reasons, I think it is pretty unlikely that Durand's concurrentist opponents will be able to show that the cool wind account of *contra naturam* miracles is incoherent, or that it otherwise fails to explain such miracles. A more promising way of developing the objection from *contra naturam* miracles is to argue that, even if the cool wind account of such miracles is consistent, it is nevertheless comparatively unappealing, because it detracts from God's sovereignty over creation. In his discussion of what he calls the “weak reading” of the argument from *contra naturam* miracles, Freddoso develops the objection in this way. On his view, God's

ability to perform such miracles by omission---that is, by refraining from acting---best captures his lordship over creation. Earlier in his discussion of the argument, Freddoso attempts to motivate this intuition by noting that otherwise, God would have to "counteract his creatures from without in order to make them do his bidding," and that he would have to "vie with them in order to exercise control over them."[30]

Suárez appears to express a similar intuition later in the same section of DM 22, where he argues that concurrentism is best suited to the greatness of God's power. He writes:

> Finally, the best argument [for concurrentism] is that this way of acting in all things and with all agents pertains to the grandeur (*amplitudinem*) of divine power, and on God's part supposes perfection without imperfection....And in general, in this way there intercedes a complete and essential subordination between the primary and a secondary cause. And there is nothing that is inconsistent [in this], as will easily be shown from the solutions to the [opposing] arguments; therefore this general influence must not be denied to God.[31]

There are a couple noteworthy aspects of this passage. First, Suárez treats this as a separate argument, distinct from the argument from *contra naturam* miracles. This makes sense, because the scope of the argument's conclusion is not limited to *contra naturam* miracles. Suárez's point is that a world in which God directly cooperates in the actions of creatures more fully manifests his power than a world in which he does not.

Second, Suárez's remark about the "subordination between the primary and a secondary cause" suggests a more fundamental reason for thinking that this is correct. His point is that a concurrentist world more fully manifests God's power because in such a world, creatures are

more completely subordinated to God. To be sure, in a mere conservationist world, at each moment creatures are dependent on God for their existence. But Suárez wants to emphasize that in a concurrentist world, creatures are also dependent on God in a more direct way for exercising their causal powers. As he notes earlier in the same section of DM 22, we should expect that creatures are dependent on God not only in being, but also in acting.[32] Suárez thinks that this additional dimension of subordination explains how a concurrentist world more fully manifests God's transcendent power.

It does look as if, in this second argument, Suárez has identified a genuine advantage of the concurrentist position. Although this is probably not actually his best argument for concurrentism, it clarifies what may be the most important intuition driving the concurrentist position. Moreover, this aspect of the argument has not been fully appreciated in the literature.[33]

Nevertheless, this argument is not decisive on its own. As Suárez himself acknowledges, whether it ultimately succeeds will depend upon whether he can meet Durand's powerful challenge to the coherence of concurrentism. Indeed, even if Suárez is able to articulate a coherent account of concurrentism, it may still turn out that, all things considered, mere conservationism is a more satisfying theory of divine activity. We shall examine these issues more closely later in this section.

Suárez's third and strongest argument is driven by considerations about divine conservation. Recall that, according to the consensus of medieval thinkers, contingent beings cannot exist, even for a moment, without God's acting to preserve them. Medievals sometimes try to capture the character of creatures' utter dependence on God by describing them as "beings through participation" (*entia per participationem*).[34] This locution, which has its origins in neo-Platonism, is meant to emphasize the fact that in Christian theology, God's own necessary

existence is prior to the existence of every other being. However, Suárez argues that once it is granted that creatures depend on God in this way, it is difficult to see how God does not also directly cooperate in their actions. Indeed, he insists that concurrentism follows straightforwardly from his earlier conclusions about conservation, so that "it is almost as certain in the Faith" that God immediately cooperates in creatures' actions as it is that he conserves creatures.[35]

Before turning to Suárez's presentation of the argument, it will be helpful to notice an additional detail about his account of divine conservation---namely, that he thinks that God conserves creatures immediately.[36] What Suárez has in mind by immediate conservation is that God does something more than merely to conserve one creature, which in turn conserves the next. Even if such causal sequences do sometimes occur, Suárez thinks that this is not how we should understand divine conservation in the most proper sense. Rather, on Suárez's view, God conserves each creature independently of his conserving others.

Although there is not space here to examine his reasons for this view in detail, it is worth noting briefly that the immediacy of divine conservation follows from Suárez's theological commitment to the immediacy of creation *ex nihilo*. Like many other Scholastic figures, Suárez thinks that the actions of conservation and creation are not distinct in extramental reality.[37] Accordingly, conservation will be immediate if and only if creation is. But Suárez takes the immediacy of God's actions of creation to be theologically non-negotiable, because he thinks that the alternative would require that creatures actually create one another. If God's creation of some creature, c_1, were only mediate or indirect, there would have to be an intervening creature, c_2, that itself creates c_1. However, Suárez regards this position as heretical. He writes:

> True and certain doctrine teaches that no creature has actually created anything; for the true Faith recognizes, and the all the saints teach, that God alone is the creator of all things.[38]

With this point about the immediacy of divine conservation in mind, let us turn now to Suárez's presentation of the argument from conservation. The clearest and most persuasive version of the argument that he offers has us consider an important similarity between a created agent and its effect---namely, that they are both beings through participation. As we have seen, Durand is prepared to grant that in order to act, secondary causes and their active powers must be conserved by God. However, Suárez points out that the effects of secondary causes are also beings through participation, and therefore immediately depend on God at every moment of their existence. *A fortiori*, they immediately depend on God at the moment when they are initially produced by secondary causes. Another way of putting this point is to say that, at the moment of an effect's initial production, both God and the created agent are immediately efficiently causing the effect. And so Suárez thinks it is clear that, whatever specific account of concurrentism is ultimately adopted, there is some sense in which God immediately cooperates with or shares in the causal influence of created agents.[39]

Consider Michelangelo's production of the statue *David*. According to the standard opinion of the Scholastic tradition, Michelangelo is able to produce *David* at a particular time, *t*, only because God chooses to immediately conserve Michelangelo and his active powers at *t*. However, like Michelangelo, *David* is also a participated being, and so must be immediately conserved by God at each moment of its existence. But then, *a fortiori*, *David* must be immediately conserved by God at *t* as well, and then God and Michelango are both immediately causing *David* at *t*.

We can formulate the argument as follows:

(1) If God immediately conserves created beings at each moment of their existence, then, *a fortiori*, he also immediately conserves them at each moment when they are being efficiently caused by secondary causes.

(2) God immediately conserves created beings at each moment of their existence.

(3) Therefore, *a fortiori*, God also immediately conserves created beings at each moment when they are being efficiently caused by secondary causes.

Perhaps because he does not offer a detailed account of divine conservation, Durand does not explicitly consider this kind of objection. However, it is likely that he would have accepted premise (1), which appears to be a truth of reason. If we accept that creatures depend on God throughout the entire duration of their existence, then it follows trivially that they will depend on God at any particular instant of time that we select from that duration.

Premise (2) appears to be a more promising target for Durand. After all, why should a mere conservationist accept that God *immediately* conserves every creature for its entire duration? A more natural account for the mere conservationist would be that God conserves every creature either mediately or immediately. Indeed, Suárez suggests just such an account on Durand's behalf, and Durand's mere conservationist predecessor, Peter John Olivi (1247/48--1298), explicitly endorses this kind of account.[40] Moreover, from Durand's perspective, this position has the additional advantage that it allows him to appeal to God's immediate causal activity where he thinks it has some explanatory benefit, but to dispense with it where he thinks it would be superfluous.

Surprisingly, however, Durand never explicitly endorses such a position. In fact, near the end of his disputed question on concurrence, he insists that created causes must be immediately conserved by God for their entire duration:

> The being of a secondary cause (say, an Intelligence or a celestial body) is the immediate effect of the first cause, which is an immediate cause of it not only in bringing it into being (*fieri*), but also in conserving it in being. And therefore a secondary cause would not exist if it did not immediately coexist with the first cause.[41]

Admittedly, this concession does not straightforwardly entail Suárez's premise (2), which is meant to include every created entity. Even so, it makes it difficult for Durand to resist the premise, because the resulting account seems arbitrary. As we have seen already, Suárez emphasizes that both created agents and their effects are beings through participation. But if Durand is prepared to accept that this renders created agents immediately dependent on God for their entire duration, it is not clear why he should resist the same conclusion for the *effects* of created agents.

Another problem, which Suárez does not mention, concerns the scope of mediate conservation. Many entities in the natural world turn out to be both efficient causes and effects. For example, consider our case of the fire heating a pot of water. In this case the fire is an efficient cause of the heat that it produces in the water, but the fire itself is presumably also an effect of some natural cause, such as a match. Since the fire is a created agent, Durand thinks that God immediately efficiently causes the fire to exist for as long as it does so. But because the fire is also an effect, he must say that God does *not* immediately efficiently cause the fire, at least at

the moment when it is initially produced by the match. It thus looks as if the conjunction of these two commitments inevitably leads to a contradiction.

It is worth pausing to briefly consider the dialectical situation. We have now seen Durand's formidable dilemma against concurrentism, as well as three objections to mere conservationism from Suárez. Recall that the first of these objections, from *contra naturam* miracles, appears to be a failure. The second, from the greatness of God's power, identifies a genuine advantage of concurrentism, but is not dispositive on its own. Finally, the third objection, from divine conservation, looks to be devastating to Durand's position. As we have seen, this is a result of Durand's insistence that created agents must be immediately conserved by God for the duration of their existence.

Our remaining task is to consider how Suárez avoids Durand's dilemma against concurrentism. In developing his own account, Suárez adopts what we have been calling one-action concurrentism. That is to say, he thinks that in cases of divine concurrence, God and the secondary cause produce their effect by performing numerically the same action.[42] Accordingly, Suárez needs to respond to the two objections Durand has raised against one-action concurrentism.

The first objection is that it is gratuitous to suppose that God's power must also be manifested in the action of a natural agent. For example, a fire's power for heating is sufficient to explain the fire's production of heat in a pot of water, so there is no theoretical benefit in supposing that God's power is also manifested in this action. However, each of Suarez's three arguments we have examined identifies a specific reason why we should think that God's power actually is required in order to satisfy some important theological *desideratum* associated with

efficient causation. Thus, to the extent that these arguments are persuasive, they also show that God's concurrence is not gratuitous.

According to Durand's second objection, no matter how one-action concurrentism is formulated, it will inevitably run afoul of what we have been calling Durand's Principle, and accordingly must fall prey to causal overdetermination. Although Suárez does not explicitly address this objection, he is at pains to identify the precise causal contributions of God and secondary causes, and it is clear that worries about overdetermination figure prominently in his thinking. Partly for this reason, he insists that in cases of divine concurrence, there is a sense in which both causes are partial or incomplete, because the manifestation of neither of their powers on its own is sufficient to bring about the effect.[43] As we have seen, Suárez thinks that the secondary cause's power is insufficient because its effect is a participated being, whose existence can only be fully explained by appealing to God's power. Likewise, Suárez insists that God's exercise of his power is also in some sense insufficient for the production of the effect, because in cases of concurrence, he voluntarily limits that exercise. Indeed, Suárez emphasizes that when he concurs with a secondary cause, God exercises his power to a lesser extent than he would do if he were producing the effect on his own.[44]

It thus looks as if Suárez's account of divine concurrence plausibly can be thought to satisfy condition (ii) of Durand's Principle, according to which the agents avoid overdetermination because both act in an incomplete or imperfect way. Even so, Suárez's account differs in at least one important way from Durand's examples of the two men hauling a boat, and of the two candles illuminating the air. This difference concerns the subordination of secondary causes to God. As we have seen, on Suárez's view created agents are subordinate to God not only because they depend on him for their existence and for the existence of their powers, but also because

they depend on God for the *exercise* of their powers. However, the created agents in Durand's examples will not have this kind of asymmetrical relationship, even if one has greater power than the other.

3. Conclusion

Durand offers a lucid and penetrating critique of concurrentism. As we have seen, this critique is interesting not only because of its dialectical force, but also because it helps to clarify the logically available options for concurrentists. Durand's treatment of the topic is also a significant influence on Suárez, who views Durand as an important opponent. Nevertheless, Suárez does get the better of Durand. He overcomes Durand's objections by providing a theological rationale for concurrentism, and by developing an account of divine concurrence that appears to avoid overdetermination. Moreover, his argument from divine conservation reveals that Durand's own account of divine causation looks rather disappointing, since it includes commitments that appear *ad hoc* and even inconsistent.[45]

1 All translations that appear here are my own, unless otherwise identified. I have consulted existing English translations where available, and have identified these in the notes.

2 For discussion of Durand's life and theological controversies, see Isabel Irribaren, *Durandus of St Pourçain: A Dominican Theologian in the Shadow of Aquinas*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

3 For discussion of Durand's mere conservationism, see Zita Toth, `Peter of Palude and the Fiery Furnace,' *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 37 (2020): 121--142; Alfred Freddoso, `God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Pitfalls and Prospects,' *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 67 (1994): 131--156; and Alfred Freddoso, `God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Why Conservation is not Enough,' *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991): 553--585. For discussion of the mere conservationist position of Durand's predecessor, Peter John Olivi, see Gloria Frost, `Peter Olivi's Rejection of God's Concurrence with Created Causes,' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22 (2014): 655--679.

4 For discussions of Suárez's concurrentism, see Freddoso, `Pitfalls and Prospects;' and Freddoso, `Why Conservation is not Enough.'

5 For Durand, see especially *In Sent.* 2, Dist. 37. Because it reflects Durand's most mature views, I rely here on the third and latest redaction (C) of his *Sentences* commentary. See Durandus of St. Pourçain, *In Petri Lombardi Sententias Theologicas Commentariorum libri IIII*, 2 vols. Venice, 1597. Reprinted Ridgewood, NJ: The Gregg Press, 1964. Some of this text is available electronically at https://durandus.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/edition/transkription-venedig-1571-c, and I have used this where available. For Suárez, see especially DM 22.4.10–39. For

Suárez's *Metaphysical Disputations*, I have consulted the Latin portion of the Latin-Spanish Rábade edition. See Francisco Suárez, *Disputaciones metafisicas,* 7 vols. Edited by Sergio Rábade Romeo, Salvadore Caballero Sánchez, and Antonio Puigcerver Zanón. Madrid: Gredos, 1960–1966. A digital scan of this edition, with some corrections, is available at https://homepage.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/Michael.Renemann/suarez/.

6 Alfred Freddoso has posted an unpublished translation of this disputed question, from the third redaction (C), on his website, at https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/translat/duran215.htm.

7 Although this way of understanding efficient causation seems to have been common, Suárez is unusually explicit in his affirmation that action is the causality of an efficient cause. For a detailed discussion, see Jacob Tuttle, `Suárez's Non-Reductive Theory of Efficient Causation,' *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 4 (2016): 125--158.

8 For discussion of Suárez's views on active powers, including some Aristotelian background, see Jacob Tuttle, `Suárez's Metaphysics of Active Powers,' *Review of Metaphysics* 74 (2020): 43--80.

9 *In Sent.* 2, d. 1, qq. 2--4.

10 *In Sent.* 2, d. 1, q. 5, paras. 11--15.

11 *In Sent.* 2, d. 1, q. 5, para. 11.

12 *In Sent.* 2, Dist. 1, Q. 5, para. 12.

13 *In Sent.* 2, Dist. 1, Q. 5, para. 12.

14 The position that the intra-Trinitarian relations involve genuine causation appears to have been controversial. For Durand's views on the Trinity, see Iribarren, *Durandus of St Pourçain*, especially pp. 108--144. For Suárez's discussion of some of the issues involved, see DM 12.1.

15 *In Sent.* 2, Dist. 1, Q. 5, para. 12.

16 Freddoso interprets this part of Durand's argument as equivocating on the Latin term "perfectum," and he thus takes Durand to be engaged in a "terminological ploy." See Freddoso, "Pitfalls and Prospects," Section IV. I must say that I see no evidence of this sort of equivocation in the text.

17 *In Sent.* 2, Dist. 1, Q. 5, para. 13.

18 *In Sent.* 2, Dist. 1, Q. 5, para. 13.

19 *In Sent.* 2, Dist. 1, Q. 5, para. 5--6.

20 *In Sent.* 2, Dist. 1, Q. 5, para. 14.

21 Frost argues that Olivi presents a similar argument. See Frost, "Peter Olivi's Rejection of Concurrence," p. 668.

22 For an English translation of this work, see Francisco Suárez, *On Creation, Conservation, and Concurrence: Metaphysical Disputations 20--22*. Translated by Alfred Freddoso. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2002.

23 For Suárez's arguments against occasionalism, see DM 18.1. For discussion of some of this material, see Tuttle, `Suárez's Metaphysics of Active Powers.'

24 See Zita Toth, `Fiery Furnace;' and Alfred Freddoso, `Why Conservation is not Enough.'

25 For brief discussion of this and other kinds of miracles in Aquinas, see Freddoso, `Why Conservation is not Enough,' Section 6.

26 DM 22.1.11.

27 Peter of Palude, *In Sent.* 2, d. 1, q. 4, in `Contra secundam opinionem,' p. 83. I have consulted Zita Toth, `Peter of Palude on Divine Concurrence: An Edition of his *In II Sent*., d. 1, q. 4.' *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 83, no. 1: 49--92. I am using Toth's translation, without any changes. See Toth, `Fiery Furnace,' p. 129.

28 Toth, `Fiery Furnace,' p. 130.

29 For treatments of Durand's views on *sine quibus non* causes, with an emphasis on issues in philosophy of mind, see Jean-Luc Sol\'ere, `*Sine Qua Non* Causality and the Context of Durand's Early Theory of Cognition,' in *Durand of Saint Pourçain and his* Sentences *Commentary*, 185--227; and Peter Hartman, `Causation and Cognition:

Durand of St. Pourçain and Godfrey of Fontaines on the Cause of a Cognitive Act,' in *Durand of Saint Pourçain and his* Sentences *Commentary*, 229--256.

30 Freddoso, `Why Conservation is not Enough.' Toth also discusses this in `Fiery Furnace.'

31 DM 22.1.13.

32 DM 22.1.10.

33 Although Freddoso and Toth both discuss this argument, they do not quite capture that this is what Suárez thinks makes the concurrentist position more amenable to God's omnipotence.

34 DM 22.1.7. For a brief discussion, see Freddoso, `Why Conservation is not Enough.' For a more detailed discussion of this notion in Aquinas, see Gloria Frost, *Aquinas on Causal Powers and Efficient Causation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

35 DM 22.1.7.

36 DM 21.1.3 and DM 22.1.7.

37 Suárez's position is actually a bit more complicated than this; it would be more accurate to say that, on his view, creation and conservation will be identical, *ceteris paribus*. For his discussion, see DM 21.2.

38 DM 20.2.1. In defense of this claim, Suárez cites the Fourth Lateran Council. See H. Denzinger and A. Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 36th edition (Freiburg, 1976), #800, p. 259.

39 DM 22.1.7. For Freddoso's discussion of the argument, see `Why Conservation is not Enough,' Section 4.

40 For Suárez's suggestion, see DM 22.1.7. For Olivi's discussion, see Peter John Olivi, *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*. 3 vols. Quaracchi: Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae,1922, Book 2, q. 116 (vol. 3, p. 346). For discussion of Olivi's position, see Frost, `Peter Olivi's Rejection of Concurrence.'

41 *In Sent.* 2, d. 1, q. 5, para. 17.

42 DM 22.3.2--5.

43 DM 22.1.22.

44 DM 22.4.9.

45 I would like to thank Jeff Brower, Susan Brower-Toland, Gloria Frost, Greg Ganssle, Peter Hartman, and Zita Toth for their comments on earlier drafts