

RAMON LLULL'S CONCEPT OF CREATION

The numerous writings of Ramon Llull, born in Palma de Majorca probably in 1232,¹ reveal him as a metaphysical philosopher of stature who, during the closing three decades of the Thirteenth and the opening two of the fourteenth century, repeatedly addressed himself to the problem of the creation of the world, with the firm conviction that well-established rational answers could be arrived at on a number of the more basic points entailed in the truth of such a creation. It must be acknowledged that, although his answers are essentially in solid accord with traditional Christian teachings on the question—which he of course accepted on the basis of his Christian faith—, Llull regularly endeavored to present and to establish them rationally, in a manner that one cannot but declare philosophical. At least he himself had no doubts that his approach and procedures were along the lines universally recognized as rational and philosophical, although he consciously utilized the principles and rules of an "Art" which he deemed heaven-inspired and which, be it recalled parenthetically, attracted the attention of a number of important Renaissance thinkers² and provided Leibnitz with an original model, as it were, for his seventeenth century *De Arte Combinatoria*. Already in two of his earliest literary and philosophical compositions³ Ramon Llull dealt with the theme

¹ Helmut Riedlinger, "Introductio Generalis," in *ROL* V, 124. Llull's year of birth has not been established beyond doubt. But all historians agree that it occurred between 1232 and 1235. See Jocelyn Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 1, n. 4.

² In confirmation of this statement see Ca II, 209-249.

³ Namely the *Liber Contemplationis in Deum* and the *Liber de Gentili et Tribus Sapientibus*. The Latin text of the *Liber Contemplationis* may be consulted in *MOG* IX-X. The Latin text of the *Liber de Gentili* may be seen in Vol. II of the same Mainz edition. The original Catalan text of the *Libre de Contemplació* may be consulted in *ORL* II-VIII, as well as in *OE* II, 97-1269. The original Catalan text of the *Libre del Gentil e los Tres Savis* may be consulted in *Obras*, pp. 3-305, as well as in *OE* I, 1057-1142.

of the creation of the world, explicitly and in a way that exhibits metaphysical awareness, perspicacity and acumen. He continued to do so, still at some length in many of the other numerous books which he managed to write, amidst a most active life and constant travels, until practically the moment of his death, in the pursuit of several lofty ideals for the well-being of the world and Christendom. Two main reasons are suggested as to why he returned, again and again in incessant writings, to the problem of the creation of the world. First and foremost, he wished to establish on a sound rational basis the truth of the creation of the world *ex nihilo* vis-a-vis the contrary positions espoused by two distinct segments of philosophers within the Islamic world, towards whom he felt genuine respect. Of the two positions, that of Avicenna was older, had a wider acceptance and was, from the Christian standpoint, more dangerous. It was so because it did not explicitly reject the creation of the world. Rather it explained it as a somewhat complex procession of the many things in the world from the reality of the original First Being, but in a manner that implied or signified a necessary and mediate emanation from the First being through a series of intermediary agents or causes.⁴ The second Arabian philosophical position was linked to the name of Averroes who, consistently with his appraisal of Aristotle's philosophy as the highest achievement and truth of human reason, resurrected the Greek notion of an eternally existing and uncreated world, with all of its matter and motions.⁵ Averroes did so within an Islamic world that, on the basis of its faith, also accepts the creation of the world out of nothing. An interesting aside in this connection is the fact that, even as late as only eight years before the Majorcan philosopher's death and when he was about seventy-seven years old, Lull persevered vigorously in a lifelong defense of the truth of the creation of the world, this time against the early fourteenth century Christian followers of Averroes at the University of Paris, where they had begun to exercise leading and active roles within its Arts Faculty. A total of twenty-nine extant anti-Averroistic treatises, written by the philosopher during his last Paris stay of two years, between the Summer of 1309 and the Autumn of 1311, still bear witness to the steadfastness, vigour, high-mindedness and to the insights with which the author carried his philosophical opposition to a then young movement, which he, in the waning years of his life

⁴ Etienne Gilson, *A History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1954), pp. 210-14; Ignatius Brady, *A History of Ancient Philosophy* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1959), p. 204-05.

⁵ Brady, *op. cit.* pp. 214-15.

but with good reasons, deemed a serious threat to an authentic Christian wisdom and philosophy.⁶

A second factor inclined Llull to explore in depth and to write clearly and persuasively on the question of the possible beginning of the world. It was part of a wider, generous and ardent desire to penetrate with his rational understanding,⁷ as much as feasible, the religious truths which he had long before, since early youth, accepted with a sincere and devout faith. To the loving desire to investigate rationally the truths of faith he linked the eagerly valued and related objective of sharing his knowledge of the salvific truths of faith with as many members of the human family as possible. He wished to do so more specifically and particularly with those persons who, he knew, were outside of the Christian fold, but yet were geographically near to, if not in the midst of, in some cases, the realm of Christendom, namely the Jews and Mohammedans.⁸ It needs no more than to be noted of course, that, with these two peoples, there was agreement with the Christians on the religious truth of the creation of the world. On this specific question therefore, the men whom Llull aimed to persuade and to win over rationally were all those others who either, until then, had been totally unaware of it or who might have rejected it, at least implicitly, as a consequence of their acceptance of the proposition that asserts the eternal duration of the world, in some form or another.⁹

With the well-founded conviction that a) differences in thought amongst a number of great philosophers (and the schools which have followed after them) are the result of a different understanding of the basic concepts at issue; and with the realization that b) the creation of the world, or correspondingly of its conceivable eternity, has been and rightly continues to be a perennial philosophical problem of both consuming interest and importance, which each generation of metaphysical thinkers must

⁶ All of Llull's extant anti-Averroistic treatises have been lately critically edited by Helmut Riedlinger and Hermogenes Harada in *ROL* V-VIII.

⁷ This desire has occasionally brought upon Llull the undeserved accusation of rationalism by some of his detractors. On this question see Sebastian Garcias Palou, "San Anselmo de Canterbury y el Beato Ramon Llull", *EL* (1957), 63-89; Bartolome M. Xiberta, "El presunte racionalisme de Ramon Llull," *EL* VII (1963), 153-65; Johannes Stöhr, "Las *Rationes Necessariae* de Ramon Llull, a la luz de sus últimas obras", *EL* XX (1976), 5-52.

⁸ One of Llull's earliest works that reveals his desire to enter into rational dialogue with the wise men of other monotheist religions is his *Liber de Gentili et Tribus Sapientibus* referred to above in note 3. The *Vita Coetanea* written about five years before the philosopher's death also provides the reader with a dramatic account of some of the conversations Llull entered into with a number of Mohammedan wise men. The Latin text of the *Contemporary Biography* can be Found in *ROL* VIII, 272-304. It is included among Llull's *Opera* because it was written by a monastic friend, to whom Llull had recently told the story of his life.

⁹ These were mainly philosophical minded thinkers who inclined to the views expressed by either of the two leading mediaeval Arabian philosophers mentioned earlier.

investigate,¹⁰ or re-think, for itself—without neglecting of course, the intellectual assistance bequeathed to them by philosophers who have faced up to the problem before them—, we shall proceed now to acquaint ourselves with the basic points of Ramon Llull's understanding of the creation of the world, as it can be gathered from his numerous writings. We hope in this manner to arrive at one objective; to obtain as clear an understanding as possible of what men signify, or have in mind, generally when they speak of the creation of the world. On that account we shall acquaint ourselves, almost exclusively, with the Majorcan philosopher's explanations and statements regarding the key points at issue when men think, ordinarily and explicitly, about such a creation, or correspondingly when others, with whom we disagree, assert the eternity of the world. As we advance in our task, we shall also become acquainted with the main reasons that were subsequently developed into arguments by the philosopher, in order to defend with them rationally the truth regarding the various questions actually involved in the problem. Time and space will not permit us on this occasion however, to enter into any detailed analyses of these arguments, either those which directly support the philosopher's position or those which are a rebuttal and answer to the opponents of his views.

Indubitably, when creationist theists defend the truth of the creation of the world, what is at issue and what they have in mind is the creation of that world *stricto sensu*, its creation from simply out of nothing.¹¹ Nor

¹⁰ For concrete examples of contemporary metaphysicians concerned with the question of Creation see Joseph Owens' already cited book *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 99-102; Maurice Halloway, *An Introduction to Natural Theology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959), pp. 337-61, and James Francis Anderson, *The Cause of Being* (St. Louis: B. Herdor, 1952).

¹¹ Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God*, tr. Peter O'Reilly (New York: MacMillan Co., 1965), pp. 46, 47. As for those who deny the creation of the world *stricto sensu*, what else might the Epicurean Roman poet, Lucretius, mean when he repeatedly wrote: "nothing from nothing was ever born?" *On the Nature of Things*, bk. 1, tr. William Ellery Leonard (New York: E. P. Button, 1950), p. 8. Particularly today there is, of course, a less strict or wider usage of the verb "to create". Not infrequently it is said that an artist, or even nature creates. Thus also we must interpret the title of George Gamow's *The Creation of the Universe* (London: MacMillan, 1951). Obviously, in such creations there is no question of productions out of nothing, or *ex nihilo*. Rather some pre-existent matter, material or subject, an *aliquid* of one sort or another, has been made use of and acted on by an efficient cause. A master of his native tongue, Llull was no exception to this extended and analogous usage of words. It ought to be noted however, that he restricted his usage of "to create" and of its derivatives to the *ad extra* productions by the First Being, God. As examples, read chapters thirty-two through thirty-six of his encyclopedic *Liber Contemplationis*. In those chapters Llull sings of the creation of the heavens, the four basic elements, the first trees, etc. Undoubtedly the author wrote there as he did, just like other careful theist thinkers, because of a profound realization of the distinctness and uniqueness of the divine *ad extra* productions. When Llull restricted the usage of creation to God in his writings therefore, it was not because of doubts or because of the rejection of an efficiently causal power exercised by beings other than God. The possession of such a causal power by humans and other natural beings he clearly acknowledged. The reason rather was Llull's correct understanding that the First Being is at the same time

can it be denied obviously that on the other hand, the production of the world out of nothing, rejected and indeed declared impossible by the majority of thinkers who maintain the eternal character and duration of the world, is that same strict creation. It may readily be understood that since Ramon Llull was always a convinced orthodox monotheist and Christian thinker, he could not but defend the classically theistic conception of the original creation of the world, of its fundamental and intrinsic essential principles and of the original, or first, beings when world first began to exist. Llull also held to the strict creation of each separate substance and of each rational or human soul. All of these have already come to be, or are still coming into existence initially, by way of a strict creation, wherein a) no preexistent material cause or prior subject is given, and b) there is therefore, a veritable transition from non-being to being, as regards the distinct reality of each of them.

What is really at issue in the disputes regarding the creation of the world is its creations *stricto sensu*, its total creation by a Creator who is other than that world or anything of that world and who, acting as the total and first efficient cause, brought that world out of sheer and total nothingness into existence for the first time. In the original production of the world therefore, the Creator utilized nothing, indeed had nothing to utilize in order to construct with it either the whole, or any of the intrinsic principles, of any of the things of that world.¹² With that understanding, we are ready to pass on more directly to the consideration and examination of Ramon Llull's understanding of the creation of the world, as it can be gathered from his many extant writings and as announced at the outset or in the title of this article. First of all, it is to be noted that according to the Majorcan philosopher, if the world or anything of the world was only given any kind of separate and objective being when and because it was created—and this for the reason that there was nothing of it before and, in addition, there was nothing with which either it, its principles or any part of it might have been made—then the world and the things that constitute

and always the First Efficient Cause of all reality outside of Himself. Moreover, the First Being alone can cause totally the things that He can efficiently bring into existence through the exercise of an infinite active power. Amongst all efficient causes, the First Being alone is without need absolutely of any cooperative secondary causes in order to produce any of His effects. If Llull described the production of the heavens, of the basic elements and of all the first physical beings as "creation"—though not conceiving them as created directly out of nothing, but rather as made out of a primal matter, previously created out of nothing,—it was clearly because he realized well that the First Being had Himself previously given being to that first matter, about which philosophers speak. In thus making those original first physical beings, the First Being remains their complete and total efficient cause, for the very simple reason that he had created the matter *ex nihilo*. No finite entity, as such possessed of only finite powers, can efficiently cause and actually make something, except through working on and utilizing some pre-existing materials or things. These it simply changes when it "creates" new objects or things.

¹² Owens, *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

it have obviously not always existed, have not always been, have not always had their own being. The world and the things in it are consequently not eternal and they have not existed, or been, from all eternity.¹³ If it is the case that the world has been brought into being because it has been made, caused or produced by a First Efficient Cause, with the obvious result that it once received its being totally and *simpliciter* for the first time since it was nothing before, then it follows necessarily that the world is not eternal in the duration of its being. If therefore, the world was created in the strict sense of the word, then it is not eternal. For if it is the case that the world and the things in it were originally produced in the totality of their being by a First Cause, it cannot be maintained at the same time that the world is uncreated and eternal. Now there have been a few notable thinkers however, who have been ready to maintain that the existence of a created thing from all eternity is not a manifest impossibility,¹⁴ at least not demonstrably so. These thinkers would rather say that the world either actually is or at least might possibly be eternal, although at the same time they are eager to admit that it was created in its being. With the exception of the few notable thinkers just noted, it is a fact however, that most thinkers and persons are inclined to think and to speak of an eternal world as an *ipso facto* uncreated world. Such was undeniably the stand of Aristotle and the other great Greek and Hellenistic philosophers about whom we know with any degree of accuracy and certainty. According to all of them, and in one form or another, either the world itself or at least the principles out of which it arose and which constitute therefore, that world, have had no absolute and total beginning. In any case, when all is said and done, the world, or at least its intrinsic principles, must be declared eternal, uncreated and wellnigh as necessary as God, or the gods, who has, or have, existed eternally.¹⁵ Limiting ourselves to the physical or material universe in which we live, it can be stated with assurance that for the Greek philosophers of ancient times in general, the world or at least the matter and elements that compose its entitative reality has or have always existed, eternally and separately from any possible maker of the world. Clearly, if we wish to speak of a maker of the world as a creator, we shall have to do so only in the wide usage and meaning of the term, not in its strict one. Here we may recall how neither the basic elements of the earliest philosophers, nor the unformed matter of Plato and Aristotle, nor the indivisible and invisible atoms of the Atomist School were ever conceived by their proponents as created in their

¹³ *Liber de Gentili*, bk. 2, art. 2, *MOG* II, 44-8 = Int. ii, 24-8.

¹⁴ Maritain, *Approaches*, pp. 46-47; Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

¹⁵ Brady, *op. cit.*, pp. 96, 126.

being. Rather in each case they thought them eternal in their existence and reality, although recognizing that perhaps the things and the world resulting from them might have had an actual and measurable beginning. The experienced and observed world of generation and corruption wherein we find ourselves and perhaps the universe at large, which is of course distinct from God and any other divinity, may have today a different arrangement, order and disposition than they had, let us say, many billions of years ago. On that account we may possibly say that the world had a beginning, because its present constitution and order have not always been exactly the same. But in the last analysis, all the intrinsic and most basic principles that in their own distinct way may have contributed to the beginning and to the reality of the present arrangement and form of the things of the world have always been in existence. They have been around eternally. It has been so because those principles are ultimately increated and uncreatable, according to the extant writings of the Greek philosophers. For at least that reason, the world did not, and could not, ultimately and originally have an external or transcendent efficient and total cause of its being, for at least its intrinsic entitative principles, particularly its matter or material cause, have always existed, have been eternally in one way or another. Understandably, such is and has to be, the consistent position put forth and defended by the at least implicitly atheistic philosophers,¹⁶ since in their view, there is no Supreme Existent or Being to whom man and the world are in any way indebted for their own existence and being, not even originally. Indubitably, for them to accept as independently objective or real an authentic creator of the world is tantamount to accepting a transcendent First Being, a Being other than the world, to whom all things in the world would ultimately owe their reality and being. But of course, if on the other hand, there is nothing real outside of, and in addition to, what we think as man and the world, then obviously there has not been, nor will there ever be, a creator of the world, understood as a total efficient cause of the world's existence. One can readily see that this should have been and was the position adopted by either a Democritus of Abdera because of his doctrine of an eternal universe of lifeless and non-cognitive atoms, moving totally at random in a limitless void or space,¹⁷ or by other similarly inclined atheistic philosophers.¹⁸ But as is well known, the notion of an eternal and uncreated world was also the position espoused and, to some extent defended by other Greek philosophers, as well as by a few of their later non-Greek successors, to whom we cannot

¹⁶ Holloway, *op. cit.*, pp. 469-70.

¹⁷ Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁸ Holloway, *op. cit.*, pp. 469-70.

attribute any outright atheism, by any stretch of the imagination. These admittedly theist philosophers were satisfied of the eternal character of the universe for different reasons and in different ways. Aristotle¹⁹ for instance, as well as his later but faithful followers—amongst whom we must name particularly the Arabian commentator, Averroes,²⁰ and the members of the Latin school named after him, besides other radical Aristotelians concluded to the existence of a First Being and Mover who neither is nor can be an efficient cause of the world, or of anything outside himself for that matter.²¹ Certainly, according to all of these Aristotelians, a transcendent and Divine Being exists, who is the noblest of all beings, is even the world's First Cause, but only as the highest final cause. In a sense, it is the supreme perfection of such a final cause that prevents it, or stops it, from being at all an efficiently creative cause of any reality outside of itself.²² Consequently, not only the separate spiritual substances but also the world, its material cause and other principles, as well as the species of all things, are uncreated and eternal.²³ The individual members of each species in the world of generation and corruption alone begin to be truly and they eventually cease. Before Aristotle, his great teacher, Plato, had unveiled an apparent maker of the world, the famous Demiurge of *The Timaeus*. To that maker the writer of the Dialogues attributed, at least allegorically, an effective efficient causality²⁴ vis-a-vis the world of becoming or of physical being. At the same time also he wrote, perhaps, of the world's and of man's beginning at the hands of both the Demiurge and the lesser gods. Yet interpreters and scholars unanimously agree that if we examine closely the "likely stories" of the *Timaeus* and give to them the most rational explanation possible, the accurate picture of the Demiurge that emerges from them falls short from the conception of a Creator of the world *stricto sensu*.²⁵ At most, the platonic Dialogue portrays a creator in the wide sense for, in the last analysis, that maker of the world is simply a giver of forms, a *formator*²⁶ or a shaper of things. He makes the world and the things in it by bestowing on an eternally unformed and chaotic matter a mysterious share or participation in the reality of the world of Forms or Ideas.²⁷ Like the chaotic matter which they somehow

¹⁹ Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 126; Riedlinger, in *ROL* V, 18.

²⁰ Riedlinger, *op. cit.*, in *ROL* V, 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 43, 46, 47, 58.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 17; Brady, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-27; Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1959), Vol. 1, pp. 326-27.

²³ Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 314.

²⁴ Plato, *Timaeus* 29e-30a in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 1162. See also Brady, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

²⁵ Owens, *op. cit.*, p. 336; Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 248.

²⁶ Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

inform, the Ideas seem to be entitatively separate and independent from the maker of the world, for they are eternally existent in their own intelligible world. The matter or material cause constitutive in great measure of most of the intrinsic reality of the things of the sensible world has not been brought therefore, into existence at all, for the reason that it has never been absolutely nothing. Uncreated, it has been around eternally. At most the Demiurge only shapes it and gives to it the different forms or natures which it receives and has at different times in our physical world,²⁸ due to a mysterious disposition wherein consists the imitation of, and the participation in, the reality of the eternal Forms and Ideas by the individual things of the physical world: a Platonic doctrine so strenuously criticized by Plato's own greatest student, Aristotle.²⁹ The point here is simply to recall how Plato's maker of the world created nothing in the strict sense of the word. He created neither the matter nor the eternal forms, both of which in their own distinct way contribute to the inner makeup of the things of the world.

We find a third and slightly different version of the eternal and uncreated character of the world when we meet with the understanding of how that world arose within the philosophy of Plotinus, the last of the ancients and with whom their philosophy came to its end, chronologically speaking. Within Plotinus' emanationist account—appropriated and modified later by several of the outstanding mediaeval Islamic philosophers, especially Avicenna³⁰—the world as a whole is explained as the result of an eternal and necessary overflow, without diminution or change, from within the substance or the One,³¹ the first principle of all that is, although the One itself is above being and thought.³² Matter, with the world that arises from it, stands at the outermost limits, as it were, of that eternal outflow and radiation from the One.³³ Yet both matter and the world are as necessary and eternal as the One and all the other emanations from it, because ultimately all the apparent multiplicity and diversity present in the world are absorbed and disappear, as it were, in the monistic and pantheistic reality of the One, notwithstanding Plotinus' heroic efforts to maintain at all costs a truly meaningful transcendence or the One over the manifold which is the world.³⁴ By reason of the at least implicit monism of

²⁹ See Aristotle *Metaphysics*, I, 9, 990a-993a in *The Student Oxford Aristotle*, tr. W. D. Ross (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1942). Also see Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 293-300.

³⁰ Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, (1962), p. 192.

³¹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI, ix, 5, tr. Stephen McKenna (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1962), p. 619. See also Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 182; and Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 466.

³² Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI, viii, 14, p. 608. See also Brady, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-82; and Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 464.

³³ Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 186; Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 467.

any authentic emanationism, not only the first Plotinian emanations and "created" beings, the Nous or Intelligence and the World-Soul, but also even the matter of the world have always been what they are. It cannot be otherwise, since in some way they always share in the reality of the One, from whom they emanate eternally. In some mysterious fashion therefore, the world has always been and, within the innermost structure of its being, it is not really separate or distinct from the transcendent One. This in spite of the fact that the One was declared to be superior and prior to being because the One has been there eternally, prior to the eternal appearance of all things that have being in a determinate way. Hence the general judgment of Plotinus' account of the reality of the world as excluding its strict creation.³⁵ The basis of that judgment lies in at least these two reasons: a) there has been no actual transition from non-being to being in the eternal emanation of all things from the One, and b) there is an ultimate oneness to all things which is really no more than a subtle monism and pantheism, with the at least implied consequent denial of the separate reality of the world from that of the One.

It was basically their understanding of the nature or the First Principle or Cause that led the three ancient philosophers to the positions just briefly outlined, in which they postulated the eternity of an uncreated world. Similarly, it was their different understanding of the ontologically First Being, different from, not to say in some basic features contrary to, that of most ancient philosophers, that has led classical theists, down through the centuries and in harmonious accord with the creationist teaching of the great three monotheist religions, to their distinct and unequivocal denial of the eternal duration of anything of, and within, the world. A classical theist upholds a properly conceived divine transcendence. According to him, the First Being is at once, in the fulness of the infinity of his being, both the ultimate First Efficient Cause and the supreme Final Cause of all of the reality and being possessed by every entity that has been, or that will ever be, placed in the extramental realm of existence.³⁶ By His very nature, which is literally infinite, the First Being contains, and indeed is identical with, the fulness and very essence of being and goodness. On that account, He is the absolutely free and total source of the existence and being of all that is not Himself. For reasons wellnigh explicit in such an understanding of the First Being, the classical theist sees that he cannot but reject outright any thought of an eternally uncreated world, or anything that is not God. To accept as factual and true the eternity of

³⁵ Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 466.

³⁶ Holloway, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

an uncreated world, or of anything else not God, amounts to no less than a denial of the singularly unique character of the Infinite Being, whom he acknowledges as truly the first efficient cause or all the beings distinct from Him. In the inexhaustible perfection of the infinity of His being, the First Being is eternally immutable and enduring.

As seen from the standpoint of classical theism, if it is a fact that the great ancient philosophers and not a small number of their followers and successors, even to the present day, have proposed and defended the notion of an eternal and uncreated world, it is because, due to one or another reason, they failed to arrive at the conception of the First Being in the correct terms of a sound theism and monotheism. In the case of a few of them, namely those who have been either atheists or pantheists, we find an outright denial of the reality of the First Being, as distinct in a meaningful way from that of man and the world. In view of such a situation, it should not surprise us, as if we had met with something totally unexpected, when we come across a philosopher of the character and stature of Ramon Llull who, contrariwise and in agreement with by far the majority of classical theist thinkers, constantly attacked the thought of an eternal world as an error and a falsehood, which a sound and true philosophy cannot but always refute, because he saw it as very much opposed to the truth and to the correct understanding of the nature of the ontologically First Being. Wellnigh unceasingly in his many varied books, he reminds the reader that the totality of things, whereof we ordinarily speak as either "the universe" or "the world", owes its entire being, ultimately and originally, to a creative action on the part of the First Being. The world or "second being"³⁷—a designation by which Llull occasionally in some of his writings names the collectivity of all finite things on account of their fundamental distinction and common origin from the First Being who has caused them—has ultimately received its being from the First Being. All that is the second being has consequently, been created, because it owes the perfection and character or its being totally to the single infinite source of all being, which is none other than the singularly unique, uncreated and eternal First Cause and Being. Within basically this thought is found the Majorcan philosopher's reiterated refusal to concede any rationality to the notion of even the mere possibility of an eternal duration, to the notion more specifically of a duration without a beginning, in the case of anything that is not the First Being. Consequently, not only is the world not eternal, but it is altogether impossible that it, or anything not God, might have existed from all eternity, even if one were willing to speak of an eternally created being or world. This means that Llull fought

³⁷ *Metaphysica Nova et Compendiosa*, ROL VI, 20.

the notion of the eternity of the world on two counts, as it were, or in two different ways. First of all and in agreement with all classical theistic philosophers, he endeavored to prove, on a few occasions in his writings, that it is demonstrably false that the world is both uncreated and eternal. This first stand which Llull attacked is the position of most of the thinkers who have professed or maintained, in different ways, the eternity of the world. The Majorcan philosopher attacked this idea of an eternal and uncreated world already in one of his earliest literary compositions, namely the *Liber de Gentili et Tribus Sapientibus*. In that book, it is suggested that one of the main reasons that led inquiring philosophers to think in such terms is the fact of the constant revolutions of the heavenly bodies, as well as their apparent incorruptibility. Apart from the astronomical incorrectness of that antiquated notion regarding the heavenly bodies, Llull's main point was to observe that the philosophers' inference concluding to the eternity of the heavens was wrong. Therefore, he noted that "the fact that both heavens and the heavenly bodies are limited in their extension signifies that they have been created."³⁸ Thirty years later, in a book which the author-philosopher intended as the final and definitive version of an Art, which he deemed heaven-inspired,³⁹ he again argued:

If the heavens are eternal, then they have the power to be eternally of themselves. This, because what was never in potency to being, can neither be ever in potency to non-being. And in such a case, the power of God would not be the cause of the power of the heavens, nor God's goodness the cause of the goodness of the heavens. Nor could the power of God deprive the heavens of their power, since the heavens, would then govern themselves.⁴⁰

Just a few lines earlier in the same book, the author had unequivocally asserted that: "if the heavens are eternal, then they have not been created out of nothing, for the simple reason that they have always existed."⁴¹ As might well have been expected, given the vigorous convictions of a philosopher of the caliber of Llull, upon learning of the recently re-

³⁸ "Respondet Judaeus: in hoc, quod firmamentum et corpora caelestia sunt terminata et finita in quantitate, significant, se esse creata". *Liber de Gentili*, *MOG* II, 48 = Int. ii, 28.

³⁹ On the origin of Llull's Art read the anonymous *Vita Coetanea*, III, *ROL* VIII, 280.

⁴⁰ "Si coelum est aeternum, potest per se esse aeternum: quoniam ens aeternum nunquam fuit in potentia ad essendum, neque est in potentia ad non essendum: et sic potestas Dei non esset causa potestatis coeli; nec bonitas Dei bonitatis coeli: et potestas Dei non posset privare potestatem coeli, eo quia coelum per se gubernaret se." Ramon Llull, *Ars Generalis Ultima*, 9, s. 3, c. 2, ed. Francis Marçal (Palma: Gabriel Guasp, 1645), pp. 223-24.

⁴¹ Si coelum est ab aeterno, non est creatum de nihilo; eo quia semper fuit". *Ibid.*, p. 223.

ved radical Aristotelian positions by the early fourteenth century Christian followers of the Arabian Averroes, in the name of authentic philosophy within the very precincts and lecture halls of the famous mediaeval University of Paris, the academic center of mediaeval Christendom, Llull again strongly opposed the resurrected Aristotelico-Averroistic tenet asserting the eternal and uncreated character of the world which Aristotle had indeed declared caused, but only teleologically. Llull attacked this thesis explicitly in several of the twenty-nine extant anti-Averroistic treatises wherein, between the end of the summer of the year 1309 and the start of the autumn of the year 1311, on a high plane but still quite vigorously he disputed all of the Averroistic positions which he deemed offensive, or at least very dangerous, to both sound philosophy and Christian orthodoxy.⁴²

From the numerous occasions and writings in which he took up the appropriate questions, it is unequivocally clear that Llull was categorically opposed, not only to the notion of an eternally uncreated world, but also to a second and slightly different stand which speaks likewise of an eternal world. According to this second notion, the world was, and indeed had to be, created. But it either was, or at least could have actually been created eternally. Although therefore created, the world has, or could have, existed from all eternity, since it either actually was, or could have been, created from all eternity. Such a different version of the eternity of the world Llull, with many others, also considered false. The reason for so thinking was that, as Llull and many other outstanding Christian philosophers, thought,⁴³ an eternal world must, practically *ipso facto* as it were, be an uncreated and unconditionally necessary world, or at least as eternal and necessary as the eternal First Being.⁴⁴ If things are really so, then the First Being is not really the source of the world's being, at least He is not its totally free and first efficient cause. The First Being could not in that case either have been the Creator of the world, or the second being, *stricto sensu*.⁴⁵ A number of Llull's writings show amply that the philosopher was well acquainted with the position of certain philosophers, particularly Islamic ones, in whose opinion there is no obvious incompatibility between the two ideas of a) a world that has actually been created and b) the same world having existed from all eternity.⁴⁶ Indeed, according to some

⁴² See note 6 above.

⁴³ For example St. Bonaventure. See Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 265.

⁴⁴ See note 41 above.

⁴⁵ *Liber de Deo et suis Propriis Qualitatibus Infinitis*, ROL II, 284-5. See also note 40 above. In order to establish that God is the efficient cause through the creation of everything that is contained within the second being Llull wrote in May of 1311 his *Liber de Efficiente et Effectu* (ROL VII, 273-91).

⁴⁶ See Llull's *Liber de Gentili*, bk. 2, art. 2, MOG II, 47 = Int. ii, 27; also Arthur Hyman and James Walsh, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 234-35; Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 147.

of those philosophers, not only could or might the world have existed from all eternity, but it actually has done so. This notwithstanding their declaration and acceptance of the truth that the world has actually been created by God or the First Cause. The world, consequently, has indeed received all of its being originally and ultimately from the First Cause. It has been truly created by Him, but it has been so created from all eternity, without a real beginning of the world's existence, which is therefore eternal, or at least eternally beginningless. According to the thought of those philosophers, the world has been made, it has been produced, and indeed it has been created out of nothing (as taught also by the Islamic religion); but it has been made and created eternally.⁴⁷

As suggested a few lines above, Llull was acquainted with the notion of an eternally created universe as it was proposed in his day by a few influential Arabian followers of the philosopher Avicenna. The latter had perhaps simply intended to utilize, as best he could, the language of Neoplatonic emanationism in order to express in meaningful philosophical language the conception of the creation of the world out of nothing by the First Cause.⁴⁸ Regardless of intentions however, the Avicennian account appears to end up, according to most historians and critics, as just another version of the emanationist theory first ingeniously devised by Plotinus centuries earlier. The physical world is viewed as a production traceable, at least mediately, to the First Cause, but by way of some sort of emanation from the tenth and last of the Avicennian separate Intelligences, of which the first alone proceeds immediately from the First Cause as its eternally necessary and first emanation. But whether or not one uses the language of creation or of emanation, according to Avicenna and his followers, the world has ultimately proceeded from its causes with a necessity of nature, rather than freely.⁴⁹ Eager and intent on not compromising in the least the eternal perfection and immutability of the Supreme Being, as well as undoubtedly wishing to be as faithful to the teaching on creation of their religion, a few later Islamic philosopher-theologians, whose thought was personally known to Ramon Llull as indicated in his writings, modified Avicenna's position slightly. Accordingly, they taught more explicitly that the First Being truly created the world and brought it into being as its First Efficient Cause. But yet He did so clearly from all eternity and without freedom, for otherwise He would have been totally idle or inactive from all eternity, until the moment when He decided, and then carried out the design, to create the world or other beings not Himself. For that

⁴⁷ Gilson, *History*, p. 212.

⁴⁸ Copleston, *op. cit.*, p. 192; Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

⁴⁹ Copleston, *op. cit.*, p. 192; Brady, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

reason, the world must have been created and must have existed from all eternity. As an alternative, we have to be willing to admit that the First Cause was inactive until It brought the world into being, with the logical implication that It has changed from a prior state of inactivity and idleness to a subsequent one in which It became fruitfully active and creative.⁵⁰ The world is therefore, both created and eternal, and it is impossible that it be otherwise, as long as God is God. A similar thought had been entertained many centuries earlier by the speculatively talented early Christian thinker, Origen. According to this writer also, a non-eternal production and creation of the world, or of some first world, would introduce newness and change into the supposedly perfect and immutable First Being. Without sufficiently distinguishing the act of creating on the part of God and the reality of the created world as the *ad extra* product of creation on the other, Origen thought that a non-eternal world, or worlds, necessarily entails a transition or change on the side of God, because He would then not have been acting and creating until He made a world.⁵¹ To this one more point was added by the Arabian thinkers, whose thought Lull had very much always in mind. According to them, the inevitable change implied in a non-eternal creation establishes also the unacceptable point that the First Being was not fully the superlatively perfect being until the world, as the affect of a non-eternal creation, received its being.⁵² The perfection of the First Being would in such a case have been incomplete or unfinished until It began to exercise Its efficient power to act exteriorly and to create either the world or some other external effect. Without at least one external and eternal effect or product to show, as it were, the efficient power of the First Cause was eternally inactive and idle, and remained consequently, incomplete and unfinished and was indeed quite imperfect until the creation of the world. The First Being might have been in existence eternally, but without any activity and operations to crown it with its requisite total fulfillment. They would have only begun when the world was finally created, adding thereby in some way to the perfection of the First Being, who therefore would not have been supremely perfect before. In lines that bespeak solid esteem and respect for the sincerity and good intentions of philosophers with whom he disagreed, Lull reveals his awareness both of their thought and of the reasons which led them to views which he considered false, specifically those of an eternal world and an imperfect God. In a short passage which we shall presently cite, he also traces their apparent failures on the matter to their

⁵⁰ See Lull, *Liber de Gentili*, bk. 2, art. 2, *MOG* II, 47-8 = Int. ii, 27-8; *Sermones Contra Averrois*, *ROL* VII, 251; also the *Vita Coetanea*, *ROL* VIII, 298.

⁵¹ Gilson, *History*, p. 40.

⁵² Anon. *Vita Coetanea*, *loc. cit.*

ignorance of the infinitely and eternally productive interior life within the Godhead, realized fully in the perfectly immanent activities with which the Divine Being is eternally and supremely perfect and self-sufficient. As a consequence, they were also ignorant of the fact that, in order to have fully the infinite perfection of His nature and being, God stands in no need at all of any external works or productions wherewith, in the exercise of his efficient power and causality He can bring into existence beings other than Himself. In kind and sympathetic words Lull explains that

The principal reason why philosophers desire greatly to prove that the world is eternal is so that they thus attribute honor to the First Cause, i.e. God. From that Cause the philosophers proceeded down to their understanding of other things. They asserted that since It is the Cause and the End of all things, and since It is eternal, in the same fashion, whatever it has caused, its effect in other words, must also be eternal. And that effect they identified with the world.⁵³

It is not possible to state with assurance whether Lull was, or was not, explicitly aware of the slightly different position advocated by a few other thinkers, among whom as the leading one we must name the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas. One of the acknowledged great masters of authentic Christian thought, St. Thomas accepted, on the basis of his Christian faith, the truth of the doctrine of the non-eternal creation of the world from the standpoint, of course, of the actual external production of the reality of anything distinct from God. He was moreover also convinced that men can demonstrably prove, by reason alone, that the world with all that is not the First Being was, and had to be, created in order to possess its objective existence. The world owes its whole being originally therefore, to the First Being who alone has the power to create in the sense of making something to be totally, without any pre-existing subjects or material causes. Thirdly, according to the Angelic Doctor, reason can also establish the non-conclusive character of any arguments that purportedly demonstrate the eternal existence of the world. Reason, in other words, is incapable of showing as a totally uncreated entity or as a created thing. But at the same time Aquinas holds further, that reason cannot disprove altogether that the world might or could have existed from all eternity, although however, in a created fashion, since it would still have re-

⁵³ "Hoc, per quod philosophi maxime volunt probare, quod mundus sit aeternus, est, ut dent honorem et nobilitatem primae causae, hoc est, Deo; a qua prima causa dicti philosophi devenerunt in notitiam rerum, dicentes: quod, sicut prima causa est causa et finis omnium, et est aeterna, ita conveniat, quod ejus causatum, videlicet ejus effectus sit aeternus; hoc autem causatum dixerunt esse mundum". *Liber de Gentili*, bk. 2, art. 2, *MOG* II, 47 = Int. ii, 27.

ceived its being from the creative First Cause.⁵⁴ In the mind of Aquinas and a few other thinkers in other words, God could conceivably have created the world from all eternity (although He has not done so of course). He could have done so, not simply in the sense that the creative act is eternal on the side of the First Being who is eternally perfect and immutable and not subject to time; but also in the sense that the world itself might have received its existence without beginning, since the act of the First Cause is eternal and without beginning or change. In agreement with all other classical theists, Aquinas and the thinkers who side with him on this last point reject as false the notion that the world is both eternal and uncreated,⁵⁵ which is the stand of men who deny that God is truly a creatively efficient cause, either because of an outright atheism or because they look upon God as simply and only the ultimate final cause of the world. There is general agreement also among all classical theists, among whom Aquinas is counted, in declaring false the understanding of the First Cause as in any way causing and creating the world, but as a result of a necessity of nature, without therefore, any divine freedom and with the implication that the First Being is unfinished and defective in the absence of the actual extramental realization of at least one of the possible effects of Its infinitely and eternally efficient causality.⁵⁶ A third point of agreement between Aquinas and other classical theists is closely linked to the last one. It is that human reason can demonstrably show that the First Being is the only absolutely necessary being;⁵⁷ and this of course, explains the previous point of agreement that creation *stricto sensu* is, on the side of the creator, an entirely gratuitous and free gift of being on His creations or creatures. The entirely gratuitous character of creation is at the same time used by thinkers who side with Aquinas as a confirmation of their thought that the creation of the world, with an actual beginning of its existence understood as a temporal beginning, is simply a truth of faith, a truth known by men only because it has been supernaturally revealed. The creation of the world with a beginning in time cannot be established by reason. But on the other hand, as noted earlier although human thought cannot conclusively show the impossibility of an eternally created universe, it cannot demonstrate apodictically either the possibility of an eternally created universe.⁵⁸

In none of his numerous extant writings does Llull explicitly advert to and refute the position of St. Thomas Aquinas on a conceivably eternal

⁵⁴ Gilson, *The Christian Philos.*, pp. 147-52.

⁵⁵ Gilson, *History*, p. 373.

⁵⁶ Copleston, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 365.

⁵⁷ Gilson, *The Christian Philos.*, p. 70.

⁵⁸ Gilson, *History*, p. 374.

world, about which he may have heard, or read, during one of his four or five visits to Paris, in whose university Lull was authorized to lecture on the "Art of Finding Truth".⁵⁹ But still, even in the absence of any explicit references to Aquinas' exact position, Lull's writings make it sufficiently clear that he would not approve of it. Indeed he rejected it, at least implicitly, when he explicitly rejected the very possibility that any created substance, including spiritual ones, can be equal with God as regards the particular mode of infinity which characterizes all of God's perfections and being. Just as no creature, simply because of its necessary finiteness, can be created with either a magnitude or goodness that are infinite, so also no creature can be caused or brought into being with a duration of its existence that is totally limitless, or infinite, in every possible way.⁶⁰ Such would be the case however, if it were actually beginningless and eternal. To the direct question of whether it is possible for the heavens to be eternal Lull gives a reply in these words:

It was proven that the heavens are not eternal. Nor is it even possible that they be eternal. Thence it follows that the entire universe is new and that it has been brought into being, something it did not have before.⁶¹

Now although the world could not have been given its existence from all eternity, it is incorrect to think that this is due to a positive lack or limitation in the power of the First Being, for we must acknowledge, and it can be established elsewhere, that the divine power is of itself absolutely infinite. In discussions regarding God's infinite power, particularly in written disputations against the Averroists of his day who claimed philosophically to limit God's active power, almost to the point of denying it altogether, Lull made it abundantly clear that it is not a question of any limits or imperfections on the side of the Creator's power. Rather it is all due to the very nature of anything which has reality within the totality that is the second being, i.e. the world, and all that is not the First being. Everything that is not God is of its nature finite and contingent. It is for that very reason totally incapable of receiving and keeping any perfections, including the most basic one of existence, except in a clearly limited or finite fashion.⁶² No finite entity—and no created being can be otherwise—is ca-

⁵⁹ Riedlinger, *op. cit.*, in *ROL* V, 136-7.

⁶⁰ *Liber de Perversione Entis Removenda*, *ROL* V, 477-8.

⁶¹ "Probatum est, quod caelum non est aeternum; nec etiam est possibile ipsum esse aeternum. Ad quod sequitur, quod totum universum est novum et deductum in esse, quod non erat"; *Ars Mystica Theologiae et Philosophiae*, d. 4, 3, *ROL* V, 413.

⁶² *Liber de Perversione Entis Removenda*, *ROL* V, 477.

pable of ever coming close, even from a distance, to the infinity which is uniquely proper of the First Being and wherewith He stands alone as the absolutely necessary and singular being that He is. On the other hand, Llull goes on to recognize that the First Being, by reason of His unique infinity, stands always ready to bestow on His creations more than any of them is capable of receiving. He stands ready to bestow on them any perfection even to the point of infinity, as it were, if only any of them were sufficient to receive as much.⁶³ All created beings however, are by their very nature limited and finite, and consequently they are totally removed from the boundless infinity that is required in order to receive and possess even one perfection in an unlimited and infinite way. Now if a created being were eternally in existence and without a beginning, then it would possess its existence in an unlimited or infinite way. But that it cannot do, precisely because it cannot be otherwise than contingent and finite. For that reason, Ramon Llull rejected altogether the notion of any creature that might or could conceivably have been created from all eternity, whether the creature be the world considered in its totality or any single substance of whatever kind. He had no choice but to do so, since the notion of an eternally created creature appeared to him practically absurd and contradictory, if one understands correctly the nature of a finite being as such. Llull tried to show that it is so by reminding us that undoubtedly, in the minds of nearly all people, creation signifies an act of making something that had not been before,⁶⁴ at least not in the same way. Moreover, as we saw earlier, creation strictly taken is an act of making that entails, as far as the created being is concerned, its transition from totally not being, from its lack of being altogether, from its simply non-being, to the possession of being, to its being *simpliciter*, for the first time altogether in an extramental way. Previously to its creation *stricto sensu*, the created object or thing did not exist at all. It only began to exist when it was created. We noted earlier that the transition associated with strict creation is not like the transitions that occur when things that already are change from being this to being that, from being in this way to being in that way or from being this particular thing to being another thing. In strict creation, it is simply a transition from not being at all, from being nothing, to being and to being something for the first time.⁶⁵ It is not therefore, a

⁶³ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁴ "Si coelum est ab aeterno, non est creatum de nihilo; eo quia semper fuit... Unde sequitur, quod mundus non esset effectus Dei, quoad suam bonitatem, et magnitudinem... Et quia omnia ista sunt impossibilia; sequitur quod coelum creatum est, et novum". *Ars Generalis*, 9, s. 3, c. 2, *ed. cit.* p. 223.

⁶⁵ "... sed in creatione non est ita, quia ipsa non est subjecta generationi et corruptioni, sed productioni creaturae productae de non esse in esse, quae creatura non esset producta de non esse in esse, si antequam produceretur, esset in potentia; nam si esset in potentia, esset aliquid". *Liber de Anima Rationali*, *MOG VI*, 422 = Int. vii, 8. "In hoc, Domine, quod aeternitas tibi est propria, probatur quod

question of a transition measurable by the moments of before and after that occur, or are distinguishable, whenever things are made, or created, but through changing one thing into another. In creation strictly understood, a thing therefore, is not made, is not made to be, gradually. It is made instantly and totally in the essentials of its nature when, through creation, it begins to be. The transition involved in creation strictly taken is not therefore, a temporal one, for it is not a transition that involves change in the proper meaning of the word. As stated more than once, the transition is simply from non-being to being, because the created thing did not exist extramentally at all before, neither itself completely nor any of the principles that make it to be what it is, at least partially. Consequently, we must not and cannot think that a created being has always been. To say that it has, is to say that it has not passed from non-being to being. If a thing has always been, without therefore having gone from its total non-being to being something, then it has not been made, it has not been created. If something has always been—and this is the common understanding of the statement that the world is or might be eternal—then it is uncreated.⁶⁶ If the world has always existed because it is eternal, then one cannot legitimately think that its non-being has come before its being and existence. In such a case, the quasi *terminus a quo* of non-being implied in the understanding and definition of creation *stricto sensu*, was never given. Consequently, a world or thing that either has, or could possibly have, existed eternally, without a beginning to and of its being, is not a world that has-been made. And less could it have been created, since in order to be so made or created, it must not have been before its creation. Certainly at least, a beginningless world or thing could not have been created *ex nihilo* because it would have always been, instead of not having been anything at all before in order that it might then be made and created after, and because, it had been nothing. According to Lull therefore, to propose a world that is at once created and eternal is to propose what is an impossibility and a contradiction.⁶⁷ For that reason, he was ready to reject the notion as in a way a more ridiculous and less understandable error than the one which gives us a world that is both eternal and uncreated.

creaturae sint creatae ex nihilo; nam, cum nulla res sit aeterna, nisi Tu, probatur, quod ipsae devenerint in esse de non esse". *Liber Contemplationis*, bk. 2, c. 30, *MOG IX*, 64. "... jam dixi, quod Divina Voluntas voluerit, quod creatura de non esse deduceretur in esse". *Disputatio Eremitae et Raymundi super Aliquibus Dubiis Quaestionibus Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, bk. 2, c. 37, *MOG IV*, 260 = *Int*, iv, 36.

⁶⁶ See note 41 above.

⁶⁷ "Utrum... sit Aeternus? Respondendum est, quod non. Ratio huius est, quia factibilis est. Factibilis autem ab aeterno esse non potest; quia si sic, implicaretur contradictio, quod esset factibilis et non factibilis". *Liber de Forma Dei*, *ROL VIII*, 72.

The rational conclusion which asserts unequivocally that the world had an absolute beginning was a conclusion accepted by Llull as in perfect accord with the truth that he had known and accepted from the early years of his life in a sincere Christian faith. Because of that faith, he had long before spoken of the world as created and new or non-eternal.⁶⁸ Rationally to his own satisfaction at least, he had now explained that it cannot be otherwise. Not because of limits or of a lack of power on the side of the infinite and eternal First Cause, but because of the finiteness that belongs to the very nature of all that is not the eternal and infinite First Being. Created beings would not be the creatures that they are, contingent and finite in every way, down to the roots and foundations of their reality, if they actually had, or could even theoretically possess, a truly boundless or eternal duration of existence, at least because beginningless. The world therefore, has not always existed. It has had a beginning of its existence, a beginning which has come after its previous total non-being, except as a divine idea within the mind and wisdom of its eternal Creator. That divine idea however, has always been and will always be totally one with the Divine Reality.⁶⁹ It is not, and cannot be, entitatively identical and one, in any way whatsoever, with the reality of the entities that constitute the world collectively. The start of the world, as well as its transition and succession from non-being to being must not be imagined or understood as a beginning, a transition and succession that occurred in or with time. Time itself only began at and with the beginning of the world. We must not, therefore, imagine and think of a time which came before the creation of the world.⁷⁰ According to Llull, when all is said and done, neither the world as a whole nor any part or thing of it ever was, or could ever have been from all eternity, even if one is willing to say that it was created from all eternity. Creation, as an act on the part of God productive of the entire reality of beings distinct or separate from His being and nature, is certainly as eternal as God Himself.⁷¹ It cannot be otherwise, since any acts performed by the eternal First Being are one and identical with His being in the perfect simplicity and immutability of the divine essence. But when persons wonder at and speak of an "eternally created world" ordinarily, it is not that interior act within the First Being that they are thinking about. What is at issue in their minds is not the divine activity itself whereby God causes His effect *ad extra*. Rather what is in question is the possible beginningless duration of the world, admittedly the effect of God's creative act. It is that eternal and beginningless duration that

⁶⁸ *Libre de Doctrina Pueril*, c. 3 (Palma: Imprenta Pere Antoni Capó, 1736), p. 10.

⁶⁹ *Disputatio Eremitae et Raymundi*, bk. 2, c. 37, *MOG IV*, 259 = Int. iv, 35.

⁷⁰ *Liber Contemplationis*, bk. 2, c. 30, *MOG IX*, 64

⁷¹ *Disputatio Eremitae et Raymundi*, bk. 2, c. 37, *MOG IV*, 260 = Int. iv, 36.

Llull rejects because neither the world nor anything else created and finite is ever able to have it, since it is totally excluded from it by its finite and contingent character. It goes without saying that according to Llull and rightly so, the non-eternal character of the creature does not in any way modify or alter either the immutability or eternity of the Creator, simply because the nonnecessary creation of finite beings in no way adds to or takes anything away from the fulness of God's infinite being and perfections.⁷²

Another very distinct characteristic of Llull's understanding of creation would seem to be rather obvious from the standpoint of any theist who distinguishes clearly the reality of God from that of any other thing or being. The denial of that distinction cannot but lead to some sort of pantheism or monism, one of the perennial temptations before the human spirit as borne out by the history of thought and of religion.⁷³ The aspect in the understanding of creation to which we allude now has sometimes been overlooked, or at least obscured, by those who seem unable to understand how a creation *ex nihilo*, a creation *stricto sensu*, can ever occur because of the difficulties linked to the *ex nihilo*. As a result, since they do not wish to deny altogether the production of the creature by the First Being in some way, these men have undertaken to derive the reality of created being, not from nothing—they declare such a thing an impossibility altogether, and rightly so in their incorrect understanding of the statement—but from the reality and substance of the First Being. Seen in that way, the First Cause actually becomes at least a part of the creature, although some of those men still desire all the while to maintain some kind of meaningful distinction between the Creator and the creature. Llull was always totally unwilling to compromise in the least the authentic divine transcendence. For that reason he was quite emphatic in his insistence on the lack of entitative identity between the First Being and the second being, between God and the world or anything of the second being, between God and the world or anything of the world, either totally or partially.⁷⁴ In the creation of anything, the uncaused, infinite and eternal First Being brings into being other things that are decidedly finite, contingent and non-eternal. Regardless of when and how they exist, if they do so at all, all created beings—and this means everything other than God—owe their real being to the uncreated and eternal Being, who as such cannot

⁷² "... et ita multo melius Deus non capit novitatem in sua aeternitate, quamvis creaverit mundum, qui non erat": *Liber de Consolatione Eremitae*, ROL I, 100. See also *Liber de Ente quod Simpliciter Est per Se et Propter Se Existens et Agens*, d. 3, 3, ROL VIII, 211; and *Liber de Forma Dei*, ROL VIII, 67.

⁷³ Maritain, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-33, 61-63.

⁷⁴ *Disputatio Raymundi Christiani et Hamar Saraceni*, p. 2, c. 1, MOG IV, 442 = Int. vii, 12; also *Metaphysica Nova* in ROL VI, 10, 20.

be or become created and finite. Literally and in a very real sense, all finite beings have proceeded from, or come from nothingness, since their being has ultimately followed after their total non-being. They have done so therefore, either absolutely when anything other than the Infinite One began or begins to exist through its creation *stricto sensu*; or at least in a relative meaning, since their being still has followed after their non-being, although admittedly they have been made from, and followed after, another thing which has in some way turned into them. The Creator alone is singularly and uniquely eternal, absolutely necessary, infinite and possessed of the highest simplicity and actuality of being.⁷⁵ Logically therefore, it has to be said unhesitatingly, that all things finite, non-eternal, contingent and composite in their being are, and will always remain, fundamentally distinct from their ultimate eternal and infinite creative cause. The First Being on the one hand, and everything else on the other are consequently, infinitely different in their very being: the First Being is eternal and infinite; all other entities are finite and non-eternal. For that reason, there can be no possible entitative identification in which the substance of either becomes literally the essence and substance of the other.

No matter therefore, what it does or what is done to it, a creature or created being cannot in its entitative essence ever become the Creator. Nor can the eternal Creator on the other hand, be entitatively changed into that which has been created and is both finite and non-eternal at once: obviously because to do so, He would have on the one hand always been, and on the other He would have begun to exist. A contradiction would then of course, be given, for the eternal One, in order to have begun to be after not being, since supposedly it has become a creature, would not have been eternally. A strict creation of whatever is not God rules out altogether every kind of monism and of pantheism, no matter how subtly proposed or mitigated. It does so because in all of them, the clearcut distinction or duality which distinguishes the Creator from the creature, the First Being from all that is the second being, the ultimately First Efficient Cause from what is in some way a secondary cause and His effect, is effectively denied or absorbed in the homogeneous unity of the unique reality of the all-pervading One. A properly correct creationist account therefore, one which aims at explaining satisfactorily and well the origin of the world, of all that is embraced within the second being, and this by way of a creation *stricto sensu*, must on that account also exclude even the semblance of any form of pantheism, including the subtle form of pantheism which in history is known as emanationism, and even more so of course, any other kinds of theistic evolutionism, wherein the world and

⁷⁵ *Liber Contemplationis*, bk. 2, c. 30, *MOG IX*, 260.

man are the supreme reality, evolving either eternally or in time. More than once in his writings, Lull made the decided effort to express positively and clearly his understanding of the unequivocal and radical distinction that obtains between the eternal and infinite Creator and non-eternal and finite creatures. Thus he noted clearly that the ontological distance which separates the finite from the infinite is itself infinite or beyond measurement. Not even an infinite addition of the finite to the finite will ever yield, or result in, the reality of the truly Infinite One. On that basis, one of the reasons which he readily suggested as to why God cannot create an eternal world is rooted in the infinite disproportion which obtains between what is finite and what is truly infinite. As he says himself:

Between the infinite and the finite there is no proportion at all. But now, if the Divine Power were to create an eternal world, then the world would be the means wherein a proportion would be given between the infinite and the finite.⁷⁶

The Infinite stands of course, for none other than the absolutely First Being, alone both uncreated and eternal. The entire universe, with all that we may wish and have to include within the designation of the "second being", is non-eternal, created and finite. Obviously and simply as the second being that it is, the entire universe, with whatever else might be thought to exist, is not of itself, *per se* or *a se*; rather is totally dependent on the First being who alone is not through another being or *ab alio*, but *per se* and *a se*.⁷⁷ Everything comprised within the second being is therefore, contingent, non-eternal, finite, imperfect, even defective in several ways and the entitative result of a basic composition within itself of being and non-being, of act and potency, of substance and accidents, and possibly in other ways. In stark and total contrast on the other hand, the First Being is uncaused, supremely actual, infinitely perfect, eternal, without any composition of any sort, without accidents, and truly infinite in Its being and in all of Its perfections. Under such circumstances, how can the conclusion be avoided that no entitative identity obtains between whatever constitutes the second being and what is the reality of the First Being?

There is one other way in which Lull makes it quite clear that the Creator is not, and cannot be, identical within the reality of His being,

⁷⁶ "Inter infinitum et finitum est nulla proportio; sed, si divina potestas creasset mundum aeternum, esset mundus medium, ratione cujus esset proportio inter infinitum et finitum, existente mundo limitato in omnibus suis extremitatibus excepta sua infinita duratione". *Quaestiones per Artem Demonstrativam seu Inventivam Solubiles*, q. 30, in *MOG* IV, 68 = Int. iii, 52.

⁷⁷ *Metaphysica Nova* in *ROL* VI, 20

even partially, with anything of, or with the whole of, the totality of the reality of that which he, as noted earlier, at times calls "the second being". This other way consists in nothing more than a reminder that all the products of a creation *stricto sensu*—and all things other than God must be traced ultimately to at least one such creation, immediately or mediately, because in the case of all of them, taken collectively, their absolute non-being came before their being, until at least with the creation of the world something besides God began to exist—have all been made or created out of nothing, *ex nihilo*.⁷⁸ Precisely as a created being in the strict sense of the word, no creature has been made from, or produced out of, and with the substance or entitative reality of Him who is the First Cause. Had any creature been drawn and made from the very essence and being of the First Cause, or of any other reality for that matter, then obviously it would not have been created out of nothing. Rather the reality of the supposedly created being would then have been preceded by, and been formed out of and with something, with an *aliquid*, namely the entitative reality of the First Cause. Not only would the being that is *simpliciter* infinite have made itself in some way a finite entity, but also its very being and substance would then have served and continue to serve as one or more of the intrinsic causes that preceded first, and then became the reality of, the second being. The substance of the First Being would then itself be either a material or a formal cause, or both, of the substance or reality which is the second being. Lull is most emphatic and clear in his repudiation of this type of pantheistic thought. In one of his earliest, impressive and inspiring literary compositions he wrote: "You do not create the creatures out of your essence. Rather you have created them out of nothing. The reason we know that you have not created any creature out of yourself is..."⁷⁹ The words just quoted appear in a chapter of the *Book of Contemplation* that has as its title: "How God created creatures out of nothing".⁸⁰ Moreover, in three ensuing chapters that follow, albeit not in strict consecutive order, the reader is given the occasion to reflect on how, also out of nothing, were created a) the original prime matter that subsequently became, or was formed into, the substance of the heavens and of the innumerable species of all the kinds of physical things that are found on the planet man inhabits, as well as possibly on others; b) the rational souls of each and every human being at the time of the beginning of the existence of each one of them; and c) the exclusively spiritual substances

⁷⁸ *Liber Contemplationis*, bk. 1, c. 30, *MOG IX*, 64.

⁷⁹ "Tu non creasti creaturas de tua essentia, sed creasti eas ex nihilo; nam id, per quod nos cognoscimus, Te non creavisse creaturas de Te ipso ...", *Liber Contemplationis*, *MOG IX*, 63.

⁸⁰ "Quomodo Deus creaverit creaturas ex nihilo". *Loc. cit.*

ordinarily spoken of as "angels".⁸¹ Somewhat distinctly, on the other hand, in four other chapters⁸² inserted between the two chapters that tell us about the creation of the basic prime matter and of the rational souls of men, the author outlines the "creation" –obviously in a broad or wide sense– of a) the heavens, b) the four simplest elements, c) the various types of minerals, d) the many species or kinds of plants, and e) the many species of animals, mainly from the standpoint of the physical part of their being, inclusive the body of man. Since all the various types of entities envisioned in these four chapters were originally formed, at least in a good part, not out of simply nothing, but out of the things that had previously been created, ultimately and more specifically out of the original basic matter created out of nothing, we must because of that acknowledge that their creation by God was of the sort that we named earlier "creation in the wide sense". But of course and as just indicated, the prior thing, or things, out of which each of these main types of creatures, namely the heavens, the minerals, the species of plants and animals in their first instances, was originally created, was not the divine substance or essence but the prime matter, itself created out of nothing, or the several basic elements formed with and out of that prime matter. The thought that, in the creation of anything *stricto sensu*, neither the whole of the First Being nor anything that might *per impossibile* be thought as an entitative element or part of His being is either transformed into, or passes into and becomes entitatively, anything of the reality of the created being is made again very clear by Lull in a later book entitled *Liber de Anima Rationali*. What he says there in reply to a question asking "whether the soul is created" obviously holds also in the case of any creation by God. We read:

A seal leaves behind on the wax the similitudes of the real letters in its essence, without the letters (now) present in the wax being one with the reality of the letters in the seal. They are however, the likenesses and the imprints of those letters. In a like fashion, in creation God stamps His likenesses on creatures, but not so that creatures are now of the essence of God. Rather they are His similitudes, and this insofar as they are able to receive and retain those likenesses.⁸³

⁸¹ cc. 31, 36, 37, *MOG IX* pp. 66, 75, 77.

⁸² cc. 32-25, *MOG IX*, pp. 67, 69, 71, 73.

⁸³ "Sigillum relinquit in cera similitudines suarum essentialium literarum, quin literae cerae sint de essentia literarum sigilli, sed sunt similitudines et impressiones illarum literarum; similiter in creatione Deus imprimit suas similitudines in creaturis, non, quod creaturae sint de essentia Dei, sed sunt similitudines illius, secundum quod ejus similitudines possunt recipere et sustinere". *Liber de Anima Rationali*, *MOG VI* 422 = Int. vii, 8.

The comparison of that occurs with, or is given in, a mirror was added by Lull to that of the seal and its letters in a book he wrote four years later. In it the author endeavored anew to explain clearly that nothing of the reality of the Creator is changed into, or passes into, what is the actual substance of the realities which He admittedly creates. In introducing the analogy, Lull points out that it is incorrect to think that at least the divine exemplar, the idea of each creatable thing within the wisdom or mind of God, enters into or in any way becomes, at least partially, anything of the essence and reality of the created being. With approval he recalls that the exemplar or idea has of course, existed eternally within the Supreme Intellect. Because of a divine exemplary idea—and within that same idea, in reality one with the Divine Being—a creature may also be said to have existed eternally, before its actual objective production and projection into the realm of extramental reality. But of course until its creation, the creature only has a cognitional being within a divine idea of it. Until its creation, it does not exist on its own at all. In any case, since God's knowledge and ideas are eternally one with God's essence, the eternal divine idea of each thing does not at all become either an intrinsic partial principle or the whole of the reality of any created being. This is how Lull expresses his non-pantheistic understanding of creation in the later book:

The image or figure which appears on a mirror is present in that mirror which receives that image from outside, without yielding anything of its own reality and nature; much like a seal which passes onto the wax its own characters, yet placing outside of itself nothing of its reality. He likewise asserted that the world and its parts have been from all eternity within the divine intellect by means of one or more ideas, without the divine intellect placing outside of itself anything of its own reality and nature, nor of the being of its attributes. Hence, when God created the world, He placed, outside of Himself nothing of the being of the idea. For had he done so, the idea would have been altered, and would not have been eternal.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ "Imago vel figura, quae apparet in speculo, est in speculo, quod ab extra recipit illam imaginem nihil extra mittendo de sua essentia et natura; sicut sigillum, quod in ceram transmittit suum characterem nihil extra mittendo de esse suae essentiae: item dixit, quod mundus et partes ejus ab aeterno fuerint in intellectu divino per ideam vel ideas, intellectu divino nihil extra mittente de sua essentia et natura, nec de esse essentiae suorum attributorum: unde quando Deus creavit mundum, nihil de esse ideae in creando extra se misit; quia si transmisisset, idea esset alterata, et non aeterna; quod est impossibile, cum idea sit Deus". *Disputatio Eremitae*, bk. 2, c. 37, *MOG IV*, 259 = Int. iv, 35.

The last two quotations show clearly that, according to Llull, to entertain the thought that the divine reality in some way passes or changes into, and consequently becomes, at least in part, somet of the world and man, is to think that one can do away with, and discard altogether, the entitatively real distance and ontological difference that obtain between two orders of being infinitely diverse: that of the First Being who is infinite, eternal, immutable, altogether uncaused and pure actuality on the one hand; and on the other, that of everything else which of necessity is finite, non-eternal, mutable, caused and which has in different degrees composition of potency and act, and of being and non-being, because drawn from sheer nothingness at the moment of its first creation. By removing and doing away with the ontological gap and distinction between the eternal and the non-eternal, between the infinite and the finite, between the creative uncaused cause and the created effect, a person is effectively reducing one to the other within his thought, so that in a resultant radical identity one has no longer two infinitely distinct orders of being, but only one. Obviously, in the end this reduction and identification yield nothing more than some kind of monism and pantheism, totally at odds, not to say totally incompatible, with the conception of the First Being, correctly defended within classical theism and monotheism of traditionally orthodox Christian thinkers. It is within the ranks of these orthodox Christian thinkers that we discover the rather delightful figure of the Majorcan philosopher, in spite of occasional strong attacks on his orthodoxy by a few of his detractors, down through the centuries since near the end of the fourteenth century.

Men who understand the creation of the world in a strict sense and therefore, *ex nihilo*, must also hold of necessity that until the creation of the first things other than God, until the creation and first appearance of anything comprised within the second being which we name ordinarily the "universe" of finite being, until and before that creation only the First Being was or existed, eternally of course, and not in time, which only began at the start of the existence of beings subject to change, in any of its various possible forms. Consequently, eternally and until the first moment that came with the creation of beings not God, nothing distinct from and outside of the First Being existed; nothing that might have been used as a material cause, in order to make with it, and out of it, the things that became the world or any other created entity, within or outside of it. Outside of God and before the original instant of creation, there was simply nothing that could have been changed into, and that could thereby have become, a principle or the substance of any creature. We saw above also that the divine substance or essence cannot itself ever become anything of the reality, or one of the intrinsic principles, either material or formal,

which are or constitute what is comprised within the second being, within the totality of things other than the creative First Cause, i.e. the universe of created being. As far as the material or physical world with all the physical substances or bodies on it –including human bodies– is concerned, there was no pre-existent matter or material, no material cause or causes that might have been utilized by the Creator towards and in the creation of the individual things that made up that world originally. The material cause, or matter, and whatever other intrinsic principles lie at the roots and heart of anything with an objective reality in the physical world, both in the order of substantial and of accidental being, had to receive their being totally and for the first time at creation, for they themselves began to exist only when things other than God first began. The so-called prime matter of the philosophers, the most elemental or basic underlying subject that is present in and becomes all the natural bodies of the world through successive substantial changes, had to be created, perhaps better had to be concreated, with the first physical things created when the world itself was first created.⁸⁵ It had to be created *stricto sensu*, or concreated with those first things, because absolutely nothing, without excluding the prime matter out of which all physical things of the world are entitatively constituted, had any objective reality, outside of and besides the First Being; certainly not until the first creation of any of the entities that collectively constitute the physical world and are therefore comprised within the second being. Admittedly, it is far from an easy matter to understand how the fact of creation *stricto sensu* is possible, as demonstrated historically by the failure of so many first rate philosophers to recognize it. None of them apparently could even imagine that anything, including the material principles that enter into the entitative constitution of anything physical in the world, could possibly be made out of simply nothing *ex nihilo*, and not *ex aliquo* or out of something else. Undoubtedly, as noted earlier, “creation”, strictly taken, names more than just an extraordinary production and type of making things rarely experienced in the normal course of events in nature and the world. It is actually a supernatural work which calls for powers beyond those possessed by nature and man, indeed by any finite entity. Indubitably, because creation, strictly taken, is so much more than and so different from, anything that finite beings might be able to accomplish, ancient philosophers in general and some recent ones –ignorant of, or unwilling to accept, the authoritative truth of Sacred Scripture– were incapable of even suspecting the creation of the world *ex nihilo*. Indeed in many cases, they denied it, at least implicitly, by their explicit acceptance of the necessary and eternal existence of the world, of its matter and of its motions, as did Aristotle. Up to the present day, many of those who still reject the creation of the world *stricto sensu* frequently

⁸⁵ *Liber Contemplationis*, bk. 2, c. 31, *MOG IX*, 66.

defend their stand with the old assertions that "from nothing nothing ever came" and that "out of nothing simply nothing comes".⁸⁶ And indeed, unless properly understood, it must be admitted that those assertions appear *prima facie* undeniable. One or two clarifications are in order if we are to understand them properly. Otherwise they may seem unanswerable objections to a rational understanding of the possibility of creation. Ramon Llull, for example, conscious and keenly unaware of the fact that the objection had already been raised in ancient times, tried to dispose of it by immediately noting that we must stop thinking of "nothing" as if nothing were some kind of thing, as if it were something. Nothing clearly is not something. Rather it is the total absence of anything that has any positive reality or being. Precisely because it is not anything at all, obviously what is really signified by "nothing" cannot be made use of as if it were an instrument or a material of some sort with which and out of which one might make some one thing. We must therefore, make the effort to avoid thinking of "nothing" as if it were a "something", as if it were named by an "it" in which "it" stands for a positive principle or reality, out of which and with which the world might have been created, as with a material of some sort. In this regard Llull counsels that we refrain from taking "nothing" *materialiter*, because nothing is not something that can function or act as a material cause or as any other cause. The objection implied in the above assertions seems to suggest this type of thinking and rightly notes that "nothing" cannot be used in order to make something, either with in or out of it. For the same basic reason, neither can "nothing" itself be turned into something by whatever sort of change one may choose. But little thought is actually needed to realize that it is a total misconception to deal with "nothing" as if it were something, as it were at least a material cause of some sort. In Llull's last expressly anti-Averroistic writing before he left Paris, the scene of the early fourteenth century birth, or resurgence, of the Latin Averroist movement, we come across these words:

To the third reason that asserts that "out of nothing nothing is made" this must be answered: materially (yes), because then nothing would already be something. But a Catholic says that what is (thus) made was (before) neither in potency nor in act.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ These maxims hold for any natural production by finite beings. Llull shows he takes them seriously with "Natural Proverbs" he proposes in *Liber Proverbiorum*, p. 2, c. 1, *MOG VI*, 325 = *Int. vi*, 43.

⁸⁷ "Ad tertiam quod de nihilo nihil fit, respondendum est: Materialiter, quia iam nihil esset aliquid. Sed Catholicus dicit, quod fit, quod non erat in potentia nec in actu". *Lib. de Ente*, d. 4, 3 in *ROL VIII*, 211.

If we are going to think and speak of creation correctly, we must make the conscious effort therefore, to keep always in mind that "nothing" does not stand for anything positively real at all. The fact that "nothing" neither is nor contains anything positive at all in any meaningful way, that it is not a positive reality and that therefore, it does not have any being of its own at all, not even potentially, is what renders creation *stricto sensu* so radically different from any other instance and kind of making whereof men can have experience in the world. The total negative character of "nothing" provides probably one of the strongest reasons, as suggested by the above cited nearly axiomatic assertions, that explain in good measure the ignorance, and even denial, of the creation of the world by God *ex nihilo* by so many otherwise capable thinkers. Almost certainly, it was the consciousness of this sad fact that caused Lull to expand a little more, in another of his writings, on the thought which he later expressed in the reply to the objection by Averroes quoted last. In the book intended by the author as the last and definitive version of his famous Art, the *Ars Generalis Ultima*, he had earlier written:

It is stated furthermore in philosophy that from nothing nothing is made. In order to explain this authority... we explain that nothing is not a principle. For were it such, then nothing would already be something. Again... nothing is not the matter for (making) something, for if out of it something could be made, it already would be something. Again... if it were subject to anything, it would also be something... nor can nothing be a means, for it were one, then it would already be something... we understand that nothing cannot be either a material, or a formal, or an efficient or a final cause. Nor can it be endowed with any power at all. For if it were, then it would be something.⁸⁸

This statement by the philosopher, as well as the shorter one cited before, establishes beyond doubt that he was aware of the care that is called for in order to understand first, and secondly to dispose properly of the difficulties that our intellect may appear to encounter when faced with the truth of the creation of the world. These difficulties, as well as the

⁸⁸ "Ulterius legitur in philosophia, quod de nihilo nihil fit. Ad exponendum auctoritatem istam... exponimus... quod nihil non est principium; quia si sic, jam nihil, aliquid esset. Item... quod nihil non est materia ad aliquid. Hoc idem intelligitur...; si enim nihil esset subditum alicui, aliquid quidem esset... nec nihil medium habere potest, quia si haberet, jam esset aliquid... intelligimus quod nihil non potest esse causa materialis, formalis, efficiens, nec finalis, atque de nulla potestate habituum; quia si esset, jam sequeretur quod esset aliquid". *Ars Generalis*, P. 7, c. 5, ed. cit. pp. 99-100.

objections raised by some men on account of them, are in a great measure due to a simple fact, namely that it is not easy to grasp with our understanding how any efficient cause can possibly bring it about that something be made or produced without a prior substance or principle that is utilized and changed, in order to make or create the new thing. Llull realized rather well that the rational grasp of the truth of the total creation of anything, of creation *stricto sensu*, strains the powers of the intellect to its limits. As a cognitive power, the intellect finds itself at home with that which in some way is, with that which possesses being, with being which, as realist philosophers maintain, is the adequate object of the intellect as a supra-sensory cognitive power. Consequently, we are able to understand to some degree at least, we can intellectually know at least a little, only that which shares in being in some way or measure, for only if something is can it be presented and given as an object to our intellect. What is literally "nothing," as said earlier, is not anything at all. It does not, therefore, provide our power of understanding with anything that it is able to understand and know at all. If we speak, and therefore appear to think, of "nothing" it is because, aided by that word, we attempt to think and to speak of the total removal and absence of whatever is something as best we can. That we do so the etymology of the word used in English (and possibly in other languages) plainly suggests. We might say that in a sense, in our thoughts and language, we turn nothing into something. If we keep such things in mind, we can better understand that to think of creation as the production or the making of something out of nothing is not the easiest thought for the human intellect to grasp, clearly because we have a transition from the previous total non-being or nothingness of a thing to its being. As a result of his early attempts to wrestle with the problem of the creation of the world Llull wrote in one of his earliest literary compositions:

But as to the manner how God makes a thing to be out of nothing, the human intellect cannot understand it in a created object. Do you know why? Because the intellect understands nothing in what is nothing. And because the intellect cannot understand how a thing can be made out of that in which it understands nothing, for that reason you cannot understand it in that in which you understand nothing.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ "Modum tamen, quomodo Deus ex nihilo producat aliquid, humanus intellectus non potest intelligere; et scis, quare? Quia in nihilo non potest intellectus aliquid intelligere; et quia intellectus non potest intelligere, quomodo ex hoc fiat aliquid, in que nihil potest intelligere, ideo non potes intelligere in eo, in quo nihil intelligis". *Liber de Gentili*, bk. 2, art 2, *MOG* II, 48 = Int. ii, 28.

Whatever difficulties the human mind meets with in its endeavors to know, and understand at least a little, the truth regarding the creation of the world out of nothing can be more than adequately resolved, if only one has recourse to and is mindful of the infinity of the Creator's power. Nothing less than an infinite power is both necessary and sufficient to bridge the immeasurable and practically infinite gap that separates total nothingness from the realm of being.⁹⁰ Only an infinite reality possessed of an absolutely infinite and ordered active power⁹¹ can efficiently cause something to be which up to its creation is simply nothing in itself, because totally devoid of any kind of objective being. In order to effect the transition from total non-being to being (and this is the character and meaning of creation *stricto sensu*), it is therefore, required that the Creator be possessed of an infinite power. It is of course, an obviously undeniable fact that the powers man finds himself in possession of, as well as all the powers he knows belong to the remainder of things that populate the universe at large, are finite, all of them, simply because they are part of the natural equipment possessed by entities, finite both in being and in nature. Experience and observations confirm the fact that both men and other natural agents found in the world are endowed with the necessary effective, or efficient, power to bring other things into being, even for the first time, since frequently these new things cannot reasonably be thought to have existed before, except perhaps as an idea in somebody's intellect or mind. It is fact that thus are produced new substances, animate and inanimate, which as new make their first appearance in the world, either as a result of biological reproductions or through the occurrence of some other kind of truly substantial change. These instances, as well as all those which occur ordinarily and extraordinarily in nature, wherein a new reality or substance begins to be after its previous non-existence individually, are instances of creations, but only in a wide sense. It must be said so, because we cannot in any of those numerous instances say that the new substances came from simply out of nothing. The experienced and undeniable power of efficiently causing new entities which all natural agents, including man, possess can only be exercised or be put to work if an antecedently existing thing is given, which the efficient cause can turn into, or make into, the new thing. The previously existing thing has to be changed, even destroyed or corrupted, in order to be formed into the new thing. With the exception of thinkers inclined towards occasionalism, no thinker who recognizes the objectivity of the world of extramental reality, about which

⁹⁰ "Et quia esse et non esse habent distantiam infinitam..." *Ars Consilii*, d. 3, *ROL* II, 226.

⁹¹ The title of one of Lull's *opuscula* written at Messina less than three years before his death is *Liber de Infinita et Ordinata Potestate*. With other *Opera Messaniensia*, it has been critically edited by Johannes Stöhr in *ROL* I, 237-62.

we know normally and mainly with our senses, will want to challenge the truth that both men and other natural agents, about which we know from experience, can be and frequently are authentic efficient causes. These agents therefore, have the power to produce, to make and to create something new, something that was previously non-existent, but always *ex aliquo*, always out of some previous thing or materials. The natural agents or efficient causes of the world act on those materials or things, and they change them either substantially or accidentally. In every instance of a production by these natural agents and causes a prior subject, substance or material is given and it functions as in the role of a material cause out of which the efficient cause brings the new thing. It is undoubtedly, in ways much as this that natural agents in the world are said to create. Obviously they do so only in a wide sense, since in every instance in which they create they do so only through changing some old or prior material or thing and by forming it into the new thing.⁹² No natural agent however, without the exclusion of man, has been observed or known, indeed has the power, to create *stricto sensu*, to bring something into being totally and *simpliciter* from out of its previous total nothingness or non-being. It is perhaps partially on account of this unexperienced, indeed non-experienceable, character of strict creations, particularly if added to the very real difficulty which the human mind experiences in trying to grasp something in what is nothing, as noted earlier, that so many philosophers—many of them totally ignorant and oblivious of the teaching of creation from religious sources originally, we know—have remained unaware and sometimes have denied outright the very possibility of creation *stricto sensu*. We cannot but agree, as a matter of fact, that such a creation is an impossibility from the standpoint of purely natural agents, possessed only of finite powers because of their finite natures⁹³. We have already indicated that no finite being has the necessary and sufficient power to bring something into being out of and from absolutely total nothingness, simply because it takes an infinitely great deal more than finite powers to effect the transition from non-being into being. If we must admit that we have not had, and cannot have, any experience at all of any creations *stricto sensu*, it has to be obviously because our experiences are only of finite natural agents. Precisely because they are finite, all natural and human agents lack the necessary infinite power to create in that strict sense. Indeed were God also no more than the highest conceivable finite being with the highest finite power, we would have to declare that He also cannot bring about a single creation *stricto sensu*. Such a creation would then have to

⁹² All of this was explained earlier in the first part of this paper. See note 11 above.

⁹³ *Liber proverbiorum*, bk. 2, c. 1, *MOG VI*, 325 = Int. vi, 43.

be declared a total impossibility because of the non-existence of an Infinite Being endowed with infinite power. It is a fact of course that a number of people, including philosophers in our times, will not admit of any deity except it be a finite one. Such men appear unable or unwilling to conceive of anything except of what is finite. For that reason since they cannot recognize God except in finite terms, they have also to deny perforce the creation of the world *ex nihilo*. Theirs is not of course, the correct understanding of God, at least certainly not according to classical theism. But if such men, or any man for that matter, are to ascend with their minds to the recognition of a First Cause, infinite both in being and in power, something else is probably needed because presupposed, namely that they be willing to admit that human knowledge is not simply a matter of sheer sense experience and the imagination exclusively. Within the scale of reality man is superior to the brute animals in part because with his rational knowledge he can ascend to some knowledge of the purely intelligible. The intimate connection between the recognition of man's genuine intellectual cognitive power on the one hand and the capacity to think of a reality that is infinite on the other, was insisted on by Llull against the early fourteenth century Latin followers of Averroes at Paris. Since they remained Christians, those Latin Averroists professed to accept, in virtue of their faith, the truth of God's infinite being and power. But as philosophers using their reason, they wished to reiterate Averroes' contention that, according to sound rational philosophy, which both he and they practically identified with Aristotle's thought, we cannot but declare that the First Being is a finite being, endowed with extremely limited powers, if any, to effect anything outside of His own reality. Strongly opposing them, Llull addressed them in this fashion:

Because you do not extend your knowledge beyond the senses and the imagination, which are limited powers, you are really incapable of thinking of any infinite object... And consequently, you place your intellect under constraint... and consider God finite in His goodness, grandeur, power and His other attributes... Let such a small god, defective in all of his *rationes* be yours and not mine, because he is not sufficient for me. I have another God.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ "Quoniam tu Averroista, non extendis tuam scientiam extra sensum et imaginationem, quae sunt potentiae finitae, objectare non posses objecta infinita realiter,... et sic ligas intellectum tuum, ut non transeat super sensum et imaginationem, et consideras Deum finitum quoad suam bonitatem, magnitudinem, potestatem, et etiam quoad alia principia... Talis autem Deus ita parvus, defectivus per omnes suas rationes sit tuus; meus autem non; quia non esset mihi sufficiens, quoniam alium Deum habeo, quem intelligo super sensum et imaginationem". *Disputatio Raimundi et Averroistae*, 3, ed. Hermogenes Harada in *ROL* VII, 13.

According to the Majorcan philosopher, to conceive God as a finite entity, with simply nothing more than limited perfections and powers, is simply to think of a god that is unreal and no more than a mathematical abstraction. Certainly, such a mathematically abstract god is quite different from the God affirmed by an authentic monotheism. Of any supposedly finite divinities, Llull would not hesitate to declare:

Such a god we shall not call God, except possibly a mathematical one. And in him we do not believe, because he does not exist, and no one is obliged to believe in him, since he performs not one single good thing. Instead he rather allows all sort of evil things to occur.⁹⁵

So crucial and important is, within Llull's thought, the acceptance of God's infinite being and power for the correct understanding of the creation of the world and of the truths linked intimately with God, that he devoted two of his treatises against Averroism to a presentation and defense first, of God's infinite reality and secondly, of God's infinite power. As he composed those two books, as well as the rest of his other anti-Averroistic treatises, Llull was fully aware that his contemporary followers of the famous Arabian commentator of Aristotle had, following the lead of their master of more than a century earlier, resurrected amongst other things the ancient Aristotelian and non-Christian idea of an eternal and uncreated universe. Llull's Averroist contemporaries claimed to do so philosophically and under the leadership of Averroes, they denied, more unequivocally than Aristotle did in his extant writings of seventeen centuries earlier, that it can be rationally demonstrated that the divine power is infinite and that God is the First efficient cause of the world.⁹⁶ Indubitably, with these Averroistic ideas and denials much in his mind, Llull outlined his understanding of a) the existence of an Infinite Being in his *Liber de Ente Infinito*⁹⁷ and b) of the limitless active power that belongs to that Infinite Being in the book entitled *Liber de Possibili et Impossibili*.⁹⁸ So much importance did Llull assign to the question of God's infinite power that he returned to it at some relative length in most of the twenty-nine extant anti-Averroistic *opuscula*, written during the two years of his last

⁹⁵ "Talem autem Deum dicemus non esse Deum, nisi forte mathematicum; et in talem non credimus, quia non est, neque aliquis debet credere, cum nihil boni faciat et cuncta mala sustineat". *Liber in quo Declaratur, quod Fides Sancta Catholica est Magis Probabilis quam Improbabilis*, prol., ed. Helmut Riedlinger in *ROL VI*, 337.

⁹⁶ Riedlinger, *op. cit.* in *ROL V*, 33.

⁹⁷ Ed. by Helmut Riedlinger in *ROL VI*, 93-115.

⁹⁸ Ed. by Helmut Riedlinger also in *ROL VI*, 383-466.

sojourn at Paris, immediately after he became aware of the recent rise, or resurgence, of the Latin Averroism. Unlike the Averroists whom he strongly opposed in the late years of his rich and active life, Llull accepted and always took into account earnestly the infinity of God's being and power, from the start of his philosophical and literary career. As a consequence, he was soon able within his own mind to surmount apparent difficulties and to achieve an adequately rational understanding of the truth of the creation of the world, which he had previously and sincerely accepted on the basis of his Christian faith. Soon he came also to the realization that what, in most cases, ultimately prevented philosophers from accepting the same truth was their ignorance, and possibly denial, of the infinity of the divine power. Accordingly he wrote in an early book:

But because the philosophers did not have a perfect knowledge of the divine power, wisdom, will and other perfections, and because they saw that the heavens and the heavenly bodies are incorruptible, on account of these reason they were of the opinion that they are eternal, without beginning or end. For the same reason also they denied creation.⁹⁹

He also realized at the same time on the other hand, that a correct understanding of the divine attributes, one of them the divine power, enabled theists generally to recognize at least the possibility of creation. On that vein he added to the words just quoted:

But in the perfect divine will, endowed with perfect power and perfect wisdom, it is possible to understand that God can create something out of nothing, since His will can so will, and His power so make it, and His wisdom likewise knows how to make it.¹⁰⁰

Nothing is given either presently in existence or that may possibly be some day, nothing either in a state of actuality or a state of potentiality, which is now or can ever be capable of preventing or effectively obstructing the exercise of the infinite power of the Supreme Being. The reason

⁹⁹ "Veruntamen quia philosophi non habuerunt perfectam notitiam divinae potestatis, voluntatis et sapientiae, nec earum perfectionis, et viderunt, quod firmamentum et corpora caelestia sint incorruptibilia, igitur opinati sunt, quod ea sint aeterna et sine principio et fine; et ideo moti fuerunt ad negandam creationem, omnium rerum procedentium a Deo". *Liber de Gentili*, b. 2, c. 2, *MOG* II, 48 = *Int.* ii, 28.

¹⁰⁰ "Veruntamen in perfecta voluntate divina, quae habet perfectam potestatem et sapientiam, potes intelligere, Deum posse creare aliquid ex nihilo; ex quo sua voluntas potest illud velle, et sua potestas potest facere, et sua scientia scit illud facere et creare". *Loc. cit.*

of course, is simply that things which are not God, whether real or only possible, whether actual or potential, are all finite in their being and consequently, in their power also. Obviously, beings possessed, singly and collectively, of powers that are only finite cannot prove much of an obstacle to Him who is absolute power and wisdom. Now if nothing finite—but which is at least something in some way—exists or can ever exist which is capable of preventing the infinite First Being from bringing about and accomplishing whatever his boundless wisdom may dictate, how can that which theoretically is absolutely nothing at all and therefore has and can have no powers at all, not even the power of the least and most insignificant finite being, whatever it may be. Obviously “nothing” does not have the least of powers¹⁰¹ or of anything wherewith it might obstruct or impede the creative designs and power of Him who is absolutely infinite, both in being and in perfection. On that account, in a book written on African soil, not more than a few months before his death which apparently resulted both from advanced age and physical maltreatment received in return for an outspoken defense of the Christian faith, Ramon Llull was able to argue that if God did not have the power to create things out of nothing, then all things must have been in some way eternal, either in actuality or at least in a condition of potentiality, through some eternal subject, or subjects, able to be changed into them. Only in that case however, with all of His infinite perfections, among them a perfect goodness, magnitude, eternity and power, God still cannot create a single thing out of nothing, He cannot create an *aliquid ex nihilo*. Moreover, if the First Being does not have the power to create *ex nihilo*, we then have no choice but to declare that “His power, which is said to be infinite, is impeded by a power which is nothing”.¹⁰² But this is manifestly an impossibility, Llull will remind us immediately, as he had done a little earlier against Averroes. The Arabian Commentator, as understood by Llull, had held a century earlier that God lacks the power to create anything out of nothing, noting at the same time that only what is neither in act nor in potency is simply nothing. God however, can create out of that which was previously in some way, either in act or in potency. What is ‘nothing’ escapes God’s power, simply because it is nothing, either actually or potentially. With this in mind, Llull wrote: “But to this it must be replied that the divine power for the reason that it is absolute, extends to all three terms...

¹⁰¹ “Intelligimus quod nihil... de nulla potestate potest esse habitatum; quia si esset, jam sequeretur quod esset aliquid”. *Ars Generalis*, 7, c. 5, ed. cit. p. 100.

¹⁰² “Si omne potens est aeternum in potentia vel actu, Deus cum sua potestate infinita, creare rem de nihilo iam non potest. Et potestas, quae est et dicitur infinita, est impedita potestate, quae nihil est; quod est impossibile.” *Liber de Deo et Suis Propriis Qualitatibus Infinitis*, ROL II, 285.

three terms being a) what is in act, b) what is in potency and c) what is nothing)."¹⁰³

In concert with classical theism, Llull insists on the infinity of power characteristic of a Infinite Being. It is because of it that He can create *stricto sensu*. For the same reason, the First being stands in no need of anything or of anyone apart from Himself in order to be able to exercise His power to create. Unlike all other efficient causes which are finite and hence only have a finite power, the First Cause is in absolutely no need of any prior materials on which to work, or of any instruments and collaborators with which to work, in order to effectively create. Indeed before the first creation of anything outside the First Cause, there existed no materials, no instruments or any other agents on which the First Cause might have relied and which might have served in any of the capacities indicated, as it were¹⁰⁴. That is precisely why in initial creation of anything that was not God, in the creation of what we ordinarily speak of as the "world" and of any purely spiritual beings, their creation had to be *ex nihilo*. With this thought before his mind Llull reasoned that there are two basically distinct ways in which God can make and act on things. Correctly he argued that God

can act on creatures in either of two ways: immediately or mediately... Immediately, when He brings forth a creature out of non-being into being. Mediate, when through one creature He conserves another, as for example when God through the motion of the heavens, itself a creature, conserves the motion of the elements and of the things possessed of an elemental nature, which are also creatures... Whence one thing is creation and another conservation.¹⁰⁵

Always conscious of the extent of God's infinite power, Llull had no difficulty in concluding that the divine goodness, truly one in being with the power and other infinite perfections of the Supreme Being, "is both subjectively and objectively the ordinative and formative cause of all good

¹⁰³ "Averrois autem negavit, quod Deus non potest de nihilo aliquid; et consideravit, quod illud, quod non est in actu nec in potentia, est nihil.— Sed ad hoc respondendum est, quod divina potestas, per hoc quod est absoluta, ambit omnes tres terminos..." *Sermones Contra Errores Averrois*, ROL VII, 254.

¹⁰⁴ *Liber Contemplationis*, bk. 2, c. 30, *MOG IX*, 64.

¹⁰⁵ "Deus agit in creaturis duobus modis, immediate et mediate...; immediate, quando producit creaturam de non esse in esse; mediate, quando cum una creatura conservat aliam; sicus Deus, qui cum motu coeli, qui est creatura, conservat motum elementorum et elementatorum, quae etiam sunt creaturae... unde... unum est creatio, et aliud conservatio". *Disputatio Eremitae et Raymundi*, q. 38, *MOG IV*, 260 = Int. iv, 36.

things. Subjectively, this entails creation, i.e. the making of something that was not either in act or in potency out of nothing".¹⁰⁶ Since, as noted a few lines before, the First Being has the power to act directly and immediately on creatures, and since, moreover, His power is absolutely infinite, it can be readily understood how in a strict creation, although not exclusively necessarily, the influence and effects of His efficiently causal actions are received immediately from Him by the creatures He creates, without the need of any intermediary agents and efficient causes. This need of intermediate causes was again taught at Paris in the early fourteenth century by Averroists, obviously under the influence of Neo-Platonic Arabian philosophy. At the start of a book intended to show, against Averroes and others, that God is the immediate efficient cause of the world, and not simply its final cause as proposed by Aristotle and his Arabian Commentator, Llull declared in terms that leave no doubt as to his own thought: "God is the efficient cause, and the entire universe is His effect".¹⁰⁷ By reason of a creation strictly understood, God is the immediate efficient cause of the total substance and reality of any entity He might have chosen to create. Any creature that is truly such because it has been created *stricto sensu*, whether it be a spiritual substance, as an angel or a rational soul, or the material things at the beginning of the world with matter itself, had to be produced totally and immediately by the First Efficient Cause who alone has the power to create out of nothing, as shown above. Only if an entity is created *stricto sensu*, is it then created out of nothing, totally and immediately by the First Being. After stating that God is truly the efficient cause of the whole universe, Llull further explains that only in that fashion could God have been truly the First Cause. What he then says about the angel, he applies to the other principal parts of the universe in the ensuing pages of the book establishing God's efficient causality vis-a-vis the world. About the angel he says:

And it is said that it was entirely made because it was made out of nothing, which is not something in act or something in potency. Whatever has been made out of something that was before either in act or potency, has not been made *simpliciter* but only *secundum quid* on the supposition that a being in act or in potency has existed eternally. Nor would He then be the absolutely First Cause and End. And that is impossible.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ "Probatum est... quod divina bonitas est causa ordinativa et formativa subjective et objective omnium aliarum bonitatum. Subjective autem importat creationem, hoc est facere aliquid de nihilo, quod non erat, neque in potentia, neque in actu"; *Liber de Forma Dei*, d. 2, in *ROL VIII*, 59.

¹⁰⁷ "Raimundista dicebat, quod Deus est efficiens, et totum universum est effectus eius". *Liber de Efficiente et Effectu*, prol., ed. Hermogenes Harada in *ROL VII*, 274.

¹⁰⁸ "Ad consequentiam istius sequitur, quod angelus sit totus factus sive creatus de nihilo, et quod

A point defended with almost complete unanimity by Christian thinkers who have reflected on the creation of the world is the further thought of the unconditionally free character of creation, and of any creation, on the part of the First Cause.¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, most of them have rejected outright the slightest indication which may suggest without qualifications the presence at creation of any determining necessity whereby God's total freedom and perfect transcendence would be compromised. Any kind of meaningful absolute necessity to create would cast doubts about the total otherness and the perfect self-sufficiency in goodness of the eternal and infinite First Being. A supremely perfect being, a Being who therefore, possesses the perfection of being and every other perfection in their highest possible superlative degree, i.e. to infinity, the First Being neither lacks anything nor can add anything to His nature that might in the least enhance it or improve it. Were the First Being in need of the least possible thing, He would then not be the eternally immutable and infinitely perfect being. In possession in perfect simplicity of every possible perfection in their highest possible degree, which as just said is no different than to infinity, God requires or needs absolutely nothing in order to be fully and eternally what He is. Therefore, there is nothing, and there has been nothing, outside of Him that can require or compel Him to create one single thing outside of, or apart from, the reality of His own being. Such being the case, if eternally the First Being chose to create the world, He did so simply because he has willed to do so in absolute freedom, because in His over-abundantly generous goodness His perfect will freely inclined Him to bestow existence and other perfections on other entities besides Himself, according to the designs of His perfect wisdom and love.

In addition to the more or less obvious reasons which convincingly show God's absolute and total freedom vis-a-vis all that eternally He has chosen to create *ad extra*, the Majorcan philosopher was fond of insisting on another factor which is singularly suggestive of his rather original way of understanding the active character of the nature of the First Being and of his unique way of expressing that active nature. From the start of his literary activity, Lull's concept of the First Being encourages us to think of a Divine Being who is infinitely and immanently dynamic, active and productive, all within the interior of God's infinite nature and reality. If God is the supremely Perfect Being who stands in need of nothing which He must perforce create outside of His perfect Being, it is largely due to

Deus sit efficiens... Et dicitur, quod est totus factus, quia de nihilo, quod non est aliquid in actu neque in potentia, factus est. Quod autem factum est de aliquo, quod erat in actu vel in potentia, non simpliciter factum est, sed secundum quid, posito quod ens in actu sive in potentia esset aeternum; neque per consequens Deus esset totus efficiens, sed secundum quid; neque esset absolute prima causa, neque finis. Quod est impossibile". *Liber de Efficiente* in *ROL VII*, 275.

¹⁰⁹ Owens, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

the eternal and perfect self-sufficiency of His being, totally fulfilled because of its infinitely active and productive life within the entitative interior of the First Cause. In virtue of the infinity of the Divine Essence, both the eternally active source and the term or perfect completion of the *ad intra* activities within It are given in perfect immanence, all within the interior of the Divine Essence, without any separation and multiplicity to mar the absolute simplicity of Its being. Therein we find a higher sign of the perfect and total self-sufficiency of the reality of the Supreme Being, because as a result of, and from the standpoint of, an infinitely active and productive nature that measures up perfectly, as it were, to the exigencies and possibilities of the divine essence, the First Being does not have any need at all of any productions *ad extra*. The only absolutely necessary activity and production required to satisfy and fulfill perfectly the infinite possibilities of the divine essence, as it were, are perfectly given within the interior of the First Being in an eternal and infinite production *ad intra*.¹¹⁰ This eternal active production within the very essence of the Divine Reality does not result in the creation of something that heretofore did not have any real being and is added as something new. Nothing is made or produced that was not in existence before. There is no question of anything efficiently caused either within or without the divine essence, simply because nothing is made to be that had no being before. Nothing is changed either from what it was before or from the way in which it was before, as in the case of the natural and artificial creations in nature and by man. It is so, because what is given in the perfectly immanent active production within the divine reality is nothing less than the eternal and infinite active realization, without a temporal beginning and succession, without change or increase of any sort, of the essence and life of the First Being who is literally uncaused, immutable, infinitely perfect, eternal and therefore, without any transition from non-being to being, not even *secundum quid*.¹¹¹ To this theme of the eternally and infinitely active and productive interior of the divine essence, one with the First Being, Lull constantly returned in his writings. With it or by means of it he regularly endeavored to establish the reasonableness of the highest revealed doctrine of the Christian faith, the mystery of the Trinity of the Divine Persons within the one reality and substance that is the One True God.¹¹² An immediate con-

¹¹⁰ On Lull's insistence on the dynamic character of God's entitative interior see Walter Artus, "El Dinamismo Divino y su Obra Máxima en el Encuentro de Lull y la Filosofía Musulmana", *EL* 22 (1978), 155-197.

¹¹¹ "In nulla essentia infinita et aeterna, in qua et ex qua producens infinitus et aeternus producit infinitum et aeternum, est mutatio, successio atque modus". *Liber de Consolatione Eremitarum*, 6, *ROL* I, 112.

¹¹² In confirmation, almost any of the many *opuscula* written by Lull at Sicily or at Tunis, not more than four years before his death, may be consulted. All of the extant *opera Messaniensia et Tunicihana* were edited by Johannes Stöhr in *ROL* 1-2 (1959-60).

sequence, moreover, of this vision of the perfect divine self-sufficiency and fulfilment, rooted in the infinitely active and productive immanence of the divine nature, is the understanding of the total contingency of all the works and productions *ad extra*. The eternally and infinitely active and productive entitative interior of the First Being renders any of His possible acts of efficient causality, whereby He might create things *ad extra* either out of nothing or *ex aliquo*, totally without any real necessity on His part. Consequently, any creation of whatever type or sort, is a totally free act on the part of the First Being, obviously because there is nothing, either outside or inside of Him, other than His perfect goodness, will and generosity, which can impose on Him the slightest real necessity to make the things that He may choose to create. The production of anything *ad extra*, as noted already, neither adds to, nor takes anything from, nor in any way modifies at all, the eternally and totally self-fulfilled character of the infinite nature of the First Being. Hence if He chose to create, as He has done or does a) whenever he gives existence to spiritual beings and b) when He created the material universe originally, He does so in perfect and absolute freedom, simply out of perfectly free generosity and love. On several occasions in his many books, as well also in some oral disputations with Islamic learned men recorded in *The Contemporary Biography*, Llull explained that it was ignorance of the perfectly immanent active and productive character of God's infinite nature and perfections that prevented his fellow disputants, as it has prevented many other sages and philosophers before and after them, from ascertaining the real truth about the creation of the world. Mistakenly as a result they have frequently looked upon the world as eternal and necessary in one fashion or another, and as uncreated in many cases. It was while discoursing along these lines, that Llull expressed his thoughts in meetings with Mohammedan fellow philosopher-theologians on African soil, on the first two of his three visits and stays there. Soon after his first arrival in Tunis in North Africa, Llull addressed a number of learned Islamic leaders with these words:

A man ought to have that faith which attributes to the eternal God, in whom all the wise men of the world believe, the greater goodness, wisdom, virtue... and which also establishes the greater concord or agreement between the Highest and First Cause and Its effect. From what you have proposed to me, I notice that in regard to the above named and other divine dignities, none of you, Saracens, are in possession of any knowledge concerning their proper, intrinsic and eternal acts,

without which those dignities would have been idle from all eternity.¹¹³

And doubtlessly more to the point of the non-necessary character of the creation of the world, as of any other possible works *ad extra*, the following excerpt from the *Biography* is very appropriate. In it we have the words that Llull spoke to a leading Islamic leader during the second of his three visits to North Africa, about which the *Biography* informs us. These were Llull's words:

Every being perfectly good is so perfect within itself that it stands in need of neither bringing about nor of soliciting anything outside of itself. Now you assert that God is perfectly good from all eternity and into all eternity. Consequently, He is in no need of either soliciting or of making anything outside Himself, because if He were He would not then be perfectly good *simpliciter*. But since you deny the most blessed Trinity: on the supposition that It is not, God was not perfectly good from all eternity, until the moment when He produced in time the good thing that is the universe. On the other hand, you believe in the creation of the world. And consequently, (that) God became more perfect in goodness when he created the world than He was ever before; for goodness is greater through a diffusion of itself than through remaining idle. This I have as from you. As for myself, I hold that the good itself is diffusive from eternity into eternity. Also this is of the essence of the good, that it is diffusive of itself.¹¹⁴

One concluding thought remains for us to complete our explanation of Ramon Llull's understanding of creation *stricto sensu*, as it applies particularly, although not exclusively, to the creation of the world. To the characteristics we noted that either define or distinguish a creation strictly

¹¹³ "Illam fidem tenere decet quemlibet sapientem, quae Deo aeterno, quem cuncti credunt mundi sapientes, attribuit maiorem bonitatem, sapientiam, virtutem, veritatem, gloriam et perfectionem et cetera huiusmodi... Illa etiam fides de Deo laudabilior est, quae inter Deum, qui est summa et prima causa, et inter eius effectum maiorem ponit concordantiam seu convenientiam. Sed ego per ea, quae mihi proposita sunt a vobis, adverto iam, quod vos omnes Saraceni, qui estis sub lege Machometi, non intelligitis, in praedictis et aliis huiusmodi divinis dignitatibus actus proprios esse intrinsecos et aeternos, sine quibus dignitates ipsae fuissent otiosae, etiam ab aeterno". Anonymous, *Vita Coetanea*, VI, in *ROL* VIII, 290.

¹¹⁴ "Omne ens perfecte bonum est in se ita perfectum, quod non indiget facere bonum extra se atque mendicare. Tu dicis, quod Deus est perfecte bonus ab aeterno et in aeternum; ergo non indiget mendicare et facere bonum extra se; quia si sic, tunc non esset perfecte bonus simpliciter. Et quia tu negas beatissimam trinitatem: posito, quod non sit, Deus non fuit perfecte bonus ab aeterno, usque quod produxit bonum mundi in tempore. Et ideo Deus fuit magis perfectus in bonitate, quando creavit

taken, it should be added now that the only possible agent or author of such a creation can only be God or the First Being.¹¹⁵ It cannot be otherwise because, as we have seen, a strict creation can only be the work of an infinite being endowed with an equally infinite efficient causal power. The classical theist and monotheist typified by Ramon Llull can here appeal to the many demonstrative reasons which show that such an infinite causal power is limited to one instance, namely the Uncaused First Being. He alone is, and He alone will ever be, infinite. Accordingly, it must be concluded that only the Divine First Being has, and will ever have, the requisite infinite, active and efficient power to create *stricto sensu, ex nihilo*. He alone can be a creator in the full and strict sense of the word, and this whether it is a question of the first appearance of any extramental reality when the world first began to be, or whether it is a question of the production of other beings at any time, but which can only begin to be through a strict creation *ex nihilo*. The latter is the case that holds for the creation of the rational souls of men and the spiritual substances we name "angels". This thought that God alone has the requisite power to create in the strict sense of the word is clarified by Llull on a number of occasions. After reminding us for instance, that no single human soul can produce itself or bring itself into existence, he gives as the obvious and simple reason for saying so, that "no reality can bring itself into being, since it cannot at one and the same time be and not be."¹¹⁶ Such would of course, be the case if a human soul or anything else could be the efficient cause of itself. To the next question of whether another spiritual substance, such as an angelic substance, can have the power to create one single rational soul he then replies in this fashion:

According to what we have said of the intellect, it follows that an angel cannot produce a soul from its own essence... nor can it produce a soul from another substance... nor can it produce it out of nothing, for then it would be its creator and —there would be several creators God and angels: a thing that is both impossible and contrary to God's supreme perfections and properties.¹¹⁷

mundum in tempore, quam ante; cum bonitas sit magis bona diffundendo se, quam existendo otiosa. Hoc autem habeo per te. Per me vero habeo, quod bonitas ab aeterno et in aeternum est diffusiva. Et hoc est de ratione boni, quod sui ipsius sit diffusivum". Anonymous, *Vita Coetanea* in *ROL VIII*, 298.

¹¹⁵ Holloway, *op. cit.*, p. 343; Owens, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

¹¹⁶ "Nullum ens potest producere se ipsum, cum illud in uno et eodem tempore non possit esse et non esse". *Liber de Anima Rationali*, p. 1, 2, *MOG VI*, 422 = Int. vii, 8.

¹¹⁷ "Secundum quod jam diximus de intellectu hominis... sequitur, quod angelus non possit producere animam de sua essentia, ... nec etiam possit producere animam de alia essentia, cum sit probatum, quod anima sit a creatore... nec de nihilo potest illam producere, quia esset illius creator, et essent multi creatores, scilicet Deus et angeli, quod est impossibile et contra supremas perfectiones et proprietates Dei". *Loc. cit.*

In the words just quoted, Lull makes it clear that according to him, God alone is and can be a creator in the strict sense of the word. Not even the noblest and highest of angels possesses, or can receive and exercise, the infinite power needed to enable a totally non-existent thing to effect the transition from a prior state of total nothingness to the subsequent possession of the least measure of extramental reality and being. The infinite efficient causal power to create is God's exclusive prerogative, property and perfection. So much so, that He cannot communicate it to any finite being. He cannot do so, not because of any lack of, or defect in, His infinite power which extends to all that is rational, positively real and good. But "there are two things which He cannot bring about: these are sins and contradictions. It is clear that such an 'impotency' is not contrary to His infinite power."¹¹⁸ To the question of "whether God can communicate to a creature the power to create?" Lull gave this reply with which this paper will be brought to a close:

If God could communicate to a creature the power to create, then that communicated power would have to be either a proper or a common power of the creature. It cannot be a proper one since it would have been appropriated to the creature by God, (and) because no appropriated characteristic can be a proper one (at the same time) ... nor can it be a common one because God and the creature cannot share equally in being a single creative principle... because if they could... in this manner the produced creature would be both a creature and not a creature: which is (obviously) a contradiction that cannot be.¹¹⁹

Walter W. ARTUS

St. John's University
Jamaica, N.Y. 11432

¹¹⁸ "Licet Deus habeat infinitam potestatem, duo tamen sunt, quae non potest facere, scilicet peccatum et contradictionem; et talis impotentia non est contra suam infinitam potestatem". *Disputatio Eremitate et Raymundi*, bk. 2, q. 39, *MOG IV*, 261 = Int. iv, 37.

¹¹⁹ "In Deo est proprium et commune... unde si Deus creaturae posset communicare potentiam creandi, aut illa potentia communicata esset propria creaturae, aut communis; non potest esse propria, cum esset appropriata creaturae a Deo, cum nullum appropriatum possit esse proprium; ...; nec potest esse communis, cum Deus et creatura non possint aequaliter participare in essendo unum principium creativum; quia si possent, essent unum principium creativum... et sic Deus et creatura creativa deificarent et crearent unam creaturam compositam ex Deo et creatura creativa... et sic creatura producta esset creatura et non creatura; quod est contradictio, quae non potest stare; unde sequitur..." *Ibid.*, *MOG IV*, 260-1 = Int. iv, 36-7.