*Religious Studies* **43**, 1–23 © 2007 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S0034412506008730 Printed in the United Kingdom

# Must a cause be really related to its effect? The analogy between divine and libertarian agent causality

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**Abstract:** **According to a classical teaching, God is not really related to creatures even by virtue of creating them. Some have objected that this teaching makes unintelligible the claim that God causally accounts for the universe, since God would be the same whether the universe existed or not. I defend the classical teaching, showing how the doctrine is implied by a popular cosmological argument, showing that the objection to it would also rule out libertarian agent causality, and showing that the objection rests on an account of causality and sufficient reason that we have good reason to reject.**

## Introduction

It was a common teaching of medieval theologians that, although creatures are really related to God, God is not really, but only rationally, related to creatures. Of course, these same theologians also maintained that, by creating and sustaining the universe, God causally accounts for its existence. But are these two claims consistent with one another? On the surface it appears not. In order to see why not, a bit more needs to be said concerning the classical distinction between real and rational relations.

According to Mark Henninger, author of one of the most extensive recent studies of relations in the Middle Ages, Aquinas's account of the distinction was representative of the tradition as a whole:

> [Aquinas] held that a relation R of *a* to *b* is real only if *a* and *b* are really distinct extra-mental things, and there is a real extra-mental foundation in *a* for R. Aquinas also held that a relation R of *a* to *b* is of reason only if either (i) *a* and/or *b* is not real, or (ii) *a* and *b* are not really distinct, or (iii) there is no real foundation in *a* for R.[1]

What does this account of the distinction mean for the claim that God is only rationally related to creatures? Well, clearly, neither condition (i) nor (ii) is

satisfied in the case of God's relationship to creatures, for both God and His creatures are real and really distinct from one another. We are left, then, with condition (iii), according to which to say that God has only rational relations to creatures is to say (at least) that, for any relation God has to His creatures, there is no real foundation in God for that relation. And I take this teaching to imply that, for any relation God has to His creatures, were that relation not to obtain, there would be no real, intrinsic difference in God, no change in God's real, intrinsic features or properties.

Even in statements such as 'God knows the universe' or 'God creates the universe' what are predicated of God on the classical account are merely rational relations to His creatures.[2] It follows, therefore, that in 'God creates the universe', 'creates the universe' does not refer to or involve anything intrinsic to God that would not be there were God not creating the universe. But herein lies the apparent difficulty for the claim that God causally accounts for the universe. For, if 'creates the universe' does not involve anything intrinsic to God that wouldn't be there were God not creating, then it appears that God is the same in some possible world W*, in which the universe does not exist, as He is in the actual world W, in which the universe does exist. But, in that case, by virtue of what can God be said to account for the universe's existing in the actual world? There doesn't appear to be anything, and hence the claim that God causes the universe appears without justification. Indeed, since the only difference between W and W* is the universe itself, it appears that the universe just happens to be in W by chance, with nothing explaining or accounting for it. The argument, which I will henceforth call the Creation Objection, can be stated succinctly in terms of the following hypothetical syllogism:

(1) If God is not really related to creatures, then God is the same in some possible world W*, in which the universe does not exist, as He is in the actual world W, in which the universe does exist.
(2) If God is the same across W and W*, then there is nothing in or about God that accounts for or explains why W rather than W* is actual.
(3) If there is nothing in or about God that accounts for or explains why W rather than W* is actual, then it makes no sense to speak of God as causally accounting for the universe.
(4) Therefore, if God is not really related to creatures, then it makes no sense to speak of God as causally accounting for the universe.

What the Creation Objection seems to demand, then, is that God be really related to the universe *by virtue of causing it*, that is, that God's causing the universe have as its foundation some intrinsic property of God that would not be there were God not causing the universe. For, otherwise, God might be the same whether the universe gets caused, or not.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412506008730 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A version of the Creation Objection has recently been voiced by William Lane Craig. Craig makes particular reference to Aquinas:

> According to this [Aquinas's] doctrine, then, God in freely creating the universe does not really do anything different than he would have, had he refrained from creating; the only difference is to be found in the universe itself: instead of God existing alone *sans* the universe we have instead a universe springing into being at the first moment of time possessing the property *being created by God*, even though God, for his part, bears no real reciprocal relation to the universe made by him. I think it hardly needs to be said that Thomas's solution, despite its daring and ingenuity, is extraordinarily implausible. 'Creating' clearly describes a relation which is founded on something's intrinsic properties concerning its causal activity, and therefore *creating the world* ought to be regarded as a real property acquired by God at the moment of creation. It seems unintelligible, if not contradictory, to say that one can have real effects without real causes. Yet this is precisely what Aquinas affirms with respect to God and the world. Moreover, it is the implication of Aquinas's position that God is perfectly similar across possible worlds, the same even in worlds in which he refrains from creation as in worlds in which he creates. For in none of these worlds does God have any relation to anything *extra se*. In all these worlds God never acts differently … he is just the simple, unrelated act of being. Even in worlds in which he does not create, his act of being, by which creation is produced, is no different in these otherwise empty worlds than in worlds chock-full of contingent beings of every order. Thomas's doctrine thus makes it unintelligible why the universe exists rather than nothing.[3]

This is an apparently powerful objection to the classical teaching on God's relations. Nevertheless, in what follows, I attempt to defend the classical doctrine against the charge that it renders unintelligible the claim that God causally accounts for the universe.[4]

My defence will come in three phases. In Phase 1, I will argue for two main conclusions. First, although it is seldom recognized, the denial that God is really related to the universe by virtue of creating it is strongly suggested, though not strictly entailed, by a widely employed variety of cosmological argument. Second, even if he continues to maintain that God is really related to the universe by virtue of creating it, a proponent of the sort of cosmological argument in question is still committed to God's causing an effect without being really related to that effect by virtue of being its cause. Consequently, such a person will still be committed to rejecting the underlying logic on which the Creation Objection depends, and hence, to rejecting the Creation Objection itself as a successful argument against the classical teaching on God's relations.

In Phase 2, I will show that the logic behind the Creation Objection would also rule out the coherence of libertarian agent causality, or, at least, the more popular forms of it. This point serves not only as a *tu quoque* against most libertarian proponents of the Creation Objection. Insofar as one has good reasons for accepting the more popular versions of libertarianism, one has good reason to accept a form of causality that can serve as a model for how God can cause, even if not really related to His effects.

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In Phase 3, I will show that the logic behind the Creation Objection presupposes a conception of causality and sufficient reason that we have every reason to reject in favour of a conception that would allow for both divine and libertarian agent causality. I will conclude the paper by offering a brief suggestion concerning how my response to the Creation Objection could provide resources for addressing a problem that the classical teaching on relations might be thought to pose for God's knowledge.[5]

## Phase 1: God's relations and the cosmological argument

A proponent of the Creation Objection maintains that, in order to make sense of God's causing the universe, we need to assume some real or intrinsic feature or property of God that would not be there were God not creating the universe. The Creation Objection, therefore, relies on a more general principle, what I will call the Logic of the Creation Objection, or LCO, for short:

> In order to make sense of *a*'s causally accounting for *b*, there must be some real or intrinsic property or feature of *a* that would not be there were *a* not causing *b*.

Although the Creation Objection does not strictly require it, a proponent of that objection will typically join Craig in thinking of the relevant intrinsic property of God as God's *act of creating* or His *choice to create*. Let us call this property C, allowing C to stand for any real property of God that would satisfy the LCO. C, then, is a real property of God, by virtue of which God causally accounts for the universe, that would not be in God were God not creating the universe.

Why, then, might a certain sort of cosmological argument give those who accept it reason to reject the existence of C? And, even if a defender of this sort of argument does not reject the existence of C, why will he still be committed to God's causing an effect without being really related to this effect by virtue of causing it? Why, indeed, would he still be committed to rejecting the LCO, and hence the Creation Objection itself as a successful argument against the claim that God can causally account for the universe without being really related to it? Before addressing these questions, some preliminary remarks are in order.

There is no one cosmological argument, and it is important at the outset to acknowledge that whatever implications a cosmological argument has for our understanding of God's nature and relationship to the world will depend on the particularities of the argument in question. Furthermore, if a particular argument for God's existence implies certain conclusions for our understanding of God's nature and relationship to the world, a complete defence of those conclusions based on that argument would require a complete defence of the argument itself. Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to defend a cosmological argument, I do

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not in this section purport to provide a complete defence of the *conclusions* implied by any such argument. Rather, my focus is on the *implications* of a certain sort of cosmological argument for which one might imagine a complete defence.

The sort of argument I have in mind begins with something contingent, something that might not have existed, and therefore needs a cause to account for its existence. It ultimately concludes to a single (as would be required by an argument for monotheism), necessary being, God, who accounts for all that is contingent by causing it to exist. For the purposes of this paper, God causes a thing to exist just in case the thing in some way depends for its existence on an exercise of divine causality. Although I often speak, for simplicity's sake, of 'the universe' as the contingent thing God accounts for, it is important to realize that the relevant sort of argument concludes to one God on which everything contingent depends, and that the argument might start out with something much smaller than the universe, such as a dog, a tree, or an atom. Whether it starts with the universe or something smaller, however, the argument rejects the possibility that its contingent starting point could be accounted for by a series of causes that were themselves all contingent beings. For, so the argument goes, such a series would generate an infinite regress and thus would fail to account for the original, contingent thing in question.

I have been employing rather casually such terms as 'the universe', 'God's effects', and 'God's creatures', and I should say, before continuing, a little bit more about how I understand the relationships among them. I take 'God's effects' and 'God's creatures' to be co-extensive, so that anything that is an effect of God is a creature, and anything that is a creature is one of God's effects. For the purposes of this paper, 'the universe' can be treated as the collection of God's effects, such that if anything is an effect of God, it is a part of the universe. Again, for simplicity's sake, I will continue to speak of God's causing the universe. But it can remain an open question whether the universe is a great big object that can be caused, or whether God causes the universe by causing the things that make it up.

Returning, then, to the specific focus of this section, let us begin by asking, first, why the sort of cosmological argument in question would give those who accept it reason to reject the existence of C? The answer is that, since C would be intrinsic to God, it would have to belong to God essentially or accidentally. But the cosmological argument would preclude the first alternative. And, while it would not strictly preclude the second, proponents of the argument should, nevertheless, find that alternative less fitting than simply rejecting the existence of C altogether.

If we employ a standard interpretation of what it means to be a contingent being, we can see rather easily why C cannot belong to God's essence. On this standard interpretation, a contingent being is something that exists, but might not have, or that exists in some possible world, but not in others. A necessary

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being, by contrast, is something that exists and could not have failed to exist, or something that exists in all possible worlds.[6] Now remember that C would not be in God were God not causing the universe. And (I assume) that God is not causing the universe, unless the universe gets caused. Consequently, the existence of the universe is a necessary condition for the existence C. But herein lies the problem for a proponent of the cosmological argument's conceiving of C as belonging to God's essence. For, if the universe exists, but might not have, and if the existence of the universe is a necessary condition for the existence of C, then so, too, might C not have existed. But, then, if C belongs to God essentially, it follows that God Himself might not have existed. In short, positing C as belonging to God's essence makes God contingent. Yet, if God is contingent, He cannot be the necessary being that the cosmological argument posits to account for the contingent universe. This oft-used cosmological argument thus rules out C as an intrinsic property belonging to God's essence. What's more, if C were in God essentially, then God would not be free not to create the universe – a conclusion many theists would be unhappy to accept, regardless of whether they endorse the cosmological argument in question.

Thus far, we have considered how a popular cosmological argument rules out C's belonging to God essentially,[7] though we may reach this same conclusion simply from a desire to safeguard God's freedom with respect to creating. Why, then, might a proponent of the cosmological argument be inclined to reject the existence of C as an intrinsic accident in God? The answer to this question comes in two steps. The first step is to see that if C were an accident in God, it would have to be caused by God. Why? Because, if C were an accident in God, C would be contingent. But, according to the cosmological argument, everything contingent has God as its cause. Therefore, C would have God as its cause.

The argument turns, of course, on the claim that if C were an accident in God, C would be contingent. Three reasons support this conclusion. For starters, C has to be contingent whether or not C is an accident. As noted in the argument against positing C as part of God's essence, C is a property that would not be in God were there no universe. Hence, the existence of the universe is a necessary condition for the existence of C. But the universe is contingent, and whatever has a necessary condition that is contingent (at least in the standard sense), is itself contingent. Therefore, C is contingent. Second, on some accounts, to be an accident of a thing is to be something that belongs to the thing, but might not have, something that therefore exists in only some possible worlds.[8] On these accounts, and given the 'standard' interpretation of 'contingency', an accident is by definition contingent. Finally, the cosmological argument concludes to a single necessary being, identified with God. Since C is neither God nor an essential property of God, it is neither the single necessary being, nor a property that the necessary being has necessarily. Therefore, C does not exist necessarily. But

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assuming that every thing that is, is either necessary or contingent, it follows that C is contingent.

It looks, then, that if C were an accident in God, it would be contingent, and hence caused by God. We are now in a position to consider the second step needed to show why a proponent of the cosmological argument would have reason to reject the existence of C as an intrinsic accident in God. The second step involves reflecting on the implications of C's being caused by God. What are those implications? Well, if C is caused by God, then C is one of God's effects, a creature, and hence a part of the universe. But that which is a part of the universe cannot be that by virtue of which God causes the universe. Therefore, it makes no sense, in light of the cosmological argument, to speak of God as creating the universe by virtue of C conceived as an accident in God caused by God himself.

The foregoing argument, of course, turns on my treating 'God's effects' and 'God's creatures' as co-extensive, and my defining 'the universe' as the collection of God's creatures. For, only if these terms are so employed does C become a part of the universe simply by being caused by God. The cosmological argument, however, does not strictly entail that these terms be used in this way. Therefore, one who accepts the cosmological argument might employ these terms in a different way that avoids my objection. For instance, one might agree to label the collection of all creatures 'the universe', but define 'creature' as anything that is neither God nor an accident of God. In this case, even though caused by God, since it is an accident of God, C would not be a creature, and hence not a part of the universe.

What the foregoing shows is that, strictly speaking, the cosmological argument does not preclude its proponents from thinking of C as an accident in God, caused by God, by virtue of which God creates the universe. Nevertheless, I maintain that reflection on the argument would give its proponents reason to reject thinking of C in this way. For, although the cosmological argument does not absolutely necessitate a particular definition of 'creature' or 'the universe', it does naturally suggest the sort of distinction between God and creatures that gives rise to my objection. For, the cosmological argument draws a distinction between contingent beings, which must be causally accounted for by another, and a single necessary being that ultimately accounts for all that is contingent. One who is not prepared to identify the necessary being with God is simply not going to find the argument a persuasive one for God's existence in the first place. But how is one who is prepared to identify the necessary being with God to draw the distinction between God and His creatures? Well, the natural place to do so is along that radical distinction between the necessary being, already identified with God, and contingent beings, all of which have God as their cause. Thus, whatever is contingent and caused by God would be a creature.

Since we have already seen that there are plausible grounds for thinking that C, if an accident of God, is both caused by God and contingent, it seems that, on the

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distinction between God and creatures most naturally suggested by the cosmological argument, C should be thought of as a creature. But, if C is a creature, then it cannot be that by virtue of which God causes the collection of creatures. Therefore, a proponent of the cosmological argument has good reason to reject the existence of C as an intrinsic accident in God, caused by God, by virtue of which God causes the universe. And, since a proponent of that argument is precluded from positing C as belonging to God's essence, it follows that he has good reason to reject the existence of C as an intrinsic property of God altogether. This is the first main conclusion I hoped to reach in Phase 1.

Yet, suppose that someone, who accepts the cosmological argument, prefers still to draw the distinction between God and creatures elsewhere than where the argument most naturally suggests. Suppose that such a person wants to allow that C, even though contingent, and even though an effect of God, since an accident of God, is not one of God's creatures. The second main conclusion I wish to argue for is that such a person will still be committed to God's causing an effect without being really related to that effect by virtue of causing it. Consequently, such a person will be committed to rejecting the underlying logic on which the Creation Objection depends (the LCO), and hence to rejecting the Creation Objection itself as a successful argument against the claim that God can cause the universe without being really related to it.

Recall that the LCO amounts to the following principle: that in order to make intelligible *a*'s causally accounting for *b*, there must be some intrinsic feature or property of *a* that would not be there were *a* not causing *b*. For, otherwise, so adherents of the LCO believe, there would be nothing in *a* to explain why *b* got caused rather than not. Now, suppose I am a proponent of the cosmological argument who accepts the LCO. I will rightly believe that C conceived as an accident in God, caused by God, would satisfy this principle. For, it would give us that property of God by virtue of which the universe gets caused, rather than not. But, if we accept the LCO, we can see that C so conceived would merely introduce another problem of the sort it was posited to solve. For, now, instead of asking by virtue of what intrinsic property God causes the universe, we have to ask by virtue of what intrinsic property, let's call it C′, God causes C. The options seem to be four:

(i) God causes C by C′, which belongs to God essentially.
(ii) God causes C by C′, which is an accident of God, not caused by God.
(iii) God causes C by C′, which is an accident of God, caused by God.
(iv) There is no intrinsic property of God, no C′, by virtue of which God causes C.

Clearly, neither (i) nor (ii) will work for a proponent of the cosmological argument. (i) won't work, because given the LCO, C′ would not be there were God not causing C. But, following a similar pattern as before, that makes C a necessary

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condition of C′. C is contingent, and whatever has necessary conditions that are contingent is itself contingent. But, in that case, C′ would be contingent, which would make God contingent, if C′ belonged to God's essence. (ii) won't work for the same reason that led us to conclude that C conceived as an accident in God would need to be caused by God. For, as we have just seen, C′, like C, would be contingent, and everything contingent has God as its cause.

What, then, about option (iii)? (iii), as can easily be seen, would merely introduce the problem all over again. For, given the LCO, we would now have to ask by virtue of what intrinsic property, that wouldn't be in God were God not causing C′, does God cause C′? Let us call this new property C″. For the same reasons that options (i) and (ii) won't work for C′, neither will they work if we substitute in C″. Thus, if there is a C″ in God, by virtue of which he causes C′, then it will have to be caused by God himself. But that is merely to introduce the problem once more. For, now we ask, by virtue of what intrinsic property, that wouldn't be there were God not causing C″, does God cause C″?

What the foregoing shows is that, if the proponent of the cosmological argument accepts the LCO, then he courts an infinite regress. For, by the LCO, in order to account for God's causing C, he will then have to posit some new intrinsic property that would not be in God were God not causing C. And, since this new property would have to be caused by God, it would merely reintroduce the problem all over again, and so on, to infinity, with God having to cause an infinite number of effects in order to cause the universe. But to say that God needs to cause an infinite number of effects in order to cause the universe is, quite plausibly, to render God causally impotent with respect to the universe. And, at any rate, it is a standard feature of the sort of cosmological argument under consideration to deny an infinite regress of this sort.

The only way for a proponent of the cosmological argument to avoid an infinite regress is to reject the LCO and to allow that God causes an effect without being really related to this effect by virtue of causing it. This is the path taken by (iv), which simply denies that there is an intrinsic property in God by virtue of which God causes C. Since a proponent of the cosmological argument is committed to rejecting the infinite regress, he is also committed to God's causing an effect without being really related to it by virtue of causing it. What's more, even if he continues to believe in C as an intrinsic accident of God, by giving up the LCO, consistency will require him to reject the Creation Objection itself as a successful argument against the claim that God can cause the universe without being really related to it.

Notice, though, that rejecting the LCO should help a proponent of the cosmological argument feel free to draw the distinction between God and creatures where that argument most naturally suggests it should be drawn – identifying the necessary being with God, and the contingent effects of this necessary being with God's creatures, the collection of which make up the universe. For, I suspect, that

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the most likely motive for a proponent of the cosmological argument's allowing C as an accident in God, caused by God, yet not one of God's creatures, is that such a person wants C for the same reason that the proponent of the Creation Objection thinks we need C. Namely, he thinks that without C, the claim that God causally accounts for the universe becomes unintelligible. Once the proponent of the cosmological argument recognizes that he must reject the LCO, this motive disappears.

Someone might object to the foregoing that there is a significant difference between the requirements for the intelligibility of *a*'s causing *b*, where *b* is an action or accident of *a*, and *a*'s causing *b*, where *b* is not an action or accident of *a*. And such a person, while rejecting the LCO as originally stated, might be prepared to endorse a modified version of the LCO, the MLCO, for short:

> In order to make intelligible *a's* causally accounting for *b*, where *b* is not an action or accident of *a*, there must be some intrinsic feature or property of *a* that would not be there were *a* not causing *b*.[9]

On the plausible assumption that the universe is not an intrinsic action or accident of God, this revised principle would still rule out God's causally accounting for the universe, if He is not really related to it. But this revised principle would not lead to an infinite regress for one who accepts the cosmological argument. For, a proponent of the cosmological argument could allow that God causes the universe by virtue of C, an intrinsic accident of God, caused by God Himself, which accident would not be there were God not causing the universe. Yet, since C is an accident of God, he could deny that, in order to cause C, God needs first to cause some prior effect, C′. Accepting the revised principle would, therefore, allow a proponent of the cosmological argument consistently to accept the Creation Objection against God's causing the universe, if He is not really related to it. What should we think of this objection?

I think the answer to that question comes down to whether we have any good reason to accept the MLCO, but not the original LCO. And it seems that we don't. For, letting *a* stand for a cause and *b* for its effect, any reason I can think of for demanding that there be some intrinsic property of *a* that would not be there were *a* not causing *b*, is indifferent with respect to whether *b* is or is not an action or accident of *a*. Indeed, the only reason I can think of for making such a demand is that, without such an intrinsic property, there doesn't appear to be any explanation as to why *a* causes *b*, rather than not. But this worry will apply regardless of whether or not *b* is an action or accident of *a*. I conclude, therefore, that anyone who accepts the revised version ought to accept the original, and anyone who rejects the original, ought to reject the revised. And, for this reason, the objection fails.

So, to review where we are up to this point, I have argued that proponents of a certain sort of cosmological argument have good reason to reject the existence of

C. And I have argued, further, that even if he holds on to C as an intrinsic accident of God, a proponent of the cosmological argument is still committed to God's causing an effect without being really related to it by virtue of causing it. What's more, even if he holds on to C, since he must reject the underlying logic of the Creation Objection, he should reject the Creation Objection itself as a successful argument against the claim that God can causally account for the universe even if He is not really related to it.

The cosmological argument, if it can be defended, might be thought to provide all the justification one needs for thinking that God creates without being really related to His creatures *qua* creator. Nevertheless, I can imagine a hard-nosed proponent of the Creation Objection maintaining that, if the cosmological argument commits us to an unintelligible sort of causality, *so much the worse for the cosmological argument*. For this sort of person, if a cause is not really related to its effect, then we have no explanation for why the effect gets produced, rather than not. Hence, any line of causal reasoning that leads us to postulate a cause that is not so related is a *reductio ad absurdum* of that line of causal reasoning. In the following section, I show that this rebuttal would be particularly costly to proponents of the Creation Objection who are also defenders of libertarian agency. For, as it turns out, the most popular forms of libertarian agency face a predicament strictly analogous to the Creation Objection.

Before moving on, however, I want briefly to address a question concerning the implications of what has gone thus far. Craig notes in the passage from the introduction that, for Aquinas, 'God is perfectly similar across possible worlds', and indeed, this conclusion would seem to follow from the foregoing argumentation. For, assuming that God cannot differ across worlds by virtue of His essence, any intrinsic difference in God must be due to some intrinsic accidental property. But any such property would itself be an instance of contingent being. Consequently, any such property would not be God, but, as the logic of the cosmological argument suggests, one of God's effects, one of God's creatures. It follows that, although God has different effects in different worlds, God Himself is intrinsically the same.[10]

It does not follow, however, that someone like Aquinas is committed, as Craig suggests, to the view that 'in all these worlds God never acts differently', or that 'God in freely creating the universe does not really do anything different than he would have, had he refrained from creating'. Such a charge presupposes that actions are intrinsic properties of their agents, so that in order to act differently across worlds, God must have different intrinsic properties. But one might challenge this assumption. Aquinas, for instance, subscribes to an Aristotelean principle according to which *the action of the agent is in the patient*. In his analysis of motion in both the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle locates the act of the mover in the motion of the thing moved.[11] Aquinas explicitly endorses this view,[12] one which he presupposes in his claim that God can act and cause without

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Himself undergoing change.[13] According to the Aristotelean principle, for some agent *a* to cause an effect *b* does not require that *a*'s action be some third thing between *a* and *b*. Rather, *a*'s action is simply identified with the effect *b* that *a* causes.[14] On this understanding of agency, God's effects *are* God's activity. Consequently, even though God Himself is intrinsically the same, Aquinas would deny that God's activity is the same across worlds. On the contrary, he would maintain that God's activity differs in different worlds precisely insofar as God's effects differ.

### Phase 2: A predicament for libertarian agency

According to a standard account of libertarian agency, if an agent S freely performs an action A in the actual world W, then there is a possible world W*, the same in all respects up to the moment at which S performs A, but in which S refrains from A.[15] Now, at least most libertarians want to say that the agent S is the cause of his action A.[16] Yet, on this account, S is exactly the same (up to the relevant moment) across W in which A obtains and W* in which A does not obtain. Hence, there does not appear to be anything in or about S that accounts for why A obtains in W but not in W*. By the LCO, it would make no sense to speak of S as the cause of A. Indeed, the defender of libertarian agency is simply left in the same predicament as the proponent of the classical teaching on God's relations.[17]

Notice that it won't satisfy the LCO to say that in W, A is accounted for because of S's reasons or dispositions that incline S towards A. For, the libertarian wants to allow that S has the very same reasons and dispositions in W* in which S refrains.

So, at least on a standard account, the libertarian agent, *qua* agent, is no more really related to his free actions than is the God of classical theism to the universe. And, hence, if divine causality proves unintelligible, so does libertarian agent causality. These reflections provide the defender of the classical teaching on God's relations with a powerful *tu quoque* response to libertarian proponents of the Creation Objection.[18] More constructively, if we have good independent reasons for affirming libertarian agency as a species of causality, then we have a precedent on which to model our understanding of divine causality.

One might object that the foregoing analogy between divine and libertarian agent causality suffers from the fact that it depends on my formulating 'libertarian agency' in a way that a number of libertarians would reject. My standard account of 'libertarian agency' suggests, for instance, that libertarians are committed to a free agent's ability to do otherwise, to the principle of alternative possibilities (PAP), as it is often called. But some libertarians of note, moved by the force of Frankfurt-style counter-examples to the PAP, have maintained that the ability to do otherwise is not essential to libertarian freedom. Similarly, my analogy invokes an agent-causal account of libertarianism, one on which choices

or actions are the effects of their agents. There are, however, libertarians who reject agent-causal accounts in favour of one or another variety of event-causal, reason-causal, or even non-causal account. If there are libertarianisms that do not violate the LCO, then it looks like my *tu quoque* applies to only a subset of libertarians, and that the most reasonable response to my analogy would be simply to endorse one of the libertarian accounts not so vulnerable.

In the remainder of this section, I will attempt to address this challenge. To begin with, it is worth noting that just because someone, on the basis of Frankfurt-style counter-examples,[19] denies that the ability to do otherwise is essential to freedom does not mean that such a person doubts that, in fact, human beings sometimes act when they could have done otherwise. As Eleonore Stump, a prominent libertarian defender of Frankfurt-style counter-examples against the PAP, remarks,

> Nothing in this argument has the implication that libertarian free will is never accompanied by alternative possibilities. It may even be true that in most cases in which an agent acts with free will or is morally responsible, the agent can do otherwise. What Frankfurt-style counterexamples show is only that the ability to do otherwise isn't essential to a free action or an action for which the agent is morally responsible.[20]

If we take Stump as representative, those libertarians who deny the PAP, even though they would need to reject my formulation of libertarian agency, are not denying that there are real world instances of the sort of causality that comes under criticism in the Creation Objection.

The broader point that needs to be made, however, is that violating the LCO is not a feature of libertarianism peculiar to the way I have formulated it. In fact, a wide variety of libertarian accounts are committed to the kind of causality that the LCO proscribes, and hence they are committed to denying that a cause must be really related to its effect by virtue of causing it. Any account will violate the LCO if that account involves (a) a free action's being the effect of a cause or a chain of causes, and either (b) the action is not causally necessitated by its proximate cause, or (c) one of the causes in the chain of causes leading up to the act has a cause without being causally necessitated by its cause.[21] For, given (a), and either (b) or (c), something will be the effect of some cause in the actual world, although there will be a possible world, the same in all respects to the actual world up to the moment in which the effect is produced, in which the effect is not produced by that cause. What produces some effect in the actual world does not produce that effect in some possible world. But that is precisely the sort of causality that the LCO deems unintelligible. Hence, any libertarian account that involves (a) and either (b) or (c) will be liable to the *tu quoque* charge.

A survey of the libertarian accounts on offer reveals that a great number of them would be so liable. Certainly, any agent-causal libertarian account, on

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which a free act is the effect of its agent in certain conditions without being causally necessitated by its agent in those conditions, would be liable. But so also would event-causal libertarian accounts, on which a free act is caused by certain agent-involving events that cause the action non-deterministically.[22] So too would reason-causal libertarian accounts, where the action is caused non-deterministically by the agent's reasons for performing it.[23]

It is true that some libertarian accounts might not violate the LCO. What would such an account have to look like? On the one hand, it could not involve an instance of causality where the cause did not necessitate its effect, for that would be to violate the LCO, after all. Thus, any relationship between cause and effect on such an account would have to be one where the cause necessitated its effect. On the other hand, if it is genuinely a libertarian account, it must by definition steer clear of determinism. Perhaps, a libertarian account might allow that a free action is determined or necessitated relative to its proximate cause. But that can be the case only if some cause further up the chain of causes leading up to the act is not so determined.[24] In no case could libertarianism be compatible with a free act's being the necessary outcome of a series of causes, each member of which causally necessitates the subsequent member in the series, while being causally necessitated by the prior member.

Where do these considerations leave us? Since the indeterminism that any libertarian account requires could not be located in the relationship between some cause and its effect, it appears that we are left with only two alternatives. Either the free act itself is *not* caused, or some first cause in a series of necessitating causes terminating in the free act is *not* caused. What are we to think of these alternatives?

To begin with, many libertarians would immediately rule out the latter alternative in cases where the first cause in the series came from outside the agent. For, many libertarians want to say that an action is not genuinely free unless it is ultimately up to its agent. And, it is hard to see how the agent's action can be ultimately up to it, if that action is causally necessitated by a chain of causes beginning outside the agent.[25]

Of more general concern, however, are the metaphysical difficulties that either alternative raises. If a free action, or some cause in a chain of causes terminating in a free action is un-caused, then we have something beginning to exist without a cause. Now, there may be philosophers who have no problem with the idea of something beginning to exist without a cause.[26] But, I suspect that most philosophers inclined to side with the LCO against the notion of a cause not being really related to its effect will find the idea of something beginning to exist without a cause equally problematic. For I take it that the main reason a philosopher might find the notion of a cause not being really related to its effect problematic is the belief that the effect would have no adequate explanation. Yet, it seems that something that began to exist without a cause at all would have even less of

an explanation. Consequently, it is difficult to imagine someone wanting to endorse a libertarian account of this sort specifically in order to avoid violating the LCO.

One way around the conclusion that something would be beginning to exist without a cause would be to deny either that free actions ever begin to exist or that first causes of series that terminate in free actions ever begin to exist. But I take it that a thing begins to exist if there is a time before which it does not exist. Certainly, there was a time before which (at least) many free actions existed, and hence, it won't work to say that free actions never begin to exist. That leaves the second alternative – that the first causes of series of necessitating causes terminating in free actions never begin to exist. But this alternative will be unappealing to most libertarians. For, given that there is a time before which many free agents begin to exist, the only way for the first cause of such a series to be such that it never begins to exist is if that first cause lies outside the agent. And we have already seen that many libertarians deny that an act can be free if it is necessitated by a series of causes that originates outside its agent.

The considerations of the last few paragraphs are not developed enough, nor are they intended, to be a decisive refutation of the sort of libertarian account that could avoid the *tu quoque* charge. Rather, they are intended to cast some doubt on the *prima facie* attractiveness of adopting such an account in order to avoid violating the LCO, while remaining libertarian. Perhaps, there are libertarian accounts, not considered here, that do not violate the LCO. But as I suggested above, it appears that most of the ones currently on offer do. Rather than debate the merits of competing accounts any further, in the following section, I will argue that behind the LCO lies a conception of causality and sufficient reason that we have every reason to reject. What should be rejected is the LCO itself, not divine or libertarian agent causality.

## Phase 3: The creation objection, causality, and sufficient reason

The LCO presupposes an account of causality that models the relationship between cause and effect on the relationship between the antecedent and consequent of a strict logical entailment. On this view, once the cause has been posited, the effect follows necessarily. By the same token, different effects imply different causal antecedents. That the LCO presupposes this conception of causality is clear from the fact that it denies the legitimacy of a causal assertion simply because the cause would have been the same even if the effect had been different.[27]

Is this conception of causality one we must endorse? At her inaugural lecture at Cambridge, Elizabeth Anscombe thought not. Anscombe makes two points in her attempt to distance the notion of causality from that of determination. First, she notes that there is no good empirical evidence forcing us to hold that causes must

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necessitate their effects. Second, she maintains that the essential feature of the causal relationship is derivativeness, not necessitation:

> There is something to observe here, that lies under our noses. It is little attended to, and yet still so obvious as to seem trite. It is this: causality consists in the derivativeness of an effect from its causes. This is the core, the common feature, of causality in its various kinds. Effects derive from, arise out of, come of, their causes. … Causation, then, is not to be identified with determination. If A comes from B, this does not imply that every A-like thing comes from some B-like thing or set-up or that every B-like thing or set up has an A-like thing coming from it; or that given B, A had to come from it, or that given A, there had to be B for it to come from. Any of these may be true, but if any is, that will be an additional fact, not comprised of A's coming from B.[28]

If Anscombe is right about what does and does not belong to the 'core' of the concept of causality, then the Creation Objection collapses. For, so long as the universe 'comes from' God, we are justified in naming God its cause, even if God would be the same were there no universe. Anscombe's intuitions are therefore welcome. Yet, more satisfying would be a positive argument against conceiving all causality on the model of entailment.

The point of entry for such an argument manifests itself when we ask what motivates such modelling. The answer to this question appears to be an intuition that anything less than a cause that entails its effect would not give us a sufficient reason for the obtaining of a contingent state of affairs. In other words, the conception of causality presupposed by the LCO appears to be motivated by a version of the principle of sufficient reason, according to which:

> For any contingent state of affairs, SOA1, there is a sufficient reason or explanation for the obtaining of that state of affairs only if there is another state of affairs, SOA2, whose obtaining entails SOA1.

This version of the PSR thus gives rise to the causal principle presupposed by the LCO, what I will call the Entailment Causality Principle, or ECP, for short:

> For any contingent state of affairs, SOA1, the obtaining of that state of affairs must be causally explained in terms of another state of affairs, SOA2, whose obtaining entails SOA1.[29]

It is easy to understand why someone might be attracted to such a causal principle. For, it might be thought that we haven't really explained SOA1 if the obtaining of its cause still leaves open the possibility that SOA1 not obtain. What, after all, would account for the fact that SOA1 does obtain when, given the cause, it might not have?

Despite the initial plausibility of the ECP, I think it should be abandoned. For, on reflection, we can see that it merely leads to an infinite regress that actually undermines the attempt to give a sufficient explanation for contingent states of affairs. Suppose, as the principle states, that any contingent state of affairs, SOA1,

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has to be causally explained in terms of another state of affairs, SOA2, whose obtaining entails SOA1. Since any state of affairs, whose obtaining entails a contingent state of affairs, is itself contingent, it follows that SOA2 would be contingent. But in that case, SOA2 would need to be explained in terms of another state of affairs, SOA3, whose obtaining entails SOA2. And so on, *ad infinitum*. What these considerations show is that the ECP introduces an infinite regress of causes in any attempt to explain SOA1. Thus, if an infinite regress of causes fails to account for the obtaining of SOA1, then the ECP, far from its intent to ensure that SOA1 has a sufficient explanation, actually precludes the possibility of such an explanation.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to defend the thesis that an infinite regress of causes fails to account for the obtaining of a contingent state of affairs. Others have argued for this thesis, and I concede that my case against the ECP will be persuasive only to those who find those arguments compelling. Some, like Aquinas, will be troubled only by a synchronic infinite regress in an essentially ordered series of causes. Others, like defenders of the *kalam* argument, will object to a diachronic infinite regress of causes extending back in time. Notice, of course, that the ECP guarantees an infinite regress whether we are attempting to explain SOA1 in terms of SOA2 considered as a synchronic cause of SOA1's *obtaining now* or as a diachronic cause of SOA1's *beginning to obtain*. So, rejecters of both types of infinite regress have a reason to reject the ECP as a principle concerning what is necessary to account for contingent states of affairs.

If the ECP actually undermines the attempt to give a sufficient explanation for contingent states of affairs, then it should be discarded. For, the promise of such an explanation was the only thing that made the principle attractive to begin with. In its place, we should adopt a more moderate principle regarding what is needed to account for contingent states of affairs. Let us call this the Production Causality Principle, or PCP, for short:

> The obtaining of a contingent state of affairs, SOA1, must be causally explained in terms of another state of affairs, SOA2, that produces it.[30]

Notice that the PCP still gives us a cause of every contingent state of affairs. But unlike the ECP, it does not generate an infinite regress in the attempt to account for SOA1. For, since there is no requirement that a cause entail its effect, there is no requirement that every cause of a contingent state of affairs be itself contingent, and therefore in need of a cause.

One might argue that the PCP provides no better explanation for the obtaining of SOA1 than does the ECP, and therefore, that we have no reason to prefer it. For, one might say, even though the ECP generates an infinite regress that fails to explain SOA1, the PCP also leaves unanswered the question why SOA1 obtains, given that its not obtaining is consistent with the obtaining of its cause.[31] But this objection assumes that in answering the question 'Why does SOA1 obtain?' it is

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not enough to point to its cause, unless that cause entails SOA1. And that is just to presuppose the truth of the ECP and of the principle of sufficient reason behind it. There is a quite ordinary sense in which simply pointing to the cause of a thing is a perfectly sufficient answer to the question 'Why does it exist?'. Granted, if the cause does not entail the effect, then the cause can't be understood on the model of the sufficient condition of a strict logical entailment. But there is a broader sense of 'sufficient' meaning 'enough'.[32] And the mere cause, even if it is not necessitating, gives us 'enough' of an answer to the question why SOA1 obtains, especially now that we recognize that the ECP undermines its own promise to provide a sufficient explanation.

Once the ECP has been rejected in favour of the PCP, then the Creation Objection collapses. For the only reason that God's being the same even while His effects differ should lead one to deny the coherence of divine causality is if causes must entail their effects. The only reason to think that causes must entail their effects is if one models causality on logical entailment. And the only reason to model causality on logical entailment is if one thinks that a principle such as the ECP is needed to account for contingent states of affairs. Once the ECP has been rejected in favour of the PCP, space is made available for both divine and libertarian agent causality. For, on the PCP, a difference in effect would not have to imply a difference in cause, and therefore, unlike on the ECP, a cause would not have to be really related to its effect.

It should be noted that my argument against the ECP, though it leaves open the possibility of a host of causes that do not entail their effects, strictly speaking only warrants the denial that *every* cause entails its effect. For all I have shown, there may be many effects that *are* entailed by their causes. Indeed, it would be sufficient for the purposes of stopping an infinite regress to admit just one exception to the ECP. My purpose at this point is not to adjudicate the number of such exceptions (which may lie anywhere from a single to all instances of causality). Proponents of libertarian agency will want to say that there are quite a few. But even if there is just one exception, since this one exception would be the unique first cause of the whole series of contingent causes, it could readily be identified with God. And it follows, therefore, that at the very least God is a cause that would not have to be different even if His effects were different.

Thus ends my three-phase attempt to defend the classical teaching on God's relations against the challenge posed by the Creation Objection. In sum, that objection might be thought to fail for three reasons: (1) A popular cosmological argument, if it works at all, gives us grounds to believe in God as a cause that is not really related to His effects by virtue of causing them; (2) libertarian agents, if we acknowledge such things, give us an example of causes that, *qua* causes, are not really related to their effects; and (3) the demand that a cause be really related to its effect by virtue of causing it turns on a self-defeating, and hence rejectable, principle concerning what is necessary to provide a sufficient reason for the

obtaining of a contingent state of affairs. Whether or not the classical teaching on God's relations can be defended against other objections that have been levelled against it is a question for another day. Yet, given the conclusions reached thus far, now is an opportune moment briefly to suggest at least a possible response to a problem that the classical teaching might be thought to pose for God's knowledge.

### The Knowledge Objection

As we have seen, if God is not really related to creatures, then God is the same in a possible world, W*, in which the universe does not exist as He is in the actual world, W, in which the universe does exist. He would also be the same if there *were* a universe, but one that contained no human beings. Now, apart from problems concerning God's causing of creatures, it might be thought that the above account renders God's knowledge of creatures incoherent. For how, it might be asked, can we make sense of God's knowing the universe if God would be no different even if the universe did not exist? Or how, if there would be no difference in God if the universe contained no human beings, can we say that God knows that our universe contains billions of them? Parallel to the Creation Objection, therefore, we have the Knowledge Objection:

(1) If God is not really related to creatures, then God is the same in a possible world, W*, in which the universe does not exist as He is in the actual world, W, in which the universe does exist.
(2) If God is the same in W* and W, then it makes no sense to say that God knows the universe in W.
(3) Therefore, if God is not really related to creatures, then it makes no sense to say that God knows the universe.

The Knowledge Objection turns, of course, on the assumption that God's knowledge of creatures is a real, intrinsic feature or property of God. This assumption will be quite natural for those who think that God's knowledge of creatures involves His having certain beliefs. On this way of thinking, God's knowing that there are billions of human beings implies that there is something *in* God, a certain belief, that wouldn't be there were there no human beings at all.

Given this way of thinking, it indeed looks as if the classical teaching on God's relations precludes God's knowing His creatures. But what if there were another model of divine knowledge that did not require that God's knowledge of creatures be an intrinsic property of God? What if we said that God knows His creatures simply by virtue of causing or creating them?[33] Since, as we have seen above, *creating the universe* need not be an intrinsic property of God, it would follow that *knowing the universe* need not be an intrinsic property either. But in that case, the Knowledge Objection collapses. For, if *knowing the universe* need not be

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an intrinsic property of God, then from the fact that God would be the same even if the universe did not exist, it would not follow that God has no knowledge of the universe. This proposal for reconciling God's knowledge of creatures with the classical teaching on relations can put as follows:

(1) (a) The classical teaching that God is not really related to creatures poses a problem for God's knowledge of creatures only if (b) God's knowing His creatures is an intrinsic property of God.
(2) If both (c) God knows His creatures simply by virtue of causing or creating them and (d) God's causing or creating His creatures is not an intrinsic property of God, then ∼(b).
(3) (c) and (d).
(4) Therefore, ∼(b).
(5) Therefore, ∼(a).

I take it that the most controversial premise of this argument is (3). The present paper has been an attempt to defend the second half of this premise, the claim (d), that God's causing or creating His creatures is not an intrinsic property of God. No attempt will be made at present to defend (c). Hence, for now, I offer my proposed solution to the Knowledge Objection merely as a suggestion worth pondering.

Although it is certainly not the predominant view, it is worth noting that a number of contemporary philosophers have been attracted to a causal model of God's knowledge, a model according to which God knows His creatures, not by virtue of observing them, but by virtue of making them to be.[34] My proposed solution to the Knowledge Objection would fit well with the sort of approach they endorse.[35,36]

## Notes

1. See Mark G. Henniger, SJ *Relations: Medieval Theories 1250–1325* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). For another recent study, see Jeffrey Brower 'Medieval theories of relations', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2001 edn), URL = http://stanford.edu/archives/sum2001/entries/relations-medieval/.
2. Aquinas holds this view explicitly. See, for instance, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia dei*, Q. 7, A. 10 and Q. 3, A. 3. See also *Summa contra gentiles*, book 2, chs 11 and 12. For a contemporary philosopher who defends this view, see Barry Miller *A Most Unlikely God* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 106–112.
3. See William Lane Craig 'Creation, providence and miracles', in Brian Davies, OP (ed.) *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide to the Subject* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 142–143.
4. Whatever difficulties it might generate, the classical teaching on God's relations may also prove helpful towards resolving certain difficulties. For two examples, see my 'Aquinas among libertarians and compatibilists: breaking the logic of theological determinism', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, **75** (2001), 221–235; and my 'Aquinas, divine simplicity, and divine freedom', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, **77** (2003), 129–144.
5. This concluding suggestion notwithstanding, the purpose of this paper is to defend the classical teaching on relations against just *one* important objection to it. I do not here attempt to defend the

classical teaching against every objection. Nor do I attempt to defend the full doctrine of divine simplicity of which the classical teaching on relations forms a part. It is worth noting that, although the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity commits one to the classical teaching on relations, one could hold the classical teaching on relations without committing oneself to the full doctrine of simplicity.

6. For this standard interpretation of what it is to be a 'necessary' or 'contingent' being, see Peter van Inwagen *Metaphysics* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1993), 83; E. J. Lowe *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 83; Michael J. Loux *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York NY: Routledge, 2002), 186. Cosmological arguments that employ this standard sense of 'contingency' abound in the literature. See, for instance, Richard M. Gale and Alexander R. Pruss 'A new cosmological argument', *Religious Studies*, **35** (1999), 461–476; Michael Peterson *et al. Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 76–80; C. Stephen Evans *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 52; Bruce R. Reichenbach *The Cosmological Argument: A Reassessment* (Springfield IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1972), 6; David Braine 'Cosmological arguments', in Davies *Philosophy of Religion*, 42–43; Germain Grisez *Beyond the New Theism* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 40–58. Though each of these authors considers (and sometimes defends) a cosmological argument with the relevant sense of contingency, I have no idea whether they would agree with what I am arguing here.
7. It should be noted that not all cosmological arguments, not even all arguments from contingency, would force us to deny that C is an intrinsic property belonging to God's essence. Suppose a person defines 'contingent', not in the standard way as 'something that exists but might not have', but rather as 'something whose own nature leaves it open whether or not it exists'. A 'necessary being' might then be defined as 'something whose own nature does not leave it open whether or not it exists'. Such a person might answer the question, 'Why do contingent things exist?' in terms of the creative activity of a 'necessary being', while leaving it an open question whether or not it is of the very nature of this necessary being to create those things. For, given the alternative sense of 'contingency' employed here, C could belong to God essentially without making God a contingent being. That is, C could belong to God essentially without God's being something whose own nature leaves it open whether or not he exists.
8. See, for instance, Lowe *A Survey of Metaphysics*, 97.
9. On some accounts, actions are a species of accident, and as noted above, proponents of the Creation Objection often identify C with God's action. I have included both 'action' and 'accident' in the MLCO's exception clause in order to lend it as broad appeal as possible.
10. Aquinas, of course, does not employ the language of possible worlds, nor does he view *possibilia* as things that actually exist *extra mentem*. I take Craig here to be using 'possible-worlds' discourse merely as a conceptual tool or shorthand for talking about ways in which things might have been, but are not. I don't think any ontological commitment is being made to the actual existence of such worlds. Certainly, I do not intend to make any such ontological commitment when discussing Aquinas's views using the language of possible worlds. Nor do I think that the creation objection depends on such a commitment.
11. See *Physics* III, 202a 14–22. Cf. *Metaphysics* XI, 1066a 28–34.
12. See *ST* I–II, Q. 110, A. 2. Cf. *ST* I, Q. 18, A. 3, ad. 1. Cf. *In XI Metaphysica*, lectio 9, 2309–2313.
13. See, for instance, Brian Davies *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 112–13.
14. David Burrell articulates this thesis nicely: 'The act of making something happen (causation) is not itself an action. As Aquinas analyzes it, causing an effect is properly a relation. The fact that A causes something to happen to B requires acts, of course, but it itself is not an action distinct from these. … When A causes something to happen to B, then, the act of the thing moved (B) is identical with that of the mover (A). In short, what happens is what we see happening to B (or in B). We say that A is causing this to happen, not because we ascertain that something is going on *between* them (whether by seeing or positing it), but simply because we understand that B depends on A to this extent.' See David Burrell *Aquinas: God and Action* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 132–133.
15. See, for instance, Peter van Inwagen *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 127–128.
16. Although I have spoken here of an agent's causing his 'action', there is no consensus among agent causal theorists about precisely what it is the agent causes. Other popular candidates include behaviour, choices, decisions, volitions, intentional states, and neurophysiological states or events. One can

substitute any of these alternatives into my argument with the same result. For a survey of the options, see Timothy O'Connor 'Libertarian views: dualist and agent-causal theories', in Robert Kane (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 337–405.

17. Timothy O'Connor reaches a similar conclusion in 'Simplicity and creation', *Faith and Philosophy*, **16** (1999), 405–412. The argument of the present section was developed independently of O'Connor's.
18. Craig himself appears particularly vulnerable here. See, for instance, his account of libertarian agency in William Lane Craig *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 261–262.
19. A standard Frankfurt-style counter-example to the claim that freedom requires the ability to do otherwise employs a thought experiment. In this thought-experiment, when an agent S freely performs an action A, the reason S could not have freely refrained is that there was a manipulator (usually a mad neuroscientist or the like) standing by, ready to intervene and force S to do A if the manipulator detected that S was about to refrain from A. Since, as the story goes, S does A on his own, our intuition is supposed to be that S does A freely and bears responsibility for A, despite the fact that he could not have freely refrained.
20. Eleonore Stump 'Libertarian freedom and the principle of alternative possiblities', in Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder (eds.) *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 88.
21. Here and in what follows, I have avoided making a commitment to any particular view concerning the proper *relata* of the cause–effect relationship. Instead, I have employed the general terms 'cause' and 'effect' with the intention that my argument apply regardless of one's more specific views on the proper *relata*. 'Cause' can be read as 'total cause' where that would be appropriate. The distinction between (b) and (c) is intended to make room for those libertarian accounts (see n. 24) that hold a free action to be determined by its proximate cause, locating the indeterminism in the relationship between a cause and effect earlier in the chain of causes leading up to the free act.
22. This holds true whether the indeterminacy is located between the free act and its proximate cause, or whether it is located at some prior stage in the chain of events leading up to the act.
23. For a survey of agent-causal, event-causal, and reason-causal libertarian accounts, see respectively, the essays by Timothy O'Connor, Randolph Clarke, and Carl Ginet in Kane *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 337–405.
24. See, for instance, the proposal of Alfred Mele *Autonomous Agents: From Self-Control to Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), ch. 12; See also Laura Waddell Ekstrom *Free Will: A Philosophical Study* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 106 ff.
25. See, for instance, the account of libertarianism given by Stump in 'Libertarian freedom and the principle of alternative possiblities', 88. See also the remarks by Randolph Clarke 'Libertarian views: critical survey of noncausal and eventcausal accounts of free agency', in Kane *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 364.
26. Elizabeth Anscombe argues against Hume's contention that something could begin to exist without a cause in 'Whatever has a beginning of existence must have a cause: Hume's argument exposed', *Analysis*, **34** (1974), 145–151. For a critique of Anscombe's argument, see David Gordon 'Anscombe on coming into existence and causation', *Analysis*, 44 (1984), 52–54.
27. On the model of causality now under consideration, if $x$ is the cause of $y$, the relationship between $x$ and $y$ can be expressed as $\Box(x \supset y)$. Henceforward, when I speak of causes *entailing* their effects, it is this model that I have in mind. One might argue that 'entailment' is a relationship that holds between intentional or proposition-like entities, not real ones. If this is a concern, we can instead speak of causes *necessitating* their effects rather than entailing them, for surely necessitation is a relationship that can hold between real entities. While I will continue to speak of 'entailing' and 'entailment', the reader who wishes can substitute 'necessitating' and 'necessitation' without affecting the substance of what follows. If $x$ necessitates $y$, then we can infer that if $x$ exists than $y$ exists and that if $y$ does not exist, neither does $x$.
28. See Elizabeth Anscombe 'Causality and determination', in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind: The Collected Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 136.
29. In choosing 'states of affairs' for the *relata* of the causal relationship, I intend that term, in the most generic and ontologically non-committal sense possible, to include whatever might be thought to serve as the *relata* of causality: substances, events, properties, accidents, things, and even states of affairs taken in a more narrow or restricted sense, etc. In much of the discussion that follows, cause can be

read as 'total cause' and effect as 'total effect'. Hence, when I speak of a cause entailing its effect, read 'total cause' when only that would make sense. For instance, where there are multiple causes necessary for a given effect, those causes could be thought of as entailing the effect only if taken together, not individually.

30. Here I follow Van Inwagen, who distinguishes between causes that 'determine' and causes that merely 'produce' their effects. See *An Essay on Free Will*, 140–141.
31. Of course, if SOA1 obtains in W but not in W*, then technically speaking, its cause (let's call it SOA2) will only be *its cause* in W, not in W*. In other words, there is no cause unless there is an effect. The point is simply that, on the PCP, what would have been SOA1's cause can obtain even if SOA1 doesn't, that is, even without its being the cause of SOA1.
32. For a similar point, see Anscombe 'Causality and determination', 135.
33. This is not the absurd suggestion that causes know their effects simply by virtue of being causes, but rather that God as an intelligent free agent might know what He creates simply by virtue of creating it.
34. For examples, see David B. Burrell *Knowing the Unknowable God* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Brian J. Shanley 'Eternal knowledge of the temporal in Aquinas', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, **71** (1997), 197–224; Brian Davies *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ch. 9. Such writers will sometimes speak (as will Aquinas) of God's knowing His creatures by virtue of His *knowing Himself as their cause*. This might imply that God knows His creatures by speculatively peering into Himself, which might further seem to require that causing His creatures be an intrinsic feature of God. But if creating is not such an intrinsic feature, then for God to know His creatures by knowing Himself as their cause is simply for God to know His own act of creating – that is, to know His creatures by virtue of creating them. God's knowledge of creatures on this model is practical, not speculative.
35. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann have worried that a causal account of God's knowledge would lead to theological determinism. If God knows our actions by virtue of causing them, then it looks as if those actions can't be free. See Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann 'God's knowledge and its causal efficacy', in Thomas D. Senor (ed.) *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 94–95. Whether or not God's causing our actions would preclude their being free is a complicated question. It is worth noting, however, that my proposal would be consistent with a Molinist approach to divine causality, divine knowledge, and human freedom. According to the Molinist account, God does not determine my actions, since what I would do in any given set of circumstances belongs to God's pre-volitional middle knowledge. However, since God knows what I will actually do along with the rest of His creation in His post-volitional free knowledge, a Molinist could say that God knows everything other than Himself simply by virtue of creating it. See, for instance, Craig's endorsement of Molinism in 'Creation, providence and miracles', 145: 'By a free decision, God decrees to actualize one of those worlds known to him through his middle knowledge. Given God's free decision to actualize a world, in the third and final moment God possesses knowledge of all remaining propositions that are in fact true in the actual world, including future contingent propositions. Such knowledge is denominated ''free knowledge'' by Molina because it is logically posterior to the decision of the divine will to actualize a world.' For a more detailed treatment of the Molinist approach, see Thomas P. Flint *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1998). For a critique of the Molinist approach, see my 'Counterfactuals of freedom, future contingents, and the grounding objection to middle knowledge', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, **74** (2000), 307–323.
36. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for *Religious Studies*, and to Jeffrey Brower, David Burrell, Brian Davies, Hugh McCann, Alexander Pruss, and Katherin Rogers for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I have also been assisted in this project by conversations with Gordon Barnes, Jonathan Evans, Steven A. Long, James Madden, Michael Rota, Thomas Sullivan, and Michael Winter.