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W. Matthews Grant, *Free Will and God's Universal Causality: The Dual Sources Account*, Bloomsbury Press, 2019, 256pp.

This intriguing and ambitious work engages some of the most challenging issues in philosophical theology. Grant offers some bold proposals and fascinating solutions to some of the most difficult problems facing the traditional theist. One might reasonably anticipate that these solutions involve major compromises on the part of traditional theism. But Grant advances his solutions from a thoroughly traditionalist position. There are no doubt some serious objections to the proposals offered in this book, still the proposals are consistently innovative and interesting.

I aim to discuss three central problems for which the *dual sources account* offers solutions: (i) the reconciliation of divine universal causation (DUC) with libertarian freedom, (ii) the reconciliation of DUC with the impeccability of God, and finally (iii) the dual sources response to the problem of moral evil. There are many other fascinating topics—topics I do not have the space to engage—that come in for detailed discussion in the book including occasionalism, agent causation, Molinism, open theism, providence, grace, and predestination.

According to Grant, the following thesis expresses the principle of divine universal causation.

DUC. Necessarily, for any entity distinct from God, God directly causes that entity to exist at any time it exists. (4)

The term 'entity' in DUC is understood to include objects, states of affairs, events, properties, propositions, actions—anything there is, in any ontological category, distinct from God. DUC encodes a form of divine sovereignty and aseity according to which the existence (and persistence) of everything distinct from God depends on God's continuous and direct causal activity. God directly brings into existence everything there is and God directly conserves in existence everything there is, as long as it is.

DUC does not entail occasionalism according to which God is the only genuine cause, but it does entail that ". . . if there are other causes, it is not possible that those causes bring about their effects without God also directly bringing those effects about". (4) The actions of finite agents are causes, too,

on this view. But if creaturely action A has effect E, then it is a consequence of DUA that God also directly causes A. But more than that, God directly causes E and God directly causes—that is, conserves in existence—the event of A's causing E, and so on. It's indeed a wonder how finite agents might be libertarian free on such a view.

The compatibility issue between DUC and libertarianism, as Grant conceives it, depends entirely on whether DUC entails determinism. Robert Kane provides an analysis of the sort of determinism Grant is concerned about.

An event... is *determined* when there are conditions obtaining earlier... whose occurrence is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of the event. In other words, it *must* be the case that, if these earlier determining conditions obtain, then the determined event will occur.¹⁴

In this analysis 'sufficient' is understood as logically sufficient so that x is sufficient for y just if necessarily x only if y. Where Kane uses 'earlier' Grant uses 'prior' so that x is prior to y just if y depends on x or x explains y. No temporal priority is assumed. (6). So x is causally determined if x has prior causes that are logically sufficient for it, even if those causes are not temporally prior to it.

DUC does entail that God directly causes everything—including every action of every moral agent—so it might appear obvious that DUC entails determinism. But Grant rejects that inference based primarily on the nature of divine causation. According to Grant, for any effect E of divine causation, there is no cause C that is both *prior to* and *logically sufficient* for E. On the model of agent causation, the cause in divine causation is a substance, God, and God is not logically sufficient for any effect E. Since furthermore nothing that is logically sufficient for E is also prior to E in the case of divine causation—that is, since nothing that is logically sufficient for E is an explanans for E—we seem to get divine universal causation without determinism.

All of this can seem like a rabbit out of a hat and it probably is. Let's select the most salient explanation for some divine effect E, namely, that God causes E. Certainly, the fact that God causes E is logically sufficient for E. But God's causing E cannot explain E, according to Grant, since the relation of God causing E is not prior to its relata (namely, God and E). (60). So, Grant concludes, the fact that God causes E does not determine E.

14 Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2005) pp. 5-6.

But notice that we are able to avoid determinism here only if we equivocate on 'prior'. The relation, God causes E, is not prior to God and E only in the sense that God causes E is not *temporally prior* to the relata, God and E. The relation obtains only when the relata exist. But Grant has already concluded that explanatory priority does not require temporal priority, so God's causing E can be prior to E in the relevant explanatory sense despite the fact that the relation is not prior to E in the irrelevant temporal sense (cf. p. 6 ff.). It certainly appears that all of the following are true: For all E, God's causing E is both logically sufficient for E and prior to E, God's causing E determines E, and God is the cause of everything that is not identical to God.

There is another major issue for DUC due to the impeccability of God. DUC seems to entail that God causes sin. There is in fact a convincing two-premise argument that DUC is inconsistent with God's impeccability.

- (1) God directly causes all creaturely actions.
- (2) Some creaturely actions are sins.
- (3) Therefore God directly causes sins. (99)

The argument is obviously valid, so the only available criticism is that one or more of the premises is false. Premise (2) is all-too-true, so the problem with this argument (if there is one) is premise (1). The question then is how it is possible that DUC is true and premise (1) is false.

Grant endorses the *privation solution* to the problem of reconciling DUC with God's impeccability. According to this solution the phrase, 'creaturely action' is ambiguous. Suppose a finite being S performs an immoral action A. The immorality of A on this account consists in A's failure to conform to some moral standard. There is a metaphysical distinction between the action itself A on the one hand and A+ which is act A plus A's failure to conform to the moral standard on the other. Finite agents are the causes A+, but God is the cause of A only.

The essential and common point is that the privation in which the badness of a sinful act consists is the act's lack of conformity to the moral standard... The claim then is that while God causes the act an its positive properties, only the sinner causes both the act and the lack of conformity to the moral standard in which the act's sinfulness consists. Thus, only the sinner, not God, causes the sin. (101)

The solution to the problem then appears to require denying premise (1). But Grant instead claims that the argument above is invalid! The argument commits the fallacy of equivocation since premise (1) is true only if ‘creaturely action’ is restricted to actions that conform to the moral standard. But premise (2) is true only if ‘creaturely actions’ is not so restricted.

Of course, since DUC is true only if restricted in a way that excludes the actions that fail to conform to the moral standard, it follows that unrestricted DUC is false. God therefore is not the cause of *everything unrestrictedly* that exists or obtains. But what made DUC so interesting as a metaphysical principle was its unrestricted application. The reconciliation of God’s moral impeccability and DUC is achieved only if we reject unrestricted DUC.

One quick response to this problem is to deny that the wrongness of creaturely actions is *real*. On this approach, we continue to hold that the wrongness of actions exists—since Aristotle informs us that even unreal things have existence—but they do not have *being or reality*. Since the wrongness or sinfulness of actions isn’t a real entity, it is not counted among the things that God causes.

It might be salutary at this point to observe that there are either two things A and A+—both of which are caused to exist and both of which are real—or there is one thing, where A just is A+. Here the idea is that the unreal feature of A+ cannot *really* distinguish it from A. If the former is true, then DUC is false. God cannot cause everything that we can cause. If the latter is true, then there are no sinful actions at all. God can cause everything we can cause, but at the cost of denying that there are sinful actions.

The last issue to consider is the dual sources account of agency and the problem of moral evil. The familiar problem is that the existence of moral evil, in the amounts and types we actually find, is inconsistent with the existence of an all powerful, all knowing, wholly good God. The problem seems especially worrisome for anyone endorsing DUC since the principle seems to entail that God can cause every free moral agent always to go right.

On the dual sources account, it is true that, necessarily, a finite agent S performs some action A *only if* God causes S to perform A. Of course it is also true that, necessarily, God’s causes S to perform A only if S performs A. It follows that $\Box(\text{God causes S to perform A} \leftrightarrow \text{S performs A})$. Each action is sufficient for the other, but neither determines the other. Since neither action determines the other, both God and S have the ability to do other than what they in fact do. (67-8)

Grant offers an intriguing argument against the standard response to moral evil found in the free will defense. Given the dual sources account, he argues that a basic assumption of the free will defense is false. The basic assumption is that there is nothing God can do to prevent a libertarian free agent from going wrong. On Grant's dual sources account, this is false since—given the necessary equivalence above—God can see to it that an agent *S* always freely goes right. God simply has to cause *S* freely to go right and *S* will both go right and be libertarian free in doing so. Grant aims to conclude that God is able to bring it about that all libertarian free moral agents always go right, contrary to the free will defense. (123) But what seems missed altogether here is that the very same reasoning establishes that libertarian free agents are able to bring it about that God causes some free agents to go wrong. Is God able to bring about a morally perfect world while simultaneously each moral agent is able to see to it that he does not? Free will defenders say no, not without cooperation.

So, then, how should theists respond to the problem of moral evil in the absence of the free will defense? Grant proposes a “range of goods” for the sake of which God might permit moral evil but concedes that we don't know for sure why God permits evil. (125) But as usual with defenses of this sort it is entirely ignored that, for any world including evil (and the good it is necessary to) there is better world without those evils. Showing that there is some good associated with an evil is not nearly enough as a response to the problem of moral evil. It has to be shown that there are no better worlds in which God prevents those evils altogether. And of course there always are such worlds.