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Fábio BERTATO, Nicola SALVATORE & Marcin TREPCZYŃSKI (Editors).

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ÍNDICE

PREFACE FROM THE EDITORSi

ARTICLES

1. DILEMAS ÉTICOS EM TEOLOGIA NATURAL E INFERÊNCIA VÁLIDA EM ENSAIOS CLÍNICOS
Julio Michael Stern.....01-27
2. LOCAL LOGICS IN CHRISTIAN TEACHING ABOUT THE TRINITY AND TWO NATURES OF CHRIST
Marcin Treczyński e Fábio Maia Bertato28-49
3. O TEÍSMO CÉTICO E O PARADOXO DO MAL
Luis R. G. Oliveira (Tradução de Sérgio Miranda)50-79
4. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE PURPOSE OF GOD
Grant Bartley.....80-98
5. UMA ABORDAGEM AXIOMÁTICA AO PROBLEMA LÓGICO DO MAL
Gesiel B. da Silva e Fábio Maia Bertato.....99-130
6. O DEUS QUASE-TEÍSTA
Rodrigo R. L. Cid, Rodrigo A. de Figueiredo e Luiz H. M. Segundo.....131-156
7. LEIBNIZ'S ARGUMENT FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD FROM ETERNAL TRUTHS
Jan L. Propach157-169
8. COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT AND ONTOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE
Valdenor M. Brito.....170-192

9. DIÁLOGO INTER-RELIGIOSO: RELAÇÃO EU X TU	
Lidiomar G. dos Santos.....	193-203
10. STERBA'S CHALLENGE AND AQUINAS' SKEPTICAL THEISM	
Nicola C. Salvatore	204-214
11. FILOSOFIA E FÉ RELIGIOSA: INCOMPATIBILIDADE OU COMPLEMENTARIDADE?	
Renato J. de Moraes	215-232

COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT AND ONTOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE

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Abstract: The interest for versions of cosmological argument formulated in non-causal terms had increased in the last years. In this paper I shall argue that the cosmological argument of contingency is better understood in noncausal terms and I shall explore how the ontological dependence of the universe on God presupposed by this cosmological argument can be understood in terms of the identity-essential account for ontological dependence championed by Kit Fine. First, I discuss the reasons for considering that the cosmological argument of contingency is about constant or constitutive ontological (noncausal) dependence. Second, I present the essentialist account of ontological dependence by Kit Fine. Third, I examine the perplexities involving the ontological argument of contingency in the framework of identity-essential dependence. My conclusion is that, under the cosmological argument of contingency plus an identity-essential account of ontological dependence, all contingent things depend on God in a collective way, not an individual one. The collective essence of the totality of contingent things requires God, even although none of these things individually need to have God in their individual essences.

Keywords: cosmological argument, essence, metaphysics, ontological dependence, philosophy of religion.

1. Introduction

In the philosophy of religion, the theistic position generally asserts that all things ontologically depend on God, which is regarded as an ontologically independent entity. However, how exactly all things depend on God is not always clear. What is the sense of dependence (and ontological dependence) in question?

In the present work I discuss how ontological dependence appears in the cosmological argument(s). It is common to say that the cosmological argument presents God as the first cause of the universe/all contingently existent things. I shall argue that it is not necessarily so. More specifically, it is not necessary for the cosmological argument of contingency and this version of the cosmological argument is better articulated in noncausal terms.

The interest in understanding the cosmological argument in non-causal terms has increased in the last few years. Pearce (2017) argues that the cosmological argument of contingency can be articulated as an argument about the foundational grounding of the universe. Bohn (2018) articulates many different arguments for the conclusion that God is the fundamental ground of the universe. Hamri (2017) and Deng (2019) provide new cosmological arguments from grounding (and Hamri also appeals to the notion of ontological dependence I use in this paper).

Here I intend to discuss the cosmological argument of contingency as an argument about the ontological (noncausal) dependence of the universe, independently about what it is the specific metaphysical building relation (in Bennett's terminology) generating this ontological dependence relationship. In addition, I examine the prospects of understanding this noncausal dependence of the universe on God in terms of identity-essential dependence.

In this fashion, I articulate a way to understanding the thesis of divine foundationalism, that is, that "anything distinct from God is existentially dependent on God" (Bohn, 2018, 1; although Bohn also discusses the formulation of the synchronic divine foundationalism in terms of grounding, he considers that it is possible to formulate this thesis in terms of ontological dependence if someone wants to). Going beyond the existential formulation, I discuss an essential formulation for divine foundationalism.

First, I discuss the reasons for considering that the cosmological argument of contingency is about constant or constitutive ontological (noncausal) dependence, differently from the kalam cosmological argument (concerning historic ontological dependence and causal dependence).

Second, I present the essentialist account of ontological dependence by Kit Fine. His approach understands constitutive ontological dependence as identity-essential dependence.

Third, I examine the perplexities related to consider the ontological argument of contingency in the framework of identity-essential dependence. The problem is that this account of ontological dependence considers that ontologically dependent things have in their essences the other things for what they depend. However, it does not seem the case for God and the contingent things individually considered.

The point I made for circumvent this point is to defend that under the cosmological argument of contingency all contingent things depend on God in a collective way, not an individual one. The collective essence of the totality of contingent things requires God, even although none of these things individually have God in their individual essences.

2. The Cosmological Argument: Causation or Ontological Non Causal Dependence?

One of the most famous and ancient arguments in favor of the existence of God is the cosmological argument. Along with the ontological argument and the teleological argument (also called argument from design), the cosmological argument makes part of the ‘holy’ triad of the stronger arguments used for establishing the existence of God.

It is long recognized that the cosmological argument does not appear in a unique form. It is more accurate to talk about cosmological arguments, in the plural. There are two very prominent versions of the cosmological argument: the kalam cosmological argument and the cosmological argument of the contingency.

The central difference between these arguments is that the kalam cosmological argument is an argument about the ‘first cause’, presupposing that the universe have a beginning, although the cosmological argument of contingency is not an argument about the ‘first cause’ and it is consistent with the temporal eternity of the universe (that is, its ‘being uncreated’ of the universe).

In fact, the cosmological argument of contingency generally is treated as an argument about ‘explanation’: if there is a sufficient reason for the existence of all contingent things jointly considered (accepting the cosmological argument of contingency), or if it is a brute fact (rejecting the cosmological argument of contingency).

I will present both in a schematic way for showing these differences in a clear way. The kalam cosmological argument uses the following reasoning:

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause of its existence.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.
4. Since no scientific explanation (in terms of physical laws) can provide a causal account of the origin (very beginning) of the universe, the cause must be personal (explanation is given in terms of a personal agent).

(Craig, in Craig and Smith, 1993)

In the other hand, the cosmological argument of contingency uses a diametral opposite reasoning:

1. A contingent being (a being such that if it exists, it could have not-existed or could cease to exist) exists.
2. This contingent being has a cause of or explanation for its existence.
3. The cause of or explanation for its existence is something other than the contingent being itself.
4. What causes or explains the existence of this contingent being must either be solely other contingent beings or include a non-contingent (necessary) being.
5. Contingent beings alone cannot provide a completely adequate causal account or explanation for the existence of a contingent being.
6. Therefore, what causes or explains the existence of this contingent being must include a non-contingent (necessary) being.
7. Therefore, a necessary being (a being such that if it exists, it cannot not-exist) exists.
8. The universe is contingent.

9. Therefore, the necessary being is something other than the universe.

(Reichenbach, 2017, s. n.; see also Rowe, 1975 for a classical presentation)

As we can see, in this version of the argument, there is an allusion to a cause or explanation for the contingent beings, that is, a disjunctive ‘or’. The reason is that this cosmological argument can be formulated as being about causes, but it is not necessarily so. Reichenbach (2017), in his note 1, considers that the causal construal is associated with Thomistic arguments, although the vocabulary of explanation expresses the enlightenment view respective to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (for example, Leibniz and Clark).

Interestingly Reichenbach also asserts that an explanation is usually (but not always) given in causal language and then he won’t exploit the difference between thinking of the cosmological argument of contingency in terms of causes versus in terms of explanations. My aim here is exploiting this difference; this ‘not always given in causal language’ character of explanations.

The kalam cosmological argument has as premises that the universe has a beginning and that this beginning needs a cause. The cosmological argument of contingency does not presuppose the beginning of the universe at all. This cosmological argument applies even if the universe always existed. That is, the argument from the contingency is preoccupied with what is the reason for all contingent things to exist, independently of the reasons for each one of them to exist, individually considered.

Here I use the formulation of the cosmological argument of contingency in terms of explanation. This argument is not concerned with the first cause. Its point is not what is the first cause beginning the universe, but what is the reason for these sets of contingent beings to exist (even if eternally existing) and no other or none at all.

The confrontation between philosophical theists and philosophical atheist shows us that the philosophical theism accepts some Principle of Sufficient Reason (see the classical presentation by Pruss, 2006) or at least a weaker version of it (see

Alexander, 2008) although the philosophical atheism rejects any Principles of Sufficient Reason. It means that for the atheist some facts are brute facts, devoid of any explanation. What is the reason for this set of actual contingent beings to exist and no other or none at all? There is no reason for that. It is simply a brute fact about the universe.

The theists assert the opposite. Yes, there is a reason for this set of contingent beings to exist rather than an alternative set or none set at all. However, as we are attempting to explain the set of all contingent beings, it is not possible to explain it by appealing to another contingent being. We need to postulate a necessarily existent being (see Pruss & Rasmussen, 2018). A necessary being does not need an explanation by another being, because a necessary being necessarily exists and then its necessary existence explains its actual existence. A necessary being can explain the set of all contingent beings because this necessary being is not part of the explanandum. And as the final step this necessary being is identified as God.

The kalam cosmological argument asserts the causal dependence from the universe on God. If God causes the beginning of the universe, then the universe is causally dependent on God. If God had not caused the universe to exist, the universe would not have existed. This argument is associated with a kind of ontological dependence: the historical ontological dependence. This kind of ontological dependence is related to the essentialism of origins. For example, a specific human person necessarily originates from their actual parents. (For the difference between historical and constant/constitutive dependence, see Thomasson, 1999; Correia, 2005).

In the terms of the kalam cosmological argument, the universe is necessarily originated by God. That is, the universe is historically ontologically dependent on God. Note that it does not mean that there is a necessity for the creation of the universe by God. It would be a violation of divine freedom. The point is that, if the universe arises, its cause is God. It is impossible for the universe to exist if God is not the cause of the beginning of the universe, according to the kalam argument.

On the other hand, the cosmological argument of contingency does not presuppose the causal dependence of the

universe. For the cosmological argument of contingency, the sequence of cause and effects can be complete: all contingent things existing in the universe have as its cause an anterior contingent thing. Each contingent thing has an explanation for its existence in another contingent thing. However, it does not explain why this specific sequence of contingent things exists rather than the other ones or none at all. A necessarily existing thing can provide this explanation, and, if Pearce (2017) is right, this explanation is not causal, but a non-causal ontological one (for Pearce, foundational grounding). It means that if this sequence ontologically depends on God it occurs in a constant way.

This non-causal character of the cosmological argument of contingency is clear when we consider the steps of the argument. Its premises do not establish that the contingent beings are caused by a necessary being. The argument of contingency is not concerned with causal events in a remote past. What this argument intends to answer is how contingent beings exist at all. That is, for any time, in reason of **what** contingent beings exist.

The above consideration shows us that in the cosmological argument of contingency God sustains the entire set of contingent beings in all times these contingent beings exist. It is the own definition of constant ontological dependence. The idea is that if God ceases to exist, the universe cannot exist. Said in another way: the universe exists only if God exists, or the universe exists only at times when God exist too.

This way of understanding this question is interesting because it highlights the difference among diverse positions about God. For the (classical) theist view, the universe is constantly ontologically dependent on God. For the pantheistic view, the universe and God are identical beings (although under different modes). For at least one version of the panentheistic view, the universe is constantly ontologically dependent on God and God also is constantly ontologically dependent on the universe.

By understanding that the cosmological argument of contingency requires the constant ontological dependence from the universe on God, it is possible to understand that the kalam cosmological argument alone does not require it. That is, for the

premises of kalam cosmological argument, it is epistemically possible that God ceases to exist and the universe remains in existence. This very strange doctrine is generally avoided for considering that the first cause required is eternal by its essence. But dropping this premise concerning the nature of the first cause does not affect the argument itself. It can affect the plausibility of the argument to be true, but does not affect its validity. In the kalam argument God is necessary to begin the universe; God is not necessary to continue the universe. It is very different from the cosmological argument of contingency, which requires the existence of God in all times of the existence of the contingent beings.

This constant ontological dependence from the universe on God required by the cosmological argument of contingency can be thought in causal terms. The idea would be that God continually causes each contingent being to exist. However, this idea has many problems. For example, we find causes for contingent beings in terms of other contingent beings that are exhaustive. Attributing an extra cause as God is redundant. Another problem is that it can affect the continuity of contingent beings. For if it is possible that God continually causes contingent beings to exist, it could mean that each entire contingent being is caused every time *ex nihilo*. However, it does not seem right to make discussions about the persistence of material objects and the persistence of their identity dependents on how God causes them to exist. It must not be relevant to this metaphysical discussion. For avoiding this conclusion, someone can introduce a different kind of causality for God, for example, that God causes an entire being in a temporally extended way, then if a contingent being exist from the time 1 to the time 5, in any time 1-5 God cause the entire being to exist for all times 1-5. In time 1, God causes the existence of the contingent being in times 1-5. In time 2, God causes the existence of the contingent being in times 1-5. And so on. However, it is very problematic too. It seems to introduce ad hoc a different kind of causation, for which we do not have any independent reason for asserting it. And it seems to introduce the same causation five times. In a usual case, the first causation for the times 1-5 suffices for the

entire being to exist in these times. It could be redundant to cause the same thing in the next instant of time and again and again.

A much more natural way to understand the generation of this constant ontological dependence is by noncausal building relations in the sense discussed by Karen Bennett. Examples of these metaphysical relations are composition, constitution, microbased determination, set formation, and so on. Bennett in fact considers causation a building relation. But as we see it is not a good candidate for the building relation generating the constant ontological dependence required by the cosmological argument of contingency (and in a general way, causation is not a good candidate for generating constant ontological dependence at all, but I do not argue this point here).

What of these noncausal metaphysical building relations does the cosmological argument require? I think that the cosmological argument of contingency does not require only one of them. It seems to me that different building relations can be argued as being generating the constant ontological dependence observed in the argument of contingency.

Pearce (2017) argues that foundational grounding is the best understanding of the relation between God and universe behind the cosmological argument of contingency. However, it is not necessary to think of the building relation involved in terms of grounding (unless he talks about grounding in a very general way, what Bennett considers to be synonymous for building relation in her sense). For example, it is possible to argue that God constitutes the universe, in a similar way for how a lump constitutes a statue. I do not intend to decide what these relations are that generate constant ontological dependence in this case. My point is that this constant ontological dependence derives from a noncausal metaphysical building relation as usual. The case of God and the universe is not an exception. It must be understudied in non-causal terms.

Bohn (2018) shows how the divine foundationalism, the thesis according to “anything distinct from God is existentially dependent on God” (p. 1), can be articulated in two different versions, postulating a diachronic dependence (causation) or a synchronic dependence (grounding). For the first, he calls DFD, “anything distinct from God is existentially caused by God” and

for the second, he calls DFS, “Anything distinct from God is existentially grounded by God”. Relevant for my purposes is the point made by Bohn about how these two theses, DFD and DFS, are different and separate claims for each other:

DFD and DFS are logically independent theses in the sense that either one can be true without the other. For example, God might have caused the universe and all things in it, but have left it alone soon after in such a way that DFD is true, but DFS is false; much like I diachronically (across time), but not synchronically (at the present time) existentially depend on my parents. The universe might also not have a first cause in time, but nonetheless be grounded by God in such a way that DFS is true, but DFD is false; much like my body synchronically (at the present time), but not diachronically (across time) depends on its present parts. (Bohn, 2018, 2)

Therefore, it is clear that the kalam cosmological argument concerns historical ontological dependence, God as a necessary cause and origination of contingent things in the past. On the other hand, the cosmological argument of contingency concerns constant or constitutive ontological dependence, the existence of God as necessary for the existence of the universe every time the universe exists.

3. The Identity-Essencial Dependence Approach by Kit Fine

The constant or constitutive ontological dependence can be understood in existential or essential terms (Correia, 2008; Koliscki, 2013; Tahko & Lowe, 2015; Tahko, 2015). The simpler way to understand constant ontological dependence is by an existential-modal version: necessarily if *x* exists, then *y* exists. That is, the existence of *x* occurs only if *y* exists too and it is a necessary truth. In the usual interpretation of modal notions as being about possible worlds, in every world *x* exists, *y* exists.

However, this notion has been criticized by does not distinguish cases of mere modal correlation or does not identify what is the right dependent entity. For example, Socrates and the singleton {Socrates} exist together in every possible world where

they both are existent entities. That is, 1) necessarily if Socrates exists, then the singleton {Socrates} exists, and 2) necessarily if the singleton {Socrates} exists, then Socrates exists, are both right, however, it is generally accorded that the right dependence relationship is the second, not the first. (Fine, 1994a) The modal notion is too coarse-grained for making the distinction. Another example: Socrates can have different lives. However, that Socrates needs to have a life does not entail that Socrates depends on any of his possible lives. These lives depend on Socrates.

Generalizing from these two examples, the problem with modal-existential dependence is that modal correlation can be 1) insufficient for determining asymmetric cases where the modal profile is symmetric; or 2) ‘accidental’ or ‘coincidental’ in a substantive sense of these terms. In the first example, the relation between the existence of the singleton Socrates and Socrates himself is purely symmetric. If Socrates exists the same singleton Socrates exists and vice-versa. However, our intuition is that this case involves asymmetric dependence and even if someone accepts symmetric dependence cases this case certainly is not one of them. In the second example, the fact that these Socrates’ lives covariate with Socrates arises from the fact that biological individuals are living beings, not from the dependence of Socrates on any or all of them.

In face of these difficulties, the perspective of ‘genuine essentialism’, ‘real essentialism’ or ‘non-modal essentialism’ arises as an alternative view. This essentialism involves “the thesis that everything has a real essence – an objective metaphysical principle determining its definition and classification. Such principles are not mere creatures of language or convention; rather, they belong to the very constitution of reality” (Oderberg, x). Correia (2008, 1.018) defines genuine essentialism as the view according to “what is essential to an object pertains to what the object is, or defines the object (at least in part)”. Therefore, non-modal essentialism asserts that metaphysical necessity is derived from essences.

Essences are not mysterious creatures of some unwarranted lore. Essence is simply what an entity is. Essences are not entities in addition to the things they define. Essences are the entities themselves – stripped of their accidental properties,

as *de re* defined. The thesis in play here is that identity claims are not merely linguistic construal referring to objects along possible worlds, but that these claims are truths grounded in the entities themselves independently how they are described by us.

For addressing the problems of modal-existential dependence (and avoiding existential formulations altogether), Kit Fine developed an essential account concerning identity-essential dependence. The idea is that some entity depends on another for its identity. That is, the dependent entity has its identity (at least partially) defined by (the identity of) the base entity¹. Different from existential-essential dependence, the focus is not about existential dependence, but identity-dependence. Identity-dependence entails existential dependence, but the inverse is not true. It allows that identity-dependence rightly discriminates cases where simpler formulations of existential dependence cannot do.

In relation to the essential identity-dependence account for ontological dependence as formulated by Kit Fine (1994a; 1994b; 1995), we may take *x* to depend upon *y* if *y* is a constituent of a proposition that is true in virtue of the identity of *x* or alternatively, if *y* is a constituent of an essential property of *x*. It means that the essence of a dependent thing establishes the ontological dependence of a thing respective to its ontological base.

By essence Fine (1994b) understands the class of essential properties of something (under a predicational form) or the class of propositions made true in virtue of the identity of what the object is. It corresponds to a distinction between ‘a essentially is *P*’ and ‘essentially a is *P*’.

The identity-essential dependence was defined in some ways as follows (by Fine and others interpreting the requirements made by Fine’s account):

[W]e may take *x* to depend upon *y* if *y* is a constituent of a proposition that is true in virtue of the identity of *x* or

¹ I use the terminology ‘base entity’ or ‘ontological base’ for designing the entity for what another entity depends on. I do not intend to refer to grounding unless another way is explicitly stated.

alternatively, if y is a constituent of an essential property of x . (Fine, 1995, 275)

If x depends for its identity upon y , then there is a function f such that x is necessarily identical with $f(y)$. (Tahko & Lowe, 2015, s. n.)

x is essentially dependent on $y \leftrightarrow$ if there is some function f such that it is part of the essence of x that $x = f(y)$. (Kolisko, 2013, 51)

x depends for its identity upon $y =df$ There is a two-place predicate ' F ' such that it is part of the essence of x that x is related by F to y . (Tahko, 2015, 100)

These definitions convey the same idea in a slightly different form. As any way of interpreting ontological dependence, identity-essential dependence has a generic and a rigid kind. In the formulation made by Calosi & Morganti:

Rigid identity-dependence: For some relation R , x is essentially related to y by R (Calosi & Morganti, forthcoming)

Generic identity-dependence: For some relation R , x is essentially related to an object that is F by R (Calosi & Morganti, forthcoming)

That is, the identity and existence of x as an ontologically dependent entity is defined by the (existence/identity of) y . The essence of x contains y , although the inverse does not obtain.

The relevant notion of identity for the identity-essential dependence is not the sense represented by the '='(equal) symbol, but "in the sense what a thing is, or which thing of a certain kind a thing is. To say that the identity of x depends on the identity of y is to say that which thing of its kind y is metaphysically determines which thing of its kind x is." (Tahko, 2015, 100) That is, a 's being X depends on b 's being Z because the essence of a defining and individuating this entity in terms of the other one. Another way to talk about the same idea is that identity-dependence is "the determination of objects in terms of the individuality of other objects" (Tahko, 2015, 100). For example, the individuality of a set depends on the individuality of its members.

However, it is important to say that identity-essential dependence refers to the essence of objects. For Fine there is a connection between essence as the metaphysical notion of identity and the identity relation as a logical notion of identity: “to specify the nature of an object *t* is to specify what is essential to an object’s being identical to *t*” (Fine, 2015, 300).

4. Cosmological Argument of Contingency and an Identity-Essential Ontological Dependence of the Contingent Reality on God

Now it is time to join the points made in sections 1 and 2 of this paper. By section 1 we conclude that the cosmological argument of contingency does not need a causal premise and that there are good reasons for considering that the central concern of this version of the cosmological argument is to establish the constant ontological dependence of the contingent reality on god rather than historical ontological dependence (necessary causal origination) or simple causal dependence at all. By section 2 we see that there are many considerations for adopting an essentialist view about (constant) ontological dependence, and the major exponent of this view is the formulation made by Kit Fine, asserting ontological dependence as identity-essential dependence.

These two before sections show us that it seems promising to use identity-essential dependence as a manner for understanding the relationship between God and contingent reality behind the conclusion of the cosmological argument of contingency (if it is true). However, there is a serious problem threatening to undermine this enterprise from the beginning.

In Kit Fine’s view, the dependent thing has in its essence/identity the (essence/identity of) thing for what it depends on. That is, the ontologically dependent thing has its ontological base in its identity and it explains why they are linked in this form.

In the case of the cosmological argument of contingency, it means that the contingent things ontologically dependent on God (that is, all of them) need to have God in their essences/identities. However, it seems to be plain wrong: each

particular thing, even particular classes of things, do not have any allusion to God for their essences.

A central reason for thinking it is that it is not epistemically necessary to suppose God for supposing any particular thing existing. For example, a mass of water ontologically depends on molecules of H₂O. It means that it is impossible that there exists a mass of water and there does not exist molecules of H₂O. Accepting all facts about water (including chemical composition), it is impossible to deny this ontological dependence relationship. Accepting a genuine essentialist view about identity alongside the before accepted facts about water, the essence of the mass of water contains the essence of the molecules of H₂O is a necessary conclusion. However, it does not seem necessary to postulate God for understanding what water is.

The problem is that particular contingent things can be exhaustively understood in terms of what they (essentially) are without postulating God in any way (including the own manner God is thought of by the cosmological argument of contingency). This exhaustive understanding of the essence of a contingent thing (as water) simply is not based on an understanding about God or if God exists or not. It seems that if God had not existed, the water would remain the same thing it is.

Note that this is true even if the inexistence of God is metaphysically impossible. The reason is that the counterpossible assertion 'God (a necessarily existing thing) does not exist and water is the same thing what it is if God does not exist or God exists' can be accepted by reasonable theists.

This counterpossible assertion enlightens another point. If it is a reasonable assertion (by atheists and theists alike) then it seems that the cosmological argument of contingency does not succeed! If water is the same thing independently if the necessarily existing being (the being the cosmological argument of contingency intends to prove the existence or turn reasonable the acceptance of its existence) exist or not exist, then it seems that there is no real ontological dependence between God and water. However, the cosmological argument of contingency says that water ontologically depends on God, because all contingent things ontologically depend on God and water is a contingent thing.

A theist can object that this counterpossible assertion is irrelevant for accepting the ontological dependence relationship intended. This objector asserts that it is impossible for God a necessarily existing being does not exist and then water is what it is only in the possible worlds God exists because God exists in all of them.

However, the same criticism made against the existential accounts of ontological dependence can be made here. It seems merely coincidental that the essence of water remains the same in all possible worlds where God exists, in a same way as is coincidental that the essence of water remains the same in all possible worlds where the number one exists. Nobody asserts that water is ontologically dependent on the number one. And then nobody needs to assert that water is ontologically dependent on God.

I think that it is possible to circumvent this problem by preserving both aims: asserting the cosmological argument of contingent (that is, that there is a necessarily existing being that explains all contingent things) and asserting the identity-essential account of ontological dependence. The solution is to appeal to the idea of collective essences discussed by some authors in the context of the Fine's account.

Fine uses as example the case of the Eiffel Tower and Socrates. Neither the Eiffel Tower contains Socrates in its essence nor Socrates contains the Eiffel Tower in its essence. It means that the nature of both are unconnected. Another way to say that is that any essential truth about Socrates depends (for its truth value) on the Eiffel Tower and vice-versa.

Consider two objects whose natures are unconnected, say Socrates and the Eiffel Tower. Then it is necessary that Socrates and the Tower be distinct. But it is not essential to Socrates that he be distinct from the Tower; for there is nothing in his nature which connects him in any special way to it. (Fine, 1994a, 5)

However, Correia was intrigued: what do you think about truths as 'Socrates essentially does not depend on the Eiffel Tower' that seems essential and relate both entities? The solution is to handle collective essences alongside individual essences.

Collective essences are truths turned true by the two or more individual essences jointly considered, a notion that Fine (1994a, 1995) had already discussed before. It means that ‘Socrates essentially does not depend on the Eiffel Tower’ is turned true by the essences of Socrates and Eiffel Tower considered together (that is, the collective essence of Socrates plus Eiffel Tower), even if none of these essences individually considered turn true this assertion. From the Correia’ very illustrative original discussion:

For take e.g. the following two propositions:

- (1) <Socrates is distinct from the Eiffel Tower if both exist>
- (2) <(Socrates is human if he exists) and (the Eiffel Tower is a non-living, concrete thing if it exists)>

and assume that both are metaphysically necessary (many other examples of propositions involving several objects, in particular many logically complex propositions, could be invoked). By the Finean reduction, there should be one object, or several objects, which is, or are, an essentialist source of the truth of (1)—and similarly for (2). Which object or objects could that be? Consider (1) first. It is most natural to reject the view that (1) is true in virtue of the nature of Socrates, on the grounds that, as Fine puts it, “there is nothing in [Socrates’] nature which connects him in any special way to [the Eiffel Tower]” (p.5). The view that the proposition is true in virtue of the nature of the tower is also most naturally rejected, for a symmetrical reason. And it is hard to see which other object could do the job. The natural thing to say is that the proposition is true in virtue of the nature of Socrates and the Eiffel Tower (and perhaps the concept of distinctness) taken together. The very same kind of considerations applies to proposition (2), and we are naturally led to the view that (2) is true in virtue of the nature of Socrates and the Eiffel Tower (and perhaps the concept of conjunction) taken together. (Correia, 2011, 4-5)

Some people could want to consider these facts as brute or basic facts, that is, not further explained in essentialist terms. However,

Correia thinks that for at least some cases it is clearly not the case:

That (1) is true in virtue of the nature of Socrates and the Eiffel Tower, or in virtue of the nature of another given plurality of objects, is perhaps of that sort. But in many cases such a claim is highly implausible. Take (2) for instance, and assume it is true in virtue of the nature of Socrates, the Eiffel Tower and the concept of conjunction. We cannot just assume that this fact is a brute fact, in the sense that it cannot be explained in further essentialist terms. For intuitively, the fact that (2) is true in virtue of the nature of the three objects in question is derivative, i.e. it is to be explained in terms of the individual nature of these objects, along something like the following lines: it is because (i) <Socrates is human if he exists> is true in virtue of the nature of Socrates, (ii) <the Eiffel Tower is a nonliving, concrete thing if it exists> is true in virtue of the nature of the tower, and (iii) conjunction has the nature it has, that (2) is true in virtue of the nature of the three objects taken together. (Correia, 2011, 5)

It means that for Correia the Finean theorist is committed with a difference between basic or brute facts (basic essentialist facts) and this kind of derivative essentialist facts, derived from the essence of many things considered together. Collective essences need to be part of the arsenal of the Fine' essentialist account.

Applying this reasoning for the case of the cosmological argument of the contingency, someone can conclude that it is possible to think that none individual essence contains God, however, the collective essence of all contingent things considered together contains God. That is, the collective essence of all contingent things requires the ontological dependence of contingent reality on God.

However, this answer has a big difficulty. It is not clear from where 'God' arises in this equation. We sum many contingent things (and then many collective essences) and God is not in them. It changes when we sum all contingent things (and then this universal collective essence). God appears. Why?

For understanding this dilemma, remember the case of the Tower Eiffel and Socrates. It is not possible to say that Socrates is essentially distinct from the Tower Eiffel without ‘conjoining’ these individual essences into a collective essence. One reason for that is that the essence of Socrates does not contain the essence of the Tower Eiffel and vice-versa. The collective essence of Socrates plus Tower Eiffel can entail that assertion because by containing both essences this collective essence can make true assertions involving these two essences.

This consideration means that the collective essence involved cannot be the collective essence of all contingent things, because this collective essence does not contain the essence of God and then cannot make true assertions involving the essence of God. Therefore, for the assertion ‘all contingent things essentially depend on God’ being made true, it is necessary to appeal to the collective essence of all contingent things plus the necessarily existent being (God).

However, this solution can have problems too. In standard cases, the essence of a dependent being contains the ontological dependence relationship between this dependent entity and another entity (its ontological base). It is unnecessary to talk about the collective essence of the ontologically dependent entity plus its ontological base for this ontological dependence relationship being known or made true.

Of course, the collective essence of the ontologically dependent entity plus its ontological base also entails that the ontologically dependent entity depends on its ontological base. However, this assertion is already made true by the individual essence of the ontologically dependent entity alone. It is the reason for the collective essence constituted by this individual essence plus any other individual essence (not necessarily that of its ontological base) entails the same result.

The problem for the case of the cosmological argument of contingency is that the collective essence of the dependent entities is not enough to establish this result of ontological dependence. It would be necessary to resource the collective essence of all contingent things plus God itself.

However, I think it is not an invincible difficulty. In fact, if this ontological dependence on God is not true for each

individual contingent being, only being made true when considered all of them together, it means that this dependence on God is opaque, not transparent. For turning this transparent it is necessary to grasp the essence of God too. An interesting result for thinking this point in this manner is that if someone asserts God and the existence of some possible contingent reality then someone has to assert that all contingent things constantly ontologically depend on God. The reason is that this fact is made true by this collective essence of God plus all contingent things, then the assertion of the existence of God alongside the assertion of some contingent reality (possible) entails that the latter essentially depends on the former.

This way of thinking this question helps us with another problematic case involving a unique contingent thing. Suppose that there is a possible world where all contingent things are only one unique contingent being. This one contingent being is a mereological simple and cannot be decomposed or composed of anything. It seems possible for theists that God actualizes a contingent reality composed by a unique contingent thing existing eternally and being uncaused by anything. However, it seems that this thing does not need to have in its essence God as its ontological base. In this case the ‘collective’ essence of all contingent things is only the individual essence of this specific contingent thing, that is, there is no collective essence of all contingent things for entailing the ontological dependence of this specific contingent thing (and for extension of all contingent reality) on God.

However, even in a possible world where God exists and one unique eternal and uncaused contingent thing exists, there is one collective essence: that of God plus this unique contingent thing. And this collective essence can entail (if the cosmological argument of contingency is true) that this unique contingent thing ontologically depends on God, even if this dependence relationship is opaque considering the individual essence of this contingent thing.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to conciliate the kind of constant ontological dependence required by the cosmological argument of contingency and the identity-essential approach for ontological dependence by Kit Fine.

Under this approach, although none individual essence contains the ontological dependence of the universe on God, the collective essence of all things contains the ontological dependence of the universe on God. That is, things depend on God as maximal totalities of things, not as individual things. At each instant of time the totality of contingent things in that time essentially depends on God. And the complete sequence of the instants of time the totality of contingent things (formed by the each 'at time-X' totality of contingent things) essentially depend on God. This result allows the compatibility between the cosmological argument of contingency and the essential-identity ontological dependence account.

However, more work is needed to advance this intriguing possibility for understanding what is the cosmological argument of contingency supposed to assume about the relationship between God and the contingent reality. This work provides a sketch for this inquiry. Another possibility I find very interesting to be examined in future works is the idea that this ontological dependence relationship presupposed by the cosmological argument of contingency is found in considerations about generic essence. The relationship between generic essence and objectual essence mirror the aforementioned relationship between collective essence and individual essence in very striking ways. Maybe it is possible to make a similar argument I made in this paper but using generic essence rather than collective essence. What the best way to formulate a theory about the identity-essential dependence of the contingent reality on God is something we will still find out.

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