**COMPENDIUM METAPHYSICAE**

**(SOME NOTES ON METAPHYSICS)**

**METAPHYSICAL POSSIBILITY**

Something (e.g., a being, event, or state-of-affairs) is *metaphysically possible* if it is *logically possible in the strong sense*.

Something is *logically possible* *in the strong sense* (in a world P) if it is both *intrinsically epistemically possible* and *extrinsically* *epistemically possible* in P.

Something is *intrinsically epistemically* *possible* if it is apparently coherently conceivable without contradiction or absurdity. (This is sufficient for logical possibility in the *weak* sense that holds across possible worlds.)

Something is *extrinsically epistemically possible* in a world P if it is both intrinsically epistemically possible and such that its *extramental* existence/occurring/obtaining is not ruled out *in principle* by further factors known to obtain in that world. (This is sufficient for metaphysical possibility *simpliciter*).

Anything that is metaphysically possible in the actual world is such that it is also *physically possible* *in the broad sense*, such that the laws of nature operating in the actual world do not rule out its existence/occurrence/obtaining *in principle.* That is to say that there is some specifiable set of conditions that, if actual, would produce that thing in accordance with those laws in the actual world.

**METAPHYSICAL CONTINGENCY**

**Something is *metaphysically contingent* if it both exists/occurs/obtains in the actual world (i.e. exists/occurs/obtains there *really*, *actually*, and *extramentally*) and is such that its *non-existence* is metaphysically possible in the actual world.** A metaphysically contingent being would be one whose non-existence is both intrinsically and extrinsically epistemically possible. If such a being is metaphysically contingent and its non-existence is physically possible in the actual world, i.e. not ruled out in principle by the laws of physics obtaining in the actual world, then it will be *metaphysically contingent in the actual world* as well.

**The physical universe is metaphysically contingent**. The physical universe is the *aggregate* or *collection* of all physical objects, events, and states-of-affairs governed by the laws of nature. Even if (as now seems false) the physical universe has existed for an infinite amount of time in the past, it is nevertheless the case that it is perfectly conceivable that this aggregate or collection of things need not have existed *at all*.[[1]](#footnote-1)Neither does anything we that we know, including the laws of nature, rule out this metaphysical possibility. The physical universe is thus metaphysically contingent in the actual world.

Given the foregoing, *each and every physical object, event, and state-of-affairs existing in the physical world* is also metaphysically contingent, since in envisaging the non-existence of the physical universe, we likewise envisage the non-existence of all of the elements of that universe.

In the same way, *matter*, conceived of as the fundamental, primitive “stuff” out of which physical objects are made, is *also metaphysically contingent*, since in envisaging the non-existence of all such objects we also comprehend the non-existence of the stuff out of which they are made.

Further, we can argue on general Humean grounds that the physical universe is not only metaphysically contingent *in principle* (or *as a totality*), it is also metaphysically contingent at *each moment* that it exists.[[2]](#footnote-2) Since it is perfectly conceivable that the physical universe *cease to exist* at any moment *without residue*, and nothing else that we know excludes this intrinsic epistemic possibility, the non-existence of the physical universe at any time T is therefore metaphysically possible. Nor is this possibility excluded by the operation of the laws of nature, since the laws of nature only determine what the next moment of the physical universe shall be like given their operation at the earlier moments of the universe. They in no way guarantee that the universe will exist at the next moment and in fact simply presuppose and thus do not explain this fact. The ceasing to exist of the physical world at any time T, then, is metaphysically possible *in the actual world*.

The same, then, holds as well for physical objects, events, states-of-affairs, and matter conceived of as the primitive “stuff’ out of which the aforementioned are made.

**METAPHYSICAL CONTINGENCY AND EXISTENCE CONDITIONS**

**Fully to explicate the notion of metaphysical contingency, it is necessary that we account for the status of the metaphysically contingent thing as both *actually existent* and *potentially non-existent* at the *same time*.** In order to explain this, we have to characterize that status in such a way that current actual existence is compatible with current potential non-existence. More specifically, the actuality of a metaphysically contingent thing has to be characterized in such a way as to be compatible with its potential non-existence, i.e. in such a way as not to exclude this possibility, either in principle or at any moment that the thing in question actually exists.

The natural suggestion here is to suppose that we can do this by reference to *existence conditions*. According to this suggestion, since a metaphysically contingent being need not have existed even if it does, it cannot be such as to be capable of existing under any and all conceivable conditions. As such, there is some set of conditions external to that existent such that, had they existed, occurred, or obtained they would have *prevented* the existence of that thing, either by *positively excluding* its existence or by preventing its existence through securing the *lack* of one of the conditions necessary for its existence, or *both*. If such a thing exists, then, it must be the case that its existence is prevented in neither way.

A metaphysically contingent being, then, is also a *finite* being, i.e. one that is limited in being by its very nature, dependent for its existence/persistence on conditions external to itself, conditioned in major respects by those external conditions, non-self-sufficient, and non-self-explanatory with regard to its existence and persistence in being.

We may summarize the foregoing as follows: A metaphysically contingent being is one that can exist on some conditions and not others as a consequence of its very nature. It is thus a *sufficient* condition for the non-existence of anything whatsoever that its existence is either excluded by the existence of external conditions that are incompatible with its existence or prevented by the failure of the conditions necessary for its existence to obtain. It is thus likewise a *necessary* condition for the real, actual, or extramental existence of anything that the positive external conditions for its existence actually obtain.

Given that such a thing *actually* exists, we may infallibly infer both that no set of external conditions has excluded/prevented its existence and that whatever external conditions are required for its positive existence have *also* actually obtained. A metaphysically contingent being is thus one that actually exists (since all of the negative and positive conditions sufficient for its existence have obtained) but which is still potentially non-existent (inasmuch as it is in principle possible for these conditions either to not have obtained or to cease to obtain at any moment of time at which the thing actually exists.)[[3]](#footnote-3)

**THAT THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE NEEDS AN EXTERNAL, NON-PHYSICAL CAUSE**

Since the physical universe is metaphysically contingent and consists wholly of metaphysically contingent material beings, *it is not metaphysically possible that the physical universe be a* ***necessary being***. To suggest such a thing (*pace* Hume) is thus otiose.[[4]](#footnote-4) The same holds for the suggestion that some element or part of the physical universe, e.g. matter (*pace* Rundle) might be a necessary being.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Neither can we explain the existence of the physical universe by reference to some sort of prior “world generating” mechanism that produced it. Such a mechanism would at most explain the existence of the *observable* physical universe and do so only by making the observable physical universe a part of a larger physical world-system. Thus, even if such a mechanism existed, it would itself be part of the physical universe and likewise a metaphysically contingent being or process which would pass its metaphysical contingency onto the observable physical order it produces. Such an explanation would at best only push the difficulty back a step rather than resolve it, so no real progress on this question can be made by pursuing such an account.

That the necessity of raising the question concerning the cause of the universe can be eliminated or evaded by suggesting that it might have existed for an infinite amount of time in the past and thus never have come into being we can raise the following obvious objection. Since the physical universe is metaphysically contingent and thus need not have existed at all, this remains the case no matter how long it has existed or how many members we suppose the aggregate or collection of elements to consist in. Again, there is no progress to be made in this direction.

Nor can the existence of the physical universe just now envisaged be explained by supposing that each later moment of the universe is explained by the previous moments of the universe that produce it. Hume asserts this, but seems unaware that something he has said elsewhere undermines this suggestion.[[6]](#footnote-6) Since the physical universe is metaphysically contingent not just with regard to its existence *simpliciter*, it is also metaphysically contingent at each moment that it exists since its ceasing to exist is metaphysically possible at any time T we might choose to name (see above). As such, neither the laws of nature nor the prior states of the universe explain why the physical universe exists at any later moment. At most, these laws and prior states determine what the substantive state of the world at that moment will be on the *supposition* that it *continues to exist* and thus will exist at that moment. Such a suggestion is thus non-responsive to the question to which it is addressed.

Again, for the same reason there is no prospect of success in supposing that the existence of the physical universe at any particular time T can be explained by some sort of internal dependence or mutual conditioning on the part of its metaphysically contingent components, since in such case the result will still be a metaphysically contingent physical universe that need not have existed *at all*. Nor can the existence of any particular element of that universe be explained in such a way, since such an explanation will be either

1. *circular*, in which case *viciously* so, since it will turn out that the existence of the thing itself will be presupposed as one of its own sustaining causes through its role as a sustaining cause of the things that sustain it, or
2. *terminate* in a set of metaphysically contingent conditions lacking sufficient conditions for their own existence and thus fail to provide an explanation for the existence of the thing from which we began, or
3. end by *postulating* an actually infinite web of metaphysically contingent conditions each of which is sustained by yet further conditions without end; such an infinite series will be a *explanatorily vicious* one, as is shown by the classic examples (the infinite stack of books, turtles all the way down, the infinite chain, Grisez’s infinitely endorsed check, etc.)

I conclude that no attempt to account for the existence of the universe from some element or principle of that universe has any likelihood of success and are not worth further exploration. If the existence of the physical universe is to be explained or accounted for at all, it must be by reference to a non-physical cause or process existing independently of it and its laws.

**DOES THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE EXIST WITHOUT CAUSE OR REASON?**

Let me say the following concerning the suggestion that perhaps the physical universe, or some element of it such as primitive matter or its initial state, may have popped into existence for no cause or reason whatsoever. First, it is not obvious that this is a metaphysically possible scenario because it is not clear that it is an intrinsically epistemically possible one. Hume apparently thinks that from the fact that I can imagine a material thing (an aardvark, say) popping into existence from nothing pre-existing, instantaneously filling a previously empty space, that I in so doing have envisaged something popping into existence for no cause or reason whatsoever.[[7]](#footnote-7) I agree that Hume has imagined something popping into existence from nothing *physically* pre-existing that thing with no *physical* cause or reason whatsoever. However, this is not the same thing as envisaging that thing popping into existence from *no* cause or reason *whatsoever*. To simply stipulate this in this context amounts to a subtle form of question begging.

Let me also remark in this regard that Hume’s thought-experiment does not amount to our imagining something coming into existence literally from nothing or without any conditions whatsoever. As Jonathan Edwards and Bede Rundle (!) note, it is *literally inconceivable* that nothing at all exist, and thus metaphysically impossible that this be the case.[[8]](#footnote-8) The “popping into existence” of any metaphysically contingent physical being must be a “popping” of that being into a specific region physical space at a particular (dateable) time or at some set of space-time coordinates. This “popping” thus presupposes space and time (or space-time) as one of its external, metaphysically antecedently necessary conditions that at the very least must be given along with it in order for that “popping” to be metaphysically possible. It thus hardly counts as conditionless in any case.

The same, I believe, would hold of the “singularity” conceived of as a densely packed ball of primitive matter. Since matter is extended, thus requires space and time as one of its necessary antecedent conditions, such a singularity could not have existed prior to the Big Bang, which must therefore be the first moment of the universe. Similarly, the Big Bang could not occur prior to the existence of the singularity, which serves as its necessary condition insofar as it is what explodes, thus producing that Bang. More than this, if the singularity had been at all stable at any point prior to the Big Bang, since it was the only thing in the physical universe, there would have been no force or change capable of bringing about the explosion constituting the Big Bang in the first place, so that it would not have occurred. As such, the singularity must be posited simultaneously with the big bang and thus not prior to it as its cause. If so, the physical universe as such has *no* unique physical cause, since both the singularity and the Big Bang appear to condition each other in such a way as to be causally prior to each other from different points of view. As such, they can only be posited together as the joint effect of a single prior cause, one that is both non-physical and ontologically prior to (thus existing independently of) the physical universe, or as having jointly “popped” into existence simultaneously for no cause or reason whatsoever.

Further, if the account of metaphysical contingency I have given is correct, then it is *not* metaphysically possible for a contingent being (such as the “singularity”) to “pop” into existence for no cause or reason whatsoever. Metaphysically contingent beings are by nature dependent, conditioned beings capable of existence only under certain conditions. On that view, the existence of any metaphysically contingent being is specified by a set of independently constituted existence conditions apart from which the existence of that thing is not metaphysically possible, Thus, it is a sufficient condition for the non-existence of anything that, e.g., the necessary conditions for the existence of that thing fail to exist, occur, or obtain. The supposition that something “pops into existence” for no cause or reason whatsoever contradicts this account by affirming the in principle possibility that something comes into existence despite the fact that sufficient conditions for its non-existence obtain thereby precluding that thing’s existence at the very moment it is affirmed to have “popped” into existence. That nothing at all exists prior to the existence of the “singularity”/Big Bang will surely be a sufficient condition for its non-existence if anything is, just as it would be for anything else. To assert the contrary is simply either special pleading or begging the question.

Given the foregoing, no one can both subscribe to the account of metaphysical contingency I have presented and countenance the notion that something could just “pop” into existence for no cause or reason whatsoever. Specifically, if the physical universe is a metaphysically contingent being (in my sense, as I argued earlier) then neither that universe as a whole nor any of its elements, all of which are themselves metaphysically contingent, could have simply “popped” into existence for no cause or reason whatsoever. I believe that the account of metaphysical contingency I have given here is both plausible and illuminating. By contrast, the supposition that it is possible for something to simply “pop” into existence for no cause or reason whatsoever has no prospect, in the very nature of the case, of being made any further intelligible, justified by reason, or confirmed by natural science. As such, anyone who finds my account of metaphysical possibility and contingency intuitive and illuminating possesses a good reason for rejecting the contrary supposition that contradicts it. By contrast, the contrary supposition provides no *reason* that I can see for *anyone* to reject the account of metaphysical possibility and contingency that I have presented here. For anyone seriously to entertain that supposition, let alone take refuge in it – even a last resort against an intolerable conclusion – is surely an act of desperation that only an intransigent dogmatist would find attractive.

**THE CAUSE OF THE UNIVERSE IS A NON-PHYSICAL, NON-CONTINGENT BEING**

**Since the physical universe along with all of its components and basic elements is metaphysically contingent, it is likewise a dependent being composed of other dependent, non-self-explanatory beings and elements.** Since a metaphysically contingent being is one by nature dependent for its existence on conditions external to itself in virtue of which it actually exists while still being capable of non-existence, it is natural, normal, and proper to seek some account of those conditions in order to explain the fact that the physical universe exists rather than not. Since (as I have argued) the explanation of that fact is not to found *within* the physical universe itself, it behooves us to seek the cause of its existence in some principle outside of the physical universe itself, one therefore non-physical in that sense. Only if we were unable to discover any plausible candidate for such a cause would we be justified in concluding, *even provisionally*, that the existence of the physical universe is an inexplicable surd fact, an impenetrable mystery that must simply be accepted without explanation as beyond our ability to explain. Those who prematurely rush to embrace this alternative in the failure of natural science to provide a naturalistic explanation for the existence of the physical universe betray the commitment to reason that they claim so highly to prize, and we do well not to follow them.

**No metaphysically contingent being could be the ultimate or primary cause of the existence of the physical universe.** Such a being, whether physical or non-physical, would require a set of conditions external to itself in order to account for its own existence, in which case we must either generate an explanatorily vicious infinite regress or terminate in some being the existence of which is merely an inexplicable surd fact. In such case, Hume is once again correct. We explain nothing by such explanatorily superfluous posits and in that case, we may as well stop with the physical universe itself.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Only a metaphysically non-contingent (i.e. metaphysically necessary) being could be the non-physical cause of the existence of the physical world.** A successful explanation of the existence of the physical universe must terminate in the operation of an ultimate and primary cause of existence that is itself non-contingent, such that its non-existence is metaphysically impossible. In that case, we will have to conceive of such a being as being infinite/unlimited, not dependent for its existence or nature on anything outside of itself, completely self-sufficient and self-explanatory through containing within itself the explanation for its own existence and persistence in being. It is reasonable for us to posit the existence of such a cause, *even without further explanation*, on the ground that it represents the *only* available explanation for the existence of the metaphysically contingent physical world capable of providing a final stopping point in the search for the existential conditions of things.

Such a being is certainly mysterious. However, given that such a being is the only available possible explanation for what would otherwise be a surd, inexplicable fact, we have ample reason for *positing* such a being as a (non-physical) theoretical entity. Like many other theoretical entities within natural science, we can assert nothing more about this being than what we must attribute to it in order to account for the effects to which it is supposed to stand as its cause. At the same time, we have little if any prospect of providing any independent confirmation of its existence or any non-theory-laden account of its substantive existence or nature.[[10]](#footnote-10) It does not follow from this that this entity must remain an utter cipher for us. Plausible extrapolation from the data and responsible speculation about its nature may well be sufficient to supply us with at least a general sketch of such a being, equal in detail to what we think we can plausibly claim about gravity, space-time, quarks, and many other equally mysterious theoretical entities. We cannot know whether this is so unless we try. For my part, I am persuaded that a plausible model for such a being can be provided.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**THE NATURE OF THE NECESSARY BEING WE HAVE POSITED**

**This being must a *concrete*, as opposed to an *abstract*, being.** Abstract beings (e.g., numbers, geometrical figures, concepts, propositions, possible worlds, essences considered as such, etc.) are generally thought to lack causal powers. However, the necessary being we have posited must have causal powers in order to function as a theoretical explanation for the existence of the physical universe. It must thus be a non-abstract (hence *in that sense* a concrete) being, even if a non-physical one.

**A necessary being in the sense we have posited it is a non-contingent being.** A non-contingent being is one whose non-existence will be metaphysically impossible, which means at a bare minimum that its existence is not externally conditioned in any way such that its actual existence might have been precluded or subject to cessation.

**Such a being will be an infinite being as well, in the sense that its act of existence will not bounded or limited by anything external to itself.** Such a being, then, will be completely self-sufficient, incapable of coming-to-be or passing away and thus of existing regardless of the structure or composition of any possible world.

**This infinite being would be one whose *essence is to exist***, i.e. to exemplify or instantiate the *fullness of being* by realizing, in a single, concrete entity, all of the potentiality inherent in the *activity* of existence. In such a being, (the act of) *existence precedes essence* as its principle – the necessary being instantiates or exemplifies the essence that belongs to being when its expression is not arbitrarily limited by any conditions, external or internal. In that case, it will be impossible to characterize that essence apart from the act of existence that realizes it. As such, *essence and existence will be identical in that being*, simply two mutually interdependent perspectives on the same concrete reality. Such a being, then, *contains* *existence as part of its essence*, not simply or primarily through possessing existence as a discrete “essential” property, but instead by possessing the essence that is inseparable from and expressive of unlimited existence. In the same way, it can also be called *Causa Sui* (cause of itself), though this expression is so easily misunderstood that it is probably better avoided.

**Therefore, such a being will be an infinite being in a positive sense as well, in that its essence will in no way limit its act of existence.** In a metaphysically contingent being, there is a real (as opposed to merely conceptual) distinction between that thing’s essence and its act of existence, so that in such a being essence represents an arbitrary limitation on that thing’s act of existence, thus making it subject to external limitation as well. However, in the case of the metaphysically necessary being we have posited, *existence precedes essence* as its principle, so that essence is merely expressive of an untrammeled act of existence. Further, since this essence is the expression of the inherent dynamic of the activity of existence as it realizes itself in its ideal form inherent in a being that admits no external limitation, it is in no way as though imposed on it from without in such a way as to result in any arbitrary limitation on its existential act. It is therefore in no way subject to any limitation of its act of existence of any sort.

**Such a being will also be a *logically* *necessary* being as well,** i.e. one whose non-existence is *inconceivable* in such a way as to be *logically impossible*. We have posited this metaphysically necessary being to be *actually existent* as the efficient cause of the existence/persistence of the physical universe, its components, and fundamental elements, and have done so for sufficient reasons. Further, we have said that such a being is completely self-sufficient and impassible, so that its existence is compatible with any set of conditions that we can envisage existing in any possible world, so that no such set of conditions would be sufficient to preclude the existence of that being in any possible world. On both these grounds, we can confidently assert that this being is possibly existent in every possible world, i.e., that the proposition “Possibly, the metaphysically necessary being we have posited exists” is true in all possible worlds, along with all the conditions required for this proposition to be true. This would include the existence of that essence (*as such*, or *qua* abstract object) in every possible world.

Further, the proposition “The necessary being we have posited exists” will be false, and thus the necessary being we have posited not exist, only in those worlds in which that being’s essence is *nonexemplified* or *uninstantiated*. This will be the case, however, only in those worlds in which there is a real distinction between that being’s existence and its essence. However, there is no such world, since it belongs to this being by nature (or essentially) that this identity of existence and essence obtain. As such, the necessary being we have posited is conceivable *only* as a being in which essence and existence are identical, thus as such in every possible world. It therefore cannot be conceived of as non-existent in any world, any more than we can conceive of a triangle with only two sides existing in any world.

Thus, the proposition “The metaphysically necessary being we have posited exists” is true in every possible world, hence is *necessarily true* and its contradictory, “Possibly, the metaphysically necessary being we have posited does not exist” is false in all possible worlds, hence *necessarily false*. As such, the necessary being we have posited therefore exists in all possible worlds and is thus a *logically necessary being* as well.

It is thus a perfectly adequate or *sufficient* explanation for the *actual* existence of this being that its existence is *logically necessary*. In virtue of its very nature, the necessary being we have posited exists in every possible world, hence in the actual world as well since the actual world is a possible world. This prevents any recourse to the senseless, impudent question, “Who made God?” as a ground for denying that God provides what Swinburne calls an *absolute explanation* for the existence of the physical world, one which also explains itself and thereby answers the question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?”[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Such a being will also be a perfect being** in both the negative and the positive senses of that term. Since this being expresses the fullness of being, it likewise *lacks all privation* of being, goodness, power, and so on. In consequence, it will also possess *all compossible perfections*, i.e. all positive, degreed properties that admit of an intrinsic maximum. Perfections are *compossible* if it is metaphysically possible for them to inhere in the same subject. A property is a *positive property* (Gödel) if it adds to the reality of a thing in some concrete, substantive way.[[13]](#footnote-13) A property is *degreed* if it admits of quantitatively different modes of participation, such that discrete individuals can be compared, ranked, and judged by reference their mode of participation in that property as higher or lower, greater or less, more or less perfect in accordance with an ideal. A property has an *intrinsic maximum* if it admits an in principle highest mode of participation that, once attained, is unsurpassable.

With regard to the necessary being we have posited, we should withhold any property, state, or characteristic that would introduce any form of dependence, limitation, or privation into that being, even if that property would constitute a perfection in a limited being. Whenever possession of the intrinsic maximum of some perfection attributable to this being, taken in the abstract, would introduce dependence, limitation, or privation into this being, the necessary being we have posited will not possess the intrinsic maximum of that property, since for it to possess that properties in that way would be inconsistent with its overall perfection. In every case that the maximal degree of any perfection would be denied of such a being, it must be shown is required by, and thus contributes to, the overall perfection of that being, which would otherwise be subject to dependence, limitation, or privation.

In accordance with the foregoing, we can confidently attribute the following attributes to this being: aseity, eternity, immutability, impassibility, simplicity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence. How exactly to understand any or all of these attributes is an ongoing matter for debate and research, and varying perspectives on these matters are possible as well.

***CREATIO EX NIHILO***

We have posited this metaphysically necessary being, now apprehended as perfect being, in order to explain the existence of the metaphysically contingent external world. We have thus arrived at the conception of this being as the *God of the Philosophers*: a perfect and providential creator/designer of the physical universe.

For our purposes here, it will be sufficient to characterize divine *omnipotence* or *perfect power* as the power to actualize any metaphysically possible state-of-affairs.[[14]](#footnote-14) Now, as Hume’s thought experiment (noted earlier) demonstrates, it is metaphysically possible for the physical universe, any element of the physical universe, and even primitive matter, to have arisen from nothing physically pre-existent. At the same time, I argued that this is not tantamount to proving that this state-of-affairs could have arisen from no cause or reason whatsoever. Indeed, on the account of metaphysical contingency presented above, this is decidedly *not* metaphysically possible. However, given that the necessary being we have posited is omnipotent in the sense just now stated, it will lie within the power of such a being to bring about this metaphysically possible state -of-affairs by a simple *fiat*, in the way similar to that in which we can actualize tokens of mental images simply by willing to do so. Creation *ex nihilo* thereby is shown to be metaphysically possible as well.

In the same way, what theologians call the *divine conservation* of the physical universe, its components, and its elemental constituent (matter), explains the persistence of that universe, its components, and of matter itself, thus explaining how it is able to persist despite being at the same time potentially non-existent and non-self-explanatory.

Again, *divine concurrence* explains how secondary causation is possible through the activity of the first cause conserving the causal power exercised by secondary causes and applying it to the production of its effect, thus preserving it in being during the interval between the exercise of that power on the part of the cause and the arising of the effect. Thus, by applying this power in a way guided by general laws that He has freely chosen for good reasons that assign particular powers and liabilities to various creatures, God guarantees the reliability of induction and the regularity of causal connections without the need to postulate any intrinsic causal necessity of the sort rejected by Hume.[[15]](#footnote-15)

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1. See Rowe (1998), 151-67, especially 154-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hume, *Dialogues*, Popkin, ed., p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The relevant relation involved here is not causation, but instead existential dependence as expressed by the EOG relation – see Duncan (2008) and the next section of this essay. However, this does not exclude efficient causation from being one of the relevant conditions in many cases. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Hume, *Dialogues*, ed. Popkin, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Rundle (2004), 166. It is to be noted that Rundle does argue for this thesis and that I have not discussed his specific arguments here; this is a matter for another time. However, I believe that what I have said here suffices on this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hume, *Dialogues*, ed. Popkin, 56. See note 7 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Hume, *Treatise*, p. 79 in the Selby-Bigge edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Edwards, “Of Being” in Faust and Johnson (1965), 18-23 and Rundle (2004) 108-117. Both argue that we cannot imagine the envisaged state-of-affairs, since the best we can do is imagine empty space, not its absence. From this, Edwards infers that a necessary being exists. Rundle, more correctly, infers that necessarily, some being exists, which does not, he thinks, entail the former. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Hume, *Dialogues*, ed. Popkin, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Actually, I am just saying this for the sake of the argument, and believe it to be false. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Duncan (2008), summarized immediately below. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. I assert this *contra* Swinburne (2004), 148 and Rundle (2004), *passim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See Kurt Gödel’s Ontological Proof in Thomson, ed. (1987), 256-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This is not a *definition* of omnipotence, since whether or not a state-of-affairs is metaphysically possible crucially depends on whether or not the God of the philosophers could bring it about. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Hume, *Enquiry*, 58-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)