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Formal Theology

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Abstract

Ontology and theology cannot be combined if ontology excludes non physical causes. This paper examines some possibilities for ontology to be combined with theology in so far as non physical causes are permitted. The paper builds on metaphysical findings that shows that separate ontological domains can interact causally indirectly via interfaces. As interfaces are not universes a first universe is allowed to be caused by an interface without violating the principle of causal closure of any universe. Formal theology can therefore be based on the assumption that the (first) universe is caused by God if God is defined as the first cause. Given this, formal theology and science can have the same ontological base.

1. Introduction

Contemporary science rests on an ontology that ascribes the physical universe causal closure. The basic assumption behind this relation in effect stops God from having any causal effect in the physical universe. It is so strong that it even prevents a non-physical cause to cause the physical.

The principle of the causal closure of the physical is defined so that no cause in the physical universe causes anything outside itself and also defined so that no cause from outside the physical universe causes anything in the physical universe. It is enough, though, for causal closure, to deny any universe to cause anything in another universe, if all universes are causally closed (Gamper 2017). By this move there are no direct interactions between universes. The redefinition, however, opens up for a new ontological realm, interfaces. Interfaces are defined as not being universes and are therefore allowed to be caused by universes and, actually, also allowed to cause universes.

This paper examines how God as the first cause can be integrated within an ontology based on the redefinition. The following areas are examined: God as creator, God as omniscient, and God as omnipresent.

2. An ontology without interfaces

The classical definition of causal closure does not allow interfaces between universes since it does not allow anything that is non-physical to causally affect the physical. Accordingly, everything is physical. God, as the cause of that which exists,

therefore, have no place in this ontology. In an ontology without interfaces the physical universe has no relations.

3. Ontologies with interfaces

If interfaces are allowed a multitude of ontologies are permitted. The one universe can cause an interface which in turn can cause another one, and so on and so forth. The first universe, also, can be caused. Therefore, any ontology with a given amount of universes, can have a first cause, or not have a first cause. If there is only one universe with no first cause we have the equivalent to the ontology class (with one element) that does not permit interfaces.

For instance, we can have an ontology with three universes and a first cause. One option here is that the first cause caused a mathematical universe, the mathematical universe caused an interface, the interface caused the physical universe, the physical universe caused another interface, and the other interface caused a mental universe/a universe of the mind. Since these ontologies are based on the permission of interfaces - an interface before the first universe and interfaces between universes - we can have a closer look into how God as the first cause may relate to universes.

According to the traditional definition of causal closure God cannot be part of an ontology that includes the physical universe. Using the definition of causal closure that permits interfaces between universes, however, an ontology can contain both universes and interfaces wherefore God, as an interface, can be in question in an ontology that includes the physical universe.

4. Formal theology

Here we start examining how a concept of God fits with the class of ontologies that allows interfaces.

4.1. God as the first cause

Any consecutive sequence of universes either has a first cause or not. Let us in this examination define God as the first cause. Accordingly, if the series of universes has no first cause, there is no God, and if the series has a first cause, there is a God.

The analysis shows that this line of argumentation generates a singular God. It could also be mentioned that the classical definition of causal closure builds upon “the physical” whereas the redefinition builds upon “there may be interfaces”. The former case, therefore, seems to be inconsistent with nihilism whereas the latter case seems to permit both nihilism and a cosmos only containing an interface.

4.2. God as omniscient

Let us differentiate between a “functional” knowing and a “knowing” knowing. If we let “omniscient” relate to “knowing” knowing, it should relate to being aware of the knowing and thus relate to self awareness. We cannot know God’s knowing

but we are acquainted with our own. So, to start with we can look at what our own self awareness could be, in the light of the possibility of interfaces between universes, and how God, as omniscient, could know what we know we are knowing.

4.2.1. Having experiences vs. knowing that you are having experiences

So, before looking at how God may know what we are thinking, let us try to account for how we, ourselves, can know what we are thinking, or, more importantly, can know what we are experiencing.

Utilizing the multiverse machinery we are working with, we are free to try applying both universes and interfaces on our attempt. In this most intricate setting, actually, we will exploit our freedom one step further and expose a new dimension of the concept of interfaces. First, however, we take a look at our experiences, or, sensations.

Let us categorize, tentatively, our sensations, our conscious contents, or the “Qualia”, as an interface between body and mind. This is really a tentative thought but it is needed to explore our subject, the omniscience of God. Our body, in this picture, causes Qualia and, to just move on, the Qualia causes the subject having the Qualia. The Qualia, accordingly, is the interface between body and mind. Allowing non self aware creatures the possibility of Qualia, this interface is not enough for self awareness. We have to dig deeper and we start by taking a step backwards.

If we take it that there is a mathematical universe before the physical universe, the interface between them could be the singularity before the Big Bang. Since there may be later singularities, inside the black holes in the physical universe, we in that case need a new concept for them, since they obviously have not caused the physical universe. If we call interfaces that causes universes, vertical interfaces, interfaces, like black hole singularities, that do not cause universes could be called horizontal interfaces. A horizontal interface, thus, is caused by a new universe but is not causing one.

So, if consciousness, the contents of our sensations, is caused by the body and is causing the experiencing subject,*self* consciousness could be a horizontal interface between body and mind, not causing the body. In this unsophisticated way we have explained our ability to know what we are experiencing and thinking.

4.2.2. How God could know what we have in our minds

As God is the first cause in form of an interface, and an interface between two ontological fields can come in different varieties, perhaps God, too, can be in different kinds of interfaces? Since we only operate with universes and interfaces, that would be the only option in this context.

If we represent a horizontal interface with a horizontal line balancing on a vertical line representing a vertical interface, we could suggest a horizontal *extended* interface being a horizontal interface with the*addition* of the first interface, represented by a slightly bent horizontal line above the representation of the horizontal interface. In the extended interface in this particular case, then, God would be part of our self consciousness, and thereby knowing what we are knowing that we are knowing.

4.2.3. Other forms of omniscience

It would certainly be premature to go on discussing knowing things that are not known otherwise. Perhaps the question, though, also is linked to omnipresence, a property that is discussed next.

4.3. God as omnipresent

Concerning omniscience we saw above that God could be omniscient about our conscious thoughts and experiences if the first cause was part of a hybrid between the first cause and the horizontal interface that is our self consciousness, in each such case. In that particular area we were moving with interfaces; both the first cause and self consciousness were construed as interfaces. Should God be everywhere, “everywhere” apparently should be an interface. Then there would be no “physical” things or any other things of one ontological kind. That is of course an option but is too complicated to analyze in this paper.

4.4. God as creator

God as a creator is straightforward. In relation to the first universe God is defined as the cause of it, and by so being its creator. If there is more than one universe God, as in the case of God being omniscient about our minds, to create those universes, must be part of a hybrid consisting of the first cause and the vertical interface that is between the universes in question.

What that would mean in its details, however, is another story. Concerning the possibility of a mathematical-physical interface, for instance, God would be part of the original singularity. Concerning the body-mind interface, also, God would be part of our conscious experiences.

5. Conclusions

Ontology traditionally has been accounting for things that exist. An alternative would be to try to account for things that are caused. This option opens up for causes that are not “things”. It also opens up for causes to exist without being caused. Ontology, therefore, can go beyond science that deals with “things” and reach what here has been labelled “interfaces”.

One such interface that we have focused here, is the possible first interface causing the first universe. To account for different traditional properties of God we have seen how God as the first cause in form of an interface has been combined with other interfaces. The result is that it seems possible to account for an omniscient God to some degrees and, also, that it could be accounted for that God is the creator of all universes. The prices seem high, though, for such views, whereas God as the first cause has no price tag at all. The issue is more if there is a first cause. In that case we are free to define God as such.

Reference

- Gamper J (2017) On a loophole in causal closure.*Philosophia* 45:631–636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-016-9791-y