Strategies for Stage II of Cosmological Arguments

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Abstract: The following article will examine three argumentative strategies to address a recent topic of debate in the philosophy of religion known as the "Gap Problem." It aims to study the "Stage II" of cosmological arguments, where the goal is to establish the theistic properties or attributes that identify the first cause or necessary being with the concept of God. The unique contribution of this study lies in the formalized and systematic presentation of the various solutions proposed by authors in the philosophical field, synthesizing their central ideas and presenting them in the form of arguments.

Introduction

Cosmological arguments for the existence of God constitute the most popular and studied family of arguments in favor of philosophical theism. They begin with a phenomenon from the natural order (the beginning of the cosmos, contingency, the hierarchy of causality), and reason to the existence of a *first cause*, *necessary being*, or *foundation* of reality that explains this phenomenon. However, starting with the work of William Rowe (1967), philosophers have been careful to identify the two "stages" present in this type of argument:

Stage I: Establishing the existence of a first cause/necessary entity.

Stage II: Establishing that this first cause/necessary entity is God.

Historically, the development of the cosmological argument has focused on establishing Stage I, while Stage II has not received the same attention.[1] Therefore, in this article, we will focus on the study of Stage II, presenting the different approaches and arguments put forth by contemporary philosophers to "close" the gap between these two stages and solve the so-called "Gap Problem."

Is the "Gap Problem" a real problem?

Conceptually, there is a central issue with the so-called "Gap Problem," and that is that it doesn't pose a true problem for the theist. This is because, generally, theistic arguments (in this case, cosmological arguments) are presented as pieces of evidence in favor of theism as a metaphysical worldview. The role of the argument in this case is to demonstrate the *reasonableness* of theism and increase its *probability*, even if Stage II of the argument has not been analyzed.

To illustrate this point, let's use a generic cosmological argument as an example:

1. Something exists.
2. If everything is contingent, then there is no external explanation for contingent things (why contingent things exist).
3. There is an external explanation for contingent things.
4. Therefore, not everything is contingent.
5. Therefore, something non-contingent exists.
6. Therefore, there exists a necessary entity.[2]

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[1] There are some notable exceptions, particularly Thomas Aquinas, who dedicates almost the entire first book of his *Summa Contra Gentiles* to establish the divine attributes of *esse subsistens* (subsisting being). See Thomas Aquinas, Saint. *Summa contra Gentiles I.*

[2] This version of the cosmological argument based on contingency has been taken from Rasmussen, Joshua., 2021. The Argument from Contingency. In Rullof and Horban (eds.) *Contemporary Arguments in Natural Theology: God and Rational Belief.* Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 20.

As we can see, the conclusion of this argument is that a necessary entity exists. This constitutes what is called "Stage I." However, on its own, this argument provides *evidence* in favor of theism since the existence of a necessary entity is expected and better *predicted* under the hypothesis of theism than under naturalism. In Bayesian terms, this could be expressed as $P(C|T) > P(C|{\sim}T)$, where C is the existence of the necessary entity, T is the hypothesis of theism, and ~T is an alternative non-theistic hypothesis. In other words, the existence of a necessary entity is more *likely* under the hypothesis of theism than under alternative hypotheses. This is because theism is the worldview that posits the existence of God, a being that, among other attributes, possesses *necessary existence*. Therefore, given theism, the probability of such a being's existence (given the truth of the worldview) is 100%, while with other hypotheses, the probability of the existence of such a being (given the truth of the worldview) is much lower. For example, under naturalism, the existence of a necessary being is neither *predicted* nor *expected*; on the contrary, under naturalism, the probability of the existence of a necessary entity is very low, almost *zero*.[3]

Therefore, even if the so-called "Stage II" is set aside, the primary conclusions of cosmological arguments provide *evidence* in favor of theism. However, the "Gap Problem" offers an additional perspective on these types of arguments: if we manage to establish or identify theistic *attributes* in this necessary entity, the probability of theism will be even *higher*, as the correct prediction made by the hypothesis will be even more *specific*. Suppose, for example, we manage to establish that this necessary entity is also a personal and omnipotent being. These attributes are predicted 100% by the hypothesis of theism, which further distances us from alternative hypotheses (non-theistic ones). So, Stage II can provide *additional* evidence to strengthen the theistic case, even though strictly speaking, it may *not* be necessary to establish its reasonableness and plausibility as the correct metaphysical worldview *per se*.

Taking this point into account, we will now analyze the strategies proposed by different authors to reinforce the theistic case through Stage II and address the so-called "Gap Problem" in cosmological arguments.

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[3] Certain naturalistic models reject the possibility of the existence of an entity with necessary existence, postulating instead the presence of brute contingency at the most fundamental levels of reality. In these cases, Stage I is sufficient to dismiss such models.

1. Abductive Strategy

The *abductive* strategy aims to establish, through various theoretical criteria, that the best explanation for the *nature* of the necessary entity or first cause implies its identification with God. This approach has been recently advocated by Byerly (2019)[4] and Miksa (2023)[5], and we will now delve into each of their proposals before summarizing each one into arguments.

Explaining necessary existence

This argument has been proposed by Byerly (2019) and consists of analyzing what kind of entity could possess necessary existence. The reasoning begins by posing the question: *Why* does this being or entity (N) have necessary existence? The suggested answer is that this entity is a *perfect* being, that is, a being that possesses *all* perfections, with *necessary existence* being one of them. This theory has the capacity to explain why this entity has necessary existence because its nature includes this property as one of its *constitutive* perfections.

This explanation makes use of the *internal* resources or characteristics of this perfect nature in order to provide a *foundation* for the necessary existence present in this entity. In other words, it succeeds in explaining this property in terms of N's own *internal* nature, which gives it *explanatory power*. However, this theory faces *alternative* rivals that compete to provide a satisfactory explanation for the necessary existence of N. Let's analyze some of them:

(a) *Physical Naturalistic Explanations*: This type of theory postulates the existence of natural entities, such as the inflationary segment theorized in the Standard Model, common objects in current cosmology. These explanations may initially seem attractive due to the *epistemic* support of the standard model in physics and inflation as a mechanism introducing *contingency*. However, they do not successfully explain why entity N possesses necessary existence. This is because *nothing* in the *intrinsic* nature of these natural entities provides the expected explanatory relationship that connects them to the property of existing

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[4] Byerly, T. Ryan, 2019. From a necessary being to a perfect being. *Analysis* 79 (1), pp. 10-17.

[5] Miksa, Ryan, 2023. From Aesthetic Virtues to God: Augmenting Theistic Personal Cause Arguments. *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 7(2)

necessarily. In this particular case, neither the high density, temperature, nor rapid expansion that characterizes the inflationary segment provides *relevant* information to address the question of N's necessary existence. Therefore, this alternative lacks sufficient *explanatory power* to surpass the perfect being theory.

(b) *Exotic-Abstract Naturalistic Explanations*: Another category of naturalistic explanations postulates the existence of exotic or abstract entities with the intention of providing an explanation for the necessary existence of N in terms of a specific *internal* nature. For example, abstract entities like mathematical objects could be candidates to explain necessary existence. In this scenario, if N were constituted as an abstract entity, its *causal inaccessibility* (a property that *characterizes* such objects) would be an internal feature of its nature that could explain why it exists in the way it does. However, despite offering some explanatory advantages over physical naturalistic explanations, this approach has the serious problem of eliminating the *causal role* that entity N has with respect to *contingent* reality. Since Stage I of cosmological arguments establishes that this necessary entity possesses the *causal power* to ground the existence of contingent entities, it is *unacceptable* to postulate that the nature characterizing N is abstract, as it would *eliminate* its explanatory role regarding contingency. Therefore, these abstract explanations do not make good candidates in the face of the perfect being theory, as they *contradict* the explanatory function that N has, as established in cosmological arguments.

(c) *Non-Theistic Supernatural Explanations*: Another type of naturalistic alternative involves postulating supernatural entities that possess an internal nature capable of explaining their necessary existence and grounding the existence of contingency. However, these types of explanations differ from the theory of the perfect being in that the being in question does *not* possess a perfect nature but one *restricted* to having some, but *not* all, perfections. The problem with these proposals is that they tend to be more *complex* and *specific*. To draw an analogy, imagine developing an argument for the existence of a black crow. Now, if we ask why this crow is black, the *type* of explanation we would expect would be in terms of some quality or *internal* property of the nature that *all* crows *share* in common. However, positing that the explanation for this property is that only *some* or *many* (but not all) crows are black is an *ad-hoc* explanation with no independent *motivation*. Additionally, this explanation generates greater overall *complexity* because, in this case, nothing explains why there is this *restriction* in the set of crows. It is simpler to posit a *uniform* nature characterized by the possession

of all perfections. Therefore, non-theistic supernatural explanations do *not* provide significant *explanatory* advantages.

Based on this, the theory of the perfect being emerges as the most *satisfactory*, simple, and *explanatory powerful* explanation compared to naturalistic rival explanations. Postulating that the nature of N is perfect provides us with *sufficient* explanatory resources to establish *why* it has necessary existence (since it possesses *all* perfections, including existence in its most perfect form), as well as its *role* as the cause or ultimate foundation of contingency, as perfection includes the necessary *causal power* to fulfill this *explanatory* function. Thus, we can establish that, from an *abductive* standpoint, the best theory about the nature of N is the perfect being theory. Therefore, N is a *perfect being*. Here is the formalized argument:

1. *N* has necessary existence (Stage I).
2. The best explanation for why N has this perfection is that N is a perfect being.
3. Therefore, *N* is a perfect being.
4. But (3) implies being God.
5. **Therefore, *N* is God.**

The Aesthetic virtues of Theism

This second abductive strategy, proposed by Miksa (2023), involves analyzing the *aesthetic virtues* of causal theories in cosmological arguments. When we talk about aesthetic virtues, we refer to a type of *theoretical* criterion that allows us to compare and weigh various theories in the *philosophical* and *scientific* fields and infer which one is the best explanation for a certain phenomenon. Specifically, aesthetic virtues consist of the criteria of beauty, simplicity, and unification, as described below:

(B) *Beauty*: The theory (T) results in *greater* aesthetic consistency than its rivals.

(S) *Simplicity*: T explains the *same* facts as rivals but with *less* theoretical content.

(U) *Unification*: T explains more *types* of facts than rivals with the *same* amount of theoretical content.

These principles carry some *epistemic* weight when comparing and deciding among rival theories because they provide *reasons* to prefer certain *virtuous* explanations over others. In the case of cosmological arguments, Stage I concludes with the existence of a necessary entity N, which plays a causal explanatory role in relation to the phenomenon of contingency. However, this conclusion opens the door to a wide range of theories about the *nature* of this entity N. In this context, the use of the previously developed aesthetic virtues allows us to *compare* the different types of theories and decide which one *better* aligns with these criteria.

Now, theories about the nature of N can be essentially classified into two categories: the theory of the *imperfect* cause (IC) and the theory of the *perfect* cause (PC). The first category includes all explanations that postulate an essentially *limited* nature in N, whether in terms of power, knowledge, moral status, or another type of *perfection*, regardless of the non-logical *restrictions* posited and the *degree* of theoretical limitation theorized (even if it is slight). On the other hand, the second category consists of postulating a *perfect* nature in N, and therefore, the existence of a *maximally* perfect being, *without* non-logical restrictions on its fundamental properties.

Considering these criteria, we will make a comparative analysis of PC versus IC as follows:

(a) *The Beauty of PC versus IC*: Beauty is a *primitive* and intuitive notion that, in this context, involves forming an *aesthetic* judgment about a theory. Regarding PC, it seems clear that its beauty as a theory is superior to IC due to the way its qualities are formed and grouped in relation to a single concept, *perfection*. Whereas IC postulates the *isolated* existence of a series of attributes or properties that are not related or grouped in the same way. However, an objector could argue that beauty is irrelevant as an epistemic criterion when deciding between theories since its nature is fundamentally *relative* and personal. But even the most ardent relativists make non-relative judgments about other disciplines or activities (such as in music, nature, or certain objects). The problem with this persistent rejection is that it leads to certain *absurd* conclusions, such as judging random and rudimentary noise as equally beautiful as the music of a privileged artist like Beethoven.[6] The point is that, with sufficient information and regular

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[6] Of course, this does not imply that there cannot be disagreements regarding certain judgments about beauty. But even in these contexts, even if there are no precise and certain principles, such disagreements can be arbitrated and resolved without implying relativism.

cognitive abilities, an individual makes *rational* judgments about aesthetics, so this criterion can be used in this context to lean towards the PC theory over IC.

(b) *The Simplicity of PC versus IC*: The criterion of simplicity involves analyzing the *parsimony* (i.e., how many entities are posited) and *elegance* (how many basic theoretical principles are required) of a theory. All else *being equal*, this principle inclines us to prefer simpler theories, i.e., those that postulate the *fewest* and simplest types of entities and theoretical principles possible. In the case of PC, it posits the existence of a single entity (N) with a *single* primitive property or characteristic: *perfection*, from which all other attributes or perfections are linked and grounded. In other words, the theory asserts the existence of only *one* entity and only *one* primitive property. On the other hand, IC does not characterize N as a perfect being, so its *limited* properties (such as power or knowledge, among others) are all primitive properties that cannot be explained, grounded, or reduced to another primary property, as is the case with PC. However, an objector could question whether perfection *implies* or entails the possession of other properties, which would not give any comparative advantage to PC over IC. But the criterion of simplicity itself leans us toward preferring a PC theory where attributes are *grounded* in the property of perfection, rather than a PC theory where all perfections are *isolated* and primitive attributes. Furthermore, even if this were true, PC maintains a *higher* level of simplicity in *individual* terms compared to IC: that is, by positing properties to a *maximal* degree without limitation, PC is considerably simpler than positing *limited*, finite, and exceptional properties, as done by IC. Scientific disciplines provide a practical example where hypotheses postulating laws *without* exceptions or maximal degrees of certain properties tend to be preferred and *prima facie* more probable explanations.

Additionally, elegance is another relevant criterion when conducting a comparative analysis of simplicity: concerning PC, the theory can be described using only one primitive *term*, *perfection*. This is also known as ideological qualitative parsimony, an epistemic virtue possessed by theories that postulate the *fewest* primitive *ideological* types, i.e., concepts that *resist* being defined by other concepts. In this case, PC exhibits an *ideal* case of ideological parsimony, as only one ideological concept is needed to describe the theory, and nothing more. However, IC presents much greater ideological *complexity* since it multiplies the number of primitive types considerably. Since IC *cannot* be reduced to a single ideological concept, it necessarily resorts to the use of *subconcepts* or a *longer* structure of primitives. Therefore, PC proves to be a much *simpler* theory (in terms of parsimony and elegance) than IC.

(c) *Unification*: This final criterion analyzes the *explanatory* simplicity of a theory, that is, how many types of facts it can explain with a given amount of theoretical content. Naturally, the *more* types of facts a theory can explain with the same theoretical content, the *greater* its unification. In the case of PC, perfection has the advantage (as seen in the previous argument) of being able to explain to some extent why N is a necessary being, in addition to explaining the existence of contingent reality. However, IC does *not* offer an *internal* explanation in terms of the nature of N for the necessity of its existence. Therefore, PC can explain *more* types of facts with the same theoretical content. Additionally, PC offers great explanatory *simplicity* when addressing *other* types of phenomena. For example, if we consider the fine-tuning of the universe, the existence of objective morality, or other *aspects* of reality, this theory possesses the *flexibility* and the *necessary* qualities to explain these facts, appealing solely to the perfect nature of N. However, IC is limited to explaining a very narrow *range* of facts, and when used as an explanation for other phenomena, its theoretical content is *insufficient* to address them satisfactorily and *non-ad-hoc*. Therefore, PC proves to be a theory with greater explanatory *unification* than IC.

In conclusion, the theory that postulates the nature of N as *perfect* better aligns with the described aesthetic virtues: it possesses greater *beauty*, *simplicity*, and *unification* than rival theories that postulate a limited, *imperfect*, or mixed nature. Thus, PC emerges as the *best* explanation of the nature of N in terms of theoretical superiority. Therefore, N is a *perfect* being. Below is the formal argument:

1. *N* has necessary existence (Stage I).
2. The theory of the perfect being is the most beautiful, simple, and unified explanation of the nature of *N*.
3. Therefore, the best theory about the nature of *N* is the theory of the perfect being.
4. But (3) implies being God.
5. Therefore, *N* is God.

2. Deductive Strategy

The *deductive* strategy aims to establish, in a strictly metaphysical and logically deductive manner, that the necessary entity or first cause of Stage I possesses certain theistic attributes that identify it with God. This approach has been

historically developed by medieval philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, or Avicenna,[7] and more recently by philosophers like Rasmussen (2009), Pruss (2009), or Gellman (2000). Below, we will present some of the contemporary proposals that have been developed in philosophical literature.

Personal Agency

Argument I

One of the essential attributes that can be established in Stage II is the agency of the necessary entity, i.e., its *volitional* capacity to act freely. To establish this characteristic, Rasmussen (2009) argues that the causal connection between contingent substances and the necessary entity (let's call it "N") suggests the presence of a non-deterministic *volitional* act that would establish the *personality* of the necessary being. To establish this attribute, Rasmussen makes use of the following principle of causality:

(C1)   Every set of contingent intrinsic properties or relations can be causally explained.[8]

This principle (similar to those proposed in Stage I) states that for every contingent *property* or contingent *relation* present in a concrete object/substance, it is *possible* that this exemplification can be causally explained.

The motivation behind C1 is highly intuitive and justified, and to illustrate it, we will use the following scenario: suppose there are two spherical objects, one red and the other blue. Both objects exist *contingently* and exemplify their colors *contingently*, meaning that neither their existence nor their colors are necessary, as they could have not *existed* or exemplified a *different* color. Naturally, the following question arises: why do these objects exist, and why do they have the colors they have? An explanation in *causal* terms for the *contingent* existence, properties, and

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[7] See Thomas Aquinas, Saint. *Summa Contra Gentiles I*; Wolter, Allan, O.F.M, 1987. *Duns Scotus: Philosophical Writings*. Hackett Publishing Company; Avicenna. *The Metaphysics of The Healing*. Translated by Marmura, Michael E. Brigham Young University Press, 2005.

[8] Note the use of the modal operator of possibility ($\Diamond$) when it is asserted that "can be causally explained," making C1 exceptionally *modest*. Also, C1 presents a slight modification that simplifies the one presented by Rasmussen.

relations of both objects should be metaphysically possible. This is what C1 claims.

The second principle that will be used states that:

(D1)   For every finite attribute A, where A consists of possessing a certain property D to the degree μ, and any concrete object x that has A, there is a degree such that it is possible for x to have D to the degree $\mu - e$ or $\mu + e$.

What D1 states is that for any *finite* attribute possessed by a concrete object/substance, that attribute will be *contingent* since it could have been possessed to a greater or lesser degree. To illustrate this, we could imagine a certain object with a measurable finite power. Suppose this object possesses 100 units of power x. Therefore, this degree of power is contingent because it could have been possessed to a degree of $100 + e$ or $100 - e$ (for example, 99.999 or 100.001). Therefore, the power possessed by this object will be *contingent* as it could have been exemplified to a *different* degree.

Based on these principles, Rasmussen presents the following strategy to demonstrate that N is a personal agent: From Stage I of the cosmological argument, we know that N is a necessary entity that explains the *existence* of all *contingent* concrete things/objects that exist (let's call this set of things "L"). But if N does not possess the ability to act *freely* (i.e., if it were not a personal agent), then the mere existence of N would be a sufficient condition for the existence of L. Since N is a necessary entity, the existence of L would also be necessary. However, this is contradictory because L is, by definition, *contingent*. Therefore, N cannot be an impersonal entity.

However, one could propose an impersonal *non-deterministic* alternative, meaning that even though N is not a personal agent, the explanation it provides for the existence of L is *indeterministic*. This would imply that N has a fixed *degree* of probability, denoted as H, of causing the existence of L. However, due to principle (D1), this probabilistic property is *contingent* because it could have been possessed to a different degree. But according to (C1), this probabilistic property can be causally explained. This leads to a *circular* problem since N would need to possess a probabilistic property to *causally* explain the contingent properties and relations, including the probabilistic properties that N itself possesses in the first

place.[9] This problem arises from the assumption that N is an *impersonal* entity that explains the existence of L in a non-deterministic way. Therefore, N cannot be an impersonal entity with probabilistic properties to causally explain L.

Because of this, the only remaining option is that N is a personal agent. Since its causal activity is not *impersonal*, it follows that N is a being with *volition* and free will. Thus, the explanation for the existence of L will be in terms of a *personal* agent. Below is the formal argument:

1. *N* is a necessary entity that explains the existence of a specific *L* in *w* (Stage I).
2. *N* is a (i) personal or (ii) impersonal entity.
3. Suppose that (ii) *N* is an impersonal entity (*reductio*).
4. If (ii), then the explanation for the existence of *L* can be (a) impersonal deterministic or (b) impersonal non-deterministic.
5. Suppose (a) the explanation is impersonal deterministic.
6. Therefore, the mere existence of *N* is a sufficient condition for the existence of *L* in *w*.
7. Therefore, the existence of *L* is metaphysically necessary since *N* is a necessary being.
8. But the existence of *L* is contingent (by definition of "set L").
9. But (8) contradicts (7).
10. Therefore, the explanation is (b) impersonal non-deterministic.
11. If the explanation is impersonal non-deterministic, then *N* explains the existence of *L* under a fixed probability degree.
12. But if *N* has the property of causing the existence of *L* under a fixed probability degree *H*, it is possible that *N* could have that property to the degree *H+e* or *H–e* (principle (D1)).
13. Therefore, that property of *N* is contingent.
14. Therefore, that property can be causally explained.
15. But *N* is the cause of all contingent things and properties in *w* (Stage I and principle (C1)).
16. But then the probabilistic property of *N* is ultimately explained by the causal activity of *N*.

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[9] More specifically, for any set M of contingent properties that includes the contingent properties of N, N could not explain M because it would be circular. Rasmussen refers to these sets of contingent properties and relations as "gridscapes."

17. But (16) is a circular explanation since the probabilistic property of N is explained by the causal activity of N, which requires a probabilistic property in the first place.
18. Therefore, N cannot have a fixed probabilistic property of causing L.
19. But (18) contradicts (11).
20. Therefore, the explanation is neither (a) impersonal deterministic nor (b) impersonal non-deterministic.
21. But (20) contradicts (4).
22. Therefore, the supposition (3) is false.
23. Therefore, N is not an impersonal entity.
24. Therefore, (i) N is a personal entity.

Argument II

The following argument developed by Pruss (2009) to establish *agency* involves analyzing the type of *explanation* that the necessary being provides for the existence of contingent reality, specifically, what kind of *causal* activity allowed the *existence* of the contingent. When we examine the possible types of explanations, we encounter three distinct categories: *scientific* explanations in terms of contingent laws, conditions, and causes; *personal* explanations in terms of agents and their volition; and *conceptual* explanations.

Now, what type of explanation does the necessary being provide for the existence of contingent reality? Pruss argues that a conceptual explanation is not viable because the existence of contingent substances in reality cannot be *conceptually* explained by something other than the substances *themselves*. This is because they are *self-sufficient*, and even if we allow that they can be conceptually explained by their constituent *parts*, those parts themselves are substantial, leading to the same problem. Therefore, this option is ruled out. With respect to scientific explanations, the entities involved in such explanations are laws and *contingent* conditions. However, this is not possible in this scenario because, by definition, the necessary being does *not* exist contingently. Therefore, given this triple disjunction, the only remaining option is an explanation in personal terms. This implies that the necessary being explains the existence of contingent reality through its *volitional* activity, making it an intentional *agent*. Here is the formal argument:

1. *N* has necessary existence (Stage I).
2. The explanation for *L* is (a) scientific, (b) conceptual, or (c) personal.
3. Suppose (a) the explanation for *L* is scientific.
4. Scientific explanations occur in terms of contingent causes.
5. Therefore, the explanation for *L* is a contingent cause or causes.
6. But (5) contradicts (1) since *N* has necessary existence.
7. Therefore, (b) the explanation for *L* is conceptual.
8. However, the substances in *L* cannot be conceptually explained by something other than the substances themselves.
9. Therefore, (c) the explanation for *L* is personal.
10. Therefore, *N* is a personal being.

Argument III

Another argument to establish personal agency has been proposed by Craig (2008), and it consists of analyzing the *type* of entity that possesses or fulfills the characteristics associated with the necessary entity.

Particularly, Stage I establishes the existence of a necessary entity N with certain *causal* powers, from which the existence of contingent reality is grounded. However, given its nature, this entity must be essentially *immaterial* because material composition implies a certain level of *contingency* in terms of spatial location, composition, and quantity of matter, contrary to its necessary essence. But given these properties (necessity and immateriality), the *types* of entities that fit this description are reduced to only two: *abstract* objects or *minds*.

The first type, abstract objects, are immaterial and necessary entities that exist *outside* the *concrete* realm, understood as the *causal* network among objects that have the capacity to affect each other in some of their properties or relations. On the other hand, mental entities are those that possess *intentionality* and *causal* capacity.

Now, since N is the *cause* or ultimate foundation of contingent reality, it follows that it must possess some kind of causal *power* or *explanatory* capacity concerning contingent objects; otherwise, it could *not* be the ultimate causal explanation of them, contrary to the conclusion of Stage I. But if this is the case, N cannot be an abstract entity, as by definition abstract objects are *outside* the concrete realm and, therefore, causally *inert*. Due to this, the type of entity that corresponds to the nature of N is *mental* entities. Therefore, N is an *intentional* agent with mental capacities. Here is the argument in formal notation:

1. N is a necessary entity that explains the existence of contingent reality (Stage I).
2. If (1), then N is immaterial (since materiality implies contingency).
3. If (2), then N is (a) an abstract entity or (b) a mind.
4. Suppose N is (a) an abstract entity.
5. But abstract objects are causally inert.
6. But (5) contradicts (1), as in that case, N could not be the ultimate cause of contingency.
7. Therefore, N is (b) a mind.

Unity

Argument IV

Unity or uniqueness is the status or attribute of existing in a unique and irreplaceable manner, one of the distinctive features of monotheism in which this quality is attributed to God. However, theistic cosmological arguments in Stage I establish the existence of a necessary entity and often appeal to the principle of *Occam's Razor* or similar principles to argue that the hypothesis of a single necessary being is the *simplest* and most *parsimonious* way to explain contingent reality. They argue that postulating more entities of this kind *diminishes* the plausibility and simplicity of the hypothesis, making the singular existence of the necessary being the most reasonable position.

However, there are other arguments that go further and attempt to establish logically that the existence of more than one necessary being (*a se*) is impossible. The present argument that we will develop has been formulated by Gellman (2000), and it aims to demonstrate the contradiction that would arise from postulating two "creators." Suppose there are two necessary beings called N_1 and N_2. Each of them can be called a "creator" under the following definition:

(CR)   N is a creator being in w $=_{def}$ N is a necessary being whose causal power explains the existence of all contingent beings in w.

This characterization arises from the conclusion of the Stage I of cosmological arguments, in which such a necessary being is the ultimate explanation of contingency in a possible world. Therefore, we would have the creator being N_1, responsible for the contingent reality in w_1, and the creator being N_2, responsible for the contingent reality of w_2. Advancing with the argument, Gellman argues

that the causal powers of both beings will be essential, that is, not contingent, so they will possess them in every possible world. To establish this point, he uses the following iterative principle:

(PI) If x possesses the power to obtain the power to do A, then x already possesses that power to do A.

This principle seems self-evident, and it states that if a being has the capacity to exercise a certain power P, even if such exercise requires an intermediate instance, the being in question already possesses power P. Now, suppose that a creator being N possesses its causal powers *contingently*. Let's call the set of all its contingent powers P. Due to the contingency of P, its existence or instantiation in N will *require* an explanation. But, since the creator being N explains the existence of everything and every contingent property, it follows that N is the ultimate *explanation* of P, its contingent powers. Therefore, N must possess some power *distinct* from P, that is, a power P' through which it obtained P, its contingent powers. But since P encompasses *all* of its *contingent* powers, it follows that P' must be an *essential* power, and due to the iterative principle (PI), that power will include or contain all its contingent powers. But this *contradicts* the initial hypothesis that N possesses its powers contingently. Therefore, N possesses all its powers *essentially*.[10]

Once the essential nature of the powers of N_1 and N_2 is established, Gellman proceeds to construct a dilemma based on the concept of *repelling power*:

(R) x possesses repelling power over y in w $=_{\text{def}}$ x can prevent y from creating certain contingent beings in w.

And the dilemma is as follows: Does N_2 have *repelling* power over N_1 in w_1? In other words, can N_2 prevent N_1 from creating the contingent beings that it creates in w_1? This dilemma can only be answered in two ways: yes or no. Let's see what happens in each of these options:

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[10] Another simpler way to establish this point is as follows: If N is a *primary* necessary being in w (in the sense that every contingent thing or substance is logically *posterior* or derived from the causal power of N), then *nothing* external to N can explain its contingent powers. But every contingent property can (at least) have a causal (external) explanation for its existence or instantiation. Therefore, a contradiction arises in which its powers cannot and can have an explanation. Therefore, N *cannot* have contingent powers but *essential* ones.

Affirmative case: Suppose that N_2 indeed *has* repelling power over N_1 in w_1. In that case, N_2, contingently, chooses not to exercise that power over N_1 since N_1 is the explanation for all the contingent beings in w_1, and for this reason, its causal activity should not have been interrupted. Now, if N_1 is indeed *responsible* for the existence of all contingent beings in w_1, then N_1 possesses the power to *determine* the contingent reality that will exist in w_1, and this implies that N_1 can prevent a different contingent reality from being actualized than the one it creatively decided. Therefore, N_1 *has* repelling power over N_2 in w_1. But this contradicts the initial assumption, so N_2 has and does not have repelling power over N_1. *Contradiction*.

Negative case: Now suppose that N_2 does not have repelling power over N_1 in w_1. If that is the case, then the absence of that power is *not* contingent but *essential*: due to the principle (PI) stated earlier, neither N_1 nor N_2 can possess contingent powers, only essential ones. Therefore, if some power is absent in N_1 or N_2, that absence is essential; that power is *absent* in *every* possible world. But if that is the case, N_2 does not have repelling power over N_1 *even in* w_2. However, N_2 is responsible for the existence of the contingent reality in w_2, so it must have *repelling* power over N_1 in w_2 because it has the ability to *determine* the contingent reality that will exist in w_2 and can *prevent* a different contingent reality from being actualized than the one it creatively decided. But this means that N_2 actually has repelling power over N_1, and therefore, it must have it *essentially* in every possible world. But this contradicts the initial assumption, so N_2 has and does not have repelling power over N_1. *Contradiction*.

In this way, by leading the disjunction to *absurdity*, Gellman manages to demonstrate that if we were to admit the existence of two creator beings N_1 and N_2, it would lead us to a contradictory scenario where N_1 has repelling power over N_2, and N_2 has repelling power over N_1 *essentially*. Therefore, the existence of two necessary beings (*a se*) with essential causal powers (as established in Stage I) is *impossible*; there can only be *one*.[11] Here is the formal argument:

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[11] An interesting consequence of this argument is that the contingency of every possible world is explained by the action of a *single* creator being, N, something akin to the usual concept of *omnipotence*. Due to this, it could avoid a possible objection that the argument initially assumes that there is only one necessary being explaining contingent reality in each possible world since the existence of a "committee" of necessary beings that together explain a contingent reality implies the possibility of *conflicts* in creating, and ultimately *impotence*.

- *Set L = L* is the totality of contingent things and their properties (attributes) in a possible world *w*.
- *Creator being N = N* is a necessary being (*a se*) that explains the existence of *L* in *w*.
- *Repelling power = x* possesses repelling power over y when x can prevent y from creating a certain *L* in *w*.

1. Suppose there are two creator beings, N_1 and N_2, which explain the existence of L_1 and L_2 in possible worlds w_1 and w_2, respectively (*reductio*).
2. N_1 and N_2 possess their powers essentially (if they were contingent, their own causal activity would explain their powers, which is circular).
3. If (2) then N_2 (i) has a repelling power over N_1 in w_1 or (ii) does not have a repelling power over N_1 in w_1.
4. Suppose that (i) N_2 has a repelling power over N_1 in w_1.
5. Since N_1 is, by definition, a creator being in w_1, the existence of L in w_1 depends on its causal activity.
6. Therefore, N_1 has a repelling power over N_2 in w_1 since N_1 can prevent N_2 from actualizing a different *L* in w_1.
7. But (6) contradicts (4).
8. Therefore, (ii) N_2 does not have a repelling power over N_1 in w_1.
9. But given (2), N_2 does not possess a repelling power over N_1 essentially (not contingently).
10. Therefore, N_2 does not have a repelling power over N_1 in any possible world (including w_2).
11. Since N_2 is, by definition, a creator being in w_2, the existence of *L* in w_2 depends on its causal activity.
12. Therefore, N_2 has a repelling power over N_1 in w_2 since N_2 can prevent N_1 from actualizing a different *L* in w_2.
13. But (12) contradicts (10).
14. Therefore, from premise (3) arises a contradiction (since N_2 has and does not have a repelling power over N_1 in w_1, which is absurd).
15. Therefore, the assumption (1) is false.
16. Therefore, there cannot be more than one creator being *N*.

Argument V

This argument originates from the work of the great Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Book 1, Chapter 42), which has been analyzed and expanded upon in a contemporary context by Kretzmann (1997). It is an argument that examines the concept of necessary existence and establishes that the multiplicity of beings with this quality is *impossible*. This argument is very useful because it allows us to rule out the *possibility* of a plurality of necessary beings (*a se*) without reference to any additional attribute or characteristic.

The argument begins by considering a scenario in which two necessary beings, N_1 and N_2, exist. Since they are two *distinct* and differentiated beings, their "individuation" is due to a property or characteristic that distinguishes them, such that $N_1 \neq N_2$.[12] Now, this property can either be (a) accidental or (b) a property of the necessity of their being: both options are logically *exhaustive*, meaning there is no third available option. Therefore, the argument starts with a main *disjunction* that will *branch* out into other options, depending on the path we take.

Let's begin by analyzing option (a):

(a) *Difference by an accidental property*: If what constitutes the difference between N_1 and N_2 is an accidental property D, then this property must have some explanation for its existence or instantiation. This follows from applying the *principle of sufficient reason*, as used in Stage I or as previously explained in other arguments like (C1). Now, the causal explanation of the accidental property D could either be (i) due to the essence of N_1 or N_2 or (ii) due to an entity external to N_1 or N_2. Suppose it's due to (i). But in that case, and since they share the same *essence* of necessary existence, this property will be *possessed* by both N_1 and N_2, so D does not serve as a *distinguishing* property between them. Therefore, D is explained by (ii) an entity external to N_1 or N_2. However, in that case, *neither*

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[12] In this argument, when we talk about properties, we refer to *real* or *intrinsic* properties, inherent to the *being* in question, and not *external* or *relational* properties with respect to other objects. For example, being "the creator of heaven and earth" does not constitute an example of *intrinsic* property but an extrinsic or relational one. Likewise, these types of contingent extrinsic properties will not serve to differentiate two necessary beings, as in that case, there will be a possible world where N_1 exemplifies that property, and N_2 does not, and vice versa, so they cannot be differentiated under this criterion. This means that the only basis for distinguishing two objects or beings is based on their *individual essence* (or intrinsic properties). On the impossibility of differentiating two deities based on an extrinsic contingent property, see Zagzebski, Linda, 1989. Christian Monotheism. *Faith and Philosophy*.

N_1 nor N_2 will be beings with necessary existence (*a se*) because in this case, their existence as two different beings *depends* on an *external* cause that causally explains this distinguishing property D, which contradicts their ontological *independence*. Therefore, the part (a) of the disjunction is *false*.

Now, let's analyze option (b):

(b) *Difference by a property of the necessity of their being:* If what differentiates N_1 from N_2 is an essential property D, then this property could either be (i) common to the essence of necessary existence or (ii) something that distinguishes them into two distinct species. If (i), then this property *cannot* serve as the *difference* between N_1 and N_2, as both share the same *essence* of necessary existence, so they both possess the *same* property D. Kretzmann uses the example of the property of being "animated." This property is present in all beings that share an *animal* essence, so it is of no use in distinguishing (for example) between a tiger and a worm. Therefore, the essential property D is (ii) something that differentiates N_1 and N_2 into two distinct species. In this case, D_1 would be the property that *defines* species E_1, and D_2 would *define* species E_2. Just as animals can be divided into *species* (tigers or worms, to use the previous example), necessary beings could also be divided into two species, in this case, E_1 and E_2.

In this scenario, a necessary being does not exist simply and *directly* as such (necessarily), but it must exist as E_1 or E_2, with a *distinguishing* property (D_1 or D_2) that *defines* it. This creates the problem that such a necessary being depends on something *external* to the essence of necessary existence (i.e., a distinguishing property) that is *neither derived* from that essence nor *grounded* in it but is a property related in a merely *contingent* way to its necessary essence. However, this contradicts the very notion of necessary existence because in this case, such a being *depends* on a property *disconnected* from necessary existence to exist individually. In other words, the *essence* of necessary existence would *not* be *sufficient* for the existence of a necessary being, as something *additional* and *distinct* from it is required for the individuation and existence of a necessary being, which *contradicts* its independence. Therefore, the part (b) of the disjunction is *false*.

From this argument, it is demonstrated that the assumption that there is more than one necessary being (*a se*) is *false*, as it generates *contradictions* with the concept of necessary existence in all *possible* cases. Below is the formal representation of the argument:

1. Suppose that there are two necessary beings, N_1 and N_2 (*reductio*).
2. Therefore, N_1 and N_2 differ either (a) by some property of the necessity of their being or (b) by some accidental property.
3. Suppose that N_1 and N_2 differ by (b) some accidental property.
4. If (3), then the cause of this accidental property is either (i) the necessary essence or (ii) something external.
5. Suppose that the cause of the distinguishing accidental property is (i) the necessary essence.
6. But if (i), then this accidental property will be present in both N_1 and N_2, as they both share the same necessary essence.
7. But (6) contradicts (5).
8. Therefore, the accidental property is caused by (ii) something external.
9. But if (ii), then the existence of N_1 and N_2 depends on an external cause that distinguishes them, contradicting their necessary existence.
10. Therefore, (i) and (ii) are false.
11. Therefore, the assumption (3) is false.
12. Therefore, N_1 and N_2 differ by (a) some property of the necessity of their being.
13. If (13), then this distinguishing property will be either (iii) something included in the common necessary nature or (iv) something that distinguishes the two natures into two species.
14. Suppose that the distinguishing property is (iii) something included in the common necessary nature.
15. But if (iii), then this property will be common to both beings with necessary existence.
16. But (16) contradicts (15).
17. Therefore, the distinguishing property is (iv) something that distinguishes the two natures into two species.
18. But if (iv), then N_1 will possess a property D_1 that distinguishes it from N_2, and N_2 will possess a property D_2 that distinguishes it from N_1.
19. But then, N_1 and N_2 will depend on these external properties for their differentiation, contradicting their necessary existence.
20. Therefore, (i), (ii), (iii), and (iv) are false.
21. Therefore, the assumption (1) is false.
22. Therefore, there cannot be more than one necessary being N.

Argument VI

The following argument is inspired by the medieval Christian philosopher John Duns Scotus, particularly from his work *De Primo Principio* (Treatise on the First Principle), and it has been recently studied by O'Connor (1996). It attempts to analyze the consequences of what would happen if a kind of necessary existence allowed for *multiple* instances, that is, the possibility of more than one exemplification of that nature in various individuals.

To begin, the argument starts with the assumption that indeed necessary existence, as a kind, admits *multiplicity*. Now, if that is the case, then concerning the kind itself, there can be nothing *intrinsic* that limits the *possibility* of instances to a particular finite number of beings. Clearly, this applies to *all* kinds, regardless of their type. It seems that, concerning kinds, there is nothing inherent in them that makes it *impossible* for there to be a limited number x of instances. Of course, given various *external* factors, the existence of an infinite number of individuals of a particular kind could be *causally* impossible, but what this argument is examining are not these extrinsic conditions but the kind itself in *isolation* and its potential to admit instances *indefinitely*.

Now, it follows from this that if a kind of necessary existence allows for an infinite number of instances, then there effectively exists an actual infinite number of necessary beings. This is not controversial and indeed follows from the very *definition* of necessary beings: they exist in *all* possible worlds, not just in some. Due to this, and unlike any contingent kind, if a kind of necessary beings admits the metaphysical possibility of its existence in an infinite form, then (and using the S5 axiom of modal logic) an infinite number of necessary beings (i.e., particular instances of the kind) *exist* in all possible worlds.

But here arises an obvious problem, namely, the existence of an infinite actual number of concrete objects is metaphysically *impossible*. This problem has been well-known from medieval thinkers to our times, and it has been illustrated in many different ways through paradoxes and various scenarios that, while allowing for the possibility of an infinite actual number of concrete things, would lead to a metaphysical *absurdity*. Below, I will present a simple way to illustrate the issue and justify this point:

The impossibility of an actual concrete infinite

Suppose we have an *infinite* group of people, each with a Christmas gift. Let's also assume that *all* the gifts are essentially the same (same size, content, shape, etc.). Now, each person places their gift in front of them on the ground, and then they take another gift as follows: person 1 takes the gift of person 2, person 2 takes the gift of person 4, person 4 takes the gift of person 8, and so on, with person n taking the gift of person 2n. What will happen in this scenario is that *all* the people will end up with a gift, and yet there will *still be* an infinite number of gifts left on the ground. However, now, if all the people put the gifts *back* on the ground and person 1 takes back the gift that was originally theirs, and so on, with person n taking back the gift that belonged to person n, we will see that in this case, there will be *no* gifts left on the ground, and *everyone* will have a gift in their hands.

Scenario 1

Taken gifts: infinite

Gifts left on the ground: infinite

X, X, X, X, X, X...

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...

X, X, X, X, X, X...

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...
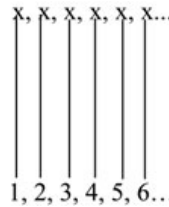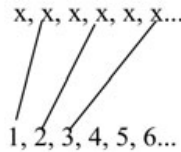
Scenario 2

Taken gifts: infinite

Gifts left on the ground: zero

But this is *absurd*: in one scenario, an infinite number of *remaining* gifts are left on the ground, and all people have a gift in their hands, and in the other scenario, no gifts are left on the ground, and everyone has a gift in their hands. But how? If all people took just one gift for themselves, how can it be that by performing the same action of taking back a gift (but in a different arrangement), a different number of gifts remains on the ground? What is happening here is a violation of a basic metaphysical principle, which is that numbers do not have *causal* power: simply modifying the quantity of objects in a set does *not* change the causal capacities of that set.

For example, suppose a certain thing x has zero mass. In this case, the quantity of objects x will be irrelevant regarding the measurement of its weight, as whether there is one, two, or a hundred objects x with zero mass, it will *not* change the fact that the set of objects has no mass, nor will it add new *properties* beyond the qualities inherent to the object itself. But in this scenario of infinite Christmas gifts, it seems that the presence of an *infinite* number of objects actually

affects the causal capacity of the set of objects itself. However, this is *impossible* since the *causal* capacities of a set of objects depend on its *qualities* and characteristics (of the object itself), not on the number of objects. Therefore, the existence of an actual infinite number of concrete objects is metaphysically *impossible*.

Therefore, since the *kind* of necessary existence, if it were to allow multiplicity, would generate the actual existence of *infinite* necessary beings, it follows that the initial assumption is *false*: there cannot be more than *one* instance of the kind of necessary existence, and therefore, there can only be a *single* necessary being (*a se*). However, a possible objection to this argument could be based on the assumption that the multiplicity of a kind can potentially allow for infinite instances.

An objector could argue that perhaps only the instantiation of the kind in two individuals is possible. Perhaps only two necessary beings can exist, neither more nor less. The problem with this type of suggestion (that perhaps only a *limited* number of instances of a kind are possible) is that it would violate the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*. To illustrate the issue, imagine that there are only two necessary beings, N_1 and N_2. Then the question arises: Why has this common nature (kind) been particularized into *two* instances, and not three, or four, etc.? It seems that admitting a multiplicity of instances implies *contingency*. And because of this, there must be an *explanation* for this existential fact. But as we have seen, nothing in their *common* nature dictates or explains why this is the case, nor can an external explanation to N_1 and N_2 explain this fact, as in that case, *neither* of them would be necessary beings (*a se*), but their existence would be *derived* or dependent on something external.

Therefore, the argument concludes that necessary existence (*a se*) does not allow for *multiplicity* of individuated instances but can only have a single necessary being. Here is the formal representation of the argument:

1. Suppose that more than one necessary being *N* can exist (*reductio*).
2. If a kind is capable of existing in more than one individual, then concerning the kind itself, it is potentially capable of existing in an infinite number of individuals.
3. Therefore, there can potentially be an infinite number of necessary beings.
4. But what is necessary must exist in every possible world (S5).
5. Therefore, there are infinite necessary beings.

6. However, the actual existence of infinite concrete objects is impossible.
7. But (6) contradicts (5).
8. Therefore, the assumption (1) is false.
9. Therefore, there cannot be more than one necessary being *N*.

Omnipotence

Argument VII

The attribute of omnipotence is another relevant aspect of philosophical theism, common to all models concerning the nature of God. The following argument is inspired by Duns Scotus and aims to establish, based on the creative act of the necessary being, that its causal power is *infinite* or *maximal*. Rasmussen (2009) has extended the argument using modal logic and possible worlds semantics, allowing for a formulation of the argument in light of contemporary metaphysics.

The argument begins with an initial reasoning about contingent reality, which states that for any *set* of contingent entities L, there will always be another set L' that requires a *greater* difficulty or causal *power* to actualize. This first premise is not controversial because there will naturally be a *metaphysical* possibility that a certain set of contingent concrete objects could include a *greater* number of objects. Extending this idea, it concludes that there is *no limit* to the difficulty of actualizing a certain contingent set:

(M)   For every set of contingent concrete objects L, there is a set L' that requires greater power to actualize.

Since Stage I establishes that the necessary being N is the ultimate *cause* or *foundation* of contingent reality, it follows that N is responsible for the *existence* of the contingent set L in the actual world. However, for every contingent reality in every possible world, given the necessary existence of N and its causal connection with contingency, every contingent set L' in every possible world w' will ultimately be a product of N's creative act. In conjunction with the principle (M), it follows that N's causal power *cannot* be *limited*. To claim that eventually there will be a set L that N cannot causally explain would conflict with the *Principle of Sufficient Reason* used in Stage I, which states that contingent reality (regardless of its specific form, characteristics, or particular arrangement) requires an ultimate causal explanation in terms of a necessary entity external to that set.

Therefore, the necessary being N that explains contingent reality possesses unlimited or maximal power, corresponding to the concept of *omnipotence*.[13] Here is the formal representation of the argument:

1. For every *L*, there is always an *L′* that requires greater power to actualize.
2. *N* possesses the power to actualize a particular *L* in *w* (by definition of "creator being").
3. Suppose that *N* does not possess the power to actualize a particular *L′* (*reductio*).
4. Therefore, there exists an *L′* that cannot be causally explained.
5. But there cannot be a contingent set *L* that cannot be causally explained (since every contingent set can have an external explanation for its existence).
6. But (5) contradicts (4).
7. Therefore, the assumption (3) is false.
8. Therefore, *N* possesses the power to actualize every possible *L*.
9. Due to (1), there is no limit to *N′s* causal power.
10. Therefore, the causal power of *N* is unlimited.
11. Therefore, *N* is omnipotent.

Argument VIII

This second argument is based on the contingency of *finite* attributes and their *possibility* to be caused to arrive at the conclusion that the necessary being does *not* possess power in a limited way.

To reach this conclusion, Rasmussen (2009) performs a *reductio ad absurdum* by assuming that the necessary being N possesses a *limited* degree of power. Using the principles (C1) and (D1) that we presented earlier, the argument analyzes the consequences of applying them to this scenario.

(C1) establishes that every contingent property or relation *can* be causally explained. In conjunction with (D1), which states that any *finite* attribute possessed to a particular degree μ could have been instantiated to a degree $\mu - e$ or $\mu + e$, it follows that any finite attribute is contingent and admits an explanation

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[13] Throughout this article, a certain conceptual *neutrality* will be maintained regarding the *definition* of divine attributes. In practical terms, establishing the possession of these properties to a maximum or unlimited degree does not deviate (if it does) from what is required to qualify for having these omni-properties.

in *causal* terms, meaning that something *external* can *explain* the possession of that attribute by the entity that possesses it.

Now, the problem with assuming that N possesses power to a limited degree is that it would lead us to the conclusion that this property of N admits an explanation in *causal* terms. But this implies the absurd conclusion that N *itself* explains its contingent properties. Since N explains *contingent* reality (i.e., contingent objects and properties), it follows that N must possess some kind of power to explain its own contingent powers, which is *circular*. But this absurd scenario arises from the *assumption* that N possesses power to a limited degree. Therefore, the assumption is *false*, and consequently, N possesses power in an *unlimited* way.

A simpler way to see the problem is as follows: a limited degree of power in N, and therefore *contingent*, would generate a certain level of *dependence* in the fundamental nature of N. That is, assuming that a necessary being possesses a *limited* degree of power implies that N possesses an intrinsic property *contingently*. But this is *contradictory* to the very notion of necessary existence, as the *intrinsic* properties (i.e., essence) of a necessary being are instantiated necessarily in all possible worlds. Asserting that an intrinsic property is instantiated *contingently* means that it does *not* exist in all possible worlds, and consequently, it would *compromise* the necessary existence (*a sè*) of N. Therefore, N does *not* possess a limited degree of power but is *omnipotent*. Here is the formal argument:

1. *N* possesses a certain causal power (by definition of "creator being").
2. Suppose that *N* possesses a certain degree of limited power *P* (*reductio*).
3. Therefore, *N* could possibly have power to the degree of *P+e* or *P–e*.
4. Therefore, the degree of power *P* of *N* is contingent.
5. Therefore, this property can be causally explained.
6. But *N* is the cause of all contingent things and properties in *w* (Stage I and principle (C1)).
7. Therefore, the contingent power of *N* is ultimately explained by the causal activity of *N*.
8. But (7) is a circular explanation since the power of *N* is explained by the causal activity of *N*, which requires power in the first place.
9. Therefore, the power of *N* cannot be contingent.
10. But (9) contradicts (4).
11. Therefore, the assumption (2) is false.
12. Therefore, the power of *N* is unlimited.
13. Therefore, *N* is omnipotent.

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Argument IX

The third argument we will present is based on Thomas Aquinas' idea of creation *ex nihilo* and the absence of passive *potentiality* to demonstrate the omnipotence of the first cause. Madden and Mancha Jr. (2005) use Aquinas' central argument in the *Summa Theologiae* (Book 1, Chapter 45) to construct a new version of it, which deduces that the being that explains the existence of contingent reality possesses *unlimited* power.

   The argument begins with the assumption (established in Stage I) that there exists a certain agent N that creates a world *ex nihilo* at time t. When speaking of a "world," we refer to a *maximally compossible* set of propositions that describe reality. Therefore, this creative act C carried out by N assigns *truth* values to these propositions.[14] Additionally, this creative act C is performed *ex nihilo*, which in this context means that *no* substance or prior causal event intervenes in the *instantiation* of this world.[15]

   Given the nature of this creative act, it is deduced that N acts *without* any extrinsic *limitation* to its causal *power*. This is because any substance or event distinct from N is *posterior* to the creative act C in question and does not participate either wholly or partially in this action. What this means is that *no* logically possible proposition or state of affairs could have counterfactually *prevented* N from creating, given its explanatory and causal *priority*.

   At this point, and given N's unrestricted act, it can be maintained that any other creative act C' of the same type could be performed by N at time t. This follows from N's own power, free from extrinsic restrictions: that any other *instance* of creative act would also be free from any external condition or logically possible state of affairs that could block it. To illustrate this point, Madden and Mancha Jr. provide the following example: imagine a person who is 5'8" tall and can climb stairs with small steps. Now, imagine another staircase with steps that are 6'5" apart. Does the fact that this agent can climb the first staircase imply that

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[14] Some may argue that certain propositions are necessary, and therefore it would be trivially true that N, for example, could actualize the state of affairs "2+2=4." Due to this, the argument could be defined in terms of *contingent* states of affairs, and the final conclusion would still be the same, that N is omnipotent.

[15] The argument does not require assuming anything about the *finitude* or *eternity* of the universe. Whether it is finite in the past or has existed eternally, N has a type of explanatory *priority* over it since it is the *ultimate* causal foundation upon which it relies. Therefore, the argument's conclusion holds in either case.

they can also perform another *instance* of stair climbing, such as the second one? It seems not, and this is because the agent is related to other entities in such a way that they have *extrinsic* limitations on their power that prevent them from performing other instances of stair climbing. However, if the agent in question could create *ex nihilo*, it follows that no extrinsic limitation (i.e., no state of affairs) could counterfactually *prevent* them from climbing other types of stairs. In this context, the staircase with a 6'5" distance between steps would not provide an extrinsic limitation *against* the agent (since no logically possible state of affairs could do so), so he could climb it. This is the case with N, the being that creates *ex nihilo*. Therefore, N has the power to actualize *any* creative act of type-C at time t.

Now, given that the creative act C, which involves the ability to actualize a maximal composable set of states of affairs (a "world," as we have defined it), also implies in some way attributing truth value to those propositions, and therefore, this act in time t will also affect subsequent states of affairs after t. In other words, its creative capacity *arranges* composable states of affairs that occur later or following this creative moment, so N's capacity is *not* limited solely to that initial moment t.

But this implies that ultimately, N has the ability to actualize *any composible* set of states of affairs, that is, to make or produce any logically possible description. But this is what *omnipotence* fundamentally means. Therefore, if N is the necessary being that through its causal activity explains reality or our "world" ex nihilo, then N is necessarily *omnipotent*. Here is the argument in formal form:

- *World* = a world is a maximally composible set of states of affairs that exhausts all of reality.
- *Creative act C* = an action in which an agent actualizes a world without any prior causal substance or event.

1. If *N* explains the existence of a world at time t, then there is no extrinsic limitation that could have counterfactually prevented *N's* creative act *C*.
2. There is no logically possible state of affairs that could have prevented *N* from actualizing *C* at time *t*.
3. If there is no logically possible state of affairs that could have prevented *N* from actualizing *C* at time *t*, then at time *t*, *N* could have actualized any creative act of type-*C* that is logically possible.

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4. Therefore, N could have actualized any type-C action at time t.
5. For every x, if there is a time t at which x could actualize any type-C action, then x could arrange any compossible state of affairs for any time subsequent to t.
6. N could have arranged to actualize any compossible state of affairs.
7. But if x has the power to arrange any compossible state of affairs, then x is omnipotent.
8. Therefore, N is omnipotent.

Argument X

A more *direct* version of the Thomistic argument presented earlier has been elaborated by Kretzmann (1997), using the notion of active power and its relationship with passive potentiality for the production of a certain effect.

The argument begins by defining how active power is measured: an agent x, in the production of a certain *effect* or in actualizing a certain state of affairs, utilizes a certain amount of passive *potentiality*. This means that the agent depends on certain *external* circumstances or entities that must be present and *contribute* to the *total* production of the effect in question. Therefore, the presence of passive potentiality in an agent indicates its *dependence* on certain circumstances outside itself for the realization of a certain effect. Naturally, the *greater* the amount of passive potentiality required by the agent to bring about a certain effect, the *lower* the degree of active power it possesses.

To illustrate this concept, Kretzmann provides the following example: suppose agent A draws a picture of a house on a sheet of paper, and agent B traces the already completed drawing. In this case, B has less active power because it used more passive potentiality than A to perform the action: B required the sheet of paper and additionally the completed drawing of the house to make the trace, while A only needed the sheet of paper to make the drawing. Therefore, since B uses *more* passive potentiality than A to bring about its respective effect, it follows that B has less active power than A. In summary, the *less* passive potentiality is required (i.e., the less *dependence* on external events or entities contributing to the effect), the *greater* the active power exhibited by the agent.

Expanding this analysis to the necessary being N, who is the *ultimate* explanation or causal *foundation* of all contingent reality, it follows that every event, circumstance, or entity outside of N is logically *posterior* to him and

therefore *dependent* on his causal activity. Therefore, at the logical moment when N creates, *nothing* other than N could have possibly *contributed* to the production of that creative effect. Therefore, N is *absent* of all passive potentiality. But since less potentiality used implies greater active power, and since the *least* possible potentiality implies the *maximum* possible active power, it follows that if an agent produces an effect in the total *absence* of passive potentiality, its active power is *infinite*. Mathematically, we can represent active power A as the *quotient* of the produced effect E and the used passive potentiality P. Since P=0, if N brings about a certain effect, then A=1/0, resulting in A=∞. Therefore, given the *absence* of passive potentiality in the creative act, it follows that N is *omnipotent*. Here is the formal argument:

1. The degree of active power of an agent *x* varies inversely with the amount of passive power used to actualize a certain effect *E*.
2. *N* is the ultimate explanation of *L* in *w* (Stage I).
3. Since *N* is explanatorily primary in *w*, every substance or event external to *N* is causally dependent on its creative act *C*.
4. Therefore, the creative act *C* does not presuppose any passive power.
5. But (4) implies the actualization of a certain effect *E* without any passive power.
6. Therefore, and given (1), the active power of *N* is infinite.
7. Therefore, *N* is omnipotent.

Omniscience

Argument XI

The attribute of omniscience is another classical aspect of philosophical theism, implying the possession of *unlimited* or *maximal* knowledge. This first argument uses the same strategy as previously employed to demonstrate that possessing *finite* knowledge implies *contingency* and that, therefore, the necessary being N cannot possess this quality to a limited degree.

By utilizing the principles (C1) and (D1), Rasmussen (2009) conducts a *reductio ad absurdum* as follows: Suppose that N possesses a limited degree of knowledge K. This initial assumption naturally follows since N, as we have already established, is an agent with *volition* and therefore capable of having *knowledge*. However, due to (C1), it follows that any *finite* attribute, instantiated to a *limited* degree, implies *contingency*, and this allows for the possibility of an external *causal*

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explanation, as per (D1). In other words, the degree of knowledge K possessed by N is *contingent* and thus could admit an explanation in terms of something external that is the *cause* of the instantiation of this attribute.

Again, as argued previously, this scenario leads us to the absurd conclusion that N *itself* explains its contingent properties. This is because N, being the *ultimate* explanation of contingent reality (i.e., contingent objects and properties), must possess some form of *knowledge* to cause that contingency, including its own finite knowledge, which is circular, as it would be using its *knowledge* to explain the possession of that knowledge itself. Alternatively, we can say that if an intrinsic property is instantiated *contingently*, it means that it does not exist in all possible worlds, and consequently, it would *compromise* the necessary existence (*a se*) of N. Therefore, the assumption that N possesses limited knowledge is *false*, and it follows that N is *omniscient*.[16] Here is the formal argument:

1. *N* possesses certain knowledge due to its volitional agency.
2. Suppose *N* possesses a certain degree of limited knowledge *K* (*reductio*).
3. Therefore, *N* could possibly have knowledge to the degree *K+e* or *K–e*.
4. Therefore, the degree of knowledge *K* of *N* is contingent.
5. Therefore, this property can be causally explained.
6. But *N* is the cause of all contingent things and properties in the world *w* (Stage I and Principle (C1)).
7. Therefore, the contingent knowledge of *N* is ultimately explained by *N's* causal activity.
8. But (7) is a circular explanation, as *N's* knowledge is explained by *N's* causal activity, which requires knowledge in the first place.
9. Therefore, *N's* knowledge cannot be contingent.
10. But (9) contradicts (4).
11. Therefore, the assumption (2) is false.
12. Therefore, *N's* knowledge is unlimited.
13. Therefore, *N* is omniscient.

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[16] When we speak of N's knowledge, we refer to the state of knowledge or its capacity to know a certain set of true *propositions*, and not the truth value of the propositions themselves. This avoids the *confusion* of thinking that since N cannot have a *limited* and *contingent* knowledge state, then the propositions known by N will not be contingent either, leading to a modal *collapse*. One thing is the state or capacity for *unlimited* knowledge (non-contingent) of N, and another thing is the propositions (contingent or not) known by N.

Argument XII

A second argument proposed by Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2002) focuses on the analysis of omnipotence and what this attribute implies in relation to omniscience. The argument is based on the idea that the possession of power implies not only *ability* but also *opportunity*. An omnipotent being is one that has *efficacy* in its will: if certain circumstances or external obstacles can *prevent* this being from exercising its abilities, then its power is not maximal but is *restricted* to some extent.

Now, for an omnipotent being to be able to *exercise* its abilities in every logically possible context, it must possess the necessary *information* to act with perfect efficacy and without extrinsic restrictions. But if omnipotence implies the power to actualize *any* logically compossible state of affairs, then its *knowledge* must also *extend* to relevant information in all possible scenarios. But any state of knowledge *less* than omniscience would imply a *restriction* in the opportunity for action of an omnipotent being in some logically possible scenarios. Therefore, since the necessary being (as we have seen) is omnipotent, it follows that it is also *omniscient*. Below is the argument in formal terms:

1. *N* is omnipotent (arguments (VII)-(X)).
2. Power implies both ability and opportunity.
3. If (2), then an omnipotent being cannot be restricted by external circumstances from exercising its abilities.
4. Suppose *N* has finite knowledge (*reductio*).
5. If (4), then there will be logically possible scenarios in which *N* does not have the opportunity to exercise its abilities.
6. But (5) contradicts (3).
7. Therefore, the assumption (4) is false.
8. Therefore, *N* has infinite knowledge.
9. Therefore, *N* is omniscient.

Omnibenevolence

Argument XIII

Omnibenevolence or moral perfection is another of the central attributes of classical models of theism and constitutes the possession of a maximally *good* character and behavior with respect to morality. The following argument, primarily proposed by Swinburne (2016) and Weaver (2015), is based on certain *metaethical* theses that, in conjunction with other *descriptive* attributes we have established, will seek to demonstrate how omnibenevolence is deduced and *linked* from omnipotence and omniscience.

The argument begins by analyzing the concept of action: when we say that an agent performs an *action*, that action is mobilized by the existence of a purpose or reason that the agent holds, even if it is *minimal*. For an agent to have a reason to act means that they consider certain achievable states of affairs as *good* through that action, either *indirectly* (valuing a subsequent state of affairs) or *directly* (valuing the action itself).

Now, if an agent has *decisive* reasons *not* to take a certain action A, and yet performs A, the explanation for such behavior goes beyond mere reasons for action, so *non-rational* factors come into play. It becomes *unintelligible* to claim that a certain agent performs a specific action while also having *decisive* reasons not to perform it, unless *external* factors beyond their control influence their behavior, which is known as a *constraint* of the will.

Based on these concepts, we can now introduce the two main metaethical theses of this argument: moral realism and moral rationalism. With respect to the former thesis, there is not much to say since it is the starting point for any *significant* analysis of moral goodness. What moral realism maintains is that moral *truths* exist: that certain things are *objectively* good and bad, independently of the desires or motivations of agents.[17] On the other hand, moral rationalism is a metaethical thesis that asserts:

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[17] For a defense of moral realism (or cognitivism), see: DeLapp, Kevin, 2013. *Moral Realism.* Bloomsbury Academic; Shaffer-Landau, Russ, 2003. *Moral Realism: A Defence.* Oxford University Press; Enoch, David, 2011. *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism.* Oxford University Press.

(MR)   If a moral agent *x* determines that action A in situation S is good (or obligatory), then in S, *x* will be motivated to do A, or it will be practically *irrational*.

What this thesis means is that if there is a moral agent capable of deliberating on moral issues, who knows that a certain action is morally correct in a certain context, then in that context, the agent will be motivated to perform that action. Otherwise, the agent will be subject to *non-rational* influences (what we have called a constraint of the will).

Taking this thesis into account, we can now see how omnibenevolence can be deduced from omnipotence and omniscience: as we have seen, the necessary being N is omnipotent and omniscient. Being omnipotent, *no external* factor or event can causally influence its efficacy of the will: this means that nothing other than N can ultimately determine how N will act. This implies that its actions only arise based on *objective* reasons for action: no *irrational* external influence can generate *constraints* on its will. To suggest otherwise would compromise its omnipotence because we would be postulating that certain external factors, beyond N's control, can ultimately determine its actions, which implies a *limitation* in its power. Therefore, we can say that N is also *perfectly rational* (or free), in the sense that its actions are not influenced by any external causal factor, and therefore, it is guided solely by rational considerations (since every agent is motivated by some reason to act). N is also an omniscient being, which means it knows *all* true propositions. Consequently, and given moral realism, propositions about *morality* (i.e., what is good and bad in every logically possible situation) are known by N. Finally, if we introduce the thesis (MR) into the equation, it follows that the necessary being N will *always* act perfectly *good*: since N is perfectly rational, its actions will be motivated solely by *objective* reasons for action. Given its omniscience, N knows all moral *truths*, i.e., all *moral* reasons for action in every logically possible situation. And according to moral rationalism (MR), N will be *motivated* to act based on these reasons. Therefore, N is perfectly good or *omnibenevolent*. The following is the formal representation of the argument.

1. *N* is omnipotent and omniscient (arguments (III)-(VI)).
2. Due to its omnipotence, *N's* will cannot be limited by external influences.
3. Therefore, *N's* will is not restricted by non-rational influences.
4. Therefore, *N* is perfectly rational.
5. Due to its omniscience, *N* knows all moral truths.

6. Due to its perfect rationality, N always acts in accordance with moral truths (thesis (MR)).
7. Therefore, N always acts in a perfectly moral way.
8. Therefore, N is omnibenevolent.

Eternity

Argument XIV

Eternity can be ascribed to entities that neither begin nor cease to exist, and therefore possess a mode of *permanent* existence. In the case of N, the reason for its eternal existence is evident: anything that begins or ceases to exist is characterized as a *contingent* entity (meaning its non-existence is *possible*) and therefore cannot be characterized as a necessary entity. But N is a being that exists in a metaphysically *necessary* way, as established in Stage I. Therefore, N is *eternal*. This leaves open the question of whether N exists in a *timeless* or *temporally* eternal manner. The essential point is that its mode of existence is *permanent*, whether outside or within the temporal dimension. Below is the argument in formal terms:

1. Everything that begins or ceases to exist is contingent.
2. N is a necessary being (Stage I).
3. Therefore, N is not contingent.
4. Therefore, N neither begins nor ceases to exist.
5. Therefore, N is eternal.

Inmateriality

Argument XV

Immateriality is the property of being an entity devoid of material composition, spatial location, or extension, and thus outside the realm of the fundamental laws of matter. In the case of the necessary being N, being metaphysically necessary, it is quite straightforward to elucidate why it must be essentially immaterial.

Material entities possess a series of *finite* and *quantitative* characteristics, such as mass, charge, velocity, energy, etc., and each of these properties constitutes limited and *graded* attributes. Now, given the nature of material composition, it is

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evident that any entity with such a nature will exist *contingently* since these quantitative characteristics could be possessed to a slightly higher or lower degree. Causal principles like (D1) that we have developed earlier allow us to conclude that every *finite* and gradable property is instantiated *contingently*, opening the possibility that its possessor could have had that property to a different degree. But since N is a metaphysically necessary being, it follows that its fundamental nature is instantiated *necessarily*, and therefore, we cannot characterize it as essentially material because that would contradict its necessary nature. Therefore, N is an immaterial entity, devoid of all physical and spatial composition or limitation. Here is the formal argument:

1. *N* is a necessary being (Stage I).
2. Suppose that *N* is essentially material (*reductio*).
3. Materiality implies instantiating finite properties to a degree μ.
4. If (3), then materiality implies contingency.
5. But (4) contradicts (1).
6. Therefore, the assumption (2) is false.
7. Therefore, *N* is an immaterial being.

Perfection

Argument XVI

Perfection is the *fundamental* definition or attribute of God from which all other omni-attributes stem. When we speak of perfection, we refer to the quality of being maximal with respect to *positive* properties (perfections) and the absence of any limit or *imperfection* in that fundamental nature. A positive aspect or property is one that contributes to increasing the *intrinsic value* or greatness of a being, such as knowledge, power, or goodness. Therefore, a supreme or perfect being is one that possesses a *maximal* nature *without* limits with respect to its *positive* properties.[18] The following argument developed by Rasmussen (2023) uses the notion of necessary existence or *fundamentality* to show that the necessary being N must have a perfect nature that *excludes* any limited or imperfect property.

First, the argument analyzes the nature of *limited* properties: When we talk about *limited* entities, we refer to anything that possesses a *finite* or *non-maximal*

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[18] In the literature, these attributes are also known as great-making properties.

fundamental nature.[19] For example, having a finite amount or degree of mass, size, power, etc., constitutes a *limit* in the nature of a being. As we have seen previously through principles like (D1), this type of property brings us into the domain of *contingency*, meaning the possibility that such a *limited* property could have been instantiated to a *different* degree. Based on this metaphysical principle, the argument establishes that anything that is limited *can* have an external explanation.

To illustrate this point, consider the following example: a human being is *dependent*, meaning it is *not* a being that exists out of *necessity* of its own nature. This means that the existence of a human being has an explanation external to itself (for example, their parents giving birth to them). Following this reasoning, we can think that *every* human being (regardless of their age, size, height, intelligence, etc.) is *dependent*, meaning their existence is explained *externally.*

A second illustrative example could be the existence of a mountain. Imagine a mountain with *two* peaks. This mountain is dependent: its *shape* is due to external factors, such as erosion and the pattern in which wind and water affected it. But now, imagine a mountain with *two thousand* peaks: in this case, is there an external explanation for the shape and number of peaks of the mountain? Certainly, there is, as the *mere* difference in the shape or size of a mountain is *irrelevant* to the need for an external explanation.

Therefore, based on examples of the same nature, a *fundamental* principle explaining this need for an external explanation can be deduced:

(L) All *limits* are categorically *uniform* with respect to their *dependence* on an *external* explanation.[20]

This means that *mere* differences in limits do *not* change the fact that they are dependent or explainable by something external. *Regardless* of the limit we are

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[19] When we speak of fundamental nature, we refer to all those basic attributes (i.e., attributes not grounded or explained by other attributes) possessed by an entity, such that the rest of the attributes supervene in virtue of these basic ones.

[20] As with the previously developed principle (C1), this principle of dependence or *explicability* of limits can be modally weakened with the possibility operator ($\lozenge$). Thus, the principle becomes exceptionally *modest*, and the same conclusion is still maintained since (as will be seen below) N does not admit the *possibility* of external dependence or explicability of its *fundamental* nature.

talking about (whether it's size, shape, power, etc.), a *change* in the quantity or degree of that limit does not eliminate the need for an external explanation: it will still be *dependent* (in the absence of a reason to the contrary).

Now, analyzing the case of N, this being is constituted as a metaphysically necessary or *fundamental* entity, which means its existence and nature have ontological *independence*: *no* external entity or explanation can explain or cause its existence or essential properties, as that would create a level of dependence in N, contradicting its *fundamentality*. But if this is the case, then any *imperfection* or *limit* in its positive properties would generate this tie of dependence or need for an *external* explanation that grounds these limits. Therefore, its nature *excludes* any instances of limited properties that imply the possibility of *dependence* or external explanation. Ultimately, this reveals that the fundamental nature of N is *perfect*, as any lower term or *limited* characterization of its essential properties would generate the need for an *external* explanation of that particular instantiation, contrary to the *fundamentality* of N.[21]

Alternatively, this perfect nature can be seen in the light of the *intrinsic value* of N. When we talk about intrinsic value, we refer to those qualities that have value in themselves, in an *objective* sense. These qualities are valuable insofar as they *enhance* their possessor and are intrinsically *better* to have than not to have. Now, N is the foundation through which value *flows*, and it is through its *creative* acts and *nature* that the existence of value in reality is possible: without it, *nothing* could have existed, and consequently, no *value* or positive quality could exist, given that N is the *ultimate* explanation or cause of contingent reality, as established in Stage I. Therefore, N possesses the power to produce *value*, which is an intrinsically *valuable* aspect of its nature.

Furthermore, N possesses certain *great-making* attributes, such as causal powers, necessary existence/fundamentality, or self-sufficiency. Therefore, its nature is inherently *valuable* and *positive*. But how much value does N possess? As we have established, N has a nature *without limits*: that is, its essential properties are *maximal*. Due to this, the value of N *cannot* be limited; it is *perfect*. This leads us to elucidate the deepest and most foundational aspect of N: its *complete*, purely

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[21] This *minimal* concept of perfection provides the starting point for philosophical theology, particularly the method of perfect being theology, to develop a comprehensive theory of the *divine nature*. Therefore, it leaves open the field of research into what these specific perfections that N must possess when constituting as perfect are. Because of this, the argument is *compatible* with theistic worldviews, both in its classical and neoclassical forms.

positive nature, devoid of any imperfection that implies a limit in its intrinsic *value*. Therefore, N is a *perfect being*.[22] Below, the argument in a more formal manner:

1. Everything that is limited can have an external explanation.
2. *N* is a necessary or fundamental being (Stage I).
3. If (2), then *N* cannot have an external explanation.
4. Therefore, the fundamental nature of *N* is not limited.
5. Everything that is not perfect has limits in its fundamental nature.
6. *N* has no limits in its fundamental nature (by (4)).
7. Therefore, *N* has a perfect nature.
8. Therefore, *N* is a perfect being.

3. Cumulative Strategy

The *cumulative* strategy makes use of various philosophical arguments with the aim of presenting a general case in favor of theism as the most *plausible* and probable explanation for Stage II, also known as the *identification* Stage. In this way, all theoretical resources are used *together* to establish the theistic conclusion. Such strategies, also known as *cumulative cases*, combine the conclusions reached in various arguments to strengthen the theistic worldview, i.e., the existence of God as the *best* explanation for observed phenomena.

Cumulative cases have *historically* been the way in which philosophers and theistic thinkers have defended their worldview due to the *integrative* and systematic capacity that arguments from natural theology provide when it comes to *understanding* the nature of God, the ultimate foundation of reality, as well as the phenomena of reality. Furthermore, the advantage of this type of strategy is that it does not require an exhaustive analysis of the attributes or properties of the entity involved, as the conclusions established in each of the arguments *reveal* an aspect of its nature that, together, forms a *complete* image of Divinity.

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[22] This argument is compatible with the doctrine of the Trinity. In that case, it could be argued that the number of persons is explained in terms of another *fundamental* attribute or aspect, such as supreme *love*. For such a proposal, see Swinburne, Richard, 1994. *The Christian God*. Oxford University Press, pp. 343-345. Along similar lines, see Sijuwade, Joshua, 2021. Love and the Necessity of the Trinity: An A Posteriori Argument. *Religions* 12. Koons, on the other hand, proposes an explanation of the Trinity in conceptual and relational terms. See Koons, Robert C., 2018. Divine Persons as Relational Qua Objects. *Religious Studies* 54 (3), pp. 1-21.

For example, cosmological arguments allow us to establish, as we have seen, the existence of a *fundamental* or *necessary* entity with causal *powers*. To this conclusion, we can add the conclusion of teleological arguments, which postulate the existence of an *intelligent* mind, the cause of the order and fine-tuning of the cosmos. On the other hand, moral arguments provide us with a basis to believe that morality (ontological or epistemological) is grounded in a *morally perfect* entity who serves as the ultimate and objective standard for its existence. At this point, the different *independent* conclusions reached through these arguments help us elucidate the *nature* of this entity, allowing us to infer that its properties *align* with the traditional concept of God in philosophical theism. Thus, theism presents itself as the best metaphysical theory when addressing these phenomena, as the postulated entity (God) possesses all the *necessary* explanatory *resources* to ground them. Therefore, the arguments provided by natural theology serve as *independent* pieces of evidence in favor of the theistic model, which, taken *together*, allow us to construct a complete picture of the nature of God and His explanatory role with respect to the various domains of reality.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, we have addressed an analysis of the three main strategies that have been proposed to "bridge the gap" between Stage I (establishing the existence of a first cause, necessary being, or fundamental entity) and Stage II (the identification of this being as God) in cosmological arguments. Firstly, the *abductive* strategy allowed us to establish, based on various criteria or theoretical *virtues*, that theism presents itself as the *best* theory about the nature of N, the necessary being in Stage I. Secondly, the *deductive* strategy has provided us with numerous *independent* arguments to individually establish each of the divine *attributes* from the notion of necessary existence, aseity, or fundamentality, in conjunction with various metaphysical principles and theses. Thirdly, the *cumulative* strategy has provided us with an argumentative *framework* from which to establish the explanatory superiority of theism by using various arguments that appeal to different phenomena and aspects of God.

However, these strategies can be used to strengthen *intermediate* conclusions of a similar nature in *other* arguments favorable to theism, *not* limited solely to cosmological arguments. Therefore, and based on the strategies and arguments proposed throughout the article, the so-called "Gap Problem" can be satisfactorily addressed, strengthening the theistic case and providing new

solutions for future research in this specific area of natural theology. Finally, we will present a summary of the results achieved in the following diagram:

Fig. 1. The Divine Nature in Stage II
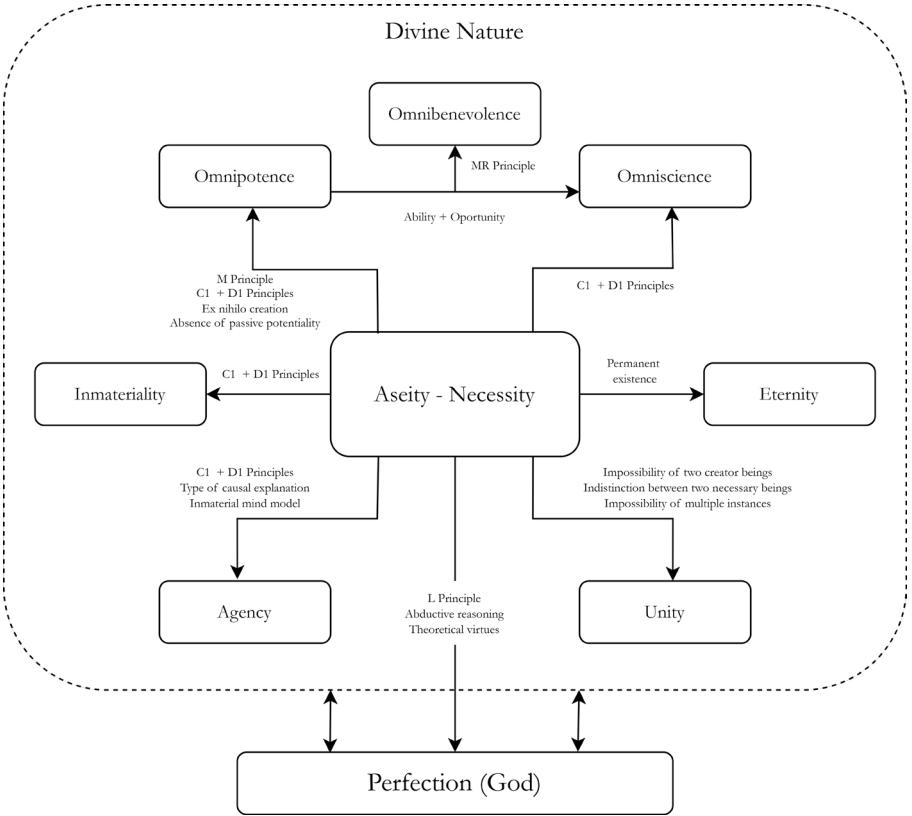
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