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## On God's Existence

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compared to the energy involved in the entire act of, say, raising one's hand to vote. When an engineer throws a switch to release the water behind Hoover Dam, the vast amount of potential energy unleashed by the moving water is overwhelmingly greater than that involved in the engineer throwing the switch. It may be the same with libertarian acts. Perhaps the energy released in the exercise of active power is miniscule compared to the potential energy released in the body as part of the relevant causal pathway. I just don't know. Second, even if one opts for this second option (the release of energy is virtually undetectable), it doesn't follow that the resulting gap would not be detectable, since the effects of a libertarian act could still be quite different in a "gappy" way from what would have followed in the absence of that act.

## On God's Existence

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In what must be a brief response to broad objections, I will comment only cursorily to most of the points made by Evan Fales. It is not that they do not deserve an extended response, but that they are old points which have already been sufficiently answered.

That naturalism, for example, can produce an objectivist ethic is obvious, but only in the sense that all human behaviors are causally related to an actual biological and social evolutionary process. This, however, cannot account for an objectively binding set of objective values.<sup>1</sup>

The rejection of my examples of fine-tuning is no more than an *ad hominem*. It fails to add anything of substance to the extensive conversation here.

The use of multiple worlds to diminish improbability has also been given sufficient response. William A. Dembski, for example, has noted that one cannot "invent probabilistic resources simply to prop an otherwise failing chance hypothesis."<sup>2</sup> While it is certainly an interesting hypothesis,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the exchange between Michael Martin and Paul Copan in *Philosophia Christi*, Series 2, 1.2 (1999):45, and 2.1 (2000):75-91.

<sup>2</sup> William A. Dembski, *The Design Inference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 215. Dembski refers to this as the inflationary fallacy. It is, I would say, a close relative to committing the same category mistake as the gambler's fallacy.

there is not a shred of evidence for it and it does not appear to be logically sustainable.<sup>3</sup>

Two objections do, however, demand a bit more discussion, namely those in reference to my use of the cosmological argument. Both of Fales's points, regarding the need for a principle of causality, as well as the demand for an explanation of God's initial choice, fail to recognize the true nature of the Aristotelian/Thomistic argument. Most recent discussion has been concerned with the Leibnizian or "sufficient reason" argument, and within that context both of Fales's objections are relevant but have also received sufficient responses.

Aristotle's argument, however, depends on the nature of contingency and necessity. Its principle of causality is a descriptive generalization.<sup>4</sup> It is the denial of an infinite regress that is crucial in demanding a necessary being, not a necessary principle of sufficient reason. And to ask for an accounting of the first and necessary cause misses the point of its necessity.<sup>5</sup> Thus it yields the concept of divine omnidetermination.<sup>6</sup>

One last note: Fales seems to miss the real function of the chapter. Its purpose within the context of the book was not to prove God's existence *simpliciter*, but to show that the usual arguments yield the sort of being to whom it would make sense to attribute miracles. Of course, this is not an excuse for bad arguments, but it was not my intent to state a case for God's existence. Fales is clearly right that that could not be done adequately in thirteen pages. Nor do I presume that these comments could deliver anything like a sufficient response. But I see nothing in Fales's objections that has not already been sufficiently answered in the recent literature.

<sup>3</sup> One of the most informative discussions of this issue in the context of the argument for God's existence is in William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith, *Theism, Atheism and Big Bang Cosmology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> See the discussion by Robert Koons, "A New Look at the Cosmological Argument," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 34 (1997): 193-211.

<sup>5</sup> This point is well made recently in many places. See for example, Patterson Brown, "Infinite Causal Regression," *Philosophical Review* 75 (1996): 510-25; Giovanni Blandino, "The Existence of God: The Proof from Contingent Beings to the Absolute Being," *Aquinas* 38 (1995): 529-52; Norris Clarke, "Natural Theology Today," in *Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, ed. Robert Russell, William Stoeger, and George Coyne (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory, 1988); Stephen Davis, *God, Reason and Theistic Proofs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); and Norman Kretzmann, "Aquinas's Disguised Cosmological Argument," in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today*, ed. Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> See William Alston, "God's Action in the World," in *Evolution and Creation*, ed. Ernan McMullin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).