

PAUL HELM

DIVINE CAUSATION AND ANALOGY*

There are types of argument in natural theology that depend crucially upon a premise such as “whatever begins to exist has a cause”. Cosmological arguments of certain types then use such a premise, together with other premises, to argue that God is the cause of the universe. Other types of natural theological argument involve the claim, as a conclusion, that it is probable that the universe is caused by an intelligent designer. Quite aside from the wisdom and merits of such arguments, it is a constituent feature of theism that God is the cause of the universe. So the idea of God having causal powers, the idea of God being a cause, is a pretty fundamental one in philosophical theism.

In “Causation and the Logical Impossibility of a Divine Cause” Quentin Smith argues that the idea of God being the originating cause of the universe is logically inconsistent with all extant definitions of causation and logically impossible (SMITH 1996, 169–91).¹ In this paper I want to examine the case that Smith brings against the very idea of divine causation.

In developing his argument Smith makes temporalist assumptions about God, with which in the first part of this paper I shall concur, and supposes further that the big bang might be the first moment of creation. He supposes, that is, that there might be a mental event in the divine mind which is the cause of the coming into being of the first event of the universe, and that the big bang is that event. One might object to the idea of the universe’s coming

PAUL HELM, Emeritus Professor of the Philosophy and History of Religion, King’s College, London (1993–2000); e-mail: phelm2@gmail.com.

* Though there are many differences, philosophically and theologically speaking, between the two of us, I have a recurrent admiration for Bill Hasker. He works hard, and has decided views, and he is uniformly pleasant, good company, and his work is uniformly interesting. I wish him a restful retirement and a stretch of good health.

¹ I give my page references to Smith’s “Causation and the Logical Impossibility of a Divine Cause” in parentheses if not otherwise indicated.

into being as an event. For it would seem that in order for there to be an event it is logically necessary that there be an individual which (or who) changes (or undergoes change). Perhaps we need to distinguish between a change in the totality of things, and a change in some thing. Creation is a change in the totality of things in that there is something when before there was nothing. But the act of creation is not a change in what was created.² So the relation may be between an event, God's willing, and an object, the consequence of God's willing, the universe in its temporally first state. This might make us initially suspicious of whether divine creation ought to be considered as even a *prima facie* case of event causation and I shall return to this point later. So although there are difficulties with the idea that there might be an event in the divine mind, and that what God creates is another event, the big bang, for the time being I shall also go along with these assumptions.

The structure of Smith's argument is to consider the idea of the divine causal creation of the universe alongside various popular (and some less popular) accounts of causation and to claim that the idea of divine causation is not causation in any of these senses, and could not be. He then considers the question of whether God might be regarded as the cause of the universe in some analogical or non-literal sense of "cause".

Smith also rejects this idea. He thus concludes that God cannot be a cause of the universe in a literal sense, nor can he be the cause in an analogical sense. And so though God may be said to stand in a certain relation to the universe, that relation cannot be a causal relation. I shall first consider Smith's treatment of the idea that God might be the cause of the universe in the literal sense of "cause" before looking at what he has to say about analogy. I shall then offer an account of divine causation of my own, and thus attempt to argue that Smith has not shown that the relation that God has to the universe is not a causal relation.

² Compare Aquinas: "Creation is not a change, except merely according to our way of understanding. For change means that a constant is now otherwise than it was before: sometimes this is the same actual being which varies by changes of quantity or quality or place; sometimes it is the same potential being, as in the case of substantial change where matter is the subject. But creation, whereby the entire substance of things is produced, does not allow of some common subject now different from what it was before, except according to our way of understanding, which conceives an object as first not existing at all and afterwards as existing"—*Summa Theologiae* Ia.45.2, trans. Thomas Gilby (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), 31.

THE LITERAL SENSE OF "CAUSE"

Smith begins by claiming that God's temporal act of will cannot be the cause of the universe because (on Hume's account) though it may be a temporal event it is not spatio-temporally contiguous with, nor is it nomologically related to, the supposed event of the first moment of the universe. Because God is a non-bodily reality, he cannot be contiguous with anything. Nor is there any law in virtue of which a volition of God's is the cause of the universe (Smith does not consider the idea of personal causation, the occurrence of an event brought about by a rational agent or person, as a distinct type of causation³ but this omission does not affect the main point of his argument). So God could not be a Humean cause of the universe; nor, on a transfer account of causation, could God cause the universe to come into existence, since it will readily be agreed that the creation is not effected by a transfer of energy. (Besides, the transfer account is also nomological in character).

Leaving aside the idea that the coming into existence of the universe *ex nihilo* might not in any case be an event, one might suppose that a counterfactual analysis, which Smith next considers, is more promising. For it is *prima facie* plausible to suppose that at least part of what God created the universe means is that had not God willed the universe then the universe would not have been.

It is important to keep in mind the distinction between a counterfactual analysis of causation, and the presence of a counterfactual element in causation. In what, following the work of David Lewis, has come to be regarded as the standard counterfactual analysis of causation, there is a *prima facie* problem about the reversibility of the counterfactual relation. For suppose we analyse the change in air pressure caused the barometer to drop as if there had been no change in air pressure the barometer would not have dropped, we may equally well conclude if there had been no drop in the barometer then the air pressure would not have changed. But this is counter-intuitive. For while the barometer reading may be said to depend counter-

³ It is an important element in Richard Swinburne's argument for the reasonableness of belief in the existence of God that God is a personal cause; see SWINBURNE (1979, chaps. 2 and 3). Swinburne appears to think that all cases of personal causation are contingent since all cases of causation are contingent, even though this seems to raise difficulties for his account of the Trinity, particularly for his account of the Father's begetting of the Son. For further discussion of this point see Paul Helm's "Time and Trinity," in *Questions of Time and Tense*, ed. Robin Le Poidevin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 251–64.

factually on the air pressure, the air pressure does not similarly depend upon the barometer reading. To avoid this result Lewis denies that if the effect had not occurred the cause would not have occurred, holding instead that the cause could have occurred just as it did but would have failed to cause the effect (LEWIS 1987, 170). But this solution to the problem of reversibility is not open in the case of the idea of divine causation, because in the case of divine causation the alleged cause is logically sufficient for the effect (a point that Smith makes a great deal of, and to which we shall return shortly). Smith claims that Lewis's solution to the problem of the reversibility of the counterfactual relation in the case of nomological event causation, "cannot be instantiated by God's willing the big bang, since if *c* had occurred (if God had willed the big bang) then it would have *B* necessarily caused *e* (the big bang); God is omnipotent and his willing is necessarily effective" (174).

There may be other problems with a counterfactual theory of causation. For example, it may be that the counterfactual "If God had decided not to make a world there would not have been a world" is false on Lewis's approach, since a world with God and a world randomly appearing seems closer to the actual world (in which God exists and the world is created by God, let us say) than is the situation in which there is God but no world.

Behind Smith's dismissal of the prospects for a counterfactual analysis of divine causation lies a more basic point about his conviction that all causal relations are logically contingent. More on this also shortly.

Having dismissed the prospect of a counterfactual analysis of divine causation, Smith thinks that perhaps the most promising candidate is a singularist account of causation of a type proposed by C. J. Ducasse (172–73). But according to Smith such an account requires physical contiguity, and so is disqualified *ab initio* as a candidate for an account of divine causation.

In discussion of these various accounts of causation what emerges is the importance, as Smith sees it, of the central fact that causation is a contingent relation between its relata and the importance of physical contiguity, though contiguity receives less notice as the argument progresses. In focusing upon the centrality of the logical contingency of the causal relation Smith does not so much have in mind the Humean principle that anything might produce anything as the weaker principle that any cause may fail to bring about its effect.⁴ Smith then considers three objections to his argument so far. Firstly,

⁴ Smith also, in the course of his argument, takes sidelong glances at both J. L. Mackie's and Ernest Sosa's accounts of causation; but consideration of these would not add anything to the main lines of argument being developed here.

perhaps the definition of causation has yet to be. Secondly, might we not simply define causation as “c is a cause of e if and only if c is a sufficient condition of e and c is earlier than e”? This definition, as Smith points out, would exclude accounts of creation by a God who exists timelessly, but it is consistent with his temporalist assumptions. And finally, perhaps the notion of causation is a primitive, unanalysable notion, indefinable.

THE LOGIC OF THE ARGUMENT

Smith thinks that each of these three responses is unavailing in the face of the “crucial fact” that there is an entailment relation between “c is a cause of e” and “c is not a logically sufficient condition of e”. But it is important to recognise that this does not mean that Smith thinks, on observing that the common feature of all extant accounts of causation, for all their differences, is the logical contingency of the causal relation, that this constitutes good inductive evidence for the claim that all causal relations are contingent. Such an argument would carry a presumption against divine literal causation but it would nevertheless leave the possibility of such an account open. Rather, Smith makes the much stronger, if not extravagantly strong, claim that the common feature he detects in the extant theories of causation, namely the logical contingency of the causal relation, exemplifies a logical requirement “upon these and all possible valid definitions or theories of causality” (170). So Smith says that it is necessarily the case that “(1) for any two particular events or states x and y, if x is a logically sufficient condition of y, then x is not the cause of y” (176). Unfortunately, Smith does not tell how he knows that this is necessarily the case. It certainly does not follow logically from the set of the various definitions of causation, beginning with Hume’s, that he has discussed. And there is at least one extant theory of causation—that of Malebranche—with which (1) conflicts. For as he himself allows, all that he has offered in his consideration of these various theories is what amounts to an argument from induction to the conclusion that all causal relations are logically contingent. And of course his conclusion does not follow from a consideration of all possible theories of causation either unless Smith somehow knows that these are all the theories that there could be. And how could he know that?

And how in any case could (1) be a valid objection to the idea that causation is a simple relation, a conceptual primitive the nature of which cannot

be captured in a definition? If causation is primitive, unanalysable, surely we are not in a position to say that this or that feature is essential to something's being a cause.

Smith does consider a couple of objections to (1). The first is that it is possible to describe any cause in terms which logically imply the occurrence of the effect. Thus "there is an explosion that burned the house down" logically necessitates the burning down of the house. However, as Smith points out, this is an unsurprising and unimpressive result as it is a description of both the cause and the effect. The second objection is that it may be possible to describe divine creation in terms which do not logically necessitate the coming into existence of what is created. But then, as Smith points out, the mere fact that one can describe an event in a certain way does not show very much about the ontological or metaphysical status of what one is describing. Even if one allows that each of Smith's answers to these objections is sound, it still does not follow that we know that (1) is true. (1) is certainly not self-evidently true, and whether it is reasonable to hold that (1) is true is what is in dispute. So from a purely logical point of view, Smith's claim that there cannot be a divine literal cause of the universe fails.

AN ANALOGICAL SENSE OF "CAUSE"?

Having ruled out the prospect of giving an analysis of divine originating causation in a literal sense Smith then considers the possibility that God's willing the first event in the universe is a case of causation in an analogical sense. This would mean that God's willing the universe has some features that are present in those situations we normally describe by "willing" and "cause" and also that God's willing has some features that are different. Thus, Smith says:

The analogy for "willing" would be this: If a human wills something, this willing is a mental event that has for its aim bringing another event into existence. Likewise, we may say of God that he or she experiences a mental event and that this mental event has for its aim bringing another event into existence. This is the analogy. There is also this difference, in that God's willing is a logically sufficient condition of the existence of the event that is willed, whereas a human's willing is not logically sufficient for the event that is willed.

And this is Smith's response:

However, this resort to the “analogical” use of “willing” and “cause” threatens to break down the intelligibility of our talk of God’s willing. The explanation of the analogical meaning of these words is in terms of other words that also have an analogical meaning. We said that God’s willing is a mental event that “has for its aim bringing another event into existence.” However, the literal meaning of the phrase about aiming for a goal implies that “it is logically possible that this goal is not achieved.” When we say that Alice has the aim of writing a book, we mean, in part, that it is logically possible that she not succeed in achieving her aim.... Consequently, the explanation of the analogical meaning of “divine willing” in terms of “aiming to do something” cannot involve a literal use of “aiming to do something”. But if “aiming” is used analogically, then our problem of explaining what we mean by our words reappears. (180–81)

The general point here is that if one offers an analogical understanding of a term using only terms which are themselves analogical, no advance in understanding is thereby achieved. And this seems reasonable. But has Smith shown that an attempt to provide an analogical account of divine causation must fail in this way? There is reason to think not.

In the quotations given above Smith claims that this effort to explain divine willing fails because to say that God causes in the sense of aims to bring X about, but that in the case of God such willing is logically sufficient, is to explain divine causality in terms that are themselves analogous when applied to God. But this is a confused point, based upon a misunderstanding of what analogy is. If Smith’s account of what analogy is were accurate there could never be a satisfactory analogical account of anything.

The whole point about an analogical understanding of a term is that that understanding has elements of both univocity and equivocity about it. So that an analogical understanding of “willing”, for example, could not be achieved merely by substituting another expression for it, such as “aims”. To offer a true analogical understanding of divine willing we may say that God’s willing is like successful human willing in being a bringing about, (this is the element of univocity) but that it is unlike a human’s willing in that it is a bringing about that is logically sufficient for the achieving of what is aimed at in the bringing about. (This is the equivocal element). The requirement about logical sufficiency thus modifies the sense of “aims at” or “wills” to something other than the literal sense, but to a sense that is not wholly other than the literal sense. (Thus it retains, in common with the literal sense, the idea of intentional endeavour.)

It is not an objection against this proposal to understand a certain term analogically that the explanation of one analogy is in terms of another analogy, because it clearly isn't. The claim is that while in a creature's case a willing may fail, it won't, necessarily won't, in God's case. And that there is a perfectly good reason for this, namely divine omnipotence.

Let's look at this matter of analogy from the other end, not of logical necessity but of logical sufficiency. As Smith points out, the idea of logical sufficiency is not entirely absent from cases of intramundane event causation. Thus "the sun's shining on a stone, in conjunction with the law that whatever is shined upon is warmed, logically necessitates that the stone is warmed" (176). He points out that while there is only a logically contingent connection between the sun's shining on the stone and the stone's being warmed, the sun's shining is "nomologically sufficient, in that it is logically sufficient for the stone's being warm only if it is conjoined with some law of nature" (176). So we can say, given the law, and the appropriate conditions in which the stone is placed: "If this stone had not warmed then the sun had not shone on it."

Take another case, perhaps closer to the case of divine creation. Given certain constitutional powers, the Queen's signature on a piece of paper is logically sufficient for a Parliamentary Bill's becoming a Parliamentary Act. Her signature as the person who is in fact the Queen is not sufficient for this change, but her signature as the Queen, with the constitutional powers that the monarch possesses, is sufficient. Such an account of the powers of the monarch entails counterfactuals such as "if this document is not an Act of Parliament then the Queen (the monarch) has not signed it".

It is a logically contingent fact (let us suppose) that the particular scientific laws governing the warming of stones are as they are. And it is a logically contingent fact that the person who is in fact the Queen is the Queen and that the constitutional arrangements are as they are.

So here, in what follows, is an analogical understanding of divine creation based upon such creaturely instances of logically sufficient power. God's willing of the universe is logically sufficient for the universe coming into being. That's the element that is equivalent to "the Queen's willing (by signing) the enactment of a Bill is logically sufficient for the Act coming into being". But whereas the individual who is the Queen might not have been the Queen and so might not have possessed the appropriate regal powers, and the constitutional arrangements which she presides over as Queen might have been different, the individual who is God (supposing that God is

an individual)⁵ could not fail to have omnipotence. This is one element of equivocity; no doubt there are others. Here we think of God on analogy with a Queen possessing the powers of a constitutional monarch. Like a Queen, God has such powers. Perhaps he has these powers, like the present Queen of England, because he has not chosen them, but because they are, so to speak, given, as in many philosophers' account of God's relation to logical and moral truths. This would draw the analogy between God and the Queen in Parliament more tightly. Or perhaps he has these powers in a less constitutional, more arbitrary mode. This would draw the analogy not between God and a constitutional monarch, but between God and a benevolent dictator. Either way, the analogy is intelligible enough.

Alternatively, we might think of divine omnipotence not so much on analogy with the possession of regal powers, constitutional or otherwise, but on analogy with the possession of lawful (in the sense of regular) physical powers, like being imbued with something like physical powers. Then we can say that the idea of God's willing of the universe into existence being logically sufficient for the universe's coming to exist is equivalent to one event's being nomologically sufficient for the occurrence of another event. That's the element of univocity. But while the event that is logically sufficient for the occurrence of another event is only so given the existence of certain physical laws, and it is a contingent matter of fact that these laws exist, or continue to exist, God's willing the universe is logically sufficient for the universe coming into being in virtue of the existence in his possession of lawfully behaving powers possessed necessarily by him. That's one element of equivocity.

Neither of these possible lines of conveying understanding of what it might mean for God to create the universe *ex nihilo* falls foul of Quentin Smith's objection to an analogical response to his argument that such a response fails because it merely explains one analogy in terms of another.

So we can approach an analogical account of God's causal powers perfectly satisfactorily either from the side of logical necessity, or from the side of logical sufficiency, without falling into any of the difficulties that Smith imagines. We are faced, then, with a number of alternative approaches with respect to the idea of divine causation. In the first place, for all that Smith has shown to the contrary, there might be an account of divine causation in the literal sense. Secondly, God may be a cause of the universe in an analogical sense. Each of these arguments would be sufficient, in turn, to

⁵ As Quentin Smith does. He thinks of God as a "concrete particular" (182–83).

show that Smith has failed in his task of showing the idea of a divine cause is logically impossible.

A POSITIVE PROPOSAL

Having argued that God could not be the cause of the universe Smith allows that there may be some relation between God and the big bang: God's intentional act may be a logically sufficient condition for the property being the big bang, to be exemplified. That is, there is a relation R in which God stands to the property being the big bang such that by virtue of God's standing in this relation it is logically necessary that being the big bang is exemplified (182). He argues that this relation cannot be understood as a case of causation since it does not satisfy any extant definition of causation nor does it satisfy a logically necessary condition of being a cause, namely that any causal relation is logically contingent. But as we have seen, a survey of extant definitions of causation is an inductive argument that does not compel, and Smith's (1) is not self-evidently true.

We might spell out this relation R in a bit more detail. Let's call the expansion Relation C. For example we might say that for any omnipotent being existing in time to cause the universe to come into being entails the following logically necessary conditions:

(a) There is a temporal relation C between an omnipotent being and the universe such that only in virtue of this relation obtaining does the universe exist, but it is not at all in virtue of this relation obtaining that the omnipotent being in question exists.

(b) The relation C holds between an event in the mind of an omnipotent being (or an intentional state of that being) and a later object, the universe.

(c) The exemplification of C is not logically necessary.

(d) C is logically sufficient for the existence of the universe.

(e) Given C, were the universe not to have existed then an omnipotent being would not have willed it.

We could then say that (a)–(e) is an account of the idea of creation *ex nihilo*, where the relation is between an event in the mind of the omnipotent being and the coming into existence of another object, the universe.

Such an account would need some modification to satisfy the views of those theists for whom the existence of the universe is not contingent. Such a theist would remove condition (c) from Relation C. In the same way some-

one who held that the divine existence was timelessly eternal would remove any vestiges of temporality from Relation C.

Would this family of relations be cases of causal relation, or not? It does not seem to me that what answer we give to this question has much, if any, importance. Perhaps there are at least two literal senses of causation, one that applies to a relation between events, to changes in objects, and another which applies to the creation of objects *ex nihilo*. Or perhaps we might wish to say that the members of the family of Relation C are not cases of a literal sense of “cause” as Smith understands this in his article. The labels don’t matter; what matters is the cogency of the respective accounts.

There is a perfectly good related notion, let us call it *cause** (or “accounting for”), spelled out in (a)–(e) above, and its variants, such that we can say that although God may not be the cause of the universe, he is nonetheless the *cause** of the universe, or he is what accounts for the existence of the universe.

We can say that God does not cause the big bang (supposing the big bang to be the first event in the universe) in the sense that there is a logically contingent relation between God’s willing and what it effects, but that he causes it in the manner specified by (a)–(e) above. To say that (a)–(e) cannot be instantiated to give a case of causation because by definition all causal relations are logically contingent simply begs the question and in any case as we have seen Smith has not shown this even in the case of analyses of mundane causation. Alternatively, to say of relation C what Smith says of his relation R, that it cannot plausibly be read as an account of divine initial causation without the inclusion of an ineffability ingredient, is simply false. Smith may be correct in what he says are the objections to an ineffability ingredient, but a reasoned response to what he has to say about God and causation in no way depends upon an appeal to ineffability, and so his interesting remarks about ineffability are beside the point. There is nothing in the least ineffable about Relation C and its variants.

In a similar way while Smith considers (and then rejects) the proposal that his relation R might be a counterexample to the extant definitions of causation that he considers, there is no need to go to the lengths of saying that the relation C is a counterexample to the extant definitions of causation. For relation C is not competing for the same territory as any of the extant accounts of causation considered by Smith. In any case, given several extant theories of causation the proponents of each theory may well think that they can provide counterexamples to the remaining theories. One thing that one

could say is that it may be that one of these theories is the correct theory of causation if understood as a relation between changes, event causation, but that divine *creatio ex nihilo*, though a causal relation, is not a relation of change, it is not strictly speaking a case of event causation. Another, simpler, thing one could say is that the notion of being a cause* is a different notion from being a cause.

Perhaps, all in all, it is better to take up another one of Smith's suggestions and to opt for a disjunctive account of causation. Smith objects to this proposal on the grounds that there are many exemplifications of his relation R which are not cases of causation. For instance he says this:

John's being a living organism (or John's being embodied in a mortal body at time t) both is temporally prior to and is a logically sufficient condition of John's being dead, but John's being a living organism (or John's being embodied in a mortal body at time t) is not the cause of his death. His death is caused, say, by a car hitting him as he crosses the street. (186)

But it does not need to have any such consequence in the case of our relation C. Smith has one last objection to this. Suppose that we say that c is a cause of e if and only if either God's stands in the relation of C to e or c satisfies (say) a Humean account of causation.⁶ Smith objects that it is a logically necessary condition of a correct definition of a purely qualitative universal like the causal relation that it not include a disjunct mentioning one particular case that does not meet the general conditions described in the other disjunct. Let us suppose that Smith is correct about this logically necessary condition, though he provides no argument for it and it has the whiff of special pleading about it. It is a simple enough matter to eliminate any singular referring expressions from our account of C; indeed the account offered above contains no singular referring expressions. And so the disjunctive account of causation would have the form: c is a cause of e if and only if c stands in a relation C to e, or c satisfies (say) a Humean account of causation.

Would it be a valid objection to this proposal about a disjunctive approach to causation that it renders the counterexample approach, the standard method of testing definitions, useless? Would it, as Smith suggests, have the consequence that any counterexample to one of the disjuncts in the

⁶ Of course, if one thinks of God as the primary cause, and created agents and powers as secondary causes, then it would be more appropriate for such a theist to think of many cases, perhaps all cases, of causation as cases of *conjunctive* causation.

definition would be logically equivalent to the provision of another disjunct? Why should it, if there is good reason to support the admission of each particular disjunct in the first place? There is still a place for possible counterexamples to this disjunct if there is a valid counterexample to one or other of the disjuncts that is not a counterexample to the other.

REFERENCES

- HELM, Paul. 1998. "Time and Trinity." In *Questions of Time and Tense*, ed. Robin Le Poidevin, 251–64. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- LEWIS, David. 1987. *Philosophical Papers*. Vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SMITH, Quentin. Spring 1996. "Causation and the Logical Impossibility of a Divine Cause." *Philosophical Topics* 21 (1): 169–91.
- SWINBURNE, Richard. *The Existence of God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

DIVINE CAUSATION AND ANALOGY

Summary

Quentin Smith's idea is that God being the originating cause of the universe is logically inconsistent with all extant definitions of causation, and thus logically impossible. Thus, for example the God of the Philosophers couldn't have created the Universe, not even in both its senses, in both literal and analogical senses. The thesis is advanced by accounts of the usual views of "cause". It is maintained these is successful. Such I shall then offer an account of divine causation of my own, and thus attempt to argue that Smith has not shown that the relation that God has to the universe is not a causal relation. Such as a Humean or that of David Lewis sense and of the "singularist" view of C. J. Ducasse would fail the analogical. And Malebranche's "occasionalism" is surely an exception. If we turn to the other kind then it seems to be a case of "if the data are analogical-in, then the data will be that too". Finally, it is argued that it is more productive to consider particular individual theistic powers and perfections, for these are monogrels which literality and of analogy are compounded.

Keywords: God; causation; analogy; Quentin Smith.

BOSKA PRZYCZYNOWOŚĆ A ANALOGIA

Streszczenie

Według Quentina Smitha Bóg jako przyczyna istnienia świata jest logicznie niespójny z wszystkimi znanymi definicjami przyczynowości, a zatem logicznie niemożliwy. Na przykład Bóg filozofów nie mógłby stworzyć świata ani w sensie dosłownym, ani w sensie analogicznym. Smith broni tej tezy odwołując się do typowych poglądów na temat natury „przyczyny”, i twierdzi, że ta obrona jest udana. W odpowiedzi autor przedstawia własną koncepcję przyczynowości

Boskiej i próbuję pokazać, że Smithowi nie udało się dowieść, iż relacja Boga do świata nie ma charakteru przyczynowego. Autor argumentuje ponadto, że lepiej jest rozważyć osobno poszczególne Boskie moce i doskonałości, ponieważ zawierają one w sobie pomieszanie dosłowności i analogiczności.

Słowa kluczowe: Bóg; przyczynowość; analogia; Quentin Smith.