

# ON THE NECESSARY EXISTENCE OF AN OBJECT WITH CREATIVE POWER

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I present an argument which is related to the ontological argument which has a more plausible premise and a weaker conclusion. I assume two postulates concerning the meaning of 'x creates y'. I then prove that the proposition *possibly, something (non-vacuously) creates everything* entails, in quantified S5, that there is a necessarily existing object with creative power – an object which creates all (and some) contingently existing objects in *some* possible world.

Theism is often thought to embody the claim that:

- (A) There is a being that is causally responsible for the existence of everything.

Like many traditional descriptions of God, A can be given interpretations according to which it is trivially false. In the following, I will give an interpretation of A that is minimally generous and such that *possibly* A has intuitive appeal. I will then show informally that *possibly* A entails, in quantified S5, that there is a necessarily existing object that is possibly the creator of everything, although, so far as the derivation goes, he may actually be the creator of nothing.

It will simplify what follows to employ the usual symbolism of quantified modal logic. I will use the following abbreviations:

$E_N x$  iff  $\Box_{df} \exists y (x=y)^1$  (x necessarily exists)

$E_C x$  iff  $\exists_{df} y (x=y) \wedge \sim \Box \exists y (x=y)$  (x contingently exists)

Also, we will say that *x creates y* just in case x is causally responsible for the existence of y. Now it is difficult to see how anything could be causally responsible for the existence of itself, or how anything could be causally responsible for the existence of a necessarily existing object. So I adopt the following postulates concerning the meaning of 'x creates y':

(P<sub>1</sub>) Necessarily, for all x, it is not the case that x creates x.

(P<sub>2</sub>) Necessarily, for all x and for all y, if x creates y, then  $E_C y$ .



With the intention to give a plausible interpretation of the thesis that something creates everything, we might take this to mean that something creates everything that contingently exists, since by  $P_2$ , it is impossible that something create anything that necessarily exists. So:

(B) Something creates every  $x$  such that  $E_c x$ .

If, contrary to our suspicion, there are some necessarily existing objects but no contingently existing objects, then B will be true. Every necessarily existing object will be a vacuous creator. It will be causally responsible for the existence of all, that is, none, of the contingently existing objects. So let us consider a stronger hypothesis, that there is a non-vacuous creator:

(C) Something creates every  $x$  such that  $E_c x$ , and there is an  $x$  such that  $E_c x$ .

I recommend C as a minimally generous interpretation of A. More formally, C can be expressed as follows:

(C<sub>1</sub>)  $\exists x[(z)(E_c z \rightarrow x \text{ creates } z) \wedge \exists y(E_c y)]$

Let F be the property defined by:

$[(z)(E_c z \rightarrow x \text{ creates } z) \wedge \exists y(E_c y)]$

This could be read as *the property of being an  $x$  such that  $x$  creates all, and some, contingently existing objects*. Let O be some object that satisfies Fx. Now suppose that  $E_c O$ . It then follows by C<sub>1</sub> that O creates O, in violation of postulate P<sub>1</sub>. Relative to the class of objects that actually exist, the properties  $E_c$  and  $E_n$  are contradictories. So since  $E_c O$  is false,  $E_n O$  is true – O necessarily exists.

We have derived that anything that satisfies Fx also satisfies  $E_n x$ . C<sub>1</sub> asserts that something satisfies Fx. So C<sub>1</sub> implies:

(C<sub>2</sub>)  $\exists x(E_n x \wedge Fx)$

Since we have assumed that it is necessarily true that nothing creates itself (P<sub>1</sub>) we can conclude that C<sub>1</sub> strictly implies C<sub>2</sub>. Simplifying C<sub>1</sub> to ' $\exists x Fx$ ', we have:

(C<sub>3</sub>)  $(\exists x Fx \rightarrow \exists x(E_n x \wedge Fx))$

Now assume that it is possible that there be a non-vacuous creator. That is, assume  $\Diamond C_1$ , or:

(C<sub>4</sub>)  $\Diamond \exists x Fx$

The following schema is universally valid in S5:

$$(S) \quad (\Diamond P \wedge \Box(P \rightarrow Q)) \rightarrow \Diamond Q$$

Substituting ' $\exists xFx$ ' for ' $P$ ' and ' $\exists x(E_Nx \wedge Fx)$ ' for ' $Q$ ', we can derive  $\Diamond \exists x(E_Nx \wedge Fx)$  from the resulting instance of S, together with  $C_3$  and  $C_4$ . So:

$$(C_5) \quad \Diamond \exists x(E_Nx \wedge Fx)$$

If we eliminate the abbreviation ' $E_N$ ' from  $C_5$  we get:

$$(C_6) \quad \Diamond \exists x(\Box \exists y(x=y) \wedge Fx)$$

In any model for quantified S5 in which  $C_6$  is true, there is some possible world  $w$ , accessible to the actual world, in which some object  $O$  satisfies the predicates  $\exists y(x=y)$  and  $Fx$ . So  $O$  is  $F$  in  $w$  and something is identical to  $O$  in any world accessible to  $w$ . Given that accessibility is an equivalence relation in any S5 model, it follows that there is something identical to  $O$  in every world accessible to the actual world, and that  $O$  is  $F$  in some world accessible to the actual world. So  $C_6$  entails:

$$(C_7) \quad \exists x(\Box \exists y(y=x) \wedge \Diamond Fx)$$

From the hypothesis that there could be something that non-vacuously creates every contingently existing thing, we have derived that there is a necessarily existing object with creative power, though it is consistent with our premises that this object be perfectly idle in the actual world.

There remains a sense, however, in which this argument constitutes of proof of the existence of God. Consider a theist who knows that following proposition is true:

$$(C_8) \quad \text{Necessarily, no necessary existent, other than God, can be causally responsible for the existence of something.}$$

I assume that it is an implicit tenet of Christian theology that there are no necessary beings with causal power, other than God. Given that the Christian can know that  $C_8$  is true, he may correctly speak of *the* object whose existence is established by the foregoing argument as God. Consequently, an atheist who accepts the conclusion of the argument may be said, in sense, to have come to believe in the existence of God: He believes that there exists a certain object of which it is true that  $x=\text{God}$ . In a more common sense, he does not believe in God. He does not believe that there is an  $x$  such that  $x=\text{God}$ . So it may seem that such conversion to theism is trivial. An atheist who knows me well enough to believe anything I say with a certain seriousness might accept my assertion that:

The object that I am currently contemplating, exists.

If this object is God, then the atheist has come to believe that there exists a certain  $x$  which, unknown to him, is God. But the result of accepting the conclusion of the foregoing argument is more significant. Whereas the

property of *being the object I am currently contemplating* contingently applies to God, the property of *being a necessary being with creative power*<sup>2</sup> is, in virtue of (C<sub>8</sub>), a logically individuating property of God. God necessarily possesses it, and nothing else could possibly possess it. The atheist who accepts C<sub>7</sub> has the belief that there is an *x* which has a certain property, where this property is one which is necessarily coextensive with the one expressed by '*x* is God'. To compel belief in God in this sense is perhaps the most that we can expect from considerations of logic and conceivability that are completely abstracted from matters of faith.

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#### NOTES

1. The quantifiers here and throughout are 'actualist'. When sentences employing them are evaluated with respect to some world *w*, their range is all and only those individuals that exist in *w*. When there is no explicit relativization to a possible world, their range is all and only those individuals that exist in the actual world. An individual constant denotes the same object irrespective of the world at which a sentence containing that constant is evaluated. I use lower case Roman letters for variables, and '*O*' as the only individual constant.

2. This is the property expressed by the predicate formed by dropping the initial quantifier from C<sub>7</sub>.