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Libertarian Agency and the Craig/Grünbaum Debate about Theistic Explanation of the Initial Singularity

by J. P. Moreland

Though some would demur, it is widely recognized today that the spatio-temporal physical universe had a beginning. There are at least two classical Big Bang models of the initial singularity of time $t=0$. The first model depicts a time interval which is closed at $t=0$. On this model, $t=0$ is a singular, temporally first event of physical space-time. The second model features a time interval which is finite, open in the past, and excludes $t=0$ as a point of space-time. Rather, $t=0$ is construed as a boundary of space-time. In both models, there is no instant of time prior to the initial singularity. Now, a number of theists have seized on the recognition that the universe had a beginning to revive the ancient kalam cosmological argument for God's existence. The defender of the kalam cosmological argument presents three exhaustive dilemmas and tries to establish the relevant horn of each: (1) Either the universe had a beginning or it did not. (2) If the universe had a beginning, then it was either caused or uncaused. (3) If the beginning of the universe was caused, the cause was either personal or impersonal.

Needless to say, the kalam argument has been hotly contested. Let us grant that the past is temporally finite and that the universe had a beginning. In recent years, William Lane Craig and Adolf Grünbaum have engaged in a stimulating and heated debate about dilemma (3).¹

¹ William Lane Craig, "The Origin and Creation of the Universe: A Reply to Adolf Grünbaum," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 43 (1992): 233-40; "Cosmology and Big Bang Cosmology," *Philosophia naturalis* 31 (1994): 217-24; "Prof. Grünbaum on Creation," *Erkenntnis* 40 (1994): 325-41; "A Response to Grünbaum on Creation and Big Bang Cosmology," *Philosophia naturalis* 31 (1994): 237-49; Adolph Grünbaum, "The Pseudo-Problem of Creation in Physical Cosmology," *Philosophy of Science* 56 (1989): 373-94; "Creation as a Pseudo-Explanation in Current Physical Cosmology," *Erkenntnis* 35 (1991): 233-54; "Some Comments on William Craig's 'Creation and Big Bank

To understand this exchange, let us begin by asking this question: If the origin of the universe is not to be taken as a brute fact, what sort of explanation should we give for it? For at least two reasons, Craig has argued that it is obvious that an event-causal explanation will not suffice.² First, whether $t=0$ is the first event in time or the boundary of time and therefore not an event, it is the case that (i) if causal priority entails temporal priority, then there can be no event-cause for $t=0$, and (ii) if causal priority does not entail temporal priority (that is, a cause can be simultaneous with its effect), then the event cause for $t=0$ would itself be the (explanatorily) first event, rather than the initial singularity, and an event-causal explanation would in turn be needed for it, ad infinitum.³ Second, Craig has claimed that the cause of the universe's beginning must be uncaused, eternal, and changeless (*sans* the creation). Moreover, the cause must be personal "[f]or the only way in which a temporal effect could originate from an eternal, changeless cause would seem to be if the cause is a personal agent who eternally chooses to create an effect in time. A changeless, mechanically operating cause would produce either an immemorial effect or none at all; but an agent endowed with [libertarian] free will can have an eternal determination to operate causally at a (first) moment of time and thereby to produce a temporally first effect."⁴

On Craig's view, then, not only is an event-causal explanation inadequate for the beginning of the universe, but a personal explanation is adequate. Grünbaum has inveighed against a personal explanation of the beginning of the universe and raised a number of objections against Craig that seek to show the unintelligibility or inadequacy of a theistic personal explanation for the initial singularity. The purpose of this article is to show that once the conceptual resources of libertarian agency and agent causation are clarified, these resources are sufficient to rebut the objections raised by Grünbaum against Craig and to tip the scales of their limited debate in favor of Craig. I will not seek to justify the kalam cosmological argument in its entirety, nor will I argue that libertarian agency and agent causation are, in fact, the correct model of

Cosmology', *Philosophia naturalis* 31 (1994): 225-36.

² I am assuming here that there is no metaphysical time prior to physical time.

³ If the initial singularity is taken to be an event, then the event cause would be simultaneous with the initial singularity in the sense of being at the same time as the singularity. If the initial singularity is taken as a boundary of time, then the cause, strictly speaking, would not be an event (in which case, event causality would not be applicable), but could still occur coincidentally in that both the cause and the effect occur at $t=0$. For more on this, see William Lane Craig, "Creation and Big Bang Cosmology," *Philosophia naturalis* 31 (1994): 222.

⁴ Craig, "Cosmology and Big Bang Cosmology," 219.

human action, though I believe that to be the case. I will begin by discussion event and agent causation and the forms of explanation appropriate to each. This will be followed by an application of agent causation and personal explanation to the task of rebutting the five key arguments proffered by Grünbaum against Craig.

Event Causation, Agent Causation and Explanation: Event causation is a model of efficient causality widely employed in science. Suppose a brick breaks a glass. In general, event causation can be defined in this way: an event of kind K (the moving of the brick) in circumstances of kind C (the glass being in a solid and not liquid state) occurring to an entity of kind E (the glass object itself) causes an event of kind Q (the breaking of the glass) to occur. Here, all causes and effects are events that constitute causal chains construed either deterministically (causal conditions are sufficient for an effect to obtain) or probabilistically (causal conditions are sufficient to fix the chances for an effect to obtain). Associated with event causation is a covering law model of explanation according to which some event (the explanandum) is explained by giving a correct deductive or inductive argument for that event. Such an argument contains two features in its *explanans*: a (universal or statistical) law of nature, and the initial causal conditions.

Some philosophers, compatibilists for example, describe human actions in terms of event causality and employ a covering law model to explain such actions. Advocates of libertarian freedom demur and they have developed different versions of an alternative model of human action. A widely accepted understanding of libertarian agency identifies the core component of intentional action as intentional endeavoring, that is, exercising a power in trying to bring about some effect for a reason.⁵ As we will see later, some libertarians offer slightly modified versions of intentional action. But for now, we may incorporate this characterization of intentional action in the following depiction of libertarian agency: Person P exercises libertarian agency, and freely and intentionally brings about some event *e* just in case 1) P is a substance that has the active power to bring about *e*; 2) P exerted his power as a first mover (an "originator") to bring about *e*; 3) P had the categorical ability to refrain from exerting his power to bring about *e*; 4) P acted for the sake of a reason which serves as the final cause or teleological goal for which P acted. Taken alone, 1-3 state necessary and sufficient conditions for a pure voluntary act. Propositions 1-4 state necessary

⁵ This is not quite correct because, sometimes, an agent performs an intentional action by simply allowing a certain sequence of events to take place. Here an agent gives a sort of passive permission and does nothing to stop a sequence of events that accomplish the agent's intent. The agent refrains from endeavoring.

and sufficient conditions for an intentional act.

By "substance" I mean a member of a natural kind, an essentially characterized particular that sustains absolute sameness through (accidental) change and that possesses a primitive unity of parts, properties, and capacities/powers at a time. "Active power" is an epistemically primitive notion which has a sense that is ultimately understood ostensibly in acts of first person introspective awareness of one's own initiation of change.⁶ A characteristic mark of active power is the ability to initiate motion, to bring something about. Active power is a dual ability. So understood, it is impossible for an exercise of active power to be causally necessitated by prior events. A "first mover" is a substance which has active power. The notion of "categorical ability" in 3) has two important aspects to it. First, it expresses the type of ability possessed by a first mover that can exercise active power and, as such, it contrasts with the conditional ability employed by compatibilists. Second, categorical ability is a dual ability; if one has the ability to exert his power to do (or will to do) A, then one also has the ability to refrain from exerting his power to do (or to will to do) A. Finally, 4) expresses a view of reasons as irreducible, teleological goals for the sake of which a person acts. In general, we may characterize this by saying that person S Φ' d (for example, went to the kitchen) in order to Ψ (for example, get coffee or satisfy S's desire for coffee). This characterization of action, according to 4), cannot be reduced to a causal theory of action that utilizes belief/desire event causation.

Three things should be mentioned about this definition of libertarian agency. First, there are two basic schools of thought regarding the issue of whether or not agents cause their actions. Advocates of the first school hold to agent causation and, thus, believe that the first mover in 2) causes his actions. For example, Roderick Chisholm claims that an adequate theory of agency should include the notion that "there is a certain event or state of affairs that an agent caused or brought about ('Jones killed his uncle' implies that the death of Jones' uncle was caused or brought about by Jones ... ").⁷ Along similar lines, Marilyn Adams

⁶ Timothy O'Connor holds that the primitive, core element in our concept of causality is that of the "production" or "bringing about" of an effect. See Timothy O'Connor, "Agent Causation," in *Agents, Causes, & Events*, ed. by Timothy O'Connor (N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1995), 175-78. For O'Connor, this core element is a genus of which agent and event causation are distinct species. My claim that active power is epistemically primitive is consistent with O'Connor's claim in this way. Through introspective awareness of my own free acts, I am aware of my own active power. By reflection, I may then form a concept of active power. By reflection on the concept of active power, I may then form a concept of causal production *per se* by removing from my concept of active power the component of being able to refrain.

states that "[w]e adults with impaired freedom are responsible for our choices ... in the sense that we are the **agent causes** of them."⁸ Advocates of the second school accept a non-causal view of agency in which the actions of unmoved movers are uncaused events done for reasons as final causes. Such reasons provide explanations for free acts but they do not do so by citing the reason itself or the agent as an efficient cause of the act. Stewart C. Goetz is a major advocate of the non-causal theory of libertarian agency: "On the non-causal view of agency I am developing, causation plays no **positive** role in explaining the reality ... of freedom.... Actions with respect to which an agent is free and responsible are uncaused events."⁹ Either way, libertarians agree that an unmoved mover is an agent that can act without sufficient causal conditions necessitating that the agent act—the agent is the absolute source of his own actions.

Second, libertarian agency theorists are divided about the role or reasons in an over all theory of agency. Non-causal theories of agency are clear in seeing reasons as final causes—teleological goals for the sake of which someone acts. Advocates of agent causation either accept this view of reasons or else they hold reasons to be necessary (efficient) causal conditions that, together with the agent's own active exercise of power (and, perhaps, other conditions), cause the action.¹⁰ Therefore, some agent causationists would adjust 4) accordingly. Third, it is broadly logically impossible for a person to be caused to agent-cause something. Libertarian acts are spontaneous in the sense that there are no causal antecedents sufficient to determine that an agent act with libertarian freedom.

Advocates of libertarian agency employ a form of personal explanation that stands in contrast to a covering law model. To understand this form of explanation, we need to look first at a distinction that is part of action theory: the difference between a basic and non-basic action. To grasp the difference between a basic and non-basic action, note first, that often more than one thing is accomplished in a single exercise of

⁷ Roderick M. Chisholm, "The Agent as Cause," in *Action Theory*, ed. by Myles Brand and Douglas Walton (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1976), 199.

⁸ Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians," in *Reasoned Faith*, ed. by Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 313.

⁹ Stewart C. Goetz, "A Noncausal Theory of Agency," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 49 (1988): 311; see also his "Libertarian Choice," *Faith and Philosophy* (forthcoming). Compare Alan Donagan, *Choice: The Essential Element in Human Action* (NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989); Richard Taylor, *Action and Purpose* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

¹⁰ Cf. Randolph Clarke, "Toward a Credible Agent-Causal Account of Free Will," *Nous* 27 (1993): 191-203.

agency. Some actions are done by doing others; for example, I perform the act of going to the store to get bread by getting into my car and by driving to the store. Basic actions are fundamental to the performance of all others but are not done by doing something else. In general, S's Φ -ing is basic if and only if there is no other non-equivalent action description 'S's Ψ -ing' such that it is true that S Φ -ed by Ψ -ing. My endeavoring to move my arm to get my keys is a basic action. A non-basic action contain basic actions are parts of and means to the ultimate intention for the sake of which the non-basic action was done. To fulfill a non-basic intention, I must form an action plan: a certain ordered set of basic actions that I take to be an effective means of accomplishing my non-basic intention. The action plan that constitutes going to the store to get bread includes the acts of getting my keys and walking to my car.¹¹

In my view, an action is something contained wholly within the boundaries of the agent. Thus, strictly speaking, the results of an action are not proper parts of that action. A basic result of an action is an intended effect brought about immediately by the action. If I successfully endeavor to move my finger, the basic result is the moving of the finger. Non-basic results are more remote intended effects caused by basic results or chains of basic results plus more remote intended effects. The firing of the gun or the killing of Lincoln are respective illustrations of these types of non-basic results.

With this in mind, a personal explanation (divine or otherwise) of some basic result R brought about intentionally by person P, where this bringing about of R is a basic action A, will cite the intention I of P that R occur and the basic power B that P exercised to bring about R. P, I, and B provide a full explanation of R: agent P brought about R by exercising power B in order to realize intention I as an irreducibly teleological goal. To illustrate, suppose we are trying to explain why Wesson simply moved his finger (R). We could explain this by saying that Wesson (P) performed an act of endeavoring to move his finger (A) in that he exercised his ability to move (or will to move) his finger (B)

¹¹There is some debate about whether each of these basic actions requires its own intending. Richard Swinburne argues that in performing actions which take a long time (writing a chapter), we do not exercise a separate volition for each intentional action (for example, willing to write the first sentence) that is part of the long term act. Rather, we just intend to bring about the long term effect by bringing about a generally conceived series of events and the body unconsciously selects a particular routine to accomplish that effect. See Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 94-95. I leave the matter open except to note that to the degree that a non-basic action contains sub-acts of a discontinuous nature (picking up keys, getting into a car vs. a series of steps in taking an hour long walk), then it is more likely that sub-intentions are required to characterize adequately those sub-acts.

intending to move the finger (I). If Wesson's moving his finger was an expression of an intent to move a finger to fire a gun to kill Smith, then we can explain the non-basic results (the firing of the gun and the killing of Smith) by saying that Wesson (P) performed an act of killing Smith (I₃) by endeavoring to move his finger (A) intentionally (I₁) by exercising his power to do so (B), intending thereby to fire the gun (I₂) in order to kill Smith. An explanation of the results of a non-basic action (like going to the store to get bread) will include a description of the action plan.¹²

Personal Explanation, Divine Action, and Grünbaum's Critique: We are now in a position to discuss personal explanation and divine action.¹³ Theists differ about the precise nature of the world's own causal activity, but I want to set these disputes aside and concentrate on explaining the difference between primary causal, miraculous acts by God in the natural world vs. the use of secondary causes by God.¹⁴ In the ordinary course of natural events, weather patterns or chemical reactions, for example, God sustains natural entities in existence along with their own causal powers, but those entities have causal dispositions to bring about changes themselves if they are affected in certain ways. In ordinary causal chains, God does not move natural entities, he simply sustains them. In such cases, God is not directly responsible for the changes of states of affairs in things, and event causation, along with a covering law model of explanation, is appropriate, even if God employs natural causal sequences to secure a divine intent. However, when it comes to primary causal, direct miraculous acts by God in producing changes in the world (parting the Red Sea, creating the universe from nothing for example), God exercises libertarian agency as a primary cause. Some

¹²Thus, we see that there are at least three kinds of intentional actions: Basic actions with a basic intent (simply intentionally moving my finger), basic actions with non-basic intents (ultimate intents that have other intents as means, for example, intentionally squeezing my finger to fire a gun to kill Smith), and non-basic actions (those that contain sub-acts—sub endeavorings and intendings—as parts, for example, going to the store to buy bread).

¹³For excellent treatments of divine action relevant to this article, see the chapters by Jonathan L. Kvanvig and Hugh J. McCann, Philip L. Quinn, Peter van Inwagen, and William P. Alston in *Divine & Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988).

¹⁴The main views of the world's causal activity in relationship to God's are the full secondary causality view (God sustains the world in existence but in the normal course of things, the entities of the world exert their own causal powers and such exertions are sufficient to produce changes in the world), occasionalism (there are no autonomous, distinct causal powers possessed by created objects; God is the only true cause and no effect in nature is brought about by natural entities), and concurrentism (every event cause has God collaborating with the natural causal entity, cooperating with its causal activity by ratifying that activity). My own view is the first position.

have conceived of such activity as God either bringing something into existence *ex nihilo* or momentarily supplying natural entities with new causal powers different from their normal powers which, in turn, sets off a chain reaction of divergence in the universe. Irrespective of the precise nature of Divine primary causal activity, however, at least the basic results of such acts are caused by an exercise of Divine libertarian agency and are to be explained by personal theistic explanation.

From what I can tell, Adolf Grünbaum's rebuttal of Craig's employment of personal theistic explanation for the initial singularity boils down to five key arguments:

(1) The notion of a Divine agent cause of the initial singularity is incoherent because causation is essentially a temporal activity or relation in which the cause must be temporally prior to its effect. Now, if God were the agent cause of the initial singularity, then since there was no time prior to that singularity, this would mean that His creative causal act and the physical effect, that is, the initial singularity, would have to occur simultaneously. But the notion of simultaneous causation is unintelligible. Says Grünbaum, "I consider the notion of simultaneous causation, as applied to the purported creation of time, either unintelligible or, at best, incoherent."¹⁵ Elsewhere, he adds, "Precisely the hypothesis that $t = 0$ simply had no temporal predecessor obviates the misguided quest for the elusive cause."¹⁶

(2) The notion of a Divine agent cause of the initial singularity is too inscrutable, mysterious and obscure to do any explanatory work. According to Grünbaum, any appeal to Divine agency as a creator, conservator, or intervener is an appeal to "the inherently irremediable dynamical inscrutability of divine causation ..."¹⁷ He also claims that "so far as divine causation goes, we are being told ... that an intrinsically elusive, mysterious agency X inscrutably produces the effect."¹⁸

(3) Divine Personal explanation is inferior to scientific explanation because the former fails to provide what the latter proffers: a specification of intermediate causal processes, mediating causal links that connect causes (Divine or otherwise) with their effects. Says Grünbaum, "... the invocation of a divine creator to provide causal explanations in cosmology suffers from a fundamental defect vis-à-vis scientific expla-

¹⁵ Grünbaum, "Creation as a Pseudo-Explanation in Current Physical Cosmology," 244. Cf. "Some Comments on William Craig's 'Creation and Big Bang Cosmology,'" 231-35.

¹⁶ Grünbaum, "Creation as a Pseudo-Explanation in Current Physical Cosmology," 239.

¹⁷ Ibid., 235.

¹⁸ Ibid., 235. On the same page, Grünbaum confesses "I, for one, draw a complete explanatory blank when I am told that God created photons."

nation: As we know from two thousand years of theology, the hypothesis of divine creation does not even envision, let alone, specify, an appropriate intermediate causal process that would link the presence of the supposed divine (causal) agency to the effects which are attributed to it.... In physics, there is either an actual specification or at least a quest for the mediating causal dynamics linking presumed causes to their effect."¹⁹

(4) Grünbaum argues that it does not follow from the causal premise "whatever begins to exist has a cause" that the first cause is a conscious agent. So even if we grant that there is a first cause of the initial singularity, such an admission does not entail that the first cause is a personal God.²⁰

(5) Only events can qualify as the momentary effects of other events or of the actions of agents and if the singularity $t=0$ is taken as a non-event, then the singularity cannot be taken as an effect of any cause: "Let me take for granted the altogether reasonable view that only events can qualify as the momentary effects of other events, or of the action of an agency. Since the Big Bang singularity is technically a non-event, and $t=0$ is not a bona fide time of its occurrence, the singularity cannot be the effect of any cause in the case of either even-causation or agent-causation alike."²¹

Part of Craig's response to Grünbaum, especially to (1), is the specification of three cogent models of theological creationism of which two are relevant to my concerns. Model 1: The Creator may be conceived to be causally, but not temporally, prior to the origin of the universe, such that the act of causing the universe to begin to exist is simultaneous with its beginning to exist. The Creator, *sans* the universe, exists changelessly and (most likely) timelessly and at the singularity creates both the universe and time. Model 2: The Creator may be conceived to exist timelessly and to cause tenselessly the origin of the universe at the Big Bang singularity.

Further reflection on the nature of libertarian agency will, I hope, support the intelligibility of Craig's models and provide further refutations of Grünbaum's objections. For the purpose of brevity, let us assume for now without argument a volitional theory of action according to which normal actions, like raising one's arm, are to be parsed in the

¹⁹ Ibid., 234-35.

²⁰ Grünbaum, "The Pseudo-Problem of Creation in Physical Cosmology." Compare William Lane Craig, "The Origin and Creation of the Universe: A Reply to Adolf Grünbaum," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 43 (1992): 233-35.

²¹ Grünbaum, "Some Comments on William Craig's 'Creation and Big Bang Cosmology,'" 237.

following way: the bodily movement is caused by a specific sort of event—a volition (endeavoring)—which, in turn, is brought about in some way or another by the agent himself.

Now there is a certain difficulty for the libertarian theory of agency if we grant that whatever has a beginning has a cause. The raising of one's arm is an event with a beginning and it is caused by another event—a volition. But the volition is an event with a beginning and it has a cause as well, namely, the agent. Now, what does the agent do to cause his volition? If the agent does something, is what he does itself an event and if so, does it need a cause? The claim that the agent causes an infinite hierarchy of events in causing his volition is inadequate. What other solutions are available? There are three which have been most widely recognized.²²

AC I: The agent does not do anything to cause his volition. The volition is a basic act produced directly by the agent without exercising any power to produce it. The agent is simply the first relatum that stands in a primitive causal relation to the second relatum, the volitional event. The following objection has been raised against AC I: If the volition occurs at a particular time t^1 and the cause is an enduring substance that existed for some time prior to t^1 , then why did the volition occur when it did? One reason this problem arises is that in cases of libertarian agency, no set of conditions within an agent is sufficient to produce a volition. There may be necessary conditions (motives, beliefs and desires for example), but these may exist in an agent over a protracted time period with no volition brought about. If the agent doesn't do something to cause the volition, why does it happen at t^1 ? So far as I can see, short of abandoning AC I, the best solution to the problem is to work with the second relatum. An agent does not just cause a volition simpliciter, say a volition-to- ϕ . The agent causes a volition-to- ϕ -at- t_1 (or now).

AC II: The agent does do something to cause his volition, namely, he exercises a power. According to this view, the causal relation between an agent and his volition is not primitive; it is grounded in an exercise of power. In AC II, we should revise the causal principle and recognize that an exercise of power is not an event in the sense relevant to this revised principle. The causal principle should read "every substance that begins to exist or every change that a substance undergoes has a cause." Now an exercise of power is simply the exertion of a self moving power or principle of self determination that is not itself a change undergone by the agent. In libertarian acts, agents are unmoved

²²William Rowe, *Thomas Reid on Freedom and Mortality* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 30-40, 145-61.

or first movers. They do not first undergo a change (an exercise of power) before they can cause a change (a volition). Rather, agents, qua substances, directly cause their volitions by virtue of possessing and exercising their power to do so. Since an exercise of power is not a change undergone by an agent (nor a coming-to-be of a substance), it is not an event with a beginning in the sense relevant to the causal principle, even though there was a time before and after which the agent caused his volitions. Besides coming into existence, only changes (internal or relational) need a cause.

AC III: The correct causal principle is "every event that can broadly logically have a cause does have a cause." As we saw earlier, it is broadly logically impossible for someone to be caused to agent-cause something else, a volition, for example. So if we grant that an exercise of power is an event (that is, a change within the agent), when we recognize that such an exercise just is the event of an agent directly agent-causing his volition (the exercise of power isn't an event caused by the agent which, in turn, event causes the volition), it becomes clear that it does not have an efficient cause because it cannot (though it may have a reason which serves as the final cause of the exercise of power).

Let us apply these insights to Grünbaum's criticisms of divine agent causality. It turns out that his objections actually take exception to agent causation and not divine action *per se*. Regarding objection (1), the notion of divine agent causality is not incoherent at all. There is a well developed literature about agent causality, as well as its application to divine action, and most philosophers who reject agent causation do not do so on the grounds that it is incoherent. Moreover, Craig's first response to the charge of incoherence (God's act of causing the origin of the universe was simultaneous with its beginning) is quite plausible. God's volition (AC I-III) or his exercise of power and his volition (AC III) could be taken as simultaneous or coincident with the basic result of God's volition—the creation of the initial singularity. AC I-III render intelligible the notion that a timeless God *sans* creation could spontaneously bring about the initial singularity. On AC I, God timelessly causes the volition-to-create-the-universe-at- $t=0$ and this volition is simultaneous or coincident with the initial singularity. AC II depicts God's exercise of power as something brought about by God but which is not itself a change within God. So it becomes intelligible to suppose that God could changelessly exist and exercise His power to bring about a volition to cause the-creation-of-the-universe-at- $t=0$. Again, the volition would be simultaneous or coincident with the initial singularity. If God could do this changelessly, I see no reason to deny that he could also do it timelessly because temporality is relevant to efficient causality largely because it is sometimes mistakenly thought that an exercise of efficient causality involves change, and change is temporal. On AC III,

God's exercise of power would just be the uncaused event of directly agent-causing his volition to bring about the initial singularity. Such an exercise would not, indeed could not be preceded by a prior event that brought it about. In this sense, such an exercise is done spontaneously by an agent.

Craig's second model (God exists timelessly and tenselessly causes the initial singularity) is plausible as well (setting aside problems of reconciling this model with an A series view of time) if we set aside the volitional theory of action: an agent brings about an effect without doing so by way of an internal, volitional change within the agent. On AC I, God could timelessly cause from eternity the-beginning-of-the-universe-at- $t=0$. On AC II, an exercise of power would bring about the initial singularity but the exercise of power would not itself be an event. AC III would not be applicable to Craig's second model because it depicts an exercise of power as an event within the agent.

Objection (2) is wide of the mark as well. For one thing, the Divine creation of the initial singularity is precisely analogous to human libertarian acts, for example, both involve first movers who initiate change. There is nothing particularly mysterious or inscrutable about the latter, so in the absence of some good reason to think that there is some specific problem with the initial Divine creation, the charge of inscrutability is question begging. Moreover, we understand exercises of power primarily from introspective awareness of our own libertarian acts, and we use the concept of action so derived to offer third person explanations of the behavior of other human persons. There is nothing obscure about such explanations for the effects produced by other finite persons, and I see no reason to think that this approach is illicit in the case of Divine initial creation. In fact, naturalists like John Searle, John Bishop, and Thomas Nagel all admit that our basic concept of action itself is a libertarian one.²³ Searle goes so far as to say that our understanding of event causality is conceptually derived from our first person experience of our own causation. There is a major tradition in philosophy that agent causation is clearer and more basic than event causation, and it may actually be that if any sort of causation is inscrutable, it is event causation. By claiming that God created the initial singularity, we mean that (1) there was no sufficient causal antecedent for the initial singularity (temporal or otherwise) apart from

²³In Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 98; John Bishop, *Natural Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 58, 69, 72, 95-96, 103-104, 126-127, 140-141, 144; Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 110-37.

either (i) God directly causing the initial singularity without first doing something (AC I) or (ii) an exercise of Divine power to bring about the initial singularity (AC II or III); (2) in a basic libertarian act, God freely and spontaneously brought about a volition which caused $t=0$ as a basic result.

Objection (3) is also wide of the mark. A basic libertarian act that produces a basic result does not have intermediate causal links between the act and the result. The basic result is brought about directly. Moreover, the sort of personal explanation that goes along with basic libertarian actions and basic results does not employ intermediate causal links in its explanans. As we saw earlier, examples of this sort of explanation makes reference to the agent himself, the agent's intention, and the basic power exercised. Since theists depict the creation of the initial singularity as a basic Divine act in which a First Mover brought about an initiation of change, yielding the initial singularity as a basic result, there is no causal intermediary. So it can hardly count as a liability that a theistic personal explanation of the initial singularity fails to cite an intermediate causal process disallowed by the theistic model itself.

In philosophy of science, it is widely recognized that, given two competing paradigms, sometimes one rival will consider a phenomenon basic and not in need of a solution, empirical or otherwise. It may, therefore, disallow questions about how or why that phenomenon occurs and, thus, can hardly be faulted for not being fruitful in suggesting lines of empirical research for causal processes whose existence is not postulated by the theory. As Nicholas Rescher has pointed out,

[o]ne way in which a body of knowledge S can deal with a question is, of course, by **answering** it. Yet another, important different, way in which S can deal with a question is by disallowing it. S **disallows** [Q] when there is some presupposition of Q that S does not countenance: given S, we are simply not in a position to raise Q.²⁴

Not only is it not a vice that a theistic personal explanation fails to cite an intermediate causal process, it is also a virtue that the theistic explanation requires no such causal process. Whatever caused $t=0$ could not have done so by way of an intermediate temporal causal process of the type Grünbaum heralds as a virtue of scientific explanation since $t=0$ is either the first event or the initial boundary from which

²⁴Nicholas Rescher, *The Limits of Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 22.

events ensue. Either way, there are no events prior to $t=0$ and, therefore, an event causal explanation that cites a causal process leading up to $t=0$ is out of the question. Thus, the theistic model is superior to Grünbaum's scientific model as an explanation of the initial singularity because the former eschews but the latter requires an intermediate causal linkage.

In my view, this third objection is nothing more than a question-begging claim that if agent causal explanations do not conform to those proffered by event causal explanations, then the former are inferior as general explanatory strategies. So understood, Grünbaum's third objection is not really directed primarily at theistic explanation. Instead, it is an attack on libertarian agency and the sort of explanation associated with it. It would seem, then, that this third objection is not very impressive. Some philosophers may think that compatibilist models of freedom are to be preferred to libertarian models, but it is simply question-begging to fault the latter on the grounds that they do not conform to modes of explanation that only become relevant if we have already eschewed libertarian action and personal explanation in favor of event causation and explanation.

Regarding (4), so far as we know, only conscious agents endeavor or will anything. So even if it is logically possible that the First Cause was not conscious, it is not epistemically possible in light of what we know about the types of agents who are capable of libertarian action. If the origin of the spatio-temporal universe is not to be taken as a brute fact, then as we have seen, Divine libertarian agency theory provides an explanation for the initial singularity and event causal explanations can provide no such explanation. Now, I know of no example of an endeavoring libertarian agent which was not conscious. Grünbaum must do more than just assert the bare logical possibility that the First Cause was not conscious. He must show that it is epistemically plausible to think that such an agent could exercise a power and will the initial singularity into being and yet not be conscious. And this Grünbaum has not done.

Further, John Bishop has argued that given the nature of contemporary scientific naturalism, "the idea of a responsible agent, with the 'originative' ability to initiate events in the natural world, does not sit easily with the idea of [an agent as] a natural organism."²⁵ Elsewhere, Bishop notes that "... the problem of natural agency is an ontological problem—a problem about whether the existence of actions can be admitted within a natural scientific perspective.... [A]gent causal-rela-

²⁵Natural Agency, 1. Bishop's own solution eschews libertarian agency in favor of a version of the causal theory of action.

tions do not belong to the ontology of the natural perspective. Naturalism does not essentially employ the concept of a causal relation whose first member is in the category of person or agent (or even, for that matter, in the broader category of continuant or 'substance'). All natural causal relations have first members in the category of event or state of affairs."²⁶ If we grant that abstract objects do not have efficient causal powers, then Bishop's remarks, if correct, would seem to imply that the efficient cause of the initial singularity is not only conscious, but also supernatural.

Finally, in light of what we have seen in our analysis of libertarian agency and personal explanation, objection (5) is simply false or question begging. Agents bring about their own exercises of power and, in virtue of our analysis of AC II, these may reasonably be taken as non-events. Given AC II, Grünbaum's claim that only events can qualify as the momentary effects of other events or actions of agents is not correct. Moreover, in non-basic actions, agents are first movers who generate a chain of events. If we take an exercise of power or a volition to be the first event in such a chain, the agent brought about this event. However, if we take a non-basic action to be the initiation of a temporal, causal sequence to follow, such that the exercise of power/volition forms an initial boundary for that sequence, the agent still brought about the exercise of power/volition. Insofar as libertarian agents are first movers, when they perform non-basic actions, the causal sequence of events brought about by such agents have an initial boundary in a way exactly analogous to the origination of the spatio-temporal universe. In the case of normal libertarian non-basic actions, the agent brings about the initial temporal boundary of the sequence of events, as well as the rest of the ensuing chain. In principle, then, there is no difficulty with the idea of a Divine libertarian agent bringing about $t=0$, as well as the rest of the events that follow. So even if we grant that $t=0$ is a non-event, libertarian action theory has the resources to allow that it could be an effect of a free, Divine, creative act.

In sum, in their exchange about the adequacy of personal theistic explanation for the initial singularity, neither Craig nor Grünbaum

²⁶ Ibid., 40. An interesting implication of Bishop's view is that naturalism cannot allow for there to be a first event in the absolute sense of not being preceded by other events because all events are caused by prior events or else they are simply uncaused. In the latter case, the coming to be of the event cannot be "natural" since it is just a brute fact. In the former case, this means that if the kalam cosmological argument is correct and there was a beginning to the universe, then the beginning itself was not a natural event nor was its cause if it had one. For more on this, see William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith, *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

clarify the nature of libertarian agency and agent causation in order to shed light on their exchange. I have tried to advance this debate by doing just that. From what we have seen, irrespective of one's view about the adequacy of the kalam cosmological argument in general, Grünbaum's arguments against Craig's employment of personal theistic explanation fail to be persuasive.

Biola University
La Mirada, California