In the name of God



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Table of Contents

Created Events and Acquired Acts: Al-Ghazali on Causality, Kasb, and the Ontology of Divine Action

Mesfer Alhayyani 4

Divine Agency and Natural Causation in Averroes and Thomas Aquinas: Primary and Secondary Causation

Mehmet Ata Az 5

Randomness in Nature and Design

Ebrahim Azadegan 6

Duns Scotus on Divine Agency between Avicenna and al-Ghazālī

Mohamad Mahdi Davar and Mohammad Naderi 7

Necessity of the Divines Ideas and Contingency of the Creatures According to Peter Thomae

María José Jaramillo Gómez 8

Who Acts? Divine and Saintly Agency in the Akbarian Tradition

Farinaz Kavianifar 9

Divine Agency and the Epistemology of Religious Orientation

Muhammad Legenhausen 10

Divine Agency in Light of Grounding Hojjat Imanikia and

Atefeh Lotfi 11

Divine Agency and Moral Realism: A Critique and Meta-Analysis of Legenhausen's Solution to the Problem of Evil

Muhammad Mahdi Montasseri 12

Divine Action without Deliberation: Physis and the Unmoved Mover in Aristotle

Pu Liu 13

Divine Action and Human Agency: A Metaphysical Account of the Relationship between Divine Causality and Human Freedom in the Philosophy of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli
Mohammad Sajjad Qadeer..... 14

Divine Action and the Wounded Neighbor: An Abrahamic Criterion of Discernment against Sanctified Hatred
Kurt Anders Richardson 15

Beyond the Substantial Self; Buddhist Philosophy and a Humanotological Ontology of Becoming
Bilal SAMBUR 16

Rethinking Divine Agency in Post-Gaza Theology
Vahid Sohrabifar 17

Does Complete Dependence on God Exclude Creaturely Agency? Mullā Ṣadrā and Leibniz on Divine Action
Tomasz Stefaniuk..... 18

Simplicity Without Loss: How Divine Simplicity Accommodates De Se Cognition
Seyed
Ali Taheri Khorramabadi 19

The Divine Attributes and the Negative Theology in the Maimonides' Guide of Perplexed
Addamiana Cosma Tocci 20

The Creative Mind of Heaven and Earth and the Problem of Evil
ZHANG YUXIANG 21

Two Accounts of Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysical Structure of Objects
Amirhossein Zadyousefi 22

How Is 'Repetition' Possible? Hierophany, Retrospective Construction, and Structural Relations

Wanli Zhang…… 23

Created Events and Acquired Acts: Al-Ghazali on Causality, Kasb, and the Ontology of Divine Action

Mesfer Alhayyani[1]

Discussions of Asharite divine action often separate natural causality from human agency. Can created things produce effects if God is the sole creator? How can human beings be responsible for acts that God creates? This paper argues that al-Ghazali treats them as one ontological problem. All temporal events are created by divine power, yet they do not bear the same relation to creatures. The paper reads the seventeenth discussion of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* with the account of power and acquisition in *Moderation in Belief*. Al-Ghazali denies that the connection between a natural cause and its effect is necessary. Fire does not produce burning through an independent power. God creates burning when fire meets cotton within the habitual order, while remaining able to act otherwise. However, al-Ghazali also rejects the determinist denial of human power. Voluntary movement differs from a tremor because it occurs with the agent's will and created power. God creates both the movement and the power related to it, while the person acquires the act.I reconstruct this position through a distinction between productive dependence and agential attribution. Natural effects depend productively on God and occur regularly with created conditions. Human actions also depend productively on God, but they bear a further relation to human intention and power. This relation does not produce the act, yet it makes the act attributable to the person. *Kasb* is therefore neither secondary efficient causation nor a verbal redescription of divine action. It explains how one event can be created by God and still belong to a creature as a voluntary act. The paper finally asks whether a non-productive relation is sufficient for agency and responsibility. Al-Ghazali avoids treating divine and human powers as competing causes while preserving a difference between action and mere occurrence. The remaining difficulty is whether attribution is too thin when created power contributes nothing to production. I argue that the model offers an account of agential ownership, though not a complete account of agential control. This reveals both the promise and the limit of the Asharite ontology of divine action.

Keywords: Al-Ghazali, Asharism, divine action, causality, kasb.

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Divine Agency and Natural Causation in Averroes and Thomas Aquinas: Primary and Secondary Causation

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The relationship between divine agency and natural causation constitutes a central problem in medieval philosophical discussions of God's action in the world. This paper comparatively examines the accounts of divine agency developed by Averroes and Thomas Aquinas, focusing particularly on the relationship between divine causality and the causal efficacy of created beings. Both philosophers affirm the reality and intelligibility of natural causation and reject an account in which natural events are reduced to arbitrary or purely occasional divine interventions. Nevertheless, they articulate the relation between divine and created causality in significantly different ways. Averroes, within an Aristotelian framework, attributes genuine causal powers to natural beings and understands the natural order as a rationally structured causal order. God's causality is principally articulated through the metaphysical and cosmological structure of this order, including God's role as the ultimate source and principle of cosmic motion and order. The paper argues that, although Averroes recognizes divine causality, his account does not develop the same model of simultaneous and hierarchical divine and created causation that becomes central to Aquinas's metaphysics. Aquinas, while preserving the Aristotelian reality of secondary causes, develops a more explicit doctrine of primary and secondary causation. Created beings are genuine causes precisely because God, as the first cause, gives and sustains both their existence and their causal powers. Divine causality therefore does not compete with or replace natural causality; rather, God causes through created causes. The paper argues that this distinction enables Aquinas to affirm both the genuine causal efficacy of natural beings and the ontological dependence of their causal activity upon divine agency. The comparison ultimately shows that Averroes and Aquinas share a commitment to the intelligibility of natural causation, while differing over how divine agency is metaphysically related to the causal activity of created beings. Their positions consequently offer two distinct medieval models for understanding divine action within an ordered natural world.

Keywords: Divine Agency; Natural Causation; Averroes; Thomas Aquinas; Primary and Secondary Causation.

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Randomness in Nature and Design

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It seems that ontological randomness as apparent lack of purpose in biological evolution, contradicts any pre design view. Many evolutionists agree that there are forms of ontological randomness in the world that are intrinsic and cannot be reduced to an epistemic randomness. This paper suggests that the traditional notions of divine sovereignty and providence, induce a concept of design that requires preprogramming like a human design for her plans but according to my open theology perspective one can reconcile ontological randomness with divine providence and design in a way that the biological and natural systems randomly and freely evolve and the result will be the manifestation of divine nature which is beauty and love.

Keywords: Randomness, evolution, natural selection, design

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Duns Scotus on Divine Agency between Avicenna and al-Ghazālī

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This article examines divine agency in Duns Scotus's view by asking whether God is the complete cause of every effect, why is the world not a necessary existent like God, and under what conditions natural causes and the human will have agency alongside God's agency? To answer this question, we should consider three points: (1) the priority of God's causality; (2) the freedom of the divine will; and (3) the causal agency of God's effects. We show how he uses Avicenna's thought in formulating his account. Furthermore, we demonstrate whether the difference between Scotus's view of the divine will and Avicenna's may be the result of al-Ghazālī's influence on his philosophy. In the first section, we identify Avicennian elements in Scotus's thought and show that, in Avicenna's view, the contingent being attains necessity through its efficient cause. Scotus accepts that contingent beings must ultimately terminate in an uncaused and non-contingent efficient cause. However, he does not agree that a complete efficient cause brings a determinate effect into existence. Rather, he holds that, in order to exist, a contingent being requires the divine will, and that the divine will may be directed toward another contingent being. In the second section, we show that al-Ghazālī affirms the divine will, but differs in denying a necessary connection between causes and effects. For example, fire may fail to burn if God does not will it; there is no necessary connection between fire and burning, and everything depends on God's will. We show that Scotus, like al-Ghazālī, reckons the divine will, but that his view does not lead to the rejection of a necessary connection between cause and effect. Divine agency and the agency of God's effects are not two co-ordinate realities; each belongs to a distinct causal order, and these orders are not opposed to one another. The paper concludes that Scotus is influenced by Avicenna on causality and contingency and was perhaps directly or indirectly influenced by al-Ghazālī on the question of the divine will. What distinguishes him from both thinkers is that, while preserving divine agency, he also believes in the causal necessity between cause and effect and does not regard the agency of caused beings, including human beings, as contrary to God's agency.

Keywords: God's Agency, Causality, God's Will, Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Duns Scotus.

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Necessity of the Divines Ideas and Contingency of the Creatures According to Peter Thomae

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In the fourteenth century, Peter Thomae, a follower of John Duns Scotus, is very interested in the problem of the divine ideas. He tries to solve some problems related to the generation of divine ideas and their ontological status. Peter Thomae proposes in the Quaestiones de esse intelligibili a theory where the divine essence gives intelligible being to the creatures, and in this way the ideas come to be in the divine intellect. The divine ideas, which represent the creatures, become intelligible as they are perfectly represented by the divine essence. Peter Thomae denies a form of causality, production, or generation of the divine ideas in the divine intellect and understands the divine ideas, or the creatures with intelligible being, as necessarily resulting from the divine essence. This implies that the divine ideas are in themselves necessary. Nevertheless, Peter Thomae tries to understand in his Commentary to the Sentences of Peter Lombard, where the contingency of the creatures is originated, for they are created based on the divine ideas, which are in themselves necessary and follow necessarily the divine essence. He affirms in this text that the origin of the contingent character of creatures created by God is the divine will. This offers obviously some difficulty, because it puts on the table the problem of the necessary divine knowledge of contingent futures and creatures, that seems nearly impossible to make compatible. This paper will, therefore, explore the conception of Peter Thomae on the divine knowledge of creatures and his explanation of the contingency of created beings.

Keywords: Necessity, contingency, divine knowledge, divine will, Peter Thomae, Scotism

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Who Acts? Divine and Saintly Agency in the Akbarian Tradition

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If the Divine is the true agent (*fāʿil al-ḥaqīqī*), in what sense can the saint (*walī*) be said to act? If the Divine is the sole agent of all actions, how can the mystic, saint, and prophet exercise spiritual willpower (*himmah*) and intervention (*taṣarruf*) without possessing independent causal efficacy? It begins from two Qurʾānic foundations of Ibn ʿArabī's anthropology: God's designation of the human being as His vicegerent (*khalīfat-Allāh*) on earth (Q 2:30) and His teaching Adam "all the names" (Q 2:31). Within Ibn Arabi's framework, these verses establish the human being as a comprehensive locus (*maẓhar*) of the Divine Names and, consequently, as the bearer of a delegated mode of divine agency. Through an ontological reading of Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, alongside Jāmī's *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ*, the paper explores how saintly agency is understood in relation to agency (*fāʿiliyyah*), receptivity (*qābiliyyah*), sainthood (*wilāyah*), and divine self-disclosure (*tajallī*). The paper argues that Ibn ʿArabī neither reduces human action to illusion nor attributes the saint an independent causal power. Rather, his doctrine of the unity of acts (*tawḥīd al-afʿāl*) provides the ontological basis for understanding saintly agency. *Wilāyah* therefore entails a transformation in the mode of action itself. Through proximity to the Divine (*qurb*), servanthood (*ʿubūdiyyah*), and the cultivation of receptivity through one's capacity (*istiʿdād*), the saint ceases to regard the self as an autonomous source of efficacy and becomes a perfected locus through which divine action is manifested. Drawing upon the Chapter on Solomon and Lot, these themes will be examined alongside the distinction between obligatory and supererogatory proximity (*qurb al-farāʾiḍ* and *qurb al-nawāfil*), and the role of *himmah and taṣarruf* in the manifestation of extraordinary acts (*karāmāt*). Such efficacy does not establish a creative power alongside the Divine; rather, it demonstrates how divine creativity may be operative through a perfected human subject.

Keywords: Akbarian Ontology, *Taṣarruf*, *Himmah,* Divine Efficacy.

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Divine Agency and the Epistemology of Religious Orientation

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A religious epistemology of divine agency is sketched that is centered on religious orientation rather than on the metaphysical mechanisms that might be taken to be required for divine agency to operate in the world. Aside from the metaphysics of divine agency, we can also pose questions of religious orientation to ask what it means to inhabit a world interpreted through divine agency. The epistemology of divine agency proposed here has been one generated by turning from questions of justification and toward understanding, where this understanding is grounded in religious life. From questions of how to understand divine agency as manifest in religious life, we move to the consideration of the orientation within which this understanding is framed. This brings us to consider hinge epistemologies that are able to examine religious hinges as supports for the framework within which a religious orientation is to be found. In contrast to some Wittgensteinians, I suggest that religious hinges may be subject to epistemological criticism by considering the viability of the religious orientations they support.

Keywords: Understanding, Orientation, Viability, Hinge Epistemology, Divine Agency.

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Divine Agency in Light of Grounding

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In Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics, the move from the gradational unity to the personal unity of existence raises a problem concerning divine agency: if contingent beings are not independent existents alongside God but His manifestations, determinations, and modes, how should their dependence on Him be understood? This paper argues that contemporary metaphysical grounding provides a more precise framework for reconstructing the ontological dimension of this relation. Grounding is a non-causal form of metaphysical determination and explanation: a derivative fact obtains in virtue of a more fundamental fact. For example, on a standard conception of sets, the fact that Socrates exists grounds the fact that the singleton set {Socrates} exists. Socrates does not produce this abstract set through a causal process; its existence is instead explained by a relation of metaphysical dependence. On the strict conception adopted here, this relation is irreflexive, since neither fact grounds itself, and asymmetric, since the singleton's existence does not ground Socrates' existence. Although these formal properties are not unique to grounding, the example demonstrates an explanatory dependence that is constitutive rather than productive. I argue that this distinction illuminates Mullā Ṣadrā's account of divine agency under personal unity: the distinction between the divine reality and its manifestations need not amount to a distinction between two independently existing realities. Grounding can therefore express the explanatory priority of the one fundamental existence over its dependent manifestations, while making sense of the directionality of their dependence. Its advantage over an exclusively causal account is not that causation is false, but that the language of causal relation alone does not fully articulate what it means for manifestations to have no independent existence. The paper thus interprets manifestation, determination, and divine self-disclosure through a contemporary grounding framework, without attributing that theory to Mullā Ṣadrā or denying the legitimacy of causal discourse at other explanatory levels.

Keywords: Divine Agency, Metaphysical Grounding, Mullā Ṣadrā, Personal Unity of Existence, Manifestation; Causation.

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Divine Agency and Moral Realism: A Critique and Meta-Analysis of Legenhausen's Solution to the Problem of Evil

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The problem of evil challenges the compatibility of divine perfection with apparently gratuitous suffering. In his analysis of the problem from an Islamic perspective, Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen does not attempt to show that every evil is necessary for the goodness of the world, as classical theodicies from Ibn Sīnā to Leibniz sought to do. Instead, he questions whether the conventional formulation rests on an anthropomorphic conception of divine agency and an insufficiently defended assumption about the scope of moral obligation. Drawing on Neoplatonic strands of Islamic philosophical theology and on the theory of norms, he argues that moral norms function to regulate social cooperation and mutual accountability among human agents, and that God, as an agent by self-disclosure who has no needs, cannot be accused of injustice or held to a general obligation to eliminate gratuitous evil. This paper offers a charitable reconstruction of that position and develops two meta-critical objections. First, drawing on ethical realism, it argues that explaining the social function of norms does not by itself establish the limits of their normative authority, so the exclusion of creaturely welfare from divine normative concern requires further argument. Second, it argues that Legenhausen's appeal to divine covenant is internally unstable: for God to be accountable for His covenants, values such as truthfulness and fidelity must already apply to divine agency, so normativity cannot be eliminated from the divine side. It does not claim that God is obligated to prevent gratuitous evil, only that excluding general divine obligations requires further argument than Legenhausen provides.

Keywords: Divine Agency, Moral Realism, Problem of Evil, Philosophy of Religion, Anthropomorphis.

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Divine Action without Deliberation: Physis and the Unmoved Mover in Aristotle

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Aristotle's unmoved mover exercises a complete actuality that involves no passage from deliberation to execution. Calling its relation to nature divine action nevertheless requires an account of how its activity bears upon the world's changing beings. This paper defends a hylomorphic interpretation: the first mover is the natural whole in respect of its formal life, and natural processes belong to that life's bodily exercise. The argument brings Aristotle's account of physis in *Physics* II into conversation with the cosmic organization of *De Caelo* II.3 and the living intellectual actuality of *Metaphysics* XII.7-9. In *De Caelo*, terrestrial generation helps explain the plurality of celestial movements, giving divine eternal life an articulated bodily setting. Reading this organization as one living substance is the paper's central interpretative inference. The proposed unity gives the first mover a role in explaining what the whole actively is, extending beyond its final orientation. It also requires a revisionary account of separation: the principle's intellectual actuality remains independent of the succession of bodily processes while informing the life they exercise. Natural movements and divine thinking have distinct accounts within this life; each movement is not itself an act of thought. Divine action by manifestation names the exercise of this formal life through the powers of particular natural beings. Those beings retain their own sources of activity and determinate ends. *De Caelo* II.12 places an essential restriction on the account: natural processes cannot supply a perfection the first principle lacks. The passage's treatment of praxis as action required to attain a good leaves room for the complete energeia attributed to divine life in *Metaphysics* XII.7. On this interpretation, divine agency consists in the efficacy of an already actual life, whose bodily exercise includes generation and change. *Physis* acquires theological significance as the living unity of these differentiated activities.

Keywords: Aristotle; physis; unmoved mover; divine action; manifestation; hylomorphism.

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Divine Action and Human Agency:

A Metaphysical Account of the Relationship between Divine Causality and Human Freedom in the Philosophy of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli

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One of the central questions in the philosophy of divine action is how to understand the relationship between God′s absolute causality and genuine human agency. If God is the ultimate source of existence and all actions depend on Him, how can human beings still possess freedom and responsibility? This paper examines this question from the perspective of Islamic philosophy, particularly through the thought of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli. Drawing on Transcendent Philosophy (al-ḥikmah al-mutaʿāliyah) as interpreted in Javadi Amoli′s thought, this study argues that divine action and human agency should not be understood as competing forms of causality. Rather, human agency exists within and through divine causality. The dependence of human action on God does not eliminate human responsibility; it provides the ontological foundation that makes human action possible. According to Islamic metaphysics, God is the only independent source of existence, while created beings possess a dependent mode of existence and causality. Therefore, human beings are real agents, but their agency is not separate from divine creative activity. Human actions are genuine manifestations of created agency grounded in divine causality. The Qur′anic statement, "God created you and what you do" (Qur′an 37:96), can be understood within this framework. Human actions are truly attributed to human beings, while simultaneously remaining manifestations of divine creative activity. In the deeper perspective of Transcendent Philosophy, created causality is not an independent reality alongside divine causality; rather, it is a mode of dependence and manifestation within the continuous act of divine creation. This paper argues that this perspective provides an alternative to the opposition between theological determinism and human autonomy. By emphasizing the existential dependence of all created beings on God, Islamic metaphysics presents a model in which divine sovereignty and meaningful human freedom are compatible. The thought of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli demonstrates that recognizing the absolute role of divine action does not diminish human agency; rather, it reveals its deepest metaphysical foundation.

Keywords: Divine Action; Human Agency; Divine Causality; Human Freedom; Transcendent Philosophy; Islamic Philosophy; Ayatollah Javadi Amoli.

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Divine Action and the Wounded Neighbor:

An Abrahamic Criterion of Discernment against Sanctified Hatred

Kurt Anders Richardson[1]

Religious communities frequently interpret historical victory, political sovereignty, communal survival, and even the defeat of enemies as manifestations of divine action. Yet such claims can also sacralize violence, authorize coercion, and transform the suffering of another community into supposed evidence of divine judgment. This paper asks whether the Abrahamic traditions contain internal criteria by which claims concerning divine action may be distinguished from human actions performed—or justified—in the name of God. Through comparative scriptural reasoning, the paper examines differentiated Jewish, Christian, and Islamic constellations of divine agency and human responsibility: the divine interrogation following the blood of Abel, the prophetic identification of worship with justice and mercy, Jesus' parable of the wounded traveler and the compassionate stranger, and Qur'anic commands to uphold justice even against communal self-interest and to protect human life. These traditions do not yield a single harmonized doctrine of divine action. They do, however, subject theological claims to searching moral and eschatological tests. The paper argues that divine action cannot be identified directly with state power, communal success, or historical force. Nor should divine agency be reduced to humanitarian conduct. Rather, assertions of providence, election, victory, and judgment become theologically credible only when they generate responsibility toward the wounded neighbor through practices of attention, protection, repentance, and repair. This approach contributes an Abrahamic criterion for discerning divine action while preserving the distinctiveness of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic accounts. It also clarifies the crucial difference between confessing God's action in history and sanctifying our own actions by attributing them to God.

Keywords: Divine Action, Comparative Scriptural Reasoning; Abrahamic Traditions, Religious Violence, neighbor, Discernment

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Beyond the Substantial Self; Buddhist Philosophy and a Humanotological Ontology of Becoming

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How can human beings be agents if they possess no permanent, independent self? And how can freedom be understood if human existence emerges through conditions that precede individual choice? These questions bring Buddhist philosophy into a productive and critical dialogue with humanotology, an approach that places human becoming, freedom, and responsibility at the center of ontological inquiry. This article develops that dialogue while reconsidering the problem of divine agency. Classical theology has often sought to reconcile divine causation with human freedom, whereas Buddhist philosophical traditions have questioned both the notion of a supreme creator and the assumption of an enduring self. Humanotology proposes a related but distinct perspective: human beings are neither self-created substances nor passive effects of a transcendent will. They are embodied, psychologically complex, culturally formed, and historically situated participants in their own becoming. Drawing on the Buddhist concepts of anattā (not-self), dependent origination, and the ethical transformation of experience, the article examines whether agency can be understood without positing an absolute self or a first and final divine agent. It argues that freedom should be conceived not as independence from all conditions, but as the situated capacity to understand, resist, and transform some of the conditions through which human lives are formed. The resulting humanotological ontology does not simply identify itself with Buddhist philosophy. It develops a critical conversation between the two, preserving human responsibility while questioning metaphysical explanations that render human agency secondary.

Keywords: Humanotology, Buddhist Philosophy, Divine Agency, Not-Self, Dependent Origination, Human Becoming, Freedom, Moral Responsibility, Philosophical Anthropology.

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Rethinking Divine Agency in Post-Gaza Theology

Vahid Sohrabifar[1]

In classical theology, divine agency—much like God's other attributes—is conceived in absolute terms. This notion is systematically articulated in theological-philosophical treatises through doctrines such as "Divine Unity in Action" (*Tawhid al-Af'ali*) and theological principle such as "there is no true agent in existence except God" (*La Mu'athira fi al-Wujud Illa Allah*). Scriptural sources—including Quranic verses, Hadith traditions, and Du'as—likewise offer various teachings that have historically been interpreted in a manner reinforcing this classical model of divine agency. Nevertheless, this paper argues that classical Islamic theology requires substantial rethinking, with the problem of divine agency serving as one of its pivotal axes. To this end, the paper first addresses the insensitivity of classical theology toward concrete historical events. It then examines the methodological trajectory of classical theology (from demonstrative proof to reasonability). Subsequently, the Gaza catastrophe is scrutinized as a foundational, paradigm-shifting rupture. Finally, the paper investigates the plausibility and reasonability of the classical model of divine agency in the post-Gaza world.

Keywords: Divine Agency, Classical Theology, Post-Gaza Theology

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Does Complete Dependence on God Exclude Creaturely Agency?

Mullā Ṣadrā and Leibniz on Divine Action

Tomasz Stefaniuk[1]

The aim of this paper is to compare the conceptions of divine action and creaturely agency in the philosophies of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā, c. 1571-1640) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). The point of departure is a problem common to both philosophers: how can the complete ontological dependence of the world on God be reconciled with the attribution of genuine activity and agency to created beings? The comparison does not presuppose any historical connection between the two thinkers. Rather, its purpose is to examine two independently developed attempts to address a similar philosophical problem within seventeenth-century Persian and European philosophy. In Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, the problem of divine action is closely connected with his ontology, particularly with the doctrine of the primacy of existence (aṣālat al-wujūd), the gradation of existence (tashkīk al-wujūd), and the radical dependence of created beings on their ultimate source. Created beings do not possess existence independently, and their activity takes place within an order whose ultimate ground is God. This, however, does not necessarily entail regarding the created world as entirely passive or reducing all causation to the direct action of God. An analogous tension, although addressed through a different conceptual framework, can be found in Leibniz's philosophy. Created substances are entirely dependent on God both for their existence and for the order within which they operate, while at the same time Leibniz attributes to them an intrinsic principle of activity. This enables him to resist the occasionalist reduction of created causation to mere appearance and to preserve a distinction between divine action and the activity of created beings. The paper will focus on comparing the ways in which Mullā Ṣadrā and Leibniz seek to maintain two claims simultaneously: the radical ontological dependence of created beings on God and the genuine character of their activity. Particular attention will be paid to the relationship between ontological and causal dependence, the status of secondary causes, and the question of whether creaturely action can be genuine if both the existence of created beings and their capacity to act are ultimately grounded in God.The comparison is intended not so much to demonstrate the similarity of two philosophical systems as to present two distinct models for addressing a shared problem in the philosophy of religion and metaphysics. This will make it possible to raise a more general question: does the complete ontological dependence of created beings on God necessarily restrict their genuine agency, or can divine and creaturely agency—as Mullā Ṣadrā and Leibniz seek to demonstrate in different ways—be understood as compatible?

Keywords: Divine Agency; Creaturely Agency; Mullā Ṣadrā; Leibniz; Philosophy of Religion.

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Simplicity Without Loss: How Divine Simplicity Accommodates De Se Cognition

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Wandile Ganya (2026) argues that traditional theistic conceptions of divine cognition cannot meet the requirements needed to account for divine agency. For an account of divine agency to incorporate contrastive responsibility, it must include a de se attitude, and this entails that God possesses the following kind of cognition: "I created world 1 rather than world 2". Such cognition involves the first-person pronoun "I" and is therefore indexical. On the other hand, according to the Thomistic theistic conception, God is absolutely simple, and absolute simplicity entails that divine cognition is identical with the divine essence and is non-propositional and non-structural. Ganya concedes that a defender of the classical conception could claim that the divine essence, while simple, can nonetheless be a cognition involving a de se attitude. However, classical theism currently has no "sufficiently developed" account of such cognition at its disposal. Therefore, traditional theistic conceptions cannot account for contrastively responsible agency with respect to God. The present paper seeks to provide such an account of divine cognition within the framework of traditional theism. To this end, I draw on Laurence BonJour's (1999) account of the "conceptual description" of the content of sensory experience. On his view, the most important problem confronting foundationalists is how experience lacking propositional content can justify a belief that has propositional content. To solve this problem, BonJour appeals to the claim that although experience lacks conceptual and propositional content, there nevertheless exists a "conceptual description" of non-conceptual and non-propositional content, and he then employs this to resolve the problem of the justification of basic beliefs. Similarly, I argue in this paper that the existence of a "conceptual description" of divine cognition suffices to account for responsible divine agency, and that the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity does not constitute an obstacle to this account.

Keywords: Divine Simplicity; De Se Cognition; Contrastive Responsibility.

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The Divine Attributes and the Negative Theology in the Maimonides' Guide of Perplexed

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In the Introduction to part I of *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides classifies terms in three ways: (i) universals: applied when the essence of two objects is attributed to them; (ii) metaphoric: applied to two or more objects by virtue of something they share, yet which does not concern their essence; (iii) equivocal: applied to two subjects without any relationship of similarity. Throughout Part I (chapters I-LXXVI), Maimonides examines the divine attributes found in the Holy Scriptures, explaining in each instance the correct sense in which the terms should be read to avoid error: the terms must be understood equivocally because there is no resemblance whatsoever between God and created beings. The issue oscillates between two poles—agnosticism on the one hand and anthropomorphism on the other; to avoid both extremes, Maimonides employs the method of negative theology, which consists not only of denying affirmations attributed to God but also of denying negations and privations. According to this method, one cannot say that God is wise—as this would attribute a human perfection to Him—but rather that God is not ignorant. Negative theology underscores the impossibility of any resemblance between God and created beings. In his classification of attributes, Maimonides identifies those relating to action as the only possible attributes of God, since they are the furthest removed from the definition of the subject's essence; just as fire liquefies, hardens, and burns objects without itself changing through its mode of action, every attribute found in the Holy Scriptures must be read as an attribute of His actions, never of His essence. Faced with absolute divine simplicity and transcendence, the philosopher Maimonides opts for the negative method, which allows for the denial of any predication regarding God, thereby preserving His wholly other nature.

Keywords: attributes, negative theology, God's transcendence.

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The Creative Mind of Heaven and Earth and the Problem of Evil

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This essay reconstructs the Confucian idea of the Mind of Heaven and Earth (tiandi zhi xin, hereafter Tianxin) as a response to the problem of evil. Following Tang Wenming's realist and creationist interpretation of Zhu Xi, I argue that Tianxin is not a metaphor for an unconscious natural process and cannot be reduced either to li (principle) or to qi (vital force). It is the ultimate, eternal, and creative reality that encompasses and generates li and qi: as mind, it is the ultimate source of cosmic efficacy; as heavenly principle, it is the ultimate norm and end of creation. This claim is developed through a three-level account of eternity, creation, and continuous generation (shengsheng). The levels are ontological rather than chronological. They explain how a transcendent source can remain immanent in the differentiated world without becoming identical with every event in it. Such a strong conception of Tianxin intensifies rather than dissolves theodicy: if the highest good creates the order of li and qi, why do suffering, moral evil, and historical injustice occur? I answer that evil is neither a positive principle created alongside goodness nor an instrument whose victims may be justified by a harmonious totality. Natural evil arises from the finitude and collision intrinsic to differentiated embodiment; moral evil from the derivative freedom and self-contraction of human agents; historical evil from the institutional accumulation of culpable action. The purposiveness of Tianxin is non-deliberative but real, and its governance is mediated through the internal efficacy of qi and the co-creative responsibility of human beings. Comparisons with Augustine, Leibniz, Plantinga, Berdyaev, and Voegelin clarify this Confucian position without determining it.

Keywords: Mind of Heaven and Earth; Zhu Xi; evil; theodicy

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Two Accounts of Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysical Structure of Objects

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The doctrine of divine simplicity is often expressed through two claims: that God has no physical or metaphysical parts (DDS1), and that God is identical with His intrinsic properties (DDS2). Although these claims are frequently presented together, the connection between them is not straightforward. This paper argues that whether DDS1 supports DDS2 depends on a prior metaphysical question concerning the structure of objects and the relation between objects and their properties. I examine this issue through two familiar theories of object structure: bundle theory and substratum theory. On bundle theory, an object is constituted by its properties. If this framework is applied to God, numerically distinct divine properties would amount to distinct metaphysical constituents and would therefore conflict with DDS1. Standard substratum theory introduces a property-bearer distinct from the properties it instantiates, but on its usual constituent interpretation, the substratum and its properties together constitute the object. Applied to God, this account faces the same basic difficulty. I then consider a non-constituent version of substratum theory according to which a substance is identical with its substratum, while its properties are instantiated by it without being among its metaphysical constituents. On this model, God could possess properties numerically distinct from Himself without being composed of them. DDS1 could therefore remain true while DDS2 is false. The paper concludes that the inference from divine partlessness to divine-property identity is not secured by DDS1 alone. Its success depends on the background ontology of property possession.

Keywords: Divine Simplicity, Divine Attributes, Bundle Theory, Substratum Theory, Metaphysical Composition, Property-Bearer.

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How Is 'Repetition' Possible? Hierophany, Retrospective Construction, and Structural Relations

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Mircea Eliade's theory of "archetypes and repetition" explains how homo religiosus, through ritual, withdraws from homogeneous and irreversible profane time and returns to primordial mythical time. Yet insofar as the sacred may manifest itself in any profane object, while its ultimate source is described as the wholly other, irreducible to any pre-existing conceptual scheme, a problem of identification arises: on what grounds can religious subjects recognize a present actualization as the manifestation of a particular archetype? Drawing on Rudolf Otto, this paper proposes a distinction between the "numinous mystery" and the "sacred." The former designates the wholly other prior to symbolization. Since every discourse concerning it is necessarily mediated by language, myth, and ritual, it can appear only as a retrospectively posited limit-concept. The "sacred," by contrast, refers to the recognizable forms acquired by the numinous mystery once it enters the symbolic order. From this perspective, both archetypes and their repetitions are retrospectively constituted by religious consciousness. The problem of identification must therefore be addressed by examining the process through which such consciousness is constituted. Lévi-Strauss's relational approach further suggests that a repetition is recognized as the actualization of a particular archetype insofar as the relational systems constituted by roles, actions, spaces, and oppositional terms are structurally homologous. Ritual not only enables religious subjects to return effectively to sacred time, but also incorporates the irreversibility of profane time and the recoverability of sacred time into a single symbolic system, thereby rendering a primordial contradiction thinkable. This account preserves the reality exerted by the numinous mystery while delimiting the level at which structural construction operates, thus establishing a non-reductive convergence between phenomenology of religion and structuralist mythology.

Keywords: Mircea Eliade, Lévi-Strauss, Hierophany, Retrospective Construction.

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