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You Must Not Eat from the Dead Tree of Modal Collapse

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YOU MUST NOT EAT FROM THE DEAD TREE OF MODAL COLLAPSE

Abstract: Modal collapse arguments against classical theism claim that, if God is simple, then creation must be as necessary as him. For some, indeterminism kills this line of argument. However, Joseph C. Schmid has argued that this is fruitful death, for two new problems for classical theism come from it —intentional collapse and providential collapse. This paper continues the conversation. First, I argue providential collapse collapses into intentional collapse. Second, I distinguish two models of intentional action and argue intentional collapse only arises assuming one of them, but not the other. Thus, modal collapse was more dead than we thought!

Key words: God, classical theism, modal collapse, philosophy of religion

...for in the day you eat from it, you shall most certainly die.

Gen. 2: 17

1. Introduction

Classical theism (CT) denotes a family of models about God which affirm, among other theses, the doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS): the idea that God is bereft of any composition whatsoever —be it of act and potency, essence and existence, nature and subject, form and matter, substance and accidents, and so on (and so on). According to DDS, God has no parts, either physical or metaphysical. In other words, there are no positive ontological items intrinsic to God that are distinct from God. Instead, everything that is in God *just is* God, full stop.[1]

If CT is correct, though, a problem appears to arise. Crudely put, if God is absolutely simple, then God is identical to his own act of creation —that by which God creates is simply the simple God himself. But God, on CT, exists necessarily. Hence, it seems CT must likewise affirm that God's act of creation exists necessarily, making creation itself necessary (contrary to other traditional commitments of CT) and collapsing all modalities into necessity. This is called the problem of modal collapse.[2]

[1] For treatments of divine simplicity, see Vallicella (2023), Feser (2017: 189-196), Dolezal (2011 and 2017) and Pruss (2023).

[2] Versions of this argument can be found in Moreland & Craig, 2003: 525; Mullins, 2013; Mullins, 2016: 137-143. For a comprehensive summary of the debate, see Mullins & Byrd, 2022.

The modal collapse objection against CT has received increasing attention in the literature. In section 2, I briefly sketch a succession of several versions and responses. Recently, Joseph C. Schmid (2021 and 2022) has argued that indeterministic causation is the silver bullet that kills the modal collapse argument. This death, though, is a "fruitful" one, for it opens the path to two new potential problems for CT —intentional collapse and providential collapse.

Schmid's contribution to this debate is valuable and insightful, and he offers the two fruits of modal collapse not as knock down arguments against CT, but as tools "to advance the modal collapse debate and to further our collective inquiry into the ultimate nature of reality" (Schmid, 2022: 1433). I present this paper in the same spirit. I don't aim to provide the final word on this issue —only several reflections that, hopefully, will help us see clearer the path forward.

Apart from this, my aim is twofold. First, I'll argue (in section 3), that providential collapse ends up collapsing into intentional collapse (so many collapses!), so that there's not really two problems here, but only one. And second, I want to point toward a potentially satisfactory solution to intentional collapse by distinguishing two accounts of intentional action (sections 4 and 5).

2. The Fruitful Death of Modal Collapse

We can formalize the simple modal collapse argument following Christopher Tomaszewski (2019: 277):

(1) Necessarily, God exists.
(2) God is identical to God's act of creation.
(3) Necessarily, God's act of creation exists.

As Tomaszewski (2019: 278-279) points out, this form of the argument commits a modal shift fallacy and is, hence, invalid. The problem comes from substituting "a non-rigid singular term ('God's act of creation') for a rigid proper name ('God') in a referentially opaque or intensional context" (Schmid, 2021: 3), as happens in Quine's (1953: ch. 8) famous example:

(4) Necessarily, 8 is greater than 7.
(5) The number of planets is equal to 8.

(6) Necessarily, the number of planets is greater than 7.

Additionally, a parody argument can be constructed that goes beyond CT:

(7) Necessarily, God exists.
(8) God is identical to the Creator.
(9) Necessarily, the Creator exists (Tomazsewski, 2019: 278);

which would make creation likewise necessary. Thus, it is good that the inference is invalid, for if it weren't, the problem would not be unique to CT but affect all forms of theism that affirm God as a necessary being.[3] So, something more is needed to construct a valid form of the modal collapse problem that can target only CT. Tomazsewski (2019: 279-283) considers several alternatives and finds them lacking.

For instance, changing *(2)* to *(2*) Necessarily, God is identical to God's act of creation* would make the argument valid, but at the price of begging the question, for classical theists are under no obligation to accept said premise —after all, for CT, "God's act of creation" does not refer to God in the possible world where God exists alone. And a parody argument would be available against all theists, changing *(8)* to *(8*) Necessarily, God is identical to the Creator*, with the same question-begging result.

Consider also a version using Leibniz's Law:

(10) Necessarily, if God is identical to God's act of creation, then God and God's act of creation have all the same properties.
(11) God is identical to God's act of creation.
(12) God has the property of necessarily existing.
(13) Therefore, God's act of creation has the property of necessarily existing.

But the classical theist can affirm (10)-(13) and simply deny that modal collapse follows. Surely, the *entity* designated by "God's act of creation" has the property of necessary existence, but this entity is not designated by that expression in every possible world. Once more, a parody argument can be generated to attack all theists:

(14) Necessarily, if God is identical to the Creator, then God and the Creator have all the same properties.
(15) God is identical to the Creator.

[3] It would affect even those forms of naturalism that want to affirm some kind of necessary first cause, from which the rest of reality contingently follows. This *tu quoque* retort is common in the modal collapse literature, as we will see.

(16) God has the property of necessarily existing.

(17) Therefore, the Creator has the property of necessarily existing (Tomazsewski, 2019: 282).

But no modal collapse follows, for "the Creator" does not designate God in every possible world (unless we want to beg the question). The same response applies above — hence, if (17) does not imply modal collapse, neither does (13).

There are other more elaborate versions of the argument. Take the following from Ryan Mullins:

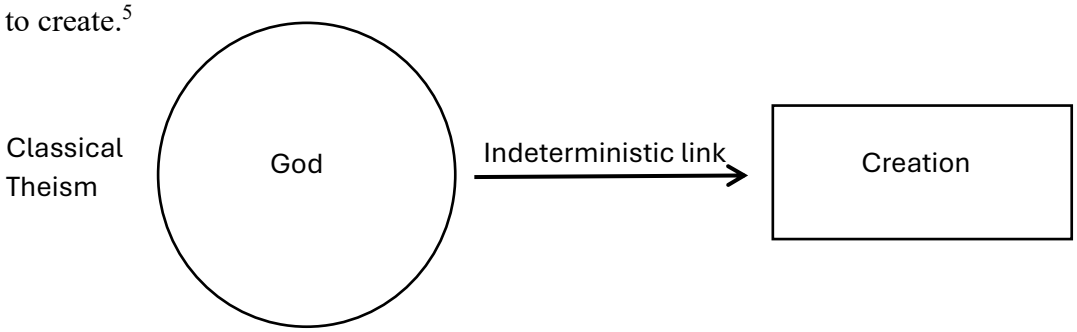
> If God could create this universe, but chose not to, God would have unactualized potential. So, in order to be pure act, God must create this universe. The same is true of any other potential universes that God might be able to create. […] For any possible universe that God can create, He must create. Otherwise, God will have unactualized potential (Mullins 2016: 140).

Steven Nemes (2020) has argued that this and similar variants presuppose what he calls the *difference principle*: the idea that a difference in effect presupposes a difference in the cause. Thus, if there is a difference in creation (the effect), there must be a difference in God (the cause), in terms of some actualized potential that otherwise would have remained unactualized, or what have you. But according to CT, since God is absolutely simple and everything in God is just God, there can't be any contingent items in him. This means God is absolutely trans-world identical: in every possible world, God is intrinsically the same, there are no variations on his side. But then, assuming Nemes's difference principle, modal collapse follows. For there to be a difference in creation (the effect), there should be a difference in God (the cause). But there cannot be any difference in God across possible worlds, according to CT. Thus, if CT is true, creation is as trans-world invariant as God is.

To defeat this version of the argument, the classical theist needs to deny the difference principle, as Nemes suggests: "In this way, the contingency of the creation is preserved without the supposition of unactualized potentiality in God, since there can be a difference in effect without a difference in the cause" (Nemes, 2020: 110). One may ask whether denying the difference principle is too great a cost, but some reflection suggests the opposite —that accepting it may be too pricey. Indeed, the difference principle is incompatible with indeterministic causation more generally and with libertarian freedom.

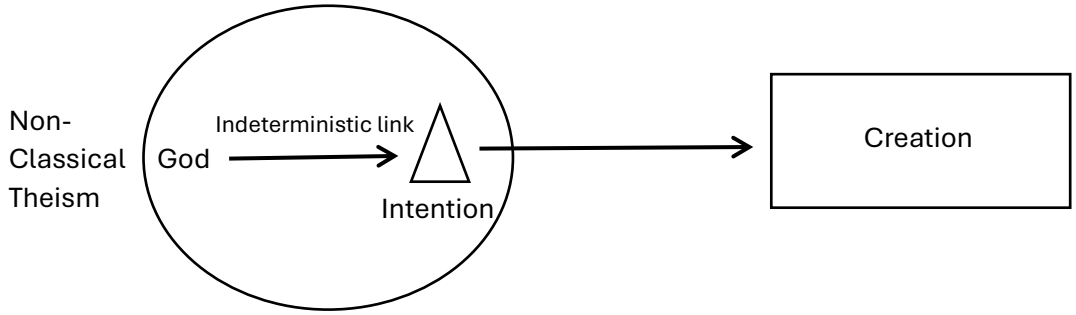
For defenders of indeterministic causation, the same intrinsically identical cause can have a certain effect in one possible world and a different effect in another possible world, breaking the difference principle. Likewise for libertarians, free actions presuppose alternative possibilities. Thus, a free agent can choose A but could well have chosen B — the agent causes A in the actual world, but there's still a possible world where the same agent, characterized by the same intrinsic states, caused B instead, violating the difference principle.[4]

Lastly, by affirming the difference principle to attack CT, non-classical theists open themselves to the same kind of objection (see, for instance, Schmid, 2021: 12-13). True, the non-classical theist might explain a difference in creation through a difference in God's intentions or willings (understood as positive ontological items within God but distinct from God that allow for variation). But modal collapse reappears when considering the link between God and God's intentions. For, presumably, there is some kind of dependence relation between God and God's intentions —it is not as if God finds himself, inexplicably, with certain intentions, but that God freely forms the intention, for instance, of creating this world instead of any other. But if a difference in effect always presupposes a difference in the cause, the non-classical theist gets either trapped in an infinite regress of prior differences within God, or succumbs to modal collapse himself, for now God could have no genuine alternative possibilities when forming his intention to create.[5]



[4] As a matter of historical curiosity, we can see this libertarian denial of the difference principle going back at least to Ockham, for whom "freedom is the power by which I can indifferently and contingently produce diverse things in such a way that I can cause or not cause the same effect, without there resulting in any difference in that power" (*sciendum quod voco libertatem potestatem qua possum indifferenter et contingenter diversa ponere, ita quod possum eumdem effectum causare et non causare, nulla diversitate existente alibi extra illam potentiam*; *Quodlibeta Septem*, q. 16, a. 1).

[5] It will not do to suggest that the difference principle is a causal one, and that the link between God and God's intentions need not be causal, for two reasons. First, because it seems all the motivations for the causal difference principle will likewise apply to a non-causal difference principle. And second, because if non-classical theists can avoid modal collapse by saying that the link between God and God's intentions is not causal, then classical theists can just do the same for the link between God and creation (as some already do, see Pearce, 2021).



In a similar vein, Schmid (2021; 2022) has pointed to indeterministic causation as the necessary and sufficient silver bullet that kills modal collapse arguments. Indeed:

> So long as God's act (with which he is identical) merely indeterministically causes its effects, modal collapse is entirely averted. For in indeterministic causation, one and the same C [cause] exists in worlds in which E [effect] exists and in worlds in which E does not exist. C is thus not cross-world variant —given identical causal conditions C, E may or may not obtain (Schmid, 2021: 13).[6]

Indeterministic causation, thus, determines the death of modal collapse. But not everything is lost, Schmid says. For this death is a fruitful one, in that it opens the path to at least two new potential problems for classical theism. First, the indeterministic link classical theists need to affirm between God and creation to avoid modal collapse threatens with collapsing "God's status as an intentional agent who knows and intends what he is bringing about in advance" (Schmid, 2022: 21) —this is called the problem of intentional collapse (IC). The second challenge threatens God's providential control over which creation comes about and is thus called the problem of providential collapse (PC).

IC and PC are the results of the death of modal collapse. But you should at least pause before eating the fruits of a dead tree, regardless of how tasty they may seem. Thus, let's tackle providential collapse.

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[6] Also: "so long as God only indeterministically causes his effect(s), God can be cross-world invariant, necessarily existent, and identical to his single act while creation is cross-world variant and contingent. This is part and parcel of indeterministic causation —the entity that is in fact the cause of E can exist without E. Hence, such an entity can be necessary while E is contingent, and moreover such an entity can be cross-world invariant while E is cross-world variant (e.g., existing in one world and not existing in another)" (Schmid, 2022: 5). Schmid calls this the "Biconditional Solution: Classical theists avoid modal collapse if and only if they embrace an indeterministic link between God and his effects" (Schmid, 2022: 4).

3. Providential Collapse

According to the providential collapse (PC) problem, the radical indeterminism CT must affirm between God and creation puts into question the idea that God is "in control" of what particular creation obtains. In Schmid's words:

> For under classical theism, one can fix all the facts about God himself and yet any creation whatsoever (or no creation at all) among the infinite array of possible creations can spring into being with a dependence on God. This simply follows from the radical indeterministic causal link between God and God's effect needed to avoid modal collapse arguments. Every fact about God is perfectly compatible with any creation whatsoever coming into being: there is no distinctive intentional act to bring about this particular creation. […] Had any other of the infinite creations come about, nothing about God would have differed. And in that case, there is nothing we can cite on God's end to explain why this particular creation came into being. And in that case, it's hard to see how God can providentially control whether this particular creation (as opposed to the infinitely many others, or no creation at all) comes about (Schmid, 2021: 17-18).

Schmid (2022: 11) formalizes the argument as follows:

(18) If fixing all the facts about an agent and their act(s) is perfectly compatible with the obtaining of any possible effect of their act(s) among an arbitrarily large range of possible effects, then the agent is not in control over which effect of their act(s) obtain.

(19) If DDS is true, then fixing all the facts about God and his act is perfectly compatible with the obtaining of any possible divine effect among an arbitrarily large range of possible divine effects.

(20) So, if DDS is true, God is not in control over which divine effect obtains.

(21) But since God is provident, God is in control over which divine effect obtains.

(22) So, DDS is false.[7]

To motivate (18), Schmid appeals to "its eminent intuitive plausibility" (Schmid, 2022: 11) and several plausible cases that he considers relevantly similar to CT's God. For instance, imagine the temperature in a room can be any positive number from 0 to 10^{googol} and beyond, and imagine no facts about your internal states specify any value or even

[7] "By 'facts about an agent and their act(s)', I mean the facts about how the agent and their acts are in themselves. It includes things like internal mental willings, intentions, desires, the character of the act(s), the character and states of the agent, and so on. By 'x is perfectly compatible with y's obtaining', I mean x leaves open whether y obtains; y's obtaining is a live possibility on the supposition that x obtains —x's obtaining does not ensure, settle, or determine ~y. By 'divine effect', I mean whatever effect of God's one necessary act obtains" (Schmid, 2022: 11).

subset of values the temperature might be set to: "*everything* about you […] leaves perfectly open which of the infinitely many room temperatures becomes actual" (Schmid, 2022: 10). In this case, no one should say *you* have control over the room's temperature.

Suppose also you push a button on a lottery machine that picks a number at random: "In such a situation, you can't control which set of numbers gets picked, even though you're causally responsible for *some number or other* getting picked" (Schmid, 2022: 10). Likewise, borrowing an example from Clarke (2002: 367-368) if you throw a ball attempting to hit a target, but the process between it leaving your hand and arriving at the target is indeterministic, it can't be said that you are in control of the final result: "Similarly, posterior to God's one, absolutely simple act, any possible effect (and hence, any possible world) could indeterministically arise. And *precisely because* of this, God is plausibly not in control over *which precise effect* arises" (Schmid, 2022: 15). Lastly, suppose you are driving and no matter how you move your hands over the steering wheel, your car will move indeterministically one way or the other: "This surely diminishes your control over the car's trajectory, precisely because the indeterminism is located entirely *downstream* of you and your acts" (Schmid, 2022: 13).

Now, it is hard to see why the range of possible effects being "arbitrarily large" should even matter.[8] Let's revise the previous examples. In the temperature case, imagine the room temperature can only be set to three values, but no fact about you specifies any of

[8] One possible reason mentioned by Schmid (2021: n. 14) might be that, according to some accounts of control, an agent has control over a precise effect E only if they can make it probable that E occurs. If this is so, the number of possible effects of an agent might be seen as plausibly influencing the probability they produce any particular effect. Taking this into account, given that, in God's case, the range of possible effects is maximal, the probability of God producing any particular effect will be drastically brought close to zero, radically diminishing God's control over which effect gets created. (I thank **[omitted]** for bringing my attention to this). I'm not sure, though, this really helps here. It is common for libertarians to claim that control is exercised *at the time* of bringing an effect about, and not prior to it (O'Connor & Franklin, 2022; see Clarke, 2005 and O'Connor, 2007). Hence, it is open to the classical theist to claim that God need not probabilify one creation over another (causally) *prior to* bringing it about. Instead, "when" he intentionally decides to do so, that's when he 100% ensures such effect comes about, given his omnipotence. This seems also consistent with Levy's account, quoted by Schmid: "[A]n agent has *direct control* over an event if the agent is able (with high probability) to bring it about by intentionally performing a basic action and if the agent realizes that this is the case" (Levy, 2011: 19). Given God's omnipotence, there is nothing that can come between God intentionally creating and creation being brought about. Hence, by intentionally performing a basic action, God is able (with 100% probability) to bring about the creation of his choosing. (This brings us to the question of whether CT can allow for God being an intentional agent, which we will discuss later). Lastly, notice that if this probabilifying account of control were a problem for CT, it should also be a problem for libertarian forms of non-CT, where the range of possible interior intentions God might form is also arbitrarily large or maximal.

them obtaining. If this meant a lack of control when the range of possible temperature values was infinite, why should control suddenly increase if the options are drastically reduced? Likewise, suppose you push a button on a lottery machine that picks a number from 1 to 5 at random. Here, you might control that *a* number gets picked, but not *which* number gets picked, and the range of possible numbers is definitely not "too large". Also, imagine you throw a ball and it can hit two targets, but which target it will hit has nothing to do with your pitch, but is indeterministically caused by the movement of the wind. Here, again, you might be in control of the ball hitting *a* target, but you can't control *which* target the balls hits, and two is certainly not "too large". Finally, the driving car example makes the point on its own: you might control that the car will shift direction, but not *which* direction it will shift in (left or right).

I propose, thus, that the lack of control in the proposed examples does not come from the *amplitude* of the range of possible effects. The proponent of PC might respond that it comes from the indeterministic link between the agent and the effect, and that it is *here* that the relevant similarity with the God of CT lies. (18) may be rephrased thus:

> (18*) If fixing all the facts about an agent and their act(s) is perfectly compatible with the obtaining of any possible effect of their act(s) among a certain range of possible effects, then the agent is not in control over which effect of their act(s) he obtains.

But with this the premise may have lost its original intuitive appeal. After all, if libertarian free will exists, there is also an indeterministic link between the agent and their willings (if such things exist),[9] and prior to the agent forming their mind, all the facts about them might be compatible with a certain bounded range of possible willings. But surely libertarians should argue this in no way means the agent is not in control of their own volitions. It's true the agent *indeterministically* produces their own willings, but they still do so *intentionally*, on purpose, and that's all that is needed for control.

Suppose I am trying to decide which of 3 movies to watch —*The Godfather*, *Silence*, or *Sharknado 12 – Revenge of the Sharks*. I am aware of the reasons for and against each movie and nothing in me necessitates that I pick one over the other. After some deliberation, I choose to favor a set of reasons over others and sit to enjoy *Sharknado*. While the main character jumps into the open jaws of a flying orphan shark in search of

[9] I have my doubts about this interior-willings model being the right theory of free intentional action, and I'll have more to say about this later. But for now, I defer to it for ease of exposition.

vengeance, I realize I could have picked any of the other two movies. I had my reasons favoring *Sharknado*, sure, but also my reasons favoring *The Godfather*, or *Silence*. None of those reasons was determining —thus, I could have decided to favor a different set of them and choose accordingly. Prior to making up my mind, everything in me was compatible with any of the three outcome choices. Still, I think *I* was in control of what I decided, since I acted intentionally.[10]

Once more, whether the range of possibilities is large or narrow does not seem relevant. Suppose you open Netflix to watch a movie and are greeted by 300 possibilities. Such a perspective is paralyzing to us, but that seems to be because of our cognitive limitations. We can't weigh in our mind the reasons for and against so many choices, not without feeling dizzy and losing interest altogether. But suppose someone who was capable, in a single overarching act of understanding, of entertaining the reasons for and against watching any of the 300 movies. And suppose said person finally decides to watch (yes) *Sharknado 12*. Why should we say this person was not in control of what they chose? Surely, prior to making up their mind, everything in them left open which movie they would favor (assuming libertarian free will). But them favoring one on the basis of non-determining reasons is just the performing of a basic intentional action. And that seems to suffice for control.[11]

The PC defender might point to the extrinsic nature of the effects in question as the relevant similarity between the examples and the God of CT. I have control of the willings I indeterministically produce because willings are internal states of mine. But just as I would have no control over the number picked in the lottery example, God can't have any control over which creation ensues, because creation is an extrinsic effect of God's act. Rephrasing (18) once more:

> (18**) If fixing all the facts about an agent and their act(s) is perfectly compatible with the obtaining of any possible effect of their act(s) among a certain range of possible extrinsic effects, then the agent is not in control over which effect of their act(s) he obtains.

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[10] If I decided at random (by throwing some dice, for instance), I would not be in control of the outcome. But I did not decide randomly, I did so intentionally.

[11] Take an action as ordinary as speaking. Normally, I could usually say the same thing very differently —using other words, making different pauses, emphasis, inflections, or face expressions… The options which are compatible with what I want to transmit pile up quickly. But I don't think this has any implication over whether people are in control of what they say and how they say it.

But reflection on the examples shows the lack of control does not come from the effects being extrinsic, but from them being intentionally disconnected from the agent. The effects are not intentionally produced by the agent in a direct and unmediated manner, but something else is (an internal willing, the push of a button, some hand movements, and so on), and from there, other processes not under the agent's control take over. If indeterminism is introduced *there*, control over the final remote result is certainly undermined. To put it paradoxically, the lack of control comes from the remote effect following some intention, but not in an intentional way.

But now consider the special case of someone with the ability to directly actualize, in an intentional way, the temperature in a room. Call him Professor X. It's not as though Professor X forms the interior intention of setting the temperature to a certain value, and from there other deterministic processes follow that ensure the result. Instead, Professor X has the ability to set the temperature to a certain value in a direct and unmediated way, in a manner analogous to how regular people form their interior intentions or willings. This case might be strange and extraordinary, for sure, but as long as it is possible, I don't see why Professor X indeterministically setting the temperature to a certain value should mean he is not in control over which value obtains, just as I don't see why regular people indeterministically forming interior intentions or willings should mean they are not in control over which ones they adopt. After all, it is the intentionality that counts, not the intrinsicality —some interior intention indeterministically but not intentionally arising in me (because of, say, brain processes outside of my control) would likewise undermine control.

Consider a different X-men example: Pyro. Pyro has the ability to directly control fire (which is surely an external effect) in a similar way as to how you move your arm. Though the precise happenings of this are a matter of controversy, one plausible account is that, to move your arm intentionally, you don't need to form a prior interior intention to move your arm, from which the movement of your arm will follow. You just… intentionally move your arm, in a direct and unmediated manner, and that's it.[12] Analogously, Pyro does not need to form a prior interior intention to manipulate fire in a certain way, from

[12] We will have a little more to say about this immediate account of intentional action in the following sections.

which the movement of fire then obtains. Pyro simply controls fire, full stop, in a direct and unmediated way.

Once more, this case is strange and fantastical, but the point goes beyond fiction. If I can indeterministically move my arm in an unmediated and direct way and still be in control of what I am doing because of the intentional nature of what is happening, I don't see why we should say Pyro can't indeterministically but intentionally control fire, only because that is not an internal effect. After all, the whole deal with libertarianism is the idea that indeterminism does not *per se* preclude intentional control. And if there can be a direct and immediate intentional link between an agent and the existence of some other thing distinct from the agent, it's hard to see why it should matter if this other thing is internal or external to the agent in question. Again, it is the intentionality that counts, not the intrinsicality or extrinsicality of the effect.

The defender of PC might retort that, sure, it is not indeterminism *per se* that undermines control, but indeterminism *in the wrong place*. As Levy writes, "indeterminacy in the wrong place undermines control. Any indeterminacy 'downstream' of a decision would seem to reduce, rather than enhance, freedom" (Levy, 2005: 53). And here is where the relevant similarity between the God of CT and Schmid's examples would lie, because "under classical theism […], the indeterminism is located precisely in the control-diminishing locus: *downstream* of God's act (and, indeed, downstream of *everything* about God as he is in himself)" (Schmid, 2022: 15).

The problem, though, is that whether such indeterminacy is "in the wrong place" or not will depend on whether intentionally producing an external effect in an immediate way is possible or not. If this is what happens in God's case, then the indeterminacy is located, yes, downstream of everything about God as he is in himself, but not downstream of God's decision to create, for God's decision to create is nothing apart from creation obtaining with an intentional link to God. The relevant analogue, then, would still be the indeterminacy between an agent and the forming of their free decisions, not the one which could be located in the control-diminishing locus —between the decision itself and the intended effect.

Thus, if it is the intentionality that matters, the clue is in the possibility of having an intentional external effect in a basic and unmediated way, without having to go through an internal *medium* that should co-vary with the effect. And that is precisely what classical

theists should claim about God —that he intentionally brings creation about in an unmediated way, in a manner analogous to how I intentionally form my own internal willings or move my arm. Nothing in God needs to be different across possible worlds for him to be in control of which creation obtains, just as nothing in me needs to be different across possible worlds for me to be in control of what I decide to will.[13] This way, none of the previous examples are truly relevantly similar to God's case, for in none the final effect is intentionally brought about, which is what undermines control. Sure, if fixing all the facts about you is compatible with any effect *randomly* occurring, you are not in control of what effect obtains. But if fixing all the facts about you is compatible with you *intentionally* bringing about any effect from a collection of possible effects, that is just what it means to be (libertarianly) free.

At this point, the defender of PC might retort that God can't intentionally control which creation obtains, because that would require some prior *something* within God to vary across possible worlds. But here is where I wanted to bring the defender of PC, for now we can see the problem of providential collapse collapses into the problem of intentional collapse.[14]

Indeed, so long as the God of CT *can* intentionally bring creation about, there does not seem to be any additional problem of providential control: control is simply included in intentionality. If God intentionally brings creation about, he is in control of which creation obtains, because he does so knowingly, on purpose, for some reason or reasons. But if God *can't* intentionally bring creation about, he is in no control of which creation obtains, regardless of the range of possible creations that can indeterministically follow from

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[13] This solution has been proposed *in passing* by W. Matthews Grant when arguing for his extrinsic model of divine action: "God has control of his effects in the same way that agent-causalists, such as O'Connor, say that creaturely agent-causes have control over their intentions —that is, by freely causing them. […] In both cases there is an agent-cause (God or the creature) that brings about an effect, but not in virtue of any intrinsic feature of the agent that would be different were the agent not bringing about the effect. If, by causing them, the creaturely agent-cause can be said to have its intentions under its control, so too can God be said to have control of his effects on the extrinsic model" (Grant, 2010: 44, n. 53).

[14] I think one can see this collapse of PC into IC prefigured in the way Schmid sometimes phrases the problem. For instance: "Every fact solely about God is perfectly compatible with any creation whatsoever coming into being; *there is no distinctive intentional act to bring about this particular creation*" (Schmid, 2021: 18; my italics); "The argument begins with the observation that if God is numerically identical to a single act across all worlds, *then there is no distinctive willing of this particular creation to obtain, and nor is there any distinctive, intentional exercise of power to bring creation into being*" (Schmid, 2022: 10; my italics.).

God's act.[15] Thus, PC is parasitic on the success of IC. And if providential collapse presupposes intentional collapse, there are not two new problems following the death of modal collapse arguments, but only one. As it seems, modal collapse was more dead than we thought.[16]

4. Two Accounts of Intentional Action

Now, it is beyond my purposes to attempt a thorough and definitive solution to intentional collapse (if that is indeed possible in philosophy). But I think something can be said to point the classical theist in the right direction. To do so, I will now present two general alternative accounts of intentional action, which I will call the Mediate Account and the Immediate Account. Though each of them would merit a book-length treatment to lay down all their details or versions and address objections, all we need right now is a cursory understanding of both to intuitively see how the choice between them impacts the present discussion.[17]

Let's start with the Mediate Account. According to it, intentional action is tied to an internal *medium* —some kind of internal state of the agent that is intrinsically oriented toward the action in question. This internal state can be the forming by the agent of an interior intention to perform the act, a distinctive act of willing or volition of the requisite action, or even the attending to a certain outcome in thought. For instance, in order for

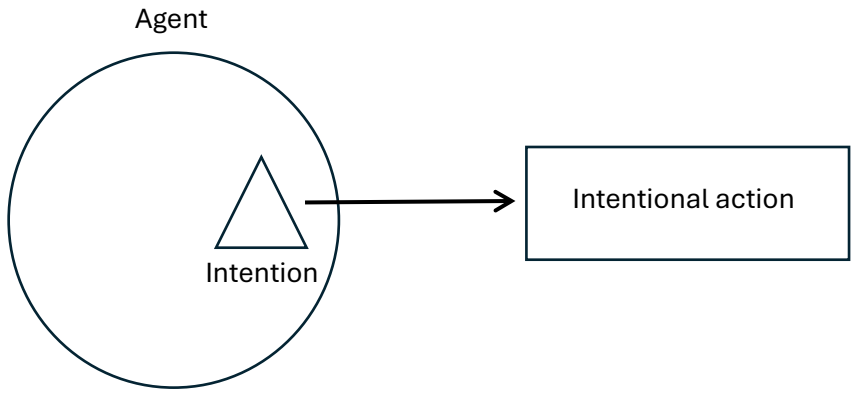
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[15] Suppose only two worlds could follow from God's act, in an indeterministic and non-intentional way. Would we say God is in control of which creation obtains? I'd say no.

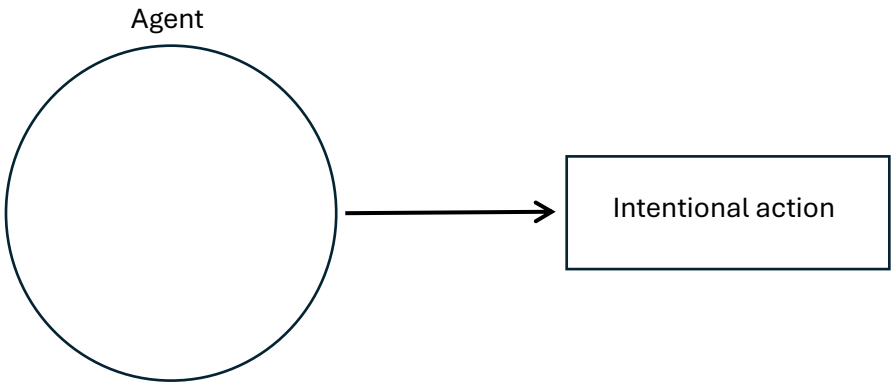
[16] There may be still hope for providential collapse —shifting the focus from control *simpliciter* to *contrastive* control. Maybe God has control over which creation obtains, granted He can act intentionally. But does he have *contrastive* control over this creation obtaining *rather than* another? Maybe (18) should be rephrased to: "If fixing all the facts about an agent and their act(s) is perfectly compatible with the obtaining of any possible effect of their act(s) among a certain range of possible effects, then the agent is not in *contrastive* control over which effect of their act(s) obtains". (I thank **[omitted]** for calling my attention to this). The trouble here is that I'm not sure denying God has contrastive control over creation is really that much of a cost. More thought should be put into this, but intuitively it seems to me providence can be defended just fine without it. At the very least, contrastive control seems too strong a notion of control, and demanding it may prove too much. Indeed, if the lack of contrastive control is a problem for classical theists, it seems it will also have to be for libertarian non-classical theists and libertarians more generally. For, unless we are prepared to embark on an infinite-regress of ever preceding reasons, when an agent decides to freely favor the reasons for doing A rather than the reasons for doing B, in the end the only answer that seems available as to why is "Because he wanted to".

[17] As it happens, I have been contrasting these two views implicitly in the previous discussion, but now it is time to bring them into the light. Other authors that have contrasted these two accounts of intentional action in the context of the modal collapse debate are Alexander Pruss (2021) and Gaven Kerr (2023).

me to intentionally move my arm or type this sentence on my keyboard, I first form the interior intention, willing, or volition to move my arm or type this sentence, *and then* my action follows, its intentionality being granted by this connection to a prior discrete *something* within the agent. Hence, this model affirms a kind of *intentional difference principle*: the idea that a difference in intentional action presupposes a difference in the agent. This model is associated to Donald Davidson (2001) and can be represented thus:



The Immediate Account, by contrast, claims a rational agent can act intentionally in a direct, unmediated, and basic way, without having to go (temporally or causally) first through the forming of an internal state oriented toward the action. In keeping with the examples above, I do not need to first form the intention of moving my arm or typing on the keyboard for these actions to follow —I simply move my arm or my fingers, full stop, and do so because of reasons. We can represent this model thus:



Given these two accounts, it is clear that any classical theist committed to the Mediate Account will run into intentional collapse one way or another. For if God is absolutely simple, there can't be any variable internal state within God that could be intentionally

directed, in each world, to the specific creation that obtains. The classical theist, then, needs to develop an Immediate Account of intentional action, in which it is possible to act intentionally in a direct and unmediated way, without having to go through the formation of any discrete internal *medium* that will, then, go on to produce the action. Under this account, intentionality is not necessarily tied to some prior discrete *something* within the agent but is the goal-oriented form *of the action* itself as the effect of a rational agent acting for a reason.[18] If *immediate* intentional action makes sense, then the classical theist may have here the adequate model to understand the intentional connection between God and creation.

Now, though the Mediate Account may have an initial intuitive appeal for some people (at least *prima facie*), the Immediate Account is not without plausibility, and it is linked to the likes of, for instance, Elizabeth Anscombe (1957). Anscombe cast doubt on the idea of intentions as inner states that cause actions, or of intentional action as somehow flowing from interior willings and volitions. Instead, she understood intentional action simply as an action that is rationally describable. Or to be more precise, according to her, intentional action belongs to that sub-class of actions which are known non-observationally (as I know the position of my limbs)[19] and to which a certain reason-giving sense of the question "Why?" is applicable. This way, to act intentionally is to do something in the world because of some reason(s). Indeed, when we ask "Why?", we may be inquiring (a) into the evidence for the truth of a certain proposition; (b) into the causes that produced a certain event; or (c) into the reasons that led to a certain action. As Jeff Speaks writes,

> This gives us three senses of the question 'Why?':
>
> 1. *Evidential*: 'They're serving French fries in the cafeteria'. 'Why?' 'That's what the sign said'.
> 2. *Causal*: 'And then the lights in the house all went out.' 'Why?' 'We blew a fuse.'
> 3. *Reason-giving*: 'Suddenly, he left the lecture and went back to his office.' 'Why?' 'He needed more coffee.'

[18] In the end, this is the application to rational agents of the Aristotelian principle that the action of the agent is in the patient —what the agent is doing and what the patient is enduring are just one and the same event (the change undergone by the patient), under two different descriptions.

[19] Intentional action is, thus, inherently cognitional. I don't need a separate act of knowledge to know that I am performing an intentional action: I know so in the very act of doing so.

> Anscombe's claim is that an action is intentional iff the question 'Why?' in the third sense has application (Speaks, 2004).

Of course, the Immediate Account in general (and its Anscombean version in particular) is not without its problems, questions, or puzzlements, and it is not my intention (duh) to defend it in a thorough way.[20] But we can at least say a couple of things in its favor, to motivate its plausibility.

First, I think something very much like the Immediate Account makes sense phenomenologically. It is true that I sometimes form interior intentions to act one way or another, but these are often tied to very remote ends that need complex extra steps to be fulfilled —say, "I want to lose weight" (it's about time), or "I want to become a millionaire" (this too). But when I focus on everyday ordinary actions, I simply don't find in myself any prior interior intentions, willings, or volitions from which the action follows. Instead, it just seems to me that I perform said actions in a basic and direct way.

Again, I don't think I form any interior intention, willing, or volition to move my arm. I do not *will* to move my arm, *and then* my arm moves; I simply move my arm —to will to move my arm is just to move my arm, full stop. With this in mind, the Mediate Account seems more a philosopher's reconstruction of intentional action than something read off the very experience of acting intentionally. As Roger Teichmann puts it:

> [O]ne just does not find within oneself any such events as willings or volitions. Questions such as 'How long do they take?'; 'What do they feel like?'; 'How many occurred just then when I put the kettle on?'; are simply unanswerable, which they really should not be, if willings (etc.) are to be taken as reportable states of mind. If you look inside yourself, you may find various things, such as images, internal exclamations —even trains of thought on topics quite removed from the topic of what you're actually doing […]. None of these deserves the title of 'willing an action' (Teichmann, 2008: 27).[21]

A second consideration in favor of the possibility of immediate intentional action is to consider the status of interior intentions, willings, and volitions under the Mediate

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[20] That can be done elsewhere, as some already have. See Narboux, 2020; Teichmann, 2008: 10-42; Hursthouse, 2000; Anscombe, 1985 and Anscombe, 2005i and 2005ii. For more on Anscombe's philosophy, see Wiland and Driver (2022).

[21] Maybe Teichmann is being too strong here. Maybe we do *sometimes* find in ourselves willings or volitions. But whether this is so or not, all we need right now is that *sometimes* we can act intentionally without any internal state playing the role of an intermediate between the agent and their action. As long as *some* actions conform to Anscombe's model, God's intentional action could be understood in their light.

Account. Are *they* produced intentionally by the agent or not? If we answer in the negative, it is at least strange that something I produce in myself non-intentionally can then ground the intentionality of an action of mine. Besides, isn't it just obvious that, in the Mediate Account, *I* produce my own willings *on purpose*, responsibly, for some reason(s), and thus, intentionally?[22] But if we answer in the affirmative, we either have an infinite regress on our hands (heads) —with a willing of the willing of the willing and you don't stop the rockin' to the bang bang boogie— or else we get immediate intentional action anyways.

Now, how does this all square with the intentional collapse discussion? Let's see.

4. Intentional Collapse

IC can be framed in different ways. In his 2021 paper, Schmid links it to the intuitive thought that "[a]n intentional action seems, of its very nature, directed towards the specific, definite outcome the agent seeks to actualize" (Schmid, 2021: 15). He writes:

> The driving force behind the intuition is that something about the *agent themself* —some 'doing' of theirs, some activity on *their* end, not on the part of their *effects*— is by nature directed toward the specific effect in question. It is by dint of *this* that the agent can be meaningfully said to intentionally act —or so the intuitive thought goes (Schmid, 2021: 16).

But given what we have just discussed, it seems that what Schmid calls here "the intuitive thought" is just the Mediate Account of intentional action —there must be *something* within the agent that is, by itself, oriented toward the effect in question.[23] If something like the Immediate Account can be made sense of, following the footsteps of Anscombe and others, the classical theist need not worry. If you have an understanding of intentional action that, at least sometimes, needs no interior intermediate (such as a discrete willing or volition) plus an extrinsic model of divine action,[24] that's all the

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[22] If someone wanted to claim that, yes, I produce my volitions responsibly, knowingly, and on purpose, but still non-intentionally, this would seem to take away all the teeth to intentional collapse. For then, if classical theists can keep creation being produced responsibly, knowingly, and on purpose by God, it might not be that much of a cost to deny that God acts intentionally.

[23] Kerr (2023) also critically notes this dependence of Schmid's objections on the Mediate (Davidsonian) Account of intentional action.

[24] In an extrinsic model of divine action, what God *does* is partially constituted by what he brings about. For defenses of an extrinsic model of divine action, see O'Connor, 1999; Grant, 2007; Pruss, 2008 and Grant, 2010: 26-30.

classical theist needs. God can then simply create intentionally in a direct, unmediated, and basic way, without anything intrinsic to him having to co-vary with creation for it to be an intentional effect. In this model, creation can be intentional because it is the effect of a rational agent to which a certain reason-giving sense of the question "Why?" is applicable, and that's it.[25]

A second (and more forceful) framing of IC starts from the realization that, in classical theism, "*contingent* predications of God's act(s) are *extrinsic* —they are not true of God in virtue of how God is *in himself* but instead in virtue of things *ad extra*" (Schmid, 2022: 5). Indeed, if DDS is true, all the variation across possible worlds is on the side of creation. Thus, "predications of God that vary across worlds track variations on the side of *creation*, not variations on God's end. And this is just to say that contingent predications of God, under DDS, are uniformly *extrinsic*" (Schmid, 2022: 6).

The problem now arises when we realize that God, as an intentional agent, "knows and intends what he is doing *in advance*" (Schmid, 2022: 6). This 'in advance' should not be understood temporally, lest we beg the question against classical theism, but causally, as the state of God existing alone, causally prior to creation —the state Schmid calls *PRIOR*. In *PRIOR*, God must know and intend what he will create, on pains of acting unintentionally and, hence, unlike a perfectly rational agent. However,

> God's knowing and intending what he will create is a *contingent* matter. […] But we saw earlier that contingent divine predications are *extrinsic*, i.e., they characterize God not as he is in himself but rather as he connects (or fails to connect) to things *ad extra*. To put it differently, contingent divine predications depend on something *apart* from God (Schmid, 2022: 7).

But there is nothing *apart* from God in *PRIOR* that could ground the truth of such contingent divine predication. It can't be grounded in God, for then we are not talking about an *extrinsic* predication (contrary to DDS). It can't be grounded in our world, for it still isn't there. It can't be grounded in its *absence*, for it is likewise absent in every other

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[25] Once more, notice how this relates to the worry that the indeterminacy between God and his effect might be located in the control-diminishing locus. Indeed, whether such indeterminacy is truly "in the wrong place" or not will depend on which account of intentional action is correct. In the Immediate Account, there is indeterminism between God and his intending to create, but not between God's intending to create and creation obtaining, because these are one and the same thing. The relevant analogue, then, is the indeterminacy in the Mediate Account between an agent and the forming of their free decisions, not the one which could be located between the decision itself and the intended effect. This shows once more that providential collapse depends upon intentional collapse.

possible world, and in none of them it is true that God knows and intends in advance to create *it*. It can't be grounded in nothing, for then the difference between God knowing and intending in advance (in *PRIOR*) to create *this* world and God knowing and intending in advance to create *another* world is brute and unintelligible. And finally, it can't be grounded in our world coming about, for then we are stuck with a viciously circular proposal:

> For God's intending and knowing our world in advance is surely part of the *explanation* of our world's coming about. It is *precisely because* God intends to actualize our world and knows he will actualize it that our world comes about. But the above proposal flips the order of explanation. Under that proposal, it is *because* our world comes about that God intends to actualize our world (and knows he will actualize it). We therefore have a vicious explanatory circle on our hands: our world comes about because God intends (and knows) our world; but God's act is one that intends (and knows) our world because our world comes about (Schmid, 2022: 8).

In the end, the argument gets formalized thus (Schmid, 2022: 9):

(23) God's act *in itself* has a character adequate to provide an intentional explanation for creation's obtaining.

(24) God's act *in itself* has a character adequate to provide such an intentional explanation *only if* God's act *in itself* counts as an act of intending creation.

(25) If God's act *in itself* counts as an act of intending creation, then the contingent predication of intending creation to God is not extrinsic.

(26) If the contingent predication of intending creation to God is not extrinsic, then DDS is false.

(27) So, DDS is false.

I think someone moved by the Immediate Account of intentional action described above should simply deny premise (24). Sure, *something* may be needed on the part of God's act *in itself* to provide an intentional explanation of creation, but that needn't require that God's act *in itself* counts as an act of intending creation, specifically. It may be enough that God's act *in itself* is that of a rational intentional agent that knows all the reasons for and against creating, and for and against creating each particular world.[26]

[26] Or the classical theist can point to God's willing his own good, which is the intentional direction which God's act has in every possible world, as Agustín Echavarría (2025) also says. Sure, neither God's reasons nor God's love for himself *determine* that he will create, because creation is no necessary means to achieve God's own good. But still, they help *explain* why creation comes about (they make it intelligible), just as

Creation then obtains with a dependence relation upon God because of some of those reasons, which God could reveal if asked. Hence, creation has the character of an (immediate or primitive) intentional action, to which the reason-giving sense of the question 'Why?' is applicable.

This commits, I think, the classical theist to denying that there is any causally *PRIOR* state in which God exists alone knowing and intending what he will create *in advance*. For God to intend creation is just for creation to be intentionally produced, so it makes no sense for the classical theist to speak of God intending creation without creation yet having come to be. Similarly with knowledge —given that intentional action is inherently cognitional, God knows what he is doing in the very "moment" of doing it (see also Grant, 2012: 271).

This squares quite well with the Immediate Account, in which intentionality does not require that you know and intend *in advance* what you will do —instead, you simply act intentionally, in a direct and primitive way (I don't need to know and intend *in advance* that I will move my arm for the movement of my arm to be intentional).[27] Thus, if the classical theist must speak of a causally *PRIOR* state to creation, it is one in which God simply exists alone, perfectly knowing all the reasons for and against creating and intending first of all his own good. What takes place posterior to that is simply that one creation is made to be because of the non-necessitating reasons that favor it —and that's where its intentionality lies, in its connection to some reason(s) known by the agent.

Two worries remain. First, under DDS, *where* are these reasons God knows? *What* are they? If DDS is true, they certainly cannot be discrete items within God himself, for everything that is in God *just is* God, full stop. Indeed, "[r]easons are *considerations* that *count in favor* of something […]. But is God a *consideration*? Does God *count in favor of something*? It's hard to see how" (Schmid, 2022: 18). This is related to the wider conundrum regarding the compatibility between divine simplicity and the doctrine of

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the facts about a composite God may help *explain* why he forms the intention to create, despite not *determining* him to create.

[27] Indeed, it seems sometimes we can act intentionally without even consciously thinking about it, either out of habit (as when I routinely prepare my coffee in the morning, while thinking about a cool title for my paper), or out of urgency. If I am driving and a kid jumps in front of my car, I don't have time to think about what I should do, nor of knowing and intending what I will do *in advance*. Still, when I violently turn the steering wheel to one side to avoid hitting him, I act intentionally (or so I would say). If I was accompanied by a blind passenger and they asked me "Why did you do that?", I would not answer "I didn't do it, it happened to me" —I'd simply explain the reasons behind what I did.

divine ideas, which has been discussed to exhaustion.[28] Here, I'll simply point to two possibilities.

First, there may be a semi-Platonic solution available to the classical theist (why not?).[29] According to it, these reasons correspond to abstract subsistent propositions the truth of which is ultimately grounded in God's nature. These exist in every possible world and are known by God in a direct and immediate way (without internal representations) by means of his one simple and undivided act, in a way analogous to how some philosophers believed we are in immediate cognitive contact with interior impressions.

Second, it seems to me a more familiar account could also work. God first and foremost knows himself, and through himself, all and every fact that relates to him, such as *I have the power to create X*, *My glory can be served by Y*, and so on. These need not be subsistent abstract propositions, nor discrete thoughts in the mind of God, but truths implicitly grasped by God's one simple act of perfect self-knowledge, grounded in all the intelligible aspects of His own nature. Them not being distinct *items* ontologically present within God need not be a worry for intentional action, because even we sometimes act for reasons we do not consciously possess as explicit discrete thoughts in our mind, such as when acting routinely.[30]

The second worry is the following —does this picture of things get trapped into the vicious circularity worry we mentioned above? I don't think so, for now the extrinsic predication "God intends to create" is only true whenever creation is around (not in *PRIOR*), and the *explanation* of creation intentionally obtaining comes from the non-necessitating reasons that *are* available to God in *PRIOR* and that God could provide if asked the question 'Why?'.[31] There is no circularity because the reasons are already known to God prior to creation, and it is God that makes some of them efficacious by creating the world they favor.[32]

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[28] For a deep dive into the issue, see Doolan (2023).

[29] Some may worry that Platonism conflicts with divine aseity. For a defense to the contrary, see Alvarado (2024) or Sijuwade (2025). I'll now do my Aristotelian penance.

[30] See note 26 above.

[31] In other words, God would not (and could not) create a certain world if no reasons favored it, so it makes sense to say God creates this world *because* of some reason(s). Thus, there is an explanation for *why* this world comes about in the reasons that favor its creation —and since it is a reasons-based explanation, it is an intentional explanation.

[32] The will is just the power to make some non-necessitating reasons efficacious.

Still, Schmid writes:

> When an agent A acts for a reason to bring *x* about, it is surely true that A acts to bring *x* about *because* A takes R to be the reason for which A acts. A's taking R to be the reason for which A acts in this case is thus *prior* to A's bringing *x* about. It is thus *false* that A takes R to be the reason for which A acts *because* A brings *x* about. That gets the order of explanation wrong.
>
> But here's the rub: *this is precisely what the classical theist must reject*, which seems to land them in a problematic vicious explanatory circle. For *it is a contingent matter* that God takes R_1 (which, we can suppose, uniquely favors creation C_1) to be the reason for which God acts. Hence […] this must be an *extrinsic* divine predication; nothing *intrinsic* to God (under DDS) explains why this is the reason for which God acts. But in that case, it's going to be something *extrinsic* to (external to, outside of) God that explains this. But in that case, it is in virtue of *creation itself* (or some portion thereof) […] that God takes R_1 to be the reason for which he acts. But as we've seen, this gets the order of explanation wrong. It is precisely *because* God takes R_1 to be the reason for which God acts that C_1 results from God's act. Hence, it is *false* that it is because C_1 results from God's act that God takes R_1 to be the reason for which God acts (Schmid, 2022: 18-19).

I think two responses are in order. First, I worry that once more we are opening an artificial divide between a (causally) prior and a (causally) posterior state of affairs that the classical theist must simply deny. As there was no *PRIOR* in which God knows and intends what he will create *in advance*, there too is no *PRIOR* in which God takes R_1 to be the reason for which he *will* act. For God to take R_1 as the reason to act is simply for God to intentionally create C_1, which is favored by R_1 —there is no gap between these, they are two descriptions of one and the same thing. Still, we may be able to say that it is "*because* God takes R_1 to be the reason for which God acts that C_1 results from God's act" because this way of describing C_1 intentionally coming about puts special emphasis on the reasons that favored C_1 and which were available to God prior to creating, and without which C_1 would not have come about. But the explanatory circle vanishes, it seems to me, when the relevant *explanans* is identified simply as God together with R_1, which was available to God, and not *God taking R_1 as the reason to act*. Though I may be mistaken, I'm not sure the classical theist needs anything more.

In any case, this seems to be a feature, not a bug, of reasons-based action in general. Let's assume, according to the Mediate Account of intentional action, that you form the

volition V_1 to perform action A_1 because of reasons R_1. If I asked what explains that you took R_1 to be the reason for which to act, you may want to point to V_1. But it seems to me the same question could be posed just there. Indeed, someone could say, it is surely true that you formed V_1 *because* you took R_1 to be the reason for which to act. If, instead, you had taken R_2 to be the reason for which to act, you would have formed volition V_2. Your taking of R_1 as the reason to act must then be *prior* to your forming of volition V_1. But what will explain *that*? It can't be an even prior act of the will, for then we end up in an infinite regress. But if it is something that does not involve the will in any way, how is it that I am in control of forming V_1 because of R_1 in the first place?

In the end, it seems we must simply say that there is no real difference between taking some reason as the reason for which to act and performing the basic intentional action this reason favors. To take a reason as *the* reason to act is just to perform the action that said reason favors. Thus, my taking R_1 as the reason to act is not a further discrete element to fit into the explanatory chain —such is already complete simply noting that I, as a rational agent, was able to perform the action and had *x*, *y*, and *z* reasons favoring it. No additional state of me *taking* them as definitive is needed; for me to take them as definitive is just for me to perform the action in question.[33]

The second response the classical theist can give is to deny that God acts for different reasons in different possible worlds, such that, if he creates C1, he takes R1 (which uniquely favors C1) as *the* reason to act; but if he creates C2, he takes R2 (which uniquely favors C2) as *the* reason to act; and so on. Actually, in all possible worlds, there is only ever one reason God takes as *the* reason for which to act: God's own goodness. Since creatures are finite goods, none is such that it is indispensable for God to truly love Himself; still, God *can* pursue this end through creation (and through multiple possible creations). Thus, God's own goodness is the reason which renders all possible creation intentional, for creatures are non-necessary means of willing the divine good. If this

[33] Here is a related worry: "Suppose I can perform a basic act of raising my arm in a classroom. I know that there are various reasons favoring this action: I'll burn some calories, movement is good for me, I'll contribute to class discussion. In raising my hand, I perform a basic intentional action favored by each of these reasons. But it's just clearly false that, for each of these reasons, I take *that* reason *as a reason for which to act*. I certainly don't raise my hand in class because that burns some calories, or because movement is good for me! So there must be a difference between performing a basic intentional action favored by R and *taking R to be the reason for which one acts*" (I thank **[omitted]** for this). I think the classical theist can point to Alexander Pruss's discussion of God's omnirationality to diffuse the objection. If God is omnirational, any action he performs, he does it *for all and only* the unexcluded reasons that favor said action (Pruss, 2013). So the objection won't translate to CT, which is sufficient for our purposes.

response is correct, it is false to say it is a contingent matter that God takes R to be the reason for which to act. In fact, in every possible world, God takes the very same reason as the reason for which to act.

This seems to be sufficient, on the Anscombean account, to render creation intentional, for there is an answer to the relevant "Why?" question —"Why are you creating?"; "To give glory to my Goodness". The answer not being a reason that uniquely favors this specific creation over others need not be a problem, since we ourselves many times act because of reasons that could equally favor many other actions. For instance, in order to express how much I love my wife, I may buy her some flowers, and my action is intentional under that description, "Expressing my love for you". But the same reason would have rendered intentional many other actions, such as telling her "I love you", giving her a hug, taking her out to dinner or to the movies, etc. Even the very same action of giving her flowers can be done in so many different ways consistent with the same overarching reason.

If God's intentional action can be understood in a way analogous to this, God can remain intrinsically the same across possible worlds, always taking the same reason as *the* reason to act, and simply producing in an immediate way one of many non-necessary means to achieve this goal.[34]

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to add my grain of sand to the discussion on modal collapse objections. We began by briefly reviewing the literature, up to the point where indeterminism killed modal collapse arguments. From this death, apparently two fruits

[34] Or refusing to create all along, since reasons for action are non-necessitating. Gaven Kerr (2023) and Agustín Echavarría (2025) both take this route to solving the intentional collapse objection. Here is Gaven Kerr: "in order to quench my thirst, I get up, walk at a leisurely pace, pick any cup (not exactly my favourite), and fill it with water (not juice, or cola, or beer). This action in all its steps is an intentional action. Each step is enacted for the reason of quenching my thirst. […] The same reason for acting could be involved in an action whereby I got up and ran and grabbed my favourite cup and filled it with juice; indeed, I could have the same reason for acting and not act at all. Similarly with God, His reason for acting is the love that He has for Himself. His creation of creatures is a non-necessary means for His loving Himself. Like the above example, He could have chosen other means or none at all, but that doesn't signify any difference in Him, only in the means" (Kerr, 2023).

followed. I have argued that at least one of those fruits was an illusion —after some reflection, it seems providential collapse ends up collapsing into intentional collapse.

As for intentional collapse, classical theists would do good to focus their efforts on Immediate Accounts of intentional action, where an agent can intentionally produce a given effect in a basic and direct way, without the mediation of discrete internal states that should co-vary with the intended effect. If there is a classical-theist-friendly solution to intentional collapse, it is here that it hides.

In the end, maybe you should not eat from the dead tree of modal collapse. But its death is still fruitful, as is Schmid's contribution, in that they clearly mark to the classical theist interested in preserving divine intentionality which paths are opened to them and which ones they have closed.[35]

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[35] **[Acknowledgments and research program.]**

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