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Rundle, WHY THERE IS SOMETHING RATHER THAN NOTHING and Copan & Craig, CREATION OUT OF NOTHING: A BIBLICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION

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it does not solve The Problem of the Many. It fails to solve The Problem because it asserts that a soul is (causally) related to a human body. Which human body, however? Tweedledee or Tweedledum? At this point, I think it is fair to point out that The Problem of the Many is a problem given a limited, naturalist ontology. If from the outset a metaphysician limits himself to sets of material simples, fusions of them, and relational Person-Composing Conditions, then The Problem of the Many can lead to some pretty nutty positions. Might not such a limitation and the fact that it leads to a development of a view like 4DPartism constitute a *reductio* argument against the materialist view of the human person? If one were to allow for the existence of a soul, form, or some other unifying principle for organisms, then The Problem of the Many simply would not be a problem. Legion's body would be identical with Tweedledee and not Tweedledum because Righty, and not Lefty, would be under the influence of the relevant unifying principle. Hudson's refusal to acknowledge the existence of such a unifying principle is itself puzzling given his willingness to countenance the existence of God. After all, God typically unifies various aspects of the universe. Thus, because God creates and sustains the universe in being, He guides its history and that of the human persons who dwell on the face of the earth. Moreover, because God is just, He guarantees that each person receives his proper reward and punishment. If one allows such a being into one's ontology, is it all that implausible to think that it or something else could be the unifying principle for a human body?

In closing, I want to correct what might be a somewhat negative impression of Hudson's book and make clear that *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* is an *absolutely wonderful* work. The mark of a truly fantastic book is not whether one agrees with it. It is whether one learns from it and either now understands things that one never understood before or understands them in a wholly clearer light. This book has that mark, and I would be nuts if I did not recommend it enthusiastically. Though you might not be nuts for not reading it, you will certainly be intellectually worse off.¹

NOTE

1. I want to thank J. P. Moreland and Dean Zimmerman for reading parts of this review.

Why there is Something rather than Nothing, by Bede Rundle. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. 204. \$42 (Cloth). *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration*, by Paul Copan and William Lane Craig. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004. Pp. 280. \$20 (Paper).

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While these two tightly reasoned books provide very different answers to the question, Why is there something rather than nothing, the philosophical

arguments they address are surprisingly similar. The resulting counterpoint arguments are worthy of attention.

Copan and Craig's (C&C) first three chapters, which rely heavily on citing concurring authors, present an extensive survey of the biblical, Jewish, and patristic texts about creation. Since these textual matters do not contribute to the larger philosophical argument, I will pass to the remaining chapters that are of more interest to readers of this journal and more central to the debate with Rundle. In chapter 4, for example, C&C explore the differences between divine creation, continuous creation, and conservation. After carefully considering the allegedly defective attempts by Phillip Quinn to differentiate these in terms of state-state causation, the authors explicate an agent account of causation, invoking the A-theory of time. They conclude that creation differs from conservation in that conservation but not creation presupposes a prior entity that receives the divine causal activity. For his part, Rundle argues that mere continuance or duration, since it lacks any change, needs no causal explanation, thereby circumventing any need for a Thomistic type of cosmological argument that leads to a divine conserving cause. For Rundle that leaves only the question of creation in respect to divine activity.

Chapters 6 and 7 reiterate Craig's widely known Kalām cosmological argument, this time tuned to show both creation (the beginning of the temporal series of physical events was caused) and its *ex nihilo* feature (no prior temporal physical events caused it). The a priori and a posteriori arguments advanced are those Craig has proposed elsewhere to show that the universe had a beginning. Chapter 6 defends the theses first that an actual infinite, which an infinite temporal regress of events would be, is incoherent and cannot exist, and second that one cannot form an actually infinite collection of things by successive addition. Both theses have been subjected to earlier criticisms to which the authors reply. Chapter 7 turns to the empirical confirmation of the thesis that the universe had a beginning. Surveying the diversity of cosmogonic theories regarding the origin of the universe, they conclude that no viable alternative to the standard big bang model exists. Further, they argue, perhaps even more persuasive is the fact that consideration of the thermodynamics of the universe points to the thesis that the "universe's energy was somehow simply 'put in' at the creation as an initial condition" (248). They conclude their work with an assessment of naturalistic accounts of the origin of the universe, contending in part that those who hold that the universe simply arose violate the standard metaphysical principle that one cannot derive something from nothing, or else that by invoking vacuum fluctuations naturalists appeal to something that itself requires causal explanation.

The philosophical portion of C&C's book contains little that the authors have not argued elsewhere. Hence, its merit consists in bringing together the textual and philosophical data to make a consistent and persuasive case for creation *ex nihilo*.

Rundle, while only once referring to Craig, constructs a philosophical counterpoint. Rundle begins by wondering whether the language that philosophers like C&C use has any meaning, and by doing so returns to the positivist criticism of theological language. Although admitting the short comings of the verificationist program, Rundle takes from it

the conclusion that if the use of theological claims is not to be wholly metaphysical but factual and meaningful, then they should have some empirical content. But not only does he think that theological claims about God and God's activity are disbarred from being subject to empirical falsification (as in Wisdom's parable), but more importantly theological statements are grounded in the non-empirical when they claim that an immaterial spirit acts on an empirical world, for one cannot give empirical meaning to an immaterial spirit acting. It is not that "God" is a meaningless term, for we can understand enough of its use to see where it is inappropriately applied. Rather, it simply lacks enough empirical content to give meaning to divine agency. For Rundle, the doctrine of analogy provides no assistance, for it fails to give enough information to understand how an immaterial being could possess the qualities under consideration. For example, we can know when mental properties apply to other human minds, but we have no way of telling how they apply to God. In sum, although he rejects the positivists' account, he thinks that the positivists have correctly pointed out that theological language claims to be factual or empirical, but in doing so the language wrongly borrows from the material realm in ways that are inappropriate to an immaterial being. This thesis of the basic incoherence of language about God underlies his entire presentation and is resorted to when all else fails.

If theological language has no empirical cash value, it certainly will not assist in explanation, either of God's alleged continuous interaction with the world via miracles or of the origin of the world. The problem with miracles, for example, is not that unusual events occur, but with the inability of the theist who holds to an immaterial God to explain why or how God could bring about these events. Similarly, teleological arguments that treat the natural laws as basic and explanatory are misguided, for the natural laws are neither necessary nor basic, but rather are reflections of the events that occur. What needs to be explained, then, are not the laws but the physical events they cover. Behind it all for Rundle lurks the problem that since religion and science are not continuous activities, explanation in terms of divine activity, such as C & C engage in, is a very anthropomorphic, "highly primitive form of explanation" (p. 29). In effect, then, the two books draw battle lines over whether the theist can give any plausible account of divine agency.

Interestingly enough, both Rundle and C&C adopt forms of agent causation. Criticizing a view of causation based on mere constant conjunction as only giving us juxtaposition, Rundle in chapter 3 argues for a notion of connection that involves agency and connectivity. Causation, he contends, is not a secret power but is visibly manifested in cutting, pulling, lifting, etc. When he applies this to divine agency, he contends not as Hume that we cannot understand a cause of the universe since we only have experience with this universe, but that we cannot intelligibly speak of an intentional, causally active immaterial agent. Since intention requires a body, we cannot meaningfully apply causation to non-physical beings. More specifically, he protests that causing is doing something to something, so that creation *ex nihilo* makes no sense. Further, causation as an act occurs in time, but creation *ex nihilo* is a creation of time, not in time. In short, how can creation *ex nihilo* occur, for it violates our ordinary uses of "cause"?

The debate between the two books, at this point, concerns what sense can be made of Copan and Craig's appeal to personal explanation. C & C move from the Kalām argument to delineate properties that this being must have, one of which is being personal (providing a personal explanation as over against a "scientific explanation in terms of laws and initial conditions" [p. 253]). Their response to the objection that the theist has not provided a causal account is that one need not provide such an account of simultaneous, asymmetric causation since as it is we have no universally accepted account of causation.

For Rundle, however, since "the only genuine substances are material substances, if there is no place for immaterial agents, there is no place for God" (p. 192). The notion of God, he claims, is of "uncertain intelligibility" (p. 191). The reason is that "mind" is misconstrued if used to name a substance (echoes of Wittgenstein). Further, while we can show how mind comes from matter, it is hard to show how matter comes from mind. And since notions of "force and energy do not allow of a non-physical application" (p. 164), it makes little sense to speak of God as creating the material cosmos. In effect, if anything exists, matter exists.

So why then is there something rather than nothing? Whereas C&C give a response in terms of God's creative activity, Rundle contends that one should not look for a particular being to resolve this question; rather he argues for a weaker conclusion that something simply had to exist. The reason is that we cannot imagine nothing, for in talking about nothing we are presupposing something. Even to arrive at nothing by subtraction supposes that there is a nothing, the "there is" indicating some location. Similarly, time cannot be where there was nothing, for time is co-existent with something. Hence, what exists encompasses all of time, so that one cannot say, "before the universe existed, there was nothing." There cannot be a before or after, and thus no room exists to accommodate a creator. So something had to be, something eternal that does not come into or pass out of existence. And this something is best thought of as matter, for we have much better evidence for matter than for God (as unintelligible).

Copan and Craig rest their philosophical case for creation *ex nihilo* on the Kalām argument, which Rundle attacks in his concluding chapter. Craig's central philosophical contention is that an actual infinite is impossible, based on a consideration of the logic of the infinite. Rundle rejects this, noting that there is reason (not presented), for example, for severing adding to the infinite (possible) from increasing the infinite (impossible). Thus, while both Craig and Rundle think that the results of applying the infinite to the actual are paradoxical, only the former thinks that this implies incoherence.

The second difference between them concerns how they view the past. Whereas Craig sees the infinite past as an actual infinite and hence subject to the above difficulties, Rundle sees it only as a potential infinite, just like the future. Rundle contends that ontologically applying "infinite" to future events is no different from applying it to past events. An infinity of past days exists in the same way as an infinity of future days; one can always add another day. And in both cases, between now and any past or future date only a finite number of days exists. Thus, just as a day in the future cannot be infinitely distant from today, no day in the

past is infinitely distant from today. That is, we cannot say that an infinitely many days have elapsed to this point. The past, like the future, is only potentially infinite. But though the only meaningful projections of the future are finite (any future day is temporally finite from now), that does not entail a future terminal event. Similarly, the only meaningful projections of the past are finite (any past day is temporally finite from now), but that does not entail an initial event.

But as C&C point out, though this is true if one counts from the present to the past, the problem is that one has to “complete” an infinite to get to the present if there is no beginning. Rundle’s reply that any event—a meteor hitting the earth n years ago—is only finitely distant does not address the problem of getting to the present where there is no starting point. Rundle mistakenly thinks that the problem is epistemic, not ontological.

For Rundle, without an initial event, nothing comes to be and thus nothing needs explanation, for continuing in being is not something that requires explanation. Indeed, “since there is no time at which the universe might not have existed, it is not possible that the universe should not have existed, so it exists of necessity” (p. 183). So in effect, with the necessity of the universe we have an end to explanations. The principle of sufficient reason is still true; it is just that it does not apply to the universe. The universe is a posteriori necessary. So whereas Craig’s argument rests on the contention that the universe must have had a beginning because there can be no actual infinite, Rundle contends that the universe did not have a beginning but is not actually infinite either. In effect, he seeks to avoid the dilemma with which C&C conclude their book.

This short summary can only allude to the subtle and dialogical philosophical reasoning found in both books. Since Craig has a penchant for engaging his opponents in debate, both *in situ* and in print, one might expect an ensuing volume where the two actually go head to head. The interesting question will then concern what kind of dialogue is possible between a Wittgensteinian and a realist.

The Divine Lawmaker: Lectures on Induction, Laws of Nature, and the Existence of God, by John Foster. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004. Pp. ix and 191. \$45 (hardcover).

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In this fascinating book, John Foster develops a novel argument for the existence of God on the basis of considerations about inductive inference and laws of nature. The key claim that Foster defends is this: that regularities in the behaviour of physical objects in different times and places are only satisfactorily explained on the assumption that the Judaeo-Christian God’s causal imposition of regularities *qua* regularities on the physical universe brings it about that the operation of the physical universe is partly governed by natural laws. On Foster’s account, for there to be a law of nature is for there to be a certain type of natural regularity of