

DIVINE SIMPLICITY AND THE MYTH OF MODAL COLLAPSE: AN ISLAMIC NEOPLATONIC RESPONSE

Khalil Andani¹

¹ Augustana College

Original scientific article – Received: 12/06/2022 Accepted: 17/11/2022

ABSTRACT

This paper responds to the modal collapse argument against divine simplicity or classical theism offered by neo-classical or complex theists. The modal collapse argument claims that if God is both absolutely simple and absolutely necessary, then God's act of creation is absolutely necessary, and therefore, the existence of the created world is also absolutely necessary. This means that God and His creation collapse into a single modal category of absolute necessity without any contingent beings. My response is grounded in the Islamic Neoplatonic philosophy of Ibn Sina and the Ismaili tradition. I offer four arguments that allow a Muslim Neoplatonist to absorb a modal collapse in a possible worlds modality while negating modal collapse within an Avicennian modality: First, the modal collapse objection is based on a possible worlds framework whose concept of necessity is overly broad; this framework fails to distinguish between God as ontologically necessary in Himself, created being as dependently necessary through another, and mere logical necessity, all of which are recognized by Ibn Sina and Islamic thinkers. Second, modal collapse arguments only demonstrate that creation is necessary through another but fails to prove that creation has ontological necessity or aseity—which only pertains to God; thus, no consequential modal collapse ensues when one's modality recognizes creation as a “dependent necessary being” despite being modally necessary. Third, Islamic philosophers have a non-libertarian concept of God's will and freedom that is immune to modal collapse objections. Finally, I argue that all classical and neo-classical theists must embrace a modally necessary creation because libertarian models of God's will entail uncaused and brutally contingent effects.

Keywords: *modal collapse; divine simplicity; Ismaili; Avicenna; libertarian; theism; Neoplatonism; necessity.*

1. Introduction

Contemporary debates in Christian analytic theology feature a contentious conflict between two versions of monotheism—known as classical theism (divine simplicity) and complex theism (known as neo-classical theism).¹ Classical theism is a theological position according to which God is an absolutely simple and unconditioned reality that transcends having any parts, internal plurality, entitative attributes, or real-distinct properties. This doctrine is known today as divine simplicity and is often expressed by the formula that God is numerically identical to His attributes, features, and properties (Schmid 2022a).

There are many premodern and modern versions of divine simplicity to be found within multiple religions but the most vocal proponents of the doctrine in modern philosophy of religion scholarship tend to be Christians (Feser, Vallicella, Leftow, Rogers, Hart, Sijuwade). Meanwhile, the rival theistic position is known as complex or neo-classical theism. In this view, God possesses several necessary attributes and some contingent features that are neither identical to Him nor separable from Him. In the words of Mullins:

God's attributes are not identical to each other. Instead, God's essential attributes are distinct and coextensive. God's wisdom is not identical to His power, but one will not find God's wisdom floating free from His power. (Mullins 2016, 331)

In other words, the neo-classical or complex theist rejects divine simplicity for a God who is internally complex and differentiated. Once again, the most vocal promoters of complex theism in modern scholarship are Christians (Plantinga, Swinburne, Craig, Morris, Mullins). The field of analytic theology is rife with philosophical jousting between classical and complex theists. One of the latest assaults that complex theists have launched against classical theism is the modal collapse argument (Craig and Moreland 2009; Mullins 2013; Schmid 2022a; Mullins and Byrd 2022). The most potent version of the argument is as follows (the rendition of Schmid 2022a and 2022b):

¹ I have borrowed the term “complex theism” to designate non-classical or non-divine simplicity theologies from Cohoe (2020).

- 1) Necessarily, God exists.
- 2) God is identical to God's creative act.
- 3) Necessarily, God's creative act exists.
- 4) Necessarily, the effect of God's creative act—the creation—exists.

This argument concludes a purported modal collapse because both God and His creation exist “necessarily”.

For many Christian philosophers, a modal collapse blatantly violates the concept of God for several supposed reasons. First, it entails that everything in existence is a “necessary being”—God and His creation are both necessary and there are no contingent existents in reality. Second, everything that happens in creation is logically necessary and there is only one possible world or a way that things could be—leading to an “extreme fatalism” (Craig and Moreland 2009, 525). Third, this violates God's freedom because it means God cannot refrain from creating *this* world and lacks the ability to choose otherwise. Fourth, it negates God's aseity—because if God *must* create this creation then it follows that God cannot exist without His creation and therefore He depends on His creation for His existence (Mullins 2013).

All current responses to the problem are grounded in Christian models of divine simplicity such as Anselmian or Thomist theology (Rogers 1996; Tomaszewski 2019; Nemes 2020; Fakhry 2021; Pedersen and Lilley 2022). Muslim voices are virtually absent from most debates in modern philosophy of religion, which continues to be a field dominated by Christian theological projects. But the current debate is an opportune moment for an Islamic philosophical response to the modal collapse objection.

In what follows, I challenge the above four claims about the nature of modal collapse by drawing on Islamic philosophy in its Neoplatonic form according to the thought of Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and the Shi'i Ismaili tradition. First, I argue that the modal collapse argument is guilty of equivocation and conflation on various kinds of “necessity”. In Islamic and Scholastic thought, “necessary” is an ambiguous term that pertains to different modalities. I unpack the concept of “necessity” in Islamic thought by distinguishing between what modern analytic philosophers call “modal necessity” *qua* existing in all possible worlds and various types of “ontological necessity” such as actuality, invariability, necessity in itself, and necessity through another. Second, the modal collapse argument only

demonstrates that creation is logically necessary given the existence of God and that both God and His creation are modally necessary—they exist in all possible worlds because there is just one possible world. But mere modal necessity does not capture what is ontologically unique about God—namely that God is ontologically necessary through Himself while everything other than God is necessary through another and only possible in itself. A modal collapse does not entail an ontological collapse because modal necessity does not amount to ontological necessity. Third, I show that Islamic philosophers have a different definition of God’s will and divine freedom than the libertarian idea of freedom that many Christians take for granted today, so accepting this modal collapse presents no theological issue for God’s freedom. Fourth, I argue that all classical and neo-classical theists must embrace modal collapse because its denial entails more fatal problems like the negation of God’s intrinsic necessity and the acceptance of uncaused brute contingencies that follow from libertarian models of God’s will.

2. From Modal Necessity to Ontological Necessity

It has become almost axiomatic in analytic theology to define a necessary being as “a concrete thing existing in all possible worlds” and a contingent being as what exists in some but not all possible worlds (Rasmussen 2010, 808). The kind of necessity applicable here is “broad logical necessity” made popular by Plantinga (Pruss and Rasmussen 2018, 12). In this analytic modal system, the existence of God is demonstrated by cosmological arguments from contingency that make use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (henceforth PSR) and thereby infer the existence of a concrete being that exists in all possible worlds which serves as the sufficient reason for the existence of concrete contingent things (Pruss and Rasmussen 2018, 12). Further argumentation deduces that this concrete necessary being has all the great-making properties of God such as aseity, omnipotence, eternity, omnibenevolence, etc. One of the key axioms within this modal logic is the “Distribution Axiom”—it says that if some necessary existent P entails the existence of Q , then the necessity of P transfers to Q and Q acquires the modal status of necessity: “The axiom basically states that necessity transfers across entailment: so, if p is necessary, and if p entails q , then q is necessary” (Pruss and Rasmussen 2018, 15).

The Distribution Axiom presents the following challenge for many analytic theists: if God *qua* modally necessary being (N) is the sufficient reason for all contingent beings (C), then according to the Distribution

Axiom, all the contingent beings are necessary beings. This is the modal collapse identified by Peter Van Inwagen, due to which he rejected the PSR. This is the same kind of modal collapse that complex theists have presented against classical theists in recent debates.

The analytic modal framework that defines necessity and contingency solely in terms of possible worlds fails to adequately account for the worldview to which most classical theists subscribe. For this reason, contemporary modal collapse arguments merely demonstrate a pseudo-problem because they fail to capture key ontological distinctions between God and His created effects as conceived in classical theism. Modal necessity—the necessity of existing across all possible worlds—is *merely one* account of necessity known as “broad logical necessity”. There are other kinds of “necessity” upheld by Islamic and Scholastic philosophers that pick out important ontological distinctions between God, God’s effects, and different kinds of created existents that today’s modal collapse arguments gloss over. Furthermore, when one speaks of concrete existents, the term “necessary being” understood in the modal sense of “exists in all possible worlds” is ambiguous and describes several ontological situations.

Several analytic philosophers have admitted that modal necessity is too broad and must be further broken down into different kinds of necessity. For example, Leftow (1989, 137) concedes that the sentence “*x* exists necessarily” asserts only that *x* is to be found in every possible world. To exist in every possible world, however, completely leaves open the question of *why* such a necessary being exists and whether it is necessary due to another modally necessary being that serves as its cause. In other words, the fact that something is a modally necessary being does not logically entail that said necessary being is uncaused or has aseity. William Lane Craig goes further and argues that any complete ontology must recognize the ontological status of “dependent necessary beings”—beings that exist in every possible world (“modally necessary”) but are nevertheless dependent on external causes: “a being that existed in every broadly logically possible world would exist necessarily, but if it has a cause, then it doesn’t exist by a necessity of its own nature. Paradoxically, it exists necessarily but contingently. I say ‘paradoxically’ because there is no contradiction here. By “contingently” in this context one means ‘dependently’ (Craig 2014). Non-theist philosophers like Felipe Leon have also pressed the distinction between an independent necessary being and a dependent necessary being to challenge the modal contingency argument. Therefore, it is important to outline a more finely-grained set of modal

categories to assess whether modal collapse arguments are actually effective.

The modal framework of the Islamic philosopher Ibn Sina or Avicenna (d. 1037) is extremely helpful in this regard. When it comes to propositions, Ibn Sina recognizes necessary, impossible, and possible propositions based on the relationship that the predicate has with the subject of the proposition. However, Ibn Sina also recognizes modalities that describe the different ontological modes of being. First, he recognizes logical necessity or *daruri* necessity—which is what contemporary philosophers call broad logical necessity—a necessity that describes propositions. Second, Ibn Sina recognizes two types of “ontological necessity” or *wajib* necessity—which describes the ontological status of concrete existents. The two kinds of ontological necessity for Ibn Sina are “necessary existence in itself” (*wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*) and “necessary existence through another” (*wajib al-wujud li-ghayrihi*). The first ontological category is the necessary existence in itself or *necessary-in-itself*—an existent which, when considered in itself without reference to anything external, cannot fail to exist and whose non-existence entails a contradiction. Therefore, the necessary in itself exists independently without being conditioned by any external or internal causes—this is what Ibn Sina identifies as God.

The second category of necessity coincides with the category of “possible in itself” or “contingent in itself” (*mumkin al-wujud bi-dhatihi*)—which refers to an essence that considered in and of itself without consideration of anything external to it, may exist or may not exist (De Hann 2020, 274). In order for anything possible in itself to exist in actuality, it must depend upon some preponderating cause to “tip the scales” in favor of its existence over its nonexistence. Thus, when the possible in itself actually obtains or exists in reality, it is because its own existence has been necessitated by its cause(s); for example, if a monkey actually exists, it is due to the existence of its various material, efficient, formal and final causes. Therefore, the possible in itself—when it actually exists—has the modal status of being “necessary existence through another” (*wajib al-wujud li-ghayrihi*) and dependent upon a distinct cause for its existence. There are also things that are possible in themselves that fail to exist in the actual world—such as a flying monkey or a unicorn—because their necessitating and preponderating causes fail to exist; this is a case of something whose existence is “impossible through another” (*mumtani‘ al-wujud li-ghayrihi*).

Finally, something may be “impossible in itself” (*mumtani‘ al-wujud bi-dhatihi*) like a married bachelor or a square circle and can never obtain in

reality. It is important to note at this juncture that the concept of logical necessity or *darura* is intertwined with all of these modal categories including ontological necessity and ontological impossibility.

For example, the existence of God *qua* necessary existence in itself (ontologically necessary) is *also* logically necessary (*daruri*), the existence of the necessary through another (ontologically contingent) when its cause obtains is logically necessary (*daruri*), and the non-existence of what is impossible in itself (like a square circle) is also logically necessary (*daruri*) (De Haan 2020, 58-61). In Ibn Sina's worldview, the Necessary Existence in Itself is only God—who is absolutely simple, uncaused, timeless, immaterial, and infinite. God eternally originates, necessitates, and bestows existence upon everything numerically distinct from Himself, namely contingent or possible existents, through a timeless creative action called emanation or origination. While Ibn Sina believes that God creates through His will, he also holds that God's creative will is a necessary concomitant of God's Essence. In fact, Ibn Sina and many in the Islamic Neoplatonic tradition hold that God's will to create the creation is ultimately necessary in the sense that it could not be otherwise.

Furthermore, all Islamic Neoplatonists believe that God's creative action is an eternal or atemporal act of origination or eternal procession by which God timelessly causes an eternal incorporeal substance known as the First Intellect. This First Intellect is both eternal and dependent upon God for its eternal existence. The First Intellect, by way of eternal emanation, generates a chain of secondary causes and effects, which leads to the physical world. Nevertheless, the First Intellect and the chain of Neoplatonic emanations are contingent in the sense of being dependent upon God for their existence and lack ontological necessity. Thus, within the Islamic Neoplatonic worldview, everything other than God is both contingent in itself and necessary through another. Contingency in the modal account of Ibn Sina and other Islamic philosophers refers to an existent's ontological dependency or existential poverty—regardless of whether that existent is logically necessitated by God's creative act. In other words, God alone is necessary in Himself and all of His created effects—which are possible in themselves—are necessary through God and always dependent upon God for their existence (De Haan 2020, 281-289).

In terms of created existence, it is also important to distinguish two kinds of existents that are "necessary through another": a) immaterial and atemporal Neoplatonic intellects and souls—whose eternal existence

transcends space, time and matter—and b) material substances which are perishable and in a state of perpetual becoming. This is an important distinction because some Islamic and Scholastic thinkers refer to these eternal immaterial creations of God as “necessary beings” in the metaphysical sense. Aquinas in his Fourth Way and elsewhere speaks of the existence of many “necessary beings” created by God that have eternal, invariable, and/or everlasting existence in contrast to temporally finite contingent beings that undergo generation and corruption (Davies 1980, 488). Likewise, the Ismaili philosopher Nasir-i Khusraw (1999, 41-42) describes the First Intellect, the first eternal dependent existent originated by God, as a “necessary being” because it is the eternal and actual cause of all subsequent creations. Accordingly, all Islamic Neoplatonic philosophers recognize a hierarchy of atemporal and immaterial necessary beings that mediate onto-cosmological relationship between the absolutely transcendent God and the material Cosmos; these necessary beings include the First Intellect, the Universal Soul, secondary Intellects, and the Active Intellect. William Lane Craig has conceded that the existence of necessary beings that are both eternal and still dependent upon God is philosophically cogent. But he notes that this idea has been glossed over due to theological bias and the shortcomings of modal logic:

Hence, even though these things necessarily exist, they depend for their existence on God. This claim may rest uneasily with a biblical doctrine of creation, which holds that nothing exists co-eternally with God, but still the idea of necessary but dependent being seems philosophically coherent. So when we get to Leibniz’s argument from contingency, we need to make room for beings that exist necessarily but dependently. So in contrast to a being which exists by a necessity of its own nature there will be dependent beings, beings which exist by some external cause. Usually these dependent beings are called contingent beings because they are contingent upon the existence of some cause. But the problem is that in modal logic “contingency” entails “non-necessity”—contingent beings exist only in some but not all possible worlds. But we’re dealing here with beings that are contingent in one sense of the word but not contingent in another sense of the word. (Craig 2016)

Thus, a truly comprehensive modal landscape must make room for eternal necessary beings that are still ontologically dependent upon God for their existence. Furthermore, the various spatio-temporal things that exist at one time or another in the world are also “actual necessary beings” to a lesser

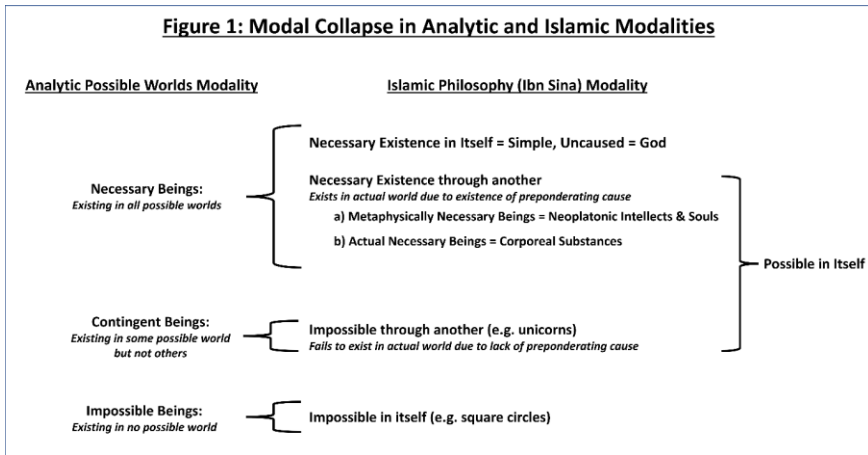
degree—because they are actualized and necessitated by their own causes for the duration over which they exist.

Based on the foregoing analysis, below is a summary of the different types of ontological modality within the Islamic Neoplatonic tradition using the ideas of Ibn Sina:

1. Necessary through Itself (*wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*): God
2. Necessary through Another (*wajib al-wujud li-ghayrihi*) = Possible in Itself (*mumkin al-wujud bi-dhatihi*):
Metaphysically Necessary Beings: Eternal Intellects and Souls
Actual Necessary Beings: Temporal Material Substances
3. Impossible through Another (*mumtani‘ al-wujud li-ghayrihi*) = Possible in Itself (*mumkin al-wujud bi-dhatihi*):
Unicorns
4. Impossible in Itself (*mumtani‘ al-wujud bi-dhatihi*): Married Bachelors

3. Revisiting the Modal Collapse with Islamic Neoplatonic Modality

Contemporary modal collapse arguments are all premised on the analytic possible worlds modality. However, possible worlds modality fails to adequately capture the different types of necessities that Ibn Sina’s modal framework lays out. This is because the former modality lacks key qualifiers that Islamic and Scholastic thinkers retained—the specifications of *in itself* and *through another*. When these modal differences are accounted for, the modern modal collapse arguments are easily answered: there is no *real* modal collapse for the Islamic philosopher working within the broader Islamic Neoplatonic tradition. This is obvious when one lines up and correlates the modal categories of the modern possible worlds framework and Ibn Sina’s ontological framework. Let us accept wholesale the chorus of modal collapse arguments put forth by Craig, Moreland, Mullins, and Schmid. The result is that everything in existence—both God and God’s created effects are necessary and exist in all possible worlds because there is only one possible world. The Islamic Neoplatonic philosophers’ reply would be: “we already know”.



The above diagram (Figure 1) depicts what a modal collapse looks like within the modern analytic possible worlds modal framework and within the Islamic philosophical modal framework. Indeed, it does logically follow that if an absolutely simple God is modally necessary, then His creative action is modally necessary, and the existence of creation is modally necessary. Thus, God and His creatures are modally necessary beings because they exist within all possible worlds. As such, there are no contingent beings—things that exist in some possible worlds but not others. This is the dreaded modal collapse for analytic theologians. But this supposed problem is a modern myth.

When we “translate” the possible worlds modal collapse into the modal framework of Islamic philosophy, the result is far from problematic. For Ibn Sina and other Islamic Neoplatonic thinkers, there is only one possible world—the actual world—and what analytic theologians call modal collapse is already part of their worldview. What Ibn Sina classified as necessary in itself and necessary through another are incorrectly conflated by the analytic framework into a single category of “necessary” *qua* existing in all possible worlds. It is evident here that possible worlds necessity is an insufficient and unremarkable description of ontological states of affairs. Mere existence across all possible worlds does not even pick out what is ontologically unique about God in comparison to other necessary beings. A complete modal framework must further specify *how* and *why* a given being exists necessarily across possible worlds and *why* such a being cannot be any other way—otherwise, any modal account remains incomplete. As Shakespeare (2018) observes: “There is no guarantee that an object’s existence in all possible worlds gives it any significant relationship to any or all other objects and states of affairs in those worlds; or that mere occurrence in all possible worlds leaves us any

the wiser about what *constitutes* the necessity of an object. What is it about an object that makes it necessary in this sense? What *grounds* necessity?”

For Ibn Sina and the Islamic Neoplatonic tradition, God does not *merely* exist in all possible worlds; more importantly, God is uncaused, unconditioned, and independent across all possible worlds. God’s necessity is *intrinsic necessity* because He is *necessary in himself*. Everything else apart from God, although necessary in terms of possible worlds, is *necessary through another* and merely *possible in itself* within Ibn Sina’s modality (Richardson 2014). Ibn Sina’s distinction between these two necessities—intrinsic necessity and extrinsic necessity—is likewise upheld in the Scholastic and modern European philosophical tradition by Leibniz and Spinoza. Pedersen and Lilley (2022), representing a Christian Scholastic perspective, likewise speak of absolute necessity versus suppositional necessity—which is likely derived from Ibn Sina’s necessary in itself versus necessary through another. Whatever is necessary through another is essentially contingent in itself and ontologically dependent upon God. Therefore, God and any other necessary beings that exist in all possible worlds do not truly belong to the same modal category. The modal collapse of analytic theology is a modern myth; it poses no threat to the modality of Islamic philosophy.

In sum, the modal collapse within a possible worlds framework does not result in a modal collapse for the ontological modal framework of Ibn Sina and the Islamic Neoplatonic tradition. Although God and His creation are logically necessary and exist across all possible worlds, they retain different modal categories within Ibn Sina’s modal framework. God alone is the necessary existence through itself (*wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*) whereas all things in His creation—including the eternal Intellects, everlasting Souls, and temporal substances—are each necessary through another (*wajib al-wujud li-ghayrihi*), possible in itself (*mumkin al-wujud bi-dhatihi*), and ontologically dependent upon God. This recognition successfully rebuts the core of the modal collapse objection by showing that a possible worlds modal collapse does not logically entail an ontological modal collapse.

4. Divine Freedom and Divine Aseity

While the above analysis rebuts the main argument against modal collapse, a second objection often levied against divine simplicity is that God *cannot refrain* from creating this world and therefore lacks genuine freedom.

Mullins and Byrd advance this claim through two arguments. First, they suppose that the essence of freedom is the ability to do otherwise or refrain from doing something. This is just a libertarian concept of freedom projected onto God (Mullins and Byrd, 2022). But they do not establish why God's freedom should be defined this way in the first place. Instead, there is an appeal to the popularity of this view among a selection of Christian thinkers: "Christian theologians have overwhelmingly affirmed that God is free in the sense that God is the source of His intentional actions, and that God has the ability to do otherwise" (Mullins and Byrd, 2022). Their second argument is that the contingent status of the created universe is grounded in the fact that God's act of creation is a free libertarian choice and could have been otherwise.

While Mullins and Byrd heavily appeal to John Webster for their position, there have been and continue to be Christian theologians who subscribe to a different view of God's freedom. One prominent Reformed theologian whose view of divine freedom easily absorbs the shock of a modal collapse is Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). Edwards' ideas on God's will and creaturely will have great resemblance to the necessitarian views of the Islamic Neoplatonists. For Edwards, God's will is *not* a libertarian selector in any sense. Edwards' God is necessary in all respects—this includes God's will: the divine will is not "self-determining" but is wholly determined by God's wisdom and God's nature; God's will is timelessly eternal and whatever God wills could *not* have been otherwise because God's nature cannot be any other way; whatever God chooses by His will is due to a sufficient reason flowing from "a morally compelling necessity" (Fisk 2020, 297-298).

As explained by Crisp, Edward's definition of "freedom of the will" is as follows: "an agent is free to choose or will a particular action if she can do that action if she chooses or wills to, and can refrain from choosing or willing the act if she wills or chooses to refrain from doing so" (Crisp 2012, 65). In this view, since all of God's choices, decrees, and acts flow from His own nature or essence and are not constrained by anything outside of Himself, this fulfills the requirement that God is "free": He is free of everything other than Himself and He only brings about what He wills. In Edwards' understanding, God is both absolutely free and absolutely necessary, therefore, God's will necessarily flows from God's intrinsic necessity:

God himself has the highest possible freedom, according to the true and proper meaning of the term; and that he is in the highest possible respect an agent, and active in the exercise of

his infinite holiness; though he acts therein in the highest degree necessarily. (Edwards in Crisp, 2012, 69-70)

Although God's will is necessitated by God's nature, what God wills is not a brutally necessary emanation; rather, Edwards holds that God's will is specifically determined by God's wisdom, which means God necessarily wills the highest manifestation of wisdom:

If God's will is steadily and surely determined in everything by supreme wisdom [i.e. by his own supreme wisdom], then it is in everything necessarily determined to that which is most wise. (Edwards in Crisp, 2012, 72)

This non-libertarian understanding of divine freedom where God's will is wholly determined by His nature or His wisdom—held by some Christian theologians—finds deep resonances with the views of certain Islamic thinkers. For example, the Islamic philosophers subscribed to a notion of God's freedom of the will expressed by the following statement: “if the agent wills, he will do the act; if he does not will it, he will not do it” (Rahman 1975, 167). This view generally captures the ideas of the Ismaili Muslim philosopher Sijistani (d. after 971) and Ibn Sina, who both adhered to some form of necessitarianism—that God eternally wills the creation of the First Intellect—a perfect, eternal, and incorporeal substance—and that God could not have willed otherwise. In the view of the Islamic philosophers, the fact that God could not have done otherwise is not a negation of His freedom because God is not constrained by anything or anyone: “if He so willed, He would act otherwise” (Rahman 1975, 171). Sijistani professes a hyper-negative theology of God that is characteristic of the Ismaili Muslim tradition. He frames the Will of God as an extrinsic and singular divine action that lacks all the temporal, spatial, and ontological contingencies that qualify creaturely acts of will. In the words of Sijistani:

The Creator's Will is absolutely undivided (*ghayr munqasim*). Indeed, His Will is what manifests His wisdom and what that wisdom perfects until it attains to the uppermost limit of its intended telos. Thus, that Will is what flows with His wisdom within that which He originated of the originated beings and in the effects of the originated beings without anything being empty of His Will. The will of the creature decides between opposing alternatives: he may will to speak; he may will to be silent; he may will to stand; he may will to sit; he may will to

move; he may will to rest. Whoever describes the Will of God, the Exalted, as being similar to this [creaturely] will that deliberates (*mutaṣarrifa*) among opposing alternatives has ascribed incapacity and deficiency to the Creator, may He be exalted from that. This is because whoever wills to speak is incapable in that very moment of bringing about what is opposed to speech, namely silence (...). The Will of the Creator, may He be glorified and exalted, is not temporal and is neither due to need, habit, favor, nor anger. But rather, His Will is pure goodness (*al-jud al-mahd*) with the manifestation of wisdom. Thus, He does not decide among opposing alternatives. But rather [His Will] is united with what He wills. We do not witness anyone who possesses a perfect will with a single position (...). Since His Will encompasses all of what His Wisdom made appear among the originated and existentiated beings up to their upper limits and objectives, everything flows in accordance with His Will—which if it were not the case would entail the corruption of the arrangement and the order [of creation]. (Sijistani 2011, 266-267)

In the above passage, Sijistani draws numerous contrasts between the God's Will and human creaturely will. Unlike human will—which is subject to various accidents like need, habit, emotion, space, and time—the Will of God is eternal and transcends these limits. While human will deliberates over a set of possible alternatives, the Will of God does not select from a pool of choices. In fact, Sijistani rejects any form of libertarian divine will for God because it would limit God's power: if God were a libertarian agent who picks one choice from several possible alternatives, it would limit God to being able to actualize one possible world to the exclusion of others; this renders God's will and power as similar to those of created agents. Instead, for Sijistani, God's Will is essentially identical to perfect goodness, pure generosity, and perfect wisdom: the Will of God is essentially directed towards manifesting the most perfect effect or greatest possible world—in the form of the perfect creation known as the First Intellect and the downstream effects of the First Intellect. Therefore, God's will could not have been any other way because anything less than the First Intellect and the actual world would be a less perfect world and thereby render God's creative act or His perfect generosity as deficient in some respect. Thus, in the Ismaili Neoplatonic worldview, God does not refrain from creating the First Intellect—and everything is encompassed and exists in accordance with His Will. But this is not a constraint or an imperfection for God; rather, this necessary act of creation is the very manifestation of God's absolute transcendence and

“freedom” from the finitude and constraints of contingent existence. Thus, Sijistani’s necessitarian view of God’s absolutely will is wholly compatible with the so-called modal collapse.

For Ibn Sina writing half a century later, God wills the creation of contingent existents by understanding Himself as the perfect cause of the best arrangement of created things—or the best possible world:

In fact, [the Necessary Existent’s] very understanding of the order of possible things according to the superior arrangement is a cause necessitating the existence of those things according to the existing order and superior arrangement. In general, [the Necessary Existent] does not know the concomitants of Itself—I mean the objects of understanding—and then thereafter consents to them; rather, as their procession is from what [the Necessary Existent] Itself requires, their very procession from It is itself Its consenting to them. Consequently, their procession from It is not something beneficial for its own sake, but is something traced back (*munāsab*) to the agent itself. Whatever is not beneficial and yet the agent understands that he is its agent is something [the agent] wills because it is traced back to him. Hence we say that these objects of understanding proceed from something requiring the very being of the Necessary Existent through Itself (*dhāt wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi*)—[It Itself] being what is desired by It—together with an understanding of It that It is their agent and cause”. (Ibn Sina, *Ta’liqat*, 11-17, in Ruffus and McGinnis 2015, 191)

Within Ibn Sina’s perspective, the existence of contingent things emanates from God’s eternal will—which is an act of divine self-intellection where God timelessly recognizes His Necessary Existence as the perfect cause and agent of everything other than Himself. However, God does not will the creation due to some external goal or final cause that He seeks to attain; rather, God Himself is the goal or end for all contingent existents, which depend upon Him to exist. In one respect, God wills and knows Himself and the emanation of creation is a superabundance or overflow of God’s necessary perfection and goodness. But this does not contradict God having “freedom” because, as Ibn Sina says, God “consents” to the procession of created things beginning with the First Intellect, which is the most perfect contingent being. The fact that God “consents” to what emanates from His absolute necessity suffices for the claim that God creates by will and not some brute necessity.

The foregoing analysis shows that the idea of divine freedom as “the ability to refrain from creation” or “the ability to do otherwise” is hardly unquestionable and far from axiomatic within the Christian and Islamic traditions. Jonathan Edwards in the Christian tradition and Sijistani and Ibn Sina in the Islamic tradition offer accounts of divine will and freedom that allow for God to necessarily create this world. As for the claim that the contingency of the created world is contingent on the fact that God was free to not create it, this does not logically follow. As shown in the modal section of this paper, the essential contingency of the universe and all created existents lies in their ontological dependence—that they depend upon God for their existence at any moment. Thus, the existential poverty or ontological contingency of anything other than God holds regardless of whether God’s will is libertarian or necessitarian.

A third objection is that modal collapse threatens God’s aseity or absolute ontological independence. As argued by Mullins (2013, 196): “In order for God to be who He is—pure act—He necessarily must create this world. This makes God’s essential nature dependent upon creation”. Mullins’ argument, with support from Katherin Rogers, is that on divine simplicity and modal collapse, God must exist *with* His creation in order to be God. There are several responses that one can offer to rebut this claim. First, the argument relies on equivocation regarding the term “necessarily”. Mullins and Rogers use the term “necessary” in the sense of broadly logical necessity or what the analytic philosophers call “modal necessity” as explained above. But this kind of necessity does not entail that God ontologically depends upon His creation. Modal necessity on a possible worlds account is so broad that one can cite any modally necessary truth or existent and construct a modal account making it *seem* that God depends upon that necessity. For example, the proposition $1+1=2$ is modally necessary because it exists in all possible worlds. Therefore, one can claim that if $1+1=2$ is false, then God does not exist and that God’s existence depends on the truth of $1+1=2$. One can substitute $1+1=2$ for any strict or broadly necessary truth and construct dozens of parody arguments (see Davidson 2019; Fine 1995). This result obtains because broadly logical or modal necessity is not fine-grained enough to account for the fact that some necessary beings *ontologically depend upon* other necessary beings. There is currently no adequate modal account for asymmetric ontological dependence because modal logic is overly broad and conflates various kinds of entailment relationships. Theories such as grounding provide a more adequate description of the asymmetric dependence of creation upon God, even if God creates necessarily (Sijuwade forthcoming). Thus, the dependence of God upon His creation does not follow from the fact that

God creates necessarily, unless one first omits the fact that the world ontologically depends upon God from the account of divine simplicity.

Second, the argument that God depends upon His creation is derived from constructing the following three counterfactuals: if God exists, it necessarily follows that creation exists ($P \rightarrow Q$); if God does not exist, it necessarily follows that creation does not exist ($\text{not-}P \rightarrow \text{not-}Q$); if creation does not exist, it necessarily follows that God does not exist ($\text{not-}Q \rightarrow \text{not-}P$). On the face of it, it *appears* like God and creation are interdependent in a circular way. However, the third counterfactual (if creation does not exist, then God does not exist) only obtains if the non-existence of creation is first established. But the non-existence of creation depends upon the non-existence of God, as per the second counterfactual. Therefore, the third counterfactual that entails God's existence depending upon the existence of His creation only obtains if one initially *assumes as a premise* that God does not exist. Therefore, the third counterfactual suffers from hidden circularity and shall never obtain once the modal and ontological necessity of God's existence is established. Thus, the counterfactual modal description of dependence—used to argue against God's creative action being necessary—is problematic and lacks the level of description required to distinguish between asymmetrical and circular dependence, as Kit Fine argues:

Indeed, it might be argued that no modal characterization of dependence could conceivably be correct. For it would appear to be possible that two philosophers could agree on all of the relevant modal facts and yet disagree on the relationships of dependence. They might agree, for example, that persons and minds were distinct, that the one could only exist with the other, and so on; and yet one might think of persons as embodied minds and hence as dependent upon minds, while the other might think of minds as abstractions from persons and hence as dependent upon persons. (Fine 1995, 272)

Finally, the complex theist who believes that God is a libertarian agent is susceptible to a very similar argument. The theological libertarian is committed to the fact that God must *make a contingent choice* to actualize *a possible world*—this may be the “alone world” where only God exists or it may be a world where God exists with a creation. But in either case, the alone world and the creation worlds are both possible worlds and equally contingent in themselves. Therefore, the libertarian God of complex theism *necessarily actualizes some possible world or contingent state of affairs*.

Mullins' argument can be parodied in this way: "In order for God to be who He is—a free willing agent—He necessarily must create *some possible* world and cannot refrain from actualizing *some possible world*. This makes God's essential nature dependent upon a creation *qua* contingent world". Based on Mullins' argument cited above, the God of complex theism equally *depends upon* the existence of a contingent state of affairs. Overall, the acceptance of a modal collapse in terms of possible worlds modality does not ontologically collapse essential contingent *qua* dependent beings into the absolute necessity of God and does not compromise God's aseity.

5. Libertarian Collapse: Brute Contingency

One of the most popular moves made by classical theists to avoid a modal collapse has been to deny any deterministic link between God and the content of His created effects (Tomaszewski 2019; Nemes 2020; Fakhry 2021; Schmid 2022a, 2022b). In terms of possible worlds semantics, this means that God remains the same across possible worlds—since He is both modally and ontologically necessary—while God's created effect differs across these possible worlds. Thus, in w_1 , God creates c_1 ; and in w_2 , God creates c_2 . But God in w_1 is identical to God in w_2 . However, according to the difference principle and the contrastive account of grounding, a difference in the effect/grounded logically entails a difference in the cause/grounder (Nemes 2020, 109). While some classical theists have denied the difference principle for God, Schmid (2022b) argues that this move leads to a "providential collapse", meaning that: "even fixing absolutely everything about God, any possible effect whatsoever can come about. The providential collapse argument reasons from this indeterminism to the denial of divine providence (i.e., God's control over (i) whether creation obtains as well as (ii) creation's precise contents if it does obtain)" (Schmid 2022b). In other words, if God's created effect is not necessitated by God and only has an indeterministic relation to His creative action, then God is not in control over the existence and essence of His creation—which is a denial of divine power and providence. In this section, I accept Schmid's providential collapse as cogent and further argue that the libertarian model of God's will, which many complex theists support, equally falls prey to this "providential collapse". Therefore, classical and complex theists should reject indeterministic and/or libertarian models of divine will if they believe in the PSR and wish to keep divine providence; they should instead accept necessitarian models of God's will akin to Jonathan Edwards and the Islamic philosophers.

To be sure, Schmid anticipated such responses to his providential collapse argument and pre-emptively countered them. However, I will show that Schmid's defense falls short and the providential collapse argument boomerangs against the complex theist's libertarian model of God that Schmid seems to prefer over classical theism.

Following Schmid's analysis, let us assume the existence of the God of complex theism—that God has multiple attributes that are numerically distinct from His Essence. We can further divide God's real-distinct attributes into necessary attributes *N* and contingent attributes called *C*. Let us further specify that God's contingent intention to create a particular creation is part of *C* (His contingent choice). Based on this model, God possesses *N*, His necessary attributes, in all possible worlds; God possesses a particular set of *C* in some possible worlds but not all. Going further, we can say that God possesses *c1* in possible world *w1*, He possesses *c2* in *w2*, *c3* in *w3*, etc. Now, the complex theist must acknowledge that in any possible world, God in virtue of His necessary attributes *N* is the cause or explanation of *C*, as Schmid notes: "God's contingent act of will is partly dependent on more fundamental, necessary features of God (e.g., God's goodness)" (Schmid 2022b). Since *N* refers to God's necessary attributes, *N* must be identical across possible worlds but *C* differs in each possible world. This is the very same problem that Schmid presented against classical theists who believe in a libertarian indeterministic divine action. Schmid states the logical outcome of this problem as follows:

13*. If fixing all the facts about *N* is perfectly compatible with the obtaining of any possible *C* (arising from *N*) among an arbitrarily large range of possible *C*'s, then *N* is not in control over *which* *C* obtains. (Schmid 2022b)

Schmid's response to this problem is for complex theists to *embrace* the above outcome and claim that it is *not* a problem. In the above statement, Schmid defines *N* as "the agent and their acts(s)" and *C* with a contingent "effect" in a possible world. He then replies:

Nothing in (13*) entails that *God* is not in control over which *C* obtains. It only entails that *N* is not in control over which *C* obtains. And *God* can be in control over which contingent act he performs even though *the necessary features* of God are not. (Schmid 2022b)

This reply rings rather odd, since Schmid *concedes* that God’s necessary features (N) are *not* in control of God’s contingent attributes/acts (C)—including God’s contingent intent to create this world. So how can Schmid still claim that “God can be in control” when God’s necessary attributes *do not control* God’s contingent attributes. It seems that Schmid has equivocated between “N”—defined in 13* as “the agent and their act(s)” and “God”, as if N and God are different. But God is identical to “the agent and his act(s)”. There is no separate agent from God—unless one is a polytheist. Thus, the term N must be substituted with “God” into the formula as follows:

13** If fixing all the facts about **God** is perfectly compatible with the obtaining of any possible C (arising from **God**) among an arbitrarily large range of possible C’s, then **God** is not in control over which C obtains.

The above shows that for the complex theist who believes in libertarian indeterministic divine intention/action, *God is not in control over His contingent attributes including His contingent intention to create this world.*

Schmid might object by saying that in his formulation, “God” is not extensionally identical with N (God’s necessary attributes); he might instead say that “God” refers to the conjunction of God’s necessary attributes (N) *and* God’s contingent attributes (C) and that, therefore, it remains true that God is in control of His contingent attributes (C) even if N is not in control of C. But this formulation just reduces to the following: “God’s necessary attributes (N) *and* God’s contingent attributes (C) are in control of God’s contingent attributes (C)”. And since Schmid concedes that “N is not in control of C”, the formulation further reduces to “God’s contingent attributes (C) are in control of God’s contingent attributes (C)”. This statement is just an affirmation of circular causation or circular dependency: nothing in God’s necessary attributes determine or control the contents of C and, therefore, God’s contingent attributes including His created effect are *self-determined* or *self-explained* in a circular fashion. Any contingency that is self-determined or self-explained is an uncaused or brute contingency—which violates the standard PSR.

At this point, the complex theist libertarian may say that they adhere to a weak PSR proposed by Alexander Pruss. According to Pruss’ weak PSR, a contingent fact P is explained by an explanation Q if “knowing that q does not leave rational room for puzzlement about why p holds” (Pruss, 2006 in Rdzak 2022). However, as Rdzak has shown in great detail, the

Pruss' weak PSR only delivers a partial explanation for libertarian choices and there is always a dimension of self-explanation of a free choice that is unavoidable. In the example where a person P freely performs action A for reason X instead of freely performing action B for reason Y, the weak PSR offers no sufficient explanation for what happens. Prior to P freely performing A for reason X, it was entirely possible that P freely performs B for reason Y instead. Pruss admits that reason Y might have impressed upon person P to perform B instead of A, but it just did not happen that way. Rdzak presents the "inexplicability objection", which is a weaker form of the classic "luck objection" to libertarian free will:

What Pruss alleges as almost-self-explanatory facts of free choice turn out to be facts involving some element of factual bruteness. Consequently, Pruss should either (a) reject both his PSR and his libertarianism, (b) accept his PSR but reject his libertarianism, or (c) reject his PSR but accept his libertarianism. The character of Pruss's project leads me to suspect that he would be most opposed to (a) and (c). That would leave Pruss with (b), an option that is, in my judgement, the most promising of the three. (Rdzak 2022, 215)

In other words, this weak PSR combined with libertarian free will for God or creatures results in the affirmation of self-explained, uncaused, and brute contingencies.

The libertarian complex theist, along the lines of Schmid (2022b), may respond that complex theists have many resources to rebut Rdzak's inexplicability objection: a) the complex theist can appeal to the idea that God possesses multiple internal reasons which explain why He formed a particular contingent intention (Fakhry 2021); b) he may appeal to God's will as a self-determining power that sufficiently explains any contingent choice that God makes; or c) he might claim that God is a necessary being who has an indeterministic tendency to produce a particular contingent effect without necessitating that effect (Pruss and Rasmussen 2018, 62). While these moves may seem promising, they all suffer from the problem of brute contingency.

For example, if one appeals to God having internal reasons that explain His contingent choice to create a particular world, then these reasons must either necessitate His choice or they do not; if the reasons necessitate the choice, then it is not a libertarian choice; if God's reasons do not necessitate God's choice, then the reasons are not a sufficient explanation

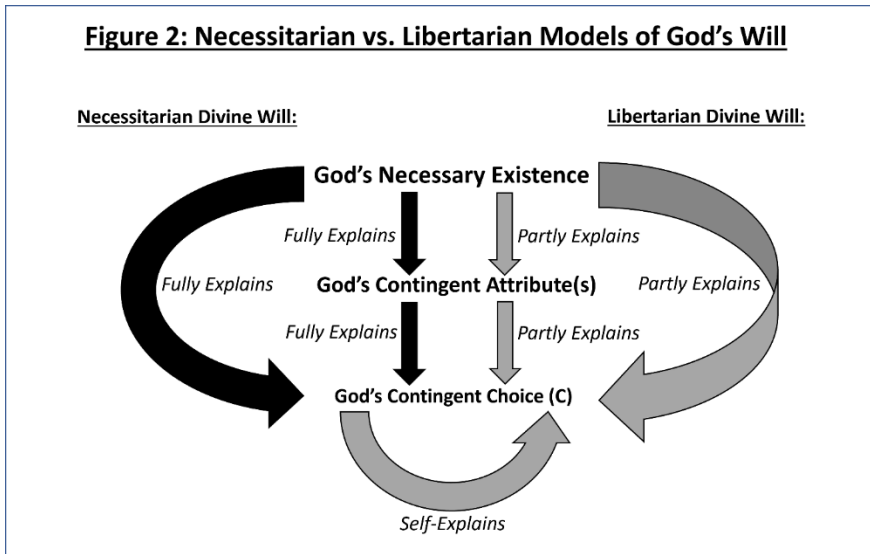
for the contingent choice. Furthermore, the reasons themselves either have necessary existence (existing in all possible worlds) or they have contingent existence. If they have contingent existence, the problem is just pushed back one level and this contingent existence requires explanation. Fakhry concedes that the chain of explanation within God will eventually stop at “basic reasons” or “ultimate reasons”; if God’s ultimate reasons have necessary existence—which they appear to have—then one must explain why God’s ultimate reasons in each possible world lead to different chains of contingent reasons and different decisions against possible worlds. Fakhry offers the following supposition about the ‘ultimate reasons’ view: “God has the same reasons in all worlds, but there is a relation that he bears to some reasons in some worlds and to other reasons in other worlds”. (Fakhry 2021, 7) What Fakhry describes as relations or connections that obtain among God’s necessary reasons, His contingent reasons, and His eventual choice are just another form of contingency that varies across possible worlds; but even in this case, the “contingent relations among God’s reasons” still require an explanation. In all these scenarios, a sufficient explanation is wholly absent and there must be another explanatory factor like deeper necessitating reasons within God or a form of self-explanation on the part of God’s choice. One will either be faced with an infinite regress of internal non-necessitating “reasons” within God or the admission that God’s contingent choice necessarily partially explains its own existence—resulting in an uncaused brute contingency.

If one takes the view that God’s will—defined as God’s ability to make a free choice—is the sole explanation for any contingent choice that God makes, then one must admit that God’s willing faculty is both self-determined and sufficient to cause and explain *any* contingent choice that God makes. If God’s will or ability to make a choice is self-determined, then this divine attribute of will has the property of aseity—which means that it is a second God because it is essentially undetermined and uncaused. If it is claimed that God’s *ability* to will is itself sufficient to actualize and explain any contingent choice that He makes, then this still does not explain why choice A obtains rather than choice B or why *all* choices do not obtain. Thus, one must again appeal to an explanation outside of God or admit that God’s contingent choice is self-caused and self-determined. Jonathan Edwards also launched this argument against a God who operates with libertarian volition:

That is, if God is free in a libertarian sense, then his acts are self-determined. But in the Edwardsian way of thinking, self-determined acts are acts that have no cause and therefore no

explanation. They occur indeterministically without any reason, from a state of volitional equilibrium without any prior preference for one outcome over another. This would mean God's actions are not determined by his supreme wisdom. They would be determined by nothing, being "entirely left to senseless unmeaning contingency, to act absolutely at random. (Crisp 2010, 72)

Finally, the idea that the necessary being N has an indeterministic tendency to produce a contingent being C is equally untenable. By implication, such a situation also entails that N has an indeterministic possibility of producing C or producing some other contingent state called C*. In the possible worlds that the necessary being N produces C instead of C*, the sheer existence of N and N's indeterministic tendency cannot constitute a sufficient explanation for the existence of C; in other words, there is no preponderance of C over C* within this libertarian scheme. As Pruss and Rasmussen admit, the fact that C came into existence instead of C* constitutes part of the sufficient explanation for the existence of C; in other words, C itself serves as the preponderator for its own existence! While both authors claim that no circularity ensues from this formulation, it is obvious that N's production of C is a necessary part of the complete explanation for the existence of C. In other words, C's coming into being from N is the "clinching explanation" or "preponderator" for C's existence. This means that C's coming into existence is what sufficiently explains C's existence—a clear case of circularity where a contingent being is explaining itself.



Overall, the outcomes of these moves reduce to the following (see Figure 2): either God’s necessary existence (divine essence and necessary attributes) is the complete explanation or sufficient cause of God’s contingent effect C or it is not. If God’s necessary existence *is* the complete explanation of C, then God necessitates C and by the Distributive Property, C is also a modally necessary being—resulting in modal collapse and a necessitarian model of God’s will. Otherwise, if God’s necessary existence is *not* the complete explanation or sufficient cause of C, then there must be something that is not numerically identical to God’s necessary existence that provides the “clinging explanation” or preponderation for the obtaining of C over anything other than C; this explanation or preponderator must either be: a) a contingent attribute of God; or b) the contingent effect C itself. If this clinging explanation is a contingent attribute of God, then this contingent attribute requires its own sufficient explanation—which will either be God’s necessary existence, another contingent divine attribute, or the contingent attribute itself. With the rejection of a necessary explanation, this leads to a regress of explanations. The only way out of the regress is for the libertarian complex theist to posit C as an explanation of itself and settle for brute contingency:

[S]ince libertarian freedom is, by definition, inconsistent with necessitation—it follows that the free actions of free agents are objectively chancy or brutally contingent, and hence lack sufficient reasons for their occurrence. (Oppy 2006, 280)

Broadly speaking, a libertarian model of God's creative intention severely compromises the inferential power of contemporary modal contingency arguments (see examples in Rasmussen 2010). This type of contingency argument logically infers the reality of a necessary being existing across all possible worlds *qua* God as the ultimate explanation for contingent beings. Many modern contingency arguments usually begin with the intuition that the way things are in the universe could have been different: "It is just so intuitive to think that the way the world is could have been otherwise. The notion that everything is absolutely necessary is deeply counterintuitive" (Mullins and Byrd, 2022). The argument turns on the question of "why are these contingent things the way they are?" And a necessary being existing in all possible worlds is supposed to explain why the contingent beings in the actual world are *this* way instead of any other conceivable way. However, it turns out that the real explanation for why these contingent beings exist is not God *qua* necessary being, but rather, God's contingent choice to make the universe this way, a choice which does *not* obtain across all possible worlds and is *not* necessitated by anything, including God. Therefore, the libertarian's contingency argument fails to live up to its inferential promise and merely posits a contingent event (God's libertarian contingent choice to make the world this way) as the explanation for the rest of the contingent existents. This simply pushes the initial premise about the contingency of the universe up several levels to God's contingent choice and is hopelessly circular: contingent things are the way they are but did not have to be that way because of a contingent choice of God that did not have to be that way. In the end, nothing is fully explained and we are left with brute contingency.

I have tried to show, by way of the aforementioned arguments, that a libertarian model of God's will is an untenable option for both classical and complex theists. The ultimate cost of affirming God as a libertarian agent who is always "free" to do otherwise and whose contingent choices are self-determined is to abandon the PSR and open the floodgates of brute or uncaused contingencies. The admission of brute contingency collapses the rational basis for theism and any sort of explanations. Although the libertarian complex theist will claim that their libertarian divine will model still offers a "partial explanation" for God's contingent effects, this is enough leeway for the atheist or agnostic to sidestep the cosmological and contingency arguments for God: the agnostic-atheist interlocuter can simply say that the "partial explanation" of the existence of any contingent universe is that such a universe is possible in itself and the universe's essential possibility partially explains its actuality. The only way to save the PSR and the existence of God as an ontologically and modally

necessary being is to embrace a necessitarian view of God's will. God wills to create this universe because God's essence, which is necessary in all respects, determines God's will towards the realization of the best possible world. This provides a complete and sufficient explanation for the contingent universe, which cannot be any other way because God cannot be any other way and the universe nevertheless retains its essential contingency because it ontologically depends upon God.

6. Conclusion

This article offers a four-fold response and resolution of the contemporary modal collapse argument offered by complex theists (Moreland and Craig, Mullins, Schmid, Mullins and Byrd) against classical theism. Unlike all the responses to date in modern scholarship, which are rooted in Christian theology (Fakhry, Nemes, Pedersen and Lilley, Tomaszewski), our response draws on Islamic Neoplatonic philosophy and the ideas of Ibn Sina and Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani.

My first argument established that the concept of necessity used in the modal collapse suffers from equivocation and the shortcomings of the analytic modality based on possible worlds semantics. The concept of "broad logical necessity" *qua* existence across possible worlds is overly broad and fails to capture various ontological modes of necessity. By drawing on Ibn Sina's modality and engaging the reflections of Leftow and Craig, I showed that one must distinguish logical necessity and ontological necessity. The former necessity describes existence across all possible worlds, but the latter differentiates necessary existence in itself from necessary existence through another—as expounded by Ibn Sina. What is necessary through another is contingent or possible in itself and always requires a cause in order to exist. On this view, there are at least three levels of "necessary beings"—God (necessary in itself), the Neoplatonic Intellects and Souls (eternal and necessary through another), and temporal existents (actualized and necessary through another). As it turns out, analytic theologians like Craig concede the cogency of this distinction.

Second, when we reconsidered the modal collapse argument using a more finely-grained modality derived from Islamic philosophy, we see that a modal collapse where everything becomes necessary *qua* existing in all possible worlds does not actually entail a modal collapse of God and created beings. Both God, who alone is necessary in Himself, and created beings, who are necessary through another, register as existing in all possible worlds, but the ontological distinction between God and created

existence remains. This is because created existence (both eternal and temporal), although it is logically necessary and entailed by God's existence, is essentially contingent, existentially poor, and ontologically dependent upon God.

Third, I demonstrated that the acceptance of a modal collapse, where God does not refrain from creating this universe, does not compromise God's freedom and aseity. This is because the Islamic philosophers, in a manner similar to Christian theologians like Jonathan Edwards, framed God's freedom as the ability to bring about whatever He chooses and refrain from whatever He does not choose. This account of divine freedom does not require the "ability to refrain and do otherwise" to which libertarian theologians subscribe. Therefore, for the Islamic philosophers Sijistani and Ibn Sina, God's will does not deliberate among alternative possibilities because it is a perfect will that reflects the absolute necessity of God's essence. The will of God, on this Islamic view, is essentially directed towards the actualization of pure goodness, due to which God eternally wills the existence of a perfect contingent being called the First Intellect.

Fourthly, we showed that a libertarian view of God's will and contingent intentions is untenable and forces one to abandon the PSR and accept brute contingency. To suppose that God makes libertarian "free choices" entails that there is no sufficient explanation or reason to account for why God makes one contingent choice as opposed to another. Even if God and His necessary attributes are identical across possible worlds, a range of contingent effects can obtain without any preponderance for one contingent effect over another. Honest libertarian theists propose that the contingent effect of a libertarian God partially serves as its own explanation—a clear admission of self-explanation and brute contingency. Once this self-explained or brute contingency is conceded, the contingency argument for theism is undermined and brute contingencies abound. Therefore, both classical theists and complex theists should reject libertarian models of God's will and instead opt for a necessitarian model of divine will along the lines of the Islamic philosophers and certain Christian theologians.

The modal collapse argument, far from being a tough pill for the classical theist to swallow, is actually an inoculation against the far greater problem of brute contingency. All theists should accept and integrate a necessitarian view of God's simplicity and will into their worldview as a matter of necessity.

REFERENCES

- Cohoe, Caleb. 2020. "Accounting for the Whole: Why Pantheism is on Metaphysical Par with Complex Theism". *Faith and Philosophy* 37 (2): 202-219.
- Craig, William Lane. 2014. "Necessity and the Argument from Contingency". The Good Book Blog. Talbot School of Theology. Accessed March 21, 2022. <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2014/necessity-and-the-argument-from-contingency/>
- . 2016. "Necessary but Dependent Beings?". The Good Book Blog. Talbot School of Theology. Accessed March 21, 2022. <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2016/necessary-but-dependent-beings/>
- Crisp, Oliver D. 2012. *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, Brian. 1980. "The Concept of Divine Necessity". *New Blackfriars* 61: 486-496.
- De Haan, Daniel D. 2020. *Necessary Existence and the Doctrine of Being in Avicenna's Metaphysics of the Healing*. Boston: Brill.
- Fakhry, Omar. 2021. "Another Look at the Modal Collapse Argument". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 13 (1): 1-23.
- Fine, Kit. 1995. "Ontological Dependence". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 95: 269-290.
- Fisk, Philip John. 2020. "Que Sera, sera". In *Jonathan Edwards within the Enlightenment*, edited by John T. Lowe and Daniel N. Gullotta, 283-298. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Khusraw, Nasir-i. 1999. *Knowledge and Liberation*, edited and translated by Faquir Muhammad Hunzai. London: Institute of Ismaili Studies.
- Leftow, Brian. 1989. "A Leibnizian Cosmological Argument". *Philosophical Studies* 57: 135-155.
- McGinnis, Jon, and Anthony Ruffus. "Willful Understanding: Avicenna's Philosophy of Action and Theory of Will". *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 92 (2): 160-195.
- Moreland, J. P., and William Lane Craig. 2009. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Mullins, Ryan. 2013. "Simply Impossible: A Case Against Divine Simplicity". *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7: 181-203.
- . 2016. "The Difficulty with Demarcating Pantheism". *Sophia* 55: 325-346.

- Mullins, Ryan and Shannon Eugene Bryd. 2022. "Divine Simplicity and Modal Collapse: A Persistent Problem". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 14 (3): 21-52.
<https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.2022.3414>
- Nemes, Steven. 2020. "Divine Simplicity does not entail modal collapse". In *Roses and Reasons: Philosophical Essays*, edited by Carlos Frederico Calbet and Silveria Alin Tat, 101-120. Bucuresti: Eikon.
- Oppy, Graham. 2006. *Philosophical Perspectives on Infinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pedersen, Daniel J., and Christopher Lilley. 2022. "Divine Simplicity, God's Freedom, and the Supposed Problem of Modal Collapse". *Journal of Reformed Theology* 16: 127-147.
- Pruss, Alexander R., and Joshua L. Rasmussen. 2018. *Necessary Existence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rahman, Fazlur. 1975. *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra Shirazi*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Rasmussen, Joshua L. 2010. "Cosmological Arguments from Contingency". *Philosophy Compass* 5 (9): 806-819.
- Richardson, Kara. 2014. "Avicenna and the Principle of Sufficient Reason". *The Review of Metaphysics* 67 (4): 743-768.
- Rogers, Katherin. 1996. "The Traditional Doctrine of Divine Simplicity". *Religious Studies* 32 (2): 165-186.
- Rdzak, Brandon. "The Principle of Sufficient Reason and Libertarianism". 2022. *Philosophia* 50 (3): 201-216.
- Shakespeare, Steven. 2018. "The unconditioned in philosophy of religion". *Palgrave Communications* 4 (118): 1-11.
- Sijistani, Abu Ya'qub Ishaq b. Ahmad. 2011. *The Book of the Keys to the Kingdom*, edited by Ismail K. Poonawala. Tunis: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami.
- Schmid, Joseph C. 2022a. "The Fruitful Death of Modal Collapse Arguments". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 91 (1): 3-22.
- . 2022b. "From Modal Collapse to Providential Collapse". *Philosophia*: 1-23.
- Tomaszewski, Christopher. 2019. "Collapsing the Modal Collapse Argument: On an Invalid Argument Against Divine Simplicity". *Analysis* 79 (2): 275-284.

