

***THE ACT OF NOT CREATING:
GOD AND THE CONCEPT OF ADVERTENT OMISSIONS***

Paul Groarke

I. INTRODUCTION

The following paper has its roots in my belief that the law provides an abundant source of distinctions which may be helpful in philosophical discourse.¹ This extends beyond ethical and epistemological issues, into more abstract areas like metaphysics. The paper itself was prompted by an exchange between Lawrence Dewan and Leslie Armour at a symposium on “The Nature of Metaphysics,” organised by the Canadian Jacques Maritain Association, in Sherbrooke, Quebec in May 1999.

The essentials of the exchange are relatively simple. Leslie Armour gave a paper entitled “Agents, Causes, and Explanations: The Idea of a Metaphysical System,”² in which he discussed the subject of design in metaphysics. There is more choice in this, perhaps, than we generally acknowledge. But his principal argument seemed to be that all metaphysical systems come up against the brute fact of unintelligibility. There are no ultimate answers and metaphysics must content itself with the task of elucidating the nature of reality.

It is for metaphysics to explain the concept of cause, for example, which is essential to our understanding of the world. Armour disputed Thomas Nagel’s statement that the idea of ‘agent cause’ is unintelligible. This gets it the wrong way around:

When people decide to raise their arms, they do. What would be unintelligible would be the case in which my arm stayed down and there was absolutely nothing wrong with me. Indeed, if I go to the doctor and say “I’m very troubled as a philosopher

¹ I would like to thank Jason West for his comments on this paper.

² Later published in *Approaches to Metaphysics*, ed. William Sweet, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004, pp. 181-207.

because every time I decide to raise my arm it goes up”, He *may* say “that’s a problem only philosopher’s have”. He may also suggest that I should see a psychiatrist.³

The notion of cause is essential, in any meaningful explanation of the world. The world is unintelligible without it.

The assumptions of ordinary life provide the rudimentary tenets of any metaphysics. The world which we confront has objects. “On the other side are agents.”⁴ Causality, he argued, is really intelligible only in the context of agents. This brings in the notion of necessity, moreover, which is philosophically difficult but relatively easy to illustrate. At the very least, our ability to explain the world suffers considerable damage without it.

Armour writes that the “scientific” view of the world does not allow for agents. It may nevertheless be possible to reconcile the scientific explanation of the world with an ontological one. The notion of complex properties is broad enough to accommodate both views.

That is, if the correct description of the world does not consist of properties designatable as P, Q, R, S, and so on, but rather, in some cases at least, of properties designatable as $P \vee Q$ or even of $P \vee Q \vee R$ and, of course, as much more sophisticated complexities, then we have a world which has the kind of structure to which ordinary scientific laws can apply and yet which is open to the actions of agents.⁵

On this view, agents are “continuants”, which pin the pieces of the scientific world in an interlocking whole.

Science cannot provide the animating principle that explains either the being of things, or the interactions between them.

The laws of the universe depend upon its having the options that it does indeed have.

They cannot explain which options are exercised or, indeed, that any options get exercised at all.⁶

If events actually happen in the world, there must be some reason or cause, and the natural inclination is to ascribe this to God.

It is Armour’s view of God that led to his exchange with Father Dewan. If God is being in itself and infinite, God provides the source of finite things. This raises the question of creation.

³ Armour, “Agents, Causes, and Explanations,” p. 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

We must, it seems to me, follow William Temple [in *Christus Veritas*] and say that the “universe is necessary to God. Being God He must create.”⁷

This is where we find the cause of things, Armour suggested, and the source of a satisfying metaphysical explanation of the world.

Lawrence Dewan was not convinced. He insisted that God could choose to create the world. Or not create the world. “Omitting is doing”, he asserted.⁸ I was impressed by his comment, which struck me as legally correct. Armour’s argument seemed to be of the form: since God necessarily acts, doing is an essential aspect of God. It follows that God must create the world. This does not hold, if God’s omission can be characterized as a form of doing. In that case, not creating the world is as much an act as creating the world. It is therefore sufficient to satisfy the essential nature of God.

II. THE HISTORICAL DISPUTE

The disagreement between Armour and Dewan is only one exchange in a historical dispute as to whether God must create the world.⁹ This divides into two questions: one is whether God is required to create the existing world; the other, more fundamental question, is whether God is required to create any world at all. The debate regarding the second question apparently originates in the claim, by Pseudo Dionysius, that the good is naturally diffusive of itself. Some philosophers have inferred that the perfect good must communicate its goodness in the creation of others. Leibniz goes further, rather famously, and says that God must do so in the most perfect way. The opposing argument seems to be that this is an imprudent restriction on the power and generosity of God, which is entirely unchecked.

The ‘necessitarian’ view

The ‘necessitarian’ view holds, in keeping with Armour, that God must create the world. There is a convenient account of this position in Norman Kretzmann’s article “Why Would God Create Anything at All?”¹⁰ There, Kretzmann traces the

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 204. The reference is to William Temple, *Christus Veritas*, London: Macmillan, 1924, at p. 275.

⁸ This is from my notes of the exchange.

⁹ Dewan has published at least two papers in which he examines Aquinas’ analysis of the controversy. See Lawrence Dewan, O.P., “St. Thomas, God’s Goodness, and God’s Morality”, *The Modern Schoolman*, 70 (1992): 45-51 and Dewan’s Critical Notice of Norman Kretzmann’s book, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas’s Natural Theology Summa Contra Gentiles I*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, in *Eidos*, 13 (1996): 97-121.

¹⁰ Norman Kretzmann, “A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything

philosophical origins of the view to a passage in Plato's *Timaeus*: "For him who is most good *it neither was nor is permissible* to do anything other than what is most beautiful."¹¹ The underlying idea seems to be that the idea of God is incomplete, without a creation that shares in the goodness of the Creator.

This idea was developed by the later Platonists, who argued that:

it is part of the essence of goodness to give rise to being and goodness – in other words, that the existence of a world is an inevitable consequence of God's perfect goodness rather than the result of a freely chosen action of his.¹²

This is expressed in the Dionysian principle: "Goodness is by its very nature diffusive of itself and (thereby) of being."¹³ Aquinas and the medievals apparently accepted this principle, without adopting the thesis of necessity.

Kretzmann argues that the principle of diffusion applies to God.

. . . I would then want to go on to urge . . . that God's bringing into existence something other than himself is among "those things which the essential nature of his goodness includes."

In other words, God is constrained by the fact that God cannot be other than good. This leads Kretzmann to argue that God may have the freedom to will, without the freedom to choose.

Although it couldn't be said on the basis of this revision that God is *free to choose* whether or not to create, it could consistently be said that God *freely, although necessarily, wills* the existence of something besides himself.¹⁴

This, he suggests, may be enough to resolve the dispute.

Armour's argument is different than Kretzmann's, in some sense. Its fundamental tenet seems to be that God cannot be other than God. And as the prime mover and first cause, on the Thomistic view, God is pure being and must act. God must 'do', a statement that requires the creation of some world. There are a number of reasons why a God who neglects to create – *simpliciter* – is not a comprehensible conception. Armour implies, at least, that the idea of God loses its meaning in the metaphysical account of causes and agents without an act of creation. On either branch of the necessitarian argument, however, the creation of the world is a necessary, given the properties of God and the natural order of things.

at All?", in *Being and goodness: the concept of the good in metaphysics and philosophical theology*, ed. Scott MacDonald, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991, pp. 208-228.

¹¹*Timaeus* 29E – 30B, as quoted in Kretzmann, p. 214.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

The liberal account

The opposing account of creation holds that the creation of the world is completely gratuitous. Kretzmann calls this the ‘libertarian view’. These kinds of explanations:

. . . deny that God is essentially productive and insist that God could have been absolutely perfect without being a creator. Such libertarian explanations may or may not go on to try to say why God freely chooses to create.¹⁵

This emphasizes God’s generosity in creating the world, which requires an act of will. Creation is the prime example of God’s liberality, precisely because it is unnecessary.

Aquinas champions the liberal account, though Kretzmann suggests that he is inconsistent in his views. Lawrence Dewan has defended the Thomistic position and criticized Kretzmann for postulating a larger world that includes God and created beings. There is no world, Dewan writes, “which includes God, with or without other beings.”¹⁶

It is wrong to simply say that God exists: God does not “have being” in the usual sense and does not “participate” in the being enjoyed by created things.¹⁷ God is radically different than all other beings because the existence of God does not depend upon universal being. It is universal being that depends on God.

The nature of God is that of a final cause, which provides the ‘end’ to which other things aspire.

We call the supreme good an “end” precisely inasmuch as it provides an excuse for the existence of another; the supreme good is “worth reproducing.” However, since the way the supreme good provides an excuse for existence for this other mode of being involves *not at all* the aspect: “unless this other being exists, the supreme good will be incomplete,” it follows that the mode of goodness of the derivative being is precisely that of “*optional* good,” not “*necessary* good.”¹⁸

The contrast between “divine and created modes of being and goodness” is stark, Dewan writes, and does not allow us to draw inferences from the nature of creation. This makes “all divine choice entirely gratuitous and, indeed, the summit of exemplary virtue.”¹⁹

This takes us into more difficult areas, which deserve their own examination. Dewan writes elsewhere that the technicalities of the position taken by Aquinas

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

¹⁶ Dewan, Critical Notice, p. 111.

¹⁷ See Dewan’s quote from Aquinas’ *In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus exposito* at *ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁹ Dewan, “God’s Goodness”, p. 51.

are reasonably precise: his essential position is that there is nothing in the divine intellect or the divine will which would restrict God to “definite effects”.²⁰ The real focus of the debate, however, appears to lie in the moral or obligatory aspects of the historical discussion. For Aquinas, this raises a question of *debitum* or justice, which consists of giving something its due. There are different degrees of *debitum*, however, which drain the word of its obligatory connotations.

Aquinas distinguishes between a “legal” and “moral” *debitum* in the *Summa*, which allows him to argue that something may be morally just but legally unnecessary.

The other *debitum* is necessary as contributing to greater goodness [*honestatem*], without which, nevertheless, goodness can be preserved. And this sort of *debitum* is respected by [the virtues of] *liberality*, *affability* or friendliness, and others of that kind.²¹

This contains the answer to the problem. Aquinas argues that:

. . . liberality, though it does not look to a *legal* debt, as justice does, nevertheless looks to a sort of moral debt, which is seen as something *appropriate to oneself* [*ex quadam ipsius decentia*], not as something we are *obliged* to give to another. Hence, he says, liberality has the *minimum* of the aspect of something “owed,” or what one “ought” to do. Thus, we watch as liberality and justice (in this wider sense) merge.²²

This divests the act of creation of necessity, while preserving its moral appropriateness.

Kretzmann and Dewan disagree as to the implications of the principle that goodness is essentially diffusive. Dewan quotes a passage from the *Summa*, which illustrates the varied nature of this diffusion:

For the communication of perfections, absolutely considered, pertains to goodness, as was shown earlier. But inasmuch as the perfections are given to things by God in function of [the things’] own proportion, it pertains to justice, as was said above. But inasmuch as he does not confer perfections on things because of his own need [utilitatem], but entirely because of his own goodness, it pertains to liberality. But inasmuch as the perfections given to things by God expel every defect, it pertains to mercy. (ST 1.21.3; 151A4-20, Dewan’s italics)

It follows that Aquinas argues his way out of the matter by holding that is fitting for God to create the world. It does not follow that God is obliged to create it.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46. This raises a subsidiary problem relating to the nature of the infinite, since Aquinas essentially rejects Aristotle’s conception of *apeiron*, which postulates unlimited but definite effects.

²¹ *Summa Theologica*, 2-2.80 (1828a 29-36), as quoted and translated by Dewan, *ibid.*, p. 50.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 51. The reference is to the *Summa*, 2-2.117.5 *ad* 1.

III. A LEGAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

This emphasizes the theological side of the debate. It may or may not present difficulties for Armour's metaphysics. The question is whether Dewan's account robs his metaphysical system of the rigour that it needs, if it is to provide a compelling account of the material world. Ideally, one wants a creation that is entirely gratuitous, yet invested with the necessity that characterizes scientific laws and gives full play to the principle that the good is diffusive of itself. In the rest of the paper, I suggest that the legal concept of an act is sufficient to reconcile the views advanced on both sides of the debate. Before advancing such an argument, however, it is necessary to consider the law of omissions.

The real controversy between the liberal and necessitarian accounts seems to lie in the possibility that God does not create the world. It is this inaction that requires analysis. Because the argument from necessity is essentially that God cannot "not create" the world. The issue between the two sides is accordingly whether the choice between creating and not creating constitutes a meaningful choice.

Anyone familiar with the common law will know that the notion of omissions has troubled the law. The English jurisprudence, at least, rests on the idea that we attract legal responsibility for our acts because we knowingly commit them. This is said in a diluted sense, and merely requires some knowledge of the consequences that may occur as a result.²³ It nevertheless remains a basic principle of liability.

The law of negligence has no application in a theological context. Nevertheless, it arose out of the recognition that the failure to do something may provide a compelling ground for liability. The law generally solves this problem by investing individuals with a duty of care, which requires them to protect others from the adverse consequences of their conduct. This holds a defendant liable in damages if the consequences to a plaintiff were reasonably foreseeable.

The concept of negligence has been extended to the criminal law, where the moral issues come to the surface. What are we to do, for example, with parents who do not feed their children? Like the civil law, the criminal law solves this kind of problem by declaring that parents have a legal duty to provide the necessities of life to their children. The failure to do so accordingly constitutes a culpable omission, which attracts criminal liability.²⁴

²³ So that in the civil and criminal law, recklessness or wilful blindness is sufficient. But of course these concepts cannot be applied to God.

²⁴ The word "omission", at least legally, implies a duty. See the reference to *Canadian Northern Railway* (1913), 12 D.L.R. 402 (Man. C.A.) , at 405, in *Words & Phrases*

There is an important distinction here, however. Although most parents who do not feed their children will be culpable, some will be morally blameless and entitled to an acquittal. There is a difference between the parent who simply does not feed a child – the parent may be dying or insane – and the parent who knowingly omits to do so. The common law accordingly distinguishes between advertent and inadvertent omissions.

In *Peda v. The Queen*, [1969] S.C.R. 905, for example, at pp. 919-20, Pigeon J. comments on the meaning that should be attributed to the word “negligence” in the criminal law.

Because negligence in the usual language includes both advertent and inadvertent negligence, it is obvious that in charging a jury on an indictment for “criminal negligence” a judge must in some way explain adequately the kind of negligence that is criminal and make it clear, but not necessarily in those words, that inadvertent negligence is not criminal.²⁵

For another case that makes use of the same distinction, see *R. v. Finlay* [1993] 3 S.C.R. 103, which deals with whether a criminal offence requiring “mere negligence” contravened the principles of fundamental justice in section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The primary purpose of such a conception is to supply the *mens rea* needed to substantiate an offence. The person who omits, advertently, has chosen not to act. He is therefore held, in a positive sense, to have “committed” an act.

The legal issue may be responsibility but the philosophical issue is cause. A person who does not do something, advertently, has legally caused whatever happens as a consequence. There is a subsidiary issue with regard to the remoteness of the consequences, but we can assume that the omission is near enough to the consequences to be judged a principal or proximate cause. It is a rough expression of the distinction but not terribly inaccurate to say that by not

Judicially Defined in Canadian Courts and Tribunals, Scarborough, ON: Carswell, 1993, under “Omission”: “The word ‘omission’ means the failure to do something which it is one’s duty to do, which a reasonable man would do.”

²⁵ This passage was quoted, with approval, by Madam Justice Wilson in *Her Majesty the Queen v. Tutton* [1989] 1 S.C.R. 1392, at p. 1405.

For a rather nuanced discussion of the difference between a civil and a criminal standard of negligence, see *R. v. Gosset*, [1993] 3 S.C.R. 76, S.C.J. No. 88 (QL). And see the passage at paragraph 28: “What the Parliament of Canada has done is to define ‘advertent negligence’ as a crime under ss. 191(1) and 221(1) [now ss. 219(1) and 249(1)]. It has not touched ‘inadvertent negligence’ . . . and until Parliament chooses to define it in the *Criminal Code* as ‘crime’, it is not crime.”

doing something, inadvertently, we allow events to happen. By not doing something, advertently, we cause them to happen.

It is true that the situation is different when we speak about God, since God cannot be subjected to legal duties. This seems to be the concern, moreover, that Aquinas is dealing with in distinguishing between legal obligations and gratuitous moral acts. But the important observation is that there is a clear distinction between advertently and inadvertently omitting. The fundamental point is that an advertent omission constitutes as much of an act as a positive personal act.

The question of what does not happen may be more difficult. It seems philosophically treacherous to say that a person's inaction "causes" what does *not* occur. This is a problem that comes to the fore in the instance of God, however, and is dealt with better in the theological context.

IV. THE LEGAL NATURE OF DIVINE OMISSIONS

The significant question is whether the distinction between advertent and inadvertent omissions is of assistance, in determining whether God must legally create? There are two preliminary remarks that seem helpful. The first is that the distinction raises the question of foreseeability. A person who does not do something, advertently, has either foreseen the consequences of his inaction or should have done so. The case of God is fundamentally different: since God is omniscient, it follows that God's inaction is always advertent.²⁶

The second remark seems uncontroversial. It is merely that God has a choice in creating or not creating. This is crucial: the law ascribes causality to someone who advertently omits to do something by attributing some choice to such a person. This rests on the assumption that the person in question has the power to determine whether certain events occur. But there is no issue here, if God is omnipotent. Unlike a human actor, God is entirely free to create or not create the world. It follows that God must choose.

This sets out the problem neatly. The choice between creating and not creating the world is not a choice between acting and – in some passive sense – not acting. The inaction of God is advertent and if God does not create the world, it is as much of a legal act as the act of creating the world. As Lawrence Dewan put it: in the instance of God, "omitting is doing." It follows that God can be described as the legal cause of whatever occurs – or does not occur – as a consequence.

²⁶ This statement seems relatively weak, legally, and it might be possible to describe the inaction of God as overtly intentional.

There are linguistic difficulties here and it seems better to resist the temptation to say that God has “caused” what does not exist. It is preferable to say merely that God has not created – and has therefore *chosen* not to cause whatever would occur as a consequence. The point is that we cannot speak outside of cause in the instance of God, who is all knowing and all powerful. It is notable that language takes on a different import in the context of a divine actor: if we say that God has “not” caused what does not exist, for example, we still seem to have imputed a causal role to God.

This changes the nature of the problem. Because it means that God’s choice to create the world is a choice between two positive acts: essentially to do A or B. The difference is that this eliminates the possibility of the deity adopting one alternative or the other without somehow choosing it. This is where the “must” appears to assert itself. In creating or not creating the world, God must choose between two acts, rather than between acting and not acting. There are no other options and, in either case, God is a legal cause.

This poses a different problem than the one that is usually considered, theologically, since it merely requires an explanation as to why God chooses one act over the other. This is where the argument that it is in the nature of goodness to diffuse itself comes into play. Given a choice between creation and some prevailing lack, the necessitarian argument is that God would choose to create. Always, and without question. Because there is a goodness in such an act, which is in keeping with the nature and generosity of God.

On the main issue, it follows that Armour is right in arguing that God must act. But this does not deprive the competing position of its central claim. Because it remains true that the creation of the world is entirely unnecessary. It would be presumptuous to say that God is at fault if God does not create the world. There are no duties here: God may act or not act, but in either case, God acts or does not act gratuitously. The liberality of God consists of the choice to create: not out of necessity, but out of the goodness of God. This is the divine generosity of the Creator. There is nevertheless a sense, on the legal side, in which the creation of the world is necessary, precisely because the exercise of the divine choice requires it.

The logic of this may be delicate, for other reasons. God is not in the position of a human actor, who may not be kind or merciful because he has other things on his mind. God has the complete freedom to act in accordance with the good. This does not deprive creation of its meritorious character, however, since God has no personal interest in the creation of the world. God does not receive an advantage or benefit, in creating the world, and remains infinite in capacity and merit. The act of God in creating the world is only a benefit to what is created.

It is a gift in the fullest sense. There is nothing in this – to put it colloquially – for God.

There is, it is true, a speculative element in any claim that God might “not create” the world. Because we can say with complete certainty that God would always create the world. There is no reason to construe this as a restriction on God’s capacity, however. The positive exercise of a negative choice cannot be construed as an inability. It is a mistake to assume that God must do something merely because God chooses not to act otherwise. This does not follow, any more than my choice to sing, because I want to sing, establishes that I have to sing.

This seems to resolve the liberal and necessitarian arguments. There is a sense in which it can be said that God must create the world. Its creation is nevertheless gratuitous. We appear to find ourselves in the situation that the world is necessary, given the voluntary exercise of God’s will, but entirely optional in spite of it. Words can be quite misleading and the “must” that arises in this context seems to be an aspect of our own reasoning. Since a volitional being, acting in a generous and enlightened manner, would choose to create the world, we *must* conclude that God would create the world.

V. ANALOGIES

It is possible to think of analogies, however incomplete they may be. Consider a game of cards in which a player has two choices: she can request another card or not request another card. It seems evident that the inaction of such a player is advertent: “not taking a card” is as much of a legal act as taking a card. Now assume that she chooses the card. The argument from advertence is that she has freely done so. There is no sense in which she is obliged to play the card. The fact that she chooses the best move, in accordance with his knowledge of the game, does not restrict his ability to do otherwise.

There is a certain degree of compulsion in this example, which comes from the decision to play the game. The rules of the game compel the player, in some sense, to make a choice. But the prerogative to decide remains with the player. The interesting feature of the example is that a player who knows the deck and the likely choices of the other players will choose the most appropriate move. The fact that the move is necessary – if she is to play the best game possible – does not impinge upon her freedom of choice.

In order to understand the theological issue properly, we probably need to take the example further and postulate a player who has no personal interest in the game. She plays merely because it benefits the other players. She exercises her rectitude – the equivalent of goodness – for the sake of rectitude alone. Such a player might be described as generous in the theological sense. The limitations

in the example do not detract from the main point, which is simply that a good player who knows the deck and the players will necessarily choose the best course of action.²⁷ This does not undermine the voluntary nature of her act in doing so.

The example can be taken further, since the single act of taking a card will determine what cards are available to other players. If the player knows the entire deck of cards and the choices that other players will make, her act can probably be described as the cause of what occurs in the rest of the game. The choice that she makes will determine how the game proceeds in a remarkably rigorous way, given the rules of the game and the choices of the players.

This is the kind of principle that Armour wants included in his metaphysical system. The point is that the player's act in playing a card ties the entire game together in a single causal chain, in the same way that scientific laws determine what occurs within the created world. It is interesting that we seem to be able to say that the player's choice determines the individual choices of the other players, without depriving the other players of their own choices. It is only natural to wonder whether the logic of this takes us in the same direction as Leibniz, who argued that God has created the best of possible worlds.

This raises issues with respect to the nature of the world, however, and God's participation in it. If necessity enters into the problem of creation, it is merely because God must act in a manner that creates the present universe or does not create it. Or in a manner that creates other universes. The metaphysical point, in each case, is that God *necessarily* exercises a choice. This requires a choice between discrete options, unless we espouse a radical omnipotence that takes us into other issues altogether.²⁸

This seems to provide the rigor that Armour is looking for in a metaphysical system, without interfering with the position on the other side. Dewan and Aquinas are right, since the creation of the universe is entirely a matter of choice. There is no legal *debitum* here. There is nevertheless a sense in which the choice to create is foreordained: since the inactions of God are advertent, God is essentially presented with a choice between two acts. This is a condition of being God and a way that God differs from other animations. Given such a choice, it follows that God will choose the higher act and create. This is a product of the knowledge and goodness of God.

²⁷ For one thing, God exists outside the world. Dewan also insists that God is a final cause.

²⁸ Which Louis Groarke disputes in "Reconsidering Absolute Omnipotence," *The Heythrop Journal*, 42 (2000): 13-25.

The pivotal question deserves repeating. Do we impugn the power of God, in saying that God faces a choice between two acts and must do one or the other? The answer is apparently no: we cannot say that God has the capacity to choose without postulating that there are alternatives from which the choice can be made. This is a condition of the act of choosing, which is unintelligible without the existence of such choices. The nature of God is such that we can confidently say that all alternatives are available to God. It is this omnipotence, in point of fact, that requires that one be chosen.

**St. Thomas University
Fredericton, NB**