

Non-Linear Simultaneity and Radical Sovereignty: A Synthesis of Strong Occasionalism Through Category Theory and Transfinite Axiology

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Abstract

The Leibnizian theodicy, justifying the actual world as the best of all possible worlds via the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), subjects divine sovereignty to an external axiological calculus. This paper departs decisively from this framework. We argue that divine creative choice is not an optimization among commensurable worlds, but a sovereign selection from among axiologically incommensurable possibilities. We formalize this through a synthesis of Cantorian set theory and Category Theory. First, we model divine knowledge as a transfinite manifold, establishing radical equilibrium freedom. Second, we define three world-types—redemptive struggle (W_1), perfect obedience (W_2), immanent virtue (W_3)—as objects in distinct, non-isomorphic categories, demonstrating their categorical and thus axiological incommensurability. Third, we argue God's will, identical with His intellect in a simple, eternal act, chooses one category via spontaneous fidelity to His agapic essence. The logical consequence is Strong Occasionalism: God must be the immediate cause of all states of affairs, as secondary causality would introduce a competing sufficient reason. We defend this against the trilemma of regularity, evil, and agency, reinterpreting moral responsibility through a categorical theory of acquisition (kasb), offering a novel agency solution. The result is a coherent theodicy where the actual world is not the “best possible” but the sovereignly willed manifestation of a specific, incommensurable form of divine love.

Keywords: Divine Sovereignty, Theodicy, Occasionalism, Category Theory, Axiological Incommensurability, Divine Freedom, Possible Worlds, Philosophical Theology.

Author Contribution Statement

[Yohanes]: As the sole architect of this research, I am responsible for the **Conceptualization** and **Original Synthesis** of the thesis. This includes the deconstruction of Leibnizian optimization, the application of Category Theory to divine sovereignty, and the novel reinterpretation of *kasb* within Strong Occasionalism. I provided the overarching logical framework, specific theological insights, and the interdisciplinary direction of the paper. I have reviewed and verified all formal proofs and philosophical arguments presented herein.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

Statement on AI Usage: During the preparation of this manuscript, the author utilized generative AI (Gemini) as a **writing and drafting assistant**. The AI was employed to translate the author's original conceptual frameworks into formal academic prose, organize the manuscript structure, and assist in the technical phrasing of mathematical and theological terminology.

Human Oversight & Intellectual Ownership:

All core ideas, including the thesis of axiological incommensurability and the synthesis of Cantorian manifolds with Occasionalism, were **conceived solely by the human author**. The AI did not generate independent hypotheses or conclusions; it functioned under the strict supervision and specific instruction of the author. The author remains fully accountable for the content, accuracy, and intellectual integrity of the work.

1. Introduction

The theological coherence of the Leibnizian assertion that ours is the Best of All Possible Worlds hinges on the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), which demands a rational ground for God's creative act (Leibniz, 1710). This framework, however, precipitates a critical dilemma: it subjects divine sovereignty to an external, pre-existing axiological order. If a "best" world is discernible by divine intellect prior to volition, then God's will appears bound by a calculus external to His nature—a conclusion that clashes with classical theism's commitment to divine aseity and *causa sui* (Rogers, 2000). Contemporary efforts to mitigate this tension, such as framing the "best" as "most fitting to divine wisdom" (Adams, 1972) or as the satisfaction of a holistic divine preference (Zagzebski, 2007), remain within a comparative paradigm. They seek to explain God's specific choice rather than interrogate the preconditions of choice itself. This paper identifies a gap in this literature: the need for a metaphysical account that takes the radical implications of divine aseity for value theory seriously, moving beyond optimization to a theology of sovereign selection.

Our core thesis is that the Leibnizian impasse is best dissolved not by perfecting the comparative calculus, but by demonstrating the axiological incommensurability of salient possible worlds. We propose three such worlds: one of redemptive struggle (W1), one of perfect created obedience (W2), and one of immanent secular virtue (W3). Crucially, we do not posit their incommensurability as an axiomatic premise, but as a conclusion to be formally derived. This paper argues that the values definitive of each world—redemptive courage, flawless harmony, autonomous altruism—inhabit categorically distinct domains, rendering any linear ranking ("best," "second best") metaphysically incoherent. Consequently, God's choice among them is not an act of optimization, but a non-arbitrary, sovereign act of self-expression, selecting from a state of genuine parity among incomparable goods.

To secure this argument, we deploy a novel methodological synthesis of analytic theology and formal logic. This synthesis is not ornamental but constitutive, as standard philosophical language lacks the precision to rigorously delineate incommensurable value structures. We acknowledge, however, that bridging formal mathematical results to substantive axiological claims requires careful philosophical justification—a task undertaken explicitly in Stage II. The argument unfolds in three stages, each designed to pre-empt major objections.

Stage I employs Cantorian set theory to model the horizon of divine knowledge. It formalizes the state of radical, equilibrium freedom (*libertas indifferentiae*) in which God's intellect apprehends a transfinite manifold of possibilities. To structure this conception, we adapt the logical form of Doyle's two-stage model of free will¹ (Doyle, 2011). This adaptation is strictly formal, using its separation of "possibility space" from "specific choice" as a scaffold to articulate divine freedom *ad extra*, while rigorously avoiding any anthropomorphic implication of temporal deliberation.

Stage II provides the formal proof for incommensurability using Category Theory. This tool is uniquely suited to the task, as it allows us to define each world-type as an object within a distinct category (e.g., a Category of Redemption, a Category of Harmony). The proof demonstrates the absence of a structure-preserving mapping (isomorphism) between these categories. The philosophical move from this structural result to axiological incommensurability will be secured by arguing that value is intrinsically constituted by the network of relations (morphisms) within a category, a position we defend as a form of ‘structural axiology’. This formal result bridges the “is-ought” gap, transforming an intuitive claim about value into a demonstrable structural fact.

Stage III addresses the resultant challenge of arbitrariness. It examines the divine will, arguing that God’s selection is an eternal, non-linear act (*libertas spontaneitatis*) that is simultaneously absolutely free and perfectly consistent with His essential character. This grounds the choice in divine nature, distinguishing our position from voluntarism. A choice is non-arbitrary not if it is compelled by an external “best,” but if it is the necessary expression of the agent’s essence within a field of genuine incomparables.

The logical and metaphysical terminus of this three-stage argument is a refined Strong Occasionalism. If God’s sovereign will is the sole sufficient reason for actualizing one incommensurable world over others, then divine causality must be immediate and total. This inference rests on the premise that any robust secondary causality would introduce a competing sufficient reason for states of affairs, thereby violating the initial condition. Created entities and natural laws are thus not autonomous secondary causes but consistent occasions (*adatullah*) for God’s singular, sustaining action. This framework is presented not merely as a causal theory but as the necessary corollary of our axiological and volitional account.

By redefining the metaphysical conditions of divine choice, this paper reframes the Leibnizian theodicy. The actual world is not “the best” according to an independent standard. It is the best because it is the one sovereignly willed by God—the unique and necessary manifestation of a specific, incommensurable form of divine love that flows from His essence. This conclusion affirms divine sovereignty without resorting to arbitrariness, offering a coherent path out of the dilemma posed by the PSR.

2. Stage I: Aleph-Sets and the Horizon of Divine Knowledge

The foundation of our argument lies in reconceptualizing the modality of divine creative freedom. To move beyond the Leibnizian paradigm where God’s will is conceptually subsequent to the identification of a “best” world, we must first articulate a coherent model of how God relates to the totality of possibility. This stage argues that divine freedom, in its initial speculative phase, is best understood as a state of radical equilibrium—a *libertas*

indifferentiae where no single possible world is antecedently necessitated by the divine intellect. To formalize this unbounded horizon of divine knowledge, we turn to Cantorian set theory and the logic of transfinite numbers, synthesizing it with the structural insight of a two-stage model of freedom.

2.1 Divine Freedom as *Libertas Indifferentiae* and the Two-Stage Model

Classical theology has long grappled with the compatibility of divine sovereignty with genuine freedom. A dominant Leibnizian intuition suggests that a perfect divine intellect would, by necessity, perceive a singular optimal world, thereby compelling the divine will. This position, however, conflates two distinct moments: the comprehension of possibilities and the volitional act of selection. To disentangle them, we adopt the logical structure of Robert Doyle's two-stage model of free will (Doyle, 2011). In its original context, this model separates an indeterminate “generation” phase, where alternative possibilities are genuinely open, from a subsequent “selection” phase, where the agent makes a specific choice. While developed for human agency, its formal architecture provides a powerful heuristic for divine freedom *ad extra*.

Transposed to the theological realm, the model's first stage corresponds to God's *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*—the knowledge of all possible states of affairs. Critically, this stage is characterized by radical indifference (*libertas indifferentiae*). It is not that God is undecided, but that the divine intellect apprehends the entire manifold of compossibility without any antecedent weighting or ranking that would pre-determine the will (Freddoso, 1988). The second stage, to be addressed in Stage III, is the act of will (*liberum arbitrium*) that actualizes one world. This structural separation is a logical, not temporal, distinction within the eternal divine simplicity. Its purpose is to resist the Leibnizian collapse of intellect into will, thereby preserving a robust, non-necessitated conception of divine creative freedom.

2.2 The Cantorian Manifold: Modeling the Transfinite Horizon

If the first stage of divine freedom involves an unconstrained apprehension of possibilities, what is the nature and scope of this “manifold”? Georg Cantor's set theory provides the indispensable formal language. Cantor demonstrated that infinity is not a monolithic concept but comes in distinct, hierarchically ordered sizes, or cardinalities, denoted by the aleph numbers (Cantor, 1891). The set of natural numbers has cardinality aleph-null; the set of real numbers a larger infinity (aleph-one, under the Continuum Hypothesis). Crucially, for any given set, the set of all its subsets (its power set) has a strictly greater cardinality. This leads to an unending, “absolute” hierarchy of infinities.

We propose that the divine intellect's knowledge of possibilities is aptly modeled by an access to this transfinite hierarchy. The “space” of logically possible worlds is not merely a very large finite set or a single, vast infinity. It is a proper class of compossible arrangements whose structural diversity mirrors the Cantorian escalation of cardinalities. Each “world” can

be conceived as a particular, maximally consistent set of states of affairs. The totality of such worlds therefore participates in an order of complexity that is transfinitely layered.² This modeling achieves two key objectives. First, it captures the qualitative unboundedness of divine knowledge. God's intellect is not surveying a fixed, countable list but engaging with a reality whose modal complexity is intrinsically open-ended. Second, it provides a precise rebuttal to any notion that the divine intellect could perform a "complete calculation" leading to a single optimal output. In a Cantorian framework, there is no maximal or complete infinity; the horizon of the possible is essentially inexhaustible.

2.3 Synthesis: The First Stage as a State of Axiological Parity

The synthesis of the two-stage model with Cantorian set theory yields a powerful formal description of the first moment of divine freedom. God, in His *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, confronts a transfinite manifold of possible worlds ($W_1, W_2, W_3, \dots W_n$). Crucially, within the confines of this first stage—considered in isolation from the divine will—no axiological metric exists to order these worlds linearly. The Cantorian structure implies a vast diversity of formal complexity. A world whose internal consistency requires a relational framework of cardinality aleph-one is a different kind of formal construct than one fully describable at aleph-null. This structural divergence suggests that a simple, linear axiological scale may be inadequate to compare them—a possibility that will be rigorously tested and proven in the categorical framework of Stage II.³

This places God in a position of genuine axiological parity with respect to creative choice. It is a state of perfect, equilibrium freedom (*libertas aequilibrii*). The Leibnizian PSR, which demands a sufficient reason within the manifold of possibilities for choosing one world over another, finds no purchase here. The sufficient reason cannot be located in a comparative valuation of worlds, for such valuation is metaphysically impossible at this stage. The reason must instead be located entirely in the agent—in the divine will itself. Thus, the function of Stage I is to clear the conceptual ground: it demonstrates that the search for a sufficient reason in the objects of choice is futile. The only coherent location for the sufficient reason for the actual world is in the nature and act of the choosing Agent.

This conclusion directly sets the stage for the argument to come. If no comparative axiology can function at the level of divine knowledge, then any apparent "goodness" of the actual world must be a consequence of God's choice, not its cause. This prepares the necessary condition for arguing that different world-types embody fundamentally different, and incomparable, forms of goodness—a claim whose formal proof is the task of Stage II.

Thus, Stage I achieves its designated ground-clearing function. It employs Cantor's hierarchy not merely to assert infinity, but to demonstrate the radical, structured diversity of the divine horizon of possibility. This formal model justifies why a simple comparative axiology must fail at this primary level, thereby transferring the burden of proof to a more nuanced, structural analysis of value—the task of Stage II.⁴

3. Stage II: Incommensurability in Category Theory

If Stage I established the formal possibility of divine choice among a transfinite manifold of worlds, Stage II must now provide the positive argument for why that choice is not merely free, but operates among genuinely incommensurable alternatives. This stage moves from the quantitative horizon of aleph-sets to a qualitative analysis of value structures. To do this, we require a formalism capable of capturing the essence of different kinds of goodness. Category theory, the branch of mathematics concerned with structures and the relationships between them, provides the precise tools for this task. It allows us to reframe the problem of comparing possible worlds from one of degree (better/worse) to one of kind (same/different structure of value).

3.1 Conceptual Primer: Categories as Frameworks for Comparative Value

A category, in its simplest form, consists of two types of data: objects and morphisms (arrows) between objects. It is defined by the network of relationships (morphisms), not the internal constitution of its objects. The crucial philosophical insight we adopt is structural axiology: value is not a monadic property of an object but a relational feature that emerges from its position within a network of morphisms. A "good" within a given category is that which participates correctly in the web of structure-preserving transformations definitive of that category.

To elaborate: a category C is defined by objects and, for every pair, a class of morphisms that can be composed associatively, with an identity morphism for each object. This framework allows us to focus on 'how things relate' rather than 'what they are made of'. Applied to value theory, it shifts focus from intrinsic properties (which presume a universal scale) to the role an entity plays within a specific relational system. For instance, the value of 'forgiveness' is defined by its position in a network involving wrong, guilt, and reconciliation—a network that may have no analogue in a category of flawless harmony.

This approach departs from the "possible worlds" semantics of Kripke (1980) and Lewis (1986), which treat worlds as particulars compared via similarity. Our categorical framework posits that worlds of different types (W_1, W_2, W_3) are objects in different categories. The question is not about degree of similarity, but whether a structure-preserving translation—a functor—exists to map the entire relational fabric of one category into another.

3.2 Formalizing the Worlds: Three Incommensurable Categories

We now construct three distinct categories corresponding to our salient world-types. The principle guiding this construction is teleological coherence. This principle holds that to

capture a distinct form of goodness, one must model the network of purposeful actions or relations that realize that good. It is grounded in a teleological ethic (see Foot, 2001) where 'good' is understood in relation to the telos of a specific form of life or agency. Applied to divine creation, it posits that a world's axiological character is defined by the types of ends its constituent beings can pursue and realize.⁵ While alternative principles for categorizing worlds exist (e.g., a consequentialist principle based on maximizing aggregate utility), such principles already presuppose a common quantitative scale—precisely what is in question. The teleological principle is chosen because it is ontologically prior: it defines the kind of scale (or its absence) upon which any quantification would have to operate.⁶

- Category C_W1 (Redemptive Struggle):
 - Objects: Situated moral agents capable of growth, failure, and reconciliation.
 - Morphisms: Sacrificial love, defiance of evil, penitent transformation, gracious forgiveness. The redemptive act transforms brokenness into healed integrity.
 - Definitive Good & Telos: Agape as redemptive courage (reconciled relationship).
- Category C_W2 (Perfect Created Obedience):
 - Objects: Created beings in perfect harmony with the divine will.
 - Morphisms: Flawless worship, fulfillment of ordained roles, coordinated praise—each a perfect instantiation of a divine norm.
 - Definitive Good & Telos: Perfect harmony (reflection of divine glory).
- Category C_W3 (Immanent Secular Virtue):
 - Objects: Autonomous rational agents with no theological reference.
 - Morphisms: Justice based on contract, compassion from empathy, altruism from shared fate.
 - Definitive Good & Telos: Autonomy and compassion (secular eudaimonia).

The distinct structures of these categories and their relational morphisms are illustrated in the Appendix.

The critical point is that the morphisms in one category have no direct analogue in another. An act of sacrificial love (a morphism in C_W1) cannot be decomposed or reconstructed from acts of flawless obedience (C_W2) or contractual justice (C_W3). The very logic of value-realization is categorically distinct.

3.3 The Core Argument: Demonstrating Categorical Incommensurability

The formal heart of our argument lies in demonstrating that these categories are not structurally equivalent. In category theory, two categories are considered structurally the same—isomorphic—if there exists a pair of functors (structure-preserving mappings) between them that are inverses to each other. This means every object and morphism in one category can be uniquely and completely translated into the other, and vice versa, with all compositional relationships preserved.

We demonstrate that no such isomorphism exists between C_W1 , C_W2 , and C_W3 . The argument follows from the teleological definitions:

1. Any functor from C_W1 to C_W2 would need to map the morphism penitent transformation to some composite of flawless acts of worship. This is impossible because the very definition of penitence includes a prior state of failure, an object-type that does not exist in C_W2 , where the possibility of failure is excluded by the category's definition.
2. Conversely, a functor from C_W2 to C_W3 would need to translate flawless worship into a morphism of immanent altruism or justice. This fails because the intentional object of worship (the divine) is ontologically absent from C_W3 , breaking the structure-preserving requirement. The functor would map a morphism with a divine terminus to one without it, thereby failing to be faithful to the relational structure.

Since there is no isomorphism, the categories are fundamentally different kinds of value structures. They are categorically incommensurable.

3.4 Philosophical Justification: From Morphisms to Values (Structural Axiology)

One might object that this formal result only shows a difference in description, not in value. We bridge this gap through our principle of structural axiology. The objection often assumes a Platonic or intrinsic theory of value, where "goodness" is a universal property that instances approximate. We argue that within a theological context of creation *ex nihilo*, such a view is problematic. If God creates the world's fundamental relational structure, then the goods realized within it are constituted by that structure. A Platonic good existing independently of any structure would be inert and irrelevant to the specific forms of flourishing God chooses to create.⁷

Therefore, the goodness of redemptive love is not an approximation of a universal "Goodness"; it is the property of fulfilling the telos defined by the morphisms of C_W1 . The categorical incommensurability of the structures entails the axiological incommensurability of the goods they realize. To ask whether redemptive love is "better than" perfect harmony is to mistakenly assume a single, overarching categorical framework within which both can be compared. No such framework exists.

3.5 Synthesis: The Divine Choice as Selection of a Value Category

The conclusion of Stage II radically reframes the divine creative act. God's choice is the selection of an entire category of value for instantiation, not of a "best instance" from a graded set. Choosing $W1$ is choosing that redemptive love—with its struggle and cost—be the fundamental mode of created goodness. This choice is sovereign (unconstrained by cross-categorical ranking) and non-arbitrary (as an expression of God's agapic essence).

Thus, the Leibnizian PSR reaches its limit: no sufficient reason exists within the objects of

choice due to their incommensurability. The sufficient reason lies wholly in the divine subject's sovereign will. This fulfills the Introduction's promise, providing the foundation for a theology of sovereign selection.

4. Stage III: Will, Simultaneity, and Divine Consistency

Stage II demonstrated that God's creative choice is a selection among incommensurable categories of value (C_W1, C_W2, C_W3). This result, while liberating divine sovereignty from external axiological calculus, raises a formidable challenge: if there is no common measure in the objects, does not the divine will operate in a void, rendering its choice arbitrary? Stage III resolves this by articulating the unique metaphysical character of the divine will. We argue that God's choice is an eternal, simple act wherein intellect and will are identical; it is both perfectly free and perfectly consistent with His essence. This act is neither externally determined nor arbitrary, but sovereignly rational.

4.1 From Category Selection to Sovereign Volition

The conclusion of Stage II transforms the question "Why this world?" into "Why is God's creative expression of this specific kind?". The sufficient reason cannot be located in a comparative valuation of worlds, for such valuation is impossible. It must be located in the divine agent. However, this does not reduce to a brute volitional fact. The transition from the transfinite manifold of possibilities (Stage I) to the single actual world is not a temporal deliberation but the eternal, self-identical act of God being God *ad extra*. In this act, the distinction between *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* (knowledge of possibilities) and *scientia visionis* (knowledge of the actual) collapses.⁸ The divine will does not "find" a reason in the world; it imparts reason to the world by being its sole ontological ground.

4.2 The Commutative Diagram of Divine Simplicity: Scientia, Voluntas, Actus

The doctrine of divine simplicity provides the classical metaphysical framework for understanding this unity. We can model it using a conceptual commutative diagram from category theory. Let *S* represent the divine intellect's knowledge of all possible worlds, *V* represent the divine will's selection, and *A* represent the creative act (*actus essendi*) that gives existence.

In a temporal agent, the process would be sequential and non-commutative: $S \rightarrow V \rightarrow A$. In God, these are one simple reality. This can be represented by a trivial commutative diagram (see Appendix for a schematic representation).

All paths are identical. The arrow from *S* to *V* (knowledge as the "source" of volition) is the same reality as the arrow from *S* to *A* (knowledge as creative decree) and the same as the arrow from *V* to *A* (will as execution). Crucially, in the divine eternity, *S* is not a mere

catalogue of abstract possibilities but is eternally identical to the knowledge of the actual (*scientia visionis*) as the one chosen possibility. The diagram commutes because S, V, and A are not distinct moments or faculties but different descriptions of the single, eternal divine act. This formalizes the Anselmian-Thomistic insight that in God, will, intellect, and power are identical (*Monologion*, Ch. 16; *Summa Theologica* I, Q. 25, A. 1, ad 4).⁹ The divine will does not “follow” divine knowledge; it is that knowledge in its volitional aspect.

4.3 The Spontaneous Fidelity of the Divine Will

If the choice is a simple, eternal act, what grounds its specificity? The answer lies in what we term the spontaneous fidelity of the divine will (*libertas spontaneitatis*). God’s will is not constrained by external goods, but it is necessarily faithful to His internal character. To choose to instantiate C_W1 (the category of redemptive struggle) is not an arbitrary “pick” but the unique and necessary expression of a God whose essence is agapic love.

It is crucial to distinguish this from logical necessitation. Necessitation would mean that given God’s essence, He could not have chosen otherwise—a conclusion that would contradict the radical freedom established in Stage I. Spontaneous fidelity, in contrast, means that any act flowing from God’s essence will faithfully express that essence.¹⁰ The actual world (W1) is not the only possible expression, but it is the only actual expression, and it is authentically divine. God’s agape could also be expressed (faithfully) in the perfect harmony of W2 or the immanent virtue of W3, even though those expressions would reside in categorically different and incommensurable value-structures (C_W2, C_W3). The choice among these faithful expressions is utterly free, yet each choice, once made, is seen as the necessary (i.e., characterologically consistent) outcome of who God is.

4.4 Logical Coherence as the Internal Structure of the Divine Act

A potential objection arises: Does not this “fidelity” impose a limit, akin to the external calculus we rejected? The answer lies in distinguishing logical coherence from axiological constraint. The divine will, as an expression of perfect rationality, cannot choose a logically incoherent object—a world that embodies a contradiction, such as a world where God both exists and does not exist, or a world where His essential agape is expressed as capricious malice. Such “worlds” are not genuine members of the transfinite manifold of Stage I; they are impossible objects, excluded by the internal logic of the divine act itself.

This limit is not external but intrinsic to the nature of the act depicted in our commutative diagram. The logical constraint applies to the content (S, V, A) of that one simple act. It does not priorly restrict the manifold of genuine possibilities but defines the internal structure of the actualizing decree. God’s freedom is radical but not irrational; it is the freedom of a perfectly rational agent.

4.5 Synthesis: The Eternal Decree and the Path to Occasionalism

Stage III synthesizes the argument thus far. The divine creative decree is:

1. Sovereignly Free: Unconstrained by any comparative axiology (Stage I & II).
2. Eternally Simple: A non-linear, identical act of knowledge, will, and creation (the commutative diagram).
3. Non-Arbitrary: A spontaneous yet perfectly faithful expression of the divine essence.
4. Logically Coherent: Excluding only the logically impossible, which are non-entities.

Therefore, the actual world is not the “best possible” but the sovereignly expressive one. It uniquely instantiates the form of goodness—redemptive, costly love—that flows from God’s agapic essence. This account provides a robust, non-Leibnizian sufficient reason for the world: the reason is God’s own nature as expressed in His free and faithful will.

This conclusion carries a profound metaphysical implication. If God’s will is the sole sufficient reason for the specific, incommensurable world that exists, and if His act is immediate and simple (as the diagram shows), then God must be the immediate cause of every state of affairs. Any robust secondary causality would introduce a competing sufficient reason and complicate the simplicity of the divine act. The logic of our argument thus points unequivocally towards Strong Occasionalism as its causal-metaphysical correlate. We now turn to its defense.

5. Strong Occasionalism: God as the Sole Actor

The argument of the preceding stages—establishing God’s sovereign choice among incommensurable value-categories—culminates in a radical metaphysical claim about causality. If God’s will is the sole sufficient reason for the specific world that exists, and if His creative act is eternal and simple, then God must be the immediate cause of every state of affairs. This chapter defends this Strong Occasionalism by: (1) logically deducing it from our established premises, (2) situating it within and advancing beyond the historical occasionalist tradition (Al-Ghazali, Malebranche), and (3) showing how it resolves the classical trilemma of regularity, evil, and agency more coherently than its predecessors.

5.1 The Deductive Necessity: From Sovereign Simplicity to Sole Causality

The deduction proceeds via *reductio ad absurdum* from two proven premises:

- P1 (The Sole Sufficient Reason): For any state of affairs E in the actual world, the sufficient reason for E’s obtaining—given the incommensurability of world-categories—is ultimately God’s sovereign will (Stage II & III).
- P2 (The Simple Divine Act): God’s knowledge, will, and creative act are identical in a

simple, eternal decree (the commutative diagram of Stage III).

Now, assume for contradiction that there exists a genuine secondary cause C that is ontologically distinct from God and has autonomous causal efficacy in producing E. This leads to an incoherence:

1. If C is truly efficacious, then C (perhaps in conjunction with other natural conditions) becomes a sufficient reason for E. This creates a scenario where E has two sufficient reasons: God's will (P1) and C. This violates the logical principle that a sufficient reason, if truly sufficient, excludes the necessity of another coordinate sufficient reason for the same effect.
2. Alternatively, if we attempt to reconcile them by making C an instrument of God's will, we must then explain how God's simple act (P2) incorporates a distinct, mediating causal entity. This would introduce compositional complexity into the divine act, contradicting its simplicity. The divine decree would no longer be the immediate sufficient reason.

Therefore, the assumption of genuine secondary causality is false. The only coherent model is that created entities are not causes but occasions (*asbāb*) for the one, simple divine act. Every event is directly willed by God. This deductive structure shares a formal similarity with Al-Ghazali's rejection of necessary causal connection in nature (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Discussion 17). However, while Al-Ghazali's argument proceeds from divine omnipotence and the logical possibility of God intervening in any alleged natural sequence, ours is grounded in the axiological and volitional metaphysics developed in Stages I-III. Our premise is not merely that God could interrupt nature, but that God's will is the only reason nature exists as it does. This logical principle—that two genuinely sufficient reasons for the same effect are redundant or compete—finds resonance in Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles and in contemporary debates about causal overdetermination, reinforcing the rigor of our *reductio*.¹¹

5.2 Historical Positioning: Beyond Al-Ghazali and Malebranche

Strong Occasionalism has two illustrious historical proponents: Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) in the Islamic *kalām* tradition and Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) in post-Cartesian Europe. Engaging with them reveals both the depth of our tradition and the distinctive advance of our argument.

Al-Ghazali's Occasionalism is primarily a critique of the philosophers' (*falāsifa*) claim for necessary causal emanation from the First Cause. For Al-Ghazali, fire does not cause cotton to burn; it is God who creates the burning in the cotton upon the occasion of contact with fire. His argument is rooted in divine omnipotence and the contingency of all created sequences (Al-Ghazali, *Tahāfut*, 2000: 166). While powerful, this foundation can invite the charge of voluntarism—that God's actions are arbitrary, unconnected to wisdom or a coherent world-structure. Our argument pre-empts this by grounding God's action not in sheer power but in a sovereign, non-arbitrary choice among incommensurable value-structures. The regularity of

the world is not a puzzle for divine power but an expression of God's consistent will to instantiate a specific categorical good (C_W1).

Malebranche's Occasionalism emerges from different concerns: Cartesian mind-body dualism and the epistemology of ideas. For Malebranche, creatures lack causal power because (a) true causality requires a necessary connection between cause and effect, which we never perceive, and (b) only God's will can be a true cause (*Dialogues on Metaphysics*, VII). Furthermore, we see all things in God (vision in God), meaning our knowledge of causal laws is really knowledge of God's general volitions. Malebranche's foundation is thus epistemological and theological (Malebranche, 1997: 115–120). Our argument complements and deepens this by providing a metaphysical ground for why God's will must be general and immediate: because it is the sole sufficient reason for a world with a specific, incommensurable axiological structure. We move from Malebranche's "we see no necessary connection" to "there can be no competing sufficient connection."

Contemporary interpretations, such as those by Steven Nadler (2011), frame occasionalism as a "divine conservationist" theory where God's continuous creative act is causality. Our argument strongly aligns with this but adds a crucial layer: what God conserves is not a world with independent natures, but the instantiation of a chosen value-category. This axiological layer answers the "why this structure?" question that pure conservationism sometimes leaves open.

5.3 Resolving the Trilemma: Regularity, Evil, and the Seeds of Agency

Any robust occasionalism must address three canonical objections: the problem of natural regularity, the problem of evil, and the problem of human agency. Our framework provides distinctive responses that leverage our core arguments.

1. The Problem of Regularity ('Ādatullāh): If God directly causes every event, why does nature exhibit such reliable, law-like patterns? The occasionalist tradition answers with God's consistent will—His "custom" or *modus operandi* (Malebranche's *volontés générales*). Our structural axiology enriches this: the laws of nature are the consistent morphisms of the actualized value-category C_W1. The regularity of gravity or chemical bonding is not an independent principle but the faithful, repeated expression of God's will to sustain a world with the structural coherence necessary for redemptive history. It is divine consistency manifest at the level of physical relations.

2. The Problem of Evil: If God directly causes every event, is He not the direct cause of evil and suffering? This is a profound challenge. Our framework necessitates a shift in theodicy. Within the chosen category C_W1 (Redemptive Struggle), moral and natural evils are not gratuitous but are the necessary conditions for the realization of the category's definitive good: redemptive courage, forgiveness, and the overcoming of brokenness. God directly wills the state of affairs that includes suffering, but He does so as part of willing the entire

incommensurable good of C_W1—a good that cannot exist without such conditions. This moves beyond Leibniz’s “best possible world” to a “chosen kind of world” where evil is instrumental to a specific, incomparable good.

3. The Problem of Human Agency (Preview for Discussion): If God causes all acts, how are humans morally responsible? The historical tradition, especially in Islam, developed the concept of acquisition (kasb), where God creates the act and the human “acquires” it, making it their own (Al-Ghazali, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*). This concept itself is subject to interpretation, ranging from a strict occasionalist reading to more concurrentist understandings, highlighting the depth of the tradition’s engagement with the problem.¹² Our categorical framework provides a new perspective: human intentionality and choice are real patterns within the morphisms of C_W1. They are not efficacious causes, but they are real relational structures through which divine agency is channeled and moral value is constituted. A full defense of moral responsibility under this model will be developed in the Discussion (Chapter 6).

In conclusion, Strong Occasionalism emerges not as an ad-hoc causal theory but as the necessary metaphysical corollary of a theology of sovereign choice among incommensurable goods. It is historically grounded yet philosophically advanced, answering its greatest challenges by appealing to the very axiological structure that necessitated it. The world runs not on autonomous laws but on the consistent, category-specific will of God.

6. Discussion: Moral Responsibility and Theodicy

The preceding chapters have constructed a coherent metaphysics of divine sovereignty: from the transfinite horizon of possibility (Stage I), through the incommensurability of value-categories (Stage II), to the simple, sovereign will that chooses one such category (Stage III), resulting in a strong occasionalist account of causality (Stage IV). Two formidable challenges remain, which this discussion addresses: the problem of moral responsibility under occasionalism, and the final vindication of the chosen world (W1) as a coherent theodicy. We argue that our categorical framework not only resolves these challenges but transforms them, revealing moral agency as a relational structure within the chosen value-category and offering a theodicy grounded in sovereign love rather than comparative optimization.

6.1 The Problem of Moral Agency in an Occasionalist World

The challenge is stark: if God is the sole causal agent, how can human beings be morally responsible for their actions? This is not merely a theological puzzle but intersects with central debates in contemporary philosophy of action concerning free will, determinism, and the conditions for moral attribution. A hard determinist might argue that occasionalism represents the ultimate deterministic system, obliterating freedom. A libertarian would see it as denying the very possibility of agent-causation. Our task is to show how a robust notion of moral responsibility can survive—and even be illuminated by—the occasionalist premise.

The historical occasionalist tradition, particularly in Islamic theology, developed the concept of acquisition (kasb or iktisāb) to address this. Al-Ghazali explains that while God creates the act, the human agent “acquires” it, making it attributable to them (Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, 1997: 89). However, this has often been criticized as a metaphysical fiction—a mere labeling of the problem rather than a solution. Contemporary scholars like Ayman Shihadeh (2005) and M. Sait Özvarlı (2010) debate whether kasb implies a kind of concurrent causation or a purely occasionalist “appropriation” without efficacy. Our framework allows us to reinterpret kasb not as a mysterious metaphysical transaction, but as a describable structural relation within a categorical system.

6.2 A Categorical Theory of Acquisition: Kasb as Relational Morphism

We propose that moral agency under occasionalism is best understood through the lens of structural axiology and category theory. Recall that in the actualized category C_W1 (Redemptive Struggle), morphisms are acts like sacrificial love and penitent transformation. These morphisms are real patterns of relation—they are what happens in the world. Under occasionalism, the divine will is the sole efficient cause instantiating these morphisms. However, the intentional and volitional character of a human agent is not an additional cause, but an essential component of the morphism’s structure.

To elaborate: consider the morphism “agent X forgiving agent Y.” This is not merely an event of reconciliation; it is a relational structure that inherently includes X’s intentional state (a will to forgive), Y’s status as wrongdoer, and a history of injury. In category theory, the morphism is defined by its domain (X in a state of resentment) and codomain (X in a state of peace), and its specific quality as “forgiveness” is intrinsic to the arrow itself. God’s causal act is the instantiation of this entire relational complex. The human “acquisition” (kasb) is the fact that the agent’s intentional state is a constitutive part of the divinely caused morphism. The agent is not the efficient cause but is internally constitutive of the caused structure. This mirrors aspects of non-causal theories of action in contemporary philosophy, where an action is defined by its place in a web of reasons and intentions, not by a unique causal force (see Ginet, 1990; Wilson, 1989).¹³

This provides a coherent basis for moral responsibility. We hold agents responsible not because they are unmoved movers, but because their character and intentions are truth-making components of the morally significant structures (morphisms) that God actualizes. Praise and blame are evaluations of the role their constitutive intentionality plays within the value-laden network of C_W1. This approach navigates between the Scylla of libertarian agent-causation (rejected by occasionalism) and the Charybdis of hard determinism, offering a compatibilism of constitutive role.

6.3 The Vindication of the Redemptive World (W1)

The second task is to fully articulate the theodicy implicit in our system. The classical

Leibnizian question—"Is this the best of all possible worlds?"—has been replaced. The question is now: "Is this (W1) a sovereignly willed, coherent expression of divine love?" Our answer is a definitive yes, and this affirmation rests on three pillars established in our argument:

1. Axiological Incommensurability: W1 (Redemptive Struggle) is not better or worse than W2 (Perfect Harmony) or W3 (Immanent Virtue); it is a different kind of good. Therefore, God's choice of W1 is not a rejection of a superior alternative but a selection of one incomparable form of goodness among others.
2. Divine Fidelity: The choice of W1 is the necessary expression (spontaneous fidelity) of a God whose essence is agapic love. A love that is agapic is inherently self-giving, participatory, and transformative. These qualities find their fullest created analogue in a world of freedom, struggle, and redemption, not in a world of flawless but static perfection (W2) or a world of virtue untethered from its divine source (W3).
3. The Structural Role of Evil: Within C_W1, moral and natural evils are not external anomalies but necessary structural components that enable the defining morphisms of the category. Without the possibility of betrayal, there is no forgiveness; without the reality of suffering, there is no sacrificial courage; without finitude and loss, there is no hope for transcendence. Evil is the *materia* out of which the specific good of W1 is sculpted.

This constitutes a suffering-transcending theodicy.¹⁴ It does not claim that each instance of evil is directly willed for a greater good in a utilitarian calculus, but that the category of world which has redemption as its supreme good logically requires the real possibility and actuality of evils to be instantiated. God wills this category, and with it, accepts the necessary conditions of its instantiation.

6.4 Synthesizing Theodicy and Agency: The Coherence of Sovereign Love

The discussion culminates by synthesizing the solutions to agency and theodicy. They are two sides of the same coin: the vindication of sovereign love. In choosing W1, God chooses a world where love is not merely a given state (as in W2) but an achieved relation—a morphism that must be navigated by free, finite agents within a context of real brokenness. The very conditions that make moral responsibility possible (genuine choice, real consequences, constitutive intentionality) are the same conditions that make evil possible and redemption meaningful.

Thus, the occasionalist framework, far from negating morality, provides its ultimate grounding: moral value is constituted within the categorical structure (C_W1) sovereignly willed by a God whose nature is love. Human agents are responsible participants in this drama not as rival causes, but as essential relata in the divinely sustained network of love and redemption. The problem of evil is transformed from a logical contradiction into the necessary backdrop against which the particular, incommensurable good of divine agape—manifest as participatory, costly redemption—is uniquely displayed.

This synthesis completes the systematic ambition of this paper. We have shown a path from the absolute freedom of the divine intellect, through the incommensurability of value, to a sovereign, non-arbitrary creative choice, its necessary occasionalist consequence, and finally to a coherent account of moral responsibility and theodicy that flows from that choice. The result is a theology that unreservedly affirms divine sovereignty without sacrificing the reality of moral value or succumbing to the Leibnizian dilemma.

7. Conclusion: The Manifestation of Sovereign Love

This paper has undertaken a systematic reconstruction of divine creative freedom and its metaphysical consequences, arguing for a definitive departure from the Leibnizian theodicy. We began with the impasse of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), which, in demanding a reason for God's choice, seemed to subject divine sovereignty to an external calculus. Our journey proposed a resolution not by finding a better reason within the old comparative framework, but by dismantling the framework itself. Through the synthesis of Cantorian transfinite sets, Category Theory, and the doctrine of divine simplicity, we demonstrated that God's choice is a sovereign selection from among genuinely incommensurable categories of value—a selection that is simultaneously utterly free and perfectly expressive of His essential character.

The core contributions of this argument are threefold. First, we provided a formal model for divine freedom. By adapting the logical structure of a two-stage model to the divine case and employing Cantor's hierarchy of infinities, we conceptualized God's *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* as an access to a transfininitely diverse manifold of possibilities, establishing a state of perfect axiological parity. Second, we introduced and defended structural axiology through Category Theory. By defining three salient world-types (Redemptive Struggle, Perfect Obedience, Immanent Virtue) as objects in categorically distinct frameworks, we proved their incommensurability, moving the debate from comparative value to kind-of-value. Third, we derived a robust Strong Occasionalism as the necessary causal-metaphysical correlate of this sovereignty. From the identity of divine intellect and will (modeled by a commutative diagram), we deduced that God must be the immediate cause of all states of affairs, as any robust secondary causality would introduce a competing sufficient reason.

The implications of this synthesis are significant for several fields. For philosophy of religion, it offers a novel, non-Leibnizian path through the dilemma of divine freedom and goodness, one that takes seriously both absolute sovereignty and non-arbitrariness. For theological metaphysics, it provides a rigorous, formal foundation for occasionalism, elevating it from a speculative causal theory to a logically deduced component of a broader axiological system. For value theory, our concept of structural axiology—where goodness is constituted by relational position within a categorical network—presents a fresh alternative to

intrinsic and consequentialist models, with potential applications beyond philosophical theology.

Inevitably, our framework prompts further questions. One such question, pertinent to eschatology, concerns the final state of creation: if the actual world is uniquely characterized by the value-category C_W1 (Redemptive Struggle), does the consummate state ('heaven' or the eschaton) perpetually inhabit this same categorical structure, preserving the memory and transformative meaning of struggle, or does it represent a teleological transition into a state analogous to C_W2 (Perfect Harmony)? While a full answer exceeds this paper's scope, our model suggests that the redemptive character of C_W1 is not merely a means to an end but is constitutive of the specific, incommensurable good that God sovereignly chose to manifest. The eternal state, therefore, would not be a negation of this chosen structure but its fulfillment and eternal preservation as a perfected redeemed order—a harmony achieved through, and forever informed by, the story of redemption.

In the final analysis, this project reframes the central question of theodicy. The actual world is not "the best of all possible worlds" in a comparative sense. It is, rather, the world that sovereignly manifests a specific, incommensurable form of divine love. The suffering, freedom, and moral complexity that characterize it are not imperfections weighed against a greater good, but the necessary conditions for the instantiation of agape as participatory redemption. God's will is thus revealed not as constrained by an external good, but as the very source and standard of the good that is uniquely expressed in the costly, transformative drama of creation and salvation. This is the coherence and majesty of sovereign love—a love that is truly free, truly self-expressive, and truly sovereign over all.

Endnotes

¹ The adaptation of Doyle's model is strictly logical and formal. We transpose its two-stage structure—distinguishing an unbounded modal landscape from a specific volitional act—to the divine case. This is a methodological choice to clarify the argument's architecture, not a claim that God's freedom is psychologically analogous to human freedom. The transposition is defended as a heuristic that avoids the temporal connotations of "deliberation" while providing a clear framework to separate divine knowledge of possibilities from the act of creation.

² This is not to say God's knowledge is "of" a proper class in a way that would make it an object external to Him. Rather, the Cantorian hierarchy serves as a finite, human conceptual model to articulate the inherent unboundedness and structural diversity that is perfectly and simply comprehended within the divine intellect as an aspect of God's own omniscience.

³ The claim here is modest but crucial: the formal incommensurability suggested by divergent cardinal complexities motivates the search for a more robust, value-specific formalism. It does not, in itself, constitute proof of axiological incommensurability. That proof is the exclusive burden of Stage II, which employs Category Theory precisely because it is a tool designed to compare different kinds of structural relationships, not just quantitative scales.

⁴ A potential objection is that such formal heavy machinery is unnecessary for the ground-clearing function. We contend it is essential. A generic appeal to "infinite possibilities" fails to capture the qualitative hierarchy of complexity that a Cantorian model provides. It is precisely this structured, transfinite diversity that renders any simplistic, linear ranking metaphysically implausible from the outset, setting a higher standard for what a successful axiological theory (developed in Stage II) must accomplish.

⁵ This principle is not ad-hoc. It aligns with virtue-ethical and teleological traditions where 'good' is specified by the *ergon* (function) or *telos* (end) of an entity (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics; Foot, Natural Goodness). In a created world, the fundamental *telos* is ordained by the Creator, making the category's morphism set the formal expression of that ordained purpose.

⁶ A consequentialist or utilitarian framework would require a prior, homogeneous "currency of value" (e.g., hedons) applicable across all worlds. This begs the question against incommensurability. The teleological approach makes no such assumption, asking first what constitutes a good act within a given form of life, thereby allowing for the possibility that different forms of life generate different, incomparable currencies of value.

⁷ This is not a rejection of divine goodness as the source of all created good. Rather, it is a claim about how divine goodness is instantiated in creation. God's own simple, infinite goodness is manifested *ad extra* in specific, structured forms. These created forms are not "shadows" of a separate Platonic form of the Good, but genuine, discrete expressions of

God's will, whose value is inherent in their being so willed and structured.

⁸ This aligns with the Thomistic view where *scientia visionis* is conceptually posterior to but eternally coincident with God's will. Our emphasis is on their identity in the simple act.

⁹ Anselm's formulation that in God "will, power, and being are not distinct" and Aquinas's argument for the identity of divine will and intellect provide the classical underpinning for the commutative diagram, which serves as a modern formalization of this insight.

¹⁰ This distinction is crucial. It mirrors the difference between *necessitas consequentis* (the necessity of the consequent—God necessarily chooses W1) and *necessitas consequentiae* (the necessity of the consequence—if God chooses to create, His creation will necessarily reflect His nature). We affirm only the latter.

¹¹ The principle that two sufficient reasons for the same effect are redundant or competing is a staple in rationalist metaphysics. See Leibniz's use of it in arguing against occasionalism in, for example, his correspondence with Arnauld. The problem of causal overdetermination is actively debated in contemporary philosophy of mind and action.

¹² This interpretation aligns with contemporary scholars like Taneli Kukkonen, who argues that Al-Ghazali's occasionalism is less about continuous miracle and more about asserting total divine control over creation's order (Al-Ghazali's Skepticism Revisited, 2018). The debate around *kasb* reflects the tension between divine sovereignty and human accountability central to occasionalist theologies.

¹³ This structural theory of *kasb* avoids the pitfall of "over-determination" that plagues some concurrentist models. There is only one efficient cause (God), but the effect is complex and includes the agent's intention as a constitutive rather than causal element.

¹⁴ This aligns with what some theologians term a "cruciform theodicy," where the cross is not merely a solution to evil but the revelation of the form that divine love takes in a world like ours. Our categorical framework provides the metaphysical scaffolding for this intuition.

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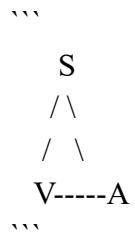
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APPENDIX: Schematic Diagrams

A.1 Commutative Diagram of Divine Simplicity

The following ASCII diagram represents the identity of divine attributes (Scientia, Voluntas, Actus) as discussed in Section 4.2. In category theory, this diagram commutes trivially because all objects and morphisms represent the same single, eternal divine reality.



Key:

- S = Scientia (Divine Knowledge)
- V = Voluntas (Divine Will)
- A = Actus (Creative Act)
- /, \, - = Morphisms representing identity. All paths (S→V, V→A, A→S) are identical.

Interpretation: The diagram does not depict a sequence but a state of ontological identity. The triangle shows three perspectives on one simple reality. In God, the diagram commutes because S, V, and A are not distinct—the "arrows" are labels for the same divine essence under different descriptions.

A.2 Categorical Structures of the Three Possible World-Types

The following ASCII diagrams illustrate the distinct categorical structures of the three salient world-types (W1, W2, W3) discussed in Section 3.2. Each category is defined by its objects and its internal network of value-constituting morphisms. Crucially, no faithful, structure-preserving functor (isomorphism) exists between these categories, demonstrating their axiological incommensurability.

Category C_W1: Redemptive Struggle

...

[Agent] --(Sacrificial Love)--> [Other]

| |
|(Failure/Grace) (Forgiveness)
| |
V V

[Penitent] <--(Transformation)--

...

Objects: Situated moral agents ([Agent], [Other], [Penitent]).

Key Morphisms: Sacrificial Love, Transformation, Forgiveness.

Definitive Good: Agape as redemptive courage.

Category C_W2: Perfect Created Obedience

...

[Being] --(Flawless Worship)--> [Divine]

| |
|(Harmonious Coordination) |(Joyful Reflection)
| |
V V

[Chorus] <--(Perfect Synergy)-----

...

Objects: Created beings in harmony ([Being], [Divine], [Chorus]).

Key Morphisms: Flawless Worship, Harmonious Coordination, Perfect Synergy.

Definitive Good: Perfect harmony (reflection of divine glory).

Category C_W3: Immanent Secular Virtue

...

[Citizen] --(Contractual Justice)--> [Peer]

| |
|(Empathetic Recognition) |(Rational Altruism)
| |
V V

[Society] <--(Social Cooperation)-----

...

Objects: Autonomous rational agents ([Citizen], [Peer], [Society]).

Key Morphisms: Contractual Justice, Empathetic Recognition, Social Cooperation.

Definitive Good: Autonomy and compassion (secular eudaimonia).

A3. Visualization of Incommensurability:

...

C_W1 [Red] C_W2 [Harm] C_W3 [Imm]

| | |

| No Isomorphic Functors |

| | |

(Isolated) (Isolated) (Isolated)

...

Interpretation: The three categories are structurally isolated. No isomorphic functor can translate the objects and morphisms of one category into another, representing axiological incommensurability.