

THE MODAL COLLAPSE OBJECTION TO DIVINE SIMPLICITY: CAN THE FIRST CAUSE ACT CONTINGENTLY?

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Abstract: The modal collapse objection holds that a doctrine of divine simplicity, on which the first cause (*prauzroč*) is identical with its own act, entails that everything the first cause brings about is brought about necessarily, so that no created state of affairs could have failed to obtain. Since Tomaszewski (2019) exposed a substitution fallacy in the standard formulation of the objection, the debate has produced a dense body of replies, counter-replies, and reformulations, yet no study has systematically mapped where each reply locates the contingency that the objection claims to destroy. This article closes that gap. Drawing on a corpus of twenty-two peer-reviewed contributions published between 2019 and 2026, I develop the Contingency Localization Framework (CLF), a five-fold typology that classifies every extant response according to the theoretical site at which it houses contingency: the inferential structure of the argument itself, extrinsic effect-side predication, multi-track divine power, intra-divine aspectival differentiation, or a graded emanational hierarchy. The framework grounds the article's central thesis, which I call the conservation of contingency: no response eliminates the modal collapse worry; each merely relocates contingency to a new site, and each relocation carries a characteristic and quantifiable theoretical cost. Bibliometric analysis of the corpus shows that 63.6% of contributions defend simplicity while 36.4% press the objection, that extrinsicist strategies account for 53.8% of relocation-based defences, and that the debate's centre of gravity shifted after 2021 from disputes over logical validity toward disputes over cost allocation. The framework is then extended to the emanationist metaphysics articulated in Knežević (2024) and analysed by Đukić (2025), which I argue constitutes a fifth, structurally distinct localization strategy with its own liabilities. The conclusion assesses which localizations survive the providential collapse argument of Schmid (2022) and at what price.

Keywords: *divine simplicity, modal collapse, first cause, contingency, classical theism, extrinsic predication, emanation, aseity.*

INTRODUCTION

Classical theism identifies God with a metaphysically simple first cause: a being without parts, without unrealized potential, and without any distinction between what it is and what it does (Vallicella, 2019; Fuqua & Koons, 2023). The doctrine is old, but the sharpest contemporary objection to it is young. In its modern analytic form, the modal collapse argument contends that if God is identical with God's unique act, and God exists necessarily, then that act occurs necessarily, and whatever the act produces (this world, with its particular constants, particular histories, particular creatures) is produced necessarily (Mullins & Byrd, 2022). Contingency evaporates.

Every truth becomes a necessary truth. The stakes could hardly be higher, because the theist who accepts the conclusion loses divine freedom, loses the distinction between creator and emanation understood as involuntary overflow, and arguably loses the intelligibility of praise, gratitude, and petitionary prayer (Smith, 2025).

The debate that followed has been unusually productive by the standards of philosophy of religion. Tomaszewski (2019) argued that the canonical formulation commits a modal fallacy: it substitutes a non-rigid designator into an intensional context, and so fails on Kripkean grounds before any metaphysical question is reached. Waldrop (2022) replied that repaired versions of the argument avoid the fallacy at the price of new premises a defender of simplicity may reject. Schmid (2021b) announced the death of purely action-based collapse arguments and, in the same gesture, resurrected the difficulty in a new body: if the collapse argument fails, it fails because divine action is extrinsically individuated, and extrinsic individuation generates a providential problem at least as serious as the modal one (Schmid, 2022). Meanwhile defenders multiplied strategies: extrinsic predication (Pawl & Grant, 2023), dispositionalist powers (Lenow, 2021), aspectual reformulation (Sijuwade, 2021a), Islamic Neoplatonic emanationism (Andani, 2022), and outright acceptance of necessary willing within a compatibilist account of divine freedom (Pedersen & Lilley, 2022).

What the literature lacks, on my reading of it, is a synoptic account of what all these strategies have in common and where exactly they diverge. Reply papers engage one another seriatim: Shields (2024) answers Schmid (2022), Echavarría (2025) answers both, Huls (2025) answers Schmid and Mullins (2022). Yet nobody has asked the structural question: when a defence blocks the collapse, where does the contingency go? Contingency, after all, must live somewhere. If the world could have been otherwise, then some element of the total metaphysical story (the act, the effect, the relation between them, the semantics of the modal operators, or the layered structure of emanation) must be the bearer of that could-have-been-otherwise. The original contribution of this article lies precisely here: I introduce, for the first time in the literature, a Contingency Localization Framework (CLF) that classifies every published response to the modal collapse objection by the site at which it houses contingency, and I defend a substantive thesis that the framework makes visible — the conservation of contingency, according to which no strategy eliminates the problem but only relocates it, always at a characteristic theoretical cost.

Three hypotheses organize the investigation. The first hypothesis (H1) is bibliometric: after 2021 the debate's centre of gravity shifted from the logical validity of the collapse argument toward the allocation of theoretical costs among auxiliary doctrines. The second hypothesis (H2) is the conservation thesis itself: every extant defence of divine simplicity against modal collapse relocates rather than eliminates contingency, and the limiting case, the necessitarian embrace of Pedersen and Lilley (2022), confirms the pattern by abandoning relocation altogether. The third hypothesis (H3) posits a systematic correlation: the site at which a strategy localizes contingency predicts which auxiliary doctrine it must weaken, whether intrinsic intentional determinacy, the non-bruteness of the causal nexus, the reality of divine unity, libertarian divine freedom, or *creatio ex nihilo*. I test all three against the corpus assembled in the methodology section.

A note on perspective is owed to the reader. I write from a position formed both by the analytic debate and by a metaphysical tradition of the Balkans that has engaged the concept of *prauzrok*, the primal cause, through hermetic, Vedantic, and Neoplatonic sources rather than through Kripke and Plantinga. In earlier work (Knežević, 2024), I developed a morphology of cosmology, evolution, and theogony in which the first cause operates as a converter of potentiality into actuality through a graded series of emanations; Đukić (2025) has recently reconstructed that system as a structurally coherent esoteric monism with elements of process metaphysics. One aim of the present article is to bring that emanationist option into contact with the

analytic literature, where it has a near relative in Andani (2022), and to show that it constitutes a fifth localization strategy with a distinctive cost profile rather than a mere curiosity. The article proceeds as follows: a review of the literature and a description of the method; a presentation of the corpus results; an analysis of the logical anatomy of collapse arguments; an analysis of the four intra-theistic localization strategies; an analysis of the emanationist alternative against its cosmological horizon; and a conclusion that returns to the hypotheses.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

The contemporary discussion descends from a compact argument. Let a stand for God's one simple act. Divine simplicity identifies God with a; classical theism holds that God exists in every possible world; therefore a occurs in every possible world; therefore whatever a causes obtains in every possible world (Mullins & Byrd, 2022). Mullins and Byrd (2022) present the argument in eleven numbered steps and defend each against five years of published objections, concluding that the problem is persistent rather than merely apparent. Their treatment builds on a decade of earlier formulations, but the 2019–2026 window contains the argument's entire mature dialectic, which is why the present study restricts its corpus to that period. Within the window, the critical wing comprises eight substantial contributions: the persistence defence of the argument (Mullins & Byrd, 2022), the aloneness argument that runs a parallel collapse through omniscience rather than causation (Schmid & Mullins, 2022), the providential collapse argument (Schmid, 2022), the fruitful-death diagnosis (Schmid, 2021b), the parallel critique of the neo-Platonic route to simplicity (Schmid, 2021c), the deeper-problem analysis of Fakhri (2021), the anti-fallacy rejoinder of Waldrop (2022), and the moral collapse extension of Smith (2025), with Feser (2022) mapping the whole dispute as a contest between rival research programmes.

The defensive wing is larger and more heterogeneous. Tomaszewski (2019) inaugurated the validity strategy, arguing that the inference from the necessity of God to the necessity of God's act substitutes the non-rigid description 'God's act of creating this universe' into a modal context, a move no more legitimate than inferring from the necessity of eight being even that the number of planets is necessarily even. Vincent (2026) has recently renewed this line against Mullins's reformulations. A second family concedes validity questions and instead distinguishes intrinsic from extrinsic predication: God's act considered intrinsically is necessary, but its being an act of creating penguins is a Cambridge property individuated by the effect, so contingency attaches to the effect-side description rather than to the act itself. Variants of this move appear in Nemes (2020), in the alone-world analysis of Kerr (2023), in the reply of Pawl and Grant (2023) to the aloneness argument, in the Thomistic providence defences of Shields (2024) and Echavarría (2025), in the action-theoretic elaboration of Huneus (2024), and in the omniscience-focused response of Huls (2025). A third family, represented by Lenow (2021), grounds modal claims in irreducibly multi-track divine power along the dispositionalist lines developed in contemporary metaphysics of modality. A fourth, developed across two papers by Sijuwade (2021a; 2021b), reformulates simplicity itself within an essentialist aspectival ontology so that necessity and contingency qualify different aspects of one and the same simple God. A fifth family departs from the shared Latin framework entirely: Andani (2022) argues from Ibn Sina and the Ismaili tradition that the collapse argument presupposes a creational picture the Neoplatonist never held, while Pedersen and Lilley (2022) — the limiting case — grant that God wills the world necessarily and argue that Reformed theology can absorb the result without loss of freedom properly understood.

Around this core, a second circle of literature supplies the argument's wider ecology. The gap problem for cosmological arguments — how to get from a necessary first cause to a perfect being

— is treated by Byerly (2019) and challenged by Anderson (2022). The existence and explanatory role of the first cause itself is contested in the exchange between Oppy (2021) and Feser (2021) over the Aristotelian proof, in the existential inertia debate (Schmid, 2021a; Schmid & Linford, 2023), in the grounding-theoretic reconstructions of Oberle (2022) and Lucero (2026), and in the fundamentality argument of Sijuwade (2021c). McNabb (2024) offers a reflective reassessment of the Aristotelian proof in light of these criticisms. On the modal-metaphysical flank, Schmid and Malpass (2023) show that branching actualism reshapes contingency arguments at their foundations, and Kittle (2020) probes what free choice is worth when outcomes are fixed, a question that returns whenever necessary willing is on the table. Kraay (2025) surveys the divine freedom terrain that any resolution must respect. Rasmussen and Leon (2019) stage the underlying dispute between theistic and naturalistic explanations of contingent reality in dialogue form, and Harwood (2024) asks whether classical simplicity is even required for orthodoxy — a reminder that the theological stakes of the collapse debate are negotiable in ways analytic participants sometimes forget.

The first-cause context deserves a closer look, because the collapse debate inherits its stakes from it. Oppy (2021) targets two specific premises of the Aristotelian proof — that no potential can be actualized except by something actual, and that a regress of actualizers must terminate, and argues that naturalists rationally reject both, so the proof settles nothing between worldviews; Feser (2021) answers that Oppy's alternative terminates explanation in brute contingency at exactly the point where his own view supplies an explainer, and that the disagreement is therefore about theoretical virtues rather than about logic. Schmid (2021a) opens a second front by articulating the existential inertia thesis, on which concrete objects persist without a sustaining cause unless positively destroyed, and by arguing that inertial persistence explains the same data as divine conservation with fewer commitments; the book-length development catalogues four inertial accounts and answers thirteen objections (Schmid & Linford, 2023). McNabb (2024) concedes that these criticisms force a reformulation, offering a reflective rather than triumphalist reassessment. Even where a necessary first cause is granted, Byerly (2019) identifies the gap problem (nothing in 'necessary' entails 'perfect') and proposes an abductive bridge: perfection best explains why the necessary being is necessary. Anderson (2022) replies that the bridge presupposes the explicability of necessity, which a Humean denies. Further down the foundations, Oberle (2022) shows that the Thomistic regress argument and Schaffer's grounding argument for metaphysical foundationalism fail for the same reason, while Lucero (2026) argues by elimination that the ground of beings cannot itself be a being among beings. Every one of these disputes feeds the collapse debate, because a first cause whose existence is not secured, or whose perfection is not derivable, changes what is at stake in its modal profile.

A theological context wing completes the picture. Harwood (2024) documents that the classical construal of simplicity, though venerable, has never been an unambiguous test of orthodoxy, which lowers the confessional cost of revising it; Vallicella (2019) states the doctrine's canonical motivations, aseity above all, with a clarity that explains why revision feels expensive to its defenders anyway. The neoclassical alternative is developed by Mullins (2021) as a systematic position and applied in Mullins (2020) to the emotional life of God, where impassibility rather than simplicity carries the argument; Feser (2022) treats this whole movement as a rival research programme and asks, reasonably, which programme is degenerating. On the freedom flank, Kraay (2025) maps the option space for divine freedom (leeway accounts, source accounts, hybrid accounts) that any resolution of the collapse debate must respect, and Kittle (2020) supplies the value-theoretic fine print: choices whose outcomes are fixed can retain value, but only under conditions whose applicability to a necessarily creating God is exactly what is in dispute. I flag one absence deliberately: the corpus contains no sustained engagement with non-Abrahamic

material apart from Andani (2022), and the present article's third analytical section is a first attempt to widen that aperture.

Two further bodies of work matter for the third analytical section. The first is the regional and emanationist literature: my own morphological system (Knežević, 2024), its systematic reconstruction by Đukić (2025), and the process-metaphysical and panpsychist debates into which Đukić places it. The second is the philosophy of cosmology, which supplies the empirical face of cosmic contingency: the fine-tuning dispute and its anthropic-selection explanations (Mendes, 2023), the epistemological standing of multiverse hypotheses (Risojević, 2023), the DESI evidence that even the dark-energy equation of state may be dynamical rather than constant (Yadav, 2025), and the ontology of intentional objects (Shala, 2024), which becomes relevant when divine intentions are individuated extrinsically. These sources are not decorative. If the physical constants could have been otherwise — and the fine-tuning literature quantifies precisely how narrowly they sit within life-permitting ranges (Mendes, 2023) — then the contingency the collapse argument threatens is not an abstraction but the modal status of measurable structure.

Research Methodology

The study combines two methods. The first is a systematic qualitative analysis of a defined corpus. I assembled every peer-reviewed journal contribution published between 1 January 2019 and mid-2026 that directly addresses the modal collapse argument, the aloneness argument, or the providential collapse argument against divine simplicity, identifying items through iterative database searches (PhilPapers, Crossref, publisher platforms) seeded by the citation networks of Mullins and Byrd (2022) and Schmid (2021b). The inclusion criteria were three: publication in a refereed venue or scholarly collection; direct engagement with at least one of the three collapse-family arguments; and verifiable bibliographic identity, including a resolvable DOI or stable journal locator. Twenty-two items met all three criteria. Book-length treatments (Schmid & Linford, 2023; Fuqua & Koons, 2023) and adjacent debates were coded as context rather than corpus. Each corpus item was then coded along two axes: dialectical direction (defence of simplicity versus prosecution of the objection) and, for defences, localization type under the CLF (validity-based, extrinsicalist, dispositionalist, aspectival, emanationist, or necessitarian limit case). Coding was performed twice, three weeks apart, to check intra-rater stability; two items changed classification between passes, and I flag both honestly in the results, since a single-researcher design offers no inter-rater test (a limitation discussed in the conclusion).

The five localization types were given operational definitions before the second coding pass, and the definitions did the sorting work. A defence was coded validity-based when its central claim is that some formulation of the collapse argument is formally unsound and no metaphysical revision is offered; extrinsicalist when the contingent difference between worlds is located in properties whose instantiation constitutively depends on something outside God; dispositionalist when a single divine power is said to ground a plurality of possible manifestations; aspectival when modal predicates are distributed over aspects, modes, or qua-qualified designations of one simple entity; and emanationist when contingency is assigned to positions in a graded procession from the first principle. Papers deploying more than one strategy were coded by their load-bearing move, the argument the author retreats to under pressure, which is a judgment call, and I do not pretend otherwise. Two decision rules handled the recurring hard cases: replies to the aloneness argument were coded by how they treat divine knowledge of creation, since that is where the contingency sits in that argument (Schmid & Mullins, 2022); and replies to the providential collapse argument were coded as extrinsicalist when they accept extrinsic individuation of the divine act and argue only that providence survives it (Shields, 2024; Echavarría, 2025). The count itself is trivial arithmetic; the classification is where the method earns or loses its keep.

The second method is conceptual cost analysis, adapted from the way Schmid (2022) prices the extrinsicalist escape and the way Fakhri (2021) prices the denial of difference-making causation. For each localization type, I identify the auxiliary doctrine of classical theism that the strategy must weaken to keep contingency housed at its chosen site, and I state the weakening as a conditional that a defender could in principle reject. The procedure treats philosophical positions the way an accountant treats balance sheets: a benefit booked at one line must be paid for at another, and the interesting question is never whether a cost exists but where it has been hidden. I make no pretence that this method is neutral on every metatheoretical question — it presupposes that theoretical costs are commensurable enough to compare, which a Wittgensteinian would deny — but it has the virtue of making disagreements tractable. All quantitative claims in what follows are simple descriptive statistics over the coded corpus; no inferential statistics are appropriate for a population this small, and none are used.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The coded corpus yields findings that can be organized in three blocks, corresponding to the three hypotheses. The first block concerns the temporal and dialectical structure of the debate. Of the twenty-two corpus items, fourteen (63.6%) defend divine simplicity against a collapse-family argument, while eight (36.4%) prosecute or extend such an argument. The yearly distribution is uneven in a revealing way: one item appears in 2019 (Tomaszewski, 2019), one in 2020 (Nemes, 2020), six in 2021, six in 2022, two in 2023, two in 2024, three in 2025, and one in 2026. Eight items (36.4%) therefore fall in the 2019–2021 window and fourteen (63.6%) in the 2022–2026 window. More telling than volume is content: both purely validity-focused defences sit at the chronological edges of the corpus (Tomaszewski, 2019; Vincent, 2026), while every defence published between 2022 and 2025 either negotiates costs within an extrinsicalist, necessitarian, or emanationist framework or defends providence specifically against the follow-up argument of Schmid (2022). The validity dispute, in other words, opened the period and now returns as a coda; the intervening years belong to cost allocation.

The second block presents the localization census that constitutes the framework's first application. Under the CLF, the fourteen defences distribute as follows: thirteen attempt to relocate contingency, and one — the necessitarian limit case — declines to. Among the thirteen relocating defences, two (15.4%) are validity-based, housing contingency in the claim that the collapse inference is unsound as stated (Tomaszewski, 2019; Vincent, 2026). Seven (53.8%) are extrinsicalist, housing contingency in effect-side, extrinsically individuated descriptions of the one necessary act: Nemes (2020), Kerr (2023), Pawl and Grant (2023), Shields (2024), Huneeus (2024), Echavarría (2025), and Huls (2025). Two (15.4%) are aspectival, housing contingency in a formal differentiation internal to the simple God (Sijuwade, 2021a; Sijuwade, 2021b). One (7.7%) is dispositionalist, housing contingency in the multi-track range of a single divine power (Lenow, 2021). One (7.7%) is emanationist in the Islamic Neoplatonic mode, housing contingency in the descending grades of a necessary procession (Andani, 2022). The necessitarian limit case (Pedersen & Lilley, 2022) declines to house contingency anywhere and accepts necessary willing outright. The two items whose classification changed between coding passes were Huls (2025), which sits between validity-based and extrinsicalist readings of omniscience, and Kerr (2023), whose alone-world analysis can be read as either extrinsicalist or aspectival; I settled both into the extrinsicalist family because each ultimately grounds the contingent difference in what exists outside God.

The third block records the cost audit, the result most directly tied to the conservation thesis. For each localization type I asked a single question: which doctrine held by classical theists at full strength must be weakened for contingency to remain housed at the chosen site? The audit

returned a determinate answer in every case, with no exceptions found. Validity-based defences must allow that God's act is only contingently an act of creating this world, which concedes an intrinsic-description gap that Waldrop (2022) shows can be repaired into a new argument; the cost is the reintroduction of the problem one level up. Extrinsicist defences must accept that nothing intrinsic to God differs between a world God creates and a world God leaves uncreated, which is exactly the premise on which the providential collapse of Schmid (2022) and the aloneness argument of Schmid and Mullins (2022) operate; the cost is intentional determinacy, the doctrine that God's own intrinsic state settles what God intends. Dispositionist defences must treat the exercise, as opposed to the possession, of the divine power as grounded in nothing further, on pain of regress; the cost is a brute contingent nexus, precisely the bruteness that first-cause arguments elsewhere forbid (Oberle, 2022; Lucero, 2026). Aspectual defences must admit aspect-indexed differences within the godhead that do not compromise identity, a commitment their own proponent concedes requires a non-classical mereology of aspects (Sijuwade, 2021a); the cost is paid against the austerity of simplicity itself. The necessitarian embrace pays in libertarian freedom, rescuing what remains through compatibilist redescription (Pedersen & Lilley, 2022; cf. Kittle, 2020). The emanationist strategy pays in *creatio ex nihilo* and personal agency, as the third analytical section details. Fourteen defences, five localization sites, six distinct invoices: contingency is conserved in every audited case, in the sense that its removal from one location forces its reappearance, or the payment of a compensating cost, at another.

A fourth, supplementary block of findings concerns the sociology of the debate, and I report it because it qualifies how much weight the census percentages can bear. The twenty-two corpus items appear across twelve venues, but three journals (Religious Studies, the International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, and the European Journal for Philosophy of Religion) account for twelve items between them (54.5% of the corpus), with four apiece. Authorship is similarly concentrated: Joseph Schmid authors or co-authors five corpus items (22.7%), Joshua Sijuwade two, and Ryan Mullins two, so three individuals touch nine of twenty-two contributions (40.9%). The debate is, in plain terms, a conversation among a small number of interlocutors in a small number of rooms. This is not a criticism, since tight dialectics produce precision, but it cautions against reading the census as a map of considered opinion across philosophy of religion, and it explains a feature of the corpus that would otherwise puzzle: entire traditions with obvious stakes in the question, from Palamite theology to Vedantic ontology, are represented thinly (Andani, 2022) or not at all. The framework proposed here is partly an invitation to widen the room.

THE LOGICAL ANATOMY OF THE MODAL COLLAPSE ARGUMENT

Why does the collapse argument keep returning after each refutation? The anatomy suggests an answer. The argument's engine is a chain of three identities and one necessity: God is identical with God's essence; the essence is identical with the act; God exists necessarily; therefore the act, being the very thing that necessarily exists, occurs necessarily (Mullins & Byrd, 2022). Tomaszewski (2019) showed that the final step, as usually written, is invalid: from the necessity of God and the identity of God with the act of creation, the necessity of the act follows only if 'the act of creation' designates rigidly, and the defender of simplicity has principled reasons to deny that it does. The point is technically correct and, I think, dialectically narrow at the same time. My initial reading of Tomaszewski took the invalidity result to end the debate; on closer inspection, however, the result merely forces the critic to choose between two repair strategies, both catalogued by Waldrop (2022), and the choice is where the real philosophy happens.

The first repair rigidifies. Instead of 'God's act of creating this universe', the critic introduces a rigid designator for the concrete event that is in fact God's act, and reruns the argument. Waldrop (2022) demonstrates that the rigidified argument is valid, and that blocking it now requires

denying a premise rather than exposing a fallacy: specifically, denying that the concrete act, rigidly designated, is necessary if God is. The extrinsicalist denies exactly this by relocating the act's creative character outside God's intrinsic being (Pawl & Grant, 2023). The second repair goes through difference-making: same cause, same effect; a cause intrinsically identical across worlds cannot ground different effects across worlds; God is intrinsically identical across worlds; therefore the effects cannot differ. Fakhri (2021) shows that the friend of simplicity must reject the same-cause-same-effect principle, and that the rejection has a price: divine causation becomes, in a precise sense, indeterministic, since the total intrinsic truth about the cause fails to fix what it causes. Nemes (2020) accepts a version of this consequence willingly, arguing that the difference principle begs the question against an omnipotent cause. Perhaps he is right. But indeterminism at the root of all things is not a free amendment, and the corpus shows the critics pressing precisely there (Schmid, 2021b; Schmid, 2022).

It helps to have the canonical argument on the table in explicit steps, because the repairs operate on different joints. Step one: God is identical with God's act of creation — this is what simplicity, applied to divine action, asserts. Step two: necessarily, God exists — the aseity commitment shared by every party (Vallicella, 2019). Step three: whatever is identical with a necessary being is itself necessary — an instance of the necessity of identity. Step four: therefore God's act of creation is necessary. Step five: necessarily, if God's act of creation occurs, creation exists. Step six: therefore creation necessarily exists (Mullins & Byrd, 2022). Tomaszewski (2019) blocks step four: the necessity of identity licenses the substitution only of rigid designators, and 'God's act of creation' is arguably non-rigid, picking out different acts, or none, in different worlds. Waldrop (2022) repairs by rigidifying the designator or by running the argument at the level of the res rather than the description, and Vincent (2026) counters that Mullins's own repaired versions equivocate between act-types and act-tokens in a way that reintroduces the fallacy. Fakhri (2021) bypasses the semantic joint entirely and attacks through the causal principle at step five's neighbourhood: same intrinsic cause, same effect. The reader should notice what the step-structure makes visible — there are exactly as many escape routes as there are joints, and each named strategy in the census is a lean against one specific joint. That correspondence between argument anatomy and defence typology is, I would suggest, the deep reason the CLF classification is exhaustive for the intra-theistic options: the joints are enumerable, so the leanings are too.

Schmid's contribution to the anatomy deserves separate attention because it converts a stalemate into a research programme, and because he is the corpus's most cited author on either wing. The fruitful-death paper concedes that action-based collapse arguments fail against a determined extrinsicalist, then observes that the failure is informative: it reveals that classical theism survives only by making divine action extrinsic, which generates successor problems about providence, intentionality, and divine knowledge (Schmid, 2021b). The providential collapse paper cashes the observation: if nothing intrinsic to God explains why this world rather than another exists, then God does not exercise the fine-grained intentional control that providence traditionally requires, and the view collapses not modally but providentially (Schmid, 2022). The aloneness argument runs the same engine through omniscience: God knows that creation exists; knowledge is intrinsic on classical accounts; a possible world where God exists alone differs from ours in what God knows; so either simplicity, omniscience, the possibility of God existing alone, or divine freedom must yield (Schmid & Mullins, 2022). Defenders answered on schedule: Pawl and Grant (2023) distinguish extrinsic knowledge-ascriptions, Huls (2025) reworks the omniscience premise, Shields (2024) and Echavarría (2025) rebuild providence on Thomistic relations and causal control, Kerr (2023) analyses the alone world directly. But notice the shared shape of every answer. Each moves some divine feature from the intrinsic to the extrinsic column. The ledger keeps

balance. What departs from one column reappears in the other, and the successor arguments feed on the transfer.

It is worth pausing on what the anatomy does not show. It does not show that classical theism is incoherent; Feser (2022) is correct that the neo-classical challenge amounts to a competing research programme rather than a refutation, and research programmes are judged by degeneration over time, not by single decisive blows. Nor does it show that the critics possess a stable alternative: the neoclassical theism developed by Mullins (2020; 2021) inherits difficulties about divine temporality that the classical view was built to avoid, difficulties visible in the atemporality analysis of Sijuwade (2024). What the anatomy shows is narrower and, for my purposes, more useful: the argument is best understood not as a proof but as a sorting device. Feed it any precise version of divine simplicity, and it returns the location where that version stores its contingency, together with the bill. This reframing, from refutation to diagnostic instrument, is, so far as I can determine, absent from the corpus, and it is what the CLF systematizes. A comparison from cosmology may help. The fine-tuning argument does not by itself prove design; it sorts cosmological models by where they place the improbability, whether in a designer's choice, in a multi-verse ensemble, or in brute fact (Mendes, 2023), and the epistemic standing of each placement can then be evaluated on its own terms (Risojević, 2023). Collapse arguments perform the same sorting function for theologies. The sorting is the discovery.

FOUR STRATEGIES OF CONTINGENCY RELOCATION

Consider the four intra-theistic localizations in ascending order of ontological commitment. The validity strategy commits to least: it houses contingency in language, holding that modal operators attach to descriptions rather than to the underlying reality, so that one and the same act is necessary under the designation 'God' and contingent under the designation 'creator of this world' (Tomaszewski, 2019). Vincent (2026) refines the position against reformulated arguments, and the refinement matters because it concedes what the 2019 paper left implicit: the strategy works only if there is no intrinsic difference between the act as it occurs in our world and the act as it occurs in a world with a different creation. The concession hands the extrinsicalist their programme and the critic their target simultaneously. In the accounting idiom of the methodology: the validity strategy holds no contingency inventory of its own; it borrows storage from the extrinsicalist warehouse next door, and the loan comes due the moment the critic rigidifies (Wal-drop, 2022).

The extrinsicalist strategy, the corpus majority at 53.8% of relocating defences, stores contingency in the world rather than in God. Its classic instrument is the Cambridge property: when Socrates becomes shorter than Theaetetus by Theaetetus growing, nothing intrinsic to Socrates changes; likewise, when God's act is an act of creating penguins, the penguins, not God, carry the difference (Pawl & Grant, 2023). Huneeus (2024) gives the strategy its most explicit action-theoretic form, arguing that willing and knowing are partly constituted by their objects and therefore partly extrinsic; Kerr (2023) applies it to the possibility of God existing alone; Shields (2024) and Echavarría (2025) rebuild providential control within it, the latter distinguishing three grades of control of which only the weakest requires intrinsic difference. The strategy is coherent, well defended, and, the conservation thesis at work, expensive at a known address. If no intrinsic feature of God differs between the penguin world and the empty world, then God's intrinsic being does not determine, in any explanatorily satisfying sense, which world obtains. Schmid (2022) prices this as the loss of providential control; Fakhri (2021) prices it as causal indeterminism at the root of being; Smith (2025) extends the invoice to the moral domain, arguing that a God whose intrinsic state fixes nothing about creation cannot bear the right explanatory relation

to created goodness. The extrinsicalist can pay, and Echavarría (2025) in particular offers serious currency, but paying is what they are doing. Nobody rides free.

Because the extrinsicalist family carries the corpus majority, its internal differentiation matters, and three variants should be distinguished by how much they concede to the critic. The minimal variant, visible in Nemes (2020) and Pawl and Grant (2023), simply denies the difference principle: an omnipotent cause can ground different effects across worlds without differing intrinsically, and demanding otherwise begs the question against omnipotence. The moderate variant, developed by Huneeus (2024), gives a positive theory of why the denial is principled rather than ad hoc: willing and knowing are object-involving states, partially constituted by what they are about, so their world-to-world variation is exactly what a correct theory of intentional action predicts. The maximal variant, in Shields (2024) and Echavarría (2025), accepts the critic's demand for control and rebuilds it: Shields (2024) argues from Aquinas's theory of real versus rational relations that the creature's relation to God does the modal work while God's relation to the creature is merely conceptual, and Echavarría (2025) distinguishes grades of causal control, arguing that the grade providence requires (the effect's complete dependence on, and conformity to, the divine will) survives extrinsic individuation, while the grade Schmid demands (intrinsic-state sensitivity to each alternative) was never a reasonable requirement on an absolutely independent cause. My own assessment, for what it is worth, is that the maximal variant is the only one that engages the providential collapse on its merits rather than restating the original defence more loudly; whether it succeeds turns on whether 'control without intrinsic difference' is a coherent species of control or a redescription of its absence, and that question the corpus leaves genuinely open (Schmid, 2022; Echavarría, 2025).

The dispositionalist strategy of Lenow (2021) deserves more attention than its single-membership in the census suggests, because it is the only strategy that tries to house contingency in something with independent metaphysical credentials. Drawing on the dispositionalist account of modality on which possibilities are grounded in actual powers, Lenow (2021) proposes that the one simple divine power is irreducibly multi-track: its single actual exercise grounds a plurality of alternative manifestations, so possible worlds are just the ways the one act could have manifested. The proposal elegantly avoids intrinsic difference across worlds, since the power and its exercise are identical in all of them; only the manifestation varies. Yet the view must then answer a question that dispositionalism about creaturely powers never faces in this form: what grounds the fact that this manifestation rather than another obtains? For a match struck in oxygen, circumstances select the manifestation. For the first cause, there are no circumstances. The selection is either grounded in God intrinsically (and the collapse argument restarts) or grounded in nothing, and the theist has purchased contingency with bruteness, the very coin that first-cause reasoning refuses to accept from naturalists (Oppy, 2021; Oberle, 2022). I am less certain about this objection than about the parallel objection to extrinsicalism, because a dispositionalist may hold that unselected manifestation is what indeterministic power means, and the aloneness of the first cause makes indeterminism harmless there; the remainder of this paragraph should be read with that caution in force. Still, the grounding question marks the strategy's invoice address, and the corpus contains no published settlement of it.

The aspectival strategy relocates inward. Sijuwade (2021a; 2021b) reformulates simplicity within an essentialist framework of aspects: numerically one entity can bear distinct aspects, and modal predicates that would contradict each other if ascribed simpliciter can be distributed across aspects without multiplying entities. God qua absolute is necessary through and through; God qua related to creation bears contingent aspectival qualifications; and since aspects are not parts, simplicity formally survives. The formal machinery is genuine and the strategy answers the aloneness argument in a way its authors have not, to my knowledge, rebutted in print (Sijuwade, 2021a).

The cost sits elsewhere. Aspects that do real modal work (one necessary, one contingent) begin to behave like the real distinctions that simplicity was defined to exclude, and the friend of austerity may reasonably ask what has been preserved beyond the word. Harwood (2024) documents how much doctrinal flexibility the tradition actually tolerates on this point, which suggests the aspectival theologian has room to manoeuvre; but manoeuvring room is not free real estate. The invoice reads: simplicity retained in name, differentiation admitted in structure. Whether that is a bargain or a capitulation depends on why one wanted simplicity in the first place, a question the analytic literature, oddly, rarely asks, though Feser (2022) and the essays collected in Fuqua and Koons (2023) begin to.

The aloneness scenario provides a controlled test that discriminates among the four strategies more sharply than the original collapse argument does, and it is worth running the comparison explicitly. Suppose a possible world in which God exists and nothing else does (Schmid & Mullins, 2022). The extrinsicalist handles the scenario by denying that anything intrinsic to God differs between that world and ours: God's knowledge that creation exists is an extrinsic ascription, true in our world courtesy of creation, false in the alone world courtesy of its absence (Pawl & Grant, 2023). Kerr (2023) refines the analysis by asking what the alone world's truthmakers are and concluding that God's own being suffices for every truth that world contains. Huls (2025) narrows the omniscience premise instead: what omniscience requires is knowing all truths, and which truths there are varies with the world, so no fixed intrinsic knowledge-state is required. The aspectival strategy accepts intrinsic aspectival variation but denies it multiplies entities (Sijuwade, 2021a). The dispositionalist can say the one power is differently manifested, but must again face the question of what selects the manifestation. And the validity strategist, interestingly, has nothing distinctive to say — the aloneness argument commits no substitution fallacy, which is precisely why Schmid and Mullins (2022) built it. A test case that silences one strategy while merely taxing the others is dialectically valuable: it shows the strategies are not notational variants, and it explains why the corpus's centre of gravity migrated toward extrinsicalism, the strategy with the most uniform answer across test cases. Migration toward uniformity is what one expects when a research community prices robustness across arguments, not just adequacy against one.

The necessitarian limit case completes the intra-theistic square by refusing the game. Pedersen and Lilley (2022) argue, from within Reformed dogmatics, that God's willing of this world is necessary, that the supposed problem of modal collapse presupposes a libertarian conception of freedom that the theological tradition never uniformly held, and that freedom as uncoerced self-expression survives necessity intact. The position is internally stable: that is precisely what makes it the limit case. It confirms the conservation thesis negatively: unable or unwilling to relocate contingency, it abolishes the explanandum and redescribes the loss as theology. Kittle (2020) supplies the relevant counter-pressure from value theory, showing that choices with fixed outcomes retain value only under conditions that necessary creation may not meet; Kraay (2025) maps how isolated the necessitarian option remains within the broader divine freedom literature. And the cosmological sciences add an empirical irony that deserves note: at the very moment some theologians embrace a necessary world, observational cosmology treats ever more of the world's deep structure as contingent, from constants that could apparently have fallen outside life-permitting ranges (Mendes, 2023) to a dark-energy equation of state that may itself evolve (Yadav, 2025). A necessitarian theology must say that all of this measured openness is appearance. Some will. The price is printed on the tin.

THE EMANATIONIST ALTERNATIVE AND THE COSMOLOGICAL HORIZON OF CONTINGENCY

The four strategies examined so far share a background assumption so familiar that the corpus rarely states it: creation is a single, punctual, voluntary act, and contingency must therefore be found either in that act, in its effects, or in the semantics that connects them. Emanationist metaphysics rejects the assumption itself. Andani (2022) makes the point with precision from within the Islamic Neoplatonic tradition: for Ibn Sina and the Ismaili thinkers, the procession of the first intellect from the One is necessary, and the modal collapse argument therefore attacks a picture of voluntary punctual creation that this tradition never endorsed. Contingency is not thereby lost; it enters downstream, in the multiplying relations, receptivities, and compositions of the lower grades of the hierarchy. The One necessitates the first effect; the first effect's own duality (necessary through another, possible in itself) opens the modal space in which everything further unfolds (Andani, 2022). Under the CLF, this is a fifth localization: contingency housed neither in God nor in a semantic gap but in the graded structure of procession itself.

The strategy has an analytic cousin already under fire in the corpus. Feser's Neo-Platonic proof argues from composition to an absolutely simple first cause (Feser, 2017), and Schmid (2021c) attacks precisely the inference from simplicity to unique unconditioned source, cataloguing eleven objections of which several turn on whether a simple source can ground plurality without intermediate differentiation. The emanationist answers that it cannot and does not: differentiation is the hierarchy's work, not the source's. What Schmid (2021c) prices as a gap in the proof, the emanationist books as the first line of the system. Whether that accounting survives scrutiny is a fair question — a critic will ask why the first procession is necessary while later ones are not, and whether 'possible in itself, necessary through another' does more than relabel the problem — but the structure is at least not ad hoc, since it predates the modal collapse debate by roughly a millennium.

My own contribution to this family, developed before I encountered the analytic corpus, is the morphological system of Prauzrok (Knežević, 2024), and intellectual honesty requires me to treat it here as an object of analysis rather than as a settled position. The system, as Đukić (2025) reconstructs it, articulates five ontological axes: absolute and manifestation, cognition, polarity, emanation, and the modalities of ether. Its emanational axis descends from a primordial triad through a first self-conscious actualization to ten successive emanations, of which the visible world is the tenth (Đukić, 2025). The element Đukić (2025) identifies as philosophically most original is the 'higher impulse' (viši impuls): not the divine idea, not primal matter, but the prauzrok itself understood as an operator that converts potentiality into actuality, to which the system gives a quasi-mathematical form through a coefficient of creative forces (Knežević, 2024). Placed under the CLF, the system localizes contingency in the conversion operation distributed across the emanational grades: the absolute pole remains necessary, the tenth emanation is maximally open, and modal status is a matter of degree along the descent rather than a binary property assigned at a single joint. This graded-modality feature distinguishes the position from Andani's binary of 'necessary through another, possible in itself' (Andani, 2022), and it is the feature I would defend most strongly, because it converts the collapse question from 'where is the contingency?' into 'how much contingency at which level?' — a question that admits of structured answers.

The invoice, to apply my own method to my own system, is twofold. First, an emanationist localization weakens *creatio ex nihilo* as classically understood: if the world is the terminal grade of a necessary procession rather than the object of a free punctual choice, then the sense in which God could have refrained from creating anything at all is at best attenuated, and the aloneness

scenario that Kerr (2023) and Pawl and Grant (2023) labour to preserve becomes doubtfully coherent. Second, it strains personal agency: an operator that converts potentiality into actuality through graded stages is not obviously an agent who intends this world under a description, and the tradition's assimilation of the first cause to an impersonal or trans-personal principle is a feature the Abrahamic mainstream has always resisted (Harwood, 2024). Đukić (2025) reads the system as an esoteric monism that refuses both reductionist naturalism and classical ontotheology; that refusal is exactly what a classical theist will find insufficient and a naturalist will find unnecessary. I record the costs without pretending to settle them here. A system builder is rarely the best auditor of his own books, which is one reason the present article submits the system to an external framework rather than the reverse.

The system's epistemic axis raises a question the analytic corpus never asks about its own materials: how would graded contingency be known, if it were real? Knežević (2024) distinguishes three cognitive modes — intellectual understanding, contemplative cognition, and direct mystical experience — and assigns them differential access to the emanational structure, with discursive intellect reliably reaching only the lower grades (Đukić, 2025). An analytic reader will suspect an immunizing move here, and the suspicion is fair; a doctrine that locates its confirmation beyond argument has purchased safety at the price of discussability. Yet the philosophy of cosmology has been forced into structurally similar territory without any mysticism: multiverse proposals are defended through non-empirical confirmation of exactly the kind Dawid articulated, and the systematic audit of such defences finds them wanting by every operational demarcation criterion while conceding that the proposals differ meaningfully in which criterion they approach (Risojević, 2023). If physics may hold epistemically stratified commitments about causally inaccessible structure, the emanationist's claim that modal structure is epistemically stratified cannot be dismissed as disqualifying in itself. What can be demanded is what I have tried to supply here: that the parts of the system which are discussable — its localization of contingency, its cost profile, its structural relations to rival strategies — be extracted and put on the common table. The rest may be private. The framework is not.

There remains the cosmological horizon, and I want to be careful about what I claim for it. The empirical sciences cannot adjudicate between localizations of metaphysical contingency; the relation is one of consonance, not confirmation. With that caution registered, three findings from the philosophy of cosmology bear on the debate's background picture. First, the fine-tuning literature quantifies the apparent modal fragility of physical structure: several fundamental constants sit within narrow life-permitting ranges, and the leading non-design explanation, anthropic selection over a multiverse, achieves only middling explanatory strength, with composite index values between 0.30 and 0.55 across the four canonical multiverse frameworks (Mendes, 2023). Second, the epistemological audit of those same frameworks returns values between 0.20 and 0.50 on a five-dimension demarcation index, indicating that no multiverse hypothesis currently satisfies any operational criterion of scientific status in full (Risojević, 2023). Third, even the deep structure once treated as fixed is now empirically negotiable: DESI measurements combined with CMB and supernova data prefer an evolving dark-energy equation of state over the cosmological constant at significance levels reaching 4.2σ , with a multi-probe convergence value of approximately 0.61 (Yadav, 2025). A world like that, layered, graded, revisable at depths previously assumed necessary, sits more naturally with a metaphysics that distributes modal status across levels than with one that concentrates all necessity at a point and all contingency in a single unexplained transition. Branching actualism, on which possible worlds share an initial segment and diverge through differential exercises of causal power, offers an analytic modal semantics with a congenial shape (Schmid & Malpass, 2023). None of this proves the emanationist right. It does suggest that the fifth localization is not the exotic outlier the corpus's silence about it would imply.

How would the fifth localization fare against the successor arguments that dispatched or taxed the first four? Against the providential collapse, the emanationist position bites a bullet the extrinsicalist refuses: it concedes that the first cause does not exercise description-sensitive intentional control over which world exists, and it denies that such control was ever the right model of the source's relation to its manifestations (Andani, 2022). What replaces control is lawful expressivity: the procession unfolds according to the source's nature, and the morphological system's coefficient of creative forces is an attempt, however preliminary, to give that lawfulness a determinate form (Knežević, 2024; Đukić, 2025). Against the aloneness argument, the position simply denies the possibility of the alone world: a source whose nature is to express cannot exist expressionless, which converts what Kerr (2023) treats as a scenario to be analysed into a scenario to be rejected. Both moves have costs already tallied. But notice that they are different costs from the intra-theistic four, incurred at a different site, and that is the point of the framework: the five families are not competing answers to one question so much as five different purchases in one market. A tradition decides what it must keep — punctual free creation, description-sensitive providence, the possibility of divine solitude, absolute austerity of the first principle — and the CLF then tells it which localizations remain affordable. Read this way, the framework functions less as a referee than as a price list, and the millennium-long persistence of every one of these families suggests that no entry on the list has ever been zero (Vallicella, 2019; Fuqua & Koons, 2023).

One further connection deserves a paragraph, because it links the extrinsicalist majority to an unresolved problem in the ontology of mind. If God's willing and knowing are partly constituted by their objects, as Huneeus (2024) argues, then divine intentional states are individuated by intentional objects that may not exist: the empty world God could have willed, the creatures God could have known. What is the ontological status of such objects? The question is Brentano's, and the recent reconstruction by Shala (2024) of a stratified intentional realism, on which the intentional object is a relational structure that is causally relevant without carrying existence commitments, supplies exactly the kind of machinery an extrinsicalist needs and currently borrows tacitly. That the machinery was built for theoretical psychology rather than theology strikes me as an advantage: it was not gerrymandered for this debate. Here the analytic and the regional literatures could profitably meet, and to my knowledge (Shala, 2024; Huneeus, 2024) neither side has noticed the other.

A doctrinal objection to the whole fifth family should be met head-on rather than left to footnotes. The worry is that emanationism, whether Avicennan or morphological, slides into pantheism: if the world is the terminal grade of the divine procession, the creator-creature distinction thins to a difference of degree. Andani (2022) answers for the Islamic tradition by distinguishing the One beyond being from every grade of the procession, including the first; the distinction is vertical and absolute, not horizontal and gradual. The morphological system answers similarly through its axis of polarity: the transcendent pole is never exhausted by manifestation, and the hermetic correspondence of above and below is a relation of expression, not identity (Knežević, 2024; Đukić, 2025). Whether these answers satisfy will depend on how much work 'expression' can do, and I concede the concept is under-formalized in both traditions. What the objection cannot honestly claim is that the mainstream alternatives are cleaner. The extrinsicalist God, none of whose intrinsic states differ whether or not a world exists, has struck more than one critic as a principle rather than a person (Schmid, 2022; Smith, 2025); the necessitarian God wills this world as inevitably as any emanationist source proceeds (Pedersen & Lilley, 2022). The boundary-policing instinct that Harwood (2024) documents historically has always operated on every side of this terrain. Degrees of orthodoxy, like degrees of contingency, turn out to be distributed rather than binary.

CONCLUSION

The three hypotheses can now be given verdicts. The first hypothesis, on the debate's temporal structure, is confirmed with a qualification. The corpus distribution — eight items in 2019–2021 against fourteen in 2022–2026, with purely validity-focused defences confined to the edges (Tomaszewski, 2019; Vincent, 2026) and every 2022–2025 defence operating inside an extrinsicist, necessitarian, or emanationist framework — supports the claimed shift from validity contestation to cost allocation. The qualification is that Vincent (2026) shows the validity front can reopen; the shift is a change of emphasis, not a closed door. The second hypothesis, the conservation of contingency, is confirmed across all audited cases: thirteen relocation defences distributed over five sites, each paying a characteristic cost, with the necessitarian limit case (Pedersen & Lilley, 2022) confirming the pattern by refusing relocation and surrendering libertarian contingency outright. No audited strategy eliminated the problem without payment; the strongest claim the evidence supports is that the invoices differ in currency, not that any reads zero. The third hypothesis, the correlation between localization site and weakened auxiliary doctrine, is confirmed in the specific mapping documented in the results: validity strategies concede the intrinsic-description gap; extrinsicism pays in intentional determinacy (Schmid, 2022); dispositionalism risks a brute nexus (Fakhri, 2021; Oberle, 2022); aspectivalism pays against austerity (Sijuwade, 2021a); necessitarianism pays in freedom (Kittle, 2020; Kraay, 2025); emanationism pays in *creatio ex nihilo* and personal agency (Andani, 2022; Đukić, 2025).

The principal original contribution of this article is the Contingency Localization Framework together with the conservation thesis it supports: a five-fold typology that classifies every published response to the modal collapse objection by the site at which it houses contingency, an audited demonstration that relocation rather than elimination is the universal pattern, and the first integration of an emanationist system from the regional literature (Knežević, 2024; Đukić, 2025) into the analytic debate as a structurally distinct fifth strategy. The framework reframes the collapse argument itself: not a refutation of classical theism but a diagnostic instrument that, given any precise doctrine of simplicity, returns the location of its contingency store and the bill attached. If the framework is right, the question in the article's subtitle has a definite answer with an indefinite article: the first cause can act contingently, on several internally coherent construals — but each construal purchases the contingency somewhere, and theology's real work is choosing the debt it can live with.

The findings carry implications for three audiences. For analytic philosophy of religion, the diagnostic reframing suggests a change in publication practice: rather than announcing that a given defence 'solves' or 'fails to solve' the collapse problem, papers should state which localization they adopt and which invoice they accept, since the corpus demonstrates that every position does both whether it says so or not (Schmid, 2021b; Waldrop, 2022). For systematic theology, the results convert a threat into a menu: the collapse argument does not force abandonment of simplicity but forces an informed choice among costed alternatives, and confessional traditions differ in which costs they can absorb — a Reformed theology tolerant of necessary willing (Pedersen & Lilley, 2022) faces a different menu than a Thomism committed to libertarian creation (Echavarría, 2025) or an orthodoxy whose boundaries are more hospitable than its polemics suggest (Harwood, 2024). For the regional and esoteric traditions of Southeast Europe, the demonstration that an emanationist morphology occupies a definable position in a live analytic debate opens a path of mutual legibility that has barely been walked: the analytic corpus gains a strategy-type it lacked, and the regional tradition gains an external audit it has rarely sought (Knežević, 2024; Đukić, 2025). None of these implications requires accepting my framework's every classification. They require only the framework's central lesson, which the evidence of twenty-two

papers over eight years supports: in this debate, nobody eliminates contingency's problem — the participants only choose where it lives and what rent they pay.

Four limitations merit explicit acknowledgment, and I state them as the constraints I actually worked under rather than as ritual modesty. The corpus is small (twenty-two items), and although I believe it is exhaustive for the stated inclusion criteria, a census of twenty-two permits only descriptive statistics, and a single overlooked paper would shift the percentages visibly. The coding is mine alone; the two classification changes between passes (Huls, 2025; Kerr, 2023) show the categories have soft edges, and an inter-rater study might redraw them. The corpus is anglophone with two deliberate exceptions, and traditions I could not read in their own languages — the Arabic sources behind Andani (2022) above all — are represented at second hand. And the cost-analysis method presupposes that theoretical costs across doctrines are commensurable enough to compare, an assumption a methodological pluralist may reject wholesale; I have tried to state each invoice in terms its debtor would recognize, but the ledger metaphor is mine, not the tradition's. Future research should test the framework where it is weakest: formalizing the five localizations in a common modal language, extending the census as the debate grows, applying the CLF to the trinitarian and incarnational analogues of collapse arguments, and, the extension I most want to see, asking whether the providential collapse argument (Schmid, 2022) admits an emanationist answer, a question no one, myself included, has yet worked out in print. Whether the pattern documented here will hold beyond the 2026 horizon remains an open empirical question that I cannot resolve; the framework at least ensures that when the next defence appears, we will know exactly where to look for the contingency, and for the bill.

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MODALNI KOLAPS KAO PRIGOVOR BOŽANSKOJ JEDNOSTAVNOSTI: MOŽE LI PRAUZROK DJELOVATI KONTINGENTNO?

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Sažetak: Prigovor modalnog kolapsa tvrdi da doktrina božanske jednostavnosti, po kojoj je prauzrok identičan vlastitom aktu, povlači da je sve što prauzrok proizvodi proizvedeno nužno, pa nijedno stvoreno stanje stvari nije moglo izostati. Otkako je Tomaszewski (2019) ukazao na supstitucijsku grešku u standardnoj formulaciji prigovora, rasprava je proizvela gust korpus odgovora i reformulacija, ali nijedna studija nije sistematski mapirala gdje svaki odgovor smješta kontingenciju koju prigovor navodno uništava. Ovaj članak zatvara tu prazninu. Na osnovu korpusa od dvadeset dva recenzirana priloga objavljena između 2019. i 2026. godine, razvijam Okvir lokalizacije kontingencije (CLF), petostruku tipologiju koja svaki postojeći odgovor klasifikuje prema teorijskom mjestu na kojem smješta kontingenciju: u inferencijalnu strukturu samog argumenta, u ekstrinzičnu predikaciju na strani učinka, u višekolosiječnu božansku moć, u aspektualnu diferencijaciju unutar božanstva, ili u stupnjevanu emanacijsku hijerarhiju. Okvir utemeljuje središnju tezu članka, koju nazivam očuvanjem kontingencije: nijedan odgovor ne eliminiše problem modalnog kolapsa; svaki samo premješta kontingenciju na novo mjesto, a svako premještanje nosi karakterističnu teorijsku cijenu. Bibliometrijska analiza korpusa pokazuje da 63,6% priloga brani jednostavnost dok 36,4% zaoštrava prigovor, da ekstrinzikalističke strategije čine 53,8% odbrana zasnovanih na premještanju, te da se težište rasprave nakon 2021. pomjerilo s pitanja logičke valjanosti na pitanja raspodjele teorijskih troškova. Okvir se potom proširuje na emanacionističku metafiziku artikulisanu u djelu Prauzrok (Knežević, 2024) i analiziranu kod Đukića (2025), za koju tvrdim da predstavlja petu, strukturno različitu strategiju lokalizacije s vlastitim slabostima. Zaključak procjenjuje koje lokalizacije preživljavaju argument providencijalnog kolapsa (Schmid, 2022) i po koju cijenu.

Ključne riječi: *božanska jednostavnost, modalni kolaps, prauzrok, kontingencija, klasični teizam, ekstrinzična predikacija, emanacija, aseitet.*