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By
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ON MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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Dedication

To my Mother and Father, without whose love and support this project would not have been possible.

And to Hillary, whose confidence in me gave me confidence in myself.

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Introduction

In Frank Capra's delightful 1947 film *It's a Wonderful Life*, George Bailey is given a "wonderful" gift: the chance to see what the world would be like without him. Escorted by Clarence – an angel from Heaven sent to comfort and help George out of despair – George is given a sort of tour of the town in which he lives, the place in which he works, and most importantly the lives of the people he loves. The purpose of this exercise is to show George what things would have been like had he never have born. George discovers that everyone is not "better off without him," as he had thought, and that no one "is a failure who has friends."

The chance to see how things would differ were circumstances different is information that is, clearly, counter to fact. Conditionals that capture this counter-to-fact information are thus referred to as *counterfactual* conditionals. Such conditionals are in the subjunctive mood, and thus generally of the form *If such-and-such were the case, then such-and-such would be the case*. A particular subset of these counterfactual conditionals are especially interesting, at least for philosophers of religion. This subset regards counterfactual conditionals that involve the free choices of agents. Such counterfactuals have the general form *If person P were in situation S, then P would freely perform action A*. What is interesting about these counterfactuals of (creaturely) freedom, as they are called, is that many philosophers believe that they provide the key to reconciling God's foreknowledge and providence

with human free agency. The theory that purports to resolve the dilemma that divine foreknowledge and providence poses to human freedom by means of counterfactuals of freedom is the theory of *middle knowledge*. And those philosophers that embrace the theory are often called *Molinists*, after the theory's primary architect Luis de Molina (d. 1600).

Middle knowledge, then, is the view that God knows counterfactuals of freedom (subjunctive conditionals of the form *If person P were in situation S, then P would freely perform action A*), and that by such knowledge God enjoys foreknowledge and providence by actualizing (creating) the circumstances specified in a counterfactual's antecedent, in order to bring about the free action specified in the counterfactual's consequent. The central objection to this view is that the counterfactuals upon which foreknowledge and providence purportedly rest cannot themselves be true. And the alleged reason they cannot be true, simply put, is that such counterfactuals lack "adequate metaphysical grounds" for their truth.

In broad terms, in this dissertation I argue that the grounding objection to the theory of middle knowledge (or Molinism) has an adequate reply. Essentially, that reply is to ground counterfactuals of creaturely freedom in the psychological states of agents, where at times what we do is causally determined by the psychological states that we have at those times. Toward showing how such states might serve as adequate metaphysical grounds for such counterfactuals, I develop a theory of free agency in which *some* of our actions remain free even though causally determined by our characters (or

psychological states). However, I argue that *all* of our actions cannot be so determined, otherwise we would never function as the ultimate cause of at least some of our actions, and so never assume ultimate responsibility for the character traits that are formed by means of our performing the actions that we do. Hence, with respect to those actions that we would be causally determined by our character to perform in certain situations, there can be true counterfactuals of freedom regarding those actions. But since not every action that we perform can be so determined, God cannot enjoy exhaustive counterfactual knowledge, and hence cannot exhaustively plan and actualize an entire possible world. He can, however, plan and actualize possible world-*segments*, so far as his partial middle knowledge affords. This idea of God enjoying partial middle knowledge and so partial foreknowledge and providence is the view I refer to as *restricted-Molinism*.

In more specific terms, the following is a brief overview of each chapter. In *Chapter 1* I develop two versions of middle knowledge (a classical and a contemporary version) and also look at two applications of the theory (in relation to the logical problem of evil and in relation to the soteriological problem of evil). The classical version of middle knowledge derives from Luis de Molina (1535-1600), the first to espouse the theory. Beginning the discussion here with Molina sets the historical context for the remainder of the dissertation. After developing Molina's version of middle knowledge, I look at the contemporary version developed by Thomas Flint, who adorns the essentials of Molina's theory with all the bells and whistles contemporary

metaphysics affords (namely, the contemporary developments in the notion of possible worlds). By way of application, contemporary Molinists argue that middle knowledge provides considerable assistance in answering two objections to God's existence (as traditionally conceived). First, that *the existence of God and the existence of evil (in general) are logically incompatible*. And second, that *the existence of God and the existence of the condemned (a particular evil) are logically incompatible*. For the rest of the chapter I explore the Molinist response to these two objections.

In *Chapter 2* I develop two versions (from William Hasker and Robert Adams) of the most formidable objection to the theory of middle knowledge: the grounding objection. That objection, essentially, is that because counterfactuals of freedom have no grounds for their truth (that is, since there is nothing there in the world that brings about their truth), they are in fact all false. And because they are all false, of course they cannot do the theoretical work that proponents of middle knowledge assign them. Replies to this objection are not in short supply, and for the remainder of the chapter I survey the replies from Molina himself, Francisco Suarez (a contemporary of Molina), Alvin Plantinga, Alfred Freddoso, Calvin Normore, Edward Wierenga, and Thomas Flint. I argue along the way, however, that each of these replies is deficient for one reason or another, and so conclude that because the grounding objection currently has no adequate reply, a fresh reply is required.

In *Chapter 3* I develop the foundation for an adequate reply to the grounding objection. And since on the whole I am responding to the grounding

objection by arguing that counterfactuals of freedom find adequate metaphysical grounds in the psychological traits of agents, in this chapter I develop a theory of freedom that shows how such traits might ground such counterfactuals. The view I develop is a mixture of elements from John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, and Peter van Inwagen, and asserts that some of our actions can be causally predetermined by our characters (or psychological traits) so long as we function as the ultimate cause for at least some of our actions, and so assume ultimate responsibility for the characters that we form during such moments. In addition to this, I consider arguments for concluding that we rarely function as the ultimate causes of our actions, and so rarely enjoy the ability to do otherwise than we do. I refer to this view of free agency as *semi-libertarianism*.

In the final chapter, *Chapter 4*, I build upon the foundation of semi-libertarianism to finally arrive at an adequate reply to the grounding objection. Because semi-libertarianism allows for some of our actions to be causally determined but still free, such causal necessitation (in conjunction with our characters) can reasonably serve as adequate metaphysical grounds for counterfactuals of freedom. Hence, counterfactuals of the sort *If person P were in situation S, then P would perform action A* are grounded and thus true via causation. However, since on semi-libertarianism some of our actions require that we function as the ultimate causes of our actions in order to assume responsibility for the characters that on certain occasions causally determine what actions we perform, it is not the case that there exists

sufficient grounds to ground *all* counterfactuals of freedom. In those moments of ultimate causation, what we do is entirely “up to us,” and thus there is no truth about what we *definitely* would do in those situations. Hence, in such situations there are no true counterfactuals of freedom and so not even God can know what we would do by knowing those counterfactuals. And if this is so, then God cannot exhaustively plan the course of the world by knowing counterfactuals of freedom, and so he cannot actualize an *entire* possible world, as traditional theories of middle knowledge affirm. However, because God enjoys some counterfactual knowledge, he can *partially* plan the course of the world given his partial knowledge of counterfactuals of freedom, and thus God can actualize possible world-*segments* (or portions of possible worlds). Actualizing only possible world-segments, and enjoying partial foreknowledge and providence based on a restricted knowledge of counterfactuals of freedom, is the view I refer to as *restricted-Molinism*. Thus, I argue that grounding counterfactuals of freedom in the psychological traits of agents requires modifying the traditional theory of middle knowledge in the ways described.

1

Middle Knowledge and Applications

Throughout the history of Christian thought, the majority of Christian thinkers have agreed that God's having foreknowledge and providence over the actions of human beings is consistent with those actions being freely performed. The particular conception of freedom involved, however, has differed greatly from one historical figure to the next; some have endorsed theological determinism (where God causally predetermines whatever comes to pass), others a more libertarian conception of human freedom (where the actions of an agent are *not* predetermined by causes over which the agent has no control). But despite these differences, the conclusion that there is nothing logically absurd in conjoining exhaustive foreknowledge and divine providence with human freedom has historically been a point of consensus. The attempts that have been made to demonstrate the philosophical compatibility of these two views are members of the family of views referred to as *theological compatibilism*. Not surprisingly, then, views that maintain that God's enjoying exhaustive foreknowledge precludes human beings from enjoying free agency, or that human beings enjoying free agency precludes God from enjoying exhaustive foreknowledge, are members of a family of views referred to as *theological incompatibilism*.

In defense of the theological compatibilist position, in 1588 Spanish Jesuit Luis de Molina (1535-1600) published the first edition of his *Liberi Arbitrii cum*

Gratiae Donis, Divina Praescientia, Providentia, Praedestinatione et Reprobatione Concordia (*The Compatibility of Free Choice with the Gift of Grace, Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination and Reprobation*).

In this work, Molina proposed a rather ingenious solution to the problem divine foreknowledge and providence presents to the idea that human beings are genuinely free: the theory of middle knowledge. Middle knowledge – or Molinism after Molina himself – ignited quite a controversy, especially with respect to whether Molina pushed the bounds of freedom too far, thereby restricting the sovereignty of God over too little. In fact, in 1597 Pope Clement VIII established a theological commission, “initiating a ten-year period of intense study and public disputation which rendered the *Concordia* one of the most carefully scrutinized books in Western intellectual history.”¹ By 1607 the commission had reached no decision, and then Pope Paul V decreed that the parties involved in the controversy were forbidden to refer to the other as heretical, and that the Church would resolve the issue at a more appropriate time. That time, however, has yet to arrive.²

In this chapter I intend to articulate the theory of middle knowledge, as well as the theory’s primary theological benefits or applications. In the first section I develop both Molina’s classical theory of middle knowledge, as well as Thomas Flint’s more contemporary version. Flint’s version capitalizes on the contemporary notion of possible worlds in order to better explain how middle

¹ Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, translated with introduction and notes by A. J. Freddoso, (Ithaca: London, 1998) viii.

² Eef Dekker, *Middle Knowledge* (Peeters: Leuven, 2000) 2.

knowledge can resolve the difficulties that foreknowledge and providence pose for human free agency. In the second section I look at two applications of the theory of middle knowledge with respect to the problem of evil. The first is the role Alvin Plantinga assigns to the theory of middle knowledge – his own version of which he developed in 1973 without prior knowledge of Molina’s work – in order to rebut the logical problem of evil. The second is William Lane Craig’s application of Plantinga’s work regarding the logical problem of evil to answer what Craig calls the *soteriological* problem of evil. This problem is roughly that of reconciling the existence of God – traditionally defined as omniscient, omnipotent, and wholly good – with the existence of the damned. We begin, then, with an explication of Molina’s theory of divine middle knowledge.

1.1. MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE AND PROVIDENCE

1.1.1. *The Classic Statement*

The doctrine of middle knowledge is intended to remove the apparent incoherence of God possessing foreknowledge of and providence over the future and free actions of his creatures. One obvious solution to remove such *prima facie* incoherence would be to deny that God actually enjoys any foreknowledge or providence at all. Another obvious solution, though probably less attractive, would be to deny that human beings are free agents. Neither solution is at all attractive to most Christian theists. The latter move threatens the justice of God, given that he holds us morally responsible for actions that we do not freely perform. And the former move threatens the veracity of

Christian Scripture, given their suggestion that God knows “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done” (Isaiah 46:10). Molina begins developing his solution to the foreknowledge-providence-freedom dilemma here. That is, as a Christian, he first consults the “Sacred Writings” to see what the reasons are for holding that God enjoys foreknowledge of and providence over the free actions of his creatures in any case.³ For, of course, if there are no good reasons, there really is no dilemma to be resolved. Some of the passages Molina considers telling include the following.

To begin with, Molina cites Psalm 138:3-4, which states “You [God] have understood my [the Psalmist’s] thoughts from afar; my path and my portion You have scrutinized. And all my ways You have foreseen ... You have known all things, the newest as well as the old.”⁴ In Wisdom 8:8, divine wisdom is described in this way, “She knows the signs and the wonders before they come to be, and the unfolding of the times and the ages.” Ecclesiasticus 23:28-29⁵ states, “The eyes of the Lord are brighter than the sun, observing all the ways of man and the depths of the abyss, and looking into the hearts of men in their secret paths. For all things were known to the Lord God before they were created.” Later at 39:24-25⁶ we find, “The works of all flesh are before Him, and nothing whatever is hidden from His eyes. From age to age

³ Freddoso 167.

⁴ As Freddoso notes, in some of these quotations Molina uses the Vulgate rather than the Hebrew numerical reckoning in referring to Scripture’s chapter and verse. Hence, according to the Hebrew reckoning, the present reference is actually to Psalm 139, and the verses to numbers 3-5.

⁵ The Vulgate 23:28-29 in more modern editions corresponds to 23:19-20.

⁶ The Vulgate 39:24-25 in more modern editions corresponds to 30:19-20.

He watches, and nothing is surprising in His sight,” to which Molina adds “as though, that is to say, something might happen which He had not foreseen beforehand.”⁷ From the prophet Isaiah 41:23 we find, “Announce what is going to happen in the future, and we will know that you are gods.” And later at 48:5 we read, “I revealed things to you beforehand; before they happened I announced them to you, so that you would not say, ‘My idols did these things, and my carved images and metal images decreed them.’” In the Gospel of John 14:29 we find Jesus saying, “And I have told you this now, before it happens, so that when it has happened, you might believe.” And according to Hebrews 4:13 we see the (unknown) author state, “No creature is hidden from His sight. All things are exposed and open to His eyes,” about which Molina comments “God knows all contingent things when they come to be and are already actual.”⁸

Some other passages that Molina did not mention, but could have mentioned, include the following.⁹ With regard to God’s foreknowledge of the general course of history, we read in Isaiah 46:9-10, “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done.” In addition, Isaiah 44:7-8 reads, “And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, Since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, Let them show

⁷ Freddoso 167.

⁸ Freddoso 167.

⁹ Many of the following passages are adopted from Gregory Boyd, *God of the Possible* (Baker: Grand Rapids, 2000).

these to them. Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?”

Pertaining to God’s foreknowledge and foretelling of the specific historical circumstances that the Israelites would encounter, Genesis 15:13-14 states that God informs Abraham of Israel’s future captivity in Egypt: “your descendents will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” Similarly, referring to Israel’s second captivity many years later in Babylon, Jeremiah 29:10 says, “After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I [God] will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.”

In addition, with respect to God’s foreknowledge regarding specific individuals, there is an abundance of Scriptural evidence indicating that God foreknows precisely what their future holds. For example, 1 Kings 13:2 says, “Then he [an unnamed “man of God”] cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD: ‘Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men’s bones shall be burned on you.’” In Isaiah 44:28 God is quoted as saying, “Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying of Jerusalem, “You shall be built,” And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”’” The significance of these passages is that the former is traditionally thought (according to a traditional,

conservative dating of 1 Kings) to have occurred over 200 years prior to the birth of Josiah, and the latter (again, according to a traditional, conservative dating of Isaiah) over a 150 years prior to the birth of Cyrus, who would later become king of Persia.

In similar fashion, many details surrounding the life and ministry of Jesus strongly suggest that God (*qua* Father and Son) possesses foreknowledge. Matthew 26:34 records Jesus foretelling Peter's denial of him, including minute details regarding when and even the number times Peter would do so: "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." From John 6:64, Jesus also appears to have foreknowledge of Judas' betrayal of him: "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray him." John 21:18-19 implies that Jesus foreknows the kind of death that Peter would face later in life. He says to Peter, "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.' This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God."¹⁰ Lastly, Matthew 16:21 states, "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." According to the book of Acts, when these events transpired, they did so "by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). The apostle Peter

¹⁰ It is part of Christian tradition that Peter was martyred by being "stretched out" and crucified upside down.

later reiterated this thought saying, “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done” (Acts 4:27-28).¹¹

Given these passages and the detail they record regarding God’s foreknowledge – even foreordination in some cases – it is little wonder why Molina and other traditional Christian theists concur that “foreknowledge of future contingents in God is absolutely obvious from the Sacred Writings, so much so that the contrary position is ... a manifest error from the point of view of the faith.”¹² However, even if as much is obvious from the point of view of the faith, it is not in the same way obvious that God’s foreknowledge and providence can be philosophically reconciled with the free agency of human beings. So how does Molina reconcile the *prima facie* inconsistency regarding freedom, foreknowledge, and providence?

Molina tells us that in order to reconcile divine foreknowledge and human freedom, we must “distinguish *three* types of knowledge in God.”¹³ The first type is what Molina refers to as “purely natural knowledge,” which is knowledge that “could not have been any different in God.” Molina asserts that through this type of knowledge God “knew all the things to which the divine power extended either immediately or by the mediation of secondary causes, including not only the natures of individuals and the necessary states of affairs

¹¹ Aside from the passages cited by Molina, these verses are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

¹² Freddoso 167.

¹³ Freddoso 168.

composed of them but also the contingent states of affairs.” This first type of knowledge, then, appears to be knowledge of all *modal* truths, such as necessary truths regarding the laws of logic. These truths are independent of God’s will and could not have been any different than they are. They are naturally, and so essentially, apart of God’s noetic structure. Included in this category of modal truths are truths regarding all possibilities or possible states of affairs. God knows every possible individual he could create, including every possible situation that individual could possibly find themselves in, and thus every possible action or reaction that individual could possibly have. Hence this type of knowledge is of either what *must* be the case or what *could* be case; it includes all necessary truths as well as all truths regarding all possibilities.

The second type of knowledge God possesses is what Molina calls “*free knowledge*.” It is described as being “*after the free act of His will,*” where “God knew *absolutely and determinately, without any condition or hypothesis*, which ones from among all the contingent states of affairs were in fact going to obtain and, likewise, which ones were not going to obtain.”¹⁴ There are two points to emphasize here. The first is that this type of knowledge is knowledge that is *contingent* as opposed to necessary (as is God’s natural knowledge). This type of knowledge is not essential or naturally part of the structure of God’s knowledge, but is only had by God after his decision to create a certain state of affairs. For example, had God decided to create states of affairs that

¹⁴ Freddoso 168.

did not include George Bush, all of the true propositions that now exist regarding President Bush would not now be true. Such a decision to create Bush is in no obvious way necessary, and so the truth of these propositions depend on God's decision to create the state of affairs that includes President Bush. Herein lies the second point. The contingently true propositions foreknown to God through his free knowledge are true as a result of God's will. In God's natural knowledge such propositions are only possibly true, but should God decide that they actually become true, they would, and thus compose the set of true propositions comprising God's free knowledge. Hence, this type of knowledge in God is knowledge of what *will* be the case, given God's decision to create whichever set of circumstances he does.

The third type of knowledge in God (on Molina's view) is what he refers to as "*middle* knowledge." Here "in virtue of the most profound and inscrutable comprehension of each faculty of free choice, He saw in his own essence what each such faculty would do with its innate freedom were it to be placed in this or in that or, indeed, in infinitely many orders of things – even though it would really be able, if it so willed, to do the opposite."¹⁵ This type of knowledge, then, contains true propositions regarding what each possible free creature ("faculty of choice") would freely do (in a libertarian sense: "it would really be able, if it so willed, to do the opposite") when placed in any possible set of circumstances ("orders of things") that God might create. In contemporary discussions, such propositions are referred to as

¹⁵ Freddoso 168.

counterfactuals of freedom, and so Molina's description of divine middle knowledge amounts to God's having exhaustive knowledge of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (propositions of the sort *If subject S were placed in circumstances C, then S would perform action A*). It is important to stress that these propositions or counterfactuals of freedom describe actions that are freely performed in a libertarian sense; a sense in which the subject in question possesses the genuine ability to do otherwise, and thus is genuinely able to choose to do otherwise given the very same set of circumstances C. Nothing about C determines that S do A, rather it is causally indeterminate whether in C subject S performs A, or something else.

It is equally important to stress, as Molina does, that in the structure of God's knowledge counterfactuals of freedom must be "located" between God's natural knowledge and his free knowledge. Toward showing that they cannot be "located" within the categories of God's natural or free knowledge – and thus that a new category of knowledge is needed – Molina says this. Perhaps "someone will ask if such middle knowledge should be called free or if it should be called natural."¹⁶ Well, first Molina says that "such knowledge should in no way be called free, both because it is prior to any free act of God's will and also because it was not within God's power to know through this type of knowledge anything other than what He in fact knew." The point, then, is that this type of knowledge, like God's natural knowledge but unlike his free knowledge, is not knowledge that he has any control over. The true

¹⁶ Freddoso 168.

counterfactual propositions that constitute middle knowledge are not propositions that God could falsify. Their truth-value is independent of his will and so is outside of his control.

However, according to Molina, it is also the case that it should “not be said that [middle] knowledge is natural in the sense of being so innate to God that He could not have known the opposite of that which He knows through it.” The reason is that if the “created choice [or subject] were going to do the opposite, as it indeed can, then God would have known *that very thing* through this same type of knowledge, and not what He in fact knows.” What Molina is emphasizing here is that God’s middle knowledge is contingent; it is knowledge that would be different if the free creature (or “created choice”) in question were to choose differently in the created circumstances (or “order of things”) in which that creature finds itself. Were the created choice or subject going to perform action A* in C rather than A, then the counterfactual *If S were in C, then S would do A* would be false, and the counterfactual *If S were in C, then S would do A** instead would be true. Thus “*middle* knowledge partly has the characteristic of *natural* knowledge, since it was prior to the free act of the divine will and since God did not have the power to know anything else,” and “it partly has the character of *free* knowledge, since ... [it] derives from the fact that free choice, on the hypothesis that it should be created in one or another order of things, would do the one thing rather than the other, even though it would indifferently be able to do either of them.”¹⁷ In short, middle knowledge

¹⁷ Freddoso 169.

resembles natural knowledge in that it is knowledge over which God has no control, but it also resembles free knowledge in that it is knowledge that is contingent rather than necessary.

One question to ask, given this portrait of divine knowledge, is how does God actually know the truth-values for counterfactuals of creaturely freedom? Another is how exactly does middle knowledge assist God in providentially guiding the world? Regarding the first question, we have already seen Molina's answer in part. Recall that in describing middle knowledge Molina described God as having such knowledge "in virtue of the most profound and inscrutable comprehension of each faculty of free choice."¹⁸ And given this profound and inscrutable comprehension God "saw in His own essence what each such faculty would do with its innate freedom were it to be placed in this or in that or, indeed, in infinitely many orders of things." Hence Molina's preliminary response is that God has epistemological access to the truth-values of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom simply in virtue of knowing his own nature. Now why such information is exactly as it is in God's nature, as opposed to something else, is not a question Molina appears to address. He does indicate that "if [a] created free choice were going to do the opposite ... then God would have known that very thing."¹⁹ But, of course, this does not tell us why one free choice is made over another in the context in which the choice is made. Hence, saying that God would know something different were a free agent to do something different does not explain everything we would

¹⁸ Freddoso 168.

¹⁹ Freddoso 169.

like explained when asking why God's middle knowledge is not different than it is.

Later in the *Concordia*, however, and in response to a quite different question, Molina does supply more content to this initial answer regarding the source or grounds of God's middle knowledge. Here the question is whether "this middle knowledge is to be countenanced by any of the blessed in heaven?"²⁰ Molina replies that the answer is no, even regarding Christ, because "Christ's soul does not *comprehend* the divine essence." Instead, "this sort of knowledge concerning created things is attributed [only] to God [the Father] ... because He is God and for this reason comprehends each created faculty of choice in a certain absolutely profound manner." This is important for Molina because "in order to see which part a free being will turn itself toward, it is not sufficient that there be a [mere] comprehension of the being or even that there be a comprehension that is greater than is the thing comprehended." Instead, "what is required is an *absolutely profound and absolutely preeminent comprehension*, such as is found only in God with respect to creatures."²¹

It appears, then, that for Molina it is insufficient for knowing which decision a libertarian free agent will make in some specified set of circumstances that one merely comprehend the divine essence (as it is here where the information regarding the truth-values of counterfactuals of freedom ontologically lies). Rather, if one wants to know what a libertarian agent will do

²⁰ Freddoso 170.

²¹ Freddoso 171.

in a certain set of circumstances, one will need to comprehend the divine essence with an “*absolutely profound and absolutely preeminent comprehension*,”²² a kind of “supercomprehension,” as Robert Adams has called it.²³ But even with these additional comments, of course, not everything regarding how exactly God obtains knowledge of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom is satisfactorily answered. It is apparent, though, that Molina believes enough has been said and argued such that given God’s omniscience and other cognitive credentials, it is unreasonable to think that knowing with an absolute and preeminent comprehension could *not* yield knowledge of the truth-values of the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom under discussion.

Now as to the second question mentioned above – How precisely do these three types of knowledge assist God in his exercise of providence? – Molina distinguishes between three kinds of causes or ways of bringing something about. As he states, “among all the things created (i) some are from God immediately, (ii) others come to be through the mediation of just those secondary causes that act by a necessity of nature without any dependence on created free choice, and (iii) still others emanate from created free choice.”²⁴ As Molina recognizes, God can be “a cause ... of all things of the first and second types solely through His purely natural knowledge ...

²² In Chapter 2 we will see that such a suggestion is not nearly enough to satisfy critics of Molina’s theory, especially when the critics’ central criticism regards whether counterfactuals of creaturely freedom have truth-values to begin with.

²³ Robert Adams, “Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1977), 111.

²⁴ Freddoso 178.

complemented by the free determination of His will.”²⁵ However, in order for God to “predestine certain human beings or angels and to ordain all things to their proper ends, besides His purely *natural* knowledge ... it was also necessary for Him to have that middle knowledge.”²⁶ For God’s possessing middle knowledge allows him, “on the hypothesis that He should will to bring about this or that order of things, [to foresee] with certainty all that would come to be because of angelic and human free choice in each one of those orders of things.”²⁷ And if God is then able to know what free creatures will do in any order of things he providentially places them, then he clearly is able to providentially control (in an indirect way) all of the free decisions of free creatures by providentially controlling (in a direct way) which orders of things and faculties of choices are created. Thus if God knows that *If S were in C, then S would do A*, and God desires that A obtain, he need only create C. And the same thing is true, of course, regarding any subject, any set of circumstances, and any subsequent action. Hence, Molina’s theory of middle knowledge, if defensible, provides an effective explanation with respect to how to reconcile God’s foreknowledge and providence with human freedom of a libertarian sort.

1.1.2. *The Contemporary Statement*

Modern versions of middle knowledge make use of the notion of possible worlds in explicating with greater detail how divine decision making should be

²⁵ Freddoso 178.

²⁶ Freddoso 178.

²⁷ Freddoso 178.

understood with respect to God's choice of creating a world. Thomas Flint is one modern Molinist, and I draw from his *Divine Providence* in developing the contemporary view.²⁸

As a Molinist, Flint's account of middle knowledge and its use in elucidating the relationship between divine foreknowledge and human freedom is alike in essentials to Molina's account. Flint holds that the three types of knowledge that God enjoys are natural knowledge, middle knowledge, and free knowledge, which correspond respectively to God's knowledge of necessary propositions, counterfactual propositions, and future-contingent propositions. Flint also accepts that God lacks any kind of influence or control regarding the truth values of propositions that reside in natural and middle knowledge, but that God does have some control regarding the truth values of propositions that lie within free knowledge. And, as we saw with Molina, this is simply because God's decisions using natural and middle knowledge then determine just what his free knowledge will be. Graphically represented, the essentials of the Molinist view regarding the modal nature and structure of God's knowledge are the following.²⁹

	<i>Natural Knowledge</i>	<i>Middle Knowledge</i>	Free Knowledge
Truths Known are:	Necessary	Contingent	Contingent
	Independent of God's free will	Independent of God's free will	Dependent on God's free will

²⁸ Thomas Flint, *Divine Providence* (Cornel University Press: Ithaca, 1998).

²⁹ The subsequent graphic is found in Flint 42.

Flint finds it important to emphasize that within God's middle knowledge there are not only counterfactuals regarding creaturely freedom, but also counterfactuals of divine freedom. To see this, consider that via his middle knowledge, God knows that "if he were to create Adam in circumstances C, circumstances which include God's assuring Adam that eating the fruit of a particular tree would lead to immediate expulsion from the garden, Adam would in fact freely eat the forbidden fruit."³⁰ Allowing D to stand for Adam's "dastardly deed" of disobeying God and thus eating the fruit, God knows by his middle knowledge that were C to occur, D would follow (or, $C \rightarrow D$). In addition, given God's warning to Adam regarding expulsion from the garden in the event that Adam were to eat the fruit, God certainly seems counterfactually to know that were D to occur, E would follow (or, $D \rightarrow E$), where E stands for expulsion from the garden. But, as Flint notes, if $C \rightarrow D$ and $D \rightarrow E$, then $C \rightarrow E$, so God would know $C \rightarrow E$ as well. That is, God would know that *If I create Adam in circumstances C, I would expel him from the garden*. This proposition is clearly contingent since it was not causally necessary that Adam eat the fruit, but just as clearly it is not a proposition under God's control, "for it follows from a counterfactual of creaturely freedom about Adam (over which truth God has no control) and a necessary truth about God's doing what he has promised to do (over which truth he likewise has no control)."³¹ Hence, $C \rightarrow E$ appears to be part of God's middle knowledge although it is clearly not a

³⁰ Flint 42.

³¹ Flint 42.

counterfactual of *creaturely* freedom. Rather, it states what God would do were certain circumstances to obtain, and so is a counterfactual of *divine* freedom. God's middle knowledge, then, appears to include "much more than [simply] counterfactuals of creaturely freedom."³²

Now with respect to the progression or development of God's knowledge, Flint views God's knowledge as, in a sense, "growing through four logical moments."³³ To clarify the notion of logical moments, as contemporary Molinists refer to them, it is important to see that they are distinct from temporal moments.³⁴ Temporal moments are chronologically ordered such that regarding any two moments t_1 and t_2 , t_1 is said to be 'temporally prior' to t_2 if only if t_1 temporally precedes t_2 . Logical moments are different. Any two logical moments l_1 and l_2 could temporally occur concurrently, or be altogether atemporal. With logical priority, to say that something is logically prior to something else – that one moment is logically prior to another, for example – is to say that either something serves to explain something else, or that one thing provides the grounds or basis for another. Such explanations or grounds may temporally precede what they ground or explain, but they need not do so. To take a common example, the truth of the premises in a sound argument are logically prior to the conclusion, but it need not be the case that, temporally

³² Flint 43.

³³ Flint 43.

³⁴ The importance of making a distinction between logical and temporal moments is that many (philosophical) theists do not want to be committed to the idea that in order to think and make decisions God must think discursively. Such a commitment is viewed as a constraint on God's epistemic abilities, and as such it is argued that it is an unbefitting restriction on the divine mind.

speaking, the truth of the premises precedes the truth of the conclusion.³⁵ If (i) all men are moral, and (ii) Socrates is a man, it follows that (iii) Socrates is mortal. And though the truth of (iii) depends on or is explained by (i) and (ii), it is incorrect to say that (i) and (ii) were, in a temporal sense, both true before (iii).

As another example, consider the relationship between God and his properties (on the assumption that the theological doctrine of divine simplicity is false). If God is essentially omnibenevolent or all-good, and God exists necessarily (i.e., there are no metaphysically or genuinely possible worlds that do not include God), then God has always existed and has always been good. However, if goodness is an essential property or characteristic of God, then God cannot exist without that property. He thus depends, in a sense, on that property for his existence, and hence that property is part of what grounds his own existence. But on the assumption that God is essentially omnibenevolent and exists necessarily, the existence of the property of being good cannot temporally precede the existence of God. The relationship between God and his goodness, given that it is not a temporal relationship, is then strictly a logical one. The property of goodness logically precedes God, and it can be said to be logically prior to him, even though it could not have existed temporally prior to him.

Now according to this construal of logical priority, what are the four logical moments that God's knowledge "grows" through, as Flint describes it? The

³⁵ Craig 127-8.

first moment encompasses God's natural knowledge, where, as discussed above, God knows all necessary truths. The second moment contains God's middle knowledge, where, as also discussed above, he knows all contingent truths over which he exercises no control. Thus, given God's natural and middle knowledge, God knows in detail which world would result from any act of creation (or "creative act of will," as Flint phrases it³⁶) that he might perform. In the third logical moment, God decides upon a certain act of creation, which includes deciding which beings he will create and in which circumstances. From this decision, as well as the content of God's natural and middle knowledge, proceed not only the initiation of the string of all the contingent creaturely events that will occur in God's chosen world, but in addition the fourth logical moment in the structure of God's knowledge: *free* knowledge. In this moment of free knowledge God knows all the contingent truths under his control, that is, propositions that became true as a result of God's decision or (creative act of will) in the third logical moment. Graphically, the point can be put this way.³⁷

<i>First Moment</i>	<i>Second Moment</i>	<i>Third Moment</i>	<i>Fourth Moment</i>
Natural Knowledge	Middle Knowledge	Creative Act of Will	Free Knowledge

According to Flint the "problems of foreknowledge and sovereignty are solved on this picture," and the reason is that God's foreknowledge of contingent events flows from a combination of knowledge beyond his control in addition to decisions that are under his control. That is, because "he has

³⁶ Flint 43.

³⁷ The following picture is found in Flint 43.

middle knowledge and makes free choices concerning which creatures will exist in which circumstances, God has both complete foreknowledge concerning how those creatures will act and great control over their actions.”³⁸ However, “because the knowledge which generates this foresight and sovereignty is not itself a product of free divine activity, our actions remain genuinely free, not the robotic effects of divine causal determination.”³⁹

To illustrate the point, consider this example from Flint.⁴⁰ Say there is a subject – call him Cuthbert – who performs a free action – buying an iguana in some set of circumstances C. On the Molinist way of thinking God has foreknowledge of and (in a sense) control over this action. Prior to creation, and by means of God’s natural knowledge, God knew many truths concerning Cuthbert, one of which was that it is possible that he purchase an iguana. By God’s middle knowledge, God knew that Cuthbert would freely buy the iguana if placed in circumstances C. This knowledge leaves God a good deal of room to providentially maneuver. God could place Cuthbert in C, in some other set of circumstances C* (where Cuthbert still buys an iguana), in C** (where Cuthbert buys two iguanas), in C*** (where he buys none), and so forth. In addition, God could create a situation that, unhappily for Cuthbert, does not include his existence at all. Whatever option God decides to actualize, he would know precisely how the world would go were he to create it. Assume, then, that after due consideration God decides to create both Cuthbert and C.

³⁸ Flint 44.

³⁹ Flint 44.

⁴⁰ The following illustration is found in Flint 44.

This creative act of will immediately provides God with the foreknowledge that Cuthbert will purchase an iguana. As Flint concludes, middle knowledge then “affords God both foreknowledge of and control over Cuthbert’s free action.”⁴¹

Before discussing in some detail Flint’s understanding of the selection process God performs in deciding upon a certain world for creation, it is appropriate here to underscore, as Flint does, two points regarding the nature of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. The first is that the counterfactuals that comprise God’s middle knowledge “need to be such that no assumption is made concerning the existence of the creature being discussed.” For middle knowledge to be of any assistance to God, middle knowledge must include counterfactuals about possible but nonactual free creatures. Obviously were God only aware of counterfactuals regarding those creatures that would turn out to be actual, it is difficult to make sense of there being a free decision on God’s part to create them. Hence, as Flint says, “to maintain God’s status as a free creator, and to safeguard the action-guiding status of his middle knowledge, the Molinist needs to affirm that, prior to his creative act of will, God has middle knowledge concerning the actions that would be performed by creatures who never in fact will be created.”⁴²

Flint is aware that thinking and speaking of nonexistent beings is a well-known difficulty, but insists that much confusion can be mitigated by thinking of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom as “making reference, not directly to *creatures*, but rather to the *individual essences* of such creatures, where the

⁴¹ Flint 44.

⁴² Flint 47.

essence of a creature is simply the set of properties essential to it.”⁴³ Because such essences could exist without any actual being that instantiates them, the counterfactuals which God considers in the third moment of his knowledge are best thought of as referring to such essences.

The second point Flint underscores about counterfactuals of creaturely freedom is that “the Molinist can and should think of the circumstances in which an action is performed as being *complete*.”⁴⁴ By this Flint means that in the circumstances in which a subject were to find herself, God would know not just some but all of the causal conditions affecting her action. The “safest” way of explicating this idea is to “think of the circumstances as including all of the prior causal activity of all agents along with all of the simultaneous causal activity by all agents other than the agent the counterfactual is about.”⁴⁵ And thinking of the circumstances comprehensively in this way in terms of causes is just what it is to think of the circumstances in counterfactuals of creaturely freedom as being complete. With these points about counterfactuals in mind, Flint proposes conceiving of counterfactuals in the following way.

If creaturely essence *P* were instantiated in nondetermining complete circumstances *C* at time *t*, the instantiation of *P* would (freely) do *A*.⁴⁶

The last item to consider before presenting Flint’s account of the selection processes God undertakes in selecting a particular possible world for actualization is that of a *creaturely world-type*. As indicated already, if God has

⁴³ Flint 47.

⁴⁴ Flint 47.

⁴⁵ Flint 47.

⁴⁶ Flint 47.

middle knowledge, he clearly then knows all true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, and in addition knows them prior to his creative act of will (the third logical moment in the structure of his knowledge). Thus, which counterfactuals God knows will obviously impose constraints on which possible world God is capable of actualizing. To illustrate the point, if God has knowledge of the counterfactual $C \rightarrow A$, which means that in circumstances C Cuthbert will perform action A (the purchase of an iguana for example), then God knows that he cannot create a world including circumstances C but excluding Cuthbert's performing action A. No doubt there are *logically* (or merely conceivable) possible worlds where Cuthbert in C performs some other action than A, but such worlds are not really or genuinely or *metaphysically* possible for God to actualize given the truth of the counterfactual $C \rightarrow A$. Thus any world in which C obtains will be followed by the obtaining of A. Now God could, it seems, bring about C and then causally preclude Cuthbert from performing A (causing Cuthbert to purchase no iguana, for example), but of course such activity on God's would render Cuthbert unfree on a libertarian conception of freedom. On that conception of freedom, if Cuthbert is not the ultimate (or first) cause of his action then the action is not properly described as being *his* action at all. Thus if God decides to bring about C, he then has no choice about whether Cuthbert will bring about A.

As Flint means it, then, a creaturely world-type is simply the complete set of logically consistent counterfactuals of freedom.⁴⁷ Two counterfactuals are said to be logically consistent just in case they are not logically contradictory. Thus the counterfactuals *If Cuthbert were in C, then he would buy only one iguana* and *If Cuthbert were in C, then he would buy only two iguanas* though each logically possible are not together logically consistent. Both counterfactuals cannot be members of the same complete set of logically consistent counterfactuals, and so both counterfactuals are members of distinct complete sets, or creaturely world-types. The set of counterfactuals themselves is obviously larger than the set of true counterfactuals, and thus there are a great many permutations of this complete set of counterfactuals that can be ordered into logically consistent creaturely world-types. So there are as many creaturely world-types as there are logically possible permutations of logically consistent complete sets of counterfactuals of freedom. Now from this it follows that any *true* creaturely world-type that God might know would then impose some restrictions on the possible world that God might create. Hence God's possessing middle knowledge not only requires that he prevolitionally know which counterfactuals are true, but also which creaturely world-type is true. And which creaturely world-type is true is simply determined by which complete set of logically consistent counterfactuals contains only counterfactuals that are true.

⁴⁷ In this context, a set of counterfactuals S can be said to be complete just in case there exists no counterfactual C that is logically consistent with S, but not a member of S.

Following Flint, let us refer to the true creaturely world-type as T.⁴⁸ Given that counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are only contingently true, the complete set of true counterfactuals will only be contingently true as well. Hence, the truth of T is contingent. In addition, T is consistent only with some possible worlds. It is obviously not consistent with those possible worlds that are themselves consistent with creaturely world-types that are in fact false. Call all of those worlds consistent with T, therefore, T-worlds, and ~T-worlds worlds which are inconsistent with T. Middle knowledge, then, informs God that his creative activity can only apply to T-worlds, even though there exists many other logically possible ~T-worlds. Given God's middle knowledge that T is true, it is simply out of God's hands that no ~T-world is creatable.

It is also out of God's hands that he cannot actualize a world where every counterfactual that is a member of T corresponds to some state of affairs in that world. The truth of one counterfactual of creaturely freedom regarding a certain state of affairs may preclude the obtaining of another state of affairs corresponding to another true counterfactual of freedom. For example, if both counterfactuals *If C were to obtain, then Cuthbert would forever be a bachelor* and *If C* were to obtain, then Cuthbert would marry Jane* are true, then though each is true there is no possible world God could actualize containing C and C*. So there are many different possible worlds that are consistent with T, and thus many different possible worlds that God could select given his middle knowledge that T is true.

⁴⁸ Flint 51.

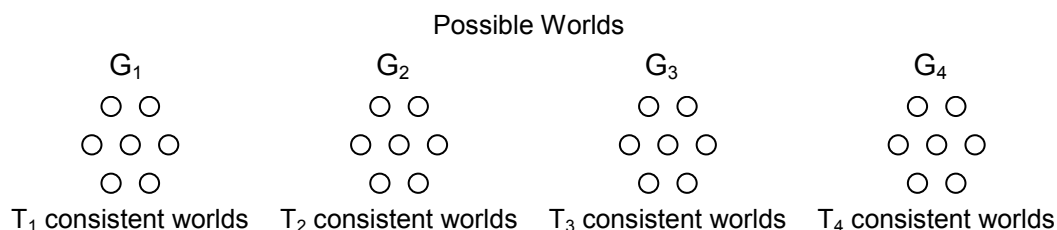
Putting this together, then, Flint's account of divine world-selection is as follows. Let the set of possible worlds consistent with a creaturely world-type be called the "*galaxy* of worlds determined by that world-type."⁴⁹ It can then be said that a particular world is *feasible* for God to create just in case it is a member of the galaxy determined by T. Thus, any world that is a member of a different galaxy than that determined by T is properly referred to as a world that is *infeasible* for God to create. From this it follows that a galaxy itself could be wholly feasible or infeasible for God depending on whether the worlds that are members of it are themselves infeasible or feasible. On this way of construing matters, to say that God has middle knowledge is to say that he knows which worlds are feasible and which worlds are not. Hence, God knows prevolitionally (in the second moment in the structure of his knowledge) that his creative abilities are constrained by T and the galaxy of worlds it determines. Within that galaxy God can actualize whichever world he pleases. But, however unfortunate, worlds outside of that galaxy simply "are not even contenders for actuality."⁵⁰

Flint finds talk of worlds and galaxies a nice heuristic for getting a firmer conceptual grip on the metaphysics of divine world-selection in particular, and so the Molinst's position in general. He asks us to consider "the set of possible worlds as being represented by an infinite set of circles located at varying distances from one another" where the distances are to be thought of as

⁴⁹ Flint 51.

⁵⁰ Flint 51.

“representing the varying relationships of similarity among the worlds.”⁵¹ According to what has been said above, the Molinist will “insist that these worlds differ with regard to which creaturely world-type is true, and hence will be grouped into various different galaxies. In some worlds, world-type T_1 will be true; those worlds constitute galaxy G_1 . Other worlds boast the truth of world type T_2 ; such worlds make up galaxy G_2 . And so on.”⁵² The following diagram depicts this description.⁵³



Now the diagram is obviously incapable of graphically depicting a limitless number of possible worlds, galaxies, as well as possibly true creaturely worlds-types. But, of course, such is not unique to this diagram. Thus, as Flint notes, so long as this is kept in mind, diagrams of this sort, as well as the ones that follow, “can help us to visualize how the Molinist sees worlds as arranged.”⁵⁴

As previously discussed, the Molinist of course does not think that these galaxies are all on an ontological par vis-à-vis God’s creative abilities. Given that only one complete set of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom is true, only one creaturely world-type is true. Hence, only those worlds that are

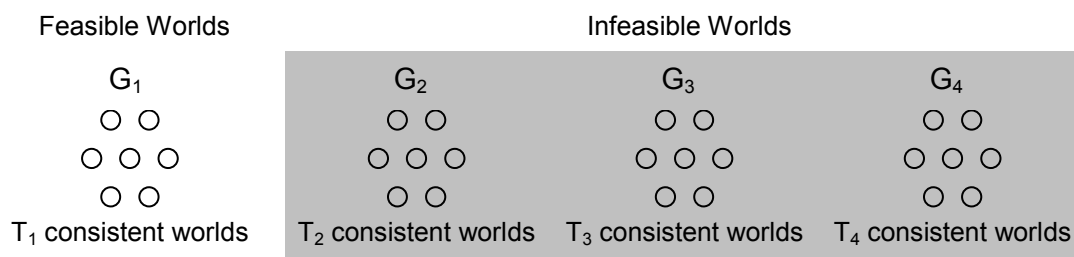
⁵¹ Flint 52.

⁵² Flint 52.

⁵³ The subsequent diagrams are found in Flint 52-4.

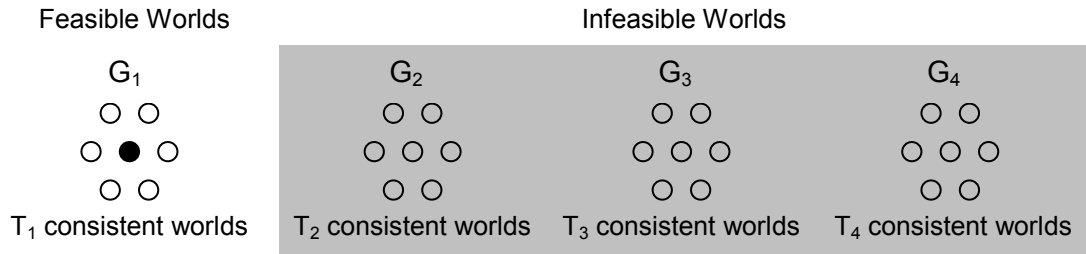
⁵⁴ Flint 53.

members of this privileged galaxy are worlds that are feasible for God; the other worlds in other infeasible galaxies are not genuine candidates for actualization. For the sake of the discussion, then, suppose that T_1 is the true world-type and so G_1 the only feasible galaxy of worlds. Since all the worlds not in this galaxy exist “in the shadow of unactualizability,” as Flint calls it, it is fitting to modify the diagram, shading those galaxies of worlds that are infeasible for God, and leaving unshaded that galaxy of worlds that are feasible for him. This modification, then, is reflected as follows.



Remember that even if this is the correct picture of which worlds are feasible and which worlds are not, things could have turned out different. Given that counterfactuals of freedom are only contingently true, the true creaturely world-type and so feasible galaxy are likewise only true contingently. It easily might have turned out that T_2 or some other creaturely world-type were true, and if it had then some other galaxy besides G_1 would have been the feasible galaxy, all others being infeasible. Still, for the moment we are supposing that T_1 is the true creaturely world-type, and so that G_1 houses the only feasible worlds that God can create. Given these many creative options, then, God exercises a creative act of will, whereby among the many possible and feasible worlds, a single world “escapes the status of mere

possibility and receives the fullness of actuality.”⁵⁵ Graphically, this selected and actualized world can be depicted with a solid circle as follows.



As Flint comments, a welcome result of these diagrams is that they correspond to the previous description of the “growth” in God’s knowledge. The first diagram “shows God’s position at the first logical moment, when only natural knowledge is present.” The next “represents his knowledge at the second moment, when middle knowledge is brought on stage.” And lastly, the final diagram “illustrates his position at the fourth moment, when, because of his creative act of will made at the third moment, free knowledge arrives.”⁵⁶ Hence, moving through the diagrams is analogous to moving or progressing from knowledge of which worlds are possible, to knowledge of which worlds are feasible, finally settling in the last diagram on which world is actual.

To summarize this first section, then, the orthodox theist who thinks there are good reasons for maintaining God’s (exhaustive) foreknowledge in addition to his ability to providentially govern human beings with libertarian freedom needs a way of accounting for how this can be so. The theory of divine middle knowledge provides a way of explaining how God can have foreknowledge and providence over the libertarian choices of free creatures,

⁵⁵ Flint 54.

⁵⁶ Flint 54.

and hence provides a *prima facie* plausible explanation for the theological compatibilism.⁵⁷ The putative reconciliation of foreknowledge, providence, and freedom, however, is not the only philosophical use for the theory of middle knowledge. The theory can also do work in a theodicy by providing some detail in an explanation seeking to reconcile the existence of God and the existence of evil in general, as well as the existence of God and existence of certain evils in particular (*viz.*, the damned). To this application of Molinism we now turn.

1.2. MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE AND EVIL

1.2.1. *The Logical Problem of Evil*

In general, the problem of evil is the claim that the existence God (traditionally conceived of as all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good) is incompatible with the existence of moral evil.⁵⁸ The *logical* problem of evil, more specifically, is the claim that God's existence (as traditionally conceived) is *logically* incompatible with the existence of moral evil; that is, it is logically inconsistent or contradictory to affirm both the existence of God and the existence of moral evil. In contemporary philosophy of religion, one rather common way of logically reconciling the two is by means of what is called the *Free Will Defense*. This defense, of which Alvin Plantinga is the chief advocate, "can be looked upon as an effort to show that there may be a very

⁵⁷ Recall that the theological compatibilist asserts that foreknowledge, providence, and (libertarian) freedom are all copossible.

⁵⁸ For practical purposes I focus only on the problem presented by moral evil (evil *agents* are causally responsible for – murder, e.g.) and leave aside the problem presented by natural evils (evil *nature* is causally responsible for – the damage and death brought about by a hurricane, e.g.).

different kind of good that God can't bring about without permitting evil. These are good states of affairs that don't include evil; they do not entail the existence of any evil whatever; nonetheless God Himself can't bring them about without permitting evil."⁵⁹ Hence, the logical problem of evil asserts that as a matter of logical necessity God and moral evil cannot coexist. The Free Will Defense, to the contrary, asserts that it is logically possible that they can. How does this defense proceed?

To begin, Plantinga defines several important terms in the Free Will Defense. The first is *being free with respect to an action*. To say that a person is free with respect to an action is to say "he is free to perform that action and free to refrain from performing it; no antecedent conditions and/or causal laws determine that he will perform the action, or that he won't."⁶⁰ The sort of freedom Plantinga has in mind, then, is freedom of a libertarian sort; that is, a sort that asserts that freedom and causal determinism are not compatible. If an action is free it cannot be caused by a series of prior events over which the agent has no control that lead into the distant past. It must in some sense be up to the agent what action is performed. The second term is *morally significant*, where an action is morally significant for a given person "if it would be wrong for him to perform the action but right to refrain or *vice versa*."⁶¹ The idea is that promise-keeping, for example, is normally an action that is morally significant for an agent, while (normally) eating one brand of cereal instead of

⁵⁹ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977) 29.

⁶⁰ Plantinga 29.

⁶¹ Plantinga 30.

another is not. The third term is *significantly free*. Here a person is said to be significantly free just in case “he is then free with respect to a morally significant action.”⁶² Lastly there is the difference between moral and natural evil, where the former results from the actions of free creatures, and the later then encompasses any other kind of evil.

With these definitions in mind, Plantinga’s statement of the Free Will Defense is as follows.

A world containing creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but He can’t *cause* or *determine* them to do only what is right. For if He does so, then they aren’t significantly free after all; they do not do what is right *freely*. To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, He must create creatures capable of moral evil; and He can’t give these creatures the freedom to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. As it turned out, sadly enough, some of the free creatures God created went wrong in the exercise of their freedom; this is the source of moral evil. The fact that free creatures sometimes go wrong, however, counts neither against God’s omnipotence nor against His goodness; for He could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by removing the possibility of moral good.⁶³

The essence of the Free Will Defense, then, is the claim that “it is [logically] possible that God could not have created a universe containing moral good (or as much moral good as this world contains) without creating one that also contained moral evil.”⁶⁴ And if this is so then the existence of evil by itself does not, as the advocate of the logical problem of evil claims, *logically* preclude the existence of God. Hence the two are not logically incompatible after all.

⁶² Plantinga 30.

⁶³ Plantinga 30.

⁶⁴ Plantinga 31.

What Plantinga concedes is a formidable objection, and one he credits to J. L. Mackie, is that surely it is logically possible for one to do only what is right, even if one is free to do what is wrong. It is logically possible “that there be a world containing free creatures who always do what is right. There is no contradiction or inconsistency in this idea. But God is omnipotent; his power has no nonlogical limitations.”⁶⁵ Hence, if it is logically possible that there exist a world containing free creatures who are free but only choose what is right, then it clearly follows that an omnipotent being (defined in terms of having “no nonlogical limitations”) could create such a world. And if this is so, then the Free Will Defense is mistaken in concluding that God, though omnipotent, is not able to create a world containing significantly free creatures without permitting moral evil.

An important assumption, however, that Plantinga argues this objection makes is that it was within God’s power to create any possible world that he pleased. “But what is really characteristic and central to the Free Will Defense is the claim that God, though omnipotent, could not have actualized just any possible world He pleased.”⁶⁶ So which is correct? Could God have created any possible world he desired, worlds which include moral good but not moral evil? Or, is God limited in the number of worlds he could have made, worlds which contain moral good but moral evil as well? Not surprisingly Plantinga defends the latter proposition, and it is in this defense that the doctrine of divine middle knowledge appears.

⁶⁵ Plantinga 32.

⁶⁶ Plantinga 34.

To show that God was limited in the numbers of worlds that he could have created, and that he was not at liberty to create a world with morally significant creatures without permitting evil, Plantinga asks us to consider the following. Suppose Curley Smith, the mayor of Boston, is opposed to a potential new freeway route. Smedes, the director of highways, is in favor of the proposed route and offers Curley a bribe of \$35,000 to reconsider his opposition. Unwilling “to break with the fine old traditions of Bay State politics, Curley accepts.”⁶⁷ Smedes, then, wonders whether he could have bought Curley for a mere \$20,000. Now, suppose he could have. Suppose that were Curley offered a bribe of \$20,000, he would freely have accepted it. This means that the counterfactual (A) *If Smedes had offered Curley a bribe of \$20,000, Curley would have accepted* it is true. As Plantinga notes, “if [A] is true, then there is a state of affairs S that (1) includes Curley’s being offered a bribe of \$20,000; (2) does not include either his accepting the bribe or his rejecting it; and (3) is otherwise as much as possible like the actual world – in particular, it includes Curley’s being free with respect to the bribe; and (4) is such that if it were actual then Curley would have taken the bribe.” That is, the counterfactual (A*) *If S were actual, Curley would have accepted the bribe* is true; moreover (A*) describes the actual world, call it W.

It is important to recognize, as Plantinga does, that there is a possible world – call it W* – where S obtains and Curley does *not* take the bribe. That is, the counterfactual (R) *If S were actual, Curley would have rejected the*

⁶⁷ Plantinga 45.

bribe accurately describes events in W^* . But, given the truth of the counterfactual A^* , God could not have created W^* . In order for him to have done so, he would have had to actualize S in W^* . But as we have seen, “under these conditions Curley, as $[A^*]$ assures us, would have accepted the bribe, so that the world thus created would not have been $[W^*]$.”⁶⁸ Thus it turns out that God could not have created W^* after all, since creating W^* entails creating S , and given A^* Curley would have freely accepted, not rejected, the bribe in S . Hence the counterfactual *(R) If S were actual, Curley would have rejected the bribe* is false, and given that it is a counterfactual of freedom, not even God has the ability to make it true.

It is clear, then, that it is possible that there are some worlds that God cannot actualize, W^* being one of them. But matters may be worse. Let W stand for any world in which Curley exists and is significantly free. It is possible that in W there exists a particular action A that Curley performs that has the following peculiar property: Curley is significantly free with respect to A and *will morally go wrong* with respect to A . This means, of course, that there are no worlds God could have created that both contain Curley and no moral evil. Every such world that contains Curley and no moral evil is *infeasible*⁶⁹ for God, as there evidently exists a true counterfactual regarding any world in which Curley exists *If W were actualized, Curley would morally go wrong regarding*

⁶⁸ Plantinga 47.

⁶⁹ Recall from the discussion of Thomas Flint’s contemporary statement of Molinism that a world is infeasible for God just in case it is logically possible for God to create, but metaphysically impossible for him to do so given the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom that he knows.

A. Plantinga calls the “malady” from which Curley suffers that of “*transworld depravity*.”⁷⁰ Thus given that Curley is transworld depraved, if God is interested in creating Curley, the cost of his doing so is creating a world that contains moral evil.

So how does all of this assist Plantinga in his defense against Mackie’s assumption that God could create any possible world he pleased, and that it is possible that God could not have created a world with moral good but without moral evil? Given the discussion of Curley above, Plantinga concludes that “it is possible that there be persons who suffer from transworld depravity. More generally, it is possible that *everybody* suffers from it.”⁷¹ Hence if this possibility is actual, then “God, though omnipotent, could not have created any of the possible worlds containing just the persons who do in fact exist, and containing moral good but not moral evil.” Creating anyone at all with significant freedom – a prerequisite for morally good choices – in addition includes creating individuals that are transworld depraved. And as Plantinga notes, such “persons go wrong with respect to at least one action in any world God could have actualized and in which they are free with respect to morally significant actions.” Hence, “the price for creating a world in which they produce moral good is creating one in which they also produce moral evil.”⁷² Thus it is indefensible, as Plantinga sees it, to maintain that the existence of

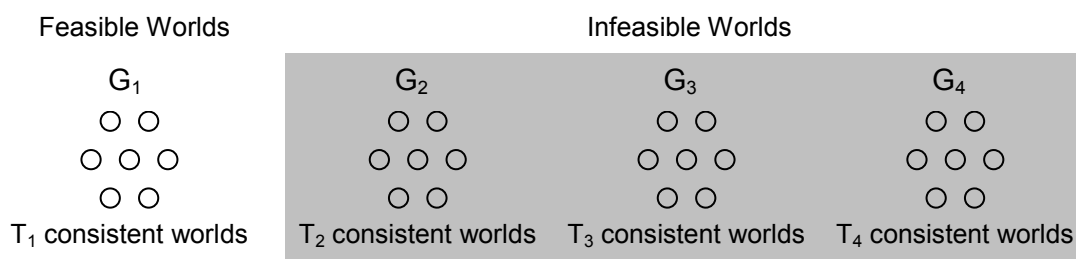
⁷⁰ Plantinga 48.

⁷¹ Plantinga 48.

⁷² Plantinga 49.

moral evil is logically inconsistent with the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good God.⁷³

To clarify the point that Plantinga is making, we can illustrate his argument by putting to work the diagrams Thomas Flint employed in explicating the contemporary version of middle knowledge. According to that version, recall that Flint illustrated God's creative options before creating the actual world by distinguishing those possible worlds that were feasible for God – in conjunction with the true creaturely world-type or complete set of true and logically consistent counterfactuals of freedom – and those that were not. The diagram representing this content, recall, was as follows.

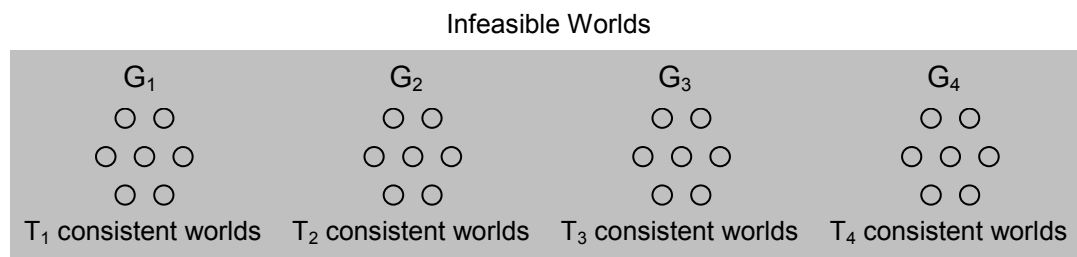


Now, the claim that Plantinga initially makes is that God could not have created a world that contained moral good without also allowing the possibility that his free creatures might freely choosing perversely. Hence, the fact that they did is no fault on God's part; for he could have precluded the possibility of evil only by precluding genuine freedom, and all of the moral benefits that such freedom includes. Mackie then objected that God's power is only limited by logical limitations, and so since there is nothing logically impossible about a

⁷³ Note that the Free Will Defense is aimed at defeating only the logical problem of evil. The *evidential* problem of evil, the idea that the existence of evil renders the existence of God *implausible*, is a quite different (and also more difficult) problem to diffuse.

possible world that contains only moral good, God could have – and indeed *should* have – actualized such a world.

But if there are true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, Plantinga responds that Mackie’s claim is not necessarily so. For it is entirely possible, he argues, that all persons suffer from transworld depravity, in which case any possible world that God were to actualize with free creatures would additionally contain moral evil. In that case, there are no feasible worlds for God to create that contain significantly free creatures (such as ourselves) but no moral evil. And so in that case, the graphic representing what God actually has to work with in relation to creating a world with significantly free creatures but no moral evil is as follows.



There simply are no such worlds, according to Plantinga, given God’s middle knowledge. Hence, given God’s middle knowledge, he cannot be faulted for creating a world with significantly free creatures *and* moral evil. Those were simply his creative options in the third moment of divine knowledge. And because this is all at least *logically* possible, Plantinga considers the logical problem resolved.

1.2.2. *The Soteriological Problem of Evil*

Another application of the doctrine of divine middle knowledge is in regard to what William Lane Craig has termed the “*soteriological* problem of evil.”⁷⁴ Essentially this is the problem of reconciling the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God, not with (his permitting) moral evil in general, as discussed above, but with the particular evil that (according to the Christian religion) there are some individuals (indeed a great many) who will not receive redemption, but rather eternal condemnation in Hell. And what reason is there for thinking that Christianity affirms this? The following is a short list of passages usually thought to provide such a reason.

In Acts 4:12 we are told “Nor is there salvation in any other [referring to Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” The Apostle Paul in speaking to the largely gentile church in Ephesus states, “at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Jesus himself affirms as much by saying “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). More pointedly, “He who believes in Him [referring to Christ] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Additionally, the Apostle John asserts, “He

⁷⁴ The term ‘soteriology’ is a theological term and refers to the domain of theology that studies the doctrine of salvation. William Lane Craig, “‘No Other Name’: A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation Through Christ,” *Faith and Philosophy* 6 (1989), 180.

who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). In reference to the disproportionate and greater number of the damned over the redeemed, Jesus states “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). Lastly, regarding the condition of those in Hell, Jesus plainly says, “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:41, 46).

Now if God is good and Hell is eternal, and the only means of escaping condemnation is through Christ, then it certainly appears as though that the majority of human beings have been, are being, and will be condemned to an eternity of suffering in Hell. If true, there is clearly an intuitive problem. How can this truth be consistent with the additional truth that an omnipotent, omniscient, and (especially) omnibenevolent God exists? How can the existence of such a God be reconciled logically with the existence of the eternally condemned in Hell?

Toward answering this question, Craig first argues that “the problem is not that the very notion of hell is incompatible with a just and loving God.”⁷⁵ He relates that the New Testament clearly indicates that God does not want any

⁷⁵ Craig 176.

persons whatsoever to be damned. For in the Apostle Peter's second epistle we read, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promises, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Elsewhere in Paul's letter to Timothy we find, "[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore, as Craig sees it, God seeks to draw all men to himself. In his doing so those "who make a well-informed and free decision to reject Christ are self-condemned, since they repudiate God's unique sacrifice for sin."⁷⁶ And thus by spurning God's sacrifice "they shut out God's mercy and seal their own destiny."⁷⁷ It is, then, they, and not God, according to Craig, who "are responsible for their condemnation, and God deeply mourns their loss."⁷⁸

Second, Craig argues that the problem is not God's condemning persons who are either "un-, ill-, or misinformed concerning Christ and who therefore lack the opportunity to receive Him."⁷⁹ The reason is that one could maintain that God "graciously applies to such persons the benefits of Christ's atoning death without their conscious knowledge thereof on the basis of their response to the light of general revelation and the truth they do have, even as He did in the case of Old Testament figures like Job who were outside the covenant of Israel."⁸⁰ Thus if one can be redeemed via general revelation⁸¹, it is untrue that

⁷⁶ Craig 176.

⁷⁷ Craig 176.

⁷⁸ Craig 176.

⁷⁹ Craig 176.

⁸⁰ Craig 176.

the absence of or misinformation about Christ guarantees that one is then condemned.

The real problem, according to Craig, with the existence of both God and the condemned in Hell “involves certain counterfactuals of freedom concerning those who do not receive special revelation and so are lost.” For if it is true that the “gate” leading to Hell is wide, and that there are many that enter it, while the “gate” leading to Heaven is narrow, and that there are few who enter it, might it not also be true that there are some who would enter the narrow gate had they only had access to special revelation, as opposed merely to general revelation? This question prompts Craig to ask a series of further questions.

Why did God not supply special revelation to persons who, while rejecting the general revelation they do have, would have responded to the gospel of Christ if they had been sufficiently well-informed concerning it? More fundamentally, why did God create this world when He knew that so many persons would not receive Christ and would therefore be lost? Even more radically, why did God not create a world in which everyone freely receives Christ and so is saved?⁸²

Craig points out that it is important to recognize that these questions seem to presuppose that “certain counterfactuals of freedom concerning people’s response to God’s gracious initiatives are true,” and especially the last two seem to presuppose that “God’s omniscience embraces a species of

⁸¹ Theologically, general revelation, as opposed to special revelation, is revelation that is found in nature (Psalm 19:1-4) regarding God’s power and intelligence (Romans 1:18-25), his goodness (Acts 14:17), and moral requirements (Romans 2:14-16). It is revelation that is available to all. Special revelation, on the other hand, is revelation from God via his prophets; the Bible is taken by Christians to be an example. This is revelation that historically has been available only to the few.

⁸² Craig 176.

knowledge known as middle knowledge.”⁸³ This certainly seems to be the case since if there are no such counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, then it is obviously not true that certain persons would receive Christ if they were to receive special revelation in addition to general revelation. Nor, it seems, can God be held responsible for the large number of the lost if he lacks middle knowledge, as without such knowledge he would have no way whatsoever of knowing how many (or, indeed, if any) persons would stand in need of redemption were he to create a world. Thus on the assumption that God does have middle knowledge, how might the soteriological problem of evil be resolved?

As Craig sees it, the soteriological problem of evil is quite simply that

(1) God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent

is inconsistent with

(2) Some persons do not receive Christ and are damned.

And since (1) is essential to Christian theism, (2) must be denied.⁸⁴ But because (1) and (2) are not logically contradictory – as neither is “the negation of the other,” and “a contradiction cannot be derived from them using first order logic”⁸⁵ – Craig claims that the proponent of this argument must mean, then, that (1) and (2) are *ontologically* inconsistent, in that there exists no possible world where both propositions are true. But why should the Christian theist concede this? Craig suggests that the proponent of the soteriological

⁸³ Craig 177.

⁸⁴ Craig 180.

⁸⁵ Craig 180.

problem of evil may believe that one (or both) of the following two propositions provide the answer.

- (3) God is able to actualize a possible world in which all persons freely receive Christ.
- (4) God prefers a world in which no persons fail to receive Christ and are damned to a world in which some do.

Indeed, one might argue that any theist who accepts (1) must also accept (3), given God's omnipotence and omniscience. Furthermore, (1) seems to make (4) much more likely than not, if God genuinely is omnibenevolent.

But is it actually true, however, that the theist, who is in addition a Molinist, is rationally obliged to accept (3)? Craig finds this far from obvious. For, as we have seen regarding the discussion of the logical problem of evil, the mere existence of a particular possible world does not entail that such a world is creatable (or feasible) by God. Recall that God's ability to actualize worlds containing significantly free creatures is limited by which counterfactuals of creaturely freedom happen to be true. Hence there may very well be possible worlds where a subject *S* refrains in circumstances *C* from performing action *A*; such worlds may even be highly desirable worlds for God. But if the counterfactual *If S were in C, then S would perform A* is true, then even God cannot place *S* in *C* without then permitting *A*. Thus a world that includes *S* being in *C* and refraining from doing *A* is simply not feasible for God; it is a world that he cannot create. There are, then, potentially an infinite number of possible worlds known to God via his natural knowledge, but such that they are infeasible for him given the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom that

happen to be true. Thus, as did Plantinga above, Craig concludes that not even God can create any possible world that exists.

The question, then, is whether the Molinist is required to think that within the range of possible worlds which are feasible for God there is at least one world in which everyone freely receives Christ and so is redeemed. Craig argues that Molinist can plausibly hold

- (5) For some individual S, there are no circumstances in which S would freely receive Christ.⁸⁶

This means, of course, that the Molinist can consistently claim that there are no worlds feasible for God in which S exists and is redeemed. And so if God were to make a world that included S, it is not a world in which (3) would be true. That is, it is not a world in which all persons freely receive Christ, since S of his own volition would reject him.

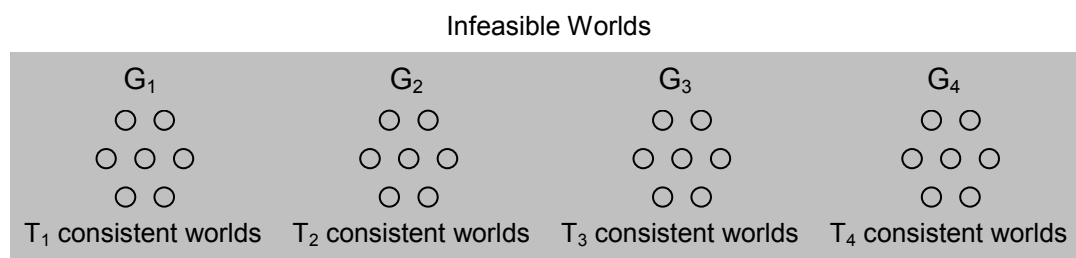
But it is legitimate to ask, at this point, since there are at least some subjects that do receive Christ, why God could not create a world containing *only* those individuals that freely receive Christ. For if he could, then he could also create a world in which (3) is true. Craig argues that it is plausible to say that such a world is not a feasible world for God to create. And the reason is that the circumstances under which subject S* freely received Christ and so is redeemed and the circumstances under which another subject S** freely receives Christ and is redeemed may not in fact be *conjointly* possible. In other words, because there is a possible world where S* is redeemed and a world where S** is redeemed, it does not follow that there is a world where

⁸⁶ Craig 181.

both S^* and S^{**} are redeemed. Furthermore, it might be that “in circumstances C_1 , individual S_1 would do action a and that in C_2 individual S_2 would do b and that C_1 and C_2 are compossible, but it does not follow that in $C_1 \& C_2$ [that] S_1 would [still] do a or that in $C_1 \& C_2$ [that] S_2 would [still] do b .”⁸⁷ Thus, “even if it were the case that for any individual He might create, God could actualize a world in which that person is freely saved, it does not follow that there are worlds which are feasible for God in which all individuals are saved.”⁸⁸ Hence rather than holding (3), Craig maintains that the Molinist can credibly hold

- (6) There is no world feasible for God in which all persons would freely received Christ.

In short, then, regarding the idea that God can actualize a possible world in which all persons receive Christ and so are redeemed, Craig argues that unless we have good reason to think that (6) “is impossible or essentially incompatible with Christian theism, the objector has failed to show (1) and (2) to be inconsistent.”⁸⁹ To put the point graphically, given the counterfactuals of freedom that are true, and thus the creaturely world-type that is true, we can say that according to Craig the following illustrates feasibility in relation to the logically possible worlds in which all persons are freely redeemed.



⁸⁷ Craig 182.

⁸⁸ Craig 182.

⁸⁹ Craig 182.

The Molinist, then, can consistently hold that there simply are no feasible worlds in which (3) is true.

Now what about (4) – that God prefers a world in which no persons fail to receive Christ and are damned to a world in which some do. Does (4) provide a reason for thinking that (1) and (2) are incompatible? Craig concedes that, “all things being equal an omnibenevolent God prefers a world in which all persons are saved to a world containing those same persons some of whom are lost. But (4) is stronger than this. It claims that God prefers *any* world in which all persons are saved to any world in which some persons are damned.”⁹⁰ Craig finds this “far from obvious.” For suppose that the only feasible world where all persons in that world receive Christ and so are redeemed is a world containing very few persons altogether. Surely, Craig argues, it is “at least possible that such a world is less preferable to God than a world in which great multitudes come to experience His salvation and a few are damned because they freely reject Christ.”⁹¹ For why “should the joy and blessedness of those who would freely receive God’s grace and love be prevented on account of those who would freely spurn it?” On the assumption that God is omnibenevolent he no doubt desires as many individuals as possible to share in his salvation, but if God does have middle knowledge, and so there are true counterfactuals of freedom, then “in order to have a multitude

⁹⁰ Craig 182.

⁹¹ Craig 182.

in heaven, [God] might have to accept a number in hell.”⁹² Thus contrary to (4), then, the Molinist might well hold

- (7) God prefers certain worlds in which some persons fail to receive Christ and are damned to certain worlds in which all receive Christ and are saved.

And as with (6) above, Craig argues that unless we have good reason to think that (7) “is impossible or essentially incompatible with Christian theism, the objector has again failed to show (1) and (2) to be inconsistent.”⁹³ And thus it has not be shown that the soteriological problem of evil is successful.

To summarize the discussion in this second section, then, the theory of middle knowledge not only plays an important role in mitigating the *prima facie* incoherence in thinking that God can foreknow and providentially control the free actions of free creatures, but also in mitigating the *prima facie* incoherence in thinking that an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good God is logically consistent with both the existence of moral evil and the existence of the damned. In response to the logical problem of evil, the Molinist can claim that it is at least logically possible that God knows via his middle knowledge that there exists no possible world he could have created containing free creatures that never use their freedom perversely. Such creatures are said to suffer from transworld depravity. If this is correct, then any world God creates containing free creatures will in addition be a world containing moral evil. Given God’s middle knowledge – knowledge, remember, that is not under his control – it is simply not up to him whether free creatures would freely abuse

⁹² Craig 182.

⁹³ Craig 183.

their freedom were he to create them. Hence, it is at least logically possible that in creating free creatures God also had to permit the existence of moral evil.

Similarly, in response to the soteriological problem of evil, the Molinist can claim that it is at least logically possible that God knows via his middle knowledge that there exists no possible world he could have created containing free creatures that never use their freedom to reject him. Such creatures condemn themselves by means of their own free will, and on the assumption that the will is free in a libertarian sense, it is simply not up to God whether it is exercised for him or against him. In addition, it is logically possible that there are some free creatures that would use their freedom to reject him in any world in which they were created. These are the transworld damned, and given God's middle knowledge, it is possible that there is nothing redemptive that he can do for them.

1.3. LOOKING AHEAD

In the next chapter I look at perhaps the most challenging obstacle to the acceptance of middle knowledge by theists: the grounding objection. I will discuss two versions of the grounding objection – one from Robert Adams and the other from William Hasker – as well as the standard replies from philosophers who are defenders of Molinism. In the end, I argue that the various replies are less than satisfactory, and thus that a fresh response to the grounding objection is required. That reply is initiated in Chapter 3, and completed in Chapter 4.

2

The Grounding Objection and Replies

In the previous chapter we looked at a detailed development of Luis de Molina's theory of middle knowledge, as well as two applications of his theory. The first application, the reader will recall, regards reconciling the alleged theoretical inconsistency of God having foreknowledge and providence over the free actions of human agents. On the assumption that God exists with exhaustive foreknowledge of the future and providential control over human free agency – in the *libertarian* sense that when we act we have the ability to do differently than what we do – middle knowledge offers an attractive explanation regarding how this is possible. If God knows how free agents will exercise their free agency in any conceivable set of circumstances they could possibly confront, then God knows what a particular free agent would do were he to place them in some specified situation. Hence, God can providentially guide any particular agent toward whatever ends he desires *without* compromising the freedom of the agent in question. Thus the paradox between foreknowledge, providence, and freedom is resolved; or so the Molinist argues.

The second application of middle knowledge that we discussed was with regard to the problem of evil, in both its logical and soteriological forms. The former states that the existence of an all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving

God is logically irreconcilable with the existence of moral evil in general, while the latter states that the existence of the eternally damned is a particular evil that is logically irreconcilable with the existence of an all-loving, all-powerful, and all-knowing God. Contemporary defenders of theory of middle knowledge rely on that theory to answer the logical problem of evil by asserting that it is at the very least logically possible for all free agents to suffer from *transworld depravity*. This is the (highly) unfortunate condition of being such that no matter what possible world in which we exist, there is some particular action we perform that is morally perverse. If all free agents are in this way transworld depraved, then not even God could create *free* agents and at the same time preclude their using their freedom perversely; for were he to preclude their doing so, he would then compromise their freedom. Hence there apparently exists no *logical* inconsistency between God's existence and the existence of moral evil.

As it pertains to the soteriological problem of evil, the advocate of middle knowledge can address this problem by saying that just as it is logically possible that all free persons are transworld depraved, it is also logically possible that all damned persons are *transworld damned*. Being transworld damned is the (highly) unfortunate condition of being such that if one is damned, then there exists no possible world that God can actualize where one freely decides to be redeemed. And the reason there exists no such world that God can actualize is that God, via his middle knowledge, knows that there are no circumstances he can actualize that include both the damned and their free

decision to be redeemed. Thus if such circumstances do not exist for God to actualize, then not even God can ensure the freely chosen redemption of the damned. Hence there apparently exists no *logical* inconsistency between God's goodness and the existence of the damned.¹

So Molina's theory can arguably be employed to resolve both the problem of foreknowledge, providence, and freedom, as well as the problem of evil, in each of its logical and soteriological forms. And for these reasons the theory is seen as having genuine explanatory power. But aside from the work proponents of middle knowledge have enlisted it to perform, is the theory itself credible, or does it instead suffer from fairly substantial objections? William Hasker and Robert Adams are two of the more recognized critics of middle knowledge. At the beginning of this chapter I examine their different versions of what is now familiarly known as the grounding objection to Molinism. This objection, in short, is roughly either that (i) because there exist no metaphysical grounds for the truth of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, they are all false, or (ii) because free agents do not bring about the truth of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (and so do not function as their grounds), such conditionals cannot – *contra* middle knowledge – regard free actions at all. Hasker argues for (ii) and Adams for (i), and obviously if either argument is sound then middle knowledge appears explanatorily inept at

¹ As discussed in the previous chapter, whether or not these solutions are *plausible* is another matter. That they are *possible* is the only question the Molinist at this point is addressing. So long as these solutions are at least logically possible, the logical and soteriological problem of evil can be successfully answered (even if the answers themselves do not appear to be particularly plausible).

reconciling the problem of foreknowledge, providence, and freedom, as well as the logical and soteriological problems of evil. Acutely aware of this, critics of Hasker and Adams – and thus the grounding objection in general – are not in short supply. After stating both versions of the grounding objection, I spend the remainder of the chapter both looking at the responses to it, and arguing that each is inadequate for the task of defending the theory of middle knowledge. Hence if middle knowledge is to maintain its explanatory use with respect to the two aforementioned problems, what is needed is a novel reply.

2.1. THE GROUNDING OBJECTION

2.1.1. *From William Hasker*

William Hasker's "refutation" of middle knowledge is self-professedly "complex," and it will take some care (and time) in developing.² The argument is at bottom a *reductio ad absurdum* argument against the theory of middle knowledge. Hasker concedes, "provisionally, that there are true counterfactuals of freedom,"³ however a crucial question to ask on the assumption that there are true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom is: "Who or what is it (if anything) that *brings it about* that these propositions are true?"⁴ In a footnote Hasker comments that the concept of bringing about he has in mind is "an asymmetrical relation of dependence of what is brought about on the action or event that brings it about," and that "the dependence in question

² William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1989) 39.

³ Hasker 39.

⁴ Hasker 39.

may be, but is not necessarily, causal.”⁵ What is important here is Hasker’s conception of the relationship between true propositions and grounds, where the former are derived (though not necessarily causally derived) from the latter. With this in mind, how does Hasker’s argument proceed?

To give the argument some “concreteness,” Hasker asks us to imagine that a certain doctoral student in anthropology – Elizabeth – is beginning to plan her dissertation field research. Elizabeth’s advisor, let us say, has been asked to make a recommendation for a foundation grant to be given for observing a newly discovered tribe in New Guinea. As the assignment is both exciting and to some extent not entirely safe, the advisor asks himself “whether Elizabeth would choose to undertake this study, or whether she would prefer to continue with her present plans to study a relatively placid group of South Sea islanders.”⁶ In other words, according to Hasker, Elizabeth’s advisor is asking himself which of the following two counterfactuals is true.

(12) If Elizabeth were offered the grant, she would accept it ($O \rightarrow A$).

(13) If Elizabeth were offered the grant, she would not accept it ($O \rightarrow \sim A$).

Now of course according to the theory of middle knowledge, one of these counterfactuals is true, and God knows which one it is. For the sake of argument, Hasker asks us to assume that it is (12) rather than (13) that is true. But to reiterate Hasker’s central question, who or what is it that brings it about that this counterfactual is true?

⁵ Hasker 39.

⁶ Hasker 40.

According to the Molinist, Hasker notes, it cannot be God “who brings it about that counterfactuals of freedom are true,” since if God were to do so it is difficult to understand how these counterfactuals could be counterfactuals of *freedom*.⁷ Instead, Hasker says, the answer to this question “given by the friends of middle knowledge is that it is the *agent named in the counterfactual* who brings it about that the counterfactual is true.”⁸ This is the claim, Hasker says, that will be the central subject of discussion throughout his refutation of Molinism. Thus, how might it be possible for an agent about whom there is a true counterfactual of freedom to bring about its truth?

As Hasker sees it, “the only possible way for the agent to do this is to perform the action specified in the consequent of the counterfactual under the conditions stated in the antecedent.”⁹ Hasker believes that the proponents of middle knowledge accept this, which is why they “claim that the agent brings about the truth of the counterfactuals *only in those possible worlds in which the antecedent is true*.”¹⁰ Put more specifically, according to Hasker the following appears to be an accepted principle:

- (14) It is in an agent’s power to bring it about that a given counterfactual of freedom is true only if its truth would be brought about by the agent’s performing the action specified in the consequent of the conditional under the conditions specified in the antecedent.¹¹

To discover, though, whether it is possible for an agent to bring about the truth of a counterfactual of freedom in this way we need to know what is required for

⁷ Hasker 40.

⁸ Hasker 40.

⁹ Hasker 41.

¹⁰ Hasker 41

¹¹ Hasker 41.

a particular event to bring it about that a proposition is true. According to Hasker, the following criterion appears to do the job.¹²

- (16) If event E brings it about that “Q” is true, then E is a token of an event-type T such that (some token of T occurs) \rightarrow Q and \sim (some token of T occurs) $\rightarrow \sim$ Q, and E is the first token of T which occurs.¹³

To illustrate the idea here, suppose that someone, Jones let us say, knocks on Smith’s door at 10AM, Harold knocks on Smith’s door at 11AM, and no one else knocks on Smith’s door the rest of the day. It is clear that Jones’ knock brings it about that the proposition *Someone knocks on Smith’s door today* is true, even though the proposition would still have been true if Jones had not knocked on Smith’s door. This means that Jones’ knocking is the occurrence of an event *token* of an event *type* (someone’s knocking on Smith’s door), such that were no token of that type of event to occur today, then nothing would bring about the truth of the proposition *Someone knocks on Smith’s door today*. Hence a more colloquial version of (16) is something akin to the following: If some event brings about the truth of some proposition, then that event is a token of an event type, such that if a token of that type were to occur, then the event token would bring about the truth of the proposition in question; however, if no such token of that type of event were to occur, then nothing would bring about the truth of the proposition in question. For Hasker, then, this is what it means for some event E to bring about the truth of some proposition Q. In addition it is important to note that if criterion (16) is not

¹² Below I omit Hasker’s (15) for the sake of concision; it does not affect the argument.

¹³ Hasker 42.

satisfied regarding the truth of some proposition Q, then it is appropriate to say that “the truth of the proposition is *independent* of the event in question.”¹⁴

Applying all of this to the case of Elizabeth, then, “what we need to know is whether Elizabeth brings about the truth of the counterfactual of freedom ‘ $O \rightarrow A$ ’ by accepting the grant, or whether its truth is *independent* of her action, in the sense just specified.”¹⁵ And to determine this, says, Hasker, we need to know which of the following two propositions are true.

(17) If Elizabeth were to accept the grant, it would be true that $O \rightarrow A$
(or, $A \rightarrow (O \rightarrow A)$).

(18) If Elizabeth were not to accept the grant, it would be true that $O \rightarrow A$
(or, $\sim A \rightarrow (O \rightarrow A)$).

Now there is no question regarding the truth of (17), as Hasker sees it, since we supposed that (12) was true – If Elizabeth were offered the grant, she would accept it – making the propositions expressed by both “O” and “A” true in the actual world, and so bringing about the truth of the counterfactual as well. It is in addition tempting to think that there is no question regarding the falsity of (18). But this, Hasker thinks, is a mistake, and that is because we are probably misreading (18) as meaning the following.

(19) If Elizabeth were to reject the grant, it would be true that $O \rightarrow A$ (or, $(O \& \sim A) \rightarrow (O \rightarrow A)$).

This conditional is false, but it is not what is asserted by (18). The antecedent of (18) merely says that Elizabeth *does not accept* the offer, which is not the same thing as saying that she *rejects* it. That she does not accept the offer is

¹⁴ Hasker 42.

¹⁵ Hasker 42.

logically consistent with that offer never having been made. Thus if Elizabeth indeed rejects the offer, then $O \rightarrow A$ will then be false. However, $O \rightarrow A$ will remain true even if no offer is actually made. Hence, we now need to evaluate the following two counterfactuals.

(20) If Elizabeth does not accept the offer, it will be because she rejected it (or, $\sim A \rightarrow (O \ \& \ \sim A)$).

(21) If Elizabeth does not accept the offer, it will be because the offer was not made (or, $\sim A \rightarrow (\sim O \ \& \ \sim A)$).

To step back for a moment and get some perspective on the developing argument, remember that we are trying to determine whether or not (17) or (18) are true *independently* of Elizabeth's action, and true independently in the sense specified in (16). Hasker assumes that (17) is true for the sake of argument, so the crucial question now as it regards independence is whether or not (18) is true. If it is, then since both (17) and (18) are true, (12) is not true because of Elizabeth's action. That is, if (12) is true independently of Elizabeth's action, then the truth of (12) is not brought about by her action. And if this is the case, Hasker will argue, then this truth quite plausibly serves as the basis for a refutation of the theory of middle knowledge, since if the truth of (12) is independent of Elizabeth, then Elizabeth could not do differently than accept the grant if it is offered. And this implies that her action is not performed freely in a libertarian sense of freedom, as a libertarian sense of freedom requires precisely the ability to do differently than accept the grant if it is offered. But if middle knowledge *includes* a libertarian conception of freedom in its account of foreknowledge, providence, and freedom and at the

same *precludes* such a conception of freedom given that true counterfactuals are true independently of the actions of free agents then middle knowledge, on Hasker's view, stands refuted. It is an important question, then, whether it is (20) or (21) that is true.

So back to (20) and (21). If it is (20) that is true rather than (21), then (18) will come out false and thus the truth of (12) may be said to be dependent on Elizabeth's action in the sense required by (16). On the other hand, if it is (21) that is true rather than (20), then (18) will come out true and thus the truth of (12) may be said to independent of Elizabeth's action in the sense required by (16). In that case, Hasker believes, middle knowledge will stand refuted. Hence, which is it?

According to the current semantics for counterfactuals, to decide the answer to this question we need to decide whether "a world in which Elizabeth received the offer and rejected it [is] more or less similar to the actual world (in which the offer was accepted) than a world in which the offer was neither made nor accepted?"¹⁶ Hasker argues that, in fact, it is (21) that is true rather than (20). The reason is that in judging the comparative similarity of two possible worlds, it is counterfactual content, rather than factual content, that should count more heavily. To see this, Hasker says, suppose "I have been hard at work making a poster announcing an upcoming event, and just as the poster is nearly completed I knock over my ink bottle, spilling ink on the poster

¹⁶ Hasker 43.

and forcing me to start all over again.”¹⁷ At this point he wonders which of the following two counterfactuals are true.

- (22) If no ink had been spilled on my poster, it would have been because I did not knock over my ink bottle ($\sim S \rightarrow (\sim K \ \& \ \sim S)$).
- (23) If no ink had been spilled on my poster, it would have been because I knocked over my ink bottle but no ink spilled ($\sim S \rightarrow (K \ \& \ \sim S)$).

Hasker argues that it would be absurd to think that it is (23) that is true simply because the (23)-world differs with respect to the actual world *only* with respect to ink spilling, whereas the (22)-world differs from the actual world in *both* the ink spilling *and* the bottle’s being knocked over. And this is because there exists the following true counterfactual of natural law.

- (24) If I were to knock over my ink-bottle in such-and-such a way, the bottle would fall over and spill ink on my poster.

This counterfactual is not only true in the actual world (as everyday events demonstrate), but is also true in the (22)-world though not in the (23)-world. Thus “in weighing the comparative similarity to the actual world of the (22)-world and the (23)-world, the truth in the (22)-world of the counterfactual (24) counts far more heavily than the slightly greater similarity of the (23)-world with respect to factual content.”¹⁸ Therefore counterfactuals can plausibly be said to be more fundamental features of the world than are particular facts. And so, as was intuitive from the beginning, it is (22) rather than (23) that is true.

Now the point of this example is that these same considerations that justify our thinking that (22) is true rather than (23) can be brought to bear in justifying Hasker’s thinking that it is (21) rather than (20) that is in fact true. For

¹⁷ Hasker 43.

¹⁸ Hasker 45.

since the counterfactual (12) is true – If Elizabeth were offered the grant, she would accept – then it is a counterfactual that is true in both the actual world as well as the (21)-world – a world in which if Elizabeth does not accept the offer, it will be because the offer was not made. It is not a counterfactual that is true, however, in the (20)-world – a world in which if Elizabeth does not accept the offer, it will be because she rejected it. Hence, by parity of reasoning with the ink-illustration, “the truth of the counterfactual (12) outweighs the slight difference with respect to similarity in factual content, so that the (21)-world is indeed more similar to the actual world than the (20)-world, and it is (21) that is true rather than (20).”¹⁹

As previewed above, though, the truth of (21) implies the truth of (18) – If Elizabeth were not to accept the grant, it would be true that $O \rightarrow A$. And since (17) – If Elizabeth were to accept the grant, it would be true that $O \rightarrow A$ – is also true, it straightforwardly follows that the truth of (12) is “independent of whether or not Elizabeth actually accepts the grant.”²⁰ In addition it follows from the bringing-about criterion (16) that “Elizabeth’s acceptance of the offer does not bring it about that the counterfactual ‘ $O \rightarrow A$ ’ is true.”²¹ In general, then, it is not true that the truth of a counterfactual of creaturely freedom is brought about by the agent about whom the counterfactual is true. This conclusion, as said before, is significant as it regards the libertarian conception of freedom to which middle knowledge is committed. Such a conception is

¹⁹ Hasker 45.

²⁰ Hasker 48.

²¹ Hasker 48.

committed to the idea that when agents act they have it within their power to act differently under precisely the same circumstances. So does Elizabeth enjoy this sort of power?

Apparently not. Though Elizabeth obviously enjoys the power to accept the grant since that is precisely what we stipulated that she does in the actual world, it is not so clear that she enjoys the power to reject it. The reason is that her rejection of the grant “entails that the counterfactual ‘ $O \rightarrow \sim A$ ’ is true, but this counterfactual is in fact false.”²² Hence “she can have the power to reject the grant only if it is in her power to bring it about that this counterfactual is true.”²³ And now, as Hasker notes, the “situation becomes serious.” For it would be in Elizabeth’s power to bring it about that $O \rightarrow \sim A$ is true only if the truth of this counterfactual would be brought about by her rejecting the offer. Unfortunately, as we have seen, “the truth of a counterfactual of freedom is *not* brought about in this way,” and thus it “follows that Elizabeth does not have it in her power to bring it about that $O \rightarrow \sim A$.”²⁴ But if she lacks this power, she then also lacks the power to reject the offer. And this is inconsistent with a libertarian conception of freedom, a conception to which the theory of middle knowledge is committed.

Vis-à-vis the grounding objection, then, Hasker’s argument apparently shows that any grounds for the truth of counterfactuals of freedom are in addition grounds that preclude the agent from doing otherwise in the

²² Hasker 51.

²³ Hasker 51.

²⁴ Hasker 51.

circumstances specified by the counterfactual. But since it is part and parcel to a libertarian conception of freedom that the agent be able to do otherwise when acting for that action to count as *free*, any grounds for the truth of a counterfactual that preclude the agent from having this ability are grounds that preclude the agent from being free in a libertarian sense. And since on middle knowledge it turns out that it is not the agent who grounds the truth of a counterfactual of libertarian freedom, the agent then lacks the power to act otherwise, and so the counterfactuals in the second moment in the structure of God's knowledge are not actually counterfactuals of *freedom* at all. Hence, if Hasker's argument is sound, middle knowledge does nothing to alleviate the alleged incoherence in God's having foreknowledge of and providence over human free agency.

2.1.2. From Robert Adams

A (much) less complicated version of the grounding objection to the theory of middle knowledge is presented by Robert Adams. In brief, Adams argues essentially that because there is nothing ontologically "there" to ground the truth of counterfactuals of freedom, they must then be all false. Or, since there exist no plausible metaphysical grounds that would bring about the truth of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, none of them is true, and so none of them can do the theoretical work required by Molinism. Adams develops this argument as follows.

In the twenty-third chapter of the Biblical book of Samuel, we find David in the city of Keilah and King Saul with plans to besiege Keilah in order to

capture David. David having caught wind of Saul's plans says to God, "O Lord God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant" (1 Samuel 23:10-11). God responds to David's latter question that Saul "will come down" (v. 11), and to David's former question that men of Keilah "will deliver you" (v. 12). Adams remarks that this passage "was a favorite proof text for the Jesuit theologians," and that they took it to prove that God knew the following two propositions to be true.²⁵

- (1) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would besiege the city.
- (2) If David stayed in Keilah and Saul besieged the city, the men of Keilah would surrender David to Saul.

Now if we grant that God is omniscient, Adams says, "we cannot consistently doubt that He had this middle knowledge unless we doubt that (1) and (2) were true."²⁶ So do we have any reason to doubt that (1) and (2) were true. Adams thinks we do.

Adams' principle complaint against thinking that (1) and (2) – or any such counterfactual of creaturely freedom – are true, is that *he simply does not understand* what it would be for (1) and (2) to be true, "given that the actions in question would have been free, and that David did not stay in Keilah." He explains his incomprehension as follows.

²⁵ Robert Adams, "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1977), 110.

²⁶ Adams 110.

To begin with, Adams says that we must first note that “middle knowledge is not simple *foreknowledge*.”²⁷ That is, the answers that David receives from God obviously cannot be understood as categorical predictions. For if they were, they would be false. Indeed, Adams notes that most philosophers “have supposed that categorical predictions, even about contingent events, can be true by corresponding to the actual occurrence of the event that they predict.”²⁸ But, of course, propositions (1) and (2) are not true in this way. There never was nor will there now ever be an actual besieging of Keilah by Saul, nor an actual betrayal of David to Saul by the men of Keilah, and so there will never be the actual occurrence of the events to which counterfactuals (1) and (2) might correspond. Hence if there are grounds for the truth of (1) and (2), they must come from elsewhere besides actual events in the actual world.

Other grounds that might be suggested for the truth of (1) and (2) appear to be “ruled out by the assumption that the actions of Saul and the men of Keilah are and would be free in the relevant sense.”²⁹ For example, Adams argues that the suggestion that Saul’s besieging Keilah follows by logical necessity from David’s staying in Keilah is simply incredible. What would it mean to say that David’s remaining in Keilah *logically entails* that Saul then besieges the city? Adams thinks this makes very little sense. As another example, a more plausible sort of necessity, as Adams sees it, that might be used to link

²⁷ Adams 110.

²⁸ Adams 110.

²⁹ Adams 111.

David's remaining in Keilah *and* Saul's besieging Keilah, or David's remaining with Saul's besieging *and* the Keilahites delivering David, is *causal* necessity. However, although this sort of link would clearly ground the truth of either (1) or (2), such a link would be far too strong. Indeed, as Adams argues, such a suggestion appears straightforwardly inconsistent with the assumption that both Saul's and the men of Keilah's actions are free.³⁰ Thus if logically necessitating grounds are nonsensical and causally necessitating grounds preclude genuine freedom, might there be nonnecessitating grounds for the truth of (1) and (2) that theoretically fair better?

Adams suggests that such nonnecessitating grounds for the truth of counterfactuals of freedom may be found "in the actual intentions, desires, and character of Saul and the Keilahites."³¹ Adams notes that it does appear from the Biblical narrative that Saul actually intended to besiege the city if David remained, and so perhaps is (1) grounded in virtue of its correspondence with Saul's intentions, desires, character, and so forth. And the same thing could be said for what grounds the truth of (2): this counterfactual is true in virtue of corresponding to the character, desires, intentions, and so forth of the men of Keilah.

But this suggestion simply will not do, according to Adams, "precisely because it is not necessitating."³² As he correctly notes, a "free agent may act

³⁰ Adams 111.

³¹ Adams 111.

³² Adams 111.

out of character, or change his intentions, or fail to act on them.”³³ Hence, the counterfactuals which may be true in virtue of corresponding to the psychological traits of Saul and the men of Keilah are not (1) and (2), but rather the following.

- (5) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would *probably* besiege the city.
- (6) If David stayed in Keilah and Saul besieged the city, the men of Keilah would *probably* surrender David to Saul.

Now (5) and (6) are enough for David to prudently act on, as Adams says, but they are not counterfactuals of the sort that middle knowledge requires. For middle knowledge requires that God possess infallible counterfactual knowledge regarding what would *definitely* occur (call such counterfactuals *would-definitely* counterfactuals) were some free agent placed in some specified set of circumstances. It is not enough that God merely counterfactually know what would *probably* happen or what some free agent would *probably* do if placed in certain situations. Such *would-probably* counterfactual knowledge simply does not provide what middle knowledge requires. Middle knowledge needs true *would-definitely* counterfactuals, and this we do not have.

But now comes the point of Adams’ argument. If neither logical nor causal necessitation, nor psychological contingencies can plausibly link the antecedent and consequent in counterfactual conditionals such as (1) and (2),

³³ Adams 111.

then what can?³⁴ Since Adams himself cannot comprehend what could, he simply cannot understand what it would be for would-definitely counterfactuals of freedom to be true. There is simply nothing there to ground their truth, and so, according to Adams, we have no reason to suppose that any are true. Hence the theory of middle knowledge should be abandoned.

2.2. REPLIES

2.2.1. *From Luis de Molina*

Replies to the grounding objection are not in short supply, and though Hasker's version has its critics, for the most part the replies are directed at the version of the grounding objection articulated by Adams. That is, they are directed at the problem of specifying precisely what it is, if anything, that is ontologically "there" that can serve as the grounds for the truth of counterfactuals of freedom. And as this is perhaps the most significant stumbling block to a broader acceptance of middle knowledge among theists, it seems natural to begin with the reply of the founder of the theory itself: Luis de Molina.

Recall from the discussion of Molina's development of middle knowledge in Chapter 1 that, as he views it, God via his natural knowledge thoroughly comprehends each possible entity with an "*absolutely profound and absolutely preeminent comprehension*."³⁵ The reason, recall, for this stipulation is that it

³⁴ In Chapter 4 when developing my own reply to the grounding objection, I will argue that, *contra* Adams, psychological contingencies can in fact plausibly link the antecedent and consequent of counterfactuals of freedom.

³⁵ Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, translated with introduction and notes by A. J. Freddoso (Ithaca: London, 1998) 171.

is intended to answer the question regarding how God knows what a free creature will freely and contingently do in some specified set of circumstances C. As Molina says, “in order to see which part a free being will turn itself toward, it is not sufficient that there be a comprehension of the being or even that there be a comprehension that is greater than is the thing comprehended.” Instead, as stated already, what is required is “an *absolutely profound and absolutely preeminent comprehension*, such as is found only in God with respect to creatures.”³⁶ This theory of “*absolutely profound and absolutely preeminent comprehension*,” as Freddoso notes, subsequently came to be known in the Molinist literature as the theory of *supercomprehension*.³⁷ Thus for Molina, that God supercomprehends some possible essence is sufficient to inform him of what that essence would freely do if actualized in C. And though on Molina’s view we are not told precisely what it is that *grounds* a counterfactual of creaturely freedom or what it is that *makes* a particular counterfactual of freedom true, we are told that such information is available to God via supercomprehension.

As Adams understands it, this response to the grounding problem is not at all satisfactory. For given that the theory is essentially that “God’s intellect so immensely surpasses, in its perfection, all created free wills, that it ‘supercomprehends’ them,” it seems to follow, Adams says, that God “understands more about them than would be necessary merely to

³⁶ Freddoso 171.

³⁷ Freddoso 51.

comprehend them.”³⁸ And such, he argues, is nonsense. Indeed, Adams approvingly refers to Francisco Suarez, a contemporary and critic of Molina, who argued in rejecting the theory of supercomprehension that “to comprehend something is already to understand about it everything that is there to be understood, and it is absurd to suppose that anyone, even God, could understand more than that.”³⁹ So, for Adams, Molina seems to want to say that “what free creatures would do under various possible conditions is not there, objectively, to be known, but that God’s mind is so perfect that He knows it anyway. But this is impossible.” The problem that needs to be resolved, Adams argues, “is how the relevant subjunctive conditionals can be true, and nothing that may be said about the excellence of God’s cognitive powers contributes anything to the solution of that problem.”⁴⁰

But has Adams (and Suarez) misinterpreted Molina on this point? Alfred Freddoso thinks so, and argues against both Adams and Suarez that Molina “is not making the absurd claim that by His middle knowledge God knows something that is not there ‘objectively’ to be known.”⁴¹ The “states of affairs which God knows by His middle knowledge really obtain from eternity and the corresponding propositions are really true from eternity.” Instead, “Molina is claiming that what is ‘there’ to be known prevolitionally about future contingents can be known *infallibly* and *with certitude* only by a cognitively

³⁸ Adams 111.

³⁹ Adams 111.

⁴⁰ Adams 111.

⁴¹ Freddoso 52.

perfect being.”⁴² Freddoso grants that this account is “arguably the weakest link in the Molinist chain,” but “it is not for that reason obviously untenable.”⁴³ Indeed, if “God is essentially omniscient, one has only to establish that conditional future contingents [i.e., contingent counterfactuals] obtain in order to show that God has comprehensive and infallible prevolitional knowledge of them.”⁴⁴ This, as Freddoso sees it, renders the theory of supercomprehension “superfluous,” and thus he says it can safely be “swept under the rug;” it is just not needed.⁴⁵ Arguably, then, not only have Adams and Suarez misinterpreted Molina regarding how the theory of supercomprehension should be understood, the theory is not required for middle knowledge in any case.

But perhaps Freddoso is giving Adams less credit than his argument deserves. For even if we grant that Adams has misinterpreted Molina, and that his theory of supercomprehension is superfluous and so not necessary to middle knowledge, one could still argue that nothing Freddoso has said (at least so far) addresses Adams’ central concern with respect to how “the relevant subjunctive conditionals can be true.”⁴⁶ And nothing from either Molina or Freddoso (so far) provides us with any arguments about how we should handle that concern. In addition, as Adams correctly notes, “nothing that may be said about the excellence of God’s cognitive powers contributes

⁴² Freddoso 52.

⁴³ Freddoso 53.

⁴⁴ Freddoso 53.

⁴⁵ Freddoso 53.

⁴⁶ Adams 111.

anything to the solution of that problem.”⁴⁷ Hence, Molina’s theory is interesting regarding God’s “*absolutely profound and absolutely preeminent comprehension*” of free creatures as a means by which God comes to know the truth-values of counterfactuals of freedom that regard them. But in the end it must also be seen as impotent as a response to the grounding objection. Talk about what God knows or comprehends requires that there is something there to know or comprehend. And the bare assertion that something is there is not anything like an argument that there is. Hence even if the proper interpretation of Molina is that there is something there objectively speaking for God to supercomprehend, Adams and others skeptical of Molinism will want an account of what exactly that is. Thus, as a reply to the grounding objection, Molina’s explanation is unsatisfying. And so a satisfactory response to the grounding objection must be sought elsewhere.

2.2.2. *From Francisco Suarez*

As mentioned already, Francisco Suarez was a contemporary of Molina. And though he was a critic of Molina’s theory of supercomprehension, he was an advocate of Molina’s theory of middle knowledge. According to Robert Adams, in explaining the grounds for counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, Suarez’s response seems to be the “least clearly unsatisfactory type of explanation for the alleged possibility of middle knowledge.”⁴⁸ For in responding to the grounding problem Suarez “appeals, in effect, to a primitive understanding, which needs no analysis, of what it is for the relevant

⁴⁷ Adams 111.

⁴⁸ Adams 111.

subjunctive conditionals to be true.”⁴⁹ For example, consider a possible free creature *c* (who may in fact never exist) and a possible free action *a*, which *c* may freely perform or refrain from performing in situation *s*. As Suarez sees it, “*c* has a property ... which is either the property of being a possible agent who would in *s* freely do *a*, or the property of being a possible agent who would in *s* refrain from doing *a*.” Thus, for Suarez, God has middle knowledge regarding *c* in *s* because God knows whether *c* has the property of in *s* doing *a*, or in *s* refraining from doing *a*. Not surprisingly this sort of property is had for any possible agent regarding any possible situation in which that agent might find herself. Thus Suarez’s reply to the grounding objection amounts to saying that either the agent has the property of performing an action in some specified situation, or the agent does not. And the agent’s possession of, or lack of, that property is ontologically primitive, such that there is no explanation available as to why the agent either has or lacks the property in question.

Now the reason Adams says above that this explanation by Suarez is the “least clearly unsatisfactory type of explanation for the alleged possibility of middle knowledge” is not because Adams thinks that Suarez’s explanation is particularly satisfying. Rather, his reason for saying as much is that “it is very difficult to refute someone who claims to have a primitive understanding which I seem not to have.”⁵⁰ In other words, Adams confesses that with regard to the idea of our having primitive properties regarding actions we would or would not perform in counterfactual situations is simply not something that Adams can

⁴⁹ Adams 111.

⁵⁰ Adams 112.

seriously consider. As he says, “I do not think I have any conception, primitive or otherwise, of the sort of ... property that Suarez ascribes to possible agents with respect to their acts under possible conditions. Nor do I think that I have any other primitive understanding of what it would be for the relevant subjunctive conditionals to be true.”⁵¹ And with Adams I agree. Suarez’s view would, of course, answer the question as to what the grounds are for the truth-values of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. Such counterfactuals are true because free creature *c* bears (or more exactly the *essence* of *c* includes) a property of doing this or that in some situation *s*. This is enough to bring about the truth or falsity of a particular counterfactual of freedom regarding *c* in *s*. However, naturally the next question to ask is why precisely it is that *c* bears the property *p* of performing action *a* in *s*, or the property *p** (say) of refraining from *a* in *s*. Why is it the case that one property is included in a creature’s essence rather than another, *a fortiori* when such properties regard actions that are supposed to be *contingent*?

Now presumably Suarez would consider this an unfair question, reiterating that on his account it is simply *primitive* whether the essence of *c* includes *p* or *p** instead. Thus, given that account, it is simply not legitimate to ask for an explanation of a phenomenon that is primitive. But quite arguably this response is inappropriate given that what Suarez says is primitive is also construed as contingent. If it truly is a contingent matter that there are primitive properties included in our individual essences that ground counterfactuals of

⁵¹ Adams 112.

freedom, it looks entirely reasonable to ask for an explanation for why one contingent property over another is essential to us. But aside from this, normally essential properties are construed as properties that are themselves necessary, rather than contingent. Hence, on Suarez's view, even though a primitive property in our essence would ground the truth of a counterfactual of freedom, it is difficult to understand how that counterfactual could in fact remain a counterfactual of *libertarian* freedom. For the necessity of the primitive property would render necessary the truth of the counterfactual, in which case the agent in question does not enjoy the ability to do otherwise, and so does not enjoy freedom of a libertarian sort. But middle knowledge is purported to be a theory reconciling foreknowledge, providence, and a libertarian conception of freedom – in the sense that our actions are contingent and we enjoy the ability to do otherwise – and so it is difficult to see how Suarez's reply answers the grounding objection in terms that are compatible with the theory his reply is intended to defend.

In short, then, c either having p or having p^* would indeed explain why a certain counterfactual about c in s is true or false, but it would not explain why the essence of c either contingently includes p or contingently includes p^* . Moreover, if either p or p^* is not contingent but necessary instead, then what needs explaining is how counterfactuals of freedom that are necessarily true could also be counterfactuals of *libertarian* freedom. Hence either way, more is needed from Suarez by way of explaining how counterfactuals of freedom could be true besides saying that the grounds for such counterfactuals are

primitive. This response, arguably, avoids giving an explanation where an explanation appears evidently required. Thus, though Suarez's reply does provide an explanation (of sorts) for the truth of counterfactuals of freedom, it is not an explanation that genuinely explains what the grounding objector legitimately wants explained. Hence, we should look elsewhere for a satisfactory reply to the grounding objection.

2.2.3. *From Alvin Plantinga*

Alvin Plantinga has directly responded to the argument from Robert Adams that middle knowledge is implausible given that counterfactuals of freedom, because ungrounded, are not true. Plantinga understands Adams to be saying not that counterfactuals of creaturely freedom "all just *happen* to be false," but rather that they are "*necessarily* false."⁵² And this appears quite odd to Plantinga since we so often pretheoretically believe that counterfactuals of freedom are true. For example, says Plantinga, if "Bob Adams were to offer to take me climbing at Tahquitz Rock the next time I come to California, I would gladly (and freely) accept."⁵³ This is a counterfactual that Plantinga believes is clearly true, hence what "is the reason for thinking," he asks, that "we are always, on those occasions, mistaken, that we believe what couldn't possibly be true?"⁵⁴ As Plantinga paraphrases Adams, the reason is that "there seems to be no *ground or basis* for the truth of such counterfactuals; there seems to

⁵² Tomberlin 374.

⁵³ Tomberlin 373.

⁵⁴ Tomberlin 374.

be nothing ... that *makes or causes* them to be true.”⁵⁵ So suppose, Plantinga says, that we claim that “if Curley had been offered a bribe of \$35,000, he would have (freely) accepted it.”⁵⁶ Given that the acceptance of the offer is free, “the antecedent neither entails nor causally necessitates the conclusion. It is both logically and causally possible that the antecedent be true and the consequent false.”⁵⁷ Adams’ objection, then, posed as a question, is to ask exactly what it is that “makes this counterfactual true?”⁵⁸

To answer this question properly, says Plantinga, “we should have to investigate the implied suggestion that if a proposition is true, then something *grounds its* truth, or *causes* it to be true, or *makes* it true.”⁵⁹ And, Plantinga inquires, what kind of thing should we think of performing this kind of role? For example, he asks, what grounds the truth of the proposition “*this piece of chalk is three inches long*?”⁶⁰ The answer to this question, Plantinga thinks, is not at all clear. Indeed, he states it seems “much clearer that at least some counterfactuals of freedom are at least possibly true than that the truth of counterfactuals must be grounded in this way.”⁶¹ But setting this intuition aside for the moment, Plantinga says suppose we concede, for the purposes of argument, that propositions must be grounded in the very way that Adams appears to be suggesting. Suppose in fact, he asks us, that yesterday he

⁵⁵ “Replies to My Colleagues,” in *Alvin Plantinga*, Profiles series, Volume 5, James E. Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen eds. (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), 373.

⁵⁶ Tomberlin 374.

⁵⁷ Tomberlin 374.

⁵⁸ Tomberlin 374.

⁵⁹ Tomberlin 374.

⁶⁰ Tomberlin 374.

⁶¹ Tomberlin 374.

performed some action A. In that case, what was it or is it that grounded his doing so? Plantinga says “I wasn’t caused to do so by anything else; nothing relevant entails that I did so. So what grounds the truth of the proposition in question.”⁶²

Perhaps someone will say that what grounds the truth of ‘Plantinga did A’, or what makes the proposition that he did so true, is just the simple fact that he did A. If this is the response, however, Plantinga thinks “this isn’t much of an answer;” moreover “at any rate the same kind of answer is available in the case of Curley.” What grounds the truth of the counterfactual regarding Curley’s acceptance of the bribe, Plantinga says, “is just that in fact Curley is such that if he had been offered a \$35,000 bribe, he would have freely taken it.”⁶³ The point, then, is that nearly any grounding objector, and certainly Robert Adams, would grant that the proposition ‘Plantinga did A’ is true if indeed Plantinga did A. But if such a proposition is true, then according to the criteria of the grounding objector the proposition is true only if it is *made true* or *grounded* by one sort of thing or other. Regarding propositions about the past, what would that be? Thus, if it is credible to think that propositions about the past are true and so grounded, even though it is not clear what those grounds are, why is it not also credible to think that propositions regarding counterfactual situations involving free creatures, that may or may not ever obtain, are true and grounded as well? In short, if propositions involving free

⁶² Tomberlin 374.

⁶³ Tomberlin 374.

actions about the past can be grounded, Plantinga sees no reason why counterfactuals involving freedom cannot be grounded too.

As another defense of the possibility that counterfactuals of freedom are true, Plantinga considers apparently true counterfactuals regarding divine freedom. For example, he says it is highly plausible to suppose that “if Adam and Eve had not sinned, God would not have punished them; if they had not sinned he would have freely refrained from driving them out of the garden.”⁶⁴ And though none of us knows for sure that this counterfactual is true, Plantinga concedes, surely at the very least “it is *possible* that it’s true.”⁶⁵ Hence, given this simple example, there seem to be true (or at least possibly true) counterfactuals of freedom with regard to God. And if so, Plantinga asks, “what would *ground* the truth of such a counterfactual of freedom?”⁶⁶ Nothing obvious presents itself, so far as Plantinga can tell. Thus he concludes that “if counterfactuals about God can be true even if their antecedents neither entail nor causally necessitate their consequents, why can’t the same be true for similar counterfactuals about other persons?”⁶⁷ Hence Plantinga finds Adams’ argument against thinking there could be true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom “inconclusive.”

By way of critique, it is important to see that Plantinga has made three arguments against Adams. First, he has argued that it is simply more intuitive to think that counterfactuals of freedom are possibly true than that they must

⁶⁴ Tomberlin 374.

⁶⁵ Tomberlin 375.

⁶⁶ Tomberlin 375.

⁶⁷ Tomberlin 375.

be grounded in the manner that Adams' requires. Second, he has argued that it is not incredible to think that if propositions involving free actions about the past can be true and grounded, then counterfactuals involving freedom can be true and grounded too. And third, he has argued that given that there are true (or at least possibly true) counterfactuals that are true regarding divine freedom, why not in addition think that there are true counterfactuals regarding creaturely freedom. Let me say something by way of response about each.

With regard to Plantinga's first claim – that the truth counterfactuals is more credible than the requirement that they be grounded as Adams' suggests – Thomas Flint appears correctly to comment that “few Molinists would feel comfortable responding to the ‘grounding’ objection with nothing more than a plea of Socratic ignorance.”⁶⁸ Flint argues that the suggestions that counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are “true for reasons, and that those reasons ultimately have something to do with the causal activities of free creatures, seem both clear enough and plausible enough for Molinists to feel uneasy about straightforwardly denying them.”⁶⁹ Indeed this is why, Flint concedes, Plantinga proceeds to make the second argument that he does.

Regarding this second argument – that if past-tensed propositions of freedom can be true and grounded there seems to be no reason for denying grounds and truth to counterfactuals of freedom – it seems to be open to the following reply. A grounding objector such as Adams, Flint comments, “might point out that, though the claim that Plantinga did A is grounded in Plantinga's

⁶⁸ Thomas Flint, *Divine Providence* (Cornel University Press: Ithaca, 1998) 127.

⁶⁹ Flint 127.

actual activity yesterday, *no* such activity on Curley's part sufficiently grounds the truth of that counterfactual about him."⁷⁰ Hence the fact that the former state of affairs actually obtained, it can thus arguably serve as grounds for the past-tensed proposition of freedom 'Plantinga did A'. The latter state of affairs regarding Curley, however, did not obtain, and it may not ever obtain. Hence, because propositions about the past plausibly have grounds should provide us with little confidence that propositions about Curley's counterfactual activity can have grounds. The two situations are simply too different. Thus, the appeal to the similarity between our inability to specify grounds regarding obvious truths about the past and the grounds regarding possible truths about counterfactual states of affairs should give us no confidence in thinking that because the former are true, so can be the latter. But what about Plantinga's third argument?

With respect to Plantinga's third argument – that since there are true counterfactuals of freedom regarding God, we have no reason to deny that there could be true counterfactuals regarding other persons as well – I agree with Timothy O'Connor that some of the "remarks from Hasker point the way towards a proper response to Plantinga's suggestion."⁷¹ In reply to Plantinga's question regarding what would ground the truth of counterfactuals of freedom about God, Hasker says the answer "is obvious."⁷² The truth of counterfactuals regarding divine freedom are "grounded in God's *conditional intention* to act in

⁷⁰ Flint 128.

⁷¹ Timothy O'Connor, "The Impossibility of Middle Knowledge," *Philosophical Studies* 66 (1992), 160.

⁷² Hasker 32.

a certain way.” Humans, however, for the most part “have no such conditional intentions about choices they might be called upon to make – or, when they do have them, the intentions at best ground ‘*would probably*’ counterfactuals.”⁷³ Taking this cue from Hasker, O’Connor comments that if “God really does know with absolute certainty precisely how he would respond if certain circumstances were to obtain,” this is because such knowledge “is grounded in (a) his fixed, detailed, conditional intentions to act in certain ways, and (b) his knowledge that he cannot waver in his purposes.”⁷⁴ However, as O’Connor correctly argues, that this could be so does nothing to show that God “can have knowledge of human free actions under counterfactual circumstances,” given that for such actions there simply “are no analogues of (a) and (b).”⁷⁵ In addition, O’Connor notes that “to whatever extent it may be the case that humans develop at least some highly stable fixed intentions, this is a feature of their character which develops over time.” And in that case, “God could not know prevolitionally what choices would be made in the early stages of a free creature’s life which would contribute to the development of such intentions, and so he also could not know the resulting character of the intentions themselves.”⁷⁶

Thus, the response to Plantinga’s third argument is simply that any grounds available for grounding the truth of counterfactuals of *divine* freedom are not also available for grounding counterfactuals of *creaturely* freedom. With God

⁷³ Hasker 32.

⁷⁴ O’Connor 161.

⁷⁵ O’Connor 161.

⁷⁶ O’Connor 161.

there exists a stable, fixed character out of which arguably the truth of counterfactuals might flow. Hence, given God's goodness and justice, there is excellent reason for thinking that God would not have punished Adam and Eve for committing the crime of eating the forbidden fruit if they did not in fact eat the fruit. Indeed the whole point of Adams' argument against thinking that counterfactuals of creaturely freedom could be grounded in the psychological states of the agent was that agents may (and in fact sometimes do) act out of character. If God cannot, then it is not incredible to think, as Hasker does, that God's conditional intentions ground conditionals of freedom regarding what God would or would not counterfactually do. So Plantinga's argument that *because true counterfactuals of divine freedom exist, we have reason to affirm that true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom exist* is questionable.

We have seen, then, three arguments from Plantinga as a reply to Adams' version of the grounding objection. We have also seen that arguably all three arguments are wanting for one reason or another. Hence, arguably a satisfactory response to the grounding objection needs to be sought elsewhere.

2.2.4. From Alfred Freddoso

Despite the problems with Plantinga's proposals for resolving the grounding problem, there are those who think his second argument above is a step in the right direction. Alfred Freddoso is one such individual, and he develops his own proposal for resolving the grounding problem in the following way.

Freddoso characterizes Adams' objection to middle knowledge as "that a proposition p is true only if there are what we might call *adequate metaphysical grounds* for the truth of p ." In addition "there are not and indeed cannot be adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of the alleged objects of middle knowledge [i.e., counterfactuals of freedom, or 'conditional future contingents,' as Freddoso calls them] – at least not if a strong libertarian account of freedom and causal indeterminism is correct."⁷⁷ Hence, Freddoso refers to Adams as thus endorsing "*antirealism* with respect to conditional future contingents."⁷⁸ Freddoso agrees with Plantinga that Adams' requirement of "adequate metaphysical grounds" is not completely clear, but given that the grounding objection appears to many to have considerable intuitive appeal, he concedes that "the fundamental notion underlying the objection has at least some validity."⁷⁹

In articulating his own response to the grounding objection, Freddoso thinks we must first "draw a basic distinction between the grounds for the truth of metaphysically necessary propositions and the grounds for the truth of metaphysically contingent propositions."⁸⁰ The former, he says, "presumably involve just the constant and necessary relations of natures or properties to each other."⁸¹ However, Freddoso argues, such grounds are positively inappropriate to underwrite the truth of propositions that are metaphysically

⁷⁷ Freddoso 69.

⁷⁸ Freddoso 69.

⁷⁹ Freddoso 70.

⁸⁰ Freddoso 70.

⁸¹ Freddoso 70.

contingent, as there are no necessary relations of natures or properties that underwrite the truth of such propositions. Grounds for contingent propositions, Freddoso argues, “require *causal* grounding in order to be true,” by which he means that the propositions “must be *caused to be true* by some agent or agents, since it is not of their nature to be true.”⁸² So what sort of account in terms of causal grounds might do the job?

As Freddoso sees it, the most promising account for the Molinist is one that builds “upon the arguments against antirealism regarding the absolute future.”⁸³ And by the “absolute future” Freddoso simply means the future that may be described by propositions that are not expressed conditionally as are counterfactuals. To use one of Freddoso’s examples, take the proposition ‘Peter will freely sin at time T’. This proposition does not say that given certain conditions Peter will freely sin at T, or that on the hypothesis that certain circumstances obtain Peter will sin freely at T, it simply states that at T Peter will freely sin. Now, Freddoso notes, the antirealist regarding the absolute future will deny that ‘Peter will freely sin at T’ is true before Peter sins at T even if it turns out that at T Peter freely sins. And they would “support their antirealism regarding *absolute* future contingents with arguments exactly like the one Adams produces for the case of *conditional* future contingents.”⁸⁴ Specifically, the antirealist can argue, as does Adams, that the causal history of the world up to the present certainly does not *logically* entail Peter’s sinning

⁸² Freddoso 70.

⁸³ Freddoso 71.

⁸⁴ Freddoso 70.

at T, and given a libertarian conception of freedom to which the Molinist is committed, it does not *causally* necessitate Peter's sinning at T either. So, the antirealist regarding absolute future contingents concludes, analogous to Adams regarding conditional future contingents, that "there are not and cannot be adequate metaphysical grounds at present for the truth of the absolute future contingent *Peter will sin at T*."⁸⁵

Now, as stated already, Freddoso thinks that the best reply to the grounding objection is analogous to the reply against the antirealist regarding absolute future contingents. So how precisely does such a reply proceed? Freddoso thinks in this way.

Suppose that the Apostle John has regrettably reported beforehand that Peter will deny Christ at time T. In that case, says Freddoso, "after Peter's denial at T, John can reasonably maintain that his prediction was true and thus that he spoke the truth before T when he asserted the proposition *Peter will deny Jesus*." Hence, argues Freddoso, "it is reasonable to hold that this proposition was true before T."⁸⁶ To put the point differently, Freddoso asks us to suppose that a prediction is made that the next toss of a fair coin will come up heads. Suppose further that the coin's coming up one way or the other is causally indeterminate, even to the extent that prior to the toss the world is not even nondeterministically tending towards the coin either coming up heads or coming up tails. Suppose finally that when the coin is tossed, it comes up heads. Given that outcome, Freddoso argues, "it is perfectly reasonable for

⁸⁵ Freddoso 70.

⁸⁶ Freddoso 71.

me to claim that my prediction was true, that is, that I spoke the truth in asserting beforehand the proposition *The coin will come up heads*,” and so “it is reasonable for me to maintain that this proposition was true before you tossed the coin.”⁸⁷ Hence, as Freddoso sees it, there seem to be absolute future contingents that are true. But if there are such true contingent propositions, what are the metaphysical grounds for their truth?

Freddoso thinks, as does Plantinga, that the same question can be raised regarding the truth of contingently true propositions about the past. For example, asks Freddoso, what “are the grounds for the present truth of, say, the proposition *Socrates drank hemlock*?”⁸⁸ Toward answering this question, let *p* stand for present-tense propositions and *P* for the past-tense propositional operator. “The proper response,” then, to the question posed, says Freddoso, “is that there are *now* adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of a past-tensed proposition *Pp* just in case there *were* at some past time adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of the present-tense counterpart *p*.”⁸⁹ In analogous fashion to absolute future contingents, Freddoso argues, letting *F* stand for the future-tense propositional operator, the “realist about the absolute future will claim that there are *now* adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of a future-tense proposition *Fp* just in case there *will* be at some future time adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of its present-tense

⁸⁷ Freddoso 71.

⁸⁸ Freddoso 72.

⁸⁹ Freddoso 72.

counterpart p .”⁹⁰ In short, then, Freddoso is arguing that presently true propositions about the past are adequately grounded in virtue of the fact that there were at some past time adequate metaphysical grounds for their truth. Likewise, propositions about the future can be both true now and adequately grounded so long as there will be at some future time adequate metaphysical grounds for their truth. According to Freddoso, then, absolute future contingents can be both grounded and true, contrary to the claims of the antirealist about the absolute future.

If the above analysis is correct, then by extension Freddoso says “it seems reasonable to claim that there are now adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of a conditional future contingent $Ft(p)$ on H just in case there *would* be adequate metaphysical grounds at t for the truth of the present-tense proposition p on the condition that H should obtain at t .”⁹¹ To better see this, return to John’s prediction about Peter. Instead of John predicting that *Peter will deny Jesus*, he might just as easily have predicted instead that *If Peter were tempted to deny Jesus anytime soon, he would succumb*. Not surprisingly, Freddoso says “after Peter’s denial John may reasonably maintain that what he had asserted was true.”⁹² And the same point could be made regarding the coin-tossing illustration. Instead of absolutely predicting that *The coin will come up heads*, had Freddoso instead conditionally predicted that *If you were to toss the coin, it would come up heads*, then in the

⁹⁰ Freddoso 72.

⁹¹ Freddoso 72.

⁹² Freddoso 72.

event that you toss the coin and it comes up heads he thinks it is entirely reasonable to say that his prediction was true.

So, in summary, Freddoso has developed an account of adequate metaphysical grounds along the theoretical lines hinted at above in Plantinga's reply to the grounding objection. Simply put, as Freddoso sees it, analogous to past-tense propositions, future-contingent propositions and counterfactuals of freedom can *now* be true and adequately grounded so long as there will be or would be, respectively, adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of those proposition's present-tense counterparts. Thus, for Freddoso, the grounding objection falls flat.

Despite this "ingeniously suggested"⁹³ account from Freddoso, the account nonetheless has its critics. One such critic is Timothy O'Connor. O'Connor begins his critique by noting that Freddoso claims "that there are now grounds for the truth of a future-tense contingent proposition *p* just in case" the following proposition is true.

(15) there will be adequate grounds for the present-tense counterpart of *p* at some future time *t*.

So in other words, "there are grounds for *p* just in case (15) is (now) true."⁹⁴ But according to Freddoso, "all true propositions have grounds, even future-contingent ones." Hence, O'Connor says Freddoso is committed to

(16) *p* has grounds iff (15) is true

and

⁹³ Flint 128.

⁹⁴ O'Connor 155.

(17) (15) is true iff (15) has grounds

and

(18) (15) has grounds iff the present-tense counterpart of (15) will have grounds at some future time t .

O'Connor states that it "should be clear to the reader by now that we are off on an infinite regress."⁹⁵ In addition, it should be clear that the regress is not "harmless" since it has the form " α has grounds iff β has grounds, but β has grounds iff γ has grounds, ...". But if "a ground is [genuinely] to be a ground, then all conditions for its being so must be satisfied," and "this will not be the case where any condition c of the putative ground is such that every condition on *it* must satisfy some further condition." Hence, because at "no point in the process is some element independently grounded by the state of the world," O'Connor concludes that Freddoso's account unintentionally "implies that no future-tense contingent propositions have grounds."⁹⁶ Thus Freddoso's account of the grounds for the truth of future-contingent propositions has little to recommend it.

Against O'Connor, however, Eef Dekker argues that O'Connor's critique misses the mark in that "what O'Connor sees as an infinite regress is in fact an account of the very nature of a future contingent proposition."⁹⁷ To see this more clearly, Dekker says "we must explicate the time indices used in the various propositions."⁹⁸ That is, before concluding that Freddoso's account

⁹⁵ O'Connor 156.

⁹⁶ O'Connor 156.

⁹⁷ Eef Dekker, *Middle Knowledge* (Peeters: Leuven, 2000) 47.

⁹⁸ Dekker 47.

comprises a regress, we must consider the actual dates involved in future-contingent propositions. So recall, says Dekker, that Freddoso's definition for what it was for a future-contingent proposition to now have adequate metaphysical grounds is:

(FG) ... an absolute contingent proposition Fp has grounds just if there will be adequate metaphysical grounds at some future time for the truth of its present-tense counterpart p .⁹⁹

Now for the sake of argument, take the F in Fp to refer to January 1st 2009. In that case, Dekker says, the following is now true.

(FG*) Fp has grounds now (i.e. before January 1st 2009) just if at January 1st 2009 there will be grounds for p .

That is, p is now grounded if there will be grounds for p on January 1st 2009. And if so, (FG*) itself has grounds just if the present-tense counterpart of (FG*) will have grounds at January 1st 2009. In other words, "just if ' Fp has grounds now just if at January 1st 2009 there are grounds for p ' will have grounds at January 1st 2009."¹⁰⁰ Thus, as Dekker stresses, it is clear that the truth of Fp hinges on one date – January 1st 2009 – and that the truth of the proposition "will be settled at January 1st 2009, or, as the case may be, p may turn out to be false at that date." So it is "no wonder that that very date is responsible for the proposition to turn out true or false, no matter how many 'just ifs' we put in the grounding chain." Hence, Dekker concludes, the infinite regress espoused by O'Connor, "if there is any, is harmless" after all.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Dekker 47.

¹⁰⁰ Dekker 48.

¹⁰¹ Dekker 48.

But clever as Dekker's reply to O'Connor may be, I do not think that Freddoso's account has been adequately defended. The reason is that because the truth of p will be settled January 1st 2009, it hardly follows that the truth of p is settled *now*.¹⁰² Dekker, of course, means to assure us that it does, but the bare assertion that " Fp has grounds before January 1st 2009 just in case at January 1st 2009 there will be grounds for p " does little if anything to assure the grounding objector that there are *now* adequate metaphysical grounds for Fp . No doubt Dekker is correct in saying that when January 1st 2009 obtains the truth or falsity of Fp will be settled, but I do not see that he has given us any reason to think that the matter is *at present* settled. For what is there at present, on Dekker's view, that is ontologically "there" that can plausibly serve as the grounds for Fp ? The response seems to be the fact that January 1st 2009 will obtain and the world will either be as Fp describes or it will not. But this response is hardly satisfying. For why is it true *now* that the world will be (or not be) as Fp describes on January 1st 2009? Responding simply that because things *will be* (or *will not be*) as Fp describes – as Freddoso and Dekker seem to do – does not appear adequate.

Hence, I think O'Connor is correct in saying that Freddoso's account generates a regress and unintentionally suggests that no future-tense contingent propositions have grounds. Dekker defends Freddoso by arguing that *Because the future will be (or not be) the way future-tense contingent*

¹⁰² Though Dekker does not say it, by the term 'settled' here he must mean *epistemologically* settled, since the whole point of Freddoso's account of the grounds for future-tense contingent propositions is that they can be *metaphysically* settled (via grounds) *now*.

propositions say, the regress in Freddoso's account is "harmless." But, of course, that response arguably is only as credible as is the claim that *Because there will be at some future time grounds for the truth or falsity of future-tense contingent propositions, there are now grounds at this time for the truth or falsity of such propositions.* For my part, the latter claim has no intuitive appeal, and thus neither does Dekker's defense. Thus, the analogy between *absolute* future contingent propositions and *conditional* future contingent propositions that Freddoso employs in his argument appears flawed. So, given Freddoso's arguments, we do not have good grounds for thinking that conditional future contingents are true and grounded in the same way that absolute future contingent propositions are. And the primary reason is that we have not been given good reasons for thinking that absolute future contingent propositions are grounded in the first place. Thus, a satisfactory response to the grounding objection needs to be sought elsewhere.

2.2.5. *From Calvin Normore*

Calvin Normore believes that the doctrine of "scientia media" (middle knowledge) is the "most ingenious attempt" to reconcile the problem of foreknowledge, providence, and human freedom, but he is unimpressed with Molina's and Suarez's attempt to ground God's middle knowledge in supercomprehension or some sort of primitive property that persons exemplify. Instead, his own attempt to make sense of the grounding problem is briefly stated as follows.

Imagine that Gods' mind contains a perfect model of each possible thing – a complete divine idea of a particular or, if you like, an individual concept. Imagine that God simulates possible histories by thinking about how the being which is A would behave under circumstances C – i.e. he simulates C and 'sees' how A behaves. Now *if* there is a way in which A *would* behave in C, a perfect model should reflect it, so if conditional excluded middle is valid such a model is possible and God knows the history of the world by knowing that model, i.e. by knowing his own intellect and his creative intentions.¹⁰³

According to Normore, then, on the assumption that the logical principle of conditional excluded middle (CEM) is valid – a principle which states that for any conditional proposition either *If P, then Q* is true, or *If P, then ~Q* is true – counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are thus true. The reason is that, given CEM, either the counterfactual of freedom *If S were in C, then S would do A* or *If S were in C, then it is not the case that S would do A* is true. And given that one or the other is true, there is little (if any) reason to think that God would not know its truth. Hence, as Normore argues, God knows the truth-values of counterfactuals of freedom given CEM, and so given CEM God has middle knowledge.

The strength of this reply, however, obviously depends on the validity of CEM. If CEM is a valid logical principle, arguably that is sufficient to conclude, as Normore does, that God (if he exists) has middle knowledge. However, even if CEM were valid it clearly would not resolve all concerns regarding the theory of middle knowledge. For example, the question would remain as to why it is that the affirmation of a counterfactual's consequent is true rather

¹⁰³ Calvin G. Normore, "Divine Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Future Contingents: An Overview," in Tamar Rudavsky, ed., *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985) 15-16.

than the negation – or vice versa. Granted, though, if CEM is valid, then one of the counterfactuals *If S were in C, then S would do A* or *If S were in C, then it is not the case that S would do A* is true, even if we cannot say why. So much depends on the principle of conditional excluded middle. Is it valid? Perhaps not.

Linda Zagzebski argues that CEM is false because there are counterexamples to CEM that are more intuitive than is the principle itself. For example, she says, consider the following counterfactual of freedom.

(4) If I lived my life the way I have up to now (May 1988), I would be living in Chicago in 1999.

Zagzebski argues “that (4) is false.”¹⁰⁴ And the reason (4) is false has to do with the nature of contradiction according to counterfactual logic. On counterfactual logic the contradiction of the counterfactual *If S were in C, S would do A* is not *If S were in C, it is not the case that S would do A*. Rather the contradiction of *If S were in C, S would do A* is *If S were in C, S might not do A*, where the ‘might’ in question is not merely an epistemological possibility, but is instead a genuine metaphysical or objective possibility; that is, the probability of S performing A were C to occur is less than 1. Similarly for *If S were in C, it is not the case that S would do A*. The contradiction of that counterfactual is *If S were in C, S might do A*, where again the ‘might’ is objective or metaphysical. Thus what we might call *might*-counterfactuals function as the contradictions of would-counterfactuals. This means that the

¹⁰⁴ Linda Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 134.

contradiction of (4) above is *If I lived my life the way I have up to now (May 1988), I might not be living in Chicago in 1999* rather than *If I lived my life the way I have up to now (May 1988), it is not the case that I would be living in Chicago in 1999*.

With that background, then, the reason “that (4) is false,” says Zagzebski, is because “(4) is equivalent to the following.”

(5) ~ (If I lived my life the way I have up to now (May 1988), I might *not* be living in Chicago in 1999.)

“But (5) is surely false,” Zagzebski argues.¹⁰⁵ And (5) is surely false because the following two might-counterfactuals are surely true instead.

(6) If I lived my life the way I have up to now (May 1988), I might be living in Chicago in 1999.

(7) If I lived my life the way I have up to now (May 1988), I might not be living in Chicago in 1999.

Zagzebski believes that it is simply more intuitive to think that *both* (6) and (7) are true, rather than that (4) and (5) are true. And this means that CEM is invalid, since the truth of both might-counterfactuals regarding Zagzebski’s place of residence in 1999 precludes either would-counterfactual regarding her place of residence in 1999 from being true. But since the truth of a would-counterfactual is just what CEM requires, according to Zagzebski, given the strong intuitive appeal of thinking that *both* (6) and (7) are true, we have better reasons than not for thinking that CEM is invalid.

To illustrate the point with a different example, consider the events of the film *It’s a Wonderful Life*. In the film George Bailey receives from God the

¹⁰⁵ Zagzebski 134.

“great” gift of being able to see how the world – and primarily the lives of those he loves – would have turned out were he never to have existed. Obviously this information regards the obtaining of counterfactual states of affairs, and so in addition includes many true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. One such counterfactual is that Mary, George’s wife in the actual world (W), is both unmarried and a librarian in the counterfactual world (W*) he is privileged to see. Hence in that case, the following counterfactual is true.

(8) If W* were to obtain, Mary would be both unmarried and a librarian.

However, if (8) is true, then so is (9).

(9) ~ (If W* were to obtain, Mary might not have been both unmarried and a librarian.)

But surely (8) and (9) are together less intuitive than the suggestion that both of the following two might-counterfactuals are true.

(10) If W* were to obtain, Mary might have been both unmarried and a librarian.

(11) If W* were to obtain, Mary might not have been both unmarried and a librarian.

And the reason is that, on the one hand, it is arguably more intuitive than not to think that the probability is less than 1 that Mary would be both unmarried and a librarian in the event that George never existed. On the other hand, arguably it is also more intuitive to think that there is a genuine objective or metaphysical possibility that Mary might have been both married and librarian in the event that George never existed, rather than that she *definitely would* have been both unmarried and a librarian. Hence, since both might-

counterfactuals appear more credible than either would-counterfactual, CEM appears invalid.

Of course, however, if CEM is invalid, then Normore's suggestion that God can "simulate possible histories by thinking about how the being which is A would behave under circumstances C" is unfounded. For that ability requires the truth of counterfactuals of freedom, which Normore correctly argued CEM is in principle capable of providing. But because CEM is invalid, it gives us no reason to think that counterfactuals of freedom are true. And so Normore's defense of middle knowledge is inadequate.

Perhaps, however, the Molinist might argue that on this point Zagzebski is wrong, and consequently that CEM is valid after all. The committed Molinist might defend CEM in the same manner that Zagzebski defeats it, by arguing that it is more intuitive to think that either *If S were in C, then S would do A* or *If S were in C, it is not the case that S would do A* is true, rather than that both *If S were in C, then S might do A* and *If S were in C, S might not do A* are true. If the Molinist were to insist on this point, there is always recourse to developing hopefully even more intuitively appealing illustrations than those given above, but even in those cases the logical space is always there (though perhaps not always *plausibly* there) for the Molinist to argue that *either* would-counterfactual is more intuitive than *both* might-counterfactuals. And were the Molinist to do so, a different kind of argument would be required to show that middle knowledge is implausible.

Timothy O'Connor provides such an argument. His argument against Normore's defense of middle knowledge is one that does not rely upon CEM. O'Connor states that Normore's picture "suggests that God's intellect may construct a 'test run' which will necessarily result in the action characterized in the consequent" of the true counterfactual of freedom.¹⁰⁶ Now to "suppose that this simulated world corresponds to how free agents would act – as a matter of brute fact – if God had brought about such a world is to suppose that there is something about the essence of all created entities (free agents included) such that they will inevitably act in a certain manner under certain circumstances." But what reason, O'Connor asks, "do we have to believe that the essence of A will act in the same way in every circumstance when instantiated in a concrete world as it does when 'instantiated' in the ideal world, existing only in God's mind?" O'Connor answers, "I can think of only one – if the agent in question is not truly undetermined in choosing a course of action, and hence not truly free."¹⁰⁷

To put this argument in slightly different words, according to the theory of middle knowledge the counterfactuals of freedom that are true are *would-definitely* counterfactuals, rather than *would-probably* counterfactuals or *would-possibly* counterfactuals (i.e., *might-counterfactuals*). This means that were the antecedent of the counterfactual to obtain, the consequent would definitely follow as well. So if the counterfactual *If S were in C, then S would do A* is true, then in the event that S were to find herself in C, she definitely

¹⁰⁶ O'Connor 162.

¹⁰⁷ O'Connor 162.

would then do A, rather than probably doing A, or possibly doing otherwise than A. Now the problem O'Connor is bringing to the fore is the question of what is it that conceivably links antecedent and consequent in true would-definitely counterfactuals of freedom. As Robert Adams and others have noted, character and psychological traits conceivably do the job only for would-probably counterfactuals, but such traits could hardly do the job for would-definitely counterfactuals since one may choose to act out of character. In addition the link cannot be logical, as it is mysterious in any case what it would mean to say that the antecedent logically entails the consequent in a true counterfactual of freedom. Lastly it cannot be causal, as arguably that would preclude the action contained in the consequent from being performed freely. So why does the consequent indeterminately follow from the antecedent in a true counterfactual of freedom? Similar to O'Connor, I can think of only one answer: that the relationship is causally predetermined. And if so, then the counterfactuals of freedom that the Molinist claims are true are (arguably) not counterfactuals of *freedom*, as the agent in question is casually determined to perform the action that she does. Hence, contrary to Normore, a satisfactory solution to the grounding objection has yet to be seen.

2.2.6. *From Edward Wierenga*

A quite different reply to the grounding objection is given by Edward Wierenga.¹⁰⁸ Essentially, Wierenga argues that as things stand the grounding requirement in the grounding objection is vague. Wierenga attempts to remove

¹⁰⁸ Edward Wierenga, "Providence, Middle Knowledge, and the Grounding Objection," *Philosophia Christi* Series 2, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2001), 447-457.

this vagueness by considering various ways of stating the grounding requirement. He argues that any plausible construal of the grounding relation poses no threat to the theory of middle knowledge, while the only construal that does so threaten the theory is not plausible in any case. So how does his argument proceed?

Wierenga begins by noting that Robert Adams poses the grounding objection by asking the question “Who or what does cause [counterfactuals of freedom] to be true?”¹⁰⁹ Hence, as Wierenga says, it “is tempting to think of the problem as one involving *causes*.”¹¹⁰ Indeed, devout Molinist Thomas Flint puts things similarly stating: “But if such [counterfactual] conditionals are contingent, they might not have been true. Who, then, *makes* them true? Or, to phrase this question more carefully: Who or what actually causes the ones that are true to be true, and the ones that are false to be false?”¹¹¹ Perhaps then, says Wierenga, the idea is the following.

(GC) For every contingent proposition *p*, if *p* is true, then there is something *x* such that *x* causes *p* to be true (where *x* is an agent or an event).

Wierenga does not find this construal of the grounding relation plausible at all. For consider the counterfactual of freedom that Robert Adams thinks is false.

(1) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would besiege the city.

Now when Adams argues, Wierenga notes, “that nothing causes (1) to be true, he did not then pause to ask whether anything caused not-(1) to be true;

¹⁰⁹ Adams 232.

¹¹⁰ Wierenga 454.

¹¹¹ Flint 123.

rather, he simply concluded that (1) was false.”¹¹² However, Wierenga observes, “if nothing causes not-(1) to be true, we should, according to (GC), conclude that not-(1) is false, as well;” something Adams obviously would not accept.¹¹³ Consider also negative existential propositions. To use Wierenga’s example, *There are no red cows*. There may be things, he says, that “cause there to be brown cows, but nothing causes the non-existence of red cows.”¹¹⁴ Hence according to (GC) the proposition *There are no red cows* is not true since there is nothing “there” in the world which causes *There are no red cows* to be true. Of course, Wierenga reasons, ‘There are no red cows’ is true, and so there is something wrong with (GC).

Perhaps the way to revise (GC) to avoid these problems, Wierenga thinks, is to “find a grounding principle that is more general, one that does not insist that the grounding relation is causation.”¹¹⁵ Taking a cue from D. M. Armstrong, perhaps states of affairs are *truthmakers* for truths in the sense that “the truthmaker for a truth must necessitate that truth.” That is, if “a certain truthmaker makes a certain truth true, then there is no alternative world where that truthmaker exists but the truth is a false proposition.”¹¹⁶ In that case, perhaps the grounding relation should be construed this way.

(GA) A proposition *p* is grounded iff there is a state of affairs *S* such that, necessarily, if *S* obtains then *p* is true.

¹¹² Wierenga 454.

¹¹³ Wierenga 454.

¹¹⁴ Wierenga 455.

¹¹⁵ Wierenga 455.

¹¹⁶ Wierenga 455.

Thus, the proposition “*snow is white*” is grounded, on this proposal, just in case there is a state of affairs, for example, the state of affairs of *snow being white*, which is such that, necessarily, if it obtains, then the proposition is true.”¹¹⁷

Wierenga amusingly notes that the “adherent of middle knowledge can cheerfully accept (GA), of course, pointing out that the state of affairs, say, of *its being the case that if David were to stay in Keilah then Saul would besiege the city* is what grounds” the proposition

(1) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would besiege the city.

If correct, this is obviously an unwelcome result for the grounding objector, and thus, Wierenga says, what the objector needs is some restriction on what it is that can qualify as a ground. The natural suggestion is to “replace states of affairs with actual objects and their properties.”¹¹⁸ Perhaps, then, the following will do.

(GS) A proposition *p* is grounded iff there is an object *x* and property *F* such that *x* has *F* and *p* supervenes on *x*’s having *F*.

Wierenga notes that this construal of the grounding relation is meant to capture William Hasker’s suggestion that “truths about ‘what *would be the case ... if*’ must be grounded in truths about what is in fact the case.”¹¹⁹ For example, take the following counterfactual of natural law: *If the match were struck, it would light*. What makes this proposition true, presumably, is that the match has certain properties such that striking it would bring about its lighting. In that case, in terms of (GS), the proposition *If the match were struck*,

¹¹⁷ Wierenga 455.

¹¹⁸ Wierenga 455.

¹¹⁹ Wierenga 456.

it would light (*p*) is grounded because the match (*x*) bears certain properties (*F*) such that the truth of *If the match were struck, it would light* supervenes on the fact that the match has these properties.

Of course, as Wierenga notes, as stated (GS) “does not impose any constraint on the nature of the individuals and properties – other than that they be existent individuals and properties those individuals have – that comprise the grounding condition.”¹²⁰ Hence, as Wierenga sees it, it “remains easy for the defender of middle knowledge to hold that counterfactuals of freedom are grounded, even as specified by (GS), provided that the right *counterfactual* properties are available.”¹²¹ It will not do, obviously, to say that concrete individuals exemplify these properties, since on middle knowledge counterfactuals of freedom are true prior to any individuals whatsoever existing concretely. But there are “plenty of other candidates” that may exemplify such properties, Wierenga believes. For example, perhaps “*Saul’s essence* has the property of being such that if instantiated its instantiation would besiege Keilah if David were to stay here.”¹²² In such a case something would exemplify the relevant counterfactual property and so something would serve as a ground for the counterfactual truth that Saul would besiege Keilah were David to remain there. Hence (GS) is satisfied as well as Hasker’s suggestion that “truths about ‘what *would be the case ... if*’ must be grounded in truths about what is in fact the case.” And what is in fact the case, Wierenga

¹²⁰ Wierenga 456.

¹²¹ Wierenga 456.

¹²² Wierenga 456.

suggests, is that Saul's essence bears counterfactual properties, and this grounds truths regarding how he would behave under certain counterfactual conditions.

Wierenga recognizes that this result is unacceptable to proponents of the grounding objection, and says that perhaps the objector "will want to reformulate (GS) in a way that rules out counterfactual properties."¹²³ Wierenga conjectures that given the way many "philosophers these days attempt to give naturalistic explanations of things," the following construal may be what is needed to preclude counterfactual properties from functioning as grounds for counterfactual conditionals.

(GM) A proposition *p* is grounded iff there is a *concrete* object *x* and *natural* property *F* such that *x* has *F* and *p* supervenes on *x*'s having *F*.

This version of the grounding relation clearly precludes freedom-regarding counterfactual properties from grounding the truth of counterfactuals of freedom. Hence, Wierenga thinks from the perspective of the grounding objector it may be seen (at last) as a successful criteria for the grounding relation. However, despite this success, Wierenga argues that (GM) "imposes an exceptionally stringent constraint on what is required for a proposition to be grounded."¹²⁴ The reason is that it certainly does not seem that propositions which are true now regarding "what has been the case supervene upon currently existing physical objects and their natural properties."¹²⁵ The point is that propositions about the past that are obviously true are in addition

¹²³ Wierenga 456.

¹²⁴ Wierenga 457.

¹²⁵ Wierenga 457.

apparently ungrounded according to (GM). But if they are ungrounded, they should be seen as false, or at the very least lacking any determinate truth-value at all. And since this is implausible, so is (GM).

Thus Wierenga concludes that after surveying “several attempts to say what it takes for a proposition to be grounded,” on all attempts but the last “it is easy enough for counterfactuals of freedom to be grounded.”¹²⁶ And since that last attempt “has little to recommend it,” it “remains to be seen whether the [grounding] objector can devise a grounding principle that is both plausible and which counterfactuals of freedom fail to satisfy.”¹²⁷

In critique of Wierenga, the grounding objector can easily enough concede that counterfactuals of freedom are not grounded according to (GM) and perhaps even that (GM) has “little to recommend it.” What the grounding object may not so easily concede, however, is that “it is easy enough for counterfactuals of freedom to be grounded” according to Wierenga’s previous construals of the grounding relation. Take (GS) for example. Recall that (GS) construes the grounding relation in the following way.

(GS) A proposition p is grounded iff there is an object x and property F such that x has F and p supervenes on x ’s having F .

Why should the grounding objector think that counterfactuals of freedom can be grounded according to (GS)? The reason Wierenga gives is that (GS) only requires that the individuals exist and that they possess the properties in question. He then concludes that it is at least conceivable that this criteria is

¹²⁶ Wierenga 457.

¹²⁷ Wierenga 457.

satisfied via individual essences possessing counterfactual properties. So, for example, the reason the counterfactual *If David were to stay in Keilah, Saul would freely besiege the city* is true is that Saul's individual essence "has the property of being such that if instantiated its instantiation would besiege Keilah if David were to say there."¹²⁸ Is this a credible account of how counterfactuals of freedom might be grounded on (GS)? Arguably not.

The reason (or at least one reason) Wierenga's explanation is unsatisfying is that what is left unexplained is why Saul's essence includes the property of *besieging Keilah were David to remain there* rather than the property, say, of *leaving Keilah were David to remain there*, or, indeed, indefinitely many other counterfactual properties. Arguably unless Wierenga's explanation provides an account of why Saul's essence includes one counterfactual property rather than another, the real explanatory work is before us. The same point has already been made in the critique of Suarez (where he thinks counterfactuals of freedom are simply *primitively* true), and the critique of Normore (where he thinks counterfactuals are true given the logical principle of conditional excluded middle). In neither case do we get an explanation for what the grounding objector really wants explained: reasons for thinking that we truly would do what the theory of middle knowledge says we would do in counterfactual situations. In Suarez's case, arguing that counterfactuals of freedom are simply *primitively* true is arguably not a satisfying explanation. And Normore's claim that counterfactuals of freedom are true on account of

¹²⁸ Wierenga 456.

conditional excluded middle fails no better. In both cases an explanation is neglected where an explanation looks required.

Otherwise put, on Wierenga's account, assuming the validity of (GS), if counterfactuals of freedom about me are grounded in my individual essence exemplifying counterfactual properties, then the answer to the question as to why it is that I perform action A in circumstances C is just that my essence bears the property *being such that if instantiated its instantiation would in C do A*. And as was the case with Suarez and Normore, this is arguably not a satisfying answer. For given this explanation the obvious question to ask is: Why does my instantiation exemplify the counterfactual properties that it does? And this gets to the heart of the grounding objection. Being told that I would do A in C because I bear the property of doing A in C does not really explain why it is that in C I do A. What the grounding objector understandably wants explained is what the reasons are for thinking that their essence exemplifies the counterfactual properties Wierenga believes it is easy enough for them to exemplify – *a fortiori* when these properties are allegedly contingent. And because (GS) does nothing aside from merely asserting that counterfactual properties ground counterfactual conditionals, Wierenga's claim that (GS) makes it "easy for the defender of middle knowledge to hold that counterfactuals of freedom are grounded" is a claim that may be difficult to sustain.

The same goes for (GA). (GA) stated that *A proposition p is grounded iff there is a state of affairs S such that, necessarily, if S obtains then p is true*.

Wierenga quickly concludes that (GA) is no threat to Molinism since the state of affairs of *its being the case that if David were to stay in Keilah then Saul would besiege the city* could reasonably be what grounds the true proposition *If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would besiege the city*. But this conclusion appears too hasty. For why is this state of affairs what it is? What makes it the case that this state of affairs has Saul besieging Keilah rather than leaving Keilah in the event that David were to remain there? If Wierenga has no answer to this question, then as argued above against Suarez and Normore, what really needs explaining is the very thing that is left unexplained.

In addition, if counterfactual states of affairs are what ground counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, then it looks as if Hasker's version of the grounding objection can be brought to bear against Wierenga as well. For recall that Hasker's objection to middle knowledge was that because the agent about whom there is a true counterfactual does not bring about the truth of that counterfactual, then the agent cannot do otherwise, and so the counterfactual is not a counterfactual of freedom. Hence, if there is a state of affairs of *its being the case that if David were to stay in Keilah then Saul would freely besiege the city* then there is not the state of affairs, in those same circumstances, of *its not being the case that if David were to stay in Keilah then Saul would freely besiege the city*. And since this is so, Saul could not do differently than besiege the city were David to remain there, and so could not make the proposition false that *If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would freely besiege the city*. But because this is contrary to the standard libertarian

conception of free agency – where freedom requires to ability to do otherwise – *and* because Molinism is committed to libertarianism, it seems evident that Wierenga's solution using (GA) is not a solution amiable to Molinism. Hence, a satisfactory response to the grounding objection has not been provided.

2.2.7. *From Thomas Flint*

So far we have looked at responses to the grounding objection only as articulated by Robert Adams. We have yet to see a reply to William Hasker's rather complicated version of the objection. In this section we will see just that as we look a reply to Hasker from Thomas Flint.

By way of review, Flint provides an overview of Hasker's version of the grounding objection saying that Hasker "attempts to show that, if we tentatively grant that there are [counterfactuals of creaturely freedom], the Molinist must say that we do not bring about their truth." However, "if we don't bring about their truth, it follows that we lack the power to do anything other than what we do." But, of course, since "no libertarian can countenance such powerlessness, Hasker concludes that the tentative concession mentioned above needs to be withdrawn: there are no true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom."¹²⁹

In more detail, Flint says that for purposes of simplification we may view Hasker's argument as depending crucially on four premises.

- (1) If E brings it about that " Q " is true, then E is a token of an event-type T such that $[(\text{some token of } T \text{ occurs}) \rightarrow Q]$ and $[\sim(\text{some token of } T \text{ occurs}) \rightarrow \sim Q]$, and E is the first token of T which occurs.

¹²⁹ Thomas Flint, *Divine Providence* (Cornel University Press: Ithaca, 1998) 138.

- (2) Counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are more fundamental features of the world than are particular facts. (Hence, worlds that differ from the actual world with regard to factual content are closer than those that differ from it with regard to counterfactuals of creaturely freedom.)
- (3) If it is in A 's power to bring it about that P , and " P " entails " Q " and " Q " is false, then it is in A 's power to bring it about that Q .
- (4) If S freely does B in situation A , then it was in S 's power to bring it about that $(\sim B \ \& \ A)$.

Hasker's reasoning, then, as Flint describes it, is the following.

Suppose that there is a true counterfactual $A \rightarrow B$. Flint says that given that A obtains, the truth of this counterfactual is brought about "by performing the action specified in B ."¹³⁰ Hence if (1) is true, then the agent about whom the counterfactual is true can bring about the truth of this counterfactual only if it is true that had the agent not performed the action specified in B , the counterfactual would have been false. However, if (2) is true this condition will never be satisfied. For, according to Hasker, given (2) there will "always be a world in which some of the circumstances specified in the antecedent A are false that is closer to the actual world than is any world in which the counterfactual of creaturely freedom $A \rightarrow B$ is false."¹³¹ Thus, there is no A -world where $\sim B$ obtains that is closer to the actual world than a world where both A and B obtain. And that means that $\sim A$ -worlds are closer to the actual world than any world in which $A \rightarrow \sim B$ is true. Hence, it is not clear how $A \rightarrow B$ could be falsified by the agent by bringing about $\sim B$ in A . Further, if (3) is true, then for the agent to have the power to bring it about that $\sim B$ given A , the agent must have the power to bring it about that $A \rightarrow \sim B$. But from (1) and (2) it

¹³⁰ Flint 139.

¹³¹ Flint 139.

follows that the agent does not have that power, and so it follows from (1), (2), and (3), together with the assumption that $A \rightarrow B$ is true, that the agent does not have the power, given A , to bring about $\sim B$. However, as Flint notes, since the Molinist is a libertarian “the Molinist is committed to (4).” That is, the Molinist is committed to the claim that, as a free agent, the agent does “have the power to bring it about that $\sim B$ given A .” Hence, Flint says, if (1)-(4) are “beyond reproach, it follows that we have no choice but to surrender our initial assumption” that there are in fact true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom.¹³²

Though Flint does have something to say about (1), (3), and (4) by way of critique, here I shall focus only on his comments regarding (2). (2) is after all recognized as perhaps the most “controversial”¹³³ of the four premises, and of course refuting it refutes Hasker’s self-professed refutation of middle knowledge. Thus what does Flint have to say about (2)?

As it stands, Flint notes that Hasker derives (2) from the following two propositions to which Hasker thinks the Molinist is clearly committed.

- (a) Counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are more fundamental features of the world than are counterfactuals backed by laws of nature.
- (b) Counterfactuals backed by laws of nature are more fundamental features of the world than are particular facts.

Flint thinks neither proposition is particularly plausible, and so neither proposition (contra Hasker) is one to which the Molinist is clearly committed.

Regarding (b), Flint notes that Hasker seems to think that it is “beyond dispute.” However, Flint argues, we have “reason to question whether or not

¹³² Flint 140.

¹³³ Robert Adams, “An Anti-Molinist Argument,” *Philosophical Perspectives 5: Philosophy of Religion*, James E. Tomberlin, ed., (Ridgeview Publishing Company: New York, 1991) 346.

[b] expresses anything like a general truth.”¹³⁴ To see why, consider that “the Molinist will want to say that some facts (e.g., that God exists) are more fundamental features of the world than are *any* natural law counterfactuals.” But *God exists*, of course, if a fact is a *necessary* fact and thus probably, Flint concedes, not the sort of fact that Hasker has in mind. However, even if “we limit ourselves to contingent facts, might not the Molinist ... think that some such facts are more fundamental than are some natural law counterfactuals?” Flint thinks the answer is Yes, and that the (plausibly) contingent fact that “*God became a man* is more fundamental to our world than is, say, some counterfactual about potential causal interaction between two specific hydrogen molecules?”¹³⁵ Flint agrees that surely “many natural law counterfactuals are more fundamental than are many particular facts,” but the situation is “not nearly as neat” as (b) suggests. Hence Flint does not think that (b) is something to which the Molinist need be committed. Therefore, in the absence of any further argument from Hasker, Flint rejects (b). But what about (a)?

One reason, Flint says, on which Hasker relies in arguing for (2) is “based on the fact that God can and does perform miracles.”¹³⁶ If so, then “some counterfactuals backed by laws of nature have counterexamples *in the actual world itself*, and therefore also in possible worlds as close to the actual world

¹³⁴ Flint 141.

¹³⁵ Flint 142.

¹³⁶ Flint 144.

as you please.”¹³⁷ And for this reason, Flint notes, Hasker believes that counterfactuals of freedom “count for more in determining similarity of worlds than do counterfactuals based on natural laws.”¹³⁸ What should we make of this argument?

As Flint sees it, Hasker shows only that counterfactuals based on natural laws are not *a/ways* more important in determining similarity than are counterfactuals of freedom. In such “(presumably) rare instances when a miracle occurs, when a specific law of nature is violated, then at least one counterfactual based on that law will be false in the actual world, and hence its falsity in some other world needn’t count against that world’s similarity to our own.”¹³⁹ But Flint finds that this “rather obvious” fact about “what is true in rather extraordinary circumstances gives us no reason to think that the same holds in ordinary, nonmiraculous circumstances.” Indeed, if there is no miraculous activity on God’s part and so in addition no violation of a particular natural law, Flint sees no reason to believe “that a world in which such a violation *does* occur, and hence in which counterfactuals based on that law are false, is closer than a world in which a counterfactual of freedom true in our world is false.”¹⁴⁰ Flint’s point, then, is that when two worlds – W, the actual world, and some other world W*, say – disagree regarding their counterfactuals based on a certain natural law *save* only because of a unique miraculous suspension of that law, why should the Molinist think that W and

¹³⁷ Hasker 72.

¹³⁸ Flint 144.

¹³⁹ Flint 144.

¹⁴⁰ Flint 144.

W^* are less similar than W and some third world W^{**} , where W and W^{**} disagree with respect to their counterfactuals of freedom? Due to illustrations such as the following, Flint finds it much more credible to think that W and W^{**} are more similar than W and W^* . And if so, then the Molinist is well within her rights to reject (a).

Consider, then, a variation of Hasker's illustration of the spilled ink. Flint asks us to imagine that he is making a poster while using an open bottle of ink, and that he has done this frequently in the past. Imagine further that thanks to his "noticeable lack of physical dexterity" he is prone to spilling the ink on the floor, much to the dismay of his wife. But despite his clumsiness, she has always kindly agreed to purchase more ink. However, on the next occasion of ink-spilling she decides that she has had enough, and refuses to purchase any more ink. Letting C stand for the circumstances of this most recent spill, C obviously includes "facts about [Flint's] past adventures in ink-spilling, the present state and position of the bottle of ink, and much information about [Flint's] wife and the various reasons she has had for and against buying [Flint] more ink."¹⁴¹ Now according to the Molinist, Flint says, in the world imagined where God does not intervene to counter Flint's clumsiness, the following two counterfactuals would be true.

- (c) I am in circumstances C and I knock over my ink bottle in such-and-such a way \rightarrow the bottle of ink falls and the ink spills.
- (d) I am in circumstances C and I knock over my ink bottle in such-and-such a way \rightarrow my wife (freely) refuses to buy me more ink.

¹⁴¹ Flint 145.

The first is clearly a counterfactual based on natural law, while the second is a counterfactual of freedom. Flint then asks: "Which of these two is the less fundamental truth about our world?"¹⁴² Flint notes that for Hasker the answer must be (c), but this is an answer that Flint thinks is clearly mistaken. For assuming that (c) is "grounded by natural laws, the easiest way for it to turn out false might well be for God to perform a miracle. But, as we know, miracles are few and far between," especially regarding clumsiness with ink bottles.¹⁴³ It seems clear enough, on the other hand, that (d) "could easily have been false." And the reason Flint cites is that in very similar situations in the past his wife has agreed to buy him more ink. Thus all we need to falsify (d) is "for her to act on the same reasons she has repeatedly acted on in the past." Hence "in nonmiraculous cases such as this, it seems evident that Hasker is mistaken," and that "the possibility of miracles offers precious little support to (a)." ¹⁴⁴ Flint's point, then, is that in the case of (c) and (d) it is simply more believable to think that (d) is easier to falsify than (c). And if he is correct, then it looks as if it is not true, as Hasker claimed, that counterfactuals of freedom are *always* more fundamental features of the world than are counterfactuals based on natural law. For arguably worlds that share the latter are *at least sometimes* closer than worlds that share the former.

Is Flint correct? Not surprisingly Hasker does not think so.¹⁴⁵ But to avoid getting bogged down in the details of Hasker's reply, it is important to note that

¹⁴² Flint 145.

¹⁴³ Flint 145.

¹⁴⁴ Flint 145.

¹⁴⁵ William Hasker, "Response to Thomas Flint," *Philosophical Studies* 60 (1990).

the conclusion of Hasker's argument – that the truth of counterfactuals of freedom are not brought about by the agents in question, and so are not counterfactuals of *freedom* after all – can be sustained using premises that do not appeal to Hasker's controversial premise (2). Robert Adams develops such premises, saying "I believe that by focusing on an idea that Hasker does not use in this context, the idea of explanatory priority, the argument can be simplified, and points of controversy avoided."¹⁴⁶

Adams' argument comes in two stages. The first stage shows "that Molinism implies that we do not bring about the truth of counterfactuals of freedom about us." And while Hasker's version of the argument depends upon the thesis that *counterfactuals of freedom are more fundamental features of the world than are particular facts*, this is a thesis, Adams says, "on which I would rather not depend."¹⁴⁷ In the following alternative argument, this thesis is avoided while Hasker's conclusion is retained.

- (1) According to Molinism, the truth of all true counterfactuals of freedom about us is explanatorily prior to God's decision to create us.
- (2) God's decision to create us is explanatorily prior to our existence.
- (3) Our existence is explanatorily prior to all of our choices and actions.
- (4) The relation of explanatory priority is transitive.
- (5) Therefore it follows from Molinism (by 1-4) that the truth of all true counterfactuals of freedom about us is explanatorily prior to all of our choices and actions.
- (6) The relation of explanatory priority is asymmetrical.
- (7) Therefore it follows from Molinism (by 5-6) that none of our choices and actions is explanatorily prior to the truth of any true counterfactual of freedom about us.
- (8) Whatever we bring about is something to which some choice or action of ours is explanatorily prior.

¹⁴⁶ "An Anti-Molinist Argument," *Philosophical Perspectives 5: Philosophy of Religion*, James E. Tomberlin, ed., (Ridgeview Publishing Company: New York, 1991) 346.

¹⁴⁷ Adams 346.

- (9) Therefore it follows from Molinism (by 7-8) that we do not bring about the truth of any counterfactuals of freedom about us.

Clearly the “central idea in this argument is that of explanatory priority, or an order of explanation.”¹⁴⁸ Adams emphasizes that this idea is distinct from *temporal* priority, for example, in that even “if there was no time before God decided to create us, or if God is timeless, God’s knowing various things can be explanatorily prior to God’s deciding to create us.” We saw this same distinction between explanatory (or logical) priority and temporal priority illustrated in Chapter 1 when discussing the relationship between God and his properties.¹⁴⁹ If God is essentially good and eternal, for example, then God cannot exist without the property of being good, and so his existence depends on that property. But if his existence depends on that property, then the existence of the property is some sense prior to his own existence. Assuming, though, that God is eternal precludes the possibility that the property of being good is *temporally* prior to God’s existence; hence it is said that the property of being good is *logically* or *explanatorily* prior to his existence. This is the central idea on which Adams is relying here.

The second stage of his argument is one in which he argues that “agents do not have the power to act otherwise than they in fact do, and hence are not really free.”¹⁵⁰ And in order to make this argument, rather than relying on Hasker’s power entailment principle (PEP) – *If it is in A’s power to bring it about that P, and “P” entails “Q” and “Q” is false, then it is in A’s power to bring*

¹⁴⁸ Adams 347.

¹⁴⁹ See pages 14-16.

¹⁵⁰ Adams 348.

it about that Q – Adams again opts for the notion of explanatory priority. Hence in conjunction with premises 1-5 of the first stage of the argument, Adams adds the following premises to conclude that Molinism implies we are not free.

- (10) It follows also from Molinism that if I freely do action A in circumstances C, then there is a true counterfactual of freedom F*, which says that if I were in C, then I would (freely) do A.
- (11) Therefore it follows from Molinism that if I freely do A in C, the truth of F* is explanatorily prior to my choosing and acting as I do in C.
- (12) If I freely do A in C, no truth that is strictly inconsistent with my refraining from A in C is explanatorily prior to my choosing and acting as I do in C.
- (13) The truth of F* (which says that if I were in C, then I would do A) is strictly inconsistent with my refraining from A in C.
- (14) If Molinism is true, then if I freely do A in C, F* both is (by 11) and is not (by 12-13) explanatorily prior to my choosing and acting as I do in C.
- (15) Therefore (by 14) if Molinism is true, then I do not freely do A in C.

Adams notes that since “this argument applies to any creature’s doing any putatively free action in any circumstances in exactly the same way as to my doing A in C, it shows, if sound, that creatures do no free actions if Molinism is true – which is of course contrary to an essential tenet of Molinism.”¹⁵¹

In summary, then, arguably Hasker’s conclusion that any grounds for counterfactuals of freedom are grounds that preclude our acting freely can be plausibly sustained without appealing to his arguably implausible premise that *counterfactuals of freedom are more fundamental features of the world than are particular facts*. And since this seems so, that premise can be rejected while the essence of his own intricate twist on the grounding objection can be kept.

¹⁵¹ Adams 350.

2.3. LOOKING AHEAD

In this chapter we have seen a lot. We have looked at two different versions of the grounding objection, as well as replies to each. What I have primarily tried to argue in this chapter is that none of the replies is satisfying. All of the replies to Adams' version do not fully explain what the grounding objector, I argue, legitimately wants explained, and Flint's reply to Hasker's version focuses on premises that are not required to support Hasker's conclusion in any case. Given that none of the replies is satisfactory, then, on the assumption that the theory of middle knowledge is worth preserving, a fresh response to the grounding objection is in order. That response, I argue, should be able to explain, first, the heart of what the grounding objector wants explained: *why* counterfactuals of freedom if true are true (in response to Adams). Second, it should be able to explain how the existence of true counterfactuals of freedom do not preclude the ability to do differently (in response to Hasker). The next two chapters are geared toward achieving that goal.

In the next chapter, I argue for a credible (semi-) libertarian conception of free agency. Developing such a conception, I believe, is crucial in the search for adequate metaphysical grounds for counterfactuals of freedom. For, as I argue in Chapter 4, that search plausibly concludes in such a theory.

3

Semi-Libertarianism

In the previous chapter we discussed what is referred to as the grounding objection to the theory of middle knowledge. That objection, generally put, states that counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are not true, given that there is nothing ontologically “there” that functions as adequate metaphysical grounds. Differently put, arguably there is nothing that exists which brings about or causes counterfactuals of freedom to be true, and so we have little (if any) reason for thinking that any of them are true. If correct, this objection has rather devastating implications for the theory of middle knowledge, as the success of that theory’s ability to reconcile divine foreknowledge and providence with human freedom depends on the truth of counterfactuals of freedom. Hence, if none is true, the theory fails.

Not surprisingly, given this situation for the theory of middle knowledge, many Molinists have sought to reply to the grounding objection. Some replies argue for an analogy between counterfactuals of freedom and propositions about the future or past, and that if the latter can be true there is no reason to deny that so can the former. Others argue that the logical principle of conditional excluded middle entails that counterfactuals of freedom are true, even if by CEM we cannot say which particular counterfactual actually is true. And still others argue that because there is at present no plausible account of the grounding relation between a proposition and its adequate metaphysical

grounds that plausibly allows for propositions about the past to be grounded while precluding counterfactuals of freedom from having grounds, there is therefore no reason to think that the grounding objection refutes the theory of middle knowledge.

I have argued that each of these replies does not adequately address the central concern in the grounding objection. That concern, essentially, is that on the assumption that counterfactuals of freedom are true, *why* are they true? Indeed, what is it that *makes* them true? This question, I argue, cannot be adequately addressed by appeals to analogies between the past states of affairs and counterfactual states of affairs, nor by appealing to the principle of conditional excluded middle, nor still by appealing to conceptual problems plaguing detailed attempts to articulate the grounding relation. The question as to why certain counterfactuals of freedom are true, I believe, can only be adequately addressed by actually articulating the reasons for the truth of any particular counterfactual of freedom that is itself true. The present chapter is the first step in an attempt to satisfactorily articulate such reasons.

Broadly put, over the next two chapters I will argue that counterfactuals of freedom can be grounded in causal necessitation. Perhaps surprisingly, such grounds, I argue, do not threaten our freedom, even when the freedom in question regards freedom of a *libertarian* sort. To make this argument I will first develop a credible theory of libertarian free agency, and second show how that theory can function as a sort of function for the truth values of counterfactuals of freedom to assist the theory of middle knowledge. This

latter task is the project of the next chapter, while the former task will occupy us in this chapter. In short, if such a theory of free agency can be successfully developed and applied, I argue that such a theory can provide what previous replies to the grounding objection could not: adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom.

3.1. ELEMENTS OF SEMI-LIBERTARIANISM

The view of free agency I will be developing here is a view I refer to as *semi-libertarianism* (the reason for the prefix ‘semi’ should become clear by the end of the chapter). In this section, I will draw from the work of three philosophers – John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, and Peter van Inwagen – in developing semi-libertarianism. Each has an account of free will that has elements that I think are plausible and worth preserving in a credible theory of free agency, and, conversely, each has elements that I think can be safely discarded. I will evaluate their views according to two central themes commonly discussed in debates about free will. The first is whether or not at the time of acting the agent requires alternative courses of action in order to act freely, and the second is whether or not an action can be said to be free even if that action is causally necessitated by events that occurred prior to the agent’s intention to act. Otherwise said, I will evaluate their views of freedom by focusing on how they address two central concerns: whether freedom requires the *presence* of alternative possibilities, and whether it requires the *absence* of causal determinism. Examining the views of Fischer, Kane, and van Inwagen regarding these two concerns provides framework that is

conducive for both articulating and evaluating their views. Now to the task of assembling the elements of semi-libertarianism.

3.1.1. From John Martin Fischer

John Martin Fischer articulates his own view of free agency in his work *The Metaphysics of Free Will*.¹ In addressing the first concern mentioned above – whether or not freedom requires the presence of alternative possibilities – Fischer provides an answer to that question by considering what have come to be referred to as Frankfurt-type examples or thought experiments. These thought experiments or examples were made famous by Harry Frankfurt in an attempt to demonstrate that alternative possibilities were not required for *moral responsibility*.² But there are those philosophers, Fischer among them, who use the examples to show in addition that alternative possibilities are not required for *free agency* either. So how does Fischer arrive at this conclusion?

Consider the following Frankfurt-style example. Suppose that Black, say, “is a quite nifty (and even generally nice) neurosurgeon.”³ However, in performing an operation on Jones, say, to remove a brain tumor, unknown to Jones Black decides to insert a mechanism into Jones’ brain which enables Black to both monitor and control Jones’ behavior. Black has the ability to exercise this control over Jones through a sophisticated computer which Black has programmed so that, “among other things, it monitors Jones’ voting

¹ John Martin Fischer, *The Metaphysics of Free Will* (Blackwell: Malden, 1994).

² Harry Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969), 829-839. Although these examples are much discussed in debates about free will because of Frankfurt, arguably the type of example Frankfurt employs was originally thought of by John Locke; see his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: New York, 1975) 238.

³ Fischer 131.

behavior” in the 1992 presidential elections.⁴ If Jones, for example, were to show any inclination to vote for Bush, then the computer via the mechanism implanted in Jones’ brain would intervene to ensure that he would decide to vote for Clinton instead. However, if Jones were to decide to vote for Clinton on his own, the computer would do nothing but continue to monitor Jones’ brain, without interfering whatsoever in Jones’ decision to vote for Clinton. Now, suppose that Jones decides to vote for Clinton on his own in the very same way he would have had Black implanted no mechanism at all into his head. As Fischer says, it “seems upon first thinking about this case, that Jones can be held morally responsible for his choice and act of voting for Clinton, although he could not have chosen otherwise and he could not have done otherwise.”⁵ Fischer argues that this initial conclusion is ultimately correct, and that “moral responsibility does not require the sort of control which involves the existence of genuinely open alternative possibilities.”⁶

Contrary to appearances, though, this conclusion is not to say that moral responsibility requires no control at all. There is a sort of control that Fischer thinks is required for moral responsibility, it is just that this sort of control does not require the ability to do otherwise. To see this, Fischer asks us to consider the following.

Let us suppose that I am driving my car. It is functioning well, and I wish to make a right turn. As a result of my intention to turn right, I signal, turn the steering wheel, and carefully guide the car to the right. Further, I here assume that I was able to form the intention

⁴ Fischer 131.

⁵ Fischer 132.

⁶ Fischer 132.

not to turn the car to the right but to turn the car to the left instead. Also, I assume that had I formed such an intention, I would have turned the steering wheel to the left and the car would have gone to the left. In this ordinary case, I guide the car to the right, but I could have guided it to the left. I control the car, and also I have a certain sort of control *over* the car's movements. Insofar as I actually guide the car in a certain way, I shall say that I have "guidance control." Further, insofar as I have the power to guide the car in a different way, I shall say that I have "regulative control."⁷

Toward developing the notions of guidance and regulative control more fully, Fischer asks us to imagine a second case, one that is analogous to the Frankfurt-type situation discussed above. In this second case, imagine that his car's steering apparatus functions properly, but *only* when he steers his car to the right. Fischer is unaware that the car's steering apparatus is actually broken in such a way that were he to try to turn the car in any other direction than right, the car would actually veer off to the right in precisely the way it would were he himself to steer right. But since Fischer simply wants to go to the right, when he turns to the right his car's steering apparatus functions properly and his car correctly turns right. Fischer comments that his "guidance of the car to the right is precisely the same in this case and the first car case," where there was no potential steering malfunction at all. So in both cases, Fischer thinks, it appears as though he controls the movement of the car in the sense of guiding it to the right. Thus, he concludes, in both cases he has *guidance control* over the car. However, because in the second case it is true that he can direct his car in no other direction than right, he concludes that in this case – though not the first – he lacks *regulative control* over the car.

⁷ Fischer 132.

Hence, as Fischer sees it, it is clear that one can have guidance control without regulative control, and so “one can have a certain sort of control without having the sort of control that involves alternative possibilities.”⁸

Now in addition to the fact that guidance control can be divorced from regulative control, Fischer believes there is another point to draw from his Frankfurt-type analogue; namely, that when we are morally responsible for our actions it need not be because we possess a kind of control that involves alternative possibilities. Rather, Fischer thinks the suggestion from the Frankfurt-type cases is that “the sort of control necessarily associated with moral responsibility for action is *guidance control*,” and thus that “it is not, at a deep level, regulative control that grounds moral responsibility.”⁹ To illustrate the point, suppose Fischer finds himself in the second case above – the Frankfurt-type case where his steering mechanism malfunctions – and that while driving he sees an ambulance quickly approaching behind him. Desiring to do his duty and pull to the side to let the ambulance pass, Fischer quickly turns right into a parking lot at precisely the moment his steering apparatus breaks. Should we hold Fischer morally responsible (in this case praiseworthy) for pulling over in order to let the ambulance pass, even though he could not have done otherwise than pull over given the steering malfunction? Fischer thinks we should. He wanted to pull over and he did; he had guidance control over the direction of the car. Indeed, what is lost by way of responsibility by his not possessing regulative control over the car’s direction? Fischer does not

⁸ Fischer 133.

⁹ Fischer 133.

think anything, and the same would hold in situations of moral blame (e.g., where Fischer detests cats and directs his car to the right to run over a cat at just the moment the steering mechanism malfunctions, a moment in which he could not have done anything different than go to the right and thus hit the cat).

In sum, then, regarding guidance control and regulative control, as Fischer sees it “guidance control is the freedom-relevant condition sufficient for moral responsibility.” And by this he means that “guidance control is all the freedom required for moral responsibility.”¹⁰ So much, then, for Fischer’s take on whether free agency requires the ability to do otherwise – it does not.¹¹ But what is his take regarding the question of whether free agency is compatible with causal determinism?

Regarding this question, Fischer argues that, at first glance, “guidance control seems entirely compatible with causal determinism.”¹² Indeed, as he says regarding his guidance control over his car, “when I guide my properly functioning automobile to the right in the standard case, my exercise of control does not appear to depend on the falsity of causal determinism.”¹³ But there are those who no doubt would object. For even if one were to concede that regulative control is not required for moral responsibility, they need not also concede that the presence of causal determinism poses no threat to moral

¹⁰ Fischer 159.

¹¹ For the interested reader, Fischer is fully aware of the contemporary challenges to his conclusion that alternative possibilities are not required for free agency, and he addresses these “flicker of freedom” challenges (as he refers to them) at Fischer 134-147.

¹² Fischer 147.

¹³ Fischer 147.

responsibility. In other words, Fischer may be correct in arguing that regulative control is not needed in order for us to be morally responsible for what we do, but it is something else entirely to argue in addition that the absence of causal determinism is not needed in order for us to be so responsible. This latter claim requires additional argument, and Fischer is aware of this.

Fischer recognizes that for “certain incompatibilists about causal determinism and moral responsibility, the reason why determinism threatens moral responsibility is that it rules out alternative possibilities.”¹⁴ For this sort of incompatibilist, Fischer’s claim that moral responsibility need not require regulative control is enough for such incompatibilists to reject his position. However, Fischer also recognizes that “another sort of incompatibilist might grant that an agent can be morally responsible for an action although he has no alternative possibility.”¹⁵ For this sort of incompatibilist, the reasons for rejecting the compatibility of moral responsibility and causal determinism are different than those for rejecting the claim that moral responsibility requires the ability to do otherwise. Thus, what are these reasons and are they strong enough to undermine Fischer’s initial intuition that causal determinism poses no threat to guidance control, and so no threat to moral responsibility?

To begin with, an incompatibilist of this second sort – i.e., one who is committed to the view that causal determinism precludes moral responsibility apart from considerations about the ability to do otherwise – might view the lesson of the Frankfurt examples differently. For consider Jones and Black

¹⁴ Fischer 148.

¹⁵ Fischer 148.

again, and suppose that the world proceeds in a causally indeterministic way; that is, though there are some causal laws, it is not the case that *all* events are causally determined by prior events. Further, suppose that the world proceeds in just the sort of way the libertarian requires if agents are correctly considered morally responsible for what they do. In this case, an agent's beliefs, desires, purposes, and other psychological states do not causally necessitate an agent's action, but instead *influence* their actions and so provide *rational* explanations for them. Now in this sort of indeterministic world, as Fischer notes, "the libertarian can certainly say that Jones is morally responsible for voting for Clinton, even if Black *would have* brought it about that Jones vote for Clinton, if Jones had shown signs of deciding to vote for Bush."¹⁶ The point here, then, is that "nothing about Frankfurt's example requires the actual sequence issuing in the decision and action to proceed in a deterministic way; if it proceeds in a non-deterministic way that satisfies the libertarian, then Jones can be held responsible, even though he could not have done otherwise."¹⁷

The lesson an incompatibilist of the second sort might draw from the Frankfurt cases, then, is that attributions of moral responsibility should be based on what happens in the *actual sequence* of events, not on considerations about whether the agent could have brought about some *alternative sequence* of events. Hence, in the Frankfurt scenario, such an incompatibilist can easily concede that because of Black, Jones could not

¹⁶ Fischer 148.

¹⁷ Fischer 148.

have done otherwise than vote for Clinton. However, as Fischer recognizes, what such an incompatibilist will not so easily concede is that this shows that “causal determinism is compatible with moral responsibility,” *a fortiori* since “causal determinism is a doctrine about what happens in the actual sequence.”¹⁸ So, simply because Jones could not have done otherwise than vote for Clinton does not imply that were he causally determined to vote for Clinton that he would in fact then be responsible for voting for Clinton.

There are two ways then, Fischer says, in which it might be said that one could not have done otherwise. In the first way, “the actual sequence involves some factor that operates and makes it the case that the agent could not have initiated an alternative sequence.”¹⁹ In the second way, “there is no such factor in the actual sequence, but the alternative sequence contains some factor which would prevent the agent from doing other than he actually does.”²⁰ Frankfurt examples resemble the latter, and thus involve factors in an alternative sequence. However, causal determinism, if true, involves factors in the actual sequence, and so resembles the former. The point, then, is that because Frankfurt examples involve factors in an alternative sequence while causal determinism involves factors in the actual sequence, one cannot conclude from the Frankfurt examples alone that causal determinism is compatible with moral responsibility. Hence, contrary to Fischer’s initial

¹⁸ Fischer 148.

¹⁹ Fischer 148.

²⁰ Fischer 149.

intuition that moral responsibility and causal determinism are compatible, arguably more is needed than only the Frankfurt examples to conclude that.

Attractive as this argument might appear, Fischer does not find it so. The reason is that Fischer believes that even “in the absence of a knockdown argument that moral responsibility is compatible with causal determinism, the Frankfurt-type examples (conjoined with other considerations) provide very strong reason to accept this conclusion.”²¹ This is so, Fischer argues, because it is hard “to see why causal determinism would threaten moral responsibility for some reason apart from its relationship to alternative possibilities.”²² Differently said, why should we think causal determinism undermines moral responsibility apart from considerations of whether or not we enjoy alternative possibilities when we act? Fischer, for his part, can think of no compelling reasons. However, he can think of possible reasons.

For example, one reason is that the incompatibilist of this second sort – the sort, recall, that thinks causal determinism threatens moral responsibility irrespective of alternative possibilities – might think that moral responsibility requires the agent to be appropriately “active” or “creative.” If this is so, Fischer says, he does not see “any reason to deny that an agent whose action is part of a causally deterministic sequence cannot be active and creative in any sense plausibly taken to be required for moral responsibility.”²³ For consider certain examples of genuine creativity. Would we say, Fischer asks,

²¹ Fischer 149.

²² Fischer 149.

²³ Fischer 149.

that “Goya and Picasso were *not* creative” or that “Kant was not original” if “we discovered that causal determinism were true?” Fischer thinks the answer is obvious: “Clearly not.”²⁴

Another reason, though, Fischer recognizes that an incompatibilist of the second sort might think that causal determinism is incompatible with moral responsibility apart from considerations of alternative possibilities, is that they might say that “in order for an agent to be morally responsible for an action, the agent must be creative in the sense of being the ‘self-initiator’ or ‘self-originator’ of the action.”²⁵ And such would require the absence of causal determinism, since though on causal determinism the agent does cause their action, they do not do so in an initial or original sense (only a proximal sense). Fischer concedes that he can “see why someone might insist that responsibility requires this sort of incompatibilistic creativity, *if* one is committed to the idea that moral responsibility requires alternative possibilities.” However, he does not “see any reason to insist on precisely *this* sort of creativity, apart from such a prior commitment.”²⁶ To see why, suppose for example, Fischer says, that lightening strikes a barn and thus starts a fire. Would we say, Fischer asks, “that the lightening bolt did *not* start the fire, if it turned out that causal determinism were in fact true?” No doubt that for “some purposes and in some contexts, perhaps we would withdraw our claim about the lightening bolt, if causal determinism were true.” However, surely, he says,

²⁴ Fischer 149.

²⁵ Fischer 150.

²⁶ Fischer 150.

“there is a perfectly good sense in which it is true that the lightening bolt started the fire, even given the truth of causal determinism.” Hence, Fischer thinks there is a perfectly reasonable notion of “initiation” that is compatible with causal determinism. Indeed, “why suppose that the indeterministic sense is more appealing in the context of ascription of moral responsibility (*apart from considerations relevant to alternative possibilities*)?”²⁷ For his part, Fischer can think of no “promising strategy for arguing that causal determinism threatens moral responsibility apart from its allegedly ruling out alternative possibilities.”²⁸ And so, given that the Frankfurt-type examples demonstrate that alternative possibilities are not required for guidance control, and thus with a kind of freedom sufficient for moral responsibility, Fischer finds no credible reason for denying that causal determinism is compatible with freedom sufficient moral responsibility.²⁹

So far we have seen Fischer’s reasons for concluding that alternative possibilities are not required for a sort of freedom sufficient for moral responsibility, as well as his reasons for concluding that causal determinism is compatible with just such a sort. One final element to consider in relation to Fischer’s view of free will is what he refers to as “reasons-responsiveness.” The importance of this element should be evident from the following. Suppose that an individual, Smith let us say, has been hypnotized, and that the hypnotist has induced an urge for Smith to punch the nearest person

²⁷ Fischer 150.

²⁸ Fischer 151.

²⁹ Fischer 159.

whenever he hears a telephone ring. On the assumption that Smith has not voluntarily requested the inducement, Fischer thinks it is unreasonable to say that Smith has guidance control of his punching, and thus is not then morally responsible for his doing so. Fischer argues that we have similar intuitions regarding a wide range of similar cases. Persons “who perform actions produced by powerful forms of brainwashing and indoctrination, potent drugs, and certain sorts of direct manipulation of the brain are not reasonably to be held morally responsible for their actions insofar as they lack the relevant sort of control.”³⁰

The point that Fischer means to draw from these cases is that when “persons are manipulated in certain sorts of ways, they are like marionettes and are not appropriate candidates for praise or blame.” Fischer refers to such manipulative factors as “responsibility-undermining factors.”³¹ But why do such factors undermine responsibility? Here is where Fischer’s element of reasons-responsiveness comes into play.

Return to the example of Smith. Because Smith is hypnotized to punch the nearest individual upon hearing a telephone ring, Fischer believes that he is therefore “not sensitive to reasons in the appropriate way.”³² For given the hypnosis, Smith “would still have behaved in the same way, no matter what the relevant reasons were.” That is, Smith would still have punched “the nearest person after hearing the telephone ring, even if he had extremely

³⁰ Fischer 161.

³¹ Fischer 162.

³² Fischer 162.

strong reasons not to.” In such a case the “agent here is not responsive to reasons – his behavior would have been the same no matter what reasons there were.”³³ This sort of case is contrasted with a case where one initially decides to contribute, say, to a certain charity, but then decides against it after learning about widespread corruption regarding this particular charity. The agent in this case does not contribute to the charity regardless of the reasons against doing so, and indeed in learning of the reasons against doing so the agent decides against contributing. Here, the agent in question is not going to contribute no matter what, but is responsive to reasons against contributing in a way that Smith is not. For Smith, upon hearing the telephone ring, punches the nearest individual no matter his reasons against doing so.

On Fischer’s view, then, the essential feature in having guidance control and thus being morally responsible for what we do is being reasons-responsive. So long as we are reasons-responsive to our circumstances, we have guidance control of what we do and so are morally responsible for it. Fischer takes it that one virtue of this view is that “actual irrationality is compatible with moral responsibility (as it should be).”³⁴ To use Fisher’s example, consider a case where attending a basketball game would jeopardize his meeting a publication deadline. Fischer confesses that in such circumstances he would be weak-willed and still go to the game. However, he says, surely there are some circumstances where he has sufficient reason not to go to the game and he in fact decides not to go. And Fischer informs us that

³³ Fischer 162.

³⁴ Fischer 168.

circumstances where “I am told that I will have to pay one thousand dollars for a ticket to the game” are precisely such circumstances.³⁵ Hence, though there are occasions where Fischer will succumb to weakness of will, it is because there are occasions where he will not that he is said to be reasons-responsive. Were he to attend the game no matter the reasons against doing so, he would not be reasons-responsive, and so would not enjoy guidance control, and so would not merit moral responsibility.

Putting these elements together, Fischer refers to his view of free agency as *semi-compatibilism*. Central to semi-compatibilism is “the separation of acting freely from freedom to do otherwise.”³⁶ Or, put in terms of guidance control and regulative control, the separation between a kind of freedom sufficient for guidance control and a kind of freedom sufficient for regulative control. On semi-compatibilism, “moral responsibility is compatible with causal determinism, even if causal determinism is incompatible with freedom to do otherwise.”³⁷ And this is the reason for Fischer’s inclusion of the prefix ‘semi’ regarding ‘compatibilism’. According to what we might call traditional-compatibilism, a kind of freedom sufficient for *both* guidance control and regulative control is compatible with causal determinism. Fischer disagrees.³⁸ As he sees it, causal determinism precludes regulative control. But since he thinks reasons-responsiveness and moral responsibility are compatible with

³⁵ Fischer 167.

³⁶ Fischer 183.

³⁷ Fischer 180.

³⁸ For the (lengthy) argument that freedom sufficient for regulative control is incompatible with causal determinism see chapters 2-6 of *Metaphysics of Free Will*.

causal determinism, Fischer is a compatibilist in a non-traditional sense. He accepts only part of the traditional compatibilist point of view, thus making himself a compatibilist only in part.

The lesson I want to take from Fischer's work is that, arguably, free actions neither require the ability to do otherwise, nor the absence of causal determinism. Fischer's use of Frankfurt examples certainly seem to make the point that there are at least some actions we perform where we cannot do otherwise, and yet on those occasions arguably we are still both free and responsible for what we do. However, because that is true of certain of our *actions*, I do not think it necessarily follows that it is true with respect to our *agency*. Intuitively, one difference between the two is that an action is something we perform, while agency is an ability we have. Hence, obviously, what is true of the one need not also be true of the other. So what reasons do we have from Fischer for thinking that since free actions can plausibly be causally determined and devoid of alternative possibilities, free agents can be so as well?

Recall that Fischer argues that apart from considerations of alternative possibilities there is no good reason to think that causal determinism is not compatible with freedom sufficient for moral responsibility. And since the Frankfurt examples show that such freedom does not require the ability to do otherwise, Fischer concludes that there is no good reason to think that causal determinism is incompatible with freedom sufficient for moral responsibility. I think Fischer is mistaken here. For even if he is correct that our intuitions

support the conclusion that we are free and responsible for certain actions that are both causally determined and without alternative possibilities, it does not follow that those intuitions will persist if we turn our attention from the *action* to the *agent*. Fischer appears to think that they will, since he argues against the notion that in order for agents to be free and morally responsible for what they do, they need to be “self-initiators” or “self-originators” of their own actions – something causal determinism precludes. Against this requirement, Fischer says “I can see why someone might insist that responsibility requires this sort of incompatibilistic creativity, *if* one is committed to the idea that moral responsibility requires alternative possibilities, but I do not see any reason to insist on precisely *this* sort of creativity, *apart* from such a prior commitment.”³⁹

Contra Fischer, I believe that there are such reasons for insisting on just this sort of creativity regarding free agents, and they are reasons wholly apart from any prior commitment to alternative possibilities. But to see these reasons, we need to turn our attention to elements from another account of free will.

3.1.2. *From Robert Kane*

Robert Kane’s account of free will is developed in his book *The Significance of Free Will*.⁴⁰ Arguably the central theme in his account is that “*ultimate responsibility* lies where the *ultimate cause* is.”⁴¹ As we will see, these notions of responsibility and ultimacy play a large role in informing

³⁹ Fischer 150.

⁴⁰ Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1996).

⁴¹ Kane 35.

Kane's conclusions regarding freedom, alternative possibilities, and causal determinism. Interestingly, Kane's account of free will resembles Fischer's in certain crucial respects. The most notable example regards the question of whether actions require both alternative possibilities and the absence of causal determinism in order to be free. Kane agrees with Fischer that *free actions* do not, but disagrees with him that in addition *free agency* does not. In examining Kane's account of free will – as we did with Fischer's – we will consider his account within the framework of alternative possibilities and causal determinism. Understanding how Kane thinks free will relates to alternative possibilities and causal determinism will help us evaluate the merits of his account. We will begin with his views regarding the question of whether freedom requires the presence of alternative possibilities.

In assessing whether in fact alternative possibilities are a prerequisite for free agency – not merely free action – Kane begins his assessment by considering two cases from Daniel Dennett.⁴² The first case regards Martin Luther and his well-known parting with the Church in Rome. When Luther said “Here I stand. I can do no other,” on the occasion of his breaking with the Church, he meant, according to Dennett, “that his conscience made it *impossible* for him to recant.” Dennett notes that Luther may have been wrong about this, but that this is beside the point. Even if Luther was correct that he could “do no other,” in which case he lacked the ability to do otherwise and so lacked alternative possibilities, Dennett says that “we simply do not exempt

⁴² The following two Frankfurt-type cases are found in Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

someone from blame or praise for an act because we think he could do no other.”⁴³ As Dennett sees it, in asserting “I can do no other” Luther was not at all attempting to avoid responsibility, but was instead taking full responsibility for his decision to part with the Church. Hence, if it is credible to think that Luther was so responsible even on the assumption that he could not have done differently, it appears credible to think as well that alternative possibilities are not required for free and morally responsible actions. And given that in this example Luther appears so responsible despite not having alternative possibilities, Kane agrees with Dennett that free actions must not require the ability to do otherwise; or, more carefully, that they at least do not always require that ability.

To emphasize the point, Dennett offers a personal example. In this example, Dennett says that “I hope it is true,” and he thinks “it very likely is true,” that “it would be impossible to induce me to torture an innocent person by offering me one thousand dollars.”⁴⁴ Dennett recognizes that no doubt someone will object that “what if some evil space pirates were holding the whole world ransom, and promised not to destroy the world if only you would torture one innocent person?” And he concedes that were evil space pirates holding the world ransom, he would probably consent to torture an innocent individual in order to rescue humankind. But even if this is true, “so what,” he asks; after all this “is a vastly different case.”⁴⁵ The question before us is

⁴³ Dennett 133.

⁴⁴ Dennett 133.

⁴⁵ Dennett 133.

whether or not under the *original* circumstances Dennett could have done anything different. That is, could he have done anything other than refuse to torture an innocent person for an offer of one thousand dollars? And the answer to that question bears no relation to the question of whether or not he would likewise refuse in every logically possible situation. Hence, as Dennett sees it, he could not have done otherwise than refuse the offer to torture an innocent person for one thousand dollars, but his being unable to do otherwise does not preclude him from being fully responsible for his refusal. Dennett thinks, then, that he would be so responsible, and that his refusal would in addition be free.

As with the first case, Kane agrees with Dennett that this second case plausibly demonstrates that alternative possibilities are not always required for free actions. Though Dennett could not do otherwise than refuse an offer to torture, his refusal nonetheless looks free, and he looks responsible for it. The same is true regarding the case of Luther. Luther looks free and responsible for parting with the Church, even though under those circumstances he plausibly could not have done otherwise. Thus, Kane believes we have two examples that ably illustrate the point that it is at least not always the case that free actions require the presence of alternative possibilities. But can this point regarding *some* free actions be generalized to apply to *all* free actions, even to *free agency* itself? Dennett sees no reason why the point cannot be so generalized, and neither, recall, does Fischer. Kane disagrees.

The reason Kane disagrees has to do with his understanding of the importance of responsibility and ultimacy in debates about free will. Recall that above I indicated that these notions play a large role in informing Kane's conclusions regarding freedom, alternative possibilities, and causal determinism. Here we see how this notion of responsibility informs his thinking regarding the relationship between alternative possibilities and free agency.

As Kane sees it, "whether agents *deserve* praise or blame, punishment or reward, for their actions" requires us to "take account of how the persons got to be the way they are."⁴⁶ More elaborately, before we can assign ultimate responsibility to persons for actions that appear to flow from who they are – as the actions appear to do in the Luther and Dennett examples – we need to be sure we can assign ultimate responsibility to persons for being the way that they are; that is, for having the kind of characters, dispositions, and other psychological traits that they do, which themselves are involved in bringing about (at least some of) their actions. To see the importance of this, consider the case of Luther again. We need not deny, Kane says, "Dennett's claim that Luther's 'Here I stand' might be a morally responsible act, even if Luther 'could have done no other' at the time of making it." However, to decide whether or not he actually was so responsible, Kane insists we would need to know "something about the circumstances and background of Luther's action that made him responsible or accountable for it." Kane believes that if "Luther's affirmation did issue inevitably from his character and motives at the time it

⁴⁶ Kane 39.

was made, then his moral accountability for it would depend on whether he was responsible *for being the sort of person he had become at that time.*⁴⁷ So was he?

Anyone familiar with Luther's biography knows, Kane says, about the long period of inner turmoil and struggle he endured in the years leading up to his parting with the Church. Indeed, by "numerous difficult choices and actions during that period, Luther was gradually building and shaping the character and motives that issued in his act."⁴⁸ In fact, the reason we have no hesitation assigning responsibility to Luther for his action is because we believe, Kane argues, "that he was responsible through many past choices and actions for making himself into the kind of man he then was."⁴⁹ And here is the crucial point. If this is the reason we hold Luther responsible for an action for which he did not have alternative possibilities, "the question of whether Luther could have done otherwise shifts backwards from the present act to the earlier choices and actions by which he formed his character and motives." Thus if he is responsible and accountable for his present act, then "at least some of these earlier choices or actions must have been such that he could have done otherwise with respect to them." For were this not the case, "what he was would have never been truly 'up to him' because *nothing he could have ever done would have made any difference to what he was.*"⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Kane 39.

⁴⁸ Kane 39.

⁴⁹ Kane 40.

⁵⁰ Kane 40.

The same point can be made regarding Dennett's refusal to torture. We can take Dennett at his word that he literally could not have done otherwise than refuse the offer to torture, but arguably we can hold him responsible for his refusal only if Dennett himself is responsible for being the kind of person that would, without question, refuse the offer. And if Dennett is responsible for having the sort of character that literally precludes him from accepting the offer, then, arguably, that is because on previous occasions Dennett performed actions that contributed to his character being what it is, which then prevented him from accepting the offer. However, if on those previous occasions Dennett did not enjoy the ability to do otherwise, then, as Kane concludes with respect to Luther, *nothing he could ever have done would have made any difference to what he was*. In short, in order for Dennett to be both free and responsible for refusing an offer he literally could not accept, he needs to be ultimately responsible for his being the kind of person who literally could not accept the offer. And since this appears to require performing actions that contribute to Dennett enjoying the kind of character that literally could not accept the offer, this appears to require that at least some of the actions Dennett performed in the past enjoyed alternative possibilities.

With respect to the question, then, of whether alternative possibilities are required for free agency, Kane believes that they are, but not in the way conventionally understood. On Kane's view, *not all* of our morally responsible choices and free actions need to be such that we could have done otherwise with respect to them directly. However, Kane does argue that *at least some* of

our morally responsible choices and free actions do need to be such that we could have done otherwise with respect to them directly, otherwise we would not be responsible for what we do. Put differently, when it comes to free will and alternative possibilities, Kane believes that free will does not require that all free and responsible actions enjoy alternative possibilities, but he does believe that some actions in the life histories of agents do require alternative possibilities in order for agents to appropriately assume responsibility for those times when they could not have acted differently. Hence, we can concede to Dennett “that responsible actions need not always be such that the agents could have done otherwise with respect to those actions. But we can concede this without also conceding that [alternative possibilities are] irrelevant to responsible action generally, or to free will.”⁵¹ Thus, as Kane sees it, alternative possibilities are required for free agency, but not for all of our free actions.

So much, then, for Kane’s understanding of the relationship between alternative possibilities and free will. What about his understanding of the relationship between free will and causal determinism? Kane is an incompatibilist regarding free will and causal determinism, meaning that the presence of one precludes the presence of the other. Now we have already seen that considerations regarding ultimate responsibility play a large role in leading Kane to the conclusion that free agency requires alternative possibilities (though the same is not true of all free actions) .It is no surprise,

⁵¹ Kane 43.

then, that additional considerations regarding ultimate responsibility play no less a role in leading him to conclude that causal determinism is incompatible with our having free will. So what are those considerations?

The first has to do with Kane's distinction between three distinct types of control. The first type of control he refers to as "*constraining control*," where one is subject to constraining control just in case one is knowingly forced to do something against their will.⁵² Cases where someone is forced at gunpoint to do another's bidding typify constraining control. Constraining controllers, such as the gunman, "get their way by creating constraints or impediments that thwart the wills of those they control, preventing other agents from doing what they want to do."⁵³

The second type of control that Kane distinguishes is a kind of control he refers to as "*nonconstraining control*."⁵⁴ Nonconstraining control is like constraining control in that it is manipulative. However, nonconstraining control is typified by cases of behavioral conditioning and other sorts of behind-the-scenes manipulation. Nonconstraining controllers then, like constraining controllers, get their way, but they "do not get their way [as the latter do] by constraining or coercing others against their wills." Instead, they get what they want "by manipulating the wills of others so that the others (willingly) do what their controllers desire."⁵⁵ Thus nonconstraining controlled agents do not feel controlled or coerced in what they do. They act in concert with their own

⁵² Kane 64.

⁵³ Kane 64.

⁵⁴ Kane 64.

⁵⁵ Kane 64.

wants, desires, and overall intentions, yet nevertheless they are controlled “by others who have manipulated their circumstances so that they want, desire, or intend only what the controllers have planned.”⁵⁶ Kane finds the most interesting cases of nonconstraining control cases in which the controllers are *covert*. In such cases of covert nonconstraining control, the agents being controlled are unaware that they are being controlled, and so unaware of their controllers.

An excellent illustration of covert nonconstraining control, Kane argues, is found in B. F. Skinner’s novel *Walden Two*. The citizens of Walden Two live collectively in a rural commune; they share duties of farming and raising children they have plenty of time for leisure. In addition, they pursue arts, sciences, crafts, engage in musical performances, and enjoy what appears to be a generally pleasant sort of existence. Moreover, the citizens of Walden Two are free to do whatever they want or choose, which leads Frazier, the founder of the commune, to declare that Walden Two is “the freest place on earth.”⁵⁷ And indeed, Kane comments, “why should it not be?”⁵⁸ The citizens of this pleasant community are free to do whatever they want or choose, and what more could be wanted by way of freedom than doing whatever you want or choose? It turns out, however, that the citizens of Walden Two have been behaviorally conditioned since childhood only to want and choose whatever it is that they want and choose. Moreover, this conditioning has been covert, and

⁵⁶ Kane 65.

⁵⁷ B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan, 1962) 297.

⁵⁸ Kane 65.

thus the citizens of Walden Two are unaware of both the fact of their conditioning as well the existence of their controllers. So the citizens of Walden Two suffer from covert nonconstraining control. They can do whatever they want, but whatever it is that they want has been covertly conditioned by others.

Now given this additional information, is Frazier's declaration that Walden Two is "the freest place on earth" correct? Kane thinks that it is not. And the reason it is not is that "its citizens lack free will in a deeper sense than being able to do what they want." In this deeper sense of freedom, the citizens of Walden Two do not have wills that are *their own*, as "they are not the original creators of their own ends and purposes."⁵⁹ Instead, these ends and purposes, indeed their wills as a whole, are created by their controllers. Thus, as Kane sees it, the citizens of Walden Two are not free in a deeper, more meaningful sense of freedom than simply having the ability to do what they want or choose. Being able to do what we want or choose may be necessary for having freedom, but given the situation in Walden Two Kane thinks it clearly is not sufficient. To be free in a deeper sense, arguably we need to be responsible for the wills that we have. But to be responsible for the wills that we have, Kane argues, we need to be free of any covert nonconstraining control. And freedom from such control additionally requires us to be the originators or creators of our own ends and purposes. Thus, in short, Kane's view is that to be ultimately responsible for what we are we need to be the

⁵⁹ Kane 65.

authors of what we are. And being the authors of what we are precludes being authored by another.

Given these conclusions from considering the citizens of Walden Two, then, Kane inquires whether there is any relevant difference between these citizens and us on the assumption that causal determinism is true. Kane argues that the threat to freedom posed by covert nonconstraining control is not only a problem for the citizens in Walden Two, but also us on the assumption that causal determinism is true. And the central reason Kane argues for this conclusion is that if one wishes to distinguish between the kind of control held by covert controlling agents, and the kind of control had by the determination of natural causes, one must argue that while the former “takes away freedom in a significant sense, mere determination by natural causes does not.”⁶⁰ However, Kane thinks this claim is difficult to sustain. And it is difficult to sustain because it is difficult to locate the relevant difference between our powers or abilities in a world actively controlled by covert nonconstraining controllers, and a world passively controlled by nature. Why would the former compromise our freedom while the latter would not? To illustrate this point, Kane asks us to consider the following.

Imagine a possible world (W_1) “in which every aspect of persons’ lives is controlled by invisible gods or spirits.” Now imagine another possible world (W_2) “in which these persons’ lives are exactly the same as in W_1 in every detail of thought, belief, and circumstance from birth to death except that in W_2

⁶⁰ Kane 68.

everything is produced by natural causes rather than by gods or spirits.” Kane now asks, what “*powers or abilities or freedoms* do the persons have in one world that they do not possess in the other?”⁶¹ Whatever thoughts, beliefs, preferences, dispositions, character traits, and actions that are true in W_1 are also true in W_2 . The only difference between the two worlds are the sources of such thoughts, beliefs, preferences, and so forth. In W_1 the sources are gods or spirits, while in W_2 the sources are natural causes. But with respect to any powers or abilities that we have in W_1 , it is difficult to see that we do not have only those same powers or abilities in W_2 . Hence, Kane concludes, if we lack freedom in the covert nonconstraining controlled world W_1 , we must also lack it in W_2 , where the covert nonconstraining controllers are not gods or spirits, but causally determined events from within the natural world.

Kane recognizes that compatibilists attempt to prevent this conclusion by arguing (as Bruce Waller does) that the reason we really fear and worry about covert nonconstraining control is the potential harm that can be done to us and our interests by such controllers. These “manipulators and controllers are more likely to have their own good in mind than ours, and therefore we feel safer knowing that no purposeful agents are covertly controlling us.”⁶² Daniel Dennett, another compatibilist, argues similarly that “objectionable control is exercised by purposeful agents, not natural forces. It is a category mistake to think otherwise ... For, while nature may determine us, *nature* (‘not being an

⁶¹ Kane 68.

⁶² Bruce Waller, “Free Will Gone Out of Control: A Critical Study of R. Kane’s *Free Will and Values*,” *Behaviorism* 16, 165.

agent') *does not control us*."⁶³ Hence, covert nonconstraining control is purportedly objectionable "because we do not want to be controlled by other agents." And thus, say certain compatibilists, we think causal determinism is "equally objectionable because we illegitimately transfer these feelings about control to nature."⁶⁴

But Kane does not think this assessment is quite right. Though incompatibilists do not like the idea of agent-controllers any more than the compatibilist, he does not think incompatibilists conclude that freedom and causal determinism are incompatible simply because they illegitimately transferring negative feelings toward such controllers. Rather, as we have seen, one reason incompatibilists might insist on the incompatibility of freedom and causal determinism is because there is no relevant difference, with respect to our powers or abilities, between a world that is thoroughly, though covertly, controlled by agents, and a world that is likewise controlled by nature. And given that there is no relevant difference between such worlds regarding our powers or abilities, and that in one world we lack freedom, we must not be free in the other world either. But if this is so, Kane argues, causal determinism robs us of powers or abilities that are required for freedom. For just as the citizens of Walden Two could not legitimately be said to be ultimately responsible for what they are, and so did not have wills that were *their* own, if causal determinism is true, arguably neither can we legitimately be said to be ultimately responsible for what we are, and so have wills that are

⁶³ Dennett 61.

⁶⁴ Kane 69.

our own. Causal determinism is functionally no different than Walden Two's covert behavioral controllers, and so the freedom-relevant powers precluded by them seem additionally precluded by causal determinism.

There is another important consideration to mention in relation to power that "especially interests incompatibilists," Kane says.⁶⁵ This power is the "power to be the ultimate *source* or *origin* of one's own ends or purposes rather than have that source be in something *other than you*." It is not at all surprisingly that Kane emphasizes this power, given that his central conviction regarding free will, as mentioned already, is that "*ultimate responsibility* lies where the *ultimate cause* is."⁶⁶ This means that in order for one to be ultimately responsible for their ends, purposes, or actions, for example, one additionally is required to be the ultimate cause of those ends, purposes, or actions. So is our having this sort of power or ability consistent with our being causally determined to pursue what we do or act as we do? The answer is no. According to causal determinism, every event that occurs is causally predetermined to occur by some prior event. Hence the event of an agent intending to perform a certain action, say, is not an event that is ultimately caused by that agent. Rather that event is causally predetermined by previous events that occurred in the past, including events that occurred before – indeed well before – the agent was even around. These events are obviously not events that the agent had any control over, and thus as it regards Kane's understanding of ultimate responsibility, any action ultimately caused by

⁶⁵ Kane 70.

⁶⁶ Kane 35.

events outside the agent cannot be an action for which the agent is ultimately responsible. And since causal determinism precludes us from being the ultimate cause of our actions, it additionally precludes us from being ultimately responsible for actions, and thus ultimately for what we are. On the assumption that causal determinism is true, any actions that flow from our characters are not actions that can reasonably be said to be *our own*, since, if causal determinism is true, we *cannot* be ultimately responsible for our characters. Hence, as Kane sees it, causal determinism is simply not compatible with our having free agency.

So far we have seen the reasons why Kane concedes – to philosophers such as Fischer – that *free actions* are compatible with the absence of alternative possibilities and the presence of causal determinism (that is, a local version of causal determinism involving particular instances of characters causally predetermining actions). We have also seen his reasons for arguing, on the other hand, that *free agency* requires the presence of alternative possibilities and absence of causal determinism (that is, a global version of causal determinism in which every action is causally predetermined by events over which the agent has not control). There is one final and important element to consider in Kane's account of freedom. And that is Kane's account of just how it is that we assume ultimate responsibility for what we are. This is important to discuss in articulating Kane's views on free agency, since according to him what we are is sometimes causally responsible what we do. But if what we are, at times, causally determines what we do, then in order for

us on those occasions to be ultimately responsible for what we do, we need to somehow be ultimately responsible for what we are. So how does Kane argue that we are indeed responsible for what we are?

For Kane, being ultimately responsible for actions that are causally predetermined by our characters requires that there exist at least some points in our life histories where we performed “self-creating” or “self-shaping” actions. Kane argues that these sorts of actions are necessary in order for us to assume responsibility for actions causally determined by our characters, and his phrase of choice for these sorts of actions is ‘*self-forming actions*’. Essentially, self-forming actions “are the undetermined, regress-stopping voluntary actions (or refrainings) in the life histories of agents that are required” if agents are to be held ultimately responsible for actions causally determined by what the agents are.⁶⁷ For if there were no such self-forming actions, Kane argues, the agent would not be ultimately responsible for what they are, and so then not responsible for actions causally determined by what they are.

To illustrate the point, consider some action (A) causally determined by what an agent is – i.e., a complete psychological profile (P) including all of the agent’s beliefs, desires, preferences, dispositions, character traits, and so on. In this case A is causally predetermined by P, and since it is so determined the agent could not have done otherwise than A given P. For the traditional incompatibilist regarding freedom and causal determinism, apparently the

⁶⁷ Kane 75.

conclusion to draw is that A is not freely performed because states within the agent, rather than the agent herself, causally bring about A. And if such states bring about A, rather than the agent, then the agent could do nothing else besides A given P, and thus must not be free with respect to A. Kane's view provides a way of avoiding this sort of conclusion. As he sees it, there is nothing about a complete psychological profile causing an action that precludes that action from being free, and thus the agent from being held responsible for it. But Kane thinks this is so only so long as at some earlier time the agent performed actions, actions which themselves were not causally determined, and which contributed to creating the content of the agent's character. These prior actions must be indeterminate, and so enjoy alternative possibilities, as it is by performing these actions that we engage in self-formation. Kane argues that were such self-forming actions themselves causally determined, then nothing an agent could ever do would make any difference to what they are. This is the fundamental problem, Kane believes, with conjoining global causal determinism and free agency. But it need not be a problem, as we have seen, with conjoining local causal determinism and free action.

So the picture before us is that A caused by P can be something with respect to which the agent is free and responsible, but only if on some prior occasion the agent indeterminately performed some action A*, and A* contributed to creating the content of P. As Kane says regarding the case involving Luther, his "Here I stand" would have been "an affirmation for which

he was ultimately responsible, even if it was determined and even if he could not have done otherwise, so long as it was a willed action (issuing from his character and motives) and he was responsible ... by earlier undermined [self-forming actions] for the character and motives from which his affirmation issued.”⁶⁸ This lesson from the Luther example leads Kane to conclude, then, that ultimately “responsible acts, or acts done of one’s own free will, make up a wider class of actions than those self-forming actions ... which must be undetermined and such that the agent could have done otherwise.”⁶⁹ Thus, we can be free and responsible for acts that are causally determined by what we are, but only if we are free and responsible for what we are. And this requires causal indeterminism.

Putting together these elements from Kane’s view of free will, then, we may refer to his view as *hyper-incompatibilism*.⁷⁰ Fischer originally used this term to describe incompatibilist views that require causal indeterminism apart from considerations regarding alternative possibilities. And though considerations of alternative possibilities does play a role in Kane’s conclusions regarding the compatibility of free will and causal determinism, such conclusions are ultimately underwritten by considerations of ultimate responsibility. Being ultimately responsible for our actions requires being the ultimate cause, a requirement which itself precludes causal determinism. But if causal indeterminism is true, at least on some occasions, then on those occasions we

⁶⁸ Kane 77.

⁶⁹ Kane 78.

⁷⁰ Fischer 180.

do enjoy the ability to do otherwise, and so our actions do enjoy alternative possibilities. In sum, then, Kane is a compatibilist regarding causal determinism and *free action*, but an incompatibilist regarding causal determinism and *free agency*. As Kane sees it, some of our actions (caused by our characters) can be actions which are free, and for which we are responsible, even if causal determinism is true. However, if all of our actions determinately issued from our characters, then nothing we ever did would make any difference with respect to what we are, and thus we could not be free and held responsible for those actions that determinately issued from our characters. Hence on those occasions where our characters – what we are – do not causally determine what we do, our actions enjoy alternative possibilities. And it is precisely on those occasions, Kane argues, where our actions are not causally determined that we engage in self-forming actions; actions, indeed, that contribute to the content of our characters and so make a difference with respect to what we are. Only by performing these self-forming actions, Kane believes, can we be said to be free and responsible for actions causally determined by our characters.

The lesson I want to take from Kane's *hyper-incompatibilism* is a point that has been made several times over: actions causally determined by our characters are actions that we can be free and responsible for only if at earlier times we performed character-forming actions that were themselves causally indeterminate. This lesson builds on the lesson from Fischer's work – that local causal determinism is compatible with free action – but precludes

Fischer's additional contention that global causal determinism is compatible with free agency. Causal determinism is not compatible with free agency, I argue, since free agency requires being the ultimate cause of our actions, and causal determinism precludes an agent from playing this sort of causal role. If Kane is correct that "*ultimate responsibility* lies where the *ultimate cause* is" – and it seems plausible to me that he is – then in order for the agent to be free and assume ultimate responsibility for their actions, they need to function as the ultimate cause of their actions. And since causal determinism precludes this, it in addition precludes the compatibility of free agency with global causal determinism. Hence, I take it that Fischer's account of free will is incomplete, as it is an account that is plausible *only* with respect to some free actions, and thus not free agency. Kane's account fills in this important gap left by Fischer's work, and so amounts to significant progress in our attempt to develop a credible theory of free agency.

Despite the progress made, however, one important question left unanswered by Kane's work is how frequent it is that we engage in self-forming (or character-forming) actions. Is this an event that occurs, for example, many times throughout the course of a day, or is it instead relatively rare, occurring only once every so often? Kane does not address this question, but it is a question needs addressing in our pursuit of adequate metaphysical grounds for counterfactuals of freedom. Hence, we must turn now to another account of free will for an answer.

3.1.3. From Peter van Inwagen

In his article “When Is the Will Free?”⁷¹ Peter van Inwagen addresses the frequency of free action. For van Inwagen, as an incompatibilist, in order for an action to be free, it must be true that, when acting, the agent performing the action enjoys alternative possibilities. Hence, as van Inwagen understands it, not only does free agency require the ability to do otherwise, but *all* free actions do as well. Given this commitment, then, the central question of van Inwagen’s article is “just how often is it that we are able to do otherwise.”⁷² Van Inwagen notes that though “belief in one’s free will is the belief that one can sometimes do otherwise,” this idea is surprisingly consistent with the idea that an agent can have “free will despite the fact that he can almost never do otherwise.” So, when is the will free? How often do we enjoy the ability to do otherwise when we act, and so act freely? Intriguingly, van Inwagen argues that the answer is not often at all. He states that “the incompatibilist must hold that being able to do otherwise is a comparatively rare condition, even a *very* rare condition.”⁷³ Indeed we “should concede that one has precious little free will, that rarely, if ever, is anyone able to do otherwise than he in fact does.”⁷⁴ And if this is so, given that van Inwagen believes that alternative possibilities are required for free action, acting freely is a “comparatively rare, even a *very*

⁷¹ Peter van Inwagen, “When Is the Will Free?,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 3, James Tomberlin, ed. (Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing, 1989) 399-422

⁷² Van Inwagen 404.

⁷³ Van Inwagen 404.

⁷⁴ Van Inwagen 405.

rare” occurrence. But why agree with van Inwagen? What are his reasons for this conclusion?

To make the argument that we act freely only on rare occasions, van Inwagen first claims that there certainly exist occasions in which we are unable to act otherwise. Next he argues that we are only able to act otherwise on three general sorts of occasions, but that such are unfortunately occasions in which we rarely find ourselves. We will begin with the first claim, even though this ground has already been covered in discussing the accounts of free will from Fischer and Kane, because van Inwagen’s account is more thorough on this point than either Fischer or Kane. Both seem to leave the matter with a somewhat unexplored intuition – either one is persuaded by the Frankfurt-type cases, including the versions involving Luther and Dennett, or they are not. As we will see, van Inwagen offers some additional detail, in terms of rationality, that, at least as I see it, make it more convincing that it is plausible that on some occasions we could not act differently. So let us begin with van Inwagen’s first claim.

Are there occasions in which are not able to do otherwise? Van Inwagen thinks the answer is yes, and that these occasions are of three general sorts (but not to be confused with the three general sorts of occasions in which we *are* able to act otherwise). The first occasion van Inwagen mentions in which we are unable to do otherwise are occasions in which we find a potential course of action “morally reprehensible.”⁷⁵ Van Inwagen provides an example

⁷⁵ Van Inwagen 406.

from personal experience. Recently, he says, “a member of my university, speaking on the floor of a College meeting, deliberately misrepresented the content of the scholarly work of a philosopher (who was not present), in an attempt to turn the audience against him.”⁷⁶ Van Inwagen now asks us to suppose that such course of action were proposed to him. Suppose that someone were to propose to him that he misrepresent the work of Smith, say, in order to hinder his chances of becoming “Chairman of the Tenure Committee,” say. Van Inwagen informs us that he regards “lying about someone’s scholarly work as reprehensible,” and that even if he should prefer to see Smith not appointed as Chair, he “certainly wouldn’t think of blocking his appointment by any such means.”⁷⁷

Now given his strong disposition with respect to misrepresenting the work of another, van Inwagen asks us to consider the following conditional (call it ‘C’).

C If X regards A as an indefensible act, given the totality of relevant information available to him, and if he has no way of getting further relevant information, and if he lacks any positive desire to do A, and if he sees no objection to *not* doing A (again, given the totality of relevant information available to him), *then* X is not going to do A.⁷⁸

Van Inwagen now asks, what “is the modal status of C?” As he sees it, it must be “something very like a necessary truth,” and the reason is that it is very difficult to conceive of circumstances in which the antecedent is true while the consequent false. Of course, we can conceive of circumstances, he concedes,

⁷⁶ Van Inwagen 406.

⁷⁷ Van Inwagen 407.

⁷⁸ Van Inwagen 407.

where X changes his mind about A (given the discovery of new information about A, for example), or where X “just goes berserk,” but building the nonoccurrence of these things into the antecedent of C, it appears intuitively straightforward “that there is no possible world in which C is false.”⁷⁹ To strengthen that intuition, consider the following.

Imagine that X actually proceeds to do A. Imagine, too, that we ask why – for we thought X believed a mere moment ago that A was indefensible – and that X replies as follows.

Yes. I did think that. I still think it. I thought that at every moment up to the time at which I performed A; I thought that while I was performing A; I thought it immediately afterward. I never wavered in my conviction that A was an irremediably reprehensible act. I never thought there was the least excuse for doing A. And don’t misunderstand me: I am not reporting a conflict between duty and inclination. I didn’t *want* to do A. I never had the least desire to do A. And don’t understand me as saying my limbs and vocal cords suddenly began to obey some will other than my own. It was my will that they obeyed. It is true without qualification that I did A, and it is true without qualification that I *did* A.⁸⁰

This kind of response, van Inwagen believes, is “absolutely impossible.” It is not impossible, of course, for X to say it, but it is impossible for X to say it and “thereby say something true.”⁸¹ The lesson, then, as van Inwagen sees it, is that “if I regard a certain act as indefensible [in the sense just described], then it follows not only that I *shall not* perform that act but that I *can’t* perform it.”⁸² And hence it is a clear example of an action, indeed a category of actions, for which we do not enjoy the ability to do otherwise. And if so, we do not enjoy

⁷⁹ Van Inwagen 407.

⁸⁰ Van Inwagen 408.

⁸¹ Van Inwagen 408.

⁸² Van Inwagen 409.

the ability to do otherwise regarding actions that we find morally reprehensible, and so, according to van Inwagen, we do not enjoy freedom with respect to such actions.

Van Inwagen extends this conclusion to two other sorts of occasions involving action. The first involves cases of “simple, personal desire having no moral dimension whatever” – where one has a “very, very strong” desire to perform some action and “no countervailing desire of any sort” to refrain from so performing it.⁸³ The second involves cases where “things just seem – or would seem if we reflected on them at all – to be the obvious things to do in the circumstances.”⁸⁴ In both cases, van Inwagen argues, we cannot tell a coherent story where one refrains from performing the action in question, just as we could not tell a coherent story regarding X performing an action that he finds morally reprehensible. But if we cannot tell such a story, then in neither case do we enjoy the ability to do differently, and so in neither case, van Inwagen argues, do we enjoy free will.

To see this, consider the first sort of cases – cases in which we have an unopposed desire. Say an individual named Nightingale, as van Inwagen calls him, desperately desires to be a Fellow of the Royal Society. Every year on the Society’s election day Nightingale locks himself in his office eagerly awaiting a telephone call with news of his admittance or rejection. Each time the phone rings Nightingale quickly snatches the telephone receiver and bawls “Nightingale here.” Now what van Inwagen wants to know from this story is:

⁸³ Van Inwagen 411.

⁸⁴ Van Inwagen 412.

*“Could he have refrained from answering the telephone?”*⁸⁵ Van Inwagen thinks the answer is no. And the reason is that there is no coherent story to tell in which Nightingale finds himself in the situation he does, but in which he does not additionally answer the telephone. Of course, we could imagine that Nightingale “undergoes a sudden religious conversion” when the telephone rings, or just goes berserk and “begins to scream and break up furniture,” but none of this is part of the situation we are considering. In that situation, Nightingale desperately desires news from the Royal Society, and he is eagerly waiting for it. And in that situation van Inwagen thinks that “there is no possible world in which [the telephone rings] and in which Nightingale does not proceed to answer the telephone.”⁸⁶

Similarly with the second sort of cases – cases in which from the outset what to do is obvious. Sticking with telephone illustrations, van Inwagen thinks that most instances of answering the telephone are precisely such cases. As he says, on most occasions when the phone rings he has “not been expecting the telephone to ring,” and, when it does, with his mind still half on something else he picks up the receiver and absently says “Hello?” So consider such a case. Suppose van Inwagen is grading papers and the telephone rings. Suppose further that he had no reason not to answer the phone, that he does answer it, and that he does it without “reflection or deliberation.”⁸⁷ He simply puts down his pen and picks up the receiver. As before, is there a coherent

⁸⁵ Van Inwagen 411.

⁸⁶ Van Inwagen 412.

⁸⁷ Van Inwagen 413.

story to tell where van Inwagen is in just those circumstances – and so not circumstances in which he has a reason not to answer the telephone, or goes berserk, or whatever – and where the telephone rings but he does not answer it. Van Inwagen thinks we cannot. As he views it, it is “incoherent to suppose that [this] Second Telephone Story is true and that I, nevertheless, do not proceed to answer the telephone.”⁸⁸

Thus we have seen from van Inwagen three general sorts of occasions where we appear to lack the ability to do otherwise. These occasions involve duty unopposed by inclination (as in cases where an action is regarded as reprehensible, and one has no desire to perform it), inclination unopposed by inclination (as in cases where one has a very strong desire to perform some action, and no desire to refrain from performing it), and situations where what to do is simply obvious (as when the telephone and we have no reason not to answer it). On all of these occasions van Inwagen does not think that our wills are free, and they are not free precisely because we do not enjoy the ability to do otherwise. But how common are such situations? Are they more or less common than situations where we do enjoy alternative possibilities?

Van Inwagen thinks they are much more common. That is, it is much more common, he argues, for our actions to lack alternative possibilities than to have them. But why? For van Inwagen, the reason is that the occasions in which we enjoy the possibility of doing otherwise are of three general sorts, and these very rarely obtain. The first sort are what van Inwagen refers to as

⁸⁸ Van Inwagen 413.

Buridan's Ass cases. In these cases, someone "wants each of two or more incompatible things and it isn't clear which one he should (try to) get, and the things are interchangeable."⁸⁹ Indeed, van Inwagen says, "their very interchangeability is the reason why it isn't clear to him which to try to get." This is true of *Buridan's Ass* when it is placed between two equidistant and empirically identical bales of hay. Similar to *Buridan's Ass* cases, where the objects of desire involved are themselves interchangeable, van Inwagen notes that there are cases in which two or more objects of desire are *not* interchangeable. For example, cases in which someone is trying to decide between having chocolate or vanilla. Here, the very properties that distinguish the objects are themselves the properties about which we have conflicting desires.

Hence in these situations, characterized by either *Buridan's Ass* or chocolate/vanilla cases, van Inwagen thinks that our choices or actions do enjoy alternative possibilities. And the reason they enjoy alternative possibilities is that in these situations the "agent is confronted with alternatives and it is not clear to him what to do – not even when all the facts are in."⁹⁰ Thus, in neither class of cases, van Inwagen argues, is it difficult to imagine the agent acting differently under the very same set of circumstances. We have seen that this is difficult to do regarding cases of duty unopposed by inclination, inclination unopposed by inclination, and where what to do was simply obvious. But here, since it is not obvious what to do, even when all the

⁸⁹ Van Inwagen 415.

⁹⁰ Van Inwagen 415.

facts regarding what to do are in, it is easy to imagine the agent doing otherwise, and so van Inwagen believes that the agent actually could do otherwise. Hence these cases comprise one class of cases in which the agent has the ability to do otherwise.

A second class of cases in which it is not obvious what to do are cases van Inwagen calls “duty versus inclination.”⁹¹ Very often such cases involve moral struggle, where what we want to do is not consistent with what we ought to do. However, they need not always involve as much. This class of cases can easily include situations involving a struggle between “general policy and momentary desire,” where what we want to do is inconsistent with some higher goal or long term self-interest.⁹² Van Inwagen amusingly quips that any dieter will recognize this kind of non-moral struggle. Hence, cases of duty versus inclination, moral or otherwise, comprise a class of actions about which what to do is not obvious. Thus, in these sorts of cases – in addition to Buridan’s Ass and chocolate/vanilla cases – our actions enjoy alternative possibilities, and thus, according to van Inwagen, freedom as well.

A third and final class of cases in which we enjoy alternative possibilities, and thus freedom, are cases involving “incommensurable values.”⁹³ For example, van Inwagen says a “life of rational self-interest (where self-interest is understood to comprise only such ends as food, health, safety, sex, power, money, military glory, and scientific knowledge, and not ends like honor,

⁹¹ Van Inwagen 416.

⁹² Van Inwagen 416.

⁹³ Van Inwagen 416.

charity, and decency) versus a life of gift and sacrifice; caring for one's aged mother versus joining the Resistance; popularity with the public versus popularity with the critics." all these examples are cases involving incommensurable values.⁹⁴ Generally, the question that confronts the agent in this third class of cases is "What sort of human being shall I be?" or "What sort of life shall I live?" And when deliberation about what to do involves consideration of such desires, van Inwagen says "the agent's present system of values does not have anything to tell him."⁹⁵ Such cases are characterized by "*indecision* – often agonized indecision." Moreover, this period "may be a long one: weeks, months, or even a really significant part of the agent's life."⁹⁶ Thus, in these moments of indecision it is certainly not obvious what to do, and so, according to van Inwagen, on these occasions we enjoy alternative possibilities and thus free will.

Now, van Inwagen believes that "these three cases exhaust the types of cases in which it is not obvious to the agent, even on reflection, and when all the facts are in, how he ought to choose."⁹⁷ Moreover, on reflection, van Inwagen does not think that the first class of cases – Buridan's Ass and chocolate/vanilla cases – involve free action. The reason, van Inwagen argues, is that "when we choose between identical objects symmetrically related to us, or when we choose between objects that differ only in those properties that are the objects of our competing desires, there occurs

⁹⁴ Van Inwagen 416.

⁹⁵ Van Inwagen 416.

⁹⁶ Van Inwagen 417.

⁹⁷ Van Inwagen 417.

something like an internal coin-toss.”⁹⁸ Van Inwagen speculates that this coin-toss is the result of a sort of “default decision maker” – a mechanism that is always trying to make decisions, decisions which would be wholly arbitrary were it to make them, and which is normally overridden by the agent. Hence, in cases of the first sort, van Inwagen says “the person’s control over the ‘default’ decisions maker is eventually suspended and it is allowed to have its arbitrary way.” Thus, given the arbitrary nature of the decision, van Inwagen thinks it is “pretty clear that in such cases one has no choice about how one acts.”⁹⁹

But if this is correct, van Inwagen argues, then there are “at most two sorts of occasion on which the incompatibilist can admit that we exercise free will:” cases involving duty versus inclination, and cases involving a conflict between incommensurable values. Van Inwagen believes both “of these sorts of occasion together must account for a fairly small percentage of the things we do.”¹⁰⁰ But since this is the largest class of actions with respect to which we enjoy the ability to do otherwise, van Inwagen thinks that we must conclude that freedom is a “rare condition, even a *very* rare condition.”¹⁰¹

How rare is rare, though? More precisely, even granting that the ability to do otherwise is a “very rare condition,” how frequent is it? To this important question van Inwagen says it “is perhaps not clear how many of the occasions

⁹⁸ Van Inwagen 417.

⁹⁹ Van Inwagen 417.

¹⁰⁰ Van Inwagen 418.

¹⁰¹ Van Inwagen 404.

of everyday life count as making a choice.”¹⁰² Consider a first case: The stoplight turns green, “and the driver, his higher faculties wholly given over to thoughts of revenge or lunch or the Chinese Remainder Theorem puts his car into gear and proceeds with his journey.” Did the driver actually make a choice between proceeding and remaining? “Presumably not,” van Inwagen says, “the whole thing was too automatic.”¹⁰³ Consider a second case: The rookie public official “unexpectedly and for the first time is offered a bribe, more money than he ever thought of having, in return for an unambiguous betrayal of the public trust.” After a brief, but highly anxious, consideration of the offer, he accepts. “Did he make a choice?” van Inwagen asks. “Of course.” However, he argues that between “these two extremes lie all sorts of cases, and it is probably not possible to draw a sharp line between making a choice and acting automatically.” But “wherever we draw the line,” van Inwagen believes, “we are rarely in a situation in which the need to make a choice confronts us and in which it isn’t absolutely clear what choice to make ... [even] *on reflection*.”¹⁰⁴ Hence, as van Inwagen sees it, acting automatically is extremely common, and acting deliberately – when what to do is not clear – extremely rare. But this is about as much as can be said. It is likely not possible to specify precisely just how rare acting deliberately actually is.

Aside from the rarity of freedom, however, van Inwagen does not think the same regarding responsibility. And the reason is that responsibility, he argues,

¹⁰² Van Inwagen 414.

¹⁰³ Van Inwagen 414.

¹⁰⁴ Van Inwagen 414.

unlike freedom, does not require alternative possibilities. This point can be expressed as follows. Suppose that one evening Jones, a recovering alcoholic, succumbs to temptation and drinks heavily. Jones struggled mightily with the decision – a case of duty versus inclination – but in the end Jones' inclination, rather than his sense of duty, got the best of him. Suppose further that afterwards Jones drives drunk, hits another automobile, and that at the moment of the wreck Jones was literally unable to do anything different due to his intoxication. Is he morally responsible for the wreck? Van Inwagen believes that he is, since Jones' inability at the time of the wreck is an inability that Jones could have avoided having. Thus, for van Inwagen, we can be held morally responsible for actions in which we lacked the ability to do otherwise, so long as that inability can be traced back to actions in which we did have the ability to do otherwise, and so were free.

Van Inwagen thinks the same point can be made regarding actions that flow from our characters (such as in the previously discussed cases of Martin Luther or Daniel Dennett). He says it “is an old, and very plausible philosophical idea that, by our acts, we make ourselves into the sorts of people that we eventually become.”¹⁰⁵ Thus consider a certain Mafia hit-man. Presumably, van Inwagen says, “most of us have been born with a rather deep reluctance to kill helpless and submissive fellow human beings.” However, “if there is such a reluctance,” van Inwagen notes, “it can obviously be overcome.” And, presumably, “each time this reluctance is overcome it grows

¹⁰⁵ Van Inwagen 420.

weaker, until it finally disappears.”¹⁰⁶ So suppose our hit-man did act freely on the first occasion that he killed. Such an occasion, suppose, was one of duty versus inclination: duty because he was ordered to do so by The Boss, and inclination from the (presumably) natural, deep seated moral intuition that it is wrong to kill. Now say that he performs the kill, and that “he continued to do this when it was required of him until he had finally completely extirpated his reluctance to kill the helpless and submissive.”¹⁰⁷ Upon the next order to kill, this hit-man may very well lack the ability to do anything other than perform the kill. If so, then he lacks alternative possibilities and thus, according to van Inwagen, lacks free will in relation to this kill. But that does not suggest that he is not responsible for performing the kill. For on many previous occasions, van Inwagen argues, he could have done differently and so have avoided having the present inability that he does. Hence, he is morally responsible for killing, even though his character is now such that he cannot act otherwise in relation to killing when The Boss orders him to do so.

Altogether, we can refer to van Inwagen’s views of free will and moral responsibility as *restricted-incompatibilism*. In terms of our evaluative framework of alternative possibilities and causal determinism, Van Inwagen is an incompatibilist, as he believes freedom requires having alternative possibilities, but that causal determinism precludes our having such possibilities. He is, however, an incompatibilist of a unique sort in that he believes we very rarely enjoy alternative possibilities when we act. Thus he is

¹⁰⁶ Van Inwagen 420

¹⁰⁷ Van Inwagen 420.

an incompatibilist who places unusual restrictions and qualifications on the requirement of alternative possibilities for freedom, and thus the term restricted-incompatibilism.

The lesson I want to take from van Inwagen's account of free will is the answer it provides regarding the question of how often our actions enjoy alternative possibilities. Recall that one question we had regarding Kane's views on free will is precisely this question. Kane is committed to the view that alternative possibilities are required for free agency only, and thus only for *some* free actions. But Kane does not think that alternative possibilities are required for free actions in general. This account of freedom, however, is not informative regarding how often our actions enjoy alternative possibilities, and I briefly commented that answering this question is important in relation to the grounding objection (our project in the next chapter). For our present purposes, it is enough that a plausible case can be made for thinking that the ability to act otherwise is a relatively rare thing.

There are two problems, though, that I would like to mention with respect van Inwagen's view. The first is that I think he too closely associates alternative possibilities and freedom of action. For van Inwagen, the absence of alternative possibilities precludes an action from being freely performed. But given the arguments developed above in discussing Kane's views on free will, I see little merit in the idea that the ability to do otherwise is a necessary condition for *every* free action. Arguably Martin Luther's "Here I Stand" is a case where Luther literally could not do otherwise than break with the Church

at Rome, yet given the way Luther fashioned his character, which itself was responsible for his inability to do differently, I see no reason to think that Luther's stand was not free. So long as he is ultimately responsible for his character, he bears ultimate responsibility for the decision that his character caused. All things being equal, what more is needed for freedom than that? Moreover, I see no reason why the cases van Inwagen cites in which the agent cannot do otherwise – cases of duty unopposed by inclination, inclination unopposed by inclination, and where what to do is simply obvious – cannot themselves be cases involving freedom. So long as the agent in question is ultimately responsible, as Kane articulates it, for the decision that is made in each situation, the agents arguably act freely despite the inability to act otherwise. Hence, just because our actions lack alternative possibilities, I do not agree with van Inwagen that such actions cannot be free.

A second point of disagreement with van Inwagen is similar to the first. As van Inwagen sees it, we only enjoy alternative possibilities on occasions of duty versus inclination, or occasions where we possess incommensurable desires. Van Inwagen argues that in cases analogous to Buridan's Ass and chocolate/vanilla situations, despite the presence of alternative possibilities, we do not act freely given that our decision is arbitrarily made by what he refers to as a "default decision maker." Regardless of whether van Inwagen is correct regarding the existence of such a mechanism, I think we can argue that even if the mechanism were to exist, such arbitrary outputs can still be free. The reason is analogous to the argument in the previous paragraph: so

long as the agent is free and responsible for being in a situation in which the mechanism issues an arbitrary decision, there is no reason to say that the decision could not be free.

Consider the case of deciding between two equidistant and empirically identical gallons of milk in the supermarket. Suppose that van Inwagen is correct, and thus that when I select the gallon on the left my selection is arbitrarily produced by my default decision maker. However, suppose that in addition to this I am ultimately responsible for my desire to buy some milk, as well as for finding myself at that moment in supermarket. In that case, even if my decision to grab the gallon on the left is arbitrary, why should that decision in addition not count as free? I gather that such a decision would count as free were I contemplating which of two equidistant and empirically identical cars to steal. Surely it would be a poor defense after I had stolen the car on the left to claim that I did not perform the theft freely because the decision to steal the car on the left was arbitrarily made. But if such a defense is implausible, I see no reason to believe, as van Inwagen seems to, that we cannot be free and responsible for decisions that are arbitrary – as they seem to be in Buridan's Ass cases and chocolate/vanilla cases.

3.2. THE THEORY OF SEMI-LIBERTARIANISM

It is time to take stock of the lessons learned above. Amassing the lessons from Fischer, Kane, and van Inwagen into a single coherent and credible theory of free will, we arrive at the following picture of what it means to be a free agent. From John Martin Fischer's account of free will, we learn that it is

credible to think that we can be both free and morally responsible for actions that are causally determined. Thus, at the *local* level of a particular action, there seems to be nothing about causal determinism that precludes our acting freely and being morally responsible for how we act. Dennett's claim that were he offered a thousand dollars to torture an innocent person, he would not be able to do otherwise than refuse the offer, appears to be a case in point. Presumably, the reason Dennett could not accept the offer (under the circumstances he specified, circumstances which, for example, did not include that his acceptance of the offer would save the world, or anything of the sort) is that his character (or complete psychological profile) causally precluded him from doing so. Dennett believes he is simply the sort of person that literally could not accept the offer, and odds are we think as much about ourselves. I at least do not believe I could torture someone for a thousand dollars – or *any* amount of money for that matter – and so I see no reason, again apart from considerations at the local level of the action, for thinking that Dennett's rejection of the offer to do so is not an action for which he is free and morally responsible; even on the assumption that his character causally predetermined his rejection. Hence, from Fischer we learn that – again, at least at the local level – free agency is compatible with the absence of alternative possibilities and the presence of causal determinism.

But on reflection, this appears to be true *only* at the local level of an action. Considering the matter at the *global* level, the level where the entire life history of an agent is in view, the intuitions are different. For at this level, if every

particular action that an agent performs is itself causally predetermined by prior events, events which themselves are causally predetermined by even prior events still (a chain leading *all* the way back to the very first event in the universe), then, as Robert Kane has argued, it is difficult to see that an agent has any control whatsoever over their characters (that is, to what sort of character they end up having). But if this is so, then it is difficult to see – again, from this global perspective – that anyone is free and morally responsible for any actions that causally flow from their characters. Hence, from Kane we learn that it makes a definite difference, with respect to the compatibility of causal determinism and free agency, whether one is considering the question from a local or global perspective.

Consider Dennett's offer to torture again. Presumably Dennett is free and responsible in his rejection of the offer, even if causally predetermined by his character to do so, *only if* he is somehow free and responsible regarding the content of his character. Were his character forced upon him from some outside source – that is, a source other than himself, as is the case, we saw, with the citizens of Walden Two – then it is not at all clear how Dennett could correctly be said to be free and morally responsible for actions that his character causally determines. Thus, I agree with Kane's basic assumption that *ultimate responsibility lies with the ultimate cause*. Hence, in order for Dennett to be free and responsible for his rejection of the offer to torture when that rejection is causally determined by his character, he needs to be free and responsible for his character. And to achieve that, he needs to be ultimately

responsible for his character, which requires that he be the ultimate cause of his character. But since he cannot be such a cause if causal determinism is true at the global level, it certainly appears as though causal determinism is incompatible with free will. Thus, free will requires causal indeterminism at the global level, and that at least some of our actions are not causally predetermined, which entails that at least some of our actions enjoy alternative possibilities. And it is precisely in such movements where what *we do makes a difference to what we are*. The actions we perform in such moments are self-forming actions, and it is because of such actions that we can be considered free and held morally responsible at later times for actions that are causally determined by our characters.

How frequent, though, are such actions? How often do we perform self-forming actions and so determine (in part) the content of our characters? Arguably not very often. From Peter van Inwagen we learn that, arguably, on very few occasions is it not obvious what to do. Indeed, arguably, there are only three such occasions. These occasions involve: (1) uncertainty due to inclination versus inclination with respect to (a) two or more exactly similar courses of action to take (as in Buridan's Ass cases), or (b) two or more incompatible but equally desirable courses to take (as in chocolate/vanilla cases); (2) uncertainty due to a conflict of duty versus inclination (as in cases of temptation, moral or otherwise); and (3) uncertainty due to a conflict of incommensurable desires (as in cases where one considers what kind of life to lead). Thus, only occasions of inclination versus inclination, duty versus

inclination, or those involving deciding between incommensurable values is it not clear what to do, and so it is only on these occasions that we enjoy the ability to do otherwise when we act. But since such occasions are rare – though how rare, remember, it is difficult or impossible to say – it is rare that our actions are indeterminate, and thus self-forming.

All of these lessons (elements) together, as a single theory of free will, is the view I refer to as *semi-libertarianism*. According to semi-libertarianism free *actions* do not require the presence of alternative possibilities nor the absence of causal determinism, though free *agents* do. Moreover, the occasions in which free agents enjoy the ability to do otherwise are relatively rare. The reason for the prefix ‘semi’ is that on traditional libertarian views both free actions as well as free agents require the ability to do otherwise and causal indeterminism. My view is that (all) free actions do not, though free agents do. Hence, my view combines elements of the compatibilist position – namely, that (local) causal determinism does not preclude us from performing free and responsible actions – but is more libertarian, I think, than compatibilist in that it requires causal indeterminism at the global level, and so precludes conjoining a global version of causal determinism and free will.

3.3. LOOKING AHEAD

In this chapter we have developed what I take to be a coherent and plausible view of free will. We have examined three accounts of free will from Fischer, Kane, and van Inwagen, and have done so paying close attention to what each has to say about alternative possibilities and causal determinism

with respect to free will. It is from within this framework that we developed semi-libertarianism. Broadly put, this theory of free agency is compatibilist with respect to free action and causal determinism, but incompatibilist with respect to free agency and causal determinism.

As will become clear in the next chapter, taking the time to develop the theory of semi-libertarianism does assist us in the search for adequate metaphysical grounds for counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. And the next chapter attempts to show precisely how this search can conclude by relying on the resources of just such a theory.

4

Restricted-Molinism

In the previous chapter we developed a theory of libertarian free agency. There are two reasons we have done so. The first involves the Molinist's commitment to libertarianism. Given that the theory of middle knowledge is a theory purportedly reconciling divine foreknowledge and providence with human freedom of a libertarian sort, middle knowledge itself must be consistent with the essentials of libertarianism. Hence, if there is anything required by libertarianism that itself precludes God from enjoying exhaustive foreknowledge, then libertarianism itself precludes God from enjoying middle knowledge. Part of what I will argue in this chapter is that this is in fact the case. Hence, as I see it, middle knowledge requires modifying even if, for one reason or another, my own account of how it should be modified is problematic.

The second reason we developed a theory of libertarian free agency is that the grounding objection can partially find a satisfactory reply by employing such a theory. More specifically, the particular version of libertarianism that has been developed earlier can provide "adequate metaphysical grounds" for the truth values of some counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. Recall that the question of adequate metaphysical grounds was the central concern of the grounding objector to the theory of middle knowledge. Philosophers such as William Hasker and Robert Adams simply could not find any reasons for

thinking that counterfactuals of freedom could be true, and so each considers them all false. The central argument of this chapter is that our theory of semi-libertarianism has the ontological resources to ground the truth values of at least some counterfactuals of freedom, though, unfortunately, not all counterfactuals of freedom. Hence, given semi-libertarianism, God can have *partial*, but not *exhaustive* foreknowledge of and providence over libertarian free choices. This is the modification that I propose for the theory of middle knowledge, it is in this sense that our theory of libertarianism developed in Chapter 2 partially provides a satisfactory solution to the grounding objection. And since my modification places even further restrictions than does traditional theories of middle knowledge (or, traditional-Molinism) on the amount of foreknowledge and providence that God enjoys, appropriately I will refer to the view as *restricted-Molinism*.

In what follows I will develop the theory of restricted-Molinism. I will first discuss the elements of the theory and then put those elements together into a comprehensive theory of partial foreknowledge and providence. Afterwards, I will consider some objections to restricted-Molinism, addressing along the way the problem traditional-Molinism has in relation to the requirements of libertarianism. Thus, since libertarianism is incompatible with traditional-Molinism (as I will argue), restricted-Molinism is as good as it gets for the Molinist in relation to reconciling divine foreknowledge and providence with libertarian free agency. Hence, I conclude that restricted-Molinism is

theoretically preferable to traditional-Molinism, on the assumption that we enjoy libertarian free agency.

4.1. ELEMENTS OF RESTRICTED-MOLINISM

In this section I will discuss the elements (or basic materials) of the theory of restricted-Molinism. Those elements include the theory of semi-libertarianism, as well as applications of the type-token distinction in relation to actions, agents, situations, and counterfactuals of freedom. We begin with a brief review of semi-libertarianism.

4.1.1. Semi-Libertarianism

The theory of semi-libertarianism is libertarian at the core, as the theory is committed to causal indeterminism at the global level of free agency. Compatibilist views of free agency are not so committed, and are designated ‘compatibilist’ precisely because they attempt to show that causal determinism – at the global level – and free agency are indeed compatible. In the previous chapter we argued extensively that this is not so. And the central reason for thinking as much is that, quite plausibly, ultimate responsibility lies with the ultimate cause. If it is false that we are ultimately responsible for our actions, then, clearly, something else is. And according to a global version of causal determinism, what is ultimately responsible for all of our actions are events over which we have no control; events which themselves obtained in the distant past even before we existed. But if events which obtained in the distant past, and over which we have no control, are ultimately responsible for our actions because they are the ultimate cause of our actions, then it is very

difficult to see how those same actions can be regarded as actions that are *ours*, and so be actions that are free. And since global versions of causal determinism entail that all of our actions are caused by events over which we have no control, and which occurred in the distant past, it simply is not credible to think that freedom is compatible with global versions of causal determinism. Hence, semi-libertarianism is committed to causal indeterminism – at least at the global level – principally because global versions of causal determinism preclude us from being the ultimate causes of our actions, which (arguably) precludes us from enjoying free agency.

However, because freedom requires causal indeterminism at the global level, it does not follow that all of our actions must themselves be causally indeterminate. In other words, just because compatibilism regarding free agency and global causal determinism is false, it need not also be the case that compatibilism regarding free actions and local causal determinism is false. Previously we illustrated this point with Martin Luther's declaration that "Here I stand, I can do no other." It seems credible that on this occasion Luther was speaking the literal truth, and thus that on this occasion he could do no other than break with the Church at Rome. Moreover, it seems plausible that the reason Luther could do no other is that he had, by many previous actions, made himself into the sort of person – that is, with the sort of character – that literally could do no other on that occasion. It seems further reasonable to suppose that Luther's character causally precluded him from doing otherwise, and so causally determined his breaking with the Church in the circumstances

in which he did. If so, does the fact that his break with the Church was causally predetermined by his character preclude his breaking with the Church from being freely performed? Arguably not, so long as Luther was not likewise determined on those previous occasions in which he made himself into the sort of man that he was; that is, having the sort of character that he had. As long as Luther is the ultimate cause of his character, then he can assume ultimately responsibility for his character. Hence even if on certain occasions his character causally determines his actions, he can be responsible for those actions, as well as free with respect to them, given that he is the ultimate cause of his character. Such causally indeterminate occasions in which Luther made a causal contribution to his character are occasions in which Luther performed self-forming actions. These indeterminate actions made Luther into the kind of man that he was, and they are essential if Luther is to be considered free and responsible for actions that are caused by his character. Thus, all free actions need not be causally indeterminate; some can indeed be casually predetermined. However, in order for free agency to exist, a global version of causal indeterminism must exist as well.

But how often do our actions enjoy causal indeterminacy, and so function as actions that are self-forming? Arguably not very often. It is plausible to think that our actions are only indeterminate, and so not caused by our characters, on occasions in which, broadly construed, it is not obvious what to do. Such occasions include situations where inclination is opposed by inclination, situations where duty is opposed by inclination, and situations where our

desires are simply incommensurable with respect to what it is that we should do. Situations of these sorts occur relatively rarely, and so it is plausible to think that only rarely do we engage in causally indeterminate actions, and thus self-forming actions. And though we would like to know exactly how rare such situations are, it is likely that it is simply not possible for us to say; such information is likely beyond our epistemic reach.

In short, then, semi-libertarianism asserts that all free actions do not require the absence of causal determinism, but free agency itself does. In addition, occasions in which we indeterminately act are relatively rare, but how rare it is probably not possible for us to say.

4.1.2. Action-Types & Action-Tokens

In order to discuss the remaining elements (or materials) of restricted-Molinism, we need to say something about the type-token distinction. For in the next four sections I will apply the type-token distinction to actions, agents, situations, and counterfactuals. The reason for doing so is that these materials are consequently some of the tools that God has at his disposal in order to foreknow and providentially plan for the course of the actual world. How these tools assist him in this endeavor will become clear when we put all of the elements of restricted-Molinism into a comprehensive theory of foreknowledge and providence. For now, though, we must stick to developing the type-token distinction in regard to the aforementioned four areas.

The type-token distinction is roughly the distinction between universals and particulars.¹ The distinction in terms of 'types' and 'tokens' was first introduced by C. S. Peirce, who illustrated the distinction by pointing to different senses of words. For example, in one sense there is only one English word 'the'. In another sense, however, there are numerous words 'the' on the present page. These latter instances are spatiotemporal objects composed of ink, and, in terms of the type-token distinction, are construed as word *tokens* of the word *type* 'the'. Otherwise put, there is only one word 'the', understood as a universal, though there are many particular exemplifications of 'the'.

But this distinction between types and tokens appears to be applicable beyond its original use in language. For example, there is Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* and particular performances of it, the organism horse and individual horses, and even games, such as poker, and particular poker games. In each of these examples there is a kind and instances of that kind. And in terms of the type-token distinction, the former is a type and the latter a token. Interestingly, the type-token distinction plays a prominent role in the philosophy of mind. In that context, the distinction is employed to distinguish two versions of the mind-brain identity thesis. Both versions affirm that the mind and brain are identical, but they differ with regard to the nature of the identity relation involved. Is it that types of mental states are identical to types of physical states (type physicalism), or is that particular mental states are

¹ The brief explication that follows of the type-token distinction relies on Linda Wetzel, "Type/Token Distinction," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London and New York: Routledge (1998).

identical merely to particular physical states (token physicalism)? But be that as it may, for our purposes it is enough to think of types roughly as kinds or universals, and tokens as instances of those kinds or concrete particulars. Obviously among philosophers there are differing views regarding the ontological nature of types and tokens – e.g., there are realist views, nominalist views, and conceptualist views – but nothing in the following discussion presupposes one metaphysical position over another. What follows is ontologically neutral in relation to the actual ontology of tokens and types.

With that brief introduction in mind, the second element in the theory of restricted-Molinism is the distinction between act-types and act-tokens. Following Alvin Goldman, we can think of act-types as “simply an act-property,” such as “mowing one’s lawn, running, writing a letter, or giving a lecture.”² Thus when we ascribe an act to an agent, we say that the agent exemplified, at a certain time, an act-property. For example, in saying that “Jones mowed the lawn,” we are asserting that Jones exemplifies the property of *mowing the lawn* at a certain time. Goldman notes that though normally philosophers tend to apply the term ‘property’ to “such things as being six feet tall, being a bachelor, or having red hair,” it is not clear that we need to “restrict the term ‘property’ to *static* properties.”³ For just as *owning* a Chevrolet is a property that can be exemplified by Jones at a particular time, it seems that Jones might also exemplify the property of *buying* a Chevrolet at some particular time.

² Alvin Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970) 10.

³ Goldman 10.

To perform an act, then, is simply to exemplify a certain property. Hence, to perform the act of giving a lecture is simply to exemplify the property of giving a lecture. To perform the act of writing a letter is simply to exemplify the property of writing a letter; and so forth. A particular act, then, as Goldman says, “consists in the exemplifying of an act-property by an agent at a particular time.”⁴ And this exemplification of an act-property is just what Goldman refers to as an *act-token*. So an act-token is not itself a property, but rather the exemplifying of an act-property by an agent. Act-tokens, then, include Jones’ mowing his lawn at a certain time, Jones’ writing a letter at a certain time, Jones’ given a lecture at a certain time, and so on. Thus, act-types are act-properties, and act-tokens exemplifications of such properties by agents.

4.1.3. *Agent-Types & Agent-Tokens*

We can extend Goldman’s analysis of act-types and act-tokens to cover individual agents as well. On this analysis, agent-types will be construed as collections of properties, but only properties of a certain sort. The properties included in agent-types will be construed only as static properties, such as, recall, being six feet tall or having red hair. The properties included in the collection of properties that comprise an agent-type would thus not include properties such as buying a Chevrolet. Properties such as buying a Chevrolet are what we might call *dynamic* properties. Such dynamic or relational properties are properties that are exemplified by the agent, but only in virtue of

⁴ Goldman 10.

certain relations in which the agent stands. Static properties, on the other hand, or non-relational properties, are properties that are exemplified by the agent independent of any such relations. These properties are exemplified by the agent simpliciter, and thus not exemplified because of the agent's relationship to some concrete particular (as is the case with respect to the property of owning a Chevrolet).

Let us say, then, that agent-types are collections only of static properties, as these are the only properties exemplified by the agent independent of something else. The properties that comprise this collection include the aforementioned physical properties (being six feet all, having red hair), but also include psychological properties. Examples of such properties are *believing that the sky is blue*, *desiring to live life well*, and *being disposed toward intellectual honesty*. An exhaustive and self-consistent set of physical and psychological properties, then, would be an agent-type. Such types are possibly exemplifiable, and so it is possible for actual agents to collectively exemplify particular agent-types. Some types, though logically possible, are no doubt however not nomologically possible. It is possible that an agent-type include the property of being fifty feet tall, but there is very little chance, if any, that a particular agent will ever exemplify that particular agent-type. Of course, since the very same physical and psychological properties can be had by more than one agent, there will obviously be many agent-types that enjoy the overlapping properties – as when, for example, two distinct individuals are six-

feet tall, believe that the sky is blue, are disposed toward intellectual honesty, and so forth.

When a specific agent, then, as a concrete particular exemplifies all of the properties comprising a certain agent-type, that agent can be said to be an agent-token of that agent-type. All of us, then, are particular tokens of universal agent-types, but it is not the case that we remain particular types for any significant length of time. Among other things, our weights are constantly changing (for better or worse), as well as our stock of beliefs, desires, preferences, and so forth. Thus the agent-types that we exemplify are likewise constantly changing too. Indeed, whenever a single property that we did exemplify now fails to be exemplified, or that we did not exemplify is now exemplified, collectively we exemplify an entirely new agent-type. Hence, the agent-tokens that we are are themselves impermanent; we are continually proceeding from the exemplification of one agent-type to another.

4.1.4. Situation-Types & Situation-Tokens

This analysis can be further extended to cover situations; that is, circumstances or states of affairs in which we might find ourselves. Such situation-types – as I will refer to them – include every possible permutation of copossible properties. These properties are not merely static, but dynamic as well. Thus, situation-types will include static properties such as *being in the afternoon*, *being sixty-five degrees*, *being Spring*, *there being two cats*, and the like. But they will also include dynamic properties such as *there being two bookshelves to the left of the mantle*, *there being a chair three feet from the*

wall, or there being a table five feet from the door. In short, with regard to situation types, the static properties determine what specific objects (along with their own properties) any possible situation-type might include, and the dynamic properties determine precisely how those specific objects are situated within the situation itself.

It is important to note that some of the things that are a part of situation-types are agent-types. Concrete situations very often include agents, and so, at the level of types, situation-types very often include agent-types as well. For example, the concrete situation of two close friends, Jones and Smith, say, flying to New York is but a situation-token of a certain situation-type. The token includes Jones, Smith, the plane, their seating position on the plane, their beliefs regarding where they are heading, their desires for a safe flight, the menu for the flight, and many other such property tokens besides these. The situation-type, then, includes not only static and dynamic properties such as the menu for the flight, there being a plane, there being a certain number of seats on the plane, one row of seats being so many feet from another row of seats, and so forth, but also all of the psychological properties that Jones and Smith exemplify. Hence, whatever particular agent-types Jones and Smith are agent-tokens of – which recall is determined by precisely which beliefs, desires, aspirations, dispositions, and other such psychological properties, along with all of the physical properties that Jones and Smith exemplify – such types are themselves included in the situation-type. This is a salient point, as we will see, in our development of restricted-Molinism.

Another important point to emphasize is that situation-types very often include not only agent-types, but action-types. In the concrete situation of Jones and Smith flying to New York, there are no doubt many actions being performed, by themselves as well as others, as they travel on their way. Jones and Smith are thinking, conversing, looking out the window, stretching their legs (as much as can be done), and other passengers doing much of the same. The flight attendants are offering drinks, meals, pillows, and blankets, and (most importantly) the pilots are flying the plane. All of these are actions that agents are performing in the situation-token of Jones and Smith flying to New York. The situation-type, then, must include such actions if Jones and Smith flying to New York is truly a situation-token of some specific situation-type. So in our analysis of situation-types, it is important to keep in mind that they include action-types as well as agent-types.

Given this picture of situation-types, then, not surprisingly we can define a situation-token quite easily. A situation-token – as with action-tokens and agent-tokens – is simply the concrete exemplification or instantiation of the properties included in some situation-type. The actual situation of Jones and Smith on the plane is simply the concrete instantiation of all of the properties included in the universal situation-type. Thus, situation-tokens are simply exemplifications of situation-types.

One question that I have not thus far addressed is how broadly a situation should be construed. The situation I have described thus far (i.e., Jones and Smith on the plane) are relatively narrow in their scope, but situations

themselves need not necessarily be so narrowly described. We could speak not only of the situation of Jones and Smith in New York, but of the situation in the Northeast, the situation on the East Coast, the situation in the United States, North America, Earth, our solar system, galaxy, and ultimately the situation of the universe as a whole. Perhaps a situation can be even more broadly construed than the goings on in *our* universe in the event that there are others. The point, then, is that a situation can be quite broad (or narrow – we could speak of the situation in one of my cells), so for the purposes of developing restricted-Molinism, how broadly should a situation be construed?

The answer is that it depends how broadly the situation needs to be construed in order to generate, in conjunction with semi-libertarianism, a true counterfactual of freedom. To illustrate what I mean, suppose we are considering the counterfactual of freedom *If Peter were in the situation S, then Peter would deny Christ*. Suppose further that the counterfactual is true because Peter has made himself into the sort of person such that were he to find himself in S, he would be causally determined to deny Christ. Now, it seems fairly intuitive that the events on the North American Continent are not relevant to causally underwriting Peter's denying Christ. Thus, I gather that the situation in which Peter denied Christ need not be so broadly construed so as to include those events. However, saying precisely which particular events are relevant to Peter's denial, and so saying with some precision exactly how broadly the situation should be construed, such that Peter in S is determined to deny Christ, looks very difficult to say. Thus, though situations can be

broadly or narrowly construed, I do not think I can say precisely how broadly they should be construed for the purposes of developing restricted-Molinism. Again, it all depends on which particular events are required to causally yield the consequent of a counterfactual of freedom. Hence, I will leave the breadth of a situation at the intuitive level as we discuss agents and the situations in which they are determined to perform certain actions.

4.1.5. *Counterfactual-Types & Counterfactual-Tokens*

Having discussed action-types and tokens, agent-types and agent tokens, and situation-types and situation-tokens, we are now prepared to put these together and discuss counterfactual-types and counterfactual-tokens. For our purposes regarding restricted-Molinism, we will focus on counterfactuals of freedom. As the reader will recall, counterfactuals of freedom are generally of the form *If some subject S were in certain circumstances C, then S would perform action A*. Above we spoke of situations rather than circumstances, but for our purposes there is no practical difference between the two. Nor, for our purposes, is there a practical difference between a subject and a person; we can just as easily construe counterfactuals of freedom as being of the form *If some person P were in a certain situation S, then P would perform action A*. In what follows I consider the two as synonymous.

As with actions, agents, and situations, counterfactuals come in types as well as tokens. A counterfactual-type will include as constituents agent-types, action-types, and situation-types. Hence, a counterfactual-type will be of the form *If a certain agent-type were in a certain situation-type, then that agent-*

type would perform a particular action-type. Such counterfactuals will obviously include all of the properties that its constituents do, and will obviously too be counterfactuals that can be true of more than one particular agent performing a particular action in a particular situation. When a counterfactual-type has a particular agent-type in a certain situation-type that will perform the specified action-type, and those types are instantiated, then that counterfactual-type is itself instantiated, and becomes a counterfactual-token. Thus, on the assumption that Peter would deny Christ in situation S, we can say that *If Peter were in S, then he would deny Christ* is just a counterfactual-token of the counterfactual-type *If agent-type P* were in situation-type S*, then P* would perform action-type A** (where P* is the particular agent-type of which Peter is an agent-token, S* the particular situation-type of which Peter's situation is a token, and A* the particular action-type of which Peter's denial is a token). Thus, whenever the consequent of a counterfactual-type would follow from the antecedent of a counterfactual-type, the counterfactual-type itself is said to be true. And thus, whenever all of the properties of the consequent of a counterfactual-type would be exemplified given the exemplification of all of the properties of the antecedent of a counterfactual-type, then there exists a counterfactual-token which can itself be said to be true. So are there any true counterfactual-types and -tokens?

Indeed there are, at least if we assume that semi-libertarianism (or something like it) is true. For according to semi-libertarianism, some of our actions are caused by our characters. Hence, given certain psychological

properties that we have, in certain situations those properties will cause us to react to those situations in certain ways, and thus to behave in certain ways in those situations. To return once again to the case of Martin Luther, assuming that Martin Luther spoke the literal truth and could do no other than part with the Church in the situation in which he found himself, here is a case where Luther's character predetermined his response to his situation, and so a case where his psychological properties predetermined what he would do in that specific situation. Thus the counterfactual *If Luther were in S, then Luther would part with the Church* is true because Luther's character causally determined that he would do so in S. But if there is such a true counterfactual regarding Luther, then there is a true counterfactual-token regarding Luther. And if there is a true counterfactual-token regarding Luther, then there is a true counterfactual-type regarding which action-type (of which Luther's parting from the Church is an action-token) a certain agent-type (of which Luther is an agent-token) would perform in a certain situation-type (of which C is a situation-token). The properties included in the antecedent of the counterfactual-type causally require the properties included in its consequent. More elaborately, this particular counterfactual-type is true because its particular agent-type conjoined with its particular situation-type causally necessitate its particular action-type. Thus because certain counterfactuals can be true because our characters causally determine our actions in certain situations, counterfactual-tokens can be true as well as counterfactual-types. Whenever a counterfactual-type is such that the constituents of its antecedent

causally necessitate its consequent, then that particular counterfactual-type is true, and so will be any instantiations (or tokens) of it.

Altogether, then, there are action-types, agent-types, situation-types, counterfactual-types, including their corresponding tokens. Moreover, counterfactual-types and their tokens can be true so long as the antecedents of the counterfactuals causally necessitate their consequents. In terms of their tokens, we can say that counterfactuals are true so long as the agents involved are causally determined by their characters to perform the action in question when in the situation in question. It is important to emphasize that these counterfactuals can indeed be counterfactuals of *freedom*, according to semi-libertarianism. For, as we have seen in some detail, it is plausible to think that some of our actions are free even if they are causally predetermined by our characters. So whenever the properties of our characters and the properties of our situation causally require that we perform a certain action, then a counterfactual-token will be true of our actions. But since properties themselves come in types as well as tokens, we can say that certain counterfactual-types are true due to their antecedents causally requiring their consequents. So there are true counterfactuals of freedom, and they are true for the very same reason that counterfactuals in general are true: the antecedent causally predetermines the consequent. Hence, we have arrived at adequate grounds for counterfactuals of freedom: causal relations. Such relations provide a link between the antecedent and the consequent of counterfactuals of freedom that is itself sufficient for functioning as adequate

metaphysical grounds for the truth of such counterfactuals. Thus we have an adequate reply, to some extent, to the grounding objection. And I say 'to some extent' for the following reason.

Though the grounding objection was an objection that there are no adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of *all* of the would-definitely counterfactuals of freedom that traditional-Molinism requires, it is not the case that we have arrived at adequate metaphysical grounds for *all* such would-definitely counterfactuals. Semi-libertarianism demonstrates how some such counterfactuals could be true, but it cannot provide adequate grounds for all such counterfactuals. To see why, recall that semi-libertarianism only allows for some of our actions to be causally determined by our characters, and so requires that at least some of our actions are not so caused. Hence, it is only in those instances in which our actions are determined by our characters that there can be true would-definitely counterfactuals of freedom regarding our actions. In those instances in which our characters do not predetermined our actions, and so instances in which we perform self-forming actions, there are simply no adequate metaphysical grounds for would-*definitely* counterfactuals of freedom. In those instances, there are indeed true counterfactuals of freedom, but they are only of the would-*probably* or would-*possibly* variety. And these, of course, as argued by the grounding objector, do nothing by way of providing the metaphysical grounds needed for the traditional theory of middle knowledge. In short, when our actions are not determined by our

characters, then the only counterfactuals of freedom that are true are akin to the following.

(1) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would *probably* besiege the city.

Or

(2) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul *might* (would possibly) besiege the city.

(3) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul *might not* (would possibly not) besiege the city.

Thus, according to semi-libertarianism, would-definitely counterfactuals are only true when the antecedent causally determines the consequent (and that because the agent's character causally determines their action). Whenever there is no such causal link between antecedent and consequent, either the would-probably and would-possibly counterfactuals are true, or only the would-possibly counterfactuals (as in cases where the probability is even that the agent will perform, or refrain from performing, the action in question).

Given this background then, regarding true would-definitely counterfactual-types and -tokens, we are prepared to see how they can function in a theory of divine foreknowledge and providence with regard to human freedom.

4.2. THE THEORY OF RESTRICTED-MOLINISM

Before amassing the above materials together into a comprehensive theory of divine foreknowledge and providence, it will be helpful to review the essentials of the traditional-Molinist position in order to emphasize the contrast between traditional-Molinism and restricted-Molinism. Recall that traditional-Molinism holds there are four moments in the structure of God's knowledge. The first moment contains God's natural knowledge, which encompasses his

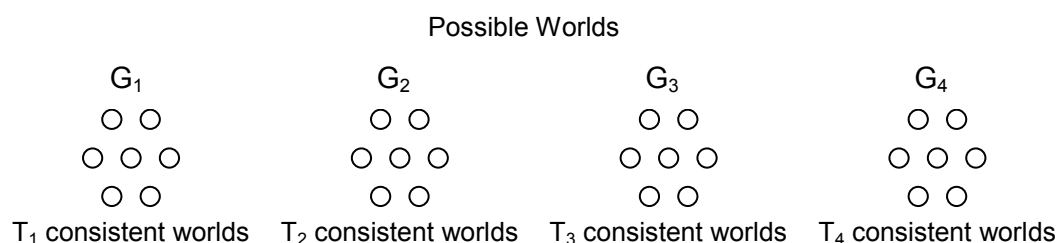
knowledge of all necessary truths. The second moment contains his middle knowledge, by which God knows what any free creature would do in any possible situation in which they might find themselves. The third moment includes God's decision upon a certain course of action (a "creative act of will") that includes which free agents he will create and place in which situations. And the fourth moment includes God's free knowledge, which is the knowledge that results from his decision upon a particular course of action in the third moment. The truths, then, that result from God's creative act of will are truths that he determines; they are truths, then, that he has some control over. The truths in the first and second moment of God's knowledge, on the other hand, are truths he does not determine, and so does not exercise any control over. What is necessarily true is not determined by God, and truths about how free creatures will act under certain circumstances, though contingent, are likewise not determined by God. For were God to so determine the corresponding actions by free agents would not be freely performed, or so the traditional-Molinist argues.

Given this picture, recall that the selection process of a particular world runs as follows. To begin with, a *creaturely world-type* was defined as simply a complete set of logically consistent counterfactuals of freedom. Because there are many permutations of logically consistent sets of counterfactuals of freedom, there are many distinct creaturely world-types.⁵ Now since the counterfactuals in these creaturely world-types are themselves contingently

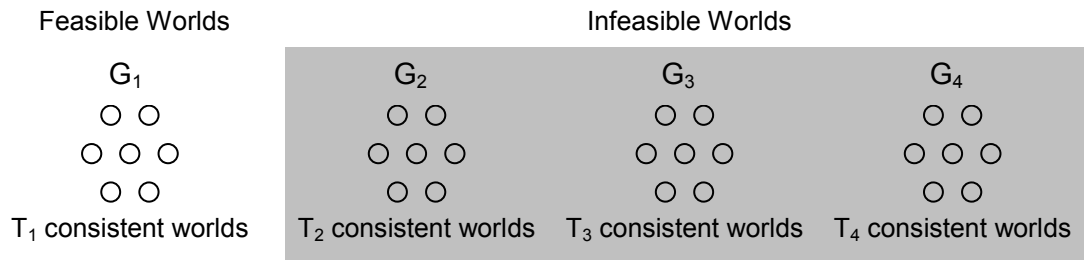
⁵ See Chapter 1 page 30 and following for a more thorough account of creaturely world-types.

true, any of the many creaturely world-types could be true as well. And since true counterfactuals of freedom do not have their truth determined by God – similar to truths that are necessary – then the true creaturely world-type does not have its truth determined by God. Thus, even God must abide by the true counterfactuals therein when exercising his creative act of will.

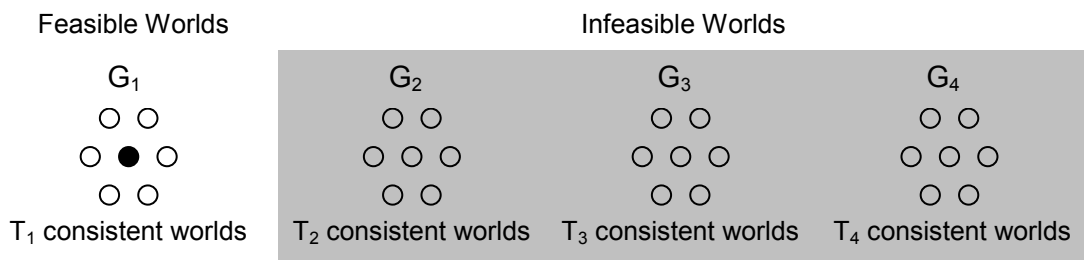
Calling the true creaturely-world type T_1 , if God wants to create a world with free agents, he must create a world that is consistent with T_1 . Thus, any world inconsistent with T_1 is not a world that God can actualize; these worlds are said to be *infeasible* for God. Now there are many possible worlds consistent with T_1 . Traditional-Molinists refer to this collection of worlds as the *galaxy* of T_1 -worlds. But because there are other possible creaturely world-types, and so other collections of possible worlds consistent with those world-types, there are other galaxies in the universe of possible worlds besides the galaxy consistent with T_1 . The following diagram illustrates this.



Some of these worlds, however, as already indicated, are not feasible for God to create. Given the true creaturely world-type, God is restricted in the possible world that he is able to actualize. Hence, the following diagram partitions the feasible from the infeasible worlds.



Now given these creative options, God is only able to create a world from within galaxy G₁, since only the worlds in that galaxy are consistent with T₁, the true creaturely world type. Thus, in the third moment of God's knowledge, God selects a world to actualize, and then actualizes it. The third diagram represents just this world – the actual world – as solid.



This, recall, is the picture of foreknowledge and providence that we get on the traditional-Molinist view of things.

We have seen reasons to think, however, that the traditional-Molinist picture cannot work in quite the way described. The grounding objection to the theory of middle knowledge is essentially that there is nothing to link the antecedent and the consequent in a counterfactual of freedom, and so there are no adequate metaphysical grounds to ensure that if the antecedent of a counterfactual of freedom were to obtain, that the consequent would then obtain too. Now there are possible links between antecedent and consequent of a counterfactual of freedom, such as logical or causal necessitation, and

were such to obtain between the antecedent and the consequent, the consequent would surely follow from the antecedent. In such cases the grounding objector concedes that there would be adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth of the counterfactual. However, it is argued (by both sides) that such a move would be counterproductive (a sort of cure that kills that patient). Because any link between antecedent and consequent in terms of logical or causal necessitation rules out the action described in the counterfactual from being performed *freely*, there is no reason to posit such a link in a counterfactual of *freedom*. Thus, though there are possible links, and so possible adequate metaphysical grounds, no such grounds, argues the grounding objector, provide any assistance to the theory of middle knowledge.⁶

Though there are several popular replies on behalf of the traditional-Molinist in response to the grounding objection, arguably they all fail. Indeed, I will argue here that they *must* fail. The reason is that given traditional-Molinism's commitment to libertarian free agency, there cannot exist adequate metaphysical grounds for the truth values of *all* (would-definitely) counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. Libertarian free agency, in one form or another, is compatible with some, perhaps even many, counterfactuals of freedom having a truth value. But it is not compatible with all such counterfactuals having a truth value. Hence, if correct, traditional-Molinism

⁶ See Chapter 2 for a much more extensive treatment of the grounding objection and traditional-Molinist solutions to it.

cannot succeed given its commitment to libertarianism. To see why this is so, consider the following.

Recall that one of the essential elements of any libertarian conception of free will is that (at least some of) our actions are causally indeterminate. This means that (at least some of) our actions must not be predetermined by the events that obtain prior to the agent's intention to act. In such cases the agent is the ultimate cause of her actions, and thus can be considered both free and responsible for the action that ensues. The question I want to consider, then, is whether it is in principle possible for a counterfactual itself to be indeterminate, but yet have a determinate truth value regarding whether the consequent *would* occur *were* the antecedent to occur? In other words, if a counterfactual is logically or causally indeterminate, is there anything that would make it the case, prior to the occurrence of either antecedent or consequent, that the consequent would occur were the antecedent to occur? For my part, I think the answer must be no. Surely part of what it means for the link between the antecedent and consequent of a counterfactual to be logically or causally indeterminate is that were the antecedent to occur, the consequent *might* occur, or on the other hand that were the antecedent to occur, the consequent *might not* occur. And thus if it genuinely could go either way – not simply in an epistemic sense, but in a genuine ontological sense – then it is surely in principle impossible for there to be a determinate truth value with respect to whether the consequent of a counterfactual of freedom would *definitely* occur were its antecedent to occur. The intuition, then, is that, for

counterfactuals, *logical or causal indeterminacy precludes alethic determinacy*. Call the principle supported by this intuition the principle of indeterminacy, or the indeterminacy principle. The principle says that if a counterfactual is indeterminate, there is no saying beforehand whether the consequent would in fact occur were the antecedent to occur. The following illustration should clarify the intuition, and thus the principle.

Consider a fair coin, one side being heads and the other side being tails. By all appearances, there is a fifty-fifty chance that the coin would come up heads were it tossed, and a fifty-fifty chance that the coin would come up tails were it tossed. That means the probability that the coin would land heads were it tossed is .5, and .5 as well that the coin would land tails were it tossed. Now given that there is a certain probability involved that the coin would land heads, is it possible for it to be true before the toss that the coin would land heads were I to toss it? It looks as if the answer must be no. It is very difficult to conceive of their being an objective, ontological probability involved in the tossing of the coin *and* for there to be a truth regarding just how the toss would go in the event that I toss it. The suggestion that there could be a determinate truth value, even if I were to decide not to toss the coin at all, simply looks incoherent. If the link between antecedent and consequent in a counterfactual regarding the toss is genuinely indeterminate – at the metaphysical level – then it is very difficult to make sense of the idea that there could be a truth value about how the toss would definitely go. Hence, if probabilities supervene on some of our actions because some of our actions are causally

indeterminate, then it appears simply impossible for there to be truths regarding the definite occurrence of those counterfactual's consequents were their antecedents to occur.

Now if that conclusion is correct – and it certainly seems more intuitive than not (indeed, the burden proof presumably resides on those who would argue the opposite) – what are the consequences for the traditional theory of middle knowledge? Not good I think. The reason is that on traditional-Molinism God enjoys exhaustive foreknowledge of actions *by means of* his knowledge of counterfactuals of freedom that themselves are presumed to have antecedents and consequents that are *indeterminately* linked. But if the indeterminacy principle is correct, then it is not in principle possible for there to be a truth value regarding exactly which actions we would indeterminately perform were we to find ourselves in the situations specified by a counterfactual's antecedent. But if there cannot be a truth value regarding which actions we would *definitely*, though indeterminately, perform, then, on the widely accepted assumption that knowledge requires truth, God in principle cannot know what we would definitely yet indeterminately do in certain situations. Hence, if the indeterminacy principle is correct, God cannot enjoy the amount of foreknowledge that traditional-Molinism claims that he does. If some of our actions are indeterminate, then there simply cannot be true counterfactuals regarding those indeterminate actions. And if there is no truth regarding how we would indeterminately act, then there is no knowledge there for God to enjoy. Thus, causal indeterminacy, I argue, precludes the

existence of would-definitely counterfactuals of freedom that regard all of our actions, and so precludes God from enjoying exhaustive foreknowledge by means of his knowledge of counterfactuals of freedom. So given traditional-Molinism's commitment to libertarianism (and so causal indeterminism) there appears to be good reason for thinking that God cannot enjoy the amount of foreknowledge that traditional-Molinism assures us he does.⁷

If the conclusions reached so far are correct, then we have reasons – given our considerations of free agency, and the indeterminacy that it requires – for modifying the theory of middle knowledge (assuming we are not inclined to scrap the theory altogether). The indeterminacy that is a part of libertarianism simply precludes some would-definitely counterfactuals of freedom from having a truth value. And thus if they cannot have a truth value, then such propositions cannot be known (not even by God). As to scrapping the theory of middle knowledge, I think there are still some fruits that the theory might yield, and so I am not prepared to make that move just yet. In what follows I detail my own proposal for modifying middle knowledge.

⁷ Clearly, at this point I have taken sides with the grounding objectors (from Chapter 2), at least with regard to the idea that *some* counterfactuals of freedom do not have adequate metaphysical grounds. I agree with Robert Adams that the available links between the antecedent and consequent of a counterfactual of freedom to guarantee that the consequent would in fact occur were the antecedent to occur are logical or causal necessitation. Because the traditional-Molinist insists that the link must be free from logical or causal determination, I do not think their project can succeed. However, I do not agree with Hasker's version of the grounding objection – roughly, that *since agents do not bring about the truth of counterfactuals of freedom, they do not freely perform the actions specified by the counterfactuals*. Given that I think counterfactuals of freedom are true because the link between antecedent and consequent is causal necessitation, and that the causal necessitation in question results from our characters sometimes causing our actions, and that we are ultimately responsible for the characters that we have (via semi-libertarianism), I think that we actually do bring about the truth of the counterfactuals of freedom that are true of us.

Because the theory of middle knowledge is committed to indeterminacy in (at least some of) our actions, and because indeterminacy precludes determinate truth values regarding (at least some) would-definitely counterfactuals of freedom, middle knowledge cannot deliver what it promises: an account of how it is that God enjoys *exhaustive* foreknowledge and partial providence. But middle knowledge can provide an account of how it is that God enjoys *partial* foreknowledge and partial providence, once modified. The way to modify middle knowledge, I argue here, is by incorporating semi-libertarianism into the theory. When we incorporate semi-libertarianism into the theory of middle knowledge, we end up with the following picture of divine foreknowledge and providence.

Semi-libertarianism shows how some of our actions can be both causally determined as well as free. Those actions that are causally determined by our characters are actions performed in situations about which there can indeed be true counterfactuals of freedom. And the reason such counterfactuals can be true in such situations is that, first, the actions described can plausibly be construed as free. Second, the fact that causal necessitation determines that the consequent in the counterfactual follows from the antecedent suggests that the counterfactual can be true – and thus known to be true – prior to the obtaining of either the antecedent or the consequent. So, for example, consider again the case of Martin Luther. If Luther spoke the literal truth that “Here I stand, I can do no other,” and was in fact causally predetermined to “do no other” in the situation in which he found himself, then as long as Luther

was responsible for having the character that he had, which causally determined his choice, then Luther can be both free and responsible for his choice. Moreover, if Luther's character did cause him to do as he did, then there can be a true counterfactual regarding Luther's action that can itself be true prior to the antecedent's obtaining. In such a case, the counterfactual *If Luther were to find himself in S, then he would break with the Church* is true prior to Luther finding himself in S, and it is true because Luther's character conjoined with S causally necessitates Luther breaking with the Church. But this counterfactual need not be true of Luther alone. Instead, the counterfactual is true of anyone with Luther's *type* of character were they to find themselves in Luther's *type* of situation. Hence, the counterfactual true of Luther is but a token of a type of causal law, where *If agent-type P* were placed in situation-type S*, then S* would perform action-type A**. Thus for any action that is causally determined by our characters in conjunction with a certain situation, there is a general causal law in terms of types that is true.

But since semi-libertarianism precludes all of our actions from being causally determined – indeed it is in those moments of indeterminacy where we perform self-forming actions and so take responsibility for what we are – it cannot be the case that there exists a true counterfactual regarding what we would do in indeterminate situations. True counterfactuals (of the would-definitely variety) only exist in those situations where our characters determine our actions (and so where there is a truth value about what we definitely would do). According to semi-libertarianism, indeterminate situations do not occur all

that often, but because they nonetheless occur there cannot be true counterfactuals of freedom regarding every free action that we perform. And if that is true, then God cannot enjoy *exhaustive* counterfactual knowledge of our actions, and so cannot enjoy *exhaustive* foreknowledge in the way that traditional-Molinism describes. God can, however, by means of semi-libertarianism, know some counterfactuals of freedom – indeed a great many if indeed we rarely enjoy the ability to do otherwise – and so God can providentially plan the course of the world to some degree. He cannot, of course, plan that course completely, given the restrictions placed upon him by the limited number of counterfactuals of freedom that are true. However, he can plan partially. This is the heart of the view that I have been referring to as restricted-Molinism.

So how much foreknowledge and providence does God enjoy on restricted-Molinism? How much of a restriction is it? Toward answering this question, consider the following.

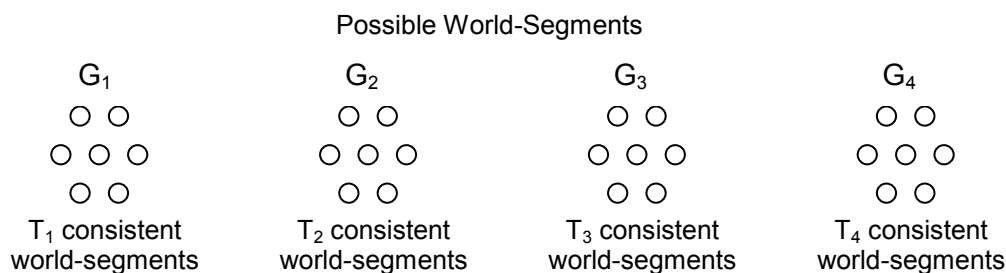
In developing an account of God's partial foreknowledge and providence, let us speak not in terms of God actualizing entire possible worlds (for this is not possible given the causal indeterminacy intrinsic to libertarianism). Instead, we will speak of God actualizing possible world-*segments*, given the partial counterfactual knowledge derived from semi-libertarianism that God enjoys at any one time. So what is a possible world-segment? In short, a possible world-segment is akin to a complete possible world on the traditional-Molinist account, only because God is in principle not capable of actualizing an entire

possible world, he instead actualizes portions of a possible world that are consistent with the counterfactuals that he knows at the time of his creative act of will. Thus in actualizing only possible world-segments, or portions of possible worlds, in creating a world, God is continually engaged in creative acts of will. And since he is continually engaged in creative acts of will, he is thus continually actualizing segments of worlds. Indeed, actualizing these world-segments is his way of providentially adjusting the course of the world as things progress in one direction or another. Again, he is able to do so given his knowledge of counterfactual-types and counterfactual-tokens. From the beginning God knows which counterfactual-types are true, as these counterfactuals are true in virtue of the types in the antecedent causally requiring the action-types in the consequent. But God does not know which counterfactual-tokens are true until he actually creates libertarian free agents, and those agents engage in self-forming actions, thus forming themselves into one agent-type or another. Once they do engage in self-formation, and so self-determine a character capable of causally determining some of their actions in certain situations, only then does there exist true counterfactual-tokens involving precisely those agents. Hence to the extent that there are true counterfactual-tokens, to that extent God has middle knowledge.

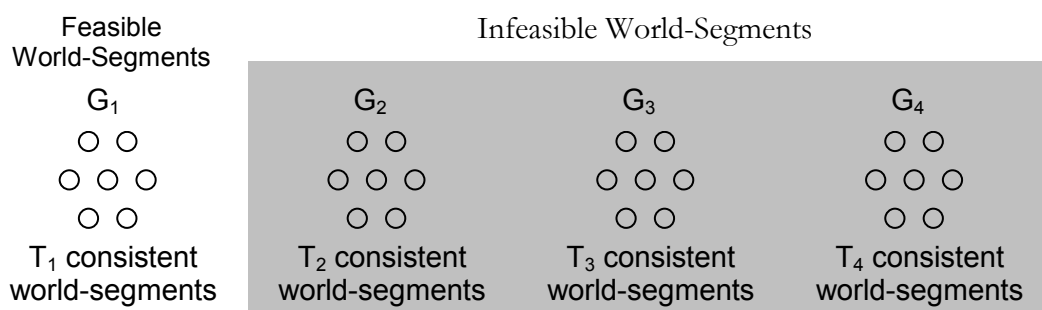
These points can more clearly be seen if we modify the traditional-Molinist diagrams above into diagrams consistent with restricted-Molinism. Hence, let a creaturely world-type be all the logically possible and logically consistent counterfactual-tokens that exist at any one time. That is, a creaturely world

type is a set of all logically consistent counterfactuals that regard actual (or token) agents. Some of these counterfactuals will be true in virtue of the causal laws resulting from conjoining the agent's characters and certain circumstances, and some of these counterfactuals will be false because they indicate that a certain causal relation will hold when in fact it will not. Let us then call the true creaturely world-type T_1 . T_1 consists of only those counterfactual-tokens that happen to be true at some time t . Again, T_1 is not the only creaturely world-type; there are others – T_2 , T_3 , T_4 , ... T_n – but only one creaturely world-type includes all the true counterfactuals-tokens that are true at any one time.

Given that account of creaturely world-types, we can say – as did the traditional-Molinist regarding possible worlds – that there are many possible world-*segments* available consistent with T_1 that God can choose to actualize. Let us call the complete set of possible-world segments consistent with T_1 the galaxy of T_1 -consistent possible world-segments. Of course, there are other galaxies of possible world-segments, those consistent with T_2 , T_3 , and so forth, but only one galaxy enjoys world-segments that are feasible for God to create. The following diagram, then, provides a rough illustration of the possible creaturely world-types at some time t , as well as the possible world-segments logically consistent with those possible creaturely world-types.

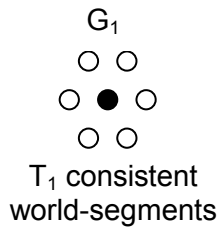


We have supposed, however, that T_1 is the true creaturely world-type, which means that only the possible world-segments in G_1 are world-segments that are feasible for God to create. All of the other world-segments in G_2 , G_3 , G_4 , are logically possible world-segments, but they are not world-segments that God can create given the true creaturely world-type at the moment we are considering. Hence, all of the possible world-segments in galaxies other than G_1 are not world-segments that God can actualize. The following diagram illustrates this point, partitioning the world-segments into those that are feasible for God and those that are not.

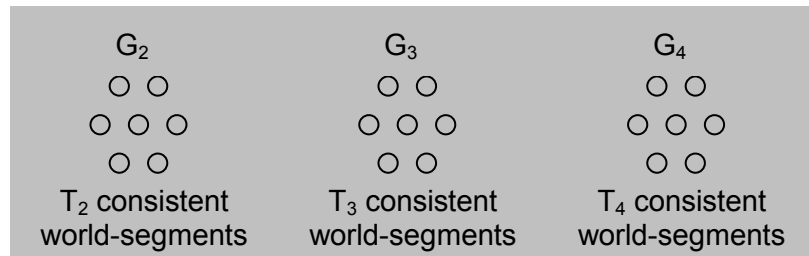


At this point, out of the G_1 feasible world-segments at t , God is free to select a possible world-segment to providentially create or actualize. After this selection is made, we can represent the actual world-segment on restricted-Molinism as a solid circle as follows.

Feasible
World-Segments



Infeasible World-Segments



Hence, since agents are continually self-forming their characters into one agent-type or another, the set of true counterfactuals, or true creaturely world-segment-type is continually changing as well. Thus, the set of feasible world-segments for God to providentially actualize will be different at different times. So again, given the restricted-Molinist picture, there is no creative act of will in the third moment of divine knowledge that settles once and for all which possible world will be the actual world, and so settles once and for all the content of God's free knowledge. Because God's middle knowledge is continually changing, so are his creative acts of will, and thus so is his free knowledge. And because God's middle knowledge extends only as far as the counterfactual-tokens that he knows will allow, his free knowledge extends only as far as his middle knowledge allows. And how far is this?

This is an important question. However, not surprisingly, for several reasons, it is very difficult to answer. First, recall that it is probably impossible to precisely say how many of our actions are predetermined by our characters. I argued in Chapter 3 that plausibly very few of our choices enjoy alternative possibilities, and thus are not causally predetermined. But how many choices this amounts to exactly is just not in our epistemic power to say. Second,

because it is impossible to say how many of our choices are causally indeterminate, it is impossible to say how many counterfactual-tokens, as well as which counterfactuals-tokens, are true. Presumably God can say (indeed he must be able to say if restricted-Molinism, or something like it, is true). However, if we are not able to say, then, of course, there is no saying here exactly how far God's foreknowledge and providence extends on restricted-Molinism. But be that as it may, there are, I think, some things that we can say that would seem to be of some benefit to God with regard to the extent of his foreknowledge and the exercise of his providence.

The first thing we can say is that God, though not enjoying exhaustive knowledge about the future, does enjoy exhaustive knowledge about the present and past. Such knowledge, by definition, includes not only knowledge of everything there is to know regarding the physical properties of the universe, but also everything there is to know regarding the psychological properties presently true of each one of us. He fully comprehends all of the tendencies to act in certain ways that creatures with any given psychological constitution in fact have. In addition, at every time he knows the probabilities that we will act in a certain way given his full comprehension of our psychological states. For example, he knows the probability (how likely it is) that given my current psychological states that I will continue writing. And given that there is some fatigue setting in, God knows what the probability is that I will take a break.

Now though it is true that some of our actions are not causally determined and so incapable of being foreknown, it is also true that in those moments of indeterminate action we may very well have strong to moderate leanings one way or the other regarding how to act. Thus, even if at some point during his providential planning God lacks would-definitely counterfactual conditionals to consider, he does at least have some would-probably counterfactual conditionals at his disposal. And though such counterfactuals do not, of course, yield God bone fide knowledge of what is to come, they are counterfactuals that he can nonetheless implement in order to “see” into probable futures. Such futures obviously may not come to pass, but if they genuinely are probable they provide God with information that is conducive to constructing at the very least contingent plans with regard to the future. Hence, arguably there is some value to God’s knowing would-probably counterfactuals; they extend his foresight into probable futures even when there exists no definite future to be seen.

Another thing we can say, even if God lacks exhaustive foreknowledge and providence, is that God certainly appears capable of influencing us, or even causing us, to behave in certain ways that does not entirely detract from our functioning as free agents. As William Hasker amusingly says, “God is perfectly capable of making someone an ‘offer he can’t refuse.’”⁸ And though making someone such an offer, or causing us to behave in certain ways, might “strike us as manipulative,” it is not necessarily so, “so long as a person is not

⁸ William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1989) 196.

influenced to act in a way inconsistent with his own major intention and motivations.”⁹ The idea here, then, toward which Hasker seems to be gesturing, can perhaps be developed along the following lines.

Suppose some agent – Jones, let us say – has engaged in a sufficient number of self-forming actions, such that Jones has developed himself into a morally sensitive person. Suppose further that not only has Jones made himself into someone who is morally sensitive, but has in addition cultivated within himself a disposition toward generosity. Now let us say that God desires that a certain charitable organization flourish, and he knows that Jones has the sort of character such that were Jones to hear about the organization, his charitable character would cause him to make a charitable contribution. In such a case, if God were to cause Jones to find himself in a situation in which he learns about the organization (say by giving Jones sufficiently strong desires to guarantee that he would Google charitable organizations), would such activity on God’s part preclude Jones from freely making a charitable donation? Arguably not. Jones, clearly, would not have any choice (or control) regarding God’s placing him in the situation in which Jones learns about the organization, but given that Jones has made himself into the kind of charitable person that would give to charitable organizations in certain situations, it does not appear that God’s placing Jones in a situation in which he does so significantly detracts from Jones’ freedom. But even if intuitions differ on this point, and so one thinks that God has significantly detracted from Jones’

⁹ Hasker 196.

freedom by causing him to be in a situation where Jones is caused to perform some particular action that God desires, it is not clear that God has done anything (morally) wrong in so detracting from Jones' freedom. Hence, were God to significantly detract from Jones' freedom in this way, such a detraction does not appear objectionable.

But what if Jones did not have the disposition to be charitable? Suppose that tendency is not a tendency that he had cultivated, though he had cultivated a tendency to be morally sensitive, and so had a general disposition of good will toward his fellow human beings. If this were the case, and God not only caused Jones to search for a charity by giving him a sufficiently strong desire to do so, but also caused him to donate to that charity by giving him a sufficiently strong desire to donate to that charity, then would it be correct to say that God significantly detracted from Jones' freedom? This case is more intuitively complicated than the previous case, but one could still argue that God did not significantly detract from Jones' freedom, given that Jones was not, as Hasker put it above, "influenced to act in a way inconsistent with his own major intention and motivations."¹⁰ Jones' "major" intentions and motivations are to be morally sensitive to his fellow human beings, these intentions and motivations are part of his character as a result of his performing self-forming actions, and so if God chooses to "use" Jones in a manner consistent with the character that Jones is ultimately responsible for, arguably God has not significantly detracted from Jones' freedom by causing

¹⁰ Hasker 196.

him to donate to a certain charity. However, as before, even if intuitions differ on this point, and thus one concludes that God has in fact significantly detracted from Jones' freedom, it is not clear that God has done anything (morally) wrong in so detracting.

As a third case, suppose that Jones does not have a disposition to be charitable, or even a disposition of moral sensitivity such that he has general disposition of good will toward his fellow human beings. In addition, suppose that Jones actually has cultivated (or self-formed) quite the opposite sort of character and has made himself into a sort of Scrooge; he is wealthy, miserly, greedy, and has no "major intention or motivations" to make charitable donations. Now in this case, were God to cause Jones to search for a particular charity as well as cause him to donate to that charity it does appear that God has significantly detracted from Jones' freedom. But, be that as it may, arguably God has still not done anything (morally) wrong in doing so. If God desires to use someone's wealth toward some good end, yet the person lacks the sort of self-determined character which yields a counterfactual of freedom that God can employ in bringing about the free action that he wants, then what is objectionable about God causing them to do something good? Certainly in this case God detracts from the freedom of the agent, but arguably such activity on God's part is not morally problematic, especially if we draw on theological resources which suggest that everything we "own" is actually on loan anyway.¹¹

¹¹ The Biblical parable of the talents comes to mind (Matthew 25:14-30).

There is one more situation with respect to Hasker's gesture to explore. Not only can God extend his exercise of providence by directly influencing or causing us to behave in certain morally respectable ways – irrespective of the character we have chosen – it seems that he can also indirectly influence or cause us to behave in certain morally inappropriate ways given the character we have chosen. To see this, consider Pharaoh in the Biblical book of Exodus. In Exodus 9:12 we find, "And the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD has spoken to Moses." In context, this refers to Pharaoh refusing the demand of Moses and Aaron, speaking on behalf of God, to let the Hebrew people leave the land of Egypt and worship God in the wilderness. This text indicates that the reason Pharaoh refused the demand is because God "hardened" his heart (whatever that means exactly). Oddly, however, Pharaoh's refusal is something that God holds Pharaoh responsible for (see 9:17), but how so if God (by all appearances) is causally responsible for hardening Pharaoh's heart, which appears causally responsible for Pharaoh refusing God's demand.

One way to understand the passage is to understand God as removing a certain positive influence from Pharaoh that Pharaoh did not want in any case. Twice before the first mention of God hardening Pharaoh's heart we are told that Pharaoh hardened his own heart: "when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them;" "But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go" (Exodus 8:15, 23). Arguably, then, before God hardened Pharaoh's heart Pharaoh had

either previously made himself into the sort of person – that is, with the sort of character – where God’s commands would be rejected if commanded, or he was performing self-forming actions at those times with a view to making himself into the sort of person that would reject God’s commands in the event that they were commanded. Either way, Pharaoh is responsible for having a hard heart. In Exodus, then, on those latter occasions where God hardens Pharaoh’s heart, we may view those cases as follows. Just as God can exert a causal influence over one’s life by directly bringing about virtuous desires for certain ends, God can also exert a causal influence over one’s life by *withdrawing* virtuous desires, which he had previously provided, for certain ends. In Pharaoh’s case, this may be what happened. God withdrew from Pharaoh an influence he did not want in any case – given the previous occasions in which Pharaoh hardened his own heart – thereby leaving him to the destiny of the character he had self-determined.

If correct, something similar may be true in cases involving actions over which God enjoys providence but which themselves are morally vicious. Such actions may play some role in God’s planning and preferring one possible world-segment over another, and so God may have morally sufficient reasons for withdrawing, or simply not providing, certain positive or virtuous influences over our lives in order to bring about that world-segment. If so, then God can leave us to the characters that we have either already self-formed, or are in the process of self-forming, and so exercise some providence even over free actions that themselves are vicious.

Now the point in mentioning these four cases is that along with the true would-definitely and would-probably counterfactuals of freedom that are, in a sense, *naturally* true, given that they are true without God's (direct or indirect) intervention, there very well could be an entire range of would-definitely and would-probably counterfactuals that are, in a sense, *artificially* true, given that they are true as a result of God's (direct or indirect) intervention. If so, then the counterfactuals that God has to work with, so to speak, in exercising his foreknowledge in providentially planning which possible world-segment to actualize next, are not only those counterfactuals of freedom that are naturally true (as we are calling them), but may include those counterfactuals that are artificially true as well. Hence, since God has the ability to make certain counterfactuals true, even if in the end they do not qualify as counterfactuals of *freedom*, the number of counterfactuals that God has to work with is potentially much greater than may have been initially thought. And this can only extend the amount of foreknowledge and providence that God enjoys.

One might wonder, though, given the forgoing, why God does not positively influence all, or at least a majority, of our actions or even cause us always to behave in morally appropriate ways if such does not either significantly detract from our freedom, or is not morally objectionable. I admit that what has been so far said may indicate that this is indeed possible. However, because God presumably has the ability to causally determine us to perform certain actions either in a way that does not significantly detract from our freedom, or in a way that does, but which itself is not morally objectionable, it does not follow from

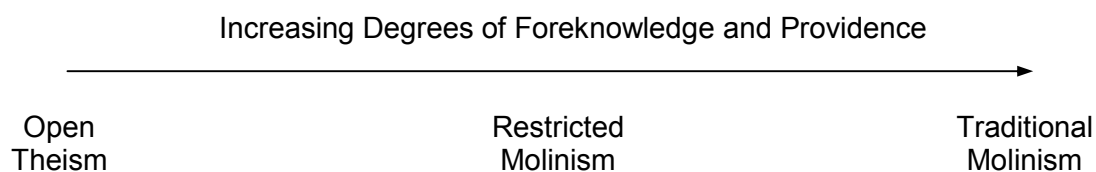
this that it is not morally objectionable for God to causally determine a majority, or even a significant minority, of our actions. Among theists it is quite common to think that one of the goods with which God has endowed humankind is free agency. Indeed, the reader will recall in the discussion in Chapter 1, regarding Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defense to the problem of evil, that one of the reasons that God did not create a world without evil is that he could not do so *given the free choices of his created free creatures*. Hence, though creating a world without evil is logically possible, the Free Will Defense argues that it is not metaphysically possible given the free decisions that human beings would make. Now God could create a world with creatures and without evil were he to create creatures that are not free, but causally determined to perform every "action" that he pleases. But since freedom and responsibility are arguably values that God regards, he chooses not to create such a world. Indeed, according to the Free Will Defense, it appears accurate to say that God values freedom and responsibility more than a world without evil.

Therefore, as stated already, just because God can cause us to perform certain actions in ways that are not morally objectionable (according to restricted-Molinism), does not imply that it is not morally objectionable were he to do so regarding even a significant minority of our actions. For if God becomes too causally active in our lives, then we cease to have the sort of control over our lives that God presumably values. To put it differently, if God is causally responsible, and so ultimately responsible, for too many of our

actions, then there is a risk that we will then forgo too many indeterminate situations, situations which themselves are required for us to engage in self-formation, and thus assume responsibility for what we are. And on the assumption that God values that we enjoy this sort of control, and so assume responsibility for what we become, God cannot be too causally active in creating counterfactuals of freedom that themselves are not natural.

In summary, then, we have developed a comprehensive theory of divine foreknowledge and providence that is consistent with libertarianism. That is, we have developed a comprehensive theory of divine foreknowledge and providence that is consistent with causal indeterminism (for at least some of our actions). The theory that some of our actions are actions that we can be both free and responsible for is semi-libertarianism, and the theory of foreknowledge and providence that incorporates the insights from semi-libertarianism is restricted-Molinsim. The theory is genuinely unique, as it occupies uncharted conceptual territory between two common positions in discussions of foreknowledge and providence. One position is open-theism (which says that God does not have *any* foreknowledge), and the other is the traditional conception of middle knowledge (which says that God has *exhaustive* foreknowledge). Restricted-Molinism lies somewhere between the two; it says that God has *some* foreknowledge. On restricted-Molinism, God has as much foreknowledge as the true counterfactuals of freedom will allow, but there are only as many true counterfactuals of freedom as the characters that we self-determined will allow. To increase even further the stock

counterfactuals that God has to work with, God can artificially determine that certain counterfactuals are true (even though there can be some debate about whether these counterfactuals are plausibly counterfactuals of *freedom*). And in the event that he does so artificially generate counterfactuals (of freedom), the amount of foreknowledge and providence that God enjoys will be even greater. All of this together is the way in which I propose to modify the traditional theory of middle knowledge. Hence, on a scale with open-theism on one end and traditional views on middle knowledge at the other, restricted-Molinism lies somewhere in between, as the following diagram illustrates.



4.3. OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

We are now at a point where we will consider a couple of objections and replies to the theory of restricted-Molinism. The objections we will consider regard, first, whether the possibility of an ever-present but nonintervening Frankfurt controller can supply traditional-Molinism with what semi-libertarianism denies it (exhaustive foreknowledge and providence for God). The second objection pertains to whether semi-libertarianism adequately accounts for moral responsibility, *a fortiori* if certain actions performed later in life were caused by character traits that themselves were cultivated rather early in life. We begin with the first objection.

4.3.1. Regarding Alternative Possibilities and an Ever-Present Nonintervening Frankfurt Controller

Recall the Frankfurt-type counterexamples that we encountered in Chapter 3. There we considered a Frankfurt-type example involving a “generally nice” neurosurgeon Black, and Jones, who is deciding for which candidate to vote in the 1992 presidential election. Remember that unknown to Jones, Black has inserted a mechanism into Jones’ brain allowing Black full control over Jones’ behavior, and that Black desires to see Clinton win the election. Toward this end, in the event that Jones decides to vote for Clinton on his own, there is no reason for Black to intervene and so implement the mechanism in Jones’ brain to ensure that Jones in fact votes for Clinton. However, should Jones decide, or lean toward deciding, to vote for Bush, then Black will implement the mechanism in Jones’ brain to guarantee that Jones votes for Clinton. As things go, however, Jones decides to vote for Clinton on his own, and so there is no need for Black to intervene.

The point of such examples, remember, is to show that a free action need not require the ability to do otherwise. In the example Jones decides to vote for Clinton, thus fulfilling Black’s will, but given the mechanism that Black placed in Jones, it is argued that there is nothing else that Jones could have done. In such a case, was Jones’ decision to vote for Clinton free, even though Jones could not have done differently than vote for Clinton? Those who offer Frankfurt-type examples as counterexamples to the claim that free actions require alternative possibilities think the answer is “Yes.” Given that

Jones votes for Clinton *on his own* and so is not causally predetermined to do so by Black, there is no reason to think that Jones' decision was not free just because Jones could not have done otherwise. Hence, so the argument from Frankfurt-examples goes, the ability to do otherwise – having alternative possibilities when we act – must not be required for performing free actions. And so if they are not, then because one cannot act differently than they do on some occasion provides no reason for thinking that on that occasion they do not act freely.

One of the central arguments of this project, however, is that alternative possibilities *are* indeed required for (at least some) free actions (that is, on those occasions in which we engage in self-formation). Given this requirement, I argued that God could not then enjoy exhaustive foreknowledge and providence, since such alternative possibilities preclude God from “seeing” beyond such choices, and thus from providentially planning for and around such choices. Hence, I argued that if middle knowledge – at least in some form – is to be maintained, it needs to be modified in some way to account for the restriction in God's foreknowledge and providence that alternative possibilities imposes. Thus, the traditional view on middle knowledge, I have argued, requires modification.

But is this conclusion mistaken? Is there a way to preserve traditional-Molinism by means of a special sort of Frankfurt-controller? For example, what if a Frankfurt-controller existed throughout the entire lifetime of Jones, but never intervened in Jones' decisions, such that everything Jones did he did on

his own, though he could not ever have done anything differently. Would the existence of an ever-present but nonintervening Frankfurt-controller allow for all of Jones' actions to be freely performed, but also exhaustively foreknown by the ever-present though nonintervening controller?¹² If so, the implications appear beneficial for the traditional view of middle knowledge. For if an ever-present but nonintervening controller is present throughout the life of some agent, then that controller can get what he wants and foreknow what he gets in the event that the agent in question always does what the controller wants. Hence, if such cases are possible, they benefit traditional-Molinism because then it is not the case that even *some* actions require alternative possibilities in order to be free, and so it is not the case that there are some actions that an ever-present controller cannot "see" beyond and so cannot providentially plan for. Thus if the conception of an ever-present but nonintervening controller is coherent, such that all of the choices of an agent can be both performed on the agent's own and fail to enjoy alternative possibilities, then the traditional-Molinist might argue that the traditional view of middle knowledge does not require the modifying that I have argued it does. Is this conclusion correct? I argue that it is not.

Toward showing that it is not one could make the argument that, contrary to appearances, one actually *does* enjoy the ability to do otherwise in the Frankfurt cases that we have considered. Robert Kane is one libertarian who

¹² This thought experiment is an adaptation of an objection that Timothy O'Connor, Alfred Mele, and John Martin Fischer raised against Robert Kane's claim that alternative possibilities are necessary for freedom. For more on that objection, see Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1996) 42-3, 142-4, 222.

argues for such a position.¹³ The Frankfurt cases that Kane considers in making this argument, however, are only those Frankfurt cases that involve a “prior sign” which alerts the Frankfurt controller that the agent is on the verge of making the “wrong” choice (e.g., a growing inclination to vote for Bush). Not all Frankfurt cases involve such a sign, however. Indeed, some philosophers argue that Frankfurt cases can be constructed that involve no prior sign, but rather the elimination of a necessary condition for doing otherwise that does not in addition causally require that the agent perform the action that they do.¹⁴ If such cases demonstrate as much, then clearly Kane is incorrect (and so am I) in thinking that alternative possibilities supervene on causal indeterminism, and thus that any libertarian conception of freedom will then entail that we enjoy alternative possibilities for at least some of our actions. But be that as it may, assessing whether such cases genuinely involve causal indeterminism as well as the inability to do otherwise is a discussion that is probably better left for another dissertation. Fortunately, however, one can argue that the traditional-Molinist is mistaken in thinking that the possibility of a global nonintervening Frankfurt controller is all that is required to show that God could enjoy exhaustive foreknowledge, without first entering the debate about whether *all* Frankfurt cases are successful in precluding the agent from enjoying the ability to do otherwise.

¹³ Kane 142-4.

¹⁴ For more on such cases, see Derk Pereboom, “Source Incompatibilism and Alternative Possibilities,” *Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities*, David Widerker and Michael McKenna, eds. (Ashgate: Burlington, 2003) 185-200.

Now, the first thing we can say against the idea that a global but nonintervening Frankfurt controller provides the traditional-Molinist all that they want by way of foreknowledge is this: it is not clear such a controller would enjoy the *right sort* of foreknowledge. Clearly such a controller would enjoy some foreknowledge. A global nonintervening Frankfurt controller would know what actions would be performed, and so enjoy exhaustive foreknowledge of the future actions of free creatures. And this is part of what traditional-Molinism requires. However, Frankfurt controllers only know the future actions of agents in Frankfurt scenarios because they first know either that they will intervene in the event that the agent is inclined to perform the “wrong” action, or because they actually do intervene to remove a necessary condition for doing other than what the controller wants. In other words, the Frankfurt controller can be well aware of the end (the action), but it is less clear that they can also be aware of the means (whether the agent will perform the action *on their own* or as a result of intervention). No Frankfurt cases, so far as I am aware, are cases in which the Frankfurt controller enjoys prior knowledge of *both* the means and the end. But such knowledge appears to be precisely what middle knowledge affords God. On traditional views of middle knowledge, God not only knows what action an agent will perform in some specified situation, but also that the agent will perform the action in question *on their own*. Indeed this is part of the beauty of the theory. In a counterfactual of creaturely freedom, God does not, and need not, intervene in the circumstances to know that the action specified by the consequent is performed in the event that the

antecedent obtains. It is the agent herself, on her own, who brings about the action specified by the consequent in a counterfactual of freedom in the event that its antecedent obtains.

The point, then, is that even if in the end the arguments for thinking that certain Frankfurt scenarios do in fact preclude the ability to do otherwise without causally predetermining which action an agent performs – and so it turns out that the ability to do otherwise is actually not required for libertarian free agency, contrary to what I argued in Chapter 3 – it does not follow that traditional-Molinism is victorious. Traditional views on middle knowledge require that God enjoys a certain sort of foreknowledge that is importantly different from the foreknowledge enjoyed by a global but nonintervening Frankfurt controller. Hence, because a global nonintervening controller enjoys foreknowledge does not entail that God enjoys the sort of foreknowledge required by traditional-Molinism. Hence, as I see it, proposing an ever-present but nonintervening controller is of no help to the traditional-Molinist in defending the traditional theory of middle knowledge.

4.3.2. Regarding Self-forming Actions and Moral Responsibility

The second objection we will consider is first and foremost an objection to semi-libertarianism. According to semi-libertarianism, some of our actions – indeed, probably a great many of our actions – are caused by our characters. Such actions are nonetheless free so long as we are ultimately responsible for having the characters that we do. And we are responsible for our characters so long as we perform actions that we have referred to as self-forming; that is,

actions that themselves are causally indeterminate and in which we are ultimately responsible for making a causal contribution to what we are. Hence, we can say that Luther is responsible for his “Here I Stand,” even if he lacked alternative possibilities and was predetermined to “do no other” by his character. And we can say this so long as on many previous occasions Luther performed self-forming actions, thus making himself into the man that he was when he could “do no other.” But at what point do we become *morally* responsible for the characters that we have, and so *morally* responsible for the actions that flow from them? How early on in our lives can we self-form certain traits of character and then be reasonably responsible for actions that we perform later that are themselves caused by just those traits?

To illustrate the question, consider the following. Suppose that Smith has a certain character trait (a disposition toward theft, let us say) that he cultivated as a child by performing acts of theft. Suppose too that Smith was encouraged by his peers to engage in petty theft (stealing candy, baseball cards, and the like) and that his role as a petty thief provided him a niche among his friends. Now suppose that later in life (when Smith is twenty-seven, say) Smith steals a car. Suppose further that this act of theft was in part caused by character traits that he self-formed as a child (around age eight or so) when he engaged in theft. Should Smith be held morally responsible for his crime?

On the one hand there is a case for saying that indeed he should, given that Smith is at an age where he ought to know that such acts are wrong, and so know that he ought not perform them. But, on the other hand, there

appears to be a case for saying that Smith should not be held responsible given that he was, in part, caused to steal the car by a character trait that he cultivated as a child, presumably before he fully understood the implications of his choices. Now what does semi-libertarianism require? Well, at first glance it appears to require that Smith be held morally responsible for stealing the car. For even though Smith was caused by his character to steal the car – albeit a character that he self-determined when he was a child – because Smith is causally responsible for making himself into the sort of person who is disposed toward theft, and so at times would be causally determined by his character to commit theft, he is ultimately responsible for stealing the car. So semi-libertarianism seems to suggest that Smith is morally responsible. But is this reasonable? Is semi-libertarianism committed to unreasonably conferring moral responsibility on agents whose acts are determined by character traits they self-formed quite early in life?

Happily, the semi-libertarian need not say so, and that for two reasons. First, the idea that ultimate responsibility entails moral responsibility has little to recommend it. And the reason is that it is possible to be ultimately responsible for events that we clearly should not be held morally responsible for. To illustrate this, suppose the keyboard that I am presently using has been villainously rigged to ignite distinct forest fires in California every one hundredth key stroke that is made. If so, then I bear ultimate responsibility for starting numerous forest fires in California. For it is myself, after all, who is causally responsible for initiating causal sequences whose end is the ignition

of forest fires in California. Clearly, in the unhappy event that I am doing so, I am not *purposefully* doing so – in the sense that I am aware of, or have knowledge of, what I am doing. But be that as it may, I am nonetheless ultimately responsible for the fires.

Now it certainly seems obvious (at least to me) that I should not be held morally responsible for starting the forest fires, even though I am in fact ultimately responsible for starting the forest fires. Hence, since I could be ultimately responsible yet not morally responsible, ultimately responsibility must not entail morally responsibility. Hence, in the case of Smith stealing a car above, just because Smith may be ultimately responsible for stealing the car, the semi-libertarian needs to say that Smith is also morally responsible for stealing the car. And so it may be the case that Smith is ultimately responsible for cultivating a character trait that caused him to commit theft *and* also the case that Smith is not morally responsible for that act of theft. If the character trait that performed a significant role in causing Smith to steal the car was in fact cultivated within Smith before he can be reasonably held morally responsible for cultivating that trait – before a sort of “age of accountability,” as it were – then perhaps Smith should not be held morally responsible for stealing the car. And semi-libertarianism does not require that he be so.

But even if it is possible that Smith is not morally responsible for stealing the car, he may in fact be so responsible. To see this, consider that Smith may have had many opportunities to perform self-forming actions that would have caused him to have a different character than he has. For example, Smith

could have cultivated a respect for the property of others (a respect no doubt he himself demands of others), thereby at the very least putting two of his character traits at odds with one another. But even if Smith did not engage in shaping himself into a person with such a respect – perhaps even through no fault of his own – he arguably still has recourse to undermining his self-formed disposition to steal. Smith, for instance, could have tried to cultivate himself into a person who is at the very least morally sensitive. Indeed, were Smith to have cultivated himself into such a person, Smith could then have developed other character traits that themselves are inconsistent with his self-formed disposition to steal. And in cultivating these other traits, Smith could have weakened and ultimately eliminated his disposition toward theft. The point, then, is that even if Smith did not (or could not) have *directly* undermined his disposition to steal, it certainly seems plausible to say that he could have *indirectly* undermined that disposition. And the way in which he could have done so is by making himself into the sort of person within which such dispositions are unwelcome. But if over the course of Smith's life he does not do so, then arguably he is responsible for stealing at age twenty-seven, even if he was in part caused to do so by character traits that he cultivated as a child. Thus, I do not see that semi-libertarianism requires anything out of the ordinary when it comes to evaluating the blameworthiness (or praiseworthiness) of another. Differently said, I do not see that it requires anything incompatible with our common moral intuitions regarding everyday evaluations of moral responsibility.

4.4. LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD

We are now prepared to bring this project to a close. I will not attempt to review all the terrain that we have covered, but I will mention some high points – briefly summarizing the essentials of the theory that I am proposing – as well as mention a few areas in which the theory of restricted-Molinism might further be applied in later projects.

To begin with, the theory of middle knowledge purports to account for God enjoying exhaustive foreknowledge and partial providence. His providence is partial because it is limited by the free choices of free creatures. Because God is no more able to force a free creature to freely choose as he wishes than he is to create a four-sided triangle, God's providence must work cooperatively with free agents. However, God can enjoy exhaustive foreknowledge, according to middle knowledge, even if his providence is partially restricted by free agents *if* God knows whether all would-definitely counterfactuals of freedom (propositions of the form *If P were in S, then P would do A*) are true or false. For with such knowledge, God could providentially guide the actual world by creating situations in which he knows we will freely perform a certain action. Thus, God can enjoy exhaustive foreknowledge by knowing just which situations he will choose to actualize. However, there is a problem. Since the actions involved in the consequent of counterfactuals of freedom are construed as libertarian, and by consequence causally indeterminate, it is not clear how such counterfactuals could have a truth value. In essence, this is the grounding objection to the theory of middle knowledge. Counterfactuals of

libertarian freedom cannot be true given that there is nothing besides logical or casual necessitation to guarantee that the consequent of a counterfactual of freedom definitely would obtain were the antecedent to obtain, and both sorts of necessitation are rejected by the traditional-Molinist. Hence, counterfactuals of freedom cannot be true, and so God cannot have middle knowledge; at least as traditionally construed.

God can have middle knowledge of a sort, however. For some counterfactuals of freedom could indeed be true even if they are not causally indeterminate, but rather causally predetermined. In different words, if in certain situations our characters caused us to perform certain actions, then counterfactuals of freedom could find their grounds in causation, and thus could be known to be true prior to the actualization of the events described in the counterfactual. In addition, the actions described in the counterfactual (the actions that are caused by our characters), could in fact be construed as free, so long as we are both free and responsible regarding the content of our characters. And we are free and responsible with respect to the content of our characters if we are ultimately responsible for the content of our characters; that is, if we are the ultimate cause of some of our actions, actions which themselves determine our characters in one direction or another. Now if we in fact function as ultimate causes, then causal indeterminacy must reign, at least at the global level of *free agency*. However, because actions can be considered free when caused by characters for which we are ultimately responsible, casual determinism can reign at the local level for at least some

free actions. This theory of free agency – indeterminism at the global level and (occasional) determinism at the local level – we have referred to as semi-libertarianism. The theory employs some elements of incompatibilism and some elements of compatibilism, and hence is a hybrid view between the two.

Now semi-libertarianism can be put to work in developing a modified view of middle knowledge. Since semi-libertarianism includes causal indeterminacy for at least some of our actions – actions necessary for self-determining our characters and thus for our taking responsibility for them – counterfactuals of freedom regarding actions that are indeterminate simply cannot be true (or false). Thus, God cannot enjoy *exhaustive* foreknowledge, as traditional theories of middle knowledge say that he can, but he can enjoy *partial* foreknowledge to the extent that there are counterfactuals whose truth or falsity is determined by our characters. So how much foreknowledge does this amount to? It is probably not possible to say for sure. Though we can plausibly conclude that very rarely are our actions indeterminate, there is probably no way to say precisely (in terms of specifying a number) just how rare such indeterminate actions are.¹⁵ And since there is no saying precisely just how rare such actions are, there is no saying precisely just how many true counterfactuals of freedom that God knows, and so precisely how far into the future God's foreknowledge extends. But since it can extend to some extent, God can to some extent enjoy middle knowledge. Thus, in actualizing a possible world, God cannot exhaustively know beforehand all of the situations

¹⁵ See Chapter 3 pages 178-9 for arguments that underwrite this assertion.

that he will actualize in order to achieve the ends that he wants (as traditional-Molinism affirms). Instead, God must be content with actualizing only as much of a world as his middle knowledge affords, and so must be content with actualizing possible world-*segments*. (Again, since we cannot say how many counterfactuals of freedom are true, and hence how much middle knowledge God enjoys, we cannot say how far into the future these possible world-segments extend.) Thus, God's middle knowledge is restricted by the number of true counterfactuals that our characters afford him. And this is just what restricted-Molinism says. On the conceptual landscape, then, restricted-Molinism lies somewhere between open-theism (where God lacks foreknowledge altogether) and traditional-Molinism (where God's foreknowledge is exhaustive).

By way of application, then, what we have looked at thus far is only the preferable account restricted-Molinism offers (as opposed to traditional-Molinism) to the question of divine foreknowledge, providence, and human freedom. But restricted-Molinism may have the resources to offer a preferable response to the problem of evil as well. To see this, consider the following. Though according to traditional-Molinism God is not responsible for evil, he is however responsible for creating a world in which he knew there would be evil (even foreknowing and planning for all of the horrendous evils of the 20th Century). The intuitive problem this poses has been exploited by open-theists, who claim that their reply to the problem of evil is preferable to something like the free will defense, since on their view God did not create a world in which

he knew that all the evils that have transpired would in fact transpire. Indeed, one might argue if God had such knowledge, the prudent thing to do in that case is not to create anything at all. Restricted-Molinism can capitalize in part on this reply as well. For the restricted-Molinist could say that God actualized a situation in which it was causally indeterminate whether there would be evil (that is, on the Biblical account, whether Adam and Eve would sin). Thus if such a situation was not causally predetermined, as we have argued, God could not know beforehand that they would sin, and so could not know that the world he created would fall into sin. Furthermore, the restricted-Molinist could even say that God placed Adam and Eve in a situation in which the probability was very low that they would sin, even though, of course, there was a slight chance that they would. Now one might insist that the mere possibility of evil, however remote, renders God imprudent in actualizing a world at all, and such may be the case. However, if it is the case, then it seems to follow by extension that every parent is likewise imprudent in having children. After all, the probability of that child experiencing evil is far greater than we need suppose was the probability that Adam and Eve would experience evil. Taking all of this into account, the restricted-Molinist may be able to offer a free will defense that is preferable to the free will defense offered by the traditional-Molinist. For the restricted-Molinist's free will defense may exonerate God from responsibility in the existence of evil to a greater degree than does the free will defense from the traditional-Molinist.

Still other areas where restricted-Molinism may yield fruit include discussions of prayer and prophecy. And there remains a need to test the theory of restricted-Molinism in relation to Christian creeds and Scriptures. But such discussions and tests must await the attention they deserve for other projects, and perhaps other authors.

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