

**IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN OTHERWISE: AN ARTICULATION AND DEFENSE
OF DIVINE SOURCE COMPATIBILISM**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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ABSTRACT

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Proponents of perfect being theism have recently explored the resources of compatibilist accounts of free will, such that freedom is compatible with necessity, as a way of countering the charge that it is not possible to reconcile God's essential perfect goodness with any significant degree of divine freedom. However, William Rowe and others have charged the proponents of this strategy with saving divine freedom while at the same time jeopardizing other fundamental ideas within traditional theism. A small number of analytic philosophers of religion (most notably Edward Wierenga, Katherin Rogers, and Thomas Talbott) have drawn from the resources of compatibilist accounts of free will as a way of understanding God's freedom, one that they do not think is inconsistent with traditional theism. To this day, however, no one has produced an extended articulation and defense of a compatibilist outlook of divine freedom, an outlook which I will call in this dissertation, *Divine Source Compatibilism* (DSC).

In chapter 1 and 2 I introduce both this study and the view of divine freedom under consideration, namely, DSC. Chapter 3 explores whether or not DSC seriously deviates from the claims of the Christian tradition regarding divine freedom. Chapters 4 and 5 are focused on the issues of divine aseity and divine thankworthiness. Here I investigate whether or not DSC is inconsistent with each of these two fundamental attributes of perfect being theism. In Chapter 6 I explore whether a certain variation of traditional theism, which I call Theistic Compatibilism, is committed to DSC in light of its metaphysical commitments to freedom and explanation. Finally, in chapter 7 I offer a conclusion and point out some areas that await further study.

In this dissertation, I argue that DSC need not fall prey to the charges typically leveled against it. I argue that this outlook of God's freedom does not seriously deviate from the claims

of the Christian tradition with respect to God's freedom and is consistent with divine aseity and divine thankworthiness. Moreover, I argue that DSC is the most plausible view of God's freedom for a particular outlook on theism, namely, Theistic Compatibilism.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the most basic sense perfect being theism can be captured in Saint Anselm's dictum that God is "something than which nothing greater can be thought."¹ In contemporary discussion perfect being theism is frequently rephrased in modal terms in which God is the greatest *possible* being, a being with the greatest possible array of compossible great-making properties. A great-making property is, according to Thomas V. Morris:

[A]ny property, or attribute, or characteristic, or quality which it is intrinsically good to have, any property, which endows its bearer with some measure of value, or greatness, or metaphysical stature, regardless of external circumstances.²

The crucial element, here, with respect to great-making properties is that of *intrinsic goodness*, which is to highlight that great-making properties are "good in themselves, and thus are proper stopping points in explanation of goodness."³ So, great-making properties are best understood as properties which are intrinsically good to possess.

But critics of perfect being theism often argue that it is somehow incoherent to hold to the compossibility of some of the great-making properties typically predicated to God.⁴ William Rowe, for instance, has argued that "there is a serious problem of reconciling God's essential

¹ Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, Chapter 2, in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 81.

² Thomas V. Morris, *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2002), 35; see also Katherin A. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 12, 13.

³ Thomas V. Morris, *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology*, 37.

⁴ I follow Thomas V. Morris with respect to compossibility where "An array or collection of properties is compossible just in case it is possible that they all be had by the same individual at the same time, or all together." Thomas V. Morris, *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology*, 37.

goodness and moral perfection with any significant degree of divine freedom.”⁵ Rowe constructs a dilemma for perfect being theism having to do with God’s act in creating: either there was a best possible world for God to create or there was an infinite hierarchy of better worlds for God to create. On the one hand, if there was a best possible world for God to create, then God’s perfect goodness would require that he create that particular world. In that case, however, God would not have been able to choose otherwise, so God cannot be free. On the other hand, if there was an infinite hierarchy of better worlds for God to create, then Rowe argues that for any world God creates, it is possible for someone or something to create a better world, so God cannot be unsurpassably good. The upshot of Rowe’s dilemma, then, is that either God cannot be free or God cannot be perfectly good.⁶ The following is a more formal way of expressing Rowe’s argument:

- (1) Either there was a best world for God to create or there was an infinite hierarchy of better worlds for God to create.
 - (2) If there was a best world for God to create, then God was not free with respect to either creating at all or creating the world he created.
 - (3) If there was an infinite hierarchy of better worlds, then God is not perfectly good.
- Therefore,
- (4) Either God is not free or he is not perfectly good.

As we can see, the tension arises between two traditional great-making properties typically predicated to God, namely, divine freedom and perfect goodness. The perennial problem is that of offering a coherent account of divine freedom in light of God’s essential perfect goodness.

⁵ William Rowe, “Divine Perfection and Freedom,” in *Evidence and Religious Belief*, eds. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. Vanarragon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 175. Antecedents of Rowe’s argument can be seen in William Rowe, “The Problem of Divine Perfection and Freedom,” in *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Eleonore Stump (Brattleboro: Echo Point Books and Media, 1993, reprint 2014), 223-233; William Rowe, “Can God Be Free?” *Faith and Philosophy*, 19 (2002): 405-424; and William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶ Much of Rowe’s outlook can be seen in the antecedent work of Philip L. Quinn, “God, Moral Perfection, and Possible Worlds,” in *God: The Contemporary Discussion*, eds. Frederick Sontag and M. Darrol Bryant (New York: The Rose of Sharon, Inc., 1982), 197-215.

This problem is sharpened by the critical Roweian thesis that “the overall conclusion...is that God cannot enjoy much in the way of libertarian freedom with respect to creation.”⁷

PRESENT STATUS OF THE PROBLEM

How have philosophers of religion who are sympathetic to perfect being theism responded to Rowe’s dilemma? *First*, some have argued that the dilemma is founded upon a false dichotomy, and thus call into question the truth of premise (1). Perhaps instead there were worlds *tied for the best* or even worlds which were *incomparable* for God to create.⁸ Either way God’s freedom is sustained since perfect goodness does not require the creation of one world (e.g., a world tied for the best) over a contrary world. A *second* and more popular response to Rowe’s dilemma has been to argue that God can indeed be perfectly good even if there was an infinite hierarchy of better worlds for God to create.

The basic thrust from this response is to argue that God can be perfectly good even if it is possible for someone or something to create a better world within the hierarchy of good worlds, thus arguing against premise (3).⁹ Again, God’s libertarian freedom to choose otherwise is sustained since he was just as equally free to create one world from the hierarchy as he was free to create another world from the hierarchy. It is important to highlight that the shared fundamental motivation between both the first and second response to Rowe’s dilemma is to

⁷ William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?*, 7.

⁸ For discussion, see Thomas Senor, “Defending Divine Freedom,” in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 168-195; see also Klaas J. Kray, “Incommensurability, Incomparability, and God’s Choice of a World,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 69 (2011): 91-102; and Myron A. Penner, “Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Rational World-Choice,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 75 (2014): 13-25.

⁹ See, for example, Thomas V. Morris, “Perfection and Creation,” in *Reasoned Faith*, 234-247; William Hasker, *Providence, Evil and the Openness of God: Routledge Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2004), 166-186; William Hasker, “Can God Be Free: Rowe’s Dilemma for Theology,” *Religious Studies* 41, (2005): 453-462; and William Hasker, *The Triumph of God Over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 74-100.

preserve the “alternative possibilities condition” with respect to God’s freedom, a view in this dissertation which I will call, *Divine Libertarianism* (DL).¹⁰

A markedly different outlook, however, has recently explored the resources of *compatibilist* accounts of free will, such that freedom is compatible with necessity, as a way of countering Rowe’s charge that it is not possible to reconcile God’s essential perfect goodness with any significant degree of divine freedom. Here, we have a denial of premise (2). Edward Wierenga, for instance, has asserted that God is free with respect to creating the best possible world even when “a logically sufficient condition obtains for his performing that action.”¹¹ Wierenga maintains that such a condition does not call into question God’s freedom since the sufficient condition derives from God’s own nature.¹² Katherin Rogers has also recently drawn upon the resources of compatibilism (though she does not explicitly state it as such) while primarily interacting with the metaphysics of Saint Anselm. Rogers suggests that while God is indeed free, “[i]t is impossible that the God of traditional, classical theism could sin, or even do less than the best.”¹³ Further, in his most recent work, Thomas Talbott has formulated a model of divine freedom in which God’s freedom is consistent with the claim that “it is... a necessary truth that he [i.e., God] always chooses whichever course of action he knows to be the best.”¹⁴

It is important to highlight at this point that the common thread which runs through these three thinkers is that the pervasive alternative possibilities condition (i.e., DL) is not a necessary condition for God’s freedom. Therefore, God’s freedom is indeed compatible with performing the best token act necessarily, where performing the best token act is typically expressed in

¹⁰ Another possible response to Rowe’s argument which is motivated to sustain DL could be to call into question one of the assumptions within the discussion, namely, God’s *essential* perfect goodness. Perhaps instead it is best to understand God’s perfect goodness as *contingent* rather than essential. For this line of argumentation, see R. Zachary Manis, “Could God Do Something Evil? A Molinist Solution to the Problem of Divine Freedom,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 28 (2011): 209-223; and Bruce Reichenbach, “God and Good Revisited: A Case for Contingency,” *Philosophia Christi*, 16 (2014): 319-338.

¹¹ Edward Wierenga, “The Freedom of God,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 19 (2002): 426.

¹² See Edward Wierenga, “The Freedom of God,” 434.

¹³ See Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 185.

¹⁴ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 26 (2009): 380.

Leibnizian fashion as the token act of instantiating “the best possible world.”¹⁵ However, that God performs the best token act necessarily is not a problem for Wierenga, Rogers, or Talbott since the necessity in question finds its origination and ultimate *source* within God himself. In other words, there is something about God’s perfect nature (typically though not exclusively essential moral perfection) which precludes him from refraining to perform the best token act. The “sourcehood condition,” then, is sufficient in order for God to be free. So, while there is something about God’s perfection which precludes him from being able to act otherwise, he nevertheless exercises his divine excellence without any external coercion. For this reason I will call this view of God’s freedom, *Divine Source Compatibilism* (DSC): God’s freedom is compatible with him performing some token act (e.g., creating or creating this particular world) necessarily provided the necessity in question is sourced within God alone.

PROPOSED METHOD OF STUDY

Although Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott are convinced that their outlook does not contradict the major constituents of perfect being theism (e.g., omnipotence, omniscience, and perfect goodness), much of their work has been committed to answering the freedom objection, that is, whether or not God is free provided he performs some act necessarily. To this date, however, no one has produced an extended articulation and defense of DSC. Therefore, in this dissertation I seek to develop and evaluate the recent movement in favor of DSC and explore whether or not such a model of divine freedom can be defended against charges typically leveled against it. I hope to offer a philosophically rigorous and informed investigation of how DSC is consistent with a strong understanding of perfect being theism. While Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott do not label it as such, the scope of this dissertation project is limited to the DSC model that is currently being proposed by them.

Accordingly, I will first describe and define more exactly what it is that is under review. I will discuss the major factors that serve to motivate DSC as well as outline what I take to be its primary features. I shall then proceed to look closely at what may seem to be the main problem areas for DSC. First, I shall investigate claims that it fails to accord with the affirmations of the

¹⁵ See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology*, in *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*, trans. by Daniel Garber and Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

Christian tradition with respect to God's freedom.¹⁶ Second, I consider the charge that DSC inevitably reduces God to being dependent on creation to be who he is, thus calling into question divine aseity. Third, I then turn my attention to the possibility that the DSC somehow jeopardizes divine thankworthiness. Fourth, I consider how DSC might bear upon the metaphysical outlook of a certain variation of traditional theism which I call *Theistic Compatibilism*. Finally, I conclude that, given certain reasonable metaphysical commitments, DSC need not fall prey to the charges that are typically leveled against it.

OUTLINE OF DISSERTATION

Chapter One: Introduction

The introduction consists of an overview of the project, an explanation of the methodology, and statement of the thesis. Here I delineate the parameters of the study, I explain the rationale for the project and I argue that it is possible to have a version of DSC which is coherent and does not succumb to the charges typically leveled against it.

Chapter Two: Divine Source Compatibilism

In Chapter 2 I will outline the major tenets of DSC. Here I shall discuss the issues under consideration and the major factors which serve to motivate Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott to endorse DSC. I will seek to lay out the historical, theological, and metaphysical commitments with which they work.

Chapter Three: Divine Source Compatibilism and the Christian Tradition

In this chapter I will begin to take a close look at what might be the most obvious problem for DSC, namely, the charge that it seriously deviates from the affirmations of the Christian tradition concerning God's freedom. Here I argue that DSC is consistent with the

¹⁶ A caveat: Despite the great diversity among the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, perfect being theism is in broad agreement in understanding God to be, *inter alia*, omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. However, my own interest and training is primarily within the Christian tradition. Because of this, many of my references are mainly to the work of Christian thinkers, whether that be historical or contemporary. Nevertheless, I think that some of the conclusions reached here can be of significant use for perfect being theists of other persuasions, since, as I have suggested, Christian theism and perfect being theism generally agree on many of the divine attributes. Hereafter, I will simply refer to perfect being theism in general, instead of traditional Christian theism, unless the additional distinction is required for clarification.

Christian tradition. If this is so, then the more popular view of God's freedom, namely, DL, is not necessarily the traditional view of God's freedom. The argument is founded upon (1) establishing a set of conditions for what constitutes a view of God's freedom as "traditional," and (2) demonstrating that DSC is consistent with each member of the set of conditions.

Chapter Four: Divine Source Compatibilism and Divine Aseity

In chapter 4 I take a step forward by investigating whether or not DSC somehow violates a fundamental attribute theists typically call divine aseity. As we will see, a number of philosophical theologians have recently asserted what I will call proposition (A): Necessarily, if God creates from an internal necessity, then God cannot have aseity (i.e., be from himself). In this chapter, however, I develop an argument for the consistency of divine aseity and the idea that God creates from an internal necessity (which is part and parcel of DSC), thus claiming that proposition (A) is false. An exploration into the Judeo-Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* will expedite the argument. This doctrine will provide sufficient grounds for thinking that God has aseity. I then argue that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is consistent with the idea that God creates from an internal necessity.

Chapter Five: Divine Source Compatibilism and Divine Thankworthiness

In this chapter, I take a careful look at what might be the stiffest challenge for DSC, namely, the charge that DSC cannot account for divine thankworthiness. It is typical within the circles of the philosophy of religion to think that if the alternative possibilities condition is denied (as DSC holds), then some agent, like God, cannot be worthy of thanks for performing some token act necessarily, such as creating the best possible world. Taking this objection to DSC into account, I argue for the conjunction of DSC and divine thankworthiness. The argument is founded upon what I will call the "gracious-though-necessary" condition (i.e., God's token act to do that which is best is gracious even though it is necessary) and thankworthy-if-gracious condition (i.e., God's gracious token act is sufficient for thankworthiness to God).

Chapter Six: Divine Source Compatibilism and Theistic Compatibilism

The fundamental aim in this chapter is to consider whether the Theistic Compatibilist's typical understanding of explanation concerning why an agent chose, say, X over not X or X

over Y is consistent with the affirmation that God is libertarianly free, particularly with his freedom to create or not to create. I will first define the terms which are essential to the conversation, namely, divine freedom, contingency, and Theistic Compatibilism. Then, after highlighting the general structure of my objection, I will consider how some contemporary Theistic Compatibilists typically account for an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice. After arguing that this account fails to be in harmony with DL, I will consider various responses open to Theistic Compatibilists concerning this objection. I will close with discussion of a possible way for Theistic Compatibilists to avoid this objection.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

In the conclusion I will first take note of some areas related to DSC that still await further investigation. However, I will focus on one such area, namely, the idea of what has been called “modal collapse,” which basically asks the following question: In what meaningful sense can one talk about *possibility* if God performs that token act which is best necessarily? In other words, given DSC, it would seem that everything in the actual world is necessary--every state of affairs (or proposition) could not possibly be different from the way it is. The result, then, is that every true state of affairs (or proposition) would collapse into being necessarily true. I will offer some brief suggestions as to how this discussion might proceed assuming the truth of DSC.

In this dissertation I articulate and defend a DSC outlook of divine freedom against its contemporary critics. More specifically, I propose to argue that DSC does not seriously deviate from the claims of the Christian tradition with respect to God’s freedom, and I further argue that DSC is consistent with divine aseity and divine thankworthiness, along with a certain variation of theism, namely, Theistic Compatibilism.

CHAPTER TWO: DIVINE SOURCE COMPATIBILISM

In this second chapter, which will primarily be descriptive, I seek to accomplish several goals. First, I shall review in detail some of the recent work by Edward Wierenga, Katherin Rogers, and Thomas Talbott in order to offer a summary statement of the model of divine source compatibilism that is under review. After outlining this model of divine freedom, I shall then focus on what I take to be the major motivating factors for Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott. Following this exercise, I then point out some of the theological and metaphysical assumptions and commitments which they affirm and from which they work as these are important to their overall project.

DIVINE SOURCE COMPATIBILISM: AN INTRODUCTION

Over the past couple of decades, Edward Wierenga, Katherin Rogers, and Thomas Talbott have explicated a Divine Source Compatibilism (DSC) account of divine freedom where freedom is compatible with God performing the best token act necessarily. In this section I will offer an overview of their work by tracing its development.

Edward Wierenga

Edward Wierenga begins his 2002 essay “The Freedom of God” by first sketching the contours of what amounts to classical theism.¹⁷ Here he declares that classical theism understands God as “essentially omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good.”¹⁸ From this it is not only clear that Wierenga is committed to these divine attributes of classical theism but also to the idea that these divine attributes are *essential* to a perfect God. That is, God could not exist and be God without them. The problem which arises for divine freedom, then, is simply that on classical theism God is not only omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good but is *essentially* so. Therefore, Wierenga focuses his attention on the coherence of divine freedom in light of God as essentially omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good. Wierenga believes that a compatibilist

¹⁷ Edward Wierenga, “The Freedom of God,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 19 (2002): 425-436.

¹⁸ Edward Wierenga, “The Freedom of God,” 425.

model of God's freedom is able to offer a coherent account, and sets himself the task of showing just how compatibilism might help perfect being theism avoid the charge that God is not free provided his essential perfect goodness.

While drawing out the problem of divine freedom, Wierenga considers a "circumstance" for God to be in; and while in such a circumstance it would seem to follow from classical theism that "whenever God is in circumstance *C* in which a certain action *A* is the best action, he would know that *A* is the best action, he would want to do *A*, and he would be able to do *A*."¹⁹ More formally, Wierenga puts it this way:

- (1) In *C*, *A* is the best action for God to do.
- (2) In *C* God knows that *A* is the best action, wants to do *A*, and is able to do *A*.

Moreover,

- (3) If in *C* God knows that *A* is the best action, wants to do *A*, and is able to do *A*, then God does *A* in *C*.²⁰

Wierenga thinks (3) to be a necessary truth and rhetorically asks how God could possibly fail to do what he knew to be best, wanted to do what is best, and was able to do what is best.

Consequently, such a circumstance for God to be in, where there is a best action to perform, provides a "logically sufficient condition" for why God performs one action as opposed to a contrary action, and thus results in an action which is necessary.²¹

In light of a logically sufficient condition obtaining for God's action, Wierenga then considers a potential problem which he thinks may still loom for divine freedom. He poses the potential problem as follows:

If God is ever in such circumstances, it would seem that he is unable in those circumstances to refrain from performing the action in question. He could not refrain from performing the action in those circumstances, since it is impossible that he be in those circumstances and not perform it.²²

¹⁹ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 425.

²⁰ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 425, 426.

²¹ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 426.

²² Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 426.

Therefore, given this circumstance for God to be in, it is *not the case* for it to be logically and causally compatible for God to either perform or not perform the action in question. That is, because God is in a circumstance, where there is a best action, which engenders a logically sufficient condition, the choice to perform token action *A* is necessary.

Is there a problem here for classical theism with respect to divine freedom? Wierenga does not think so, but before building his own case regarding this alleged problem he is exercised *against* two other possibilities which try to preserve divine freedom. The first possibility is to suggest that even when God is in such a circumstance where there is a best action, God need not choose what is best. The second possibility basically suggests that God is in such circumstances where there is no unique best choice for God to choose from. To be clear, the motivation on both of these accounts on the part of those who propound them is to preserve the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom, that is, to preserve Divine Libertarianism (DL).

According to the first view, it is claimed that God can still remain perfectly good and perform an action which is inferior to the best action. Such a view would deny the inference from (1), (i.e., In *C*, *A* is the best action for God to do) to (2) (i.e., In *C* God knows that *A* is the best action, want to do *A*, and is able to do *A*). In denying this inference, such a view would uphold God's perfect goodness while claiming that God might *not want* to perform the best action. Therefore, God could fail to perform that which is best (simply because he did not want to, provided he had a reason not to, though not the best reason) and still be perfectly good.

Wierenga indexes this view, where God need not perform the best even if there is a best, under the famous work of Robert Adams.²³ Adams considers *and rejects* two possible reasons for why it might be wrong for God to fail to perform that which is best. The first reason is because such a failing would "wrong someone (violate someone's rights), or be less kind to someone than a perfectly good moral agent must be."²⁴ His response to this first possibility is to suggest there is a substantive difference between *actual* beings and *merely possible* beings since

²³ Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," *Philosophical Review*, 81 (1972): 317-332.

²⁴ Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 318.

the former have actual rights and obligations.²⁵ God does no harm nor violates anyone's rights who are merely possible rather than actual people. Therefore, if God does no harm nor violates anyone's rights who are merely possible rather than actual, then this is good reason to think God would not wrong someone, that is, wrong those in the best possible world if he did not choose to create them. Instead, Adams lists three characteristics of a world which God could create:

- (i) None of the individual creatures in it would exist in the best of all possible worlds.
- (ii) None of the creatures in it has a life which is so miserable on the whole that it would be better for that creature if it had never existed.
- (iii) Every individual creature in the world is at least as happy on the whole as it would have been in any other possible world in which it could have existed.²⁶

Adams goes on to claim that if God creates a world with these three characteristics, then God does not harm or violate any of the creatures in it simply because "none of them would have benefitted by his [i.e., God] creating any other world instead."²⁷

Adams' second reason for why it might be wrong for God to fail to perform that which is best is because failing to do so would "manifest a defect of character."²⁸ In response to this Adams appeals to the idea of *divine grace*, where grace is understood as "a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved."²⁹ Divine grace apparently allows Adams to claim that a God who is gracious when creating "might well choose to create and love less excellent creatures than he could have chosen."³⁰ In other words, he suggests the virtue of grace as a good reason to think that God would *not want* to choose the best. Therefore, the very

²⁵ See Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 319.

²⁶ Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 320.

²⁷ Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 320.

²⁸ Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 318.

²⁹ Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 324.

³⁰ Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 324.

notion of grace, according to Adams, provides good reason to preserve the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom.

Despite the plausibility of such an Adams-like view, Wierenga thinks there is a major problem here. The overarching problem, according to Wierenga, is that Adams's two reasons for why God might not want to perform that which is best are *insufficiently complete*. That is, Adams does not establish that a perfectly good God might not want to perform what is best since what Adams has asserted would still be perfectly consistent with God performing that which best necessarily. Wierenga's objection is as follows:

Now if this [i.e., God loving less excellent creatures than he could have chosen] is merely to identify *some* virtue God has that is compatible with doing less than his best, it would not *establish* that doing so is compatible with his moral goodness, for he might have *other virtues* not thus compatible. And it is not surprising that some virtues would be compatible with doing less than one's best. Adams in fact identifies as virtues being noble, being high-minded, and being free from envy, all of which would seem to be compatible with doing less than what was best. So either Adams' defense is incomplete or else God's exercise of grace plays some positive role or makes some contribution to the value of his action (or to a world he actualizes) which enables it to provide a moral justification of God's doing less than his best.³¹

However, according to Wierenga, it is not the case that Adams's appeal to grace plays some positive role or makes some positive contribution to the value of God's action. For as Adams himself says:

This is not to suggest that grace in creation consists in a preference for imperfection as such. God could have chosen to create the best of all possible creatures, *and still have been gracious in choosing them*. God's graciousness in creation does not imply that the creatures he has chosen to create must be less excellent than the best possible. It implies, rather, that even if they are the best possible creatures, that is not the ground for his choosing them.³²

So, what Wierenga is pressing Adams with at this point is the fact that if God can still be gracious while creating the best possible world along with being gracious in worlds which are inferior to the best possible world, then it is difficult to understand how God's graciousness can

³¹ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 428 (emphases original).

³² Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 324 (emphasis added).

make more of a difference in the value of one world as opposed to the value of another world. Or similarly, with respect to explanation, it would be difficult to understand how grace provides a sufficient explanation for why one action was made over another action since God would be gracious in whatever world he decides to choose, supposing that God cannot create a bad world. To reiterate, then, Wierenga argues that Adams's attempt to demonstrate that God might not want to perform that which is best is insufficiently complete.

What about the second view which tries to preserve the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom? Can God's libertarian freedom be preserved in such circumstances where there is no unique best action for God to perform? On this account of divine freedom, Wierenga considers the views of both Richard Swinburne³³ and Thomas Flint.³⁴ Swinburne and Flint identify two possible ways of preserving the alternative possibilities condition, where there are either a number of actions tied for the best or there is an infinite number of actions such that there is no best choice. Since both Swinburne and Flint are basically the same in their analysis, I will reflect on Swinburne's account.

According to Swinburne, "A perfectly free agent will always do any action that he believes to be the best action available to him."³⁵ Here Swinburne, *contra* Adams, seems to endorse the inference from (1) (i.e., In *C*, *A* is the best action for God to do) to (2) (i.e., In *C* God knows that *A* is the best action, want to do *A*, and is able to do *A*). However, Swinburne further states, "If he [i.e., God] believes that there are a number of equally good incompatible actions open to him, all better than any other incompatible actions that he could do, he will do one of the former."³⁶ Therefore, if there is a number of actions tied for the best, in which God can perform one of them, then this situation preserves the alternative possibilities condition (i.e., DL), at least with respect to creating a particular world.

³³ See Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and *The Existence of God*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³⁴ See Thomas Flint, "The Problem of Divine Freedom," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 20 (1983): 255-264.

³⁵ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 104.

³⁶ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 104.

Swinburne further suggests the possibility that there is an infinite number of good actions for God to perform from such that there is no best action. He introduces this possibility as follows:

But when the agent has before him an infinite number of possible actions, of each of which he believes that it is less good than another, but he believes that there is no best or equal best, his perfect freedom does not entail which of these he will do. However, it may be that he believes that the incompatible actions in this infinite series fall into two kinds, such that it is better that he do any action of some one kind (at least beyond some minimum level of goodness) even though there is no best action of that kind than that he do any action at all of any incompatible kind. In that case I suggest that he will do some action of that best kind beyond the minimum level, for he has more reason for doing such an action than for doing any action of any kind incompatible therewith.³⁷

What is important to highlight from Swinburne's account is the fact that in both cases God's nature provides limitations on God's freedom. Regarding the model where actions are tied for the best, seemingly God is limited to choose from the set of those worlds tied for the best, and thus cannot libertarianly perform other good actions that are of less value. With respect to the model of an infinite number of good actions, God's nature also provides limitations on God's freedom since it is better to perform from the infinite set rather than do nothing at all. However, the particular action *within the set* of equally best actions, and the particular action *within the set* of an infinite number of good choices can be, so it seems, libertarianly performed.

Although Wierenga thinks that each of these variations of the view where there is no one unique best possible act for God to perform from is problematic, he nevertheless does not say too much about them. However, this is not to take away from the substantive claims he makes. Wierenga basically thinks that both of these outlooks which Swinburne offers reduce to affirming God's (libertarian) freedom in a trivial manner, where God is free only when to be free is utterly insignificant. Furthermore, such insignificant freedom results in God's freedom as acting randomly and arbitrarily. Thus, Wierenga says:

But it is time to return to the question of whether this proposal [where there is no one unique best action] is an adequate defense of God's freedom. I think that it is not, for it amounts to saying that God is free only *when it does not matter what he does*. In any situation in which there is a best action open to

³⁷ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 104, 105.

God, Swinburne and Flint agree that his nature compels him to do it. They only find room for God's freedom in circumstances in which any choice he makes is on par with any other, where he might as well choose blindly or randomly, and that is not a significant amount of freedom.³⁸

So, to summarize Wierenga at this point, he holds that the two possible ways in which DL can be preserved inevitably runs into trouble. For the view which claims that God need not perform the best, even if there is best, is insufficiently complete with respect to the value of a world and with respect to explaining why one action was performed over a contrary choice, while the view where there is no unique best action reduces God's freedom to insignificant freedom such that God's actions are random and arbitrary. Therefore, according to Wierenga, both these accounts of God's freedom are metaphysically thin and do not provide us with a robust notion of divine freedom.

In spite of these objections, however, Wierenga does not think that God's freedom is undermined. That is, one is not forced into holding that God's actions are random and arbitrary. Recall the divine circumstance Wierenga highlights which gives rise to the potential problem for divine freedom with respect to classical theism:

- (1) In *C*, *A* is the best action for God to do.
- (2) In *C* God knows that *A* is the best action, wants to do *A*, and is able to do *A*.

Moreover,

- (3) If in *C* God knows that *A* is the best action, wants to do *A*, and is able to do *A*, then God does *A* in *C*.³⁹

Here, according to Wierenga, the potential problem is just that: potential and not actual. For he thinks that one should "look more closely at the assumption that if a necessary condition for God's performing an action obtains [i.e., (2)], then he does not perform that action freely."⁴⁰ In other words, it is certainly *possible* that a necessary condition for God's performing an action obtains and he performs that action freely. He further elaborates:

³⁸ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 432, 433 (emphasis original).

³⁹ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 425, 426.

⁴⁰ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 433.

No doubt...an agent is free with respect to performing an action only if there are no antecedent causally sufficient conditions for the agent's performing the action. But why should we...extend this to antecedent *logically* sufficient conditions? After all, at least some libertarians are prepared to countenance the *prior truth* that an agent will (freely) perform an action, despite its being a logically sufficient condition of the agent's performing the action.⁴¹

Wierenga concludes by asking,

So why should we think that the truth of (2) In *C* God knows that *A* is the best action, wants to do *A*, and is able to do *A* is incompatible with God's doing *A* freely in *C*?⁴²

In answering, Wierenga draws upon the resources of compatibilist accounts of free will as "instructive" to the problem and therefore sees "no reason not to say...that God is free, even when he [necessarily] does what is best."⁴³ He understands compatibilism as the thesis that "an action can be free even though antecedent causal conditions for its performance exist."⁴⁴ He thinks, however, "that not just any antecedent causal conditions are so compatible" since they need to be "the right ones, arising in the right manner."⁴⁵ Just what are these antecedent causal conditions and how do they arise in the right manner? Concerning the former, Wierenga thinks that an agent's *desires* and *beliefs* are often taken to be the right antecedent causal conditions, where these desires and beliefs are internal to the agent; with respect to the latter, these desires and beliefs arise in the appropriate manner such that there is no external coercion or manipulation involved. That is, "the right manner is the customary way in which people come to have beliefs and desires, not through drugs or hypnosis or nefarious neurosurgeons manipulating their brains."⁴⁶ Accordingly, an action caused by an agent's desires and/or beliefs arising in such

⁴¹ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 433 (emphases original).

⁴² Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 433.

⁴³ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 434.

⁴⁴ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 434.

⁴⁵ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 434.

⁴⁶ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 434.

a way where there is no external coercion is nevertheless free since the primary emphasis is on the desires and beliefs which are the agent's own, that is, they are *internal* to the agent.

At this point Wierenga recognizes a frequent objection made against compatibilism which purports to show that if determinism is true, then an agent's desires and beliefs have antecedent causes and thus are not really internal to the agent at all. In other words, desires and beliefs typically arise from sources which are *external* to the agent, even cases where the external sources existed long before the agent did.⁴⁷ He responds by simply stating "that this doesn't hold in God's case."⁴⁸ The major reason why such an objection does not apply to God is because the causal conditions implied within the objection are not internal to the agent but rather external to the agent. Consequently, one is not necessarily committed to a type of compatibilism with respect to human freedom.⁴⁹

So, after applying the resources of compatibilism to the issue of God's freedom, Wierenga concludes succinctly by saying:

Even if in some circumstances *C* God's knowing that *A* is the best action, his wanting to do *A*, and his being able to do *A* is a logically sufficient condition of his doing *A* in *C*, it is nevertheless in virtue of *his own nature* that he knows that *A* is the best action, wants to do *A*, and is able to do *A*. There is no long chain stretching back to things separate from him that give him this constellation of knowledge, desire, and ability; it is due to his *own* knowledge and power and goodness. I see no reason not to say, accordingly, that God is free, even when he does what is best.⁵⁰

In summary of Wierenga, he claims that models of divine freedom which try to sustain the alternative possibilities condition either cannot give a sufficient explanation for why one action was performed over a contrary action, or such models give rise to insignificant and trivial accounts of God's freedom, where God's actions are arbitrary and random. Wierenga offers

⁴⁷ This is not to say, however, that Wierenga is committed to compatibilism with respect to human freedom.

⁴⁸ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 434.

⁴⁹ Issues with respect to the relationship between divine freedom and human freedom will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

⁵⁰ Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 434 (emphasis original).

instead a model of divine freedom where God's freedom is compatible with God performing that which is best necessarily, and such a model is sufficient in order for God to be free since the necessity finds its origin and ultimate *source* within the divine nature alone.

Katherin Rogers

In her book *Anselm on Freedom*, Katherin Rogers explains and defends a view of divine freedom which she takes to be consistent with the claims of Saint Anselm.⁵¹ Further, since Anselm is typically committed to the theological framework of Saint Augustine, we might say that Rogers is articulating, by way of implication, an outlook of God's freedom that is consistent also with Augustine. Thus she declares that, "Anselm follows Augustine's Neoplatonic line that God, being the best, does the best"⁵² and because of this "it is not surprising that, while he [Augustine] insists that God's actions are done freely, he [Augustine] never suggests that God debates between alternatives."⁵³ To think that God debates between alternatives is, according to Rogers, "a mistake born of overly anthropomorphizing God."⁵⁴ Claiming to follow the outlook of both Augustine and Anselm, she further asserts "it is impossible that the God of traditional, classical theism could sin, or even do less than the best."⁵⁵ Accordingly, a feature of classical theism, at least the classical theism of Augustine and Anselm, is the claim that God performs that which is best necessarily.

These claims made by Rogers are somewhat of a preamble to the substantive arguments made within her essay. Her essay primarily consists of arguing for three propositions. First, she argues for why it is the case that God must perform that which is best, while further demonstrating how this claim can be reconciled with the proposition that God is free. Second, she argues that God creates the best actualizable world, where our world is the only world God

⁵¹ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁵² Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 185.

⁵³ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 185.

⁵⁴ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 185.

⁵⁵ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 185.

could choose to create. And finally, Rogers argues that our world could indeed be the best world. Let us turn to see how Rogers argues for each one of these propositions.

Rogers first declares, in following Anselm, that “the meaning of freedom should be derived from its purpose, which is to hold fast to justice.”⁵⁶ Because of this teleological aspect of freedom she is content to follow Anselm’s definition of free will where free will is “the power for keeping rightness of will for the sake of that rightness itself.”⁵⁷ A non-free choice, on the other hand, “is one which is necessitated in the sense of compelled, where ‘compulsion’ includes causal necessitation by the agent’s motives and desires which have their source outside of himself.”⁵⁸ So, Rogers concludes that “the keeping of rightness to be within the power of an agent...it must be an act which *originates within the agent himself*.”⁵⁹ It is evident that such statements made by Rogers begin to highlight the “sourcehood condition” of DSC.

She goes on to argue that because of these characteristics of freedom, open options are simply irrelevant to God—God does not have or need open options in order to be free. To support the thesis that open options are not required in order for God to be free, Rogers examines what Anselm says in his *Cur deus homo*. According to Rogers, “Anselm sets himself the task...of proving, ‘by necessary reasons’ and setting aside what we have learned through Scripture, that God ‘had to’ become incarnate and die to save man from his sins.”⁶⁰ In other words, it was necessary that humanity be redeemed by the sacrificial death of the incarnate Christ. However, what exactly is it that necessitates the act of the incarnation? The following is a significant passage from Rogers:

It [i.e., the incarnation] is most appropriate because it ‘could not be done in any other way.’ In setting out his [i.e., Anselm’s] method he explains that he intends to weigh his arguments thus: ‘Just as for God impossibility

⁵⁶ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 188.

⁵⁷ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 188.

⁵⁸ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 188.

⁵⁹ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 188 (emphasis added).

⁶⁰ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 189.

(*impossibilitas*) follows upon [the ascription of] the smallest inappropriateness (*inconveniens*), in the same way the smallest reason entails necessity (*comitatur necessitas*), unless it is outweighed by a greater.’ And so in the very statement of the problem and the method to be used to solve it Anselm embraces the view that God simply ‘must’ do the best, and even allows the use of the term ‘necessity’ to apply to God’s actions.⁶¹

According to Rogers, then, that humanity be redeemed by the sacrificial death of the incarnate Christ was necessary because it was the best thing for God to do. Performing that which is best provides a reason and that very reason (though it may be the smallest reason) entails the necessity of the action. Further, it is not the case that the reason is outweighed by a greater reason since there could not be a greater reason than that which is the best. So, from this reasoning, Rogers concludes that God must do the best and this precludes the alternative possibilities condition of libertarianism, that is, God need not have open options in order to free.

Such necessity and the denial of open options, however, is not a problem for Anselm and Rogers since “the necessity in question with divine action is not any compulsion or prohibition.”⁶² Anselm and Rogers, in other words, are perfectly content to apply necessity to God’s actions since the necessity finds its *source* within God’s nature alone. Rogers again states, “The necessity which interferes with freedom is a necessity of which the origin is ultimately something outside the agent, and thus whatever qualified necessity can be properly attributed to God is not the sort that could infringe upon divine freedom.”⁶³ Furthermore, if God performs that which is best necessarily, then God is still free since the necessity finds its source within the divine nature alone. So, to reiterate, open options are simply not required for God to be free.

Rogers then moves to argue for the second proposition, namely, God creates the best actualizable world, where our world is the only world God could create. In developing her argument for this proposition she considers a possible objection, namely, that there is insufficient evidence in *Cur deus homo* to establish the fact that God does not choose between open options

⁶¹ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 189. The quotation from Anselm is taken from *Cur deus homo* 1. 10, S.II p. 67, ll. 4-6.

⁶² Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 190.

⁶³ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 190.

in other contexts, contexts like creating at all, and creating this particular world.⁶⁴ Her primary concern in answering this possible objection is to draw from what Anselm has to say in his *Monologion* with respect to God's relation to creation.

In Chapters 33 and 34 of *Monologion*, Anselm is preoccupied with answering the question of whether or not God speaks forth the Word (i.e., the second person of the Trinity) and the created order with one and the same act. (Undoubtedly, the phrase "one and the same act" gives rise to the doctrine of divine simplicity.) Anselm answers this question in the affirmative by simply concluding, "Therefore, he utters both himself and whatever he made by one and the same Word."⁶⁵ Here is Rogers's commentary on the above quotation from Anselm:

Of course God does not choose among competing options to speak or not to speak the Word which is the Second Person of the Trinity. If it is by the same act of 'speaking' that the Word is begotten and creation is made, then, since God does not have the option not to speak the Word (or to speak some different Word), the plausible conclusion is that in Anselm's view, the creation of our world is 'necessary' in the sense that it is the inevitable result of God's perfect goodness.⁶⁶

She concludes from this that what Anselm says here in *Monologion* "might not be conclusive,"⁶⁷ but because Anselm's metaphysics of freedom "simply does not find open options to be valuable for God, *the interpretation which sees creation as 'necessary' seems correct.*"⁶⁸ Therefore, these texts in *Monologion*, according to Rogers, "seem to entail that God could not have failed to create the actual world,"⁶⁹ and thus the denial of open options is to be applied to all of God's actions.

⁶⁴ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 192-200.

⁶⁵ Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion*, Chapter 33, in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 44.

⁶⁶ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 194.

⁶⁷ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 194.

⁶⁸ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 194 (emphasis added).

⁶⁹ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 193.

In addition to what Anselm says in *Monologion*, Rogers also points to where Anselm “does at one point seem to say that ours is in some sense ‘perfect’ or at least ultimately perfectible world.”⁷⁰ The reason for thinking our created world is a perfect world is because there is a perfect number of individuals in it who will experience the *visio beatifica* (i.e., the beatific vision). While commenting on what Anselm says in *Cur dues homo* 1.16, Rogers states the following:

[H]e [i.e., Anselm] notes that God sees that there is a ‘perfect number’ of rational beings who should enjoy everlasting beatitude, such that God ‘must’ see to it that that number is fulfilled. Further, ‘...if the perfection of the world of creatures is to be understood to be not so much in the number of individuals as in the number of natures, then it is necessary that human nature was made either to complete that perfection or else to exceed it, which we dare not say of the nature of the smallest worm’.⁷¹

What this implies, according to Rogers, is that a sort of perfection is possible with respect to the actual world and that our world is perfect in that it alone consists of having the perfect number of created rational beings. She admits that these affirmations of Anselm are “consistent with interpreting Anselm as saying that God ‘must’ order things properly in our world, but that He might have made other worlds or no world at all.”⁷² However, in response to this interpretation, Rogers declares “Anselm does not suggest that the perfection in question is relative to our particular world, as opposed to the other possible worlds, but speaks rather of ‘the world of creatures’.”⁷³

Rogers concludes, then, given what Anselm says in *Monologion*—where speaking forth the second person of the trinity and creation in one and the same act implies creation as necessary—and what Anselm says with respect to our world consisting of a perfect number of rational beings, we thus have good reason to think that the denial of open options is to be applied to *all* of God’s actions, not merely to actions which are subject to a specific world. As she states,

⁷⁰ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 194.

⁷¹ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 194.

⁷² Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 194.

⁷³ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 194 (emphasis added).

“we have good reason to take it that Anselm’s point in *Cur deus homo* that God’s freedom does not require choosing between open options is intended to apply to any divine act, not just actions relative to a given world.”⁷⁴ Consequently, Rogers concludes that “divine freedom is entirely consistent with God doing the best as an inevitability of His nature.”⁷⁵

At this point, however, Rogers makes a significant distinction between “the best possible world *simpliciter*” and “the best *actualizable* world.”⁷⁶ On the one hand, the best possible world *simpliciter* is to be understood as the best possible of *all* worlds without qualification. On the other hand, the best actualizable world is to be understood as the best possible world God creates but with a small qualification. The qualification is that because of human libertarian freedom, the states of affairs which constitute the world are, in a robust sense, up to humans. If humans have libertarian freedom, in other words, then humans can add to or subtract from the value of the (best) world which God initially creates, supposing that what God creates is the best he can create. As Rogers says:

Is ours, then, ‘the best of all possible worlds’? Anselm does not explicitly address the question, but I take it he would likely respond, ‘Not exactly’. If created agents have libertarian freedom, then the state of the world is partially up to us. Clearly we do not always do the best. We sin. And in Anselm’s world sin really ought not to happen. God can bring about the best results consistent with our [libertarian] choices, but it is not clear that in Anselm’s view this entails the best possible world *simpliciter*. Thus it is probably better to say that God brings about the best ‘actualizable’ world, that is, the best world He can, taking into account created choices.⁷⁷

So, to reiterate, Rogers claims it is best to think of God creating the best *actualizable* world necessarily (because of human libertarian freedom) but not the best possible world *simpliciter*. Nevertheless, whether or not this distinction is endorsed, the point remains the same: God performs that which is best (e.g., creating) as an inevitable consequence of his perfect goodness.

⁷⁴ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 195.

⁷⁵ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 195.

⁷⁶ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 195 (emphasis added on “actualizable”).

⁷⁷ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 195.

Rogers at this point considers a different model of God's freedom, a model where the alternative possibilities condition is a necessary condition in order for God to be free, that is, DL. Here she looks to Thomas Aquinas as a representative of someone who holds to the view that God could choose between genuine open options, where these possible options are allegedly consistent with God's nature. She asserts, according to Aquinas, "God's freedom demands open options, while created freedom does not" and thus "Aquinas's position can plausibly be interpreted as, in some sense, the reverse of Anselm's."⁷⁸ So, according to Rogers, we might say that Aquinas holds to divine libertarian freedom and human compatibilist freedom, while Anselm holds to divine compatibilist freedom and human libertarian freedom.

The major reason why Rogers (amongst other commentators) thinks Aquinas holds to divine libertarian freedom is because Aquinas casts doubt on the idea that there is a best possible action for God to perform. Although Aquinas does not explicitly deny or even speak of a best possible action, he does speak (as we have already seen from Rowe and Swinburne) of an *infinite number of ways* in which creation can participate in God's perfection. Therefore, since there is an infinite number of ways for creation to participate in God's perfection, this rules out any possibility of a best possible action or world for God to perform or create. So, Aquinas writes:

Moreover, God, in willing his own goodness, wills things other than Himself to be in so far as they participate in his goodness. But, since the divine goodness is infinite, it can be participated in in infinite ways, and in ways other than it is participated in by the creatures that now exist. If, then, as a result of willing his own goodness, God necessarily willed the things that participate in it, it would follow that He would will the existence of an infinity of creatures participating in his goodness in an infinity of ways. This is patently false, because, if He willed them, they would be, since His will is the principle of being for things, as will be shown later on. Therefore, God does not necessarily will even the things that now exist.⁷⁹

According to Aquinas, then, since there is an infinite number of ways in which creation can participate in God's perfection, this seemingly represents open options between which God may choose to achieve his end, that is, for the created world to participate in his perfection. On this

⁷⁸ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 196.

⁷⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. by Anton Pegis, F.R.S.C. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) I. 81. 4.

view, consequently, God is equally as free not to perform one alternative as he is free to perform some other contrary alternative. Therefore, Aquinas is interpreted as holding to divine libertarian freedom.⁸⁰

As coherent as this view might initially sound, Rogers thinks there are problems to be found within Aquinas' model of divine libertarian freedom. I think we can capture the heart of Rogers's objections found in these two following remarks:

But if God has freedom of indifference with regard to creation, then this is no explanation at all, since there is absolutely no reason why God chose our world over some other creation or over none at all. His wisdom and love might equally have issued in a creation containing only well-ordered cosmic dust, or in no creation at all. So there is no answer to the question 'Why did God prefer our world to a world of dust or nothing?' He didn't. He just chose it.⁸¹

And such a lack of explanation results in the following:

Ascribing freedom of indifference to God posits radical arbitrariness at the heart of creation such that there is no ultimate meaning or purpose to the world—at least no meaning or purpose that would not be equally fulfilled by a creation of cosmic dust or a lack of any creation at all. This seems a significant cost...[I]s this cost outweighed by some powerful philosophical benefit accruing to the thesis that God exercises freedom of indifference?⁸²

What Rogers seems to be arguing here is that a necessary condition for what constitutes a non-arbitrary and intelligible action is one in which the action has a *sufficient* explanation. For Aquinas (or anyone else) to appeal solely to God's goodness as an explanation for why one action was performed over another action simply will not do. God's goodness is (to borrow from Wierenga) "insufficiently complete" since God's goodness could be used to explain why some other world was created instead. In other words, there is no sufficient explanation which is

⁸⁰ For others who interpret Aquinas holding to divine libertarian freedom see, for example, Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); see also William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸¹ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 198, 199.

⁸² Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 199.

forthcoming according to this libertarian view. Moreover, if there is no sufficient explanation for why God performs, say, X over not X, then the exercise of the divine will results in a reasonless will characterized by randomness, arbitrariness, and unintelligibility.

According to Rogers, then, there does not seem to be any possible way for this Aquinas-like model of God's libertarian freedom to provide a sufficient explanation for why one divine action was performed over a contrary action. Applied to creation, there does not seem to be any explanation why God created rather than not created, or even why God created this particular world as opposed to some other alternative world. The sheer fact that there is no sufficient explanation thus results in jeopardizing God's rational action, on the supposition that God is necessarily rational.

Rogers finally argues for the third and apparently indefensible proposition, namely, that for Anselm our world could indeed be the best actualizable world. While arguing for this, she first asks the following question: "If the goodness of creation is a reflection of God, but God is infinite, then, must not all worlds fall infinitely short of the divine, such that for any possible world, a better world is possible?"⁸³ An affirmative answer to this question (which we saw in Aquinas) would seemingly open up the possibility for God to be libertarianly free to create any world. Furthermore, God's perfection would not be faulted if he does not perform the best actualizable world since such a task is impossible.

However, Rogers is not convinced that all worlds fall infinitely short of God's perfection. The fundamental reason that she casts doubt on the claim that God cannot create a perfect image of himself is because "it is not demonstrated that a best actualizable image of God is a genuine logical impossibility."⁸⁴ According to her, being (i.e., existing) *per se* is good, and what makes a world good is the variety of different creatures (i.e., kinds) and the number of individuals. So, "perhaps God makes a universe containing the most compossible kinds and individuals."⁸⁵ She further harks back to the Anselmian claim where there is a possible perfect number of rational

⁸³ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 200.

⁸⁴ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 201.

⁸⁵ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 201.

agents. According to Rogers, “To the contemporary philosopher the idea of a ‘perfect number’ might seem silly and quaint, but many of the giants on whose shoulders we sit—Augustine and Newton spring to mind—found it both a plausible and a useful concept.”⁸⁶ Because of these reasons she concludes, “From the Anselmian perspective the impossibility of a best actualizable world has yet to be proved.”⁸⁷

Let us sum up Rogers’s claims with respect to God’s freedom. First, God performs that which is best necessarily, and in doing so God is free since there is no sufficient explanation for why God does what he does outside of himself. Second, God creates the best actualizable world, where our world is the only world God could choose to create. And third, it is possible that our world is indeed the best actualizable world.

Thomas Talbott

In completing our articulation of DSC, we finally come to Thomas Talbott. In his recent article entitled “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” Talbott offers a metaphysic of free agency “that makes no appeal to *mysterious* notions of agent causation.”⁸⁸ In doing so, he stipulates God to be “the best example of agent causation”⁸⁹ where “a supremely perfect God...would *initiate* and *originate* his own actions.”⁹⁰ Thus understood, the main idea, according to Talbott, is that an action which finds its ultimate origin within God is perfectly consistent with denying the claim that such an action can occur *only* in a situation where alternative possibilities exist. In other words, it is possible for some divine token choice *X* to be necessitated and that choice still finds its ultimate origin within God himself.

⁸⁶ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 201.

⁸⁷ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 201.

⁸⁸ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 26 (2009): 378 (emphasis original).

⁸⁹ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 379.

⁹⁰ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 378 (emphasis original).

Talbott, similar to Wierenga and Rogers, starts with an Anselmian conception of God understood as a necessary being, who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, and perfectly rational. He claims that according to this conception “God never makes a mistake concerning the best course of action, never acts upon a false belief, and never suffers from any illusion concerning the consequences of his own actions.”⁹¹ He concludes from this statement that it is a necessary truth that God knows which action is to be the best, while further asserting that it is a necessary truth that God *chooses* whichever action he knows to be the best. Claiming to follow both Spinoza and Leibniz, Talbott claims that these actions result from an *inner* necessity of God’s own being, that is, “from the inner necessity of his own rationality.”⁹²

However, as we saw from Wierenga and Rogers, such a necessity is not a problem for Talbott since God is still the agent cause of his own actions. There is no metaphysical “thing” external to God which necessitates or even influences his actions. Furthermore, if God performs that which is best necessarily, then this seems to rid us of any problems concerning randomness and unintelligibility (which, again, was addressed by both Wierenga and Rogers). He states the following:

And because it is necessarily true that God never acts contrary to his own (correct) judgment concerning the best course of action, there can be no questions of his actions being wholly, or even partially, a matter of random chance. So even when God acts from an inner necessity, he remains the agent cause of his actions in just this sense: Each of them reflects his own perfectly rational judgment concerning the best course of action; none of them is the product of sufficient causes external to himself; and none of them is even partially a matter of random chance.⁹³

What Talbott seems to be arguing here is that if God performs that which is best necessarily, then the action *being the best* provides a sufficient explanation for why one action was performed over a contrary action. There is simply no room for random and unintelligible actions which do not have a sufficient explanation.

⁹¹ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 380.

⁹² Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 380.

⁹³ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 380.

Talbott realizes that many philosophers of religion demur at this point by asking, how can God be considered free if he performs that which is best necessarily? He considers first an objection from Wes Morriston, where Morriston states, “Since God is simply ‘stuck’ with his moral nature, he is not responsible either for it or for what follows from it, and is not therefore morally free.”⁹⁴ In order to substantiate this objection Morriston paints an illustration where “Bonnie Chance,” a non-divine being, has a nature such that “her nature prevents her from ever choosing what she sees to be less than the best.”⁹⁵ Accordingly, “Since it is Bonnie’s nature—and not Bonnie herself—that is responsible for her good behavior, we can only conclude that she is not acting freely when she acts for the best.”⁹⁶ Paralleling Bonnie Chance to God, then, Morriston further writes, “So if God’s *nature*—rather than *God*—is the ultimate determiner of his moral choices, then I do not see why we should think that he is making them freely.”⁹⁷ So, Morriston concludes from his illustration, “The mere absence of external causes is insufficient to guarantee his [i.e., God’s] freedom, for the fact remains that he is just as determined by his nature as Bonnie is by her nature.”⁹⁸

Talbott, in response to Morriston, first points out an agreement with Morriston, namely, that the absence of external causes is hardly a sufficient condition that could establish freedom that relates to a perfect rational agent such as God. The reason is because the absence of external causes is merely a necessary condition.⁹⁹ However, despite this agreement with Morriston, Talbott rhetorically asks the following questions:

If you combine the absence of external causes with perfect rationality and the power to act in accordance with such rationality—or, in the case of human beings, the power to act in accordance with a reasonable and well informed

⁹⁴ Wes Morriston, “Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 23 (2006): 93-98; 96.

⁹⁵ Wes Morriston, “Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga,” 96.

⁹⁶ Wes Morriston, “Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga,” 96.

⁹⁷ Wes Morriston, “Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga,” 97 (emphasis original).

⁹⁸ Wes Morriston, “Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga,” 96.

⁹⁹ See Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 381.

judgment concerning the best course of action—why do you not have something *close* to a sufficient condition of the freedom that pertains to rational agents? What further freedom could a rational agent [like God] possibly desire to have?¹⁰⁰

Accordingly, Talbott thinks that to have the absence of external causes in conjunction with perfect rationality, where this is to be understood as God performing that which is best necessarily, is sufficient for God to be free—or at least in his words, “something close” for God to be sufficiently free.

Besides this significant point made by Talbott, he offers a two-fold objection to Morriston’s illustration where Bonnie Chance counts against a coherent notion of divine freedom. Both objections take issue with Morriston’s claim that “God’s *nature*—rather than *God*—is the ultimate determiner of his moral choices.”¹⁰¹

First, Talbott refers “to an ambiguity in the concept of nature...and to its bearing on the issue of an individual’s identity”¹⁰² which Morriston evidently employs. The ambiguity, according to Talbott, lies in the failure to notice the substantive difference between what he calls a “philosophical notion of an essence” and a “more ordinary notion of a person’s accidental character traits, behavioral dispositions, and the like.”¹⁰³ He defines a nature in the former sense as “a set of properties” which “is an abstract object...causally inert.”¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, this sense of nature “neither *causally* determines nor exercises any *causal* influence over a person’s actions.”¹⁰⁵ However, a nature in the latter sense could indeed “figure into the causal explanation

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 381, 382. (emphasis original).

¹⁰¹ Wes Morriston, “Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga,” 97 (emphasis original).

¹⁰² Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 382.

¹⁰³ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 382.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 382.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 382 (emphasis original).

of an action,” where “a man’s honest character trait in that sense is not a property, conceived as an abstract object, but the concrete instance of that property.”¹⁰⁶

Accordingly, Talbott makes clear that he refers to “nature” in the latter sense, that is, in the sense of character traits and behavioral dispositions, exerting causal influence over our own actions. He further claims that this type of nature is *identical* to God and thus calls into question Morriston’s claim that “God’s *nature*—rather than *God*—is the ultimate determiner of his moral choices.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, Talbott writes:

If we think of God’s nature as a causally inert abstract object, then it has no more causal influence over his actions than any abstract object does; and if we think of God’s nature, no less than God himself, as the concrete instantiation of his essence, then God is clearly identical with his nature. In deciding to create, for example, it was God himself, and nothing other than God, who was the agent cause of the heavens and the earth.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, Talbott’s first point in disambiguating is that there is a significant difference between his understanding of the Anselmian God and that of Bonnie Chance. Bonnie Chance, admittedly, does have a causal nature, but this nature is merely contingent to Bonnie Chance’s identity. The contingent nature, then, allows one to distinguish between Bonnie herself and her nature. However, the Anselmian God, according to Talbott has his nature necessarily, and in all possible worlds. It is thus coherent to say that God’s nature is identical with God.

The second problem which Talbott presses Morriston with is that if there is a substantive difference between Bonnie’s nature and Bonnie herself (which Morriston seems to approve), then Bonnie herself seems to lack a relevant referent. So, Talbott asks, “Just what is it that the name ‘Bonnie Chance’ supposedly signifies if the individual named is to be distinguished from *all* of the character traits, behavioral dispositions, desires, and attitudes that, however contingent they may be, we ordinarily associate with a person’s nature?”¹⁰⁹ Apparently, according to Talbott,

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 382.

¹⁰⁷ Wes Morriston, “Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga,” 97 (emphasis original).

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 382, 383.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 383 (emphasis original).

“Bonnie Chance” does not signify anything meaningful, at least not “beyond a characterless subject of predication.”¹¹⁰ Such a characterless subject of predication, then, does not act in the world, and indeed does not act freely in the world.

Lastly, Talbott goes on the offense and offers his own objection to the alternative possibilities condition with respect to divine freedom. Unsurprisingly, he, like both Wierenga and Rogers, claims it to be difficult to account for a sufficient explanation for why one choice was made over a contrary choice, and thus randomness and unintelligibility rears its head once again. He argues that the all too often appeal to “mystery” simply deepens the very problem which proponents of the alternative possibilities condition are trying to explain away. So, here is Talbott on the matter:

For what other than random chance might ‘explain’ why I acted from [reason] R and chose to do [action] A when I categorically could have acted from R* and have chosen to refrain from A? Granted, whichever choice I had made, whether I had chosen to do A or had chosen to refrain from A, that choice would have been distinguishable from chance in the sense that I, the agent, would have acted for a reason. But what nonetheless remains unexplained, whether properly so or not, is why I should have acted from R and have chosen to do A when I categorically could have acted from R* and have chosen to refrain from A; in that respect, it is hard to see why my having chosen to do A rather than having chosen to refrain from A was not the product of random chance or at least the product of random elements in some decision making process.¹¹¹

Thus understood, the necessary condition of alternative possibilities entails randomness, arbitrariness, and chance. On the other hand, however, according to Talbott, “the God of Anselm, Spinoza, and Leibniz has *decisive* reasons for his most important actions”¹¹² and these most important actions “are in no way the product of chance and in no way a random selection between alternatives.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 383.

¹¹¹ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 384, 385.

¹¹² Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 385 (emphasis original).

¹¹³ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 385.

To summarize, then, Talbott argues God to be the clearest and most vivid expression of what it means to be free. God is a perfectly rational agent where his actions are performed for a specific reason, and necessarily so. Such a perfect freedom is incompatible with external explanation and random chance. God is, therefore, sufficiently free in a context where the alternative possibilities condition is denied, so long as he remains the ultimate source of his own actions.

Summary of Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott

In this (long) section I have offered an overview of the model of divine source compatibilism that is under review in this study. By tracing its developments from the formulations of Edward Wierenga through the ideas of Katherin Rogers to the reflections of Thomas Talbott, I traced the recent development and defense of this view of divine freedom. I have not attempted a full history of its development over the last couple of decades, nor have I tried to offer a comprehensive understanding of this theory. Instead, I have offered a summative overview, one that I hope is sufficiently clear in order to understand this particular view of God's freedom which will be defended in the following chapters of this dissertation. For our purposes I will next look at what I take to be the major motivating factors for DSC.

MAJOR MOTIVATING FACTORS

The proponents and defenders of DSC are straightforward about the motivations for their proposal. DSC is attractive to its advocates first because it offers a sufficient explanation for why God chooses one alternative over another alternative, and second because it offers a robust notion of divine freedom that is compatible with some of the major constituents of perfect being theism, namely, omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect goodness.

Sufficient Explanation

First and foremost, it should be noted that DSC takes seriously the idea that God's choices have *sufficient* explanations. It is common for proponents of DSC to refer to this sufficient explanation as the "best reason" or the "best possible world." The best reason or the best possible world, then, in turn allows the advocates of DSC not only to provide a reason for

why one divine choice was made over a contrary choice, but also to provide, as Wierenga declares, “a logically sufficient condition.”¹¹⁴

To support this, the proponents of DSC, as we have seen, draw inspiration from significant philosophically astute figures such as Saint Anselm, Baruch Spinoza, and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. As Rogers summarizes this view, “According to Anselm, God’s freedom does not entail the option to choose between good and better” but rather God, “being the best, does the best.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, Talbott declares, “The God of Anselm, Spinoza, and Leibniz has *decisive* reasons for his most important actions, these actions are in no way the product of chance and in no way a random selection.”¹¹⁶ Although proponents of DSC need not agree across the metaphysical board with Anselm, Spinoza, and Leibniz, proponents of DSC nevertheless do seem to think that something like DSC may be suggested by these philosophical thinkers. Advocates of DSC conclude that DSC is not ruled out by Anselm, Spinoza, and Leibniz. On the contrary, they believe that DSC coheres nicely with their metaphysics of divine freedom. Indeed, something like DSC may even be suggested by them.¹¹⁷

Not only do proponents of DSC find themselves to be on the shoulders of significant philosophical theologians with respect to the idea of a sufficient explanation, but they also find support for DSC by employing the *intelligibility problem*. It is noteworthy that Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott all employ the intelligibility problem when arguing against ideas of God’s freedom when the alternative possibilities condition is required for freedom. The intelligibility problem basically suggests that when an agent, such as God, is in a circumstance where it is logically and causally compatible for God to either perform or not perform the action in question, such a choice reduces to a random, arbitrary, and unintelligible choice. That is, “such a choice

¹¹⁴ Edward Wierenga, “The Freedom of God,” 426.

¹¹⁵ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 185.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 385 (*italics original*).

¹¹⁷ One might think the set [Anselm, Spinoza, and Leibniz] is a bit strange due to the fact that Spinoza is a renowned pantheist, and therefore that pantheism is a possible price for DSC. I will consider how pantheism relates to DSC in Chapter 4.

would be indistinguishable from a random selection between alternatives.”¹¹⁸ The reason why a choice reduces to a random and unintelligible choice is because there is “no explanation”¹¹⁹ and “no reason”¹²⁰ for why God chose as he did.

Hence, there seems to be a dilemma which the proponents of DSC have implicitly put their finger on, namely, either there is a sufficient explanation for why God chooses as he did or God chooses arbitrarily and randomly. According to Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott it is absurd to think that the traditional God of perfect being theism, that is, the God of Anselm, Spinoza, and Leibniz, would choose to create and perform choices randomly. Therefore, God’s choices have sufficient explanations for why he chooses as he does.

It is instructive to note that it is precisely at this point that the proponents of DSC do not deny that those who wish to affirm the alternative possibilities condition offer a coherent account of God’s freedom. That is, they most certainly are not hostile to the libertarian model of God’s freedom.¹²¹ However, when the divine attributes of classical theism (and especially with respect to God’s perfect rationality) are stipulated within the discussion, advocates of DSC argue that DSC is superior to the libertarian model. While they do not deny that the libertarian approach can exemplify these divine attributes of classical theism, they nevertheless are dissatisfied with its explanatory scope and power, and thus prefer the results of applying DSC instead. When faced with the classical attribute of God’s perfect rationality, say, libertarians can claim that God may use any *non-rational* means to accomplish his ends; and if this results in some of God’s choices being inexplicable, then some advocates of DL are perfectly content to concede this. Consider the remarks from Laura Garcia, who argues that DL is a more plausible outlook than DSC:

[S]ome...propose that among the criteria for rationality is the following principle: a rational agent must always have a reason for acting, a reason that

¹¹⁸ Thomas Talbott, “God, Freedom, and Human Agency,” 384.

¹¹⁹ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 199.

¹²⁰ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 199.

¹²¹ See Edward Wierenga, “The Freedom of God,” 430-432.

justifies choosing this specific action over every alternative action. Given this principle and the assumptions that God is perfectly rational and that he created the actual world, God must have a reason to create rather than not to create and a reason to prefer creating the actual world to creating any alternative possible world. It follows in turn that the actual world is the only possible world...Since creating the actual world was the best action God could perform, he is not free to choose any alternative course of action. While such a view is logically coherent, it is disturbingly counterintuitive. In my opinion, this is a reason to reject the rationality requirements proposed above and to allow that a rational agent may choose any satisfactory means to accomplish his or her ends. If several satisfactory means are available, a rational agent needs no additional reason for choosing one of them *rather than* the others. If this leaves some free choices partially unexplained (other than by saying they were chosen for the desired end), then so be it.¹²²

Contrary to Garcia's remarks, advocates of DSC readily point out that free choices partially unexplained does not adequately represent perfect rationality and cannot answer the question why God chooses one choice over another. In the words of Talbott, such choices where one "could have categorically chosen otherwise"¹²³ are in the end "indistinguishable from a random selection between alternatives."¹²⁴ DSC allows for a more intuitively acceptable understanding of the traditional divine attributes, says its defenders, and for that reason is preferable to the alternative possibilities condition of the libertarians.

In summary, it is clear that advocates of DSC think that it best accounts for a sufficient explanation for why God chooses one choice over a contrary choice. God necessarily choosing the best choice or the best possible world seems to provide a sufficient explanation. Further, they believe that DSC is most compatible with, perhaps even demanded by, such philosophical thinkers as Anselm, Spinoza, and Leibniz since these thinkers declared, according to their commentators, that God has decisive reasons for his choices. Proponents of DSC also employ the intelligibility problem in order to substantiate their claim that there must be a sufficient explanation for why God chooses what he does. To think that God is in a situation where he

¹²² Laura Garcia "Moral Perfection," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, eds. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 220 (emphasis original).

¹²³ Thomas Talbott, "God, Freedom, and Human Agency," 384.

¹²⁴ Thomas Talbott, "God, Freedom, and Human Agency," 384.

could have categorically chosen otherwise is to introduce randomness and arbitrariness at the heart of God's choices. For these reasons, they are attracted to DSC.

Perfect Being Theism

Lastly, the defenders of DSC pay close attention to the coherence of their model in light of perfect being theism. It is important to note that they have always been concerned from the outset with the issues that arise from perfect being theism. The first few statements of Wierenga's essay open with the question of just how God's freedom is to be best understood in light of his essential omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect goodness,¹²⁵ as does Talbott's work on the subject. As Talbott puts it, "I begin with an Anselmian conception of God, according to which God is a necessary being and such attributes as omnipotence, omniscience, perfect rationality, and loving-kindness are to be numbered among his essential properties."¹²⁶ Suffice it to say that from the beginning the defenders of DSC have been exercised to formulate the compatibilist model in a way that is consistent with perfect being theism. Whether or not they are finally successful is the subject of this study, but it should be clear that this is one of their fundamental goals; the conviction that DSC offers a model of divine freedom that is coherent and consistent with perfect being theism.

STARTING POINTS

The proponents of DSC undoubtedly have philosophical convictions to which they adhere and which influence in many ways the structure of their work. Looking at two metaphysical issues, in this section I will draw attention to some of the assumptions and commitments which are most valuable for this study.

Possible World Semantics

By this point it should be apparent that metaphysical issues play an important role in the formulation and defense of DSC as well. Because of their importance, I now offer an overview of some of what I take to be the central issues at stake. First, much of the discussion concerning

¹²⁵ See Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," 425.

¹²⁶ Thomas Talbott, "God, Freedom, and Human Agency," 380.

the metaphysics of God's freedom employs possible world semantics in order to create problems along with providing solutions to the problems. It is highly controversial, however, when one inquires into the nature of these possible worlds. Do possible worlds exist independent of human conceptualization? If not, are possible worlds merely fictional statements employed to serve some useful function? If, on the other hand, possible worlds do indeed exist independent of human conceptualization, then are these possible worlds concrete or simply abstract states of affairs or even abstract propositions? These are weighty and important questions concerning the nature of possible worlds, and how one answers such questions has significant bearing on God's freedom.

Admittedly, proponents of DSC do not explicitly state a particular position concerning the nature of possible worlds despite the pervasive use of possible world semantics.¹²⁷ One would think, however, that because they are strongly influenced by Anselm, Spinoza, and Leibniz it would not be far off the mark to think proponents of DSC hold to at least a *possible world realism*. That is, there is a plurality of possible worlds that exist independent of *human* conceptualization.¹²⁸ Furthermore, I think it is doubtful that advocates of DSC would claim that these possible worlds are just as real and concrete as the actual world, thus distancing themselves from David Lewis's possible world realism and his counterpart theory.¹²⁹ So, in what follows I will suppose that one of the assumptions of proponents of DSC is that these existing possible worlds are constituted by either platonic abstract states of affairs¹³⁰ or platonic abstract propositions.¹³¹

¹²⁷ William Rowe, however, explicitly follows Alvin Plantinga's modal realism. See William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?*, 75-77.

¹²⁸ Whether or not these possible worlds exist independent of *divine* conceptualization is a matter of dispute. The problem of how abstract objects (e.g., possible worlds) are dependent on God will be highlighted in Chapter 5.

¹²⁹ See David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1986).

¹³⁰ See Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

¹³¹ See Robert M. Adams, "Theories of Actuality," *Nous*, 8 (1974): 311-331.

The Nature of Explanation

Along with the nature of possible worlds playing a fundamental a role in the discussion for proponents of DSC, they also have convictions with respect to the nature of explanation. A *sufficient* explanation, as we have seen, is a primary motivation for DSC. However, there tends to be ambiguity regarding the word “sufficient.” In his book, the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*, Alexander Pruss considers what he calls “The Entailment Principle,” where “If q explains p , then q entails p .”¹³² He claims it follows from The Entailment Principle that “if q is necessary and entails p , then p is also necessary.”¹³³ He then considers that in favor of The Entailment Principle one might simply cite the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR). However, if this is the case, then according to Pruss, what one means by the PSR is a logically sufficient reason. So he says, “If the reason is to be *logically* sufficient for the explanandum, then one would do better to talk of the Principle of Logically Necessitating Reason (PLNR).”¹³⁴ Therefore, according to Pruss’s analysis, it might be fair to say that when proponents of DSC speak of a “sufficient explanation” or a “logically sufficient condition” obtaining with respect to God’s freedom, this is in some way very close, if not identical to, what Pruss has called the PLNR. Interestingly, Pruss goes on to state, “when Leibniz and Spinoza used the PSR, they took it to be in some sense equivalent to the PLNR.”¹³⁵ So, if we contextualize what Pruss has articulated, what proponents of DSC have in mind when declaring a sufficient explanation is what Pruss refers to as the Principle of Logically Necessitating Reason.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER

In this chapter I have offered an overview of DSC and some relevant issues. By reviewing some recent work by Edward Wierenga, Katherin Rogers, and Thomas Talbott, I have offered a summative statement of what DSC is. Following this, I highlighted what I take to be the major motivating factors for Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott. I then focused attention on some

¹³² Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 103.

¹³³ Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason*, 103.

¹³⁴ Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason*, 104 (emphasis original).

¹³⁵ Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason*, 104.

important theological and metaphysical issues. Wierenga, Rogers, and Talbott are convinced that DSC is consistent with perfect being theology. However, there are a number of charges typically leveled against DSC which cast doubt on its plausibility. It is to these charges that I now turn.

CHAPTER THREE: DIVINE SOURCE COMPATIBILISM AND THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Chapter 2 was intended to lay the groundwork for understanding the nature of Divine Source Compatibilism (DSC) by explicating three contemporary philosophers of religion. Here we found that divine freedom is compatible with the truth of necessity so long as the necessity finds its source within God's nature: God's nature necessitates him to perform that token act which is best. Therefore, God's freedom is compatible with creating necessarily, and creating this particular world necessarily.

In this chapter I will begin to take a close look at what might be the most obvious problem for DSC, namely, the charge that it seriously deviates from the Christian tradition.¹³⁶ Indeed, a substantial number of thinkers have come to believe, contra DSC, that libertarianism is the *traditional view* of God's freedom. For instance, in his book, *Anselmian Explorations*, Thomas V. Morris asserts the following:

The traditional view is that God is a free creator of our physical universe: He was free to create it or to refrain from creating it; he was free to create this universe, a different universe, or no such universe at all. Of course, the range of God's creative freedom must be consonant with his nature as a maximally perfect being. That renders divine freedom interestingly different from human freedom. He could not have done morally otherwise than as he did. He could not have produced a physical universe which was ultimately, on balance, evil. But there are innumerable many ways in which he could have done otherwise than as he did, sufficient for his creation of our worlds being free.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ I think it is important to recall footnote 15 of the Introduction at this point: "A caveat: Despite the great diversity among the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, perfect being theism is in broad agreement in understanding God to be, among other things, omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. However, my own interest and training is primarily within the Christian tradition. Because of this, many of my references are mainly to the work of Christian thinkers, whether that be historical or contemporary. Nevertheless, I think that some of the conclusions reached here can be of significant use for perfect being theists of other persuasions, since, as I have suggested, Christian theism and perfect being theism generally agree on many of the divine attributes. Hereafter, I will simply refer to perfect being theism in general, instead of traditional Christian theism, unless the additional distinction is required for clarification."

¹³⁷ Thomas V. Morris, *Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 170.

In addition to Morris, William Hasker makes the stronger normative claim that if one affirms the freedom of God, then one “must attribute libertarian freedom to God—at least, they must do so if they wish to be orthodox Christians.”¹³⁸ Similarly, Paul Copan and William Lane Craig state that, “In orthodox Christian thought creation is seen as the freely willed act of God. He does not create by a necessity of nature, and there are possible worlds in which God refrains from creation [*sic*] and so exists alone.”¹³⁹ To be clear, both Morris and Hasker along with Copan and Craig understand divine libertarianism (DL) as God’s ability to categorically choose otherwise such that God is equally as free not to create as he is/was free to create.¹⁴⁰ Accordingly, we have an argument for the alternative possibilities condition with respect to divine freedom from the Christian tradition, that is, DL is claimed to be the traditional view of God’s freedom.¹⁴¹

How might one respond to statements like that of Morris, Hasker, and Copan and Craig? Is DL the traditional view of God’s freedom? Or, is it possible for DSC to be consistent with the claims of the Christian tradition? In this chapter I will argue that DSC is indeed consistent with the claims of the Christian tradition with respect to God’s freedom, and thus show that DSC is a viable option for that particular theistic tradition. If this is so, then one need not be required to accept the proposition that DL is the traditional view of God’s freedom.¹⁴² The argument is founded upon establishing a set of conditions for what constitutes a view of God’s freedom as

¹³⁸ William Hasker, “God Takes Risks,” in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Michael Peterson and Raymond J. Vanarragon (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 220.

¹³⁹ Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 175-176.

¹⁴⁰ See Thomas V. Morris, *Anselmian Explorations*, 27-28; see William Hasker, *Providence, Evil, and the Openness of God* (London: Routledge Press, 2004), 166. For similar definitions of divine libertarianism, see Thomas P. Flint, “The Problem of Divine Freedom,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 20 (1983): 255; and William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 6.

¹⁴¹ The claim that DL is the traditional view of God’s freedom can also be seen in Sandra L. Menssen and Thomas D. Sullivan, “Must God Create?” *Faith and Philosophy*, 12 (1995): 321, 324.

¹⁴² While Rowe, for example, does not assert divine libertarianism is the traditional view of God’s freedom, he nevertheless states that denying it would “constitute significant revisions of a major stream of thought in traditional theism.” See William Rowe, “Divine Perfection and Freedom,” in *Evidence and Religious Belief*, eds. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. Vanarragon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 183.

“traditional,” and demonstrating that DSC is consistent with every member of the set of conditions. I close the chapter by considering a possible objection to my argument.

THE SET OF CONDITIONS

Now whether DSC is consistent with the claims of the Christian tradition with respect to God’s freedom will undoubtedly depend on what the requirements are for constituting a model of divine freedom as “traditional.” I see only two possible conditions individually sufficient which may support a particular model as the traditional view of God’s freedom. First, it could be argued that a certain model of divine freedom is what we find in either the testimony of Scripture or what we find in later ecumenical creeds. It is these expressions of *authoritative writings* that represent the Christian tradition, where their affirmations are suggestive of and correspond to what the Christian tradition has always affirmed. Or second, perhaps a particular model of God’s freedom is to be found in the affirmations of *significant theological figures* throughout the history of the Christian tradition. That is, that the post-canonical religious authorities, when explicating divine freedom, clearly propound and are in harmony with one another regarding a specific model of God’s freedom. I will argue that in each case these arguments do not yield the conclusion that libertarianism is the only traditional view of God’s freedom. In fact, given certain theological representatives of the Christian tradition, I shall argue that DSC ought to be the preferred model of God’s freedom. At the very least the picture is mixed, with some veering in the direction of DL while some towards DSC. Let us now consider each of these requirements.

AUTHORITATIVE WRITINGS

Authoritative writings have typically played an important role in the development of what can or cannot be deemed as a traditional theological position. Most notably these include the witness from Scripture and the declarations of Ecumenical creeds: the Nicene Creed (325), the Apostles’ Creed (390), the Chalcedonian Creed (451), and the Athanasian Creed (fifth century). In this section I will look at these two particular forms of authoritative writings to see what can or cannot be ascertained regarding divine freedom.

The Witness from Holy Scripture

One might initially apply a Holy Scripture condition since there is good reason to think that the Bible is the foundation and wellspring of what the Christian tradition has always professed. So, in the Bible we find the following representative statements which are relevant to God's freedom:

I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy (Ex. 33:19);

Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases (Ps. 115:3);

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:11);

and

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

Are these texts indicative of DL? I do not think so since the alternative possibilities condition is not explicitly found. Rather, what these texts highlight is the fact that nothing metaphysically external to God could function as the ultimate explanation for why God does one thing over another. In other words, God is not constrained, coerced, determined, or even influenced by anything *outside of himself*.

I believe, however, that these statements found in the Holy Scriptures do not demand a compatibilist sense of God's freedom either—there is simply nothing in the texts which speak of necessity. Therefore, in general, a philosophical conception of DL or DSC is not entailed by the Biblical statements. To think otherwise would simply read too much into the text. Here is a case where the language of Scripture with respect to the metaphysics of God's freedom is not sufficiently precise so as to provide a definitive resolution of the issue one way or another. Because of this insufficient precision, it would be unwise for anyone to claim that DL or DSC is entailed by the language of Scripture. To put it simply, there is underdetermination regarding God's freedom with respect the biblical evidence.

Later Ecumenical Creeds

Supposing, then, that the precise metaphysics of God's freedom is underdetermined with respect to the Scriptural data, what sort of account of God's freedom can be gleaned from the Ecumenical creeds? Here the data is even scarcer but in this case the two most relevant statements regarding divine freedom come from the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Apostles' Creed reads:

I believe in God the father, almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.¹⁴³

And the significant part of the Nicene Creed states:

We believe in one God the Father all powerful, maker of all things both seen and unseen...through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and those in earth.¹⁴⁴

What we see from both these creedal statements is that they similarly affirm God as "almighty" (or "sovereign") and "maker" of heaven and earth. The core ideas seem to be that (1) God is powerful enough to create, (2) God created all that exists, and (3) nothing external to God influenced or determined him to act as he did. Further, I do not think it would be too far off the mark to also state that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is in the background here. Nevertheless, what the church fathers produced in these creeds is not a metaphysical explanation of divine freedom but rather set parameters, or a sort of guideline, which specific theological views are filtered through. In other words, the creeds function as a way of letting the church know what is and what is not acceptable concerning the doctrine of God and creation.

To further illustrate this point, a parallel example can be seen from what Sarah Coakley has recently pointed out regarding what Chalcedon can (or cannot) solve regarding a plausible model of the Incarnation of Christ.¹⁴⁵ She argues that some of the essential terms in the

¹⁴³ For western formulas of the Apostles' Creed, see Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: A Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations of the Catholic Church*, ed. Peter Hunermann, 43rd edition (San Francisco: Ignatious Press, 2012), 19-27.

¹⁴⁴ *Decrees of the Ecumenical Council*, vol. 1, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (London: Sheed and Ward; and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 5; see also *Documents of the Christian Church*, eds. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27.

¹⁴⁵ Sarah Coakley, "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian 'Definition'," in *The Incarnation*, eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald

Chalcedonian definition (e.g. *physis* [i.e., nature] and *hypostasis* [i.e., person]) are simply left undefined, and therefore leave the definition somewhat flexible. She argues nevertheless that Chalcedon should be approached as a theologically regulatory and binding text—as a grid through which our metaphysical reflections on the Incarnation must pass. So, Chalcedon does not, she says, “intend to provide a full systematic account of Christology, and even less a complete and precise metaphysics of Christ’s make-up. Rather, it sets a ‘boundary’ on what can, and cannot be said.”¹⁴⁶

Similarly, then, just as there are many important Christological issues that Chalcedon cannot solve, so too there are many important metaphysical issues about divine freedom that the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed cannot solve either, or even hint at. These two latter creeds, for instance, do not tell us whether or not God could have acted otherwise in a libertarian sense, or whether freedom is or is not consistent with necessity, or even if God is free! This is not to say, however, that DSC is *inconsistent* with the creeds. On the contrary, the creedal statements are consistent with DSC such that they can be interpreted in a compatibilist way. Whether the church fathers intended by their statements to teach compatibilism is certainly a more complex question since these texts, admittedly, can equally well be interpreted in a non-compatibilist way, that is, in a DL way. Similarly regarding Holy Scripture, then, I conclude that these two Ecumenical Creeds are underdetermined with respect to the metaphysics of divine freedom.

Summary of Section on Authoritative Writings

In this section on *Authoritative Writings* I have briefly explored what can be gleaned concerning the metaphysics of God’s freedom by looking at the testimony from Scripture and two later Ecumenical creeds. I have concluded that in both instances the issue of God’s freedom is ambiguous. In light of this ambiguity, both DL and DSC are consistent with the statements from the Scriptural testimony along with the declarations of the Ecumenical Creeds. But what

O’Collins, SJ, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Coakley closely follows Richard A. Norris. See Richard A. Norris, “Chalcedon Revisited: A Historical and Theological Reflection,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology*, ed. Bradley Nassif (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 140-158.

¹⁴⁶ Sarah Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian ‘Definition’,” 161.

about significant theological figures and God's freedom? Can post-canonical religious thinkers further help us on how the Christian tradition understood the metaphysics of divine freedom? To these questions we now turn.

SIGNIFICANT THEOLOGICAL FIGURES

We have already seen in Chapter 2 how Katherin Rogers follows Saint Anselm in her understanding of divine freedom: God being the best, does the best necessarily.¹⁴⁷ To avoid redundancy I will take it for granted that Rogers has explicated and applied Anselm correctly, and thus Anselm will not explicitly be dealt with in this section on significant theological figures. He is, however, certainly in the background and not to be forgotten. In light of this, we can conclude that Anselm is a meaningful representative of the Christian tradition regarding an outlook on God's freedom which is sympathetic to DSC.

In what follows, then, I will consider three additional influential figures upon the Christian tradition, namely, Saint Augustine of Hippo, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Jonathan Edwards. Undoubtedly, there are other prominent thinkers that could be consulted, such as John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. However, since Augustine, Aquinas, and Edwards are strong advocates of God's perfect goodness within the Christian tradition, I will consider how these three figures help us to understand our current inquiry on divine freedom and the Christian tradition. So, our current question is now as follows: what sort of model of divine freedom is to be found in Augustine, Aquinas, and Edwards?

Saint Augustine of Hippo

Although Augustine does not give a systematic treatment of God's freedom (which is rather unfortunate), he nevertheless seems to posit that there is an internal necessity of the divine will such that for God to create *anything* less than the best is a failure of perfect goodness. To begin, Augustine claims (in the context of why God made souls he knew would sin) that it would be foolish to think that souls should not have been made, while also thinking it foolish that souls should have been made otherwise. Here is what he says in *On Free Choice of the Will*:

¹⁴⁷ See my note 13 in Chapter 1.

Whatever right reason suggests to you as more perfect, you may be sure that God has already made it, for He is the Creator of all things good. Whenever you suppose that something better should have been made, because you are unwilling to have anything less perfect exist, this is not right reason but a want of understanding stemming from envy.¹⁴⁸

And,

There may be something in nature which you do not conceive of in your mind, but it is impossible that something not exist which you truly conceive of in your mind. You cannot conceive of anything better in the creation which has escaped the knowledge of the Creator.¹⁴⁹

Although created souls are in context (as mentioned), Augustine goes on to highlight two further examples, namely, angels and the souls of the damned. He goes so far to say souls of the damned must exist since their misery “contributes to the perfection of the whole by ensuring that it includes even those souls who deserved to be made unhappy because they willed to be sinners.”¹⁵⁰

Further, when one rightly reasons that something is better than another, even though one does not see it, that particular thing *ought* to have been created. In other words, the *a priori* reflection of that which is best is capable of deducing what God has indeed created. As Augustine further declares:

So the soul must believe that God has made what his right reason tells him should have been made, even though he fails to see it among the things created. Even though a man were unable to see the heavens with his eyes and yet could rightly conclude by his reason that such a thing should be made, he would have to believe it was made, though he could not see it with his eyes. Only in the light of those [Divine] Ideas, after which all things have been made, could he see in his mind why something had to be made. One cannot form a true conception of anything not present in these [Divine] Ideas anymore than he can find something there which is not true.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. by Robert P. Russell, O.S.A. (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968), III. 5, 176.

¹⁴⁹ Augustine of Hippo, *On Free Choice of the Will*, III. 5, 177.

¹⁵⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *On Free Choice of the Will*, III. 9, 189.

¹⁵¹ Augustine of Hippo, *On Free Choice of the Will*, III. 5, 178.

What we see here from Augustine is a connection between what God knows and what God creates. Augustinian scholar, Roland Teske, offers the following reconstruction of Augustine's argument:

If one sees correctly, that is, with true reason, that X should have been made, then he can be sure that X already has been made, even if he cannot by observation check that it has been made. One sees what he sees correctly in the divine ideas, and the divine ideas are the patterns in God's mind in accord with which God produces whatever he produces. The text does not imply that something apart from God, for example, the goodness of X, causes God to create it. But what we know in the divine ideas, God obviously knows as well. If we can be certain that he has created X because we see X in his ideas, it would seem that, given this knowledge of his, he could not but create X.¹⁵²

Teske argues from this reconstruction that, "If the Augustinian God knows only what he creates, then he could not create anything other than what he does create. And thus he would not be free in the sense that he could have created other things than he did create."¹⁵³ Teske thus concludes by rhetorically asking: "Given such texts, does it not seem that God could not but create the world and could not but create the best possible?"¹⁵⁴ It goes without saying that an affirmative answer to Teske's questions resonates quite well with DSC. Indeed, with respect to Augustine's outlook on God's will, Teske goes so far as to find himself "admitting an optimistic determinism of the divine will."¹⁵⁵

Katherin Rogers seems to arrive at a similar conclusion as Teske but for different reasons. While Teske found support in *On Free Choice of the Will*, Rogers finds her main

¹⁵² Roland J. Teske, "The Motive for Creation According to Augustine," in *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 161. This piece was previously published in Roland J. Teske, "The Motive for Creation According to Saint Augustine," *Modern Schoolman*, 65 (1988): 245-253.

¹⁵³ Roland J. Teske, "The Motive for Creation According to Augustine," 161-162.

¹⁵⁴ Roland J. Teske, "The Motive for Creation According to Augustine," 163.

¹⁵⁵ Roland J. Teske, "The Motive for Creation According to Augustine," 156.

support in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, where “Augustine presents an argument which shows that a perfectly good God could not fail to create.”¹⁵⁶ Here is what Augustine says:

Of what good things could he laudably feel no need if He had not made anything? For He also could be said to need no good things, not by resting in Himself from the things He has made, but just by not making anything. But if he is not able to make good things then he has no power, and if He is able and does not make them, great is His envy. So because He is omnipotent and good He made all things very good.¹⁵⁷

The context here is God’s rest on the seventh day of creation. Augustine does indeed state that God rested in order to show that he did not need creation, and so God is not made complete by creation. Yet, as Rogers states, “[A]lthough God does not need creation, it would be inconsistent with His perfect goodness to fail to create...If God is good he will not be envious, He will want to create good things. If he is omnipotent he will be able to create them, and so God could not fail to create.”¹⁵⁸

Given what Teske and Rogers say, it seems plausible to interpret Augustine’s view as asserting God’s freedom is compatible with necessity. In fact, while David Bradshaw claims such a view is a “repellant view,” he nevertheless holds that “He [i.e., Augustine] asserts frequently that God’s will has no external cause and in that sense is necessitated. However, it does have an *internal* necessity, in that for God to create anything less than the best possible world would be a failure of perfect goodness.”¹⁵⁹ According to these commentators, then,

¹⁵⁶ Katherin A. Rogers, *The Anselmian Approach to God and Creation* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 61. Rogers also finds support for Augustine’s compatibilism applied to the divine will because of what Augustine says about the will in general, whether it be human or divine. See Katherin A. Rogers, “Augustine’s Compatibilism,” *Religious Studies*, 40 (2004): 415-435.

¹⁵⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, IV, 16, 27 in *On Genesis*, vol. I, trans. by Edmund Hill O.P. (New York: New City Press, 2002), 257.

¹⁵⁸ Katherin A. Rogers, *The Anselmian Approach to God and Creation*, 62.

¹⁵⁹ David Bradshaw, “Divine Freedom in the Greek Patristic Tradition,” *Quaestiones Disputatae*, 2 (2001): 58 (emphasis original); for similar sentiments concerning Augustine’s outlook see David Bradshaw, “Divine Freedom: The Greek Fathers and the Modern Debate,” in *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Tradition: Russian and Western Perspectives*, ed. David Bradshaw (Washington D. C.: Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, 2012); and Jesse Couenhoven, “The Necessities of Perfect Freedom,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 14 (2012): 398-419.

Augustine seems to endorse something very close to DSC. Indeed, we might agree with Rogers at this point that “Enough can be said here to show that it is at least reasonable to interpret Augustine as saying that failure to create, and to create this world, would be inconsistent with the divine nature.”¹⁶⁰ Again, such statements resonate quite well with DSC.

At this point, however, one might object to such an interpretation and claim that there is sufficient textual evidence in Augustine to demonstrate that God’s freedom is *incompatible* with necessity, and thus claim that Augustine did not think that God created and created this particular world from an internal necessity. For example, William E. Mann, while contrasting Plato’s outlook where “the demiurge created this world and that this world is the best world the demiurge could have created,” with that of Augustine’s outlook states the following:

[T]he thesis that nothing is superior to God’s will, precludes God’s will from having any cause. For Augustine the explanatory buck stops here. To put it another way, Augustine finds nothing in God’s nature that entails that God must create. It is not evident that Augustine thinks that if God decides to create, then God must create the best world that he can. Creation is indeed very good...created out of the “fullness of [God’s] goodness.”¹⁶¹

The three most promising texts which could be used (and are indeed used by Mann) to support this response can be found in *On Genesis against the Manichees, Eighty-Three Different questions*, and *City of God*.

Since they are quite similar in content, consider first what Augustine says in both *On Genesis against the Manichees* and *Eighty-Three Different questions*:

So then, if these people ever say, “Why did it take God’s fancy to make heaven and earth?” the answer to be given them is that those who desire to know God’s will should first set about learning the force of the human will. You see, they are seeking to know the causes of God’s will, when God’s will is itself the cause of everything there is. After all, if God’s will has a cause, there is something that is there before God’s will and takes precedence over it, which it is impious to believe. So then, anyone who says, “Why did God make heaven and earth?” is to be given this answer: “Because he wished to.” It is God’s will, you see, that is the cause of heaven and earth, and that is why

¹⁶⁰ Katherin A. Rogers, *The Anselmian Approach to God and Creation*, 60.

¹⁶¹ William E. Mann, “Augustine on Evil and Original Sin,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 42, 43.

God's will is greater than heaven and earth. Anyone though who goes on to say, "Why did he wish to make heaven and earth?" is looking for something greater than God's will is; but nothing greater can be found.¹⁶²

And similarly,

To inquire into why God wanted to make the world is to inquire into the cause of God's will. But every cause is productive of some result, everything productive of some result is greater than that which is produced, and nothing is greater than God's will. Therefore [God's will] has no cause to be sought after.¹⁶³

It is noteworthy here that Augustine never endorses the alternative possibilities condition. Indeed, he never even mentions it. On the contrary, Augustine is mostly concerned with preserving the superiority of God's will as a regress stopper; he is simply rejecting Manichean metaphysical dualism, where the coeternal could function as a possible external explanation for God's will.

Further, Augustine is laying emphasis on the idea of *efficient* causality rather than on a logically sufficient condition for why God created. Indeed, to even pose the question "What [efficiently] caused the divine will?" is to introduce, what Gilbert Ryle would call, a "category mistake" where a property is ascribed to something that could not possibly have that property.¹⁶⁴ In other words, asking the question "What [efficiently] caused the divine will?" is like asking the question "How much does the number 7 weigh?" So, according to Augustine, the divine will functions primarily as a regress stopper. Unless one must accept the "alternative possibilities condition" in order to avoid an infinite regress of reasons, then there is no reason to think that what Augustine says here is even significant to the present discussion. But do proponents of DL give us any good reason to think that asserting the alternative possibilities condition is the only way to avoid regress problems with respect to God's willing? It would seem not since DSC can

¹⁶² Augustine of Hippo, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, I, 4 in *On Genesis*, vol. I, trans. by Edmund Hill O.P. (New York: New City Press, 2002), 41-42.

¹⁶³ Augustine of Hippo, "Question 28 'Why did God Want to Make the World?'" in *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. by David L. Mosher (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 42.

¹⁶⁴ See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

fully account for the sourcehood condition of divine freedom. For these reasons the two above texts do not support the idea that Augustine endorsed the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom.

But what about a specific text from *City of God*? Is there evidence here against the idea that God's freedom is incompatible with necessity? For, as Augustine says, "And when it says, God saw that it was good, it signifies clearly enough that God did not make what he made out of any necessity, or out of any need of something useful to himself, but simply out of sheer goodness; that is, he made what he made because it was good."¹⁶⁵ Given that Augustine states "God did not make what he made out of any necessity" this text seems to be in clear opposition to the claim that God's freedom is compatible with necessity. But just what exactly does Augustine mean by "necessity" here?

According to Rogers, Augustine thinks that necessity is when one is forced to act out of external compulsion. And, if this is what Augustine means by necessity, then it is consistent to affirm an *internal* necessity finding its source from the divine nature. As she says, "Augustine sees no contradiction between saying that God does not create out of any necessity—He is not forced by an external compulsion—and yet holding that there is a cause of creation, that is, God's perfect goodness."¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Teske claims that Augustine, when elaborating on Psalm 135:6, contrasts "being forced, or coerced" with "willing."¹⁶⁷ Accordingly, acting out of necessity is when an agent is forced or coerced to act as they do. Teske concludes "If that is correct...it is not clear that he [Augustine] is ruling out by that phrase an internal necessity grounded in the goodness of God," and thus "to say simply that all necessity is denied may be a bit precipitous."¹⁶⁸ Consequently, God's will has no external cause and in that sense only is it not necessitated. For this reason, then, the above text in *City of God* is not a good reason to

¹⁶⁵ Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, 25.

¹⁶⁶ Katherin A. Rogers, *The Anselmian Approach to God and Creation*, 61.

¹⁶⁷ Roland J. Teske, "The Motive for Creation According to Augustine," 159.

¹⁶⁸ Roland J. Teske, "The Motive for Creation According to Augustine," 158.

undermine the interpretation that Augustine asserts that God’s freedom is compatible with necessity.¹⁶⁹

In summary, with the help of Teske and Rogers, it is plausible to interpret Augustine asserting the divine will was necessitated by its own perfect goodness, and such a statement rules out the alternative possibilities condition as a necessary condition for divine freedom. Augustine, then, seems to be more sympathetic to DSC and in direct opposition to DL. Considered as a substantial voice for the Christian tradition, Augustine seems to tip the scales of the Christian tradition toward a non-libertarian reading, which harmonizes well with his understanding of necessity as “need,” that is, the need of something outside of himself. Therefore, I think it is safe to say, in agreement with Teske and Rogers, that Augustine wholeheartedly affirms that God’s freedom is compatible with necessity, so long as the necessity in question derives from God’s own nature.

Saint Thomas Aquinas

We now move to Thomas Aquinas. What might we gather from Aquinas on divine freedom? I think it is safe to say upfront that ascribing DL to Aquinas is the standard reading of him, at least with respect to which type of world to create. Indeed, Laura Garcia remarks that, “Aquinas makes it clear in his discussion of this topic that the perfection of freedom involves...a sort of election which is unnecessitated—the ability to choose freely among genuinely open alternatives.”¹⁷⁰ Rogers goes so far to say that “Aquinas’s position can plausibly be interpreted as...the reverse of Anselm’s,” where “[a]ccording to Thomas, God’s freedom demands open options, while created freedom does not.”¹⁷¹ Let us look at two major reasons for this

¹⁶⁹ That “coercion” and “being forced” are synonymous with necessity according to Augustine resonates well with the Augustinian Lexicon 4 entry on “Necessitas.” *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 4, eds. Robert Dodaro, Cornelius Mayer, and Christof Muller (Basel: Schwabe AG Publishing, 2012), 196. Therefore, Teske and Rogers are in agreement with the Augustinian Lexicon.

¹⁷⁰ Laura L. Garcia, “Divine Freedom and Creation,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 42 (1992): 191.

¹⁷¹ Katherin A. Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 166. For a similar interpretation of Aquinas, see Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas: Arguments of the Philosophers* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2003), 100-106.

interpretation of Aquinas, where the alternative possibilities condition is a necessary condition of divine freedom.

The first reason for this interpretation of Aquinas is because he explicitly speaks of “opposites,” that is, alternative possibilities regarding the divine will. It seems natural to think that if one speaks of “opposites,” then there is a straightforward appeal to DL. To see this, Aquinas begins in *On Truth* by stating a potential difficulty with respect to divine freedom:

It seems that there is not [free choice in God], for...Free choice is a potency capable of opposite acts. But God is not capable of opposites, since He is immutable and cannot turn to evil. There is therefore no free choice in God.¹⁷²

Accordingly, the apparent difficulty arises between divine freedom—understood as a potency capable of opposite acts—and divine immutability. However, in answering the difficulty Aquinas is motivated to sustain opposites with respect to God’s freedom. So he says:

The divine will is capable of opposites, not in the sense that it first wills something and afterwards does not (which would be repugnant to its immutability), nor in the sense that it can will good and evil (for that would be defectability in God), but rather in the sense that it can will or not will this particular thing.¹⁷³

A similar outlook from Aquinas can be seen in the later work of *Summa Theologica*. Here is what he says:

Since the evil of sin consists in the turning away from the divine goodness, by which God wills all things, as above shown (De Fide ii, 3), it is manifestly impossible for Him to will the evil of sin; yet He can make choice one of two opposites, inasmuch as He can will a thing to be, or not to be. In the same way we ourselves, with sin, can will to sit down, and not will to sit down.¹⁷⁴

Now of course while interacting with Aquinas much depends on a proper analysis of what it means to say that God (or any agent) “can” do something. So, when Aquinas says, for example,

¹⁷² Thomas Aquinas, *Truth: A Translation of Quaestiones Disputatae De veritate, Questions XXI-XXIXQ*, trans. by Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), Q. 24, a. III.

¹⁷³ Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, Q. 24, a. III.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I. q. 19. a. 10.

“The divine will is capable of opposites...in the sense that it can will or not will this particular thing” one surely wonders in what sense God *can* will or not will this particular thing.

Nevertheless, what we see here from Aquinas is that there is a straightforward appeal to the idea of opposites. In light of this one need not wonder why some commentators think of Aquinas as holding to DL, where the alternative possibilities condition is a necessary condition of divine freedom.

Yet, the second and perhaps more fundamental reason why philosophers ascribe DL to Aquinas is because he argues for the conclusion that God does not will to create necessarily (as DSC holds). In support of this conclusion Aquinas casts doubt on the idea that there is a best possible action for God to perform (as DSC assumes). However, he does appear to state that God wills his own goodness necessarily while further declaring that the means to that end are of an infinite number of ways. Therefore, God does not will things other than himself necessarily. Aquinas puts it this way in *Summa Contra Gentiles*:

Moreover, God, in willing His own goodness, wills things other than Himself to be in so far as they participate in his goodness. But, since the divine goodness is infinite, it can be participated in in infinite ways, and in ways other than it is participated in by the creatures that now exist. If, then, as a result of willing his own goodness, God necessarily willed things that participate in it, it would follow that He would will the existence of an infinity of creatures participating in His goodness in an infinity of ways. This is patently false, because, if He willed them, they would be, since His will is the principle of being for things, as will be shown later on. Therefore, God does not necessarily will even the things that now exist.¹⁷⁵

Consequently, God, in willing to create, can only create those things which are finite expressions of his own perfect goodness. However, since there is an infinite number of ways in which God’s perfect goodness can be expressed, then it would appear to follow that there would indeed exist an infinite number of creations which participate in God’s perfect goodness, expressing his perfect goodness in an infinite number of ways. But this consequence is false, according Aquinas, since there is only one actual world. Therefore, the actual world which currently exists is not necessary.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 81. 4.

In addition, the fact that Aquinas is known to bolster his argument for the non-necessity of God's act to create (and God's act to create this particular world) by an appeal to *conditional necessity* since "[i]t seems that whatever God wills He wills necessarily."¹⁷⁶ Here is what he says:

[A]s to things willed by God, we must observe that He wills something of absolute necessity: but this is not true of all that He wills. For the divine will has a necessary relation to the divine goodness, since that is its proper object. Hence God wills His own goodness necessarily, even as we will our own happiness necessarily, and as any other faculty has necessary relation to its proper and principal object, for instance the sight to color, since it tends to it by its own nature. But God wills things apart from Himself in so far as they are ordered to His own goodness as their end. Now in willing an end we do not necessarily will things that conduce to it, unless they are such that the end cannot be attained without them; as, we will to take food to preserve life, or to take ship in order to cross the sea. But we do not necessarily will things without which the end is attainable, such as a horse for a journey which we can take on foot, for we can make the journey without one. The same applies to other means. Hence, since the goodness of God is perfect, and can exist without other things inasmuch as no perfection can accrue to Him from them, it follows that His willing things apart from Himself is not absolutely necessary. Yet it can be necessary by supposition, for supposing that He wills a thing, then He is unable not to will it, as His will cannot change.¹⁷⁷

What I take Aquinas to be arguing here is that only *if* God wills, say, this particular world and since God's will is eternal, then his willing this particular world is also eternal. However, it does not necessarily follow that willing this particular world is eternal *considered apart from God's willing it*. This particular world is, as Aquinas would say, necessary by supposition, where *if* God had not willed this particular world, then it would not have been created. Therefore, this particular world cannot be deemed metaphysically necessary. For, if this particular world is (absolutely) necessary, it would have existed whether or not God had willed it.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by English Dominican Fathers (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947), I. q. 19. a. 3.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I. q. 19. a. 3.

¹⁷⁸ While Aquinas may indeed affirm something akin to DL, it nevertheless has proven difficult to harmonize DL with divine simplicity and divine atemporality. For those who expound on this tension while interacting with Aquinas' theology, see, for example, Brian Leftow, "Aquinas, Divine Simplicity, and Divine Freedom," in *Metaphysics and God: Essays in Honor of Eleonore Stump*, ed. Kevin Timpe (New York: Routledge Publishing,

So, by way of summary, just what are we to make of Aquinas at this juncture? *First*, because of the two above reasons which I have drawn attention to, namely, (1) Aquinas's appeal to "opposites," and (2) the non-necessity of creation, it is easy to see why one would ascribe to Aquinas the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom. For, it is natural to think that if creation can participate in God's perfect goodness in an infinite number of finite ways, then what God has created is not necessary (which would be against DSC). Further, if what God has created is not necessary, then creating the actual world, creating a different world, or even not creating at all are all equal possibilities which God could have done. Again, we can see why one would think that Aquinas ascribed to God the alternative possibilities condition.

Second, if it holds true that Aquinas does indeed deny that God's act to create was necessary, while also denying God's act to create this particular world was necessary (and thus denies DSC), then we admittedly have a significant theological figure who represents the Christian tradition on the more libertarian side of things. But what is this to show? To put it succinctly, that Aquinas affirms DL is to simply show that the Christian tradition at this point in the thirteenth century is rather diverse, and therefore the question of "What is the traditional view of God's freedom?" becomes very difficult to answer. Nevertheless, as we now move to consider our next significant theological representative of the Christian tradition, perhaps the question might become easier to answer.

Jonathan Edwards

We finally come to arguably the greatest American philosophical theologian, Jonathan Edwards. No doubt Edwards is known to be a staunch compatibilist with respect to human freedom, but how is Edwards to be understood with respect to *divine* freedom?¹⁷⁹ Does Edwards

2009), 21-38; and James E. Dolezal, *God Without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 188-212.

¹⁷⁹ For recent discussion of Edwards's understanding of the freedom of the will in general, see Richard A. Muller, "Jonathan Edwards and the Absence of Free Choice: A Parting of the Ways in the Reformed Tradition," *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, 1 (2001): 3-22; Paul Helm, "Jonathan Edwards and the Parting of the Ways?" *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, 4 (2014): 266-285; Richard A. Muller, "Jonathan Edwards and Francis Turretin on Necessity, Contingency, and Freedom of the Will. In Response to Paul Helm," *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, 4 (2014): 266-285; and Paul Helm, "Turretin and Edwards Once More," *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, 4 (2014): 286-296.

continue to carry the torch of Augustine and Anselm concerning divine freedom? Or, is he more sympathetic to the outlook of Aquinas? Here we will look at Section 7 “Concerning the Necessity of the Divine Will,” in Edwards’s work, *Freedom of the Will*.¹⁸⁰ It is in this section that Edwards speaks most clearly of divine freedom.

In “Concerning the Necessity of the Divine Will,” Edwards first considers the possible objection that if the will, whether it is human or divine, acts necessarily because of some superior motive, then “the will of *God himself* is necessary in all its determinations.”¹⁸¹ That is, if God does “what he sees *fittest and best*” necessarily, then such an action could not have been otherwise, and thus such an action would not be free.¹⁸² To better understand this objection, consider Edwards’s chief polemical partner, Isaac Watts, in his *Essay on the Freedom of the Will in God and in the Creature* as he argues against Edwards:

What strange doctrine is this, contrary to all our ideas of the dominion of God? Does it not destroy the glory of his liberty of choice, and take away from the creator and governor and benefactor of the world, that most free and sovereign agent, all the glory of this sort of freedom? Does it not seem to make him a kind of mechanical medium of fate, and introduce Mr. Hobbes’s doctrine of fatality and necessity, into all things that God hath to do with?...In short, it seems to make the blessed God a sort of almighty minister of fate, under its universal and supreme influence; as it was the professed sentiment of some of the ancients, that fate was above the gods.¹⁸³

From these statements Watts is clearly antithetical towards any view which asserts the compatibility between freedom and necessity with respect to the divine will. By extension, in other words, we might say that what Watts argues here is that DSC is a repellant view of God’s freedom, and therefore needs to be jettisoned.

Now in responding to this type of objection, Edwards makes a strong appeal to what he calls the “moral necessity” of the divine will, where there is something about the perfect moral

¹⁸⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University, 1957).

¹⁸¹ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 357 (emphasis original).

¹⁸² Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 377 (emphasis original).

¹⁸³ Quoted in Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 375.

nature of God which precludes him from being able to choose otherwise. Consequently, to choose according to moral necessity does not result in “imperfection” or “inferiority.”¹⁸⁴ Here is what Edwards says:

That all the seeming force of such objections and exclamations [from Watts] must arise from an imagination, that there is some sort of privilege or dignity in being without such a moral necessity, as will make it impossible to do any other, than always choose what is wisest and best; as though there were some disadvantage, meanness and subjection, in such a necessity; a thing by which the will was confined, kept under and held in servitude by something, which, as it were, maintained a strong and invincible power and dominion over it, by bonds that held him fast, and that he could by no means deliver himself from. Whereas, this must be all mere imagination and delusion. Tis no disadvantage or dishonor to a being, necessarily to act in the most excellent and happy manner, from the necessary perfection of his own nature.¹⁸⁵

What we see here, according to Edwards, is that freedom and necessity are compatible since what necessitates one choice over a contrary choice is the perfect nature of God. That is, there is something about the moral make-up of God which precludes him from being able to do otherwise than that which is wisest and best. So, God’s freedom is apparently compatible with doing some token act necessarily, namely, in Edwards's words, doing that token act which is “wisest and best.”

It is noteworthy, however, that the idea of moral necessity was not original to Edwards but was rather a significant part of the philosophical discourse prior to and during the Enlightenment time period. We can see this, for example, from the philosopher, Samuel Clarke, (who Edwards, in *Freedom of the Will*, quotes authoritatively!) as he similarly applies the notion of moral necessity to the divine will. It is in these statements from Clarke that we can glean a better understanding of Edwards’s outlook on God’s freedom with respect to creating. Here is what Clarke says:

The supreme cause, therefore, and author of all things, since...he must of necessity have infinite knowledge and the perfection of wisdom...and since he is likewise self-existent, absolutely independent and all-powerful...it is evident he must of necessity (meaning not a necessity of fate, but such a

¹⁸⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 377.

¹⁸⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 377.

moral necessity as I before said was consistent with the most perfect liberty) do always what he knows to be fittest to be done. That is, he must act always according to the strictest rules of infinite goodness, justice, and truth, and all other moral perfections.¹⁸⁶

And more explicitly,

[T]hough God is a most perfectly free agent, yet *he cannot but do always what is best and wisest in the whole*. The reason is evident, because perfect wisdom and goodness are steady and certain principles of action as necessity itself. And an infinitely wise and good being endowed with the most perfect liberty can no more choose to act in contradiction to wisdom and goodness, than a necessary agent can act contrary to the necessity by which it is acted, it being as great an absurdity and impossibility in choice for infinite wisdom to choose to act unwisely, or infinite goodness to choose what is not good, as it would be in nature for absolute necessity to fail of producing its necessary effect.¹⁸⁷

Despite these affirmations, however, whether or not Edwards was dependent on Clarke is beside the point—Edwards’s idea of moral necessity, like that of Clarke’s, seems to rule out the alternative possibilities condition concerning God’s freedom. Rather, divine freedom is compatible with God performing that token act which is best and wisest necessarily.

It is worth emphasizing at this point that it would not be too far off the mark, in the case of Clarke and Edwards, to state that what does the necessitating is the *wisdom* of God. If so, then the wisdom of God is what corresponds to the idea of “moral” in moral necessity.¹⁸⁸ The divine attribute of wisdom, in other words, entails that God performs that token act which is wisest and best. Further, to think that God could perform that which is not the best would be to implicitly affirm an unwise and imperfect being. So, to be clear, it is divine wisdom which is primarily operative in necessitating the divine will. To see this point more clearly, here are some final

¹⁸⁶ Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, ed. Ezio Vailati (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 84.

¹⁸⁷ Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, 87 (emphasis added).

¹⁸⁸ Interestingly enough, it is typical for the wisdom of God to be indexed under the *moral* attributes of God when systematizing the divine attributes.

remarks from Edwards on the necessity of the divine will and how it further relates to divine wisdom:

If God's will is steadily and surely determined in everything by *supreme* wisdom, then it is in everything necessarily determined to that which is *most* wise. And certainly it would be a disadvantage and indignity, to be otherwise. For if the divine will was not necessarily determined to that which in every case is wisest and best, it must be subject to some degree of undesigning contingency; and so in the same degree be liable to evil. To suppose the divine will liable to be carried hither and thither at random, by the uncertain wind of blind contingency, which is guided by no wisdom, no motive, no intelligent dictate whatsoever... would certainly argue a great degree of imperfection and meanness, infinitely unworthy of the deity. If it be a disadvantage, for the divine will to be attended with this moral necessity, then the more free from it, and the more left at random, the greater dignity and advantage.¹⁸⁹

In summary, Edwards, like his predecessors Augustine and Anselm, is quite comfortable asserting that divine freedom and necessity are compatible since the necessity finds its source in God's perfect nature. That is, God is free even if he does that which is best necessarily so long as the necessity in question finds its ultimate source within God's nature. Perhaps the comments from William Wainwright on Edwards are instructive at this point:

Edwards...appears committed to the claim that God necessarily creates *this* world (call it w^*). God necessarily does what is "fittest and best." It is thus necessarily true that God creates the best possible world. Now God has created w^* . Hence, w^* is the best possible world. 'Being the best possible world' is an essential property of whatever world has it, however. It is therefore necessarily true that w^* is the best possible world. It follows that it is necessarily true that God creates w^* .¹⁹⁰

So, although Augustine and Anselm do not explicitly appeal to the idea of moral necessity, such an idea is consistent with their understanding of divine freedom. Further, Edwards clearly denies that the alternative possibilities condition is a necessary condition of divine freedom. Indeed, if God is a morally perfect being, then God must do that which is wisest and best. To propose

¹⁸⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 380 (emphasis original).

¹⁹⁰ Wainwright, William, "Jonathan Edwards", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/edwards/>>. For a similar interpretation of Edwards, see Oliver D. Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 57-76.

otherwise, would simply reduce God to a deficient, imperfect being since it is “no disadvantage or dishonor to a being, necessarily to act in the most excellent and happy manner, from the necessary perfection of his own nature.”¹⁹¹

Summary of Section on Significant Theological Figures

In this section I have looked at what can be gleaned from significant theological figures with respect to God’s freedom. I argued that it is plausible to interpret Augustine as asserting the compatibility between divine freedom and necessity, so long as the necessity is internal to the divine nature. If this is a reasonable understanding of Augustine, then Augustine seems to be more sympathetic to DSC rather than to DL. Further, at the beginning of this section I noted that in light of Katherin Rogers’s interpretation of Anselm in Chapter 2, we could conclude that Anselm, like his hero Augustine, also seems comfortable claiming that divine freedom is compatible with necessity. I then argued that Thomas Aquinas has a different outlook on divine freedom than that of his predecessors, Augustine and Anselm. Here we saw that since Aquinas affirms “opposites” with respect to the divine will, along with arguing for the non-necessity of creation, it seems plausible to interpret Aquinas as holding to something akin to DL. This is simply to show, however, that the Christian tradition with respect to divine freedom is rather diverse, lest I be taken for formulating a contrived set with respect to significant theological figures. Finally, I argued that Jonathan Edwards continues to carry the torch of Anselm and Augustine, thus holding that God is free even if he does that which is best necessarily so long as the necessity in question finds its ultimate source within God’s nature. The conclusion thus far, then, is that given Augustine, Anselm, and Edwards as significant theological representatives, DSC is indeed consistent with the claims of the Christian tradition.

AN OBJECTION STATED

The First Vatican General Council of 1870

Thus far I have argued that DSC is consistent with authoritative writings, namely, Scripture and the Ecumenical Creeds. I further argued that while Aquinas may indeed have a different outlook than DSC, nevertheless Augustine, Anselm, and Edwards seem to be strong

¹⁹¹ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 37.

advocates of it. If this holds true, then DSC begins to have a significant voice within the Christian tradition. However, a potential objection may arise at this point and can be put as follows: Sure, while DSC is consistent with Scripture and the Ecumenical Creeds, along with being represented by such significant theological figures as Augustine, Anselm, and Edwards, such a view of God's freedom is nevertheless clearly at odds with the statements found in the Roman Catholic First Vatican General Council of 1870. For, in Canons 1.5 entitled "God the creator of all things" the Council reads:

If anyone...says that God created, not by an act of will free from all necessity, but with the same necessity by which he necessarily loves himself...let him be anathema.¹⁹²

From these strong statements one might argue that the Vatican Council speaks straightforwardly of DL since it states that God is "free from *all* necessity." Moreover, if we take the quantifier "all" in its broadest sense to rule out a divine internal necessity (which DSC affirms), then surely the Council would at least rule out DSC.

A Response to the Objection

By way of response to this objection, there are two good reasons to think that DSC is consistent with the First Vatican Council, and thus the Council could be interpreted in less than its broadest sense. First, it could be argued that, given DSC, it is not the case that God created necessarily with the *same* necessity as he necessarily loves himself. To begin, it is noticeable how the Council contrasts God's freedom in the latter part of the passage with the absolute necessity of him loving himself. What the Council is basically stating here is that the willing activity of God to create cannot be exactly the same as God's willing activity to love himself. So, one might draw the required distinction at this point, maintaining that God's necessary love for himself is a different sort of activity than would be his necessary act to create. That is, the divine will to create necessarily is not identical to the necessity of the divine will to love itself.

To elucidate further, it is plausible to think the willing activity of God to create is *specifically intentional*, where God plans and designs to bring about some specific purpose. We might call this necessity, *creational necessity*. God's willing activity to love himself, on the other

¹⁹² Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 607.

hand, could be characterized by joint (supposing the trinity) *desire* and affirmation. We might call this necessity, *constitutive necessity*. This is not to say, however, that God does not desire what he intends to bring about. Rather, this is to highlight that God's love for himself, that is, constitutive necessity, does not have an intending aspect to it—God does not plan and design to love himself in a manner like that of creating. Therefore, in light of this subtle difference between constitutive necessity (i.e., the necessity by which God's loves himself) and creational necessity (i.e., the necessity by which he creates) DSC could agree with the Council that God did not create with the *same* necessity by which he necessarily loves himself. To put it simply, then, the first reason why DSC is consistent with the Council is because the necessity to create is *ad extra*, while the necessity for God to love himself is *ad intra*.

The second reason for thinking that DSC is consistent with the First Vatican Council is because the first Vatican Council is specifically rejecting particular worldviews, and in this specific case, the worldview seems to be pantheism. To see this point, Pope Pius IX, on June 29th of 1868, convoked the First Vatican General Council to consider the rising influence of the methods of rationalism and naturalism applied to Christian doctrine. Accordingly, if these methods were to be utilized by the church, then these methods would inevitably reduce to heterodox theological positions. In the preface to *Dei Filius*, Pope Pius IX states:

Indeed even the holy Bible itself, which they at one time claimed to be the sole source and judge of the christian faith, is no longer held to be divine... Thereupon there came into being and spread far and wide throughout the world that doctrine of rationalism and naturalism, utterly opposed to the christian religion... Thus they would establish what they call the rule of simple reason or nature. The abandonment and rejection of the christian religion, and the denial of God and his Christ, has plunged the minds of many into the abyss of pantheism, materialism and atheism, and the consequence is that they strive to destroy rational nature itself...¹⁹³

Consequently, for Pope Pius IX, if an anti-scriptural, rationalistic methodology is employed, then one of the heterodox theological positions that would follow is *pantheism*.

¹⁹³ Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 804, 805.

We can similarly see that pantheism is being rejected according to the commentary of the revered “Denzinger” text on Canons 1.5 “God the Creator of all things” when it reads that the Council is

(a) Against the pantheists and materialists; (b) against the followers of [Anton] Gunther; (c) against the followers of Gunther and [Georg] Hermes.¹⁹⁴

Additionally, recent studies have shown that Hermes was under the influence of Fichte, while Gunther was under the influence of Hegel, who were arguably both pantheists.¹⁹⁵ We can conclude, then, from Pope Pius IX and “Denzinger” that what is explicitly being condemned by the Council in Canons 1.5 “God the creator of all things” is the heterodox view of *pantheism*, which certainly leaves no room for divine freedom whatever.

Now one might further object and argue that while the Council is indeed rejecting pantheism in Canons 1.5, nevertheless the affirmation of DSC implies pantheism, and so DSC would be inconsistent with the Council by way of implication. Pantheism, broadly construed, is the view that holds God *is* everything and everything *is* God. In other words, there is an ontological identity between God and the world. As William Mander puts it, “At its most general, pantheism may be understood positively as the view that God is identical with the cosmos, the view that there exists nothing which is outside of God, or else negatively as the rejection of any view that considers God as distinct from the universe.”¹⁹⁶ Given this ontological identity of pantheism, we can better understand why the Council is against thinking that God created with the *same* necessity by which he necessarily loves himself.

However, does creation, derived and necessitated from God’s perfect nature, somehow entail pantheism? That is, does DSC somehow reduce to metaphysical monism?¹⁹⁷ I fail to see that it does. For even if God creates necessarily, then it does not follow that creation is in any

¹⁹⁴ Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 607.

¹⁹⁵ See Alan Vincelette, *Recent Catholic Philosophy: The Nineteenth Century* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 50, 56.

¹⁹⁶ William Mander, "Pantheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/pantheism/>>.

¹⁹⁷ This type of objection will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

serious sense *identical* with God's being. It would seem odd to think that God in creating the world of necessity entails that the world is ontologically identical to him. Therefore, because (1) DSC does not entail that God created with the same necessity as he necessarily loves himself, and because (2) DCS does not reduce to a pantheistic metaphysical monism, I conclude that DSC is consistent with the First Vatican General Council. It follows, then, that DL is not necessarily demanded from this later Church council.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER

In this chapter I began by examining the claim from Morris and Hasker, along with Copan and Craig, that DL is the traditional view of God's freedom. I first explored what can be found within Authoritative Writings with respect to God's freedom. Here I concluded that the testimony from Holy Scripture and two Ecumenical creeds (the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed) does not demand a libertarian understanding of divine freedom. Although DL is consistent with both these forms of authoritative writings, nevertheless DL is not demanded by either of them. I further argued, and concluded, that DSC is consistent with both these expressions of authoritative writings.

I next looked at what could be gleaned about God's freedom consulting significant theological figures. Looking to Augustine, (Anselm via Rogers), Aquinas, and Edwards as sufficient representatives of the Christian tradition, I pointed out that Augustine and Edwards readily affirm something akin to DSC, and are thus clearly opposed to DL while Aquinas leans more towards a libertarian outlook. The conclusion of my argument in this section is that, given Augustine, Anselm, and Edwards, DSC seems to be the preferred view of God's freedom. The overarching conclusion of this chapter, then, is that DSC is consistent with the claims of the Christian tradition with respect to divine freedom, and thus DL is not necessarily the traditional view of God's freedom. Although I have not examined the Christian tradition exhaustively, but merely sampled it, what I have indeed sampled is sufficient to claim that DSC is anything but a deviation from the Christian tradition. In fact, given Augustine, Anselm, and Edwards, DSC seems to be demanded by it. Therefore, what I have shown in this chapter is that DL is at best only one option within the Christian tradition and that DSC is another alternative option.

CHAPTER FOUR: DIVINE SOURCE COMPATIBILISM AND DIVINE ASEITY

We have seen in chapter three that the idea that God creates from an internal necessity (which DSC affirms) has a respected place within the Christian tradition. At this point, however, another important question arises and needs to be dealt with: Does the idea that God creates from an internal necessity (which DSC affirms) somehow call into question a fundamental divine attribute theists typically call *divine aseity*? The term aseity, by itself, is derived from the Latin phrase *a se*, meaning “from or by itself.”¹⁹⁸ Aseity thus applied to God captures the absolute independence, self-sufficiency, and self-existence of God, such that he is *from himself* in all respects. This does not entail the view that God creates himself. The phrase *a se* is typically taken in a negative way: God does not have some lack or need which must be fulfilled by some external person or principle, nor is he a product of factors or agencies working independently of him.

Nevertheless, a number of philosophical theologians have recently asserted what we will call proposition (A):

(A) Necessarily, if God creates from an internal necessity, then God cannot have aseity (i.e., be from himself).

According to (A), there is inconsistency between divine aseity and the idea that God creates from an internal necessity alone. Consider, for example, the way in which John Frame highlights (A):

We are inclined to say that God would still be God, even if he had chosen not to create Steve Hays. So we say that God’s creation of Hays is a free act, not a necessary one. The same consideration applies equally to all of God’s creative acts. Not only Hays, but the whole world is, we say, a free creation of God, not one in which he was constrained, even by his own nature. The same may be said of providence and especially redemption, for the very idea of grace seems to imply that God might have chosen otherwise. God’s nature, it seems, does not force him to create or redeem. For if he must create or redeem, even if the necessity comes from his own nature, it would seem that he owes

¹⁹⁸ See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant and Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 47.

something to the creation, that the creation has a claim on him (contrary to his aseity; see chapter 26).¹⁹⁹

Similarly, James Beilby claims that:

[W]hile God's choice was free in that it was self-determined—it was neither indeterminate nor externally determined—for divine aseity to be maintained, self-determination is necessary, but not sufficient. Divine aseity requires that God's decision to create the world be free in a libertarian sense of the word—God possessed *power to the contrary* of his choice. While he was not and could never be “disinterested” in his decision, there was nothing—either external to him or *part of his internal nature*—that necessitated one choice or made another impossible. Divine aseity, therefore, requires not only that God's choice be free—that is, self-determined—but that it not be internally necessitated.²⁰⁰

As a last proponent of proposition (A), K. Scott Oliphant argues:

(2) God's will is free, in that he is able to and *does* make choices and commits himself to actions that were in no way necessary....If we give up 2, then creation becomes necessary, and, again, his essential aseity is compromised.²⁰¹

Critics, accordingly, argue that the alternative possibilities account of divine freedom (frequently called libertarianism) with respect to creating is *required* for divine aseity, and thus the idea that God creating from an internal necessity renders it impossible for God to be an independent, self-sufficient, and self-existent being.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 232.

²⁰⁰ James Beilby, “Divine Aseity, Divine Freedom: A Conceptual Problem for Edwardsian-Calvinism,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 47 (2004): 656 (emphases original). While Beilby's polemic is clearly exercised against Jonathan Edwards and those who follow him (i.e., Edwardsian-Calvinism), I nevertheless avoid the rhetorical language in order to simplify the discussion. In other words, I am simply drawing out the principles and arguments by which Beilby (and others) utilize while abstracting from the polemics of the original.

²⁰¹ K. Scott Oliphant, *God With Us: Divine Condescension and the Attributes of God* (Wheaton: Crossway Publishing, 2012), 230 (emphasis original).

²⁰² While the three proponents of proposition (A) which I have drawn attention to are *prima facie* sympathetic to some variant of the historic evangelical outlook on Christian theism, it may nevertheless be fortuitous that proposition (A) finds its expression therein. In other words, I do not want to give the impression that there is a necessary connection between proposition (A) and some variant of the historic evangelical outlook on Christian theism, lest I be taken to have a theological axe to grind.

In what follows I develop an argument for the consistency of divine aseity and the idea that God creates from an internal necessity, thus claiming that (A) is false. An exploration into the Judeo-Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* will expedite the argument. This doctrine will provide sufficient grounds for thinking that God has aseity. I then argue that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is consistent with the idea that God creates from an internal necessity. The following is a summary of my argument where N = God creates from an internal necessity; A = God has aseity; and C = God creates *ex nihilo*:

(P1) $(C \rightarrow A)$

(P2) $(N \wedge C)$

Therefore,

(C1) $(N \wedge A)$

Along the way I will consider possible objections to my argument.²⁰³

CREATIO EX NIHILO

While the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* is not explicitly to be found in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, it is nevertheless affirmed throughout the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In *Theophilus to Autolytus*, for example, written in the late second century, Theophilus held that:

[I]f God is uncreated and matter [is] uncreated, God is no longer, according to the Platonists, the Creator of all things, nor, so far as their opinions hold, is the monarchy [i.e. the existence of God as the sole first principle] of God established. And further, as God, because He is uncreated, is also unalterable; so if matter, too, were uncreated, it also would be unalterable, and equal to God; for that which is created is mutable and alterable, but that which is uncreated is immutable and unalterable. And what great thing is it if God made the world out of existent materials? For even a human artist, when he gets material from some one, makes of it what he pleases. But the power of

²⁰³ Contrary to proponents of proposition (A), my argument in this chapter resonates quite well with the statement made by Katherin Rogers: “God, unlike created agents, does not need open options to ground his aseity.” Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 190.

God is manifested in this, that out of things that are not He makes whatever He pleases.²⁰⁴

In this passage, while clearly arguing against the Platonic idea of the eternal existence of matter, Theophilus by implication endorses what we might call the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, where the central idea is that God willed into existence from nothing what formerly did not have existence. A later advocate of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* was Saint Augustine. Augustine characterizes the doctrine this way:

And so you, Lord, are not one thing here, another thing there, but the selfsame, very being itself, ‘holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty’ (Isa. 6: 3; Rev. 4: 8). In the beginning, that is from yourself, in your wisdom which is begotten of your substance, you made something and made it out of nothing. For you made heaven and earth not out of your own self, or it would be equal to your only-begotten Son and therefore [equal] to yourself. It cannot possibly be right for anything which is not of you to be equal to you. Moreover, there was nothing apart from you out of which you could make them, God one in three and three in one. That is why you made heaven and earth out of nothing...²⁰⁵

And, in his *Monologion*, Saint Anselm held that:

[S]ince all existing things exist through the supreme essence, and nothing can exist through him unless he either makes it or is the matter for it, it follows necessarily that nothing but him exists unless he makes it. And since nothing exists or has existed except him and the things made by him, he could not make anything at all through any instrument or assistance other than himself. Now whatever he made, he certainly made it either from something as its matter or from nothing. Therefore, since it is perfectly obvious that the essence of all things that exist, other than the supreme essence, was made by that same supreme essence, and that it does not exist from any matter, there is undoubtedly nothing more evident than this: the supreme essence alone, through himself, produced so great a mass of things...from nothing.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Theophilus, *Theophilus to Autolycus*, 2.4, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishing, 2004), 95.

²⁰⁵ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), XII, Chapter 7, 249.

²⁰⁶ Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion*, Chapter 7, in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 15.

An important element here of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is what we might call the “ontological difference” component. As Augustine states, “Thou created heaven and earth, *not out of Yourself*, for then they would be equal to Your Only-begotten, and thereby even to You.” What the ontological difference component asserts is the fact that there is a difference between the being of God and the being of creation. To put it negatively, according to *creatio ex nihilo*, creation cannot be an extension of God’s own being. Consequently, the ontological difference component highlights what is typically called the “Creator-creature” distinction.

In addition to the ontological difference component, there is also what we might call the “preexisting matter denial” component. The preexisting matter denial component claims that God created the world without consulting or using any preexisting matter, typically referring to Plato’s eternal matter as we saw from the remarks of Theophilus and Anselm. God, rather, simply brings the created order into a state of existence from a state of nonexistence by his will or decree. So, in light of the preexisting matter denial component, when one speaks of *creatio ex nihilo*, he ought not to think of “nothing” as a kind of eternal matter, or an ethereal “something” from which God created the world.

Now if we bear in mind both the ontological difference component and the preexisting matter denial component, the key idea of *creatio ex nihilo* (CEN) begins to emerge:

(CEN) For any doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, God creates out of nothing only if (i) that which is created is ontologically distinct from God’s own being and (ii) God does not create from any preexisting, eternal matter.

On the face of it (CEN) has some intuitive plausibility. In fact, Herman Bavinck, a nineteenth century proponent of *creatio ex nihilo*, captures the historical development of (CEN) as follows:

The expression *ex nihilo* was eagerly preserved in Christian theology only because it was admirably suited for cutting off all sorts of errors at the root. In the first place, it served as a defense against the paganistic notion of a formless stuff (*amorphos hyle*), from which not even Plato and Aristotle were able to extricate themselves. In paganism a human being is bound by matter, subject to sensuality and nature worship....In the second place, this expression [i.e., *ex nihilo*] rules out all emanation, every hint of an essential identity between God and the world....Creatures indeed have a being of their own, but this being has its efficient and exemplary cause in the being of God.

The teaching of creation out of nothing maintains that there is a distinction in essence between God and the world.²⁰⁷

What I take Bavinck to be highlighting is that there are only two possible sources (other than God's will) for the created order: either preexisting, eternal matter, or God's own being. However, since (CEN) rules out both of these possibilities with respect to the source of creation, the most plausible thing we are left to say is that there simply is no source for creation other than the will of God. Further, in saying that there is no source with respect to creation other than God's will is what is entailed by *creatio ex nihilo*. Consequently, (i) and (ii) represented in (CEN) are necessary and jointly sufficient for *creatio ex nihilo*.

Creatio ex Nihilo and Abstract Objects

However, Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, contemporary advocates of *creatio ex nihilo*, have recently argued that in order to sustain *creatio ex nihilo* God must also have created abstract objects (e.g., numbers, sets, properties, relations, propositions, and possible worlds). Here is what they say:

The chief theological failing of Platonism, and therefore the reason it is unacceptable to orthodox theists, is that Platonism is incompatible with the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and so fundamentally compromises divine aseity. For Platonism posits infinite realms of being [i.e., abstract objects] that are metaphysically necessary and uncreated by God.²⁰⁸

Here, one might think that Copan and Craig are advising that one denies the existence of abstract objects by the following argument: if *creatio ex nihilo* holds true, then abstract objects cannot exist. But Craig (at least) is not submitting that proposal. Rather, he states "But it is no part of my [anti-platonism] project to deny that abstract objects exist; I maintain only that *uncreated* abstract objects do not exist."²⁰⁹ With this caveat in mind, Craig further argues:

²⁰⁷ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*, vol. 2, ed. John Bolt; trans. by John Vreind (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 418-419.

²⁰⁸ Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 173. It is noteworthy that Copan and Craig here are motivated, like myself, to sustain divine aseity by way of *creatio ex nihilo*.

²⁰⁹ William Lane Craig, "Anti-Platonism," in *Beyond the Control of God: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects*, ed. Paul M. Gould (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 116 (emphasis added).

If confronted by a modern-day platonist defending an ontology which included causally effete objects which were *ageneta* and so co-eternal with God, they [i.e., the ante-Nicene Church Fathers] would have rejected such an account as blasphemous, since such an account would impugn God's aseity by denying its uniqueness and undermine *creatio ex nihilo* by denying that God is the universal ground of being. The Fathers could not therefore exempt such objects from God's creative power, since He is the sole and all-originating *agenetos*.²¹⁰

Now if Craig is correct, then *creatio ex nihilo* has the consequence that abstract objects (assuming they exist) must be created by God. Has Craig given us another required component to add to (CEN)? Much, of course, will depend on one's outlook with respect to the problem of God and abstract objects, that is, whether or not one thinks traditional theism is compatible with Platonism.

While the literature on this issue is vast and quickly growing, I simply cannot go too far afield with respect to the problem of God and abstract objects. Suffice it to say, however, that the theistic activist (who is motivated to harmonize Platonism with traditional theism) could *accept* Craig's (and Copan's) point that abstract objects must be created by God since the theistic activist does indeed hold that abstract objects are created by God, though eternally and perhaps necessarily.²¹¹ However, since Craig is exercised against any variant of Platonism he argues that theistic activism suffers from two principal difficulties:

First, modified Platonism [i.e., theistic activism] misconstrues either the scope or nature of creation. If we think of abstract objects as part of the order of dependent beings existing external to God, then the scope of *creatio ex nihilo* becomes miniscule....*Second*, the more serious problem with absolute creationism [i.e., theistic activism] is that it appears to be logically incoherent. On this view all abstract objects, including properties, are created by God. But then what about God's own properties? Does God create his own properties?...But to maintain that God does create his own properties pulls us

²¹⁰ William Lane Craig, "Anti-Platonism," 115.

²¹¹ See Thomas V. Morris and Christopher Menzel, "Absolute Creationism," in Thomas V. Morris, *Anselmian Explorations* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 167-178.

into a vicious circle: in order to create various properties, God must already possess those properties.²¹²

Nevertheless, on the other hand if one wants to *deny* Craig's requirement that abstract objects must be created by God but still maintain that abstract objects are *dependent* on God for their necessary existence, then it seems one might defer to some variety of divine conceptualism. Perhaps one could endorse the recent work by Greg Welty. According to Welty, "AOs [i.e., abstract objects] are necessarily existing, uncreated divine ideas that are distinct from God and dependent on God."²¹³ Welty further states that:

As a "theistic conceptual realist" I reject (3) [i.e., If abstract objects exist, then they are independent of God], though for a different reason than theistic activists. I argue that the platonistic tradition can accommodate AOs being *necessarily dependent* on God, in virtue of their being uncreated divine ideas that "play the role" of AOs with respect to all created reality. I think there are good reasons for thinking that AOs cannot *causally* depend on God, and so I part ways with theistic activists in this respect. Still, I maintain that AOs are *constitutively* dependent on God, for they are constituted by the divine ideas, which inhere in the divine mind and have no existence outside of it.²¹⁴

Similarly, Walter Schultz denies the proposition that abstract objects must be created by God while focusing on the idea of "omni-competence," that is, "that God is aware of his ability *ad extra*."²¹⁵ The idea of divine omni-competence, according to Schultz, accounts for "real possibilities," and thus "*God's eternal awareness of his omni-competence* is the [ontological]

²¹² Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing*, 175, 176 (emphases original). For a developed argument of Craig's second objection to theistic activism, see Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey Brower, "A Theistic Argument Against Platonism (and in Support of Truthmakers and Divine Simplicity)," in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, vol. 2, ed. Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 357-386. For a reply to Bergmann and Brower's objection to theistic activism, see Christopher Menzel, "Problems with the Bootstrapping Objection to Theistic Activism," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 53 (2016): 55-68.

²¹³ Greg Welty, "Theistic Conceptual Realism," in *Beyond the Control of God: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects*, ed. Paul M. Gould (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 81.

²¹⁴ Greg Welty, "Theistic Conceptual Realism," 81.

²¹⁵ Walter Schultz, "The Actual World from Platonism to Plans: An Emendation of Alvin Plantinga's Modal Realism," *Philosophia Christi*, 16 (2014): 93.

ground of all existence *ad extra*.”²¹⁶ He highlights “five things” concerning real possibilities which capture the essence of his outlook:

The first is that these possibilities—these “thoughts”—are eternal. They are constant features of God’s being....Second, these representations are necessary....[A] third feature, that whatever is possible, is *necessarily* possible. Fourth, the eternal *actuality* of these representations lies in God’s omni-competence and in their being aspects of God’s eternal awareness of such....Finally, it follows from these that God does *not* “create” these eternal and necessarily existent abstract objects *by* thinking them as though thinking were an instrumental cause of their existence....Here we have a general answer to the *Abstract Objects Problem* which shows how they can be eternally and necessarily existent while being ontologically dependent on God.²¹⁷

What we see here, according to both Welty and Schultz, are two plausible ways in which one might deny the proposition that God must create abstract objects.²¹⁸ Of course one might think that these two variations of divine conceptualism have serious costs and thus need to be abandoned. Craig, for instance, argues that the divine conceptualist (like Welty) is confused in stating that abstract objects exist *as divine ideas*. As Craig states,

He [i.e., Welty] therefore risks misleading his readers in affirming that *abstract objects* exist as ideas in the mind of God. For as a form of concrete realism...divine conceptualism denies that abstract objects exist. Welty should say, rather, that mathematical objects, for example, are ideas in the mind of God. Only in a note do we learn that Welty is speaking merely ‘functionally’ when he affirms that abstract objects are divine ideas. Properly speaking, there are, according to his view, only concrete objects, some of which are mental, rather than physical, in nature.²¹⁹

The point, however, in drawing attention both to Welty and Schultz is not to adjudicate their position over a contrary position, say, Craig’s. Instead, I am simply showing how one might

²¹⁶ Walter Schultz, “The Actual World from Platonism to Plans,” 95.

²¹⁷ Walter Schultz, “The Actual World from Platonism to Plans,” 94-95 (emphasis original).

²¹⁸ For a similar outlook to Welty and Schultz, see James C. McGlothlin, *The Logiphro Dilemma* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publications, forthcoming).

²¹⁹ William Lane Craig, “Anti-Platonism,” 100 (emphasis original). For Welty’s response to Craig, see “Response to Critics,” 108-109.

plausibly deny that abstract objects must be created by God, yet at the same time affirm that they are dependent on him. The motivation here, on my part, is to stipulate a more “minimalistic” approach to *creatio ex nihilo* while not compromising divine aseity. So, if the minimalistic approach to *creatio ex nihilo* can plausibly account for divine aseity, then *quanto magis* the added requirement from Copan and Craig will similarly account for divine aseity.

Principle of Existential Priority I

Since then there is *prima facie* good reason to be skeptical of the idea that abstract objects must be created by God, we will hereafter understand *creatio ex nihilo* (CEN) as previously stated:

(CEN) For any doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, God creates out of nothing only if (i) that which is created is ontologically distinct from God’s own being and (ii) God does not create anything from any preexisting, eternal matter.

Although (CEN) is arguably the fundamental principle of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, it nevertheless is not the only principle. Another principle operative within *creatio ex nihilo* that will be of major concern is what we will call the “Principle of Existential Priority I” (PEP I):

(PEP I) For any x and y, if x’s existence is prior (whether temporally or nontemporally) to y’s existence, then x cannot existentially depend on y’s existence.

According to (PEP I), if x’s existence is prior to y, then x’s existence cannot depend on y’s existence. This may be because the dependence relation (i.e., existential dependence) is asymmetrical. As Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* puts it, “Some things then are called prior and posterior...in respect of nature and substance, i.e. those which can be without other things, while the others cannot be without them.”²²⁰ Therefore, while y may (or may not) depend on x for its existence, x cannot depend on y for its existence if x’s existence is prior to y’s existence.

²²⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book V, Part 11, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, vol. 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1609. Although Aristotle does not use the word existence here but rather “nature” and “substance,” I follow Kit Fine in interpreting Aristotle to have an existential outlook in mind. See Kit Fine, “Ontological Dependence,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 95 (1995): 270.

One might initially wonder if there are counterexamples to (PEP I). It is difficult, however, to see what such a possible counterexample might look like. How could *x*'s existence depend on *y*'s existence provided *x*'s existence is *prior* to *y*'s existence? To expose the difficulty of a possible counterexample to (PEP I), consider first a non-temporal notion of priority where we make the claim that “sets existentially depend on their members.” It is plausible, here, that {Plato} depends in some way on Plato for its existence but that Plato does not depend in the same way on {Plato}. The dependence relation, in other words, is asymmetrical. Moreover, the type of dependence at hand here is not causal dependence since it could be plausibly argued that Plato does not cause {Plato}. Rather, it is an existential dependence, that is, a dependence which highlights the notion of existence. So, the fact that {Plato} depends on Plato for its existence can be seen in the proposition “Plato is *prior* to the existence of {Plato}.”

In addition to the non-temporal notion sketched above, temporal examples can also highlight the difficulty of a possible counterexample to (PEP I). Consider secondly the fact that children existentially depend on their parents. However, given that children existentially depend on their parents, parents cannot existentially depend on their children—the dependence relation is, again, asymmetrical. Of course this not to say that some child *C* existentially depends on her parents *P* and *Q* for *sustaining* her existence moment by moment since it seems obvious that child *C*'s parents could go out of existence and child *C* still exists. The point, rather, is that if parents *P* and *Q* did not exist, then some child *C* could not have come into existence. What this temporal example highlights is that child *C*'s initial existence depends on parents *P* and *Q*. So again, like Plato and his singleton, {Plato}, that child *C* existentially depends on parents *P* and *Q* can be captured in the proposition “Parents *P* and *Q* are *prior* to the existence of child *C*.”

Now in drawing attention to both a nontemporal and temporal scenario which are motivated to cast doubt on a possible counterexample to (PEP I), I have not given an account, analysis, or even a definition of existential dependence.²²¹ Instead, I have appealed to two different examples by highlighting that the notion of existential dependence is an asymmetrical

²²¹ For further explanation and discussion on existential dependence, see Tuomas E. Tahko and E. Jonathan Lowe, “Ontological Dependence,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/dependence-ontological/>>.

relation. So, while (PEP I) is certainly not proven at this point, we nevertheless have good reason to think that (PEP I) is more plausible than its negation.

ASEITY AGAIN

Existence Aseity and Essence Aseity

Now if one employs (PEP I) at this point, then one has a strong argument against the idea that the alternative possibilities account of divine freedom (i.e., DL) with respect to creating is required for divine aseity, and thus proposition (A) (i.e., Necessarily, if God creates from an internal necessity, then God cannot have aseity) is called into question. In other words, (PEP I) seems to accentuate the idea of divine aseity. To see this, consider the notion that God is existentially prior to creation captured by third-century theologian, Tertullian:

The fact of God being the One and only God asserts this rule, for He is the One-only God for the only reason that He is the sole God, and the sole God for the only reason that nothing existed with Him. Thus He must also be the First, since all things are posterior to Him; all things are posterior to Him for the reason that all things are by Him; all things are by Him for the reason that they are from nothing...for there is no power, no material, no nature of another substance which assisted Him.²²²

According to Tertullian, if *creatio ex nihilo* holds true, then “all things are by God.” Further, if all things are by God, then “all things are posterior to God.” It follows, therefore, that if *creatio ex nihilo* holds true, then all things are posterior to the creator.

Now what I take Tertullian to be emphasizing when concluding that all things are posterior to the creator is, what I have designated as, that the created order is *existentially* posterior to God. That is, the created order’s existence is posterior to God’s existence. For Tertullian, this is simply another way of asserting that God is existentially prior to creation: God’s existence is prior to the existence of the creation. But what is perhaps most important at this point is that if the antecedent of (PEP I) holds true when applied to God and creation (i.e., that God is existentially prior to creation), then God cannot existentially depend on creation, and is thus *a se* in respect of the creation. God’s existence cannot depend on the existence of the created order provided he is existentially prior to creation. To think otherwise would be to put

²²² Tertullian, *The Treatise Against Hermogenes*, (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1956), 48.

the cart before the horse. Consequently, God's existence is from himself. A more succinct way of putting this portion of my argument is as follows:

- (1) If *creatio ex nihilo* holds true, then God's existence is prior to the created order's existence. [from Tertullian]
- (2) If God's existence is prior to the created order's existence, then God's existence is independent of the created order's existence. [from PEP I]
- (3) Therefore, if *creatio ex nihilo* holds true, then God's existence is independent of the created order's existence.

One might object at this point and state that while God's *existence* is indeed prior to creation and thus from himself, he nevertheless is dependent on creation in some other way, a way that has nothing to do with his existence. Perhaps instead God is dependent on creation for his *essence* (or similarly for his identity) if he creates from an internal necessity. For as critics such as Frame and Beilby claim, "if his very deity requires him to create and redeem, then it would seem that his *deity* depends...on the world;"²²³ and "if it [i.e., God's choice to create] was internally necessitated, then God's nature would be such that he needed to create the world *to be who he was*."²²⁴ Beilby, at least, further amplifies divine neediness provided God creates from an internal necessity when he says:

Granted. God is not lacking....But even if it is granted that there is no deficiency or lack in God...it does *not* follow that God has no unfulfilled needs. It is possible to be needy either because of a deficiency—a lack that needs to be filled—or an abundance—a surplus that must be distributed. Either way, there is an unfulfilled need, a need that is met in the creative act.²²⁵

So, while it may be granted according to this objection from Frame and Beilby that God has *existential aseity* (i.e., that his existence is from himself), he nevertheless cannot have what we

²²³ John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 232 (emphasis added).

²²⁴ James Beilby, "Divine, Aseity, Divine Freedom," 656 (emphasis added).

²²⁵ James Beilby, "Divine Aseity, Divine Freedom," 653-654 (emphasis original).

might call *essence aseity* (i.e., that his essence is from himself) if he creates from an internal necessity.²²⁶

How might we respond to this type of objection? Does God's essence depend on creation provided he creates from an internal necessity while his existence survives unscathed? First, one might respond to this objection by arguing that the distinction between existential aseity and essence aseity cannot have application in God's case given *classical* theism. For, according to classical theism, as an aspect of his aseity God cannot be composed of parts, and thus denies that he is a metaphysical composite. Rather, God is simple in that he is identical to his essence and his essence is identical to his existence. According to divine simplicity, then, God's existential aseity would be identical to his essence aseity, and thus the distinction cannot be applied to God as critics would have it.

To better understand this response from divine simplicity here is an analogy inspired by William Mann:

When Jones says that the highest mountain in the world is Everest while Smith counters that the highest mountain in the world is Chomolungma, we can say that the dispute between them is merely verbal, or merely epistemological: Jones and Smith are necessarily reporting the same fact (if they report a fact at all.) The dispute evaporates once one realizes that Everest = Chomolungma.²²⁷

Similarly, then, a proponent of divine simplicity can regard existential aseity as referring to the same reality as his essence aseity.

Principle of Existential Priority II

²²⁶ Beilby makes a similar distinction between what he calls "ontological aseity" and "psychological aseity," where the former highlights that "He is uncaused, without beginning, not dependent on an external person, principle, or metaphysical reality for his existence," while the latter captures that "There is no lack or need in God. He is fully self-satisfied, not needing anything outside of himself to be happy or fulfilled." James Beilby, "Divine Aseity, Divine Freedom," 648. In order to avoid semantic confusion at this point, I take Beilby's ontological aseity to refer to the same thing as my existential aseity, while his psychological aseity is a subcategory of my essence aseity (assuming God's *essence* is to be happy and fulfilled).

²²⁷ William E. Mann, "The Metaphysics of Divine Love," in *Metaphysics and God: Essays in Honor of Eleonore Stump*, ed. Kevin Timpe (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2009), 81.

But even if the demands of classical theism are laid aside, a second response would be to argue more generally that existential aseity implies essence aseity. Let us assume with metaphysician, E. J. Lowe, that x's essence is constitutive of a set of essential properties and an essential property is a property which x possesses at all times in every possible world.²²⁸ Consider, then, another important principle of *creatio ex nihilo* which we will call the "Principle of Existential Priority II" (PEP II):

(PEP II) For any x and y, if x's existence is prior (whether temporally or non-temporally) to y's existence, then x cannot depend for its essence on y's existence.

To see the plausibility in (PEP II) as it applies to God, we might ask the following types of questions: *Who* is this God that has existential aseity? Does he not also have an essence prior to creation? If critics such as Frame and Beilby reply, "this God who has existential aseity also has essence aseity prior to creation," then aseity undoubtedly is upheld and there does not seem to be a problem. If, however, they say "this God who has existential aseity does not have essence aseity prior to creation," then they seem to commit themselves to a God who has deficiencies *ab initio*, and thus much of their effort and commitment to proposition (A) is simply question begging from the outset. Consequently, if God's existence is prior to the created order's existence (which Frame and Beilby seem to grant via the distinction between existential aseity and essence aseity), then God's essence cannot depend on the created order's existence.

But there is more. In order to further expose the shortcomings of this type of objection, the following is a *reductio* facing both Frame and Beilby. Let us assume from the outset (and I realize that this is no insignificant assumption) that God is a temporal being.²²⁹ (1) Suppose that the idea that God creates from an internal necessity entails the denial of divine essence aseity unless God creates a universe *ad extra*, fulfilling a need thereby. (2) Suppose further that any universe created *ad extra* to fulfill a need is either bounded in time or not bounded in time. (3)

²²⁸ See E. J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96.

²²⁹ While Beilby is silent on God's relation to time, it nevertheless needs to be noted that Frame affirms a hybrid view of God's relation to time, such that God is both temporal and atemporal. As Frame states: "I shall argue...that God is indeed temporal in his immanence, but that he is (most likely) atemporal in his transcendence. He exists in time as he exists throughout creation. But he also...exists beyond time, as he exists beyond creation." John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 549.

Now on the one hand, if a universe created *ad extra* to fulfill a need is bounded in time, then it is not possible for such a God to possess essence aseity since his aseity would be coterminous with the universe, that is, a temporal and contingent aseity which is not possible. (4) On the other hand, if a universe created *ad extra* to fulfill a need is not bounded in time, then it is not possible that God ever becomes possessed of aseity since a universe not bounded in time does not have a last moment, and thus is never completed. (5) So, it not possible for such a God to possess aseity or to become possessed of aseity. To reiterate, given the fact that God creates from an internal necessity, God neither can possess aseity *ab initio* nor can he acquire it.

Another way of looking at this *reductio* argument against Frame and Beilby is to highlight the fact that God cannot come to possess aseity even were he to necessarily create the universe out of a need to do so. A plausible assumption in this discussion is that possessing aseity is a necessary feature of Godhood. But since it is not possible for God to fulfill the conditions necessary to achieve aseity by creating (as was shown above), necessarily God cannot be God. But this is absurd. Contextualizing this a bit, when Beilby, for instance, says, “God’s nature would be such that he needed to create the world to be who he was” he is alleging that God can only possess essence aseity by necessarily creating—God then comes to be who he is. However, if God were to create in these circumstances, then he would in fact not be God since what he creates supposedly to “complete” his aseity is finite, and thus God fails to be *a se* by an infinite margin.

THE NECESSITY OF CREATION AND CREATIO EX NIHILO

At this point a critic may concede the argument of the preceding subsection, namely, that if (CEN) holds true and (PEP I) and (PEP II) are operative principles within *creatio ex nihilo*, then God has aseity with respect to both his existence and his essence, while nonetheless object in claiming that (CEN) is *inconsistent* with the fact that God creates from an internal necessity. And, if this objection is sound, then divine aseity is indeed inconsistent with the idea that God creates from an internal necessity. So, in this section I will defend the consistency of (CEN) and the idea that God creates from an internal necessity.

Does the Necessity of Creation Imply either Panentheism or Pantheism?

To begin, one might wonder what sort of support an objector would offer for the proposition that (CEN) is inconsistent with the idea that God creates from an internal necessity. Consider the remarks by Thomas McCall, where he first summarizes two options with respect to divine action:

(A) Divine action with respect to creation is necessary (though still free in the compatibilist sense of freedom);

or

(B) Divine action with respect to creation is contingent.²³⁰

Taking into consideration these two options concerning divine action, McCall argues as follows:

If (A) [i.e., divine action with respect to creation is necessary though free in a compatibilist sense], *then we are right back to panentheism*. The assessment of Edwards made by the Reformed theologian John W. Cooper would be appropriate here as well: This view [i.e., (A)] is ‘best construed philosophically as a panentheism that borders on Spinozan pantheism.’ Historical considerations aside, we can see that with (A) comes the necessity of creation—thus God could not exist without creation....What is this once again but the denial of divine aseity?²³¹

Similarly, Frame makes a distinction between God’s “necessary” actions (e.g., the Father generating the Son) and God’s (libertarianly) “free” actions (e.g., creation).²³² But, like McCall, in light of the idea that God creates from an internal necessity, Frame claims there to be a problem:

Now...no such distinction [between God’s necessary actions and God’s free actions], apparently, is possible. If...God’s only freedom is freedom from external constraint, then God’s redeeming us is just as necessary to his nature

²³⁰ Thomas H. McCall, “We Believe in God’s Sovereign Goodness: A Rejoinder to John Piper,” *Trinity Journal* 29, (2008): 237.

²³¹ Thomas H. McCall, “We Believe in God’s Sovereign Goodness,” 237 (emphasis added). It is noteworthy here that McCall in this quotation, like Frame, Beilby, and Oliphant also asserts that the idea that God creates from an internal necessity is inconsistent with divine aseity. McCall, in other words, also endorses proposition (A).

²³² John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2015), 721.

as the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. *But anyone trained in theology should be able to see the pantheizing tendency here.*²³³

According to both McCall and Frame, the dreadful consequence of the idea that God creates from an internal necessity is that panentheism (a la McCall) or pantheism (a la Frame) seems to follow. Panentheism, speaking in general, is the view which states all reality is in God (“all-in-God-ism”), that is, is an emanation from him.²³⁴ Pantheism, on the other hand, makes the stronger identity claim asserting that all reality is God. Therefore, McCall and Frame allegedly argue that if God creates from an internal necessity, then either all of reality is a participant in the divine nature or all of reality is identical to God’s own being.

Now before responding to McCall's and Frame’s argument I want to express a minor quibble regarding McCall’s usage of John Cooper’s work, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers*. McCall, like Beilby mentioned in my footnote 3, is also exercised against Jonathan Edwards and those who follow him (i.e., Edwardsian-Calvinism). McCall, accordingly, claims that if *Edwards* asserts that God creates from an internal necessity, then Edwards is committed to panentheism. In support of this claim, as we can see from the above quotation, McCall draws from the sentiments of Cooper. However, upon a closer look at Cooper’s claims I fail to see that Cooper is arguing (apparently as an ally with McCall) that if Edwards (or anybody for that matter) holds to (A), then he is committed to panentheism. Here is a lengthier quotation from Cooper which McCall refers to:

It is clear why scholars debate whether Edwards is a panentheist or pantheist. Like Spinoza, he regards God as the only substance and embraces a deterministic view of God’s relation to the world. Creatures are simply direct projections of God’s mind and power, individual divine thoughts and acts. This sounds like pantheism. Yet Edwards affirms God’s transcendence of creation in ways impossible for Spinoza. He cannot say that *God* and *Nature* are two terms for the same substance. He does not regard the productivity of nature (*Natura naturans*) as divine. Moreover, although he agrees with Spinoza that humans are not substances, Edwards affirms that humans retain their individual existence everlastingly, a doctrine that Spinoza denies. These factors point away from pantheistic monism. But Edwards lacks the robust

²³³ John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology*, 721 (emphasis added).

²³⁴ See John W. Cooper, *Panentheism, The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

ontological Creator-creature distinction of classical theism. For him, creatures are divine thoughts. All things considered, his affirmation that ‘the whole is *of* God, and *in* God, and *to* God’ is best construed philosophically as panentheism that borders on Spinozan pantheism.²³⁵

Nowhere here does Cooper state that panentheism *follows* from the necessity of creation much less from a compatibilist outlook of divine freedom. Rather, what I take Cooper to be claiming is that panentheism follows for Edwards simply because “For him [i.e., Edwards], creatures are divine thoughts.”²³⁶ So, I fail see that these sentiments from Cooper could function as support for McCall’s argument that panentheism follows from the idea that God creates from an internal necessity.

Yet despite this minor quibble, although McCall and Frame do not explicitly state that *creatio ex nihilo* is inconsistent with the idea that God creates from an internal necessity, there is nevertheless good reason to think that this is an implication of what they are arguing. Recall that one of the required conditions for (CEN) is (i): *what is created by God is ontologically distinct from God’s own being*. However, if McCall and Frame are correct that either panentheism or pantheism follow from the fact that God creates from an internal necessity, then it is not the case that what is created by God is ontologically distinct from God, and is thus a denial of *creatio ex nihilo*. McCall and Frame, in other words, argue that (i) of (CEN) is called into question given the fact that God creates from an internal necessity. Here is an augmented version of McCall’s and Frame’s argument, as I understand them:

- (1) If God creates from an internal necessity, then either panentheism or pantheism follows.
- (2) If either panentheism or pantheism is true, then it is not the case that the created order is ontologically distinct from God.
- (3) If it is not the case that the created order is ontologically distinct from God, then *creatio ex nihilo* does not hold true.
- (4) Therefore, if God creates from an internal necessity, then *creatio ex nihilo* does not hold true.

²³⁵ John W. Cooper, *Panentheism*, 77 (emphases original).

²³⁶ John W. Cooper, *Panentheism*, 77.

A Response to McCall and Frame

While this is indeed a valid argument, I fail to see the plausibility in premise (1) which is where McCall's and Frame's main contention lies. For traditional theism stipulates that there is a conceptual distinction, as we have seen, between what God is and what God does *ad extra* such that what he is is prior (temporally or nontemporally) to what he does. To think otherwise would be to blur the distinction between God's being and the being of creation. It is simply incoherent to assert the character of what God does *ad extra* without conceptually presupposing the existence and being of God as distinct from the creation. But the stipulation of traditional theism that there is a conceptual distinction between the being of God and the actions of God *ad extra* seems to be consistent with the idea that God creates from an internal necessity. And if so, then premise (1) of Frame's and McCall's argument is false.

Perhaps an earthbound illustration may help further drive home the point that premise (1) is false, and thus highlight the fact that the necessity of creation is consistent with *creatio ex nihilo*. Suppose you find yourself along a beach and observe "Johnny" playing in the sand. Suppose further that Johnny is so full of joy that he cannot help but build a sandcastle. That is, Johnny builds the sandcastle from an internal necessity, namely, his own joy. However, taking into account this illustration, it seems rather obvious that Johnny is not ontologically identical with the sandcastle nor is it the case that the sandcastle is a participant in the very being of Johnny. In other words, just because Johnny creates the sandcastle from an internal necessity, it does not necessarily follow that Johnny is ontologically one with the sandcastle or that the sandcastle is part of Johnny's being.

Of course it may be objected that this analogy breaks down since Johnny's building of the sandcastle is not an instance of *creatio ex nihilo*. Fair enough. However, highlighting this fact would in effect bolster my argument instead of detracting from it. For, it seems reasonable to think that if Johnny (who does not create *ex nihilo*) is not ontologically one with the sandcastle, then *quanto magis* it is not the case that God (who does create *ex nihilo*) is ontologically one with creation. So, even if divine compatibilism holds true, the relationship between God and the world in all other regards could affirm the absolute Creator-creature distinction of traditional theism, which denies that the world is ontologically identical to God or an ontologically participant in the divine nature. It is simply a mistake on the part of McCall and Frame to think

that panentheism or pantheism follows given the fact that the divine action to create is performed from an internal necessity. The idea that God creates from an internal necessity is, therefore, consistent with the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER

We have seen in this chapter that a number of philosophical theologians propound what we have called proposition (A): Necessarily, if God creates from an internal necessity, then God cannot have aseity (i.e., be from himself). However, I have argued in this chapter that the idea that God creates from an internal necessity is consistent with divine aseity, and thus that proposition (A) is false. My argument was founded upon the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* along with operative principles within this doctrine, namely, (PEP I) and (PEP II). I then argued that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is consistent with the idea that God creates from an internal necessity.

CHAPTER FIVE: DIVINE SOURCE COMPATIBILISM AND DIVINE THANKWORTHINESS

In the previous chapter I argued that DSC is consistent with divine aseity, that is, I argued that DL is not required for God to be *a se*. My argument was founded upon the Judeo-Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*: if God created *ex nihilo*, then God has aseity. I then further argued that the idea that God creates from an internal necessity is consistent with *creatio ex nihilo*. Thus, I concluded that divine aseity is consistent with the idea that God creates from an internal necessity. However, does DSC somehow violate some other non-negotiable property of perfect being theism? Here I will take a close look at what might be the stiffest challenge for a compatibilist model of divine freedom that tries to preserve perfect being theism, namely, the charge that DSC violates divine thankworthiness.

It is typical within the circles of the philosophy of religion to think that if the alternative possibilities condition is denied (as DSC holds), then some agent, like God, is not thankworthy for performing some token act necessarily, such as creating the best possible world. Robert Adams, for instance, asserts that the praise to God found within the Judeo-Christian Psalms “seem quite incongruous with the idea that God created us because if He had not He would have failed to bring about the best possible states of affairs.”²³⁷ Similarly, Laura Garcia claims that if one denies the alternative possibilities condition with respect to divine freedom, then “gratitude towards God as creator seems inappropriate.”²³⁸ And most recently William Rowe has forcefully argued “that other non-libertarian notions of freedom [e.g., DSC] in which God may be said to be free with respect to creation are insufficient to support our being thankful and grateful to God for creating the world he has created.”²³⁹

²³⁷ Robert M. Adams, “Must God Create the Best?,” *Philosophical Review*, 81 (1972): 325.

²³⁸ Laura L. Garcia, “Divine Freedom and Creation,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 42 (1992): 192.

²³⁹ William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7.

What we see here, according to these critics, is that divine thankworthiness is the idea that God is worthy of gratitude for *what he has done* (e.g., creating this particular world). Theists frequently differentiate divine thankworthiness from the idea of divine praiseworthiness, where the former concentrates on God's actions, while the latter draws attention to God's being or character.²⁴⁰ In the view of some, divine praiseworthiness is the acceptable idea that God is worthy of our gratitude for *who he is*. But critics argue that the alternative possibilities condition is required for divine thankworthiness, and thus DSC renders it impossible for God to be worthy of thanks with respect to his actions. Although these two ways of expressing gratitude toward God may be interrelated, divine thankworthiness will be the sole focus of our discussion in this chapter.

Can the consistency of DSC and divine thankworthiness be defended? Two further premises need to be highlighted that seem to provide support for the argument against DSC and divine thankworthiness. The first premise claims that God cannot be responsible for performing some token act *A* if he performs token act *A* necessarily.²⁴¹ The second premise claims that God is thankworthy for performing some token act *A* only if God is responsible for performing token act *A*. That these two premises function as support for threatening the consistency of DSC and divine thankworthiness will become apparent as the chapter develops.

THE BASIC ARGUMENT (BA) AGAINST DSC AND DIVINE THANKWORTHINESS

Let us call the argument against DSC and divine thankworthiness the "Basic Argument" (BA):

²⁴⁰ See, for example, Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, revised edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 292; Thomas Senor, "Defending Divine Freedom," in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 168-195; and W. Paul Franks, "Divine Freedom and Free Will Defenses," *The Heythrop Journal*, 56 (2015): 108-119.

²⁴¹ In each case from now on "responsible" is to be understood in the moral sense as opposed to, say, "causally responsible." That God is *morally* responsible inevitably engenders discussion as to whether or not God is a moral agent. For further discussion on this issue, see Brian Davies, "Is God a Moral Agent?," in *Whose God? Which Tradition?: The Nature of Belief in God*, ed. D. Z. Phillips (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 97-122; and David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49-63.

P1. If God performs token act *A* necessarily, then God cannot be responsible for performing token act *A*.

P2. If God cannot be responsible for performing token act *A*, then God cannot be thanked for performing token act *A*.

C1. Therefore, if God performs token act *A* necessarily, then God cannot be thanked for performing token act *A*.

The conclusion of the argument implies that DSC and thankworthiness are inconsistent since the antecedent of P1 (i.e., that God performs token act *A* necessarily) is part and parcel of DSC. The Divine Source Compatibilist, therefore, is pressed to reject either P1 or P2 of (BA).

My response will be divided into the following parts. In section II, I consider the most typical approach to defend the consistency of DSC and divine thankworthiness, namely, to reject P1 of (BA). In section III, I favor a less obvious way of defending the consistency between DSC and divine thankworthiness, one which denies P2 of (BA). My response to (BA) is founded upon what I will call the “gracious-and-necessary” condition (i.e., that God can be gracious with respect to some token act he performs while he does it necessarily) and the “thankworthy-if-gracious” condition (i.e., that God is thankworthy with respect to performing a token act so long as the act he performed is a gracious act). Along the way I will consider possible objections to my argument.

NECESSITY AND DIVINE RESPONSIBILITY

Rowe’s Support for P1 of (BA)

How might one begin to offer support for P1 of (BA)? While critical of the consistency of God’s essential perfect goodness and divine freedom, William Rowe nevertheless argues that in order for God to be *responsible* for performing some token act necessarily, God must first cause himself to have the properties that constitute his nature, which in turn necessitate token acts.

Here is what Rowe says:

If someone’s having a certain property or nature necessitates his behaving in a certain way, it doesn’t immediately follow that...he is a fit subject for praise or blame for behaving in that way. And the reason these things don’t follow is that we need first to establish that our agent is *responsible* for his having the property or nature that necessitates his behaving in that way. Of course, if his

having the property in question is owing to the independent activity of some agent other than himself, or the result of factors outside of him over which he has no control, then he isn't responsible for the behavior that is necessitated by his possession of the property in question. And, in God's case, we can exclude both of these seeming possibilities. For no other agent causes God to have the nature he has. And no factors 'outside of him' over which he has no control bring it about that he has the nature that he does. But the question still to be answered is this: Does God cause himself to have the properties constituting his nature, properties that necessitate his always doing what is best? And if the answer is that God himself is *not responsible* for his possession of the properties that constitute his nature, then we have thus far not received a sufficient reason for thinking that God is responsible for, and to be praised for, the actions he performs and cannot avoid performing, owing to his possession of the properties constituting his perfect nature.²⁴²

According to the above statements, what I take Rowe to be arguing here is that the only way for God to be responsible for some token act which he performs necessarily, is for God to first cause his own properties (and apparently then be in possession of those properties) which in turn necessitate the token act: God must cause his own properties in order to be responsible for performing some token act necessarily. However, if God does not cause himself to have the properties which constitute his own nature, then we have not arrived at a sufficient reason for thinking that God is responsible for performing some token act necessarily, such as doing what is best. Moreover, if there is not a sufficient reason for thinking that God is responsible for performing some token act necessarily, then God is not to be thanked for what he does. Contextualizing this a bit, we might say that, according to Rowe, in order for DSC to account for divine responsibility, DSC needs also to adopt the view where God causes his own nature.²⁴³

Two Possible Responses to Rowe's Argument for P1 of (BA): Conceding the Point and Identifying a Sufficient Condition for Responsibility

But must God cause his own properties, which in turn necessitate some token act, in order to sustain divine responsibility? There seem to be, as far as I can see, at least two possible ways of responding to this line of argumentation for premise (1) of (BA). According to the first response, one could simply concede Rowe's point and admit that God does indeed cause himself

²⁴² William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?*, 141 (emphases original).

²⁴³ It is unclear whether or not Rowe thinks that the alternative possibilities condition is required with respect to God causing himself to have the properties which constitute his nature.

to have the properties that constitute his nature, which necessitate the token act. As mentioned, this would allow God to be mediately responsible for performing some token act necessarily. A second line of response, however, would be to identify a sufficient condition concerning responsibility, while at the same time denying the proposition that “God must cause his own nature” is necessary. Let us see what can be made of these two possible responses.

A first line of response could be to concede the point and admit that God does indeed cause himself to have the properties which constitute his nature. That is, God’s essential properties are somehow dependent on him for their existence. This view, as we saw in chapter 4, has recently been called “theistic activism” and has most forcefully been articulated by Thomas Morris and Christopher Menzel, a view they call “absolute creationism.”²⁴⁴ For his part, Morris puts it this way:

[A]ll properties...are God’s concepts, the products, or perhaps better, the contents of divine intellective activity....Unlike human concepts, then, which are graspings of those properties that exist ontologically distinct from and independent of those graspings, divine concepts are those very properties themselves.²⁴⁵

Similarly, Menzel adds:

[A]ctivism views abstract objects as the contents of a certain kind of divine intellective activity in which God is essentially engaged. Roughly, they are God’s thoughts, concepts, and perhaps certain other products of God’s “mental life.” This divine activity is thus causally efficacious: the abstract objects that exist at any given moment, as products of God’s mental life, exist *because* God is thinking them; which is just to say that God creates them.²⁴⁶

What we see here, according to Morris and Menzel, is that the activity (hence activism) of the divine intellect is what causes the existence and instantiation of *all* properties, namely, properties

²⁴⁴ See Christopher Menzel, “Theism, Platonism, and the Metaphysics of Mathematics,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 4 (1987): 365-382.

²⁴⁵ Thomas V. Morris, *Anselmian Explorations* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 166.

²⁴⁶ Christopher Menzel, “God and Mathematical Objects,” in *Mathematics in a Postmodern Age: A Christian Perspective*, eds. Russel W. Howell and W. James Bradley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 73 (emphasis original).

that depend on God's intellectual activity for their existence and instantiation.²⁴⁷ Consequently, *divine* properties, even essential properties, depend on God's intellectual activity for their existence and instantiation. Moreover, since God instantiates a nature, which is usually understood as a set of compossible properties, theistic activism entails the proposition that God causes his own nature. So, on this response, if it is convincing, the divine source compatibilist would also have to be a theistic activist when accounting for divine responsibility (and divine thankworthiness): God causes his own essential properties which constitute his nature, and those properties necessitate token actions.

Not many, however, are willing to follow Morris and Menzel down the theistic activist trail. The major problem with this type of response is that it seems to result either in a vicious explanatory circle or, similarly, results in an infinite regress of properties that God causes himself to have. With respect to circularity, Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey Brower put the problem this way:

If a view such as theistic activism is true, then every property (or exemplifiable) will be a product of God's creative activity. But this implies the general principle that, for any property *F*, God's creating *F* is a prerequisite for, and hence logically prior to, *F*. Notice, however, that in order to create *F*, God must have the property of *being able to create a property*. Here is where the trouble begins. For on the one hand, it would seem that this property (i.e. *being able to create a property*) must be logically prior to God's creating it, since God's having it is a prerequisite for the creation of *any* property. On the other hand, however, it would also seem that this property must be logically posterior to God's creating it, since insofar as it is a property...it must fall under the general principle articulated in AD, and hence be a product of God's creative activity. Evidently, therefore, in order for it to be true that God is the creator of all properties, there must be a property—namely, *being able to create a property*—that is both logically prior and

²⁴⁷ While Rowe is silent on whether or not the alternative possibilities condition is required with respect to God causing the existence and instantiation of all properties, even divine properties, Morris seems to commit himself to the notion that the alternatives possibilities is *not* required. As he says: "If they [i.e., abstract objects] are necessities, he [i.e., God] creates them, or gives them being, in every possible situation. But if they owe their being to God, as they must on an absolutely thoroughgoing theism, their necessity does not entail their aseity or ontological independence. Necessity is compatible with createdness." Thomas V. Morris, *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology*, (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2002), 157.

logically posterior to God's creating properties. Assuming that logical priority is an asymmetrical relation, however, this conclusion is obviously absurd.²⁴⁸

Rowe, similarly, is critical of theistic activism since such a position implies an infinite regress of properties that God causes himself to have, which, consequently, is incoherent. He puts the objection this way:

[I]n virtue of what does God have the property of necessarily willing his being perfect? Here we approach a dilemma: If we say in virtue of his being perfect, then it isn't true that God is both the cause of his divine properties and the cause of his possession of those properties. For one of the divine properties—the property of necessarily willing his being perfect—is a property God has but doesn't cause himself to have. So, the dilemma... seems to be this: either God has a property he does not cause himself to have or there is an infinite regress of properties that God must cause himself to have.²⁴⁹

Accordingly, if God has some essential property he does not cause himself to have, then theistic activism does not hold true. On the other hand, if God causes his own nature, then there is an infinite regress of properties which God causes himself to have, which apparently is a problem. Because of the worries of circularity and regress with respect to God's properties, theistic activism does not seem to be a strong response to premise (1) of (BA).

The discussion continues, unsurprisingly, with respect to the plausibility of theistic activism. Menzel, for instance, argues that Bergmann and Brower's "bootstrapping" criticism to theistic activism "is open to significant objections on several fronts."²⁵⁰ First, Menzel argues "that there is no cogent grounds for taking the relation of logical priority that is so central to BBBO [i.e., Bergmann and Brower's bootstrapping objection] to be a genuine, fundamental relation;" and second, "even if we admit such a relation [of logical priority] exists, there is strong

²⁴⁸ Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey Brower, "A Theistic Argument against Platonism (and in Support of Truthmakers and Divine Simplicity)," in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, vol. 2, ed. Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 366 (emphases original).

²⁴⁹ William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?*, 156-157.

²⁵⁰ Christopher Menzel, "Problems with the Bootstrapping Objection to Theistic Activism," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 53 (2016): 55.

reasons for thinking it is not asymmetrical.”²⁵¹ Menzel concludes, in light of these two arguments, that the bootstrapping objection is not a good reason to abandon theistic activism.²⁵²

Nevertheless, whether or not one is convinced by Menzel’s response to the bootstrapping objection against theistic activism, a second type of response to P1 of (BA) could be to identify some sufficient condition with respect to responsibility, while at the same time denying that the proposition “God causes his own nature” is necessary. This type of response has recently been propounded by Michael Bergmann and Jan Cover, where they argue that “to be responsible for [action] A involves being the front end of the causal chain issuing in A: S is responsible for her act A so long as the causal buck for A stops with S.”²⁵³ In developing what it means to be the front end of the causal chain, Bergmann and Cover employ the idea of “agent-causation.” On their account, “X is the agent-cause of *e* iff each of the following three conditions is satisfied:

1. X is a substance that had the power to bring about *e*.
2. X exerted its power to bring about *e*.
3. Nothing distinct from X (not even X’s character) caused X to exert its power to bring about *e*.”²⁵⁴

Notice here, that according to Bergmann and Cover, the alternative possibilities condition is not required for responsibility. As they state, “The option we should like now to pursue is that God is responsible for each of his good acts even though his nature entails that he couldn’t do otherwise than perform the good acts he performs.”²⁵⁵ Consequently, an agent, such as God, is responsible

²⁵¹ Christopher Menzel, “Problems with the Bootstrapping Objection to Theistic Activism,” 57.

²⁵² Since the thesis of this chapter, as mention in the introduction, is primarily concerned with P2 of (BA), I leave it to the reader at this point to investigate further whether or not Menzel has successfully answered Bergmann and Brower’s bootstrapping objection.

²⁵³ Michael Bergmann and J. A. Cover, “Divine Responsibility without Divine Freedom,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 23 (2006): 392.

²⁵⁴ Michael Bergmann and J. A. Cover, “Divine Responsibility without Divine Freedom,” 393.

²⁵⁵ Michael Bergmann and J. A. Cover, “Divine Responsibility without Divine Freedom,” 394.

for some token act so long as he is the agent-cause of the act, and thus the alternative possibilities condition is not necessary in order to be responsible.

However, while Bergmann and Cover deny that the alternative possibilities condition is necessary for responsibility, it is important to note that on their account, they are not endorsing any form of compatibilism with respect to freedom. As they further state, “This [i.e., denying the alternative possibilities condition with respect to freedom] might suggest to some readers that we are endorsing a sort of compatibilism, according which an agent can be responsible for doing A even if forced to do A. We reject such compatibilism.”²⁵⁶ Rather, Bergmann and Cover are incompatibilists, such that freedom is incompatible with necessity, yet, to be clear, they also deny that God is incompatibilistically free since they also affirm that “his [God’s] being essentially perfectly good entails that God bring it about that he performs some act than which none is better.”²⁵⁷ On their view, then, God is responsible *without* being free (in an incompatibilist sense).

Now whether or not one is convinced of Bergmann and Cover’s general outlook, I think it is promising for the divine source compatibilist to apply what Bergmann and Cover have articulated with respect to responsibility, namely, being the front end of the causal chain is sufficient to be responsible for some token act.²⁵⁸ More specifically, the idea of agent-causation (which Bergmann and Cover employ) seems to be consistent with DSC, and thus agent-causation does not solely belong to an incompatibilist outlook with respect to divine freedom. Why could it not be the case that God is still the agent-cause of his actions even if there is some inner necessity resulting from the divine *nature*, as DSC specifies? Accordingly, one could plausibly argue that God himself is *identical* to his nature. I take this to be the argument recently advanced by Thomas Talbott, which we saw in chapter two:

²⁵⁶ Michael Bergmann and J. A. Cover, “Divine Responsibility without Divine Freedom,” 383.

²⁵⁷ Michael Bergmann and J. A. Cover, “Divine Responsibility without Divine Freedom,” 395.

²⁵⁸ While Bergmann and Cover claim in this quotation that, according to compatibilism, an agent can be responsible even if forced to do A, I do not think the compatibilist, especially given DSC, is committed to the idea that God is *forced* to perform A.

If we think of God's nature as a causally inert abstract object, then it has no more causal influence over his actions than any other abstract object does; and if we think of God's nature, no less than God himself, as the concrete instantiation of his essence, then God is clearly identical with his nature. In deciding to create, for example, it was God himself, and nothing other than God, who was the agent cause of the heavens and the earth.²⁵⁹

Now the above quotation does not immediately look as though Talbott affirms the idea that God is identical to his nature, but only upon the condition that God's nature is *concrete* rather than abstract. However, I take Talbott to fulfill that condition since he states that "I shall henceforth use the term 'nature' not as a synonym for the term 'essence,' but as a term that signifies those concrete character traits and behavioral dispositions...that we ordinarily think of as constituting a person's nature."²⁶⁰

Following Talbott, then, we might say that God's *nature* necessitating some act would be synonymous with saying *God himself* necessitating some act. Consequently, if DSC can indeed plausibly account for "the causal buck stopping with S," then God would certainly be responsible for necessarily performing some token act, provided that the front end of the causal chain issuing in A is a sufficient condition for responsibility, as Bergmann and Cover state. This, I suggest, is a way forward for the divine source compatibilist who wishes to retain the idea of agent-causation while also holding to divine responsibility.

Summary of Section on Necessity and Responsibility

In summary, I have alluded to an argument for the first premise of (BA), namely, that in order for God to be responsible for performing some token action, God must cause his own properties that necessitate some token actions. I then noted two possible responses to this argument by first drawing attention to theistic activism, and second being the front end of the causal chain. I concluded that in order to preserve divine responsibility for some token act performed necessarily, theistic activism is not a plausible route for the divine source compatibilist to adopt. Rather, a more promising route would be to adopt a view, following Bergmann and Cover, where God is responsible for some token act X so long as God is the front

²⁵⁹ Thomas Talbott, "God, Freedom, and Human Agency," *Faith and Philosophy*, 26 (2009): 382-383.

²⁶⁰ Thomas Talbott, "God, Freedom, and Human Agency," 382.

end of the causal chain issuing in X, provided that God's nature is identical with God himself (as we saw from Talbott).

DIVINE THANKWORTHINESS WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY

While we have thus far highlighted two potential responses to P1 of (BA) (i.e., theistic activism and agent-causation), suppose at this point that one feels pressured to grant P1. That is, suppose it holds true at the level of intuition that God cannot be responsible for performing token act *A* if he indeed performs token act *A* necessarily.²⁶¹ Is there a plausible way for the divine source compatibilist to defend the coherence of thankfulness to God for his necessary acts, and thereby instead deny P2 of (BA)? In response to P2, one needs only to defend what I earlier called the “gracious-and-necessary” condition (i.e., that God can be gracious with respect to some token act he performs while he does it necessarily) and the “thankworthy-if-gracious” condition (i.e., that God is thankworthy with respect to performing a token act so long as the act he performed is a gracious act). In the subsections that follow, I argue for each of these two propositions.

Necessity and Being Gracious

In his seminal article, “Must God Create the Best?” Robert Adams argues that God need not create the best possible world, even if there is a best possible world, since God possesses the property of *being gracious*. Here is what he says:

A God who is gracious with respect to creating might well choose to create and love less excellent creatures than He could have chosen. This is not to suggest that grace in creation consists in a preference for imperfection as such. God could have chosen to create the best of all possible creatures, and still have been gracious in choosing them. God's graciousness in creation does not imply that the creatures He has chosen to create must be less excellent than

²⁶¹ While I am *supposing* at this point that God cannot be responsible, one may nevertheless plausibly argue for such a proposition. For example, one may argue that it is incoherent to assert whether or not God is responsible given the etymology of the word. The word “responsible” is derived from the Latin *respondeo*, and the thought is that the person responsible is someone who answers or gives an account to someone for performing some action *A*. Accordingly, it suggests an authority or an order outside the agent to whom he owes an explanation or to whom the agent reports or conforms. But, given a certain variation of theism (perhaps classical theism) there is no authority outside of God to whom he must answer and give an explanation. Therefore, in saying that God is responsible, given the etymology of the word, may be an instance of overly anthropomorphizing God.

the best possible. It implies, rather, that even if they are the best possible creatures, that is not the ground for His choosing them. And it implies that there is nothing in God's nature or character which would require Him to act on the principle of choosing the best possible creatures to be the object of His creative powers.²⁶²

Accordingly, the appeal to divine grace is motivated to preserve the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom in creating this particular world. A similar outlook is highlighted by Laura Garcia, where she states that "God is traditionally viewed as creating out of a gracious love and kindness towards his creatures *rather than out of necessity*, whether of an internal or external kind."²⁶³ What we see here, then, is that, given divine grace, it is false that God could perform some token gracious act necessarily, like creating the best possible world. That God creates out of a gracious love, in other words, is inconsistent with creating from an internal necessity.

Now it is important that we consider how Adams (at least) defines grace in this context. He defines it as "a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved."²⁶⁴ Consequently, an agent S is gracious in performing token act A only if

(i) S expresses thereby a disposition to love

and

(ii) The disposition to love is not dependent on the merit of the subject being loved.

Of course, God may indeed express a disposition to love, but such an expression of love could be *dependent* on the merit of the subject being loved. Such a scenario, however, would not be an instance of grace since condition (ii) is not met. In a different scenario, the disposition to love may not be dependent on the merit of the subject being loved, but it may be the case that God did not in fact express the disposition to love. Here condition (i) is not met, and so this also is not an

²⁶² Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 324.

²⁶³ Laura L. Garcia, "Divine Freedom and Creation," 192 (emphasis added).

²⁶⁴ Robert M. Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," 324.

instance of being gracious. Therefore, (i) and (ii) are necessary and jointly sufficient for an agent to be gracious while performing some token act.

But it seems on the face of it that this Adams-like account of divine grace is consistent with God performing some token act necessarily. Can't God express a disposition to love which does not depend on the merit of the subject being loved while performing some token act necessarily, like creating the best possible world? It would seem so, for a token act which is necessary remains gracious so long as the subject/recipient has no claim on it. The token act, in other words, is an undeserved and generous gift for the subject on whom it is lavished. So, even if God performs some token act necessarily, this does not mean that he *owes* that token act to the recipient, since the necessitating factor does not come from the merit of the recipient but rather from God's necessary perfection.

In addition, it seems implausible to think that before he or she existed the subject/recipient would have any sort of claim on the token act. Creating our world, say, is a gracious gift not because it could have been otherwise in a categorical sense but rather because for any creature in it existence itself is undeserved, and thus is a fitting expression of God's goodness for that creature. To reiterate, then, simply because God performs that which is best necessarily, it does not follow that what is created *deserved* or *merited* being created. Therefore, being gracious while performing some token act (like creating the best possible world) is consistent with that act performed necessarily.

An objection at this point might focus on the definition of grace which I have appropriated from Adams. It may be charged that although conditions (i) and (ii) may be necessary for some act to be gracious, they are not sufficient. This, no doubt, will be the sort of attack employed against the gracious-and-necessary condition. Such an attack will inevitably argue that the alternative possibilities condition is a necessary condition for what it means to be gracious. If this is so, then the gracious-and-necessary condition would not hold since it denies the alternative possibilities condition.

However, it is significant at this juncture to point out that Rowe (at least), a major critic of the consistency of DSC and divine thankworthiness, readily affirms the gracious-and-

necessary condition. That is, Rowe himself seems to argue that God can indeed be gracious for the acts he performs while doing them necessarily. He begins by asking:

In what, then, given that God has a reason for creating one world over another, would that reason reside? It would reside, I suggest, in his desire to create the very best state of affairs that he can. Having such a desire does not preclude gracious love. It does not imply that God cannot or does not equally love the worst creatures along with best creatures. Loving parents, for example, may be disposed to love fully any child that is born to them, regardless of whatever talents that child is capable of developing. But such love is consistent with a preference for a child who will be born without mental or physical impairment, a child who will develop his or her capacities for kindness toward others, who will develop his or her tastes for music, good literature, and so on. And in the like manner, God will graciously love any creature he might choose to create, not just the best possible creatures.²⁶⁵

Rowe continues by saying:

[I]f God is not reduced to playing dice with respect to selecting a world to create, there must be some basis for his selection over and beyond his gracious love for all creatures regardless of merit. And that basis, given God's nature, as an absolutely perfect being, would seem to be to do always what is best and wisest to be done. And surely the best and wisest for God to do is to create the best world he can. Doing so seems to be entirely consistent with God's gracious love of all creatures regardless of their merit.²⁶⁶

How is this argument to be understood? According to Rowe, God, as a perfect being, must have the desire to create the best states of affairs that he can. Such a desire, however, does not preclude gracious love. Further, God must have some basis for creating one world over another world other than gracious love. That basis, according to Rowe, is that God does what is wisest and best; and what is wisest and best includes gracious love.

So Rowe's argument, if more plausible than its negation, would provide further reason to uphold the gracious-and-necessary condition and conclude with Rowe, *contra* Adams and

²⁶⁵ William L. Rowe, "Divine Power, Goodness, and Knowledge," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 26.

²⁶⁶ William L. Rowe, "Divine Power, Goodness, and Knowledge," 27.

Garcia, that “It is doubtful, therefore, that the Judeo-Christian concept of grace rules out the view...that God must create the best world if there is a best world to create.”²⁶⁷

Being Gracious and Thankworthy

At this point a critic may concede the argument of the preceding subsection, namely, that God can be gracious while he performs some token act necessarily, while nonetheless rejecting what I have called the thankworthy-if-gracious condition (i.e., that God is thankworthy with respect to performing a token act so long as the act he performed is a gracious act). Such a rejection would claim that while being gracious does not require the alternative possibilities condition, *thankworthiness* certainly does. Given this claim, an agent is not thankworthy for performing some token act if that token act is performed necessarily. The rationale for P2 of (BA) comes from the idea that responsibility demands the alternative possibilities condition, and denying the alternative possibilities condition (as DSC does) makes it such that God is undeserving of thanks for performing some token act necessarily since God is not responsible for such an act.

However, upon a closer look, the thankworthy-if-gracious condition specifies that denying the alternative possibilities condition is consistent with thankworthiness if God is *gracious* while performing some token act. The thankworthy-if-gracious condition, in other words, provides a sufficient condition for thankworthiness for a token act performed necessarily. Furthermore, if the thankworthy-if-gracious condition is plausible, then it can be employed against P2 of (BA), and thus the initial rationale for P2 is undermined.

So, is the thankworthy-if-gracious condition plausible, or at least more plausible than its negation? Or, is the critic correct to claim instead that God is not thankworthy for a token act in the absence of the alternative possibilities condition? To put it simply, when it is conceded (as Rowe concedes) that God can be gracious while performing some token act necessarily (i.e., as the necessary outcome of his nature), it is puzzling why one would deny thankworthiness to God. Is it not the case that *being gracious* toward some subject *S* is a sufficient condition for thankworthiness? A sidelong glance at the Judeo-Christian Scriptures seems to support this. For example, in the Apostle Paul’s letter to Ephesus it reads, “In love he predestined us for adoption

²⁶⁷ William L. Rowe, “Divine Power, Goodness, and Knowledge,” 27.

as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, *to the praise of his glorious grace*, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.” Similarly, in 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, “I give thanks to my God always for you *because of the grace of God* that was given you in Christ Jesus.” So, while of course these texts are silent on the question of alternative possibilities, they nevertheless highlight that being gracious provides the basis for gratitude expressed toward God.

To illustrate this point further, suppose that God, because of his perfect nature, healed a child from cancer necessarily. Suppose further that this act of healing expressed a disposition to love the child and that the disposition to love could not be dependent on the merit of the child being loved, but rather on its need. That is, God was *gracious* while performing this act of healing. And, if the parents of the beloved child realize that these things are so, does it not seem reasonable that the parents would assert the following:

- (1) We recognize this is indeed a token act necessarily performed,
- (2) we affirm that God was the sole source for performing it,
- (3) we are full of joy that God expressed a disposition to love our child,

and,

- (4) we consider ourselves to be in debt to God since nothing in ourselves or our child merited this act.

It seems the parents could indeed assert all of (1)-(4) even though they realize that, because of God’s perfect nature, God healed this child from cancer necessarily. However, if the parents can assert these things, then they can reasonably thank God for healing their child of cancer.

Now a critic at this point may further object that while it is indeed *appropriate* or *fitting* to thank God in this type of instance, it does not follow that God is thankworthy since it is not *obligatory* (but merely appropriate) for the parents of the cancerous child to thank God.²⁶⁸ The parents, in other words, do not *owe* God thanks in this type of scenario. How might we respond to this type of objection? First, while I do not develop an argument here, perhaps a divine action

²⁶⁸ I thank Philip Swenson for pointing out this possible objection.

for which it is appropriate or fitting to give thanks is sufficient for God's being thankworthy. God would then be thankworthy simply by it being appropriate to thank him. Consequently, obligation would have nothing to do with thankworthiness, so God could be thankworthy without one being obligated to give thanks.

A second and perhaps more promising response is to claim that even if there is a strong connection between thankworthiness and obligation, why nevertheless ought the parents of the cancerous child be obliged to thank God? In short, they are obligated to thank God from the sheer fact that the parents (and the child!) *benefited* from God's gracious act. This line of thought has been recently advanced by Thomas Senor where he gives the illustration of a benevolent aunt bestowing gifts upon her niece or nephew. Here, while the niece or nephew benefitted from the aunt's kindness, the aunt nevertheless was unable to refrain from giving. The aunt, in other words, gives necessarily. Such a necessity, Senor argues, does not result in the fact that the aunt ought not to be thanked. Here is what he says:

Suppose that you have a benevolent aunt who frequently sends you gifts. Suppose you knew that this woman did what she did was because of her upbringing and very strong religious convictions. Indeed, suppose you knew that given your relative need and her relative plenty, her relationship to you, and her belief in the importance of giving (particularly to the family) she was not really able to resist giving you generous gifts. Would your understanding of her situation release you of a duty to thank her for her kindness toward you? Of course not. We owe our beneficiaries [*sic*] a debt of thanks when, motivated by a concern for our well being, they bestow benefits upon us. In fact, it might be that the condition that the gift is given out of a 'concern for our well being' is overly restrictive. If I have a self-serving uncle who gives me a gift primarily because it will provide him with a significant tax write off, I still have a duty to thank him provided that he was able to see that the gift would benefit me.²⁶⁹

There are two things which are noteworthy with respect to Senor's remarks. First, although Senor does not refer to the idea of grace with respect to this illustration, it nevertheless seems plausible to think that what he has in mind is something akin to the gracious-and-necessary condition since the aunt gives generously while being unable to resist giving. Second, according

²⁶⁹ Thomas Senor, "Defending Divine Freedom," 186.

to Senor, one is obligated to thank the aunt simply from benefiting from the aunt's kindness. The beneficiaries, in other words, owe the benefactor thanks for the benefit they received.

Richard Swinburne similarly seeks to defend the position that "there is clearly an even stronger case for a duty to pay explicit respect to benefactors."²⁷⁰ The following is the essence of Swinburne's hypothesis:

If a man has done much for us, he is entitled to our explicit respect. By virtue of their status benefactors are entitled to a special degree of respect. We show this by our mode of address, by giving them places of honour, perhaps by the occasional present. Sometimes to show him respect is the only return one can make to a benefactor for what he has done. Now of course some men may think that there is no obligation on the recipient of the benefit to show respect to the benefactor. They should, however, reflect on that fact that all societies from Tsarist Russia to Communist China, from primitive tribes to capitalist U.S.A., have shown such respect and thought it right to do so. They have shown such respect often when the benefactors were in no position to confer further benefit.²⁷¹

Accordingly, what Senor's and Swinburne's earth-bound illustrations highlight is that an action is worthy of thanks (and respect) so long as the benefitting action is undeserved. Applying this to our current discussion, then, it is plausible to affirm that God is indeed thankworthy in light of being gracious while performing token act A, even if token act A was done necessarily.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER

I began by constructing an argument, called the Basic Argument (BA), against DSC and divine thankworthiness. I then highlighted two possible ways to respond to P1 of (BA). I suggested that the second response was more promising than the first provided that a Divine Source Compatibilist argues that God's nature is identical to God himself. I then considered my favored response to (BA) by rejecting P2. Here I first argued that God can be gracious while he performs some token act necessarily and second that God is thankworthy with respect to performing a token act so long as the act he performed is a gracious act. Therefore, DSC is consistent with divine thankworthiness.

²⁷⁰ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 295.

²⁷¹ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 295.

CHAPTER SIX: DIVINE SOURCE COMPATIBILISM AND THEISTIC COMPATIBILISM

Thus far in the dissertation I have articulated and defended a model of God's freedom which I have called Divine Source Compatibilism (DSC). In chapter 2 I began the articulation by gleaning from three analytic philosophers of religion, namely, Edward Wierenga, Katherin Rogers, and Thomas Talbott. In chapter 3 I began the defense by arguing that DSC does not seriously deviate from the claims of the Christian tradition with respect to God's freedom. In fact, given certain theological figures, DSC seems to be the preferred view of the tradition. Then, in chapters 4 and 5 I argued that DSC is consistent with divine aseity (chapter 4) and divine thankworthiness (chapter 5).

In this final chapter I argue that a certain variation of theism which I call Theistic Compatibilism, (to be explained below), cannot hold to Divine Libertarianism (DL), and thus DSC ought to be the preferred outlook with respect to God's freedom for the Theistic Compatibilist in the Christian tradition. More specifically, I consider whether the Theistic Compatibilist's typical understanding of *explanation* concerning why an agent chose, say, X over not X is consistent with the affirmation that God is free in a libertarian sense, particularly with his freedom to create or not to create. The crux of the problem is this: the Theistic Compatibilist's typical assertion that an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice demands a *full* explanation seems to entail that God cannot be libertarianly free. However, if this is the case, then God must of necessity create, and thus on the face of things it seems that the most plausible thing for the Theistic Compatibilist to do is to affirm DSC.

I will first define the terms that are essential to the conversation. Then, after highlighting the general structure of the objection, I will consider how some contemporary Theistic Compatibilists typically account for an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice. After arguing that this account fails to be in harmony with DL, I will consider various responses open to Theistic Compatibilists concerning this objection and highlight that DSC ought to be the preferred outlook concerning God's freedom.

THE GENERAL ARGUMENT: THE INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN THEISTIC COMPATIBILISM AND DIVINE LIBERTARIAN FREEDOM

Taking Stock: Divine Libertarian Freedom and Contingency

While the nature and attributes of God are some of the most contentious topics in contemporary philosophy of religion, we have seen that there is widespread agreement that God is a metaphysically independent, perfect being. Because of this, there is nothing metaphysically external to God which could function as a possible explanation for his choice to create.²⁷² As Psalm 135:6 says: “Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”

These characteristics, as we have seen, underscore what is often called the “sourcehood condition” for God to be free.²⁷³ Given this condition, God creates freely if nothing outside of himself functions as the ultimate explanation of his choice. It is a necessary condition of God’s freedom, in other words, so long as he is the ultimate source of his choice to create. The Puritan theologian, Stephen Charnock, puts it this way:

God was free in his first purpose; and purposing this or that by an infallible and unerring wisdom, it would be a weakness to change the purpose. But, indeed, the liberty of God’s will doth not seem so much to consist in an indifferency to this or that, as an independency on anything without himself: *his will was free, because it did not depend upon the objects about which his will was conversant.*²⁷⁴

²⁷² While I will continually cite “creation” as the object and act of God’s freedom, I certainly do not mean to exclude other objects and acts of God’s freedom. In other words, I do not want to paint the picture “that there simply be a creation” is the only object and act of God’s freedom, but rather that God’s freedom also extends to the “coloring in” of the details of the creation. Therefore, I am assuming that what is said in this chapter with respect to God’s act of creation would equally apply to any of God’s acts.

²⁷³ On the sourcehood condition, see Robert Kane, “Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free-Will Debates (part 2),” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2nd edition, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4-11; and Kevin Timpe, *Free Will: Sourcehood and Its Alternatives* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 9-17.

²⁷⁴ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), I, 328 (emphasis added). Thomas Aquinas similarly affirms the sourcehood condition as he states, “Furthermore, ‘that is free which is for its own sake,’ [Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2, 982b] and thus the free has the nature of that which is through itself. Now, first and primarily, will has liberty in acting, for according to someone who acts voluntarily he is said to perform any

Accordingly, there is a link between understanding God as a metaphysically independent, perfect being and God as the ultimate source of his choices. That is, since God is an independent perfect being, God is not constrained, coerced, determined, or even influenced by anything outside of himself.²⁷⁵

Recall, however, while many would agree that the sourcehood condition is a necessary constituent of God's freedom, they also maintain that such a condition is not sufficient. God, it is said, must also be able to choose otherwise if he is to be free. For example, God has the freedom to create this particular world only if he could have created a different world instead or even refrained from creating at all. These characteristics underscore what we have called the "alternative possibilities condition" in order for God to be free.²⁷⁶ Consider the contemporary philosophical theologian (and Theistic Compatibilist), John Frame:

[T]he whole world is, we say, a free creation of God, not one in which he was constrained, even by his own nature. The same may be said of providence and especially redemption, for the very idea of grace seems to imply that *God might have chosen to do otherwise*. God's nature, it seems, does not force him to create or to redeem. For if he must create or redeem, even if the necessity comes from his own nature, it would seem that he owes something to the creation, that the creation has a claim on him.²⁷⁷

Consequently, for Frame, the alternative possibilities condition is employed in order to preclude the thought of God necessarily creating. God is, therefore, equally as free not to create as he is/was free to create.²⁷⁸ Of course, the "might have chosen otherwise" here is not merely to be

given action freely. To act through will, therefore, supremely befits the first agent, whom it supremely befits to act through itself." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. by Anton. C. Pegis F.R.S.C (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), I, 72, 8.

²⁷⁵ Historically considered this type of freedom has been expressed as the freedom of rational spontaneity. See Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 447.

²⁷⁶ On the alternative possibilities condition, see Robert Kane, "Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free-Will Debates (part 2)," 4-11; and Kevin Timpe, *Free Will*, 9-17.

²⁷⁷ John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 232 (emphasis added).

²⁷⁸ To clarify, the type of freedom I have in mind when speaking of the alternative possibilities condition is indeed *libertarian* freedom. For others who emphasize the alternative possibilities condition as libertarian freedom, see

understood in a subjunctive or conditional sense, where God might have chosen otherwise *if* some condition C had been fulfilled. Rather, since nothing in God's nature prevents him from choosing otherwise, then surely choosing otherwise is just as free as what was actually chosen. As Frame further states, "I know of nothing in God's nature that prevented him from not creating or not redeeming...there is nothing in God's nature that required him to create and redeem."²⁷⁹

Divine freedom, thus expressed, requires that God's choice to create be contingent, where "contingent" here is to be understood in the metaphysical sense, not merely in the logical sense. And because of the metaphysical contingency of the existence of creation, the central question at hand is as follows: if nothing prevented God from not creating, and nothing in God's nature necessitates him to create, then why did God choose to create rather than not create? What sort of *explanation* can be given for his choice in order to avoid sheer arbitrariness? My argument is that there is an incompatibility between God's libertarian freedom outlined above and the typical Theistic Compatibilist account of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice that I have drawn attention to. Affirming the latter seems to require the denial of, or perhaps a modification of, the former. The reasoning for such a conclusion is as follows: if an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice is one that must be *fully* explained, then it seems that God was not free not to create. It stands to reason, then, that if a Theistic Compatibilist's conception of divine freedom requires that God be able to choose otherwise, then the typical Theistic Compatibilist understanding of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice is called into question.

Before I develop this incompatibility, however, I need to make it clear what I am not arguing. First, there is no incompatibility between DL and Theistic Compatibilism *per se*. One can affirm the essentials of Theistic Compatibilism (whatever they may be) and consistently hold

Thomas P. Flint, "The Problem of Divine Freedom," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 20 (1983): 255; Thomas V. Morris, *Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 27-28; William Hasker, *Providence, Evil, and the Openness of God* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), 166; and William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6. Historically considered this type of freedom has been expressed as the freedom of indifference. See Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, 448. For caution that the freedom of indifference entails the alternative possibilities condition, see Paul Helm, "Reformed Thought on Freedom: Some Further Thoughts," *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 4 (2010): 185-207; and Paul Helm, "Structural Indifference and Compatibilism in Reformed Orthodoxy," *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 5 (2011): 184-205.

²⁷⁹ John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 235.

to the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom. Therefore, my argument should not be understood as a refutation of Theistic Compatibilism but rather of one variety of it. Second, there is no incompatibility between what God's freedom is like and the nature of *human* freedom as we have seen in the work of Katherin Rogers and Saint Anselm. One can consistently hold to different or similar views with respect to divine and human freedom. The incompatibility, rather, arises between DL and *a particular argument* against a certain type of freedom, that is, the freedom to choose otherwise. Finally, I do not claim that there is incompatibility between a Theistic Compatibilist account of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice and the *sourcehood condition* of divine freedom. Again, the incompatibility arises between DL and the Theistic Compatibilist understanding that the alternative possibilities condition leads to an unintelligible, arbitrary free choice.

Let me summarize the argument in the form of *modus tollens*, thus having a more succinct goal in mind.

- (1) If an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice must be fully explained, then it is not the case that God is free to categorically choose otherwise.
- (2) God is free to categorically choose otherwise.
- (3) Therefore, it is not the case that an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice must be fully explained.

Because (2), that is, the assertion of God's freedom to categorically choose otherwise, will be supposed throughout the rest of this chapter, I will focus my attention not only toward exploring the truth of premise (1) but also toward its consequences for Theistic Compatibilism.

Theistic Compatibilism

Before plunging into the argument, however, I must pause to acknowledge that I have been speaking quite loosely up to this point of Theistic Compatibilism. Theistic Compatibilism is unsurprisingly the conjunct of Theism and Compatibilism, where the latter asserts that human freedom and moral responsibility are compatible with determinism. The Theism aspect, on the other hand, highlights a certain variation of theism where the focus is on the exhaustive, meticulous sovereignty of God above all else. On this account of sovereignty, God plans,

decrees, ordains, or determines *all* things to come to pass from the least of things to the greatest. Theistic Compatibilists frequently align themselves with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as it says, “God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”²⁸⁰ So we might say, then, that *Theistic Compatibilism* holds that human freedom and moral responsibility are compatible with *God’s* exhaustive and meticulous determinism, that is, God is the ultimate determiner of human choices but that human beings are nonetheless free and morally responsible for those choices.

However, it will be important for our discussion to briefly differentiate Theistic Compatibilism from another form of compatibilism which I will call “Motive Compatibilism.” Motive Compatibilism is the view that human free choices are the necessary byproduct of what the human intellect judges to be most desirable or is most inclined to choose. I take my cue from Jonathan Edwards in *Freedom of the Will*, as he says, “With respect to that grand inquiry, What determines the will?...It is sufficient to my present purpose to say, It is that motive which, as it stands in the view of the mind, is the strongest, that determines the will.”²⁸¹ Further, by “strongest motive” Edwards means “that which appears most inviting...the greatest degree of previous tendency to excite and induce the choice.”²⁸² Or, as he later puts it, “the will always is as the greatest apparent good is.”²⁸³ Therefore, on Motive Compatibilism, it is an agent’s highest desire or strongest inclination which determines the choice, and thus precludes the agent from being able to choose otherwise.²⁸⁴ In short, an agent is simply free to choose what he or she most wants to choose.

Now the reason for this important distinction between Theistic Compatibilism and Motive Compatibilism is because, as we will shortly see, it is typical of Theistic Compatibilists

²⁸⁰ “Of God’s Eternal Decree,” *Westminster Confession of Faith*, (Free Presbyterian, 1994).

²⁸¹ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University, 1957), 141.

²⁸² Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 142.

²⁸³ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 142.

²⁸⁴ There are, of course, other levels of compatibilism depending on what one supposes is the necessitating factor.

also to affirm Motive Compatibilism. Parsing this out in Thomistic fashion, we might say, then, that compatibilism functions at the *primary* level of causation (where God is the cause of human choices) and compatibilism functions at the *secondary* level of causation (where a human's strongest desire is the cause of human choices). So, regardless of whether or not the emphasis is put on the primary or secondary level of causation, an agent could not have chosen otherwise—human freedom and moral responsibility are compatible with determinism on both levels. We can see how the Thomistic distinction between primary and secondary causation functions in the work of Frame, as he states the following:

In a well-wrought story, there is a causal nexus within the world that the author creates. Events can be explained, not only by the author's intention, but also by the structure of "secondary causes" within the world of the story... In Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, Macbeth kills King Duncan for his own reasons, using resources that are available to him. Duncan's death can be described entirely by the causes and effects within the world of the play. But the author, Shakespeare, is the ultimate cause of everything. Furthermore, although Duncan's death can be explained by causes within the drama, the author is not just the "primary cause" who sets in motion a chain of causes and effects that unfold without his further involvement. Rather, he writes every detail of the narrative and dialogue; as author, he is involved in everything that happens. So there are two complete causal chains. Every event in *Macbeth* has two causes, two sets of necessary and sufficient conditions: the causes within the play itself, and the intentions of Shakespeare.²⁸⁵

Theistic Compatibilist, Bruce Ware, speaks similarly when elaborating on God's asymmetrical relation to good and evil. With respect to God causing good in the world, he says the following:

Perhaps we should speak, then, of God's relation to goodness as being through a kind of *direct and immediate divine agency* in which there is a necessary correspondence between the character and agency of God and the goodness that is produced in the world. We might call this kind of divine agency "direct-causative" divine action, since it is strictly impossible for any goodness to come to expression apart from God's direct causation and as the outgrowth of his own infinitely good nature. Goodness, then, is controlled by God as he controls the very manifestation and expression of his own nature, causing all the various expressions of goodness to be brought into our world,

²⁸⁵ John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 156-157. It is noteworthy that Frame borrows this Shakespearian analogy from Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 322.

whether goodness in nature or goodness revealed through human (secondary) agency.²⁸⁶

According to Frame and Ware, the primary/secondary distinction allows the Theistic Compatibilist to affirm determinism at both the primary level (where God is the cause of human choices) and at the secondary level (where human reasons, motives, or desires are the cause of human choices). The motivation is clear: affirming compatibilism at both the primary and secondary level preserves the exhaustive and meticulous sovereignty of God—God determines *all* things. To be clear, then, according to Theistic Compatibilists (such as Frame and Ware), human free choices are similarly necessitated in terms of primary causation *and* in terms of secondary causation.²⁸⁷

Considering the implications of my argument as it affects Theistic Compatibilism, however, cannot be undertaken given the mere affirmation of God’s exhaustive and meticulous determinism. There needs to be, in other words, a more concrete target. Therefore, I will investigate the writings of some contemporary Theistic Compatibilist theologians, John Frame and Bruce Ware, on what according to them it means for an agent to exercise an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice in light of their commitment to the exhaustive and meticulous determinism of God.

THEISTIC COMPATIBILISTS ON THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF A FREE CHOICE

While articulating their account of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice, Theistic Compatibilists typically propound what is called the *intelligibility problem*, arguing that undetermined choices, that is, choices that could have been otherwise in a categorical sense, inevitably reduce to random, irrational, arbitrary, nonsensical, chance events; that is, they are

²⁸⁶ Bruce A. Ware, *God’s Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway Publications, 2004), 103 (emphasis original); see also Bruce A. Ware, “Robots, Royalty, and Relationships? Toward a Clarified Understanding of Real Human Relations with the God who Knows and Decrees all that is,” *Criswell Theological Review*, 1 (2004): 191-203.

²⁸⁷ This view would apparently be at odds with the recent work by Hugh J. McCann, where he argues that human choices are not necessitated by secondary causes (e.g. highest desires) but that nevertheless God is the primary cause of all human choices. Accordingly, it is not necessarily the case that the proposition “God determines all things” entails human compatibilistic freedom, that is, Motive Compatibilism. See Hugh J. McCann, “Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 12 (1995): 582-598; see also Hugh J. McCann, *Creation and the Sovereignty of God* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 92-112.

unintelligible.²⁸⁸ The problem which Theistic Compatibilists seem to be addressing can be summarized as follows: if the alternative possibilities condition is a necessary condition for freedom, then there does not seem to be an adequate explanation of any sort for why one choice was made over another, and thus any choice which categorically could have been otherwise results in sheer randomness. What exactly is the Theistic Compatibilist's solution for avoiding the intelligibility problem? In answering, the Theistic Compatibilists seem to focus on two metaphysical claims which begin to formulate their understanding of an intelligible free choice: (1) an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice must have a choice-specific explanation, and (2) an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice must be chosen upon one's highest desire. Let us now look at these two metaphysical claims.

Metaphysical claim 1 (MC1): An intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice must have a choice-specific explanation.

First, such Theistic Compatibilists argue that an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice is one that must have a choice-specific reason, or set of reasons, for why the choice was made over another. That is, the explanation why one particular choice was made could not possibly be the same explanation as that of a contrary choice. There is a one-to-one correspondence, in other words, between the explanation and the choice that was made. Consider Ware, as he appeals to the intelligibility problem in arguing against the coherence of the alternative possibilities condition:

[I]f at the moment that an agent chooses A, with all things being just what they are when the choice is made, he could have chosen B, or not-A, then it follows that any reason or set of reasons for why the agent chooses A would be the *identical reason or set of reasons* for why instead the agent might have chosen B, or not-A. That is, since at the moment of choice, all factors contributing to why a choice is made are present and true regardless of which choice is made (i.e., recall that the agent has the power of *contrary* choice), this means that the factors that lead to one choice being made must, by necessity, also be able to lead just as well to the opposite choice. But the effect of this is to say that there can be *no choice-specific reason or set of reasons* for why the agent chose A *instead of* B, or not-A. It rather is the case...that every reason or set of reasons must be *equally explanatory* for why the agent might choose A, *or* B, *or* not-A. As a result, our

²⁸⁸ For more on the intelligibility problem, see Robert Kane, "Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free-Will Debates (part 2)," 19-24. The intelligibility problem has also gone under the guise of the "luck objection." For further discussion, see Alfred R. Mele, *Free Will and Luck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

choosing reduces, strictly speaking, to arbitrariness. We can give no reason or set of reasons for why we make the choices we make that wouldn't be the identical reason or set of reasons we would invoke had we made the opposite choice! Hence, our choosing A over its opposite is arbitrary.²⁸⁹

In summary, the first step in the Theistic Compatibilist's argument is to assert that an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice must be one that consists of a choice-specific explanation. There is a dependence relation between the choice and the explanation, where the choice is dependent upon a specific or particular explanation. To think that the same explanation could be given for two possible choices is simply to succumb to the intelligibility problem. So, to reiterate, a choice-specific explanation is a necessary condition for an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice.

Metaphysical claim 2 (MC2): An intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice must be chosen upon one's highest desire.

The second line of argument in accounting for an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice is to claim that an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice is one that is chosen based only upon one's highest desire. Agents, accordingly, always choose what they most want to choose. Theistic Compatibilists, when explaining why one choice was made over another, frequently echo the sentiments of Jonathan Edwards and speak of one's "strongest desires" and "character traits."²⁹⁰ Here we have a straightforward appeal to what I earlier called, Motive Compatibilism. As Frame says:

We act and speak, then, according to our character. We follow the deepest desires of our heart. . . In everyday life, we regularly think of freedom as doing what we want to do. When we don't do what we want, we are either acting irrationally or being forced to act against our will by someone or something

²⁸⁹ Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, 85-86 (emphases original). For similar appeals to the intelligibility problem while also asserting the proposition "God determines all things," see John Feinberg, "God Ordains All Things," in *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views on Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, eds. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: InterVarity Press, 1986), 36; John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 138-145; and Paul K. Helseth, "God Causes All Things," in *Four Views on Divine Providence*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 42-43.

²⁹⁰ It is puzzling, however, Edwards is seldom mentioned with regard to *divine* freedom, as his account of divine freedom, like human freedom, seems also to deny the alternative possibilities condition. See Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, 375-396.

outside ourselves. This kind of freedom is sometimes called compatibilism, because it is compatible with determinism.²⁹¹

And again, Ware adds:

We are free when we choose and act and behave in accordance with our strongest desires, since those desires are the expressions of our hearts and characters. In a word, we are free when we choose to do what we want. But it stands to reason that if we choose to do what we want, then at the moment of that choice, we are not “free” to do otherwise. That is, if I want an apple, not an orange, and if my freedom consists in choosing to do what I want, then I’m free to choose the apple but I’m not free to choose the orange. Freedom, then, is not freedom of contrary of choice but freedom to choose and act in accordance with what I most want.²⁹²

Therefore, an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice is one that is chosen based upon one’s highest desire, and such a desire rules out any possibility to choose otherwise. An agent’s freedom is simply the freedom to choose whatever he or she most wants to have, to do, possess, or achieve. The possibility that one could have chosen otherwise is not a necessary condition in order for one to be considered free. Accordingly, choosing upon one’s highest desire is a necessary condition to account for an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice.

Now before considering the problematic implications of MC1 and MC2, we need to notice that there seems to be an oddity at work in how these Theistic Compatibilists explain the compatibility between God’s exhaustive, meticulous determinism and human freedom. Notice, above, how both Frame and Ware appeal to a human’s highest desire when accounting for compatibility between determinism and human freedom. That is, they appeal to Motive Compatibilism. Apparently, the highest desire is what necessitates the human choice, and thus the agent could not have chosen otherwise. But how does an appeal to Motive Compatibilism, that is, a *human’s* highest desire, even begin to clarify how human freedom is compatible with *God’s* exhaustive and meticulous determinism? There seems to be a shift of emphasis by Frame and Ware in respect of what does the necessitating from God to human desires, that is, from the primary to the secondary cause. It seems reasonable to think, for example, that a non-theist could also appeal to Motive Compatibilism in order to account for compatibility between, say,

²⁹¹ John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 136.

²⁹² Bruce A. Ware, *God’s Greater Glory*, 79-80.

(physical) determinism and human freedom. If such a non-theist could do so, then the appeal to Motive Compatibilism by Frame and Ware to account for the compatibility between God determining all things and human choices loses credibility. So, in light of God's exhaustive and meticulous determinism, it seems odd to explain the compatibility between determinism and human freedom by appealing to a *human's* highest desire since such an appeal puts all the weight on (or perhaps collapses into) secondary causation.²⁹³

Nevertheless, despite this oddity it is clear that what these Theistic Compatibilists deny with respect to human choice, they seem to require of God if he is to be free. But how could this hold given their understanding of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice? Can one consistently employ the intelligibility problem with respect to human free choices and at the same time assert and uphold the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom (i.e., DL)? It will be the burden of the next section to consider these questions.

DOES THE THEISTIC COMPATIBILIST'S ACCOUNT OF AN INTELLIGIBLE FREE CHOICE UNDERMINE DIVINE LIBERTARIAN FREEDOM?

As we have seen, it is without question that Theistic Compatibilists such as Frame and Ware frequently propound the intelligibility problem in order to account for their understanding of the compatibility between human freedom and God's exhaustive, meticulous determinism. However, does this position successfully hold together DL and their understanding of an intelligible non-arbitrary free choice? I will now argue that it does not. The problem with the Theistic Compatibilist's defense of an intelligible non-arbitrary free choice can be seen by considering two problematic implications which undermine God's libertarian freedom.

Problematic implication 1

The first problematic implication of the Theistic Compatibilist's reasoning can be recognized by more closely examining the nature of explanation. Just what sort of explanation does the Theistic Compatibilist have in mind when speaking of a *choice-specific* explanation? It

²⁹³ Interestingly, Frame and Ware also find interest in the doctrine of middle knowledge when accounting for compatibility between human freedom and determinism, but in a very unconventional way. They argue for what Ware calls, "Compatibilist Middle Knowledge," where God has knowledge of what compatibilistically free creatures *would* do. See John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 150-152; and 500-505; see also Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, 110-130.

is typical within the metaphysics of explanation to distinguish between what is called a “full explanation” and a “partial explanation,” or similarly between a “complete explanation” and an “incomplete explanation.” Richard Swinburne puts the distinction this way:

[I]f there is a full cause C of [event] E and a reason R that guarantees C’s efficacy, there will be what I shall call a *full explanation* of E. For, given R and C, there will be nothing unexplained about the occurrence of E. In this case, the ‘what’ and ‘why’ together will deductively entail the occurrence of E. But, if there is no full cause of E...or no reason that ensured that the cause would have the effect that it did, there will be at most what I shall call a partial explanation.²⁹⁴

Given this distinction, I think it is safe to say that what the Theistic Compatibilist has in mind with respect to an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice is a full explanation, since, as Ware states, a choice-specific explanation “can and does account *fully* for why we make the choices we make.”²⁹⁵ There is simply nothing whatever left unexplained. Therefore, to apply Swinburne’s reasoning, we might say that the agent (i.e. the ‘what’) in conjunction with the highest desire (i.e. the ‘why’) deductively entail the occurrence of some particular event, that is, the choice. To think otherwise would inevitably reduce a choice to an unintelligible, arbitrary decision.

This is not to confuse an epistemic issue with a metaphysical issue. The Theistic Compatibilist is making a metaphysical claim about what an intelligible free choice amounts to, namely, that there needs to be a full explanation in order for it to be non-arbitrary. Nevertheless, this metaphysical assertion is perfectly consistent with the claim that we do not know the explanation in its entirety—that is, all the conditions at hand which entail the choice. With that caveat in mind, the first implication for the Theistic Compatibilist is that a full explanation is a necessary condition for an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice.

Problematic implication 2

²⁹⁴ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 137 (emphasis original); and Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, rev. edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 137; see also David-Hillel Ruben, *Explaining Explanation*, 2nd edition (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 17-19.

²⁹⁵ Bruce A. Ware, *God’s Greater Glory*, 87 (emphasis added).

The second problematic implication of the Theistic Compatibilist's argument is associated with the claim that an agent chooses based upon his or her highest desire. In virtue of one's highest desire, "we always do what we most want to do, and hence there always is an explanation (i.e. a choice-specific explanation) for the particular choices."²⁹⁶ We might say, then, that the highest desire here functions as the full explanation. That is, when one chooses what he or she most wants to choose, there not only is an explanation, there is a full explanation—one that fully accounts for why one choice was made over the other. The highest desire, in other words, *entails* the particular choice.²⁹⁷

However, if one's highest desire functions as the full explanation, then there is no possible way in which one could have chosen otherwise, given that particular highest desire. The highest desire fully explains why one choice was made over another, and thus why, when one chooses, one *must* choose. Therefore, a full explanation on this understanding necessitates the choice. As Swinburne further says, "An explanation of E by F is a full one if F includes both a cause, C, and a reason, R, which together *necessitated* the occurrence of E."²⁹⁸ Therefore, the second problematic implication is that a necessitated choice is a necessary condition for an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice.

Here is a summary of the argument so far. The burden of the Theistic Compatibilist is to try and harmonize his account of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice with:

- (i) DL and the contingency of creation.

The implications of his account are as follows:

- (ii) An intelligible free choice has a full explanation.
- (iii) A choice that has a full explanation is a necessitated choice.

²⁹⁶ Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, 87.

²⁹⁷ What the Theistic Compatibilists seem to endorse at this point is the following "entailment principle": if *q* explains *p*, then *q* entails *p*. For more on the entailment principle and possible objections to it, see Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 103-122.

²⁹⁸ Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 76 (emphasis added).

The Theistic Compatibilist's ability to hold together DL and his account of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice, therefore, depends on the consistency of (i), (ii), and (iii). But how could this be? How can the Theistic Compatibilist successfully hold together DL and his account of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice? If the Theistic Compatibilist asserts that God is free such that God could have chosen otherwise, then this results in an unintelligible, arbitrary free choice, based on the Theistic Compatibilist's account of explanation. Furthermore, if the Theistic Compatibilist tries to retain his account of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice, then God is not free such that he could have chosen otherwise with respect to creating. That is, God's choice must be necessitated if it is to have an explanation and thus count as an intelligible choice. Therefore, the Theistic Compatibilist is caught in a dilemma: either God is free in the libertarian sense such that he could have chosen otherwise or God exercises an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice such that the choice was fully explained and hence necessitated.²⁹⁹

In summary, if only a full explanation necessitates a choice and a full explanation is required for an intelligible free choice, then it follows that to have a full explanation, that is, according to the Theistic Compatibilist, to have an intelligible free choice, it follows that creation is necessary.³⁰⁰

POSSIBLE RESPONSES FOR THE THEISTIC COMPATIBILIST

Let us suppose that what I have argued for is essentially correct, namely, that the Theistic Compatibilist's typical understanding of what amounts to an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice undermines God's libertarian freedom. Must all Theistic Compatibilists, however, go down such a trail? Perhaps it is possible for the Theistic Compatibilist to think that some of their brethren start off on the wrong foot, and their stance consequently needs to be amended. In other

²⁹⁹ It is noteworthy that Swinburne may feel the dilemma that I put forth as he elaborates on God's freedom in terms of explanation: "An action, I suggest, is a free action if and only if the agent's choosing to do that action, that is having the intention to produce the result of that action, *has no full explanation*—of any kind." Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 146 (emphasis added).

³⁰⁰ My argument is something very similar to that of James F. Ross, where he states, "If it is logically possible that God should create freely [in the sense of alternativity], then it is logically possible that some event, being, or fact...should lack a sufficient explanation since the free creation of God and the absolute universality of the Principle of Sufficient Reason are incompatible." See James F. Ross, *Philosophical Theology* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), 295.

words, one might assert that this variation of Theistic Compatibilism under scrutiny is a problem not because of Theistic Compatibilism *per se* but rather by virtue of certain metaphysical commitments with respect to either explanation or divine freedom.

What, then, are the possible responses which are available to the Theistic Compatibilist? There seem to be, as far as I can see, at least five general avenues of response. First, one might simply admit that God's free choices are indeed arbitrary. Second, it could be argued that the intelligibility problem can only be applied to human and not divine freedom with respect to choosing otherwise. Third, one might simply say that we do not know how to account for a divine intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice. God's freedom is utterly mysterious. Fourth, it could be argued, *contra* Frame and Ware, that libertarian free choices are indeed intelligible but realize that such an assertion does not commit him or her to the truth of libertarian human free choices. Lastly, one might deny that the alternative possibilities condition is a necessary part of the metaphysical makeup of divine freedom. Perhaps there is some other sense (DSC!) in which God's freedom is to be construed. Let us look at each of these possible responses.

Response 1: Conceding the Point Response

A first line of response could be to concede the point and admit that even God's free choices are indeed unintelligible. That is, his choices are random and arbitrary in light of his being able to choose otherwise. According to this response, the Theistic Compatibilist is unwilling to relinquish his understanding of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice while holding to the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom. Although I know of no Theistic Compatibilist who affirms that God's choices are random, such a position is not unheard of in contemporary philosophy of religion. Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder, for example, think that the alternative possibilities condition can be preserved by claiming there is possibly an infinite hierarchy of better choices (i.e. worlds) for God from which he can choose from.³⁰¹ God, then, chooses arbitrarily from the hierarchy. Here is their thought experiment:

Imagine that there exists a good, essentially omniscient and omnipotent being named Jove, and that there exists nothing else. No possible being is more powerful or knowledgeable. Out of his goodness, Jove decides to

³⁰¹ This is not to say, however, that the Howard-Snyders are Theistic Compatibilists.

create... [H]e holds before his mind a host of worlds, Jove sees that for each there is a better one. Although he can create any of them, he can't create the best of them because there is no best... [Jove] creates a very intricate device that, at the push of a button, will randomly select a number and produce the corresponding world. Jove pushes the button; the device hums and whirs and, finally, its digital display reads '777': world no. 777 comes into being.³⁰²

Accordingly, God does not need to have a full explanation for choosing as he did—God chooses randomly. Others, similarly, appeal to the idea in economic theory known as satisficing. According to this view, there is an infinite number of good choices (or perhaps many unsurpassable good choices) for God to select from and God made a choice that will secure an outcome which is *good enough*.³⁰³ The problem with this response is that there is a strong consensus within the Theistic Compatibilist tradition to hold that God does not make choices arbitrarily, especially in light of a soteriology where God unconditionally elects individuals to be saved. Would the Theistic Compatibilist appeal to a conception of God where God blindly elects a people for himself? Apparently not since, as Frame claims, God's "decisions [e.g. electing] are not libertarian random accidents."³⁰⁴ So, while this is a possible response, it is not likely to be warmly embraced by the Theistic Compatibilist.

Response 2: No Divine Application Response

A second possible response could be to say that while the intelligibility problem holds true for human choices, it cannot be applied to *divine* choices. In other words, there is something about human choices that renders them unintelligible when one is able to choose otherwise.

³⁰² Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder, "How an Unsurpassable Being Can create a Surpassable World," *Faith and Philosophy*, 11 (1994): 260; see also Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder, "The *Real* Problem of No Best World," *Faith and Philosophy*, 13 (1996): 422-425; and Laura Garcia, "Moral Perfection," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, eds. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 220.

³⁰³ For those who appeal to satisficing see Bruce Langtry, "God and Infinite Hierarchy of Creatable Worlds," *Faith and Philosophy*, 23 (2008): 460-476; and Bruce Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 74-83; see also William Mann, "The Metaphysics of Divine Love," in *Metaphysics and God: Essays in Honor of Eleonore Stump*, ed. K. Timpe (New York: Routledge, 2009), 68-71. God choosing arbitrarily and randomly has not only been applied to the act of creation but has also recently been applied to the certain types of evils and the number of evils which God allows in the world. See Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 89; and 103-105.

³⁰⁴ John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 236.

When God's choices are brought into the picture, however, the intelligibility problem quickly vanishes. I think the obvious problem with this response is that the distinction between human and divine choices introduces an ad hoc selectivity with respect to what free choices are or are not intelligible. In order to avoid this contrived hypothesis, the Theistic Compatibilist would have to come up with some good reason for why the intelligibility problem cannot apply to God but only to human choices. However, what sort of reason could there be? One might appeal to the Thomistic doctrine of analogical predication, arguing that the intelligibility problem cannot apply to God since God's freedom is not much like ours.³⁰⁵ Admittedly, as far I can tell, Ware is silent on how one ought to predicate attributes to God. Frame, however, is quite critical of analogical predication claiming it to be "inconsistent," thus opting instead for univocal predication. Here is what he says:

[I]f *goodness* applies to God analogously by a causal relation, what about the word *cause*? Does that require another analogous relation, and another, *ad infinitum*? Somewhere, it would seem, we must be able to say something about God univocally, for there must be some univocal attribute on which to hang the analogies, whether that be *cause*, *being*, or something else. But if *cause* can be univocal, why can't *goodness* be? This inconsistency can be pressed either toward global agnosticism or toward some level of literal knowledge about God.³⁰⁶

Frame concludes by opting for the second horn of the dilemma:

We need not be afraid of saying that some of our language about God is univocal or literal. God has given us language that literally applies to him. When one says negatively that "God is not a liar," no word in that sentence is analogous or figurative. The sentence distinguishes God from literal liars, not analogous ones. Similarly, the statement that "God is good" uses the term *good* univocally.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ I thank Walter Schultz for pointing out this possible rejoinder. For further discussion on religious language and divine freedom, see David Burrell, "Creator/Creatures Relations," *Faith and Philosophy*, 25 (2008): 177-189; David Burrell, "Response to Cross and Hasker," *Faith and Philosophy*, 25 (2008): 205-212; William Hasker, "On Behalf of the Pagans and Idolaters," *Faith and Philosophy*, 25 (2008): 197-204; Richard Cross, "Idolatry and Religious Language," *Faith and Philosophy*, 25 (2008): 190-196; see also Kevin Timpe, "An Analogical Approach to Divine Freedom," *Proceedings of the Irish Philosophical Society*, (2011): 88-99.

³⁰⁶ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 208.

³⁰⁷ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 208 (emphasis original).

Accordingly, because of Frame's insistence upon univocity, the appeal to analogical predication is not a good reason (for him) to avoid the ad hocness of the "no divine application response." Therefore, the "no divine application response" is not a response the Theistic Compatibilist should look to embrace.

Response 3: Agnosticism Response

Another line of response, similar to the "no divine application response," could be to claim that, while God does indeed exercise the sort of freedom where he could have chosen otherwise, it is simply beyond our ken to understand or know just how God's choice is to be intelligible and non-arbitrary. That is, although God's free choices to do otherwise are not unintelligible, one simply does not know how to account for their intelligibility. This sort of agnosticism response is indeed what Frame appeals to when he elaborates on God's freedom to choose otherwise. He begins by asking, "[I]f God's free decisions are not determined by any of his attributes, then where do they come from? If these decisions are not libertarian random accidents, then what accounts for them?" He concludes by answering, "I can only reply, with [the apostle] Paul, 'Oh the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!' (Rom. 11.33)."³⁰⁸

Given the application of this biblical text to God's freedom, accounting for a divine intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice, where God could have chosen otherwise, is, according to Frame, "unsearchable" and "beyond tracing out."³⁰⁹ The problem with this response, however, is that it does not seem to be any different than the typical response to the intelligibility problem as regards to *human* free choices. Is it not the case that some of those who hold to the alternative possibilities condition with respect to human freedom also frequently appeal to agnosticism and "mystery" when accounting for intelligibility?³¹⁰ If the Theistic Compatibilist wants to sustain this agnosticism response, then he will have to concede that the agnosticism response with respect to human choices is just as plausible. Further, if the agnosticism response is indeed just

³⁰⁸ John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 236.

³⁰⁹ John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 236.

³¹⁰ For an affirmative answer to this question, see Peter van Inwagen, "Free Will Remains a Mystery," *Philosophical Perspectives*, 14 (2000): 1-19.

as plausible, then the initial employment by the Theistic Compatibilist of the intelligibility problem loses its force. In addition to this, if the Theistic Compatibilist thinks that the agnosticism response can only be applied to the intelligibility of divine choices but not to human choices, then the ad hoc problem rears its head once again. For these reasons, the agnosticism response is not something the Theistic Compatibilist should embrace.

Response 4: Abandoning the Intelligibility Problem Against Libertarian Freedom Response

Another possible response available for the Theistic Compatibilist is to jettison the intelligibility problem from his arsenal of arguments for why he thinks the alternative possibilities condition is false, or at least implausible. In other words, the Theistic Compatibilist, *contra* Frame and Ware, simply needs to admit the intelligibility of human free choices that could have been otherwise. Perhaps one could endorse the work by Robert Kane with respect to the intelligibility problem where he illustrates a business woman confronting an assault taking place in an alley on her way to a meeting. Here, there is a struggle between her conscience and her career ambitions—the former tells her to stop and call for help, while the latter tells her she cannot miss the meeting. Such a struggle, Kane argues, does not result in an unintelligible, arbitrary choice once the choice is made. Here is what he says:

[U]nder such conditions, the choice the woman might make either way will not be “inadvertent,” “accidental,” “capricious,” or “merely random” (as critics of indeterminism say) because the choice will be *willed* by the woman either way when it is made, and it will be done for *reasons* either way—reasons that she then and there *endorses*... So when she decides, she endorses one set of competing reasons over the other as the one she will act on. But *willing* what you do in this way, and doing it for *reasons* that you endorse, are conditions usually required to say something is done “on purpose,” rather than accidentally, capriciously, or merely by chance.³¹¹

Similarly, Alexander Pruss seeks to avoid the intelligibility problem by defending the position “that a choice of *A* can be explained in terms of a state that was compatible with choosing *B*.”³¹²

³¹¹ Robert Kane, “Libertarianism,” in *Four Views on Free Will*, eds. John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 29 (emphasis original).

³¹² Alexander R. Pruss, “The Leibnizian Cosmological Argument,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, eds. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2012), 55.

Pruss begins his defense by offering a hypothesis about how human freedom may plausibly work, where “free choices are made on the basis of reasons that one is ‘impressed by,’ that is, that one takes into consideration in making the decision.”³¹³ The following is the essence of his hypothesis:

[S]uppose that when the agent x chooses A , there is a subset S of reasons that favor A over B that the agent is impressed by, such that x freely chooses A on account of S . My explanatory hypothesis, then, is that x freely chooses A because x is making a free choice between A and B while impressed by the reasons in S . On my hypothesis, further, had the agent chosen B , the agent would still have been impressed by the reasons in S , but the choice of B would have been explained by x 's freely choosing between A and B while impressed by the reasons in T , where T is a set of reasons that favor B over A . Moreover, in the actual world where A is chosen, the agent is also impressed by T . However, in the actual world, the agent does not act on the impressive reasons in T , but on the reasons in S .³¹⁴

What we see from both Kane and Pruss is that the fundamental motivation to avoid the intelligibility problem, and thus preserve the coherence of the alternative possibilities condition, is to try to provide a *sufficient* explanation without that explanation being interpreted as a causal explanation. In other words, the *explanans* (i.e., that which does the explaining) is sufficient but does not *entail* the *explanandum* (i.e., that which is explained). So, to be clear, neither thinker is claiming that the same thing would possibly explain one particular choice over a contrary choice.

Nevertheless, whether or not one is convinced of Kane's or Pruss's answer to the intelligibility problem, does abandoning this argument (i.e., the intelligibility problem) commit the Theistic Compatibilist to asserting that the alternative possibilities condition with respect to *human* freedom is indeed true? Certainly not. The reason is because the Theistic Compatibilist can argue for the falsity of the alternative possibilities condition for *other* reasons unrelated to intelligibility. For instance, supposing that God's exhaustive and meticulous determinism entails human compatibilistic freedom, it could be argued *exegetically* that the sort of divine sovereignty

³¹³ Alexander R. Pruss, “The Leibnizian Cosmological Argument,” 55.

³¹⁴ Alexander R. Pruss, “The Leibnizian Cosmological Argument,” 55.

which Frame and Ware affirm is to be found in the Bible.³¹⁵ Therefore, if that sort of divine sovereignty is to be found in the Bible, then it would follow, on our supposition, that the alternative possibilities condition is indeed false.³¹⁶ Secondly, one could argue that if the *saints in heaven* exercise human compatibilistic freedom, then it would not seem any less implausible for humans on this side of death to do the same as well.³¹⁷ Lastly, one could argue for the falsity of the alternative possibilities condition given a certain understanding of *divine biblical inspiration*, that is, verbal plenary inspiration.³¹⁸ Here it could be thought that the only plausible way to account for every word and every grammatical construction as divinely inspired while also being written by human beings is to appeal to human compatibilistic freedom. It would seem utterly unreasonable to some that God could inspire exactly what he wanted the biblical authors to write if the authors could have chosen different words and grammatical constructions than they actually did. So, given divine verbal plenary inspiration, the alternative possibilities condition is false.

Therefore, if these other reasons for why the alternative possibilities condition is false are found reasonable, then it is perfectly consistent for the Theistic Compatibilist to claim that free choices, which could have been otherwise, are indeed intelligible, but that this type of human freedom is still false or at least less plausible than its rivals. What this consistency shows, consequently, is that the door is open for the Theistic Compatibilist to retain the alternative possibilities condition with respect to divine freedom while at the same time asserting that the alternative possibilities condition is not necessary with respect to human freedom. This type of response, however, comes with a stiff cost, namely, abandoning a strong argument against libertarian freedom.

Response 5: No Freedom to Choose Otherwise Response

³¹⁵ See John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 47-79; and Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, 67-78.

³¹⁶ Recall, however, that the supposition here is at odds with McCann's work mentioned in note 286.

³¹⁷ See Steven B. Cowan, "Compatibilism and the Sinlessness of the Redeemed in Heaven," *Faith and Philosophy*, 28 (2011): 416-431; for a response to Cowan, see Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe, "Heavenly Freedom: A Response to Cowan," *Faith and Philosophy*, 30 (2013): 188-197.

³¹⁸ See John Feinberg, "God Ordains All Things," 34-35.

Perhaps there is one final response available to the Theistic Compatibilist. The version of divine freedom under consideration is the freedom to choose otherwise, that is, DL, where the alternative possibilities condition is a necessary condition for God to be free. However, why should we think that such a condition is necessary in order for God to be free? Perhaps the sourcehood condition is sufficient for God to be free. I think that this is the most promising response for the Theistic Compatibilist to make in order to retain his account of an intelligible, non-arbitrary free choice. Indeed, this is exactly what some thinkers have done. For example, Paul Helm, when critiquing Thomas Aquinas's model of creation participating in God's perfection in an infinite number of possible ways, states,

The problem with such a position is that...it is hard to see how divine caprice can be avoided. For God is portrayed as actualizing one of a number of co-optimific goals. If we suppose this makes sense, on what grounds could God decide in favour of one rather than another?³¹⁹

According to Helm, there simply are no grounds for why God chose as he did, and thus the choice is a result of "pure whimsy."³²⁰

Similarly, Anselmian scholar (and non-compatibilist concerning human freedom) Katherin Rogers claims:

But if God has freedom of indifference with regard to creation, then this is no explanation at all, since there is absolutely no reason why God chose our world over some other creation or over none at all. His wisdom and love might equally have issued in a creation containing only well-ordered cosmic dust, or in no creation at all...Ascribing freedom of indifference to God posits radical arbitrariness at the heart of creation such that there is no ultimate meaning or purpose to the world—at least no meaning or purpose that would not be equally fulfilled by a creation of cosmic dust or a lack of any creation at all.³²¹

What we see here from both Helm and Rogers are echoes of the intelligibility problem applied to God's freedom. However, in remaining consistent, they both affirm that the alternative possibilities condition is not necessary in order for God to be free. Helm and Rogers, we might

³¹⁹ Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God without Time*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 180.

³²⁰ Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God without Time*, 180.

³²¹ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 198-199.

say, opt instead for a type of *compatibilism* applied to the divine will, where necessity and freedom are compatible. In this context, however, it is the necessity of choosing to create which is compatible with God's freedom. The fundamental reason why this sort of necessity does not jeopardize God's freedom is because the necessity in question finds its *source* within God's very nature. There is something about God's essential perfection that precludes him from being able to choose otherwise. Accordingly, divine freedom is primarily a function of God being the ultimate source of his choices. He freely chooses if nothing metaphysically outside of him is the ultimate explanation for why he chooses one thing over another.³²² While such a position is consistent, it does not seem to be a position which Theistic Compatibilists such as Frame and Ware would want to adopt in light of their commitment to the alternative possibilities condition with respect to God's freedom and the metaphysical contingency of creation.³²³ Nevertheless, this final response, I suggest, is the way forward for the Theistic Compatibilist.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER

The Theistic Compatibilist's employment of the intelligibility problem has been influential in theological and philosophical writings, thus arguing against the coherence of the freedom to choose otherwise. Nevertheless, I have argued that the typical Theistic Compatibilist position is problematic because it implies the denial of divine freedom, understood as the freedom to choose otherwise. What I have suggested in light of this problem is that the Theistic Compatibilist affirm DSC in light of their metaphysical commitments to both human freedom and explanation.

³²² Other than Wierenga, Rogers and Talbott (which were discussed in Chapter 2), for other contemporary accounts of God's freedom where the alternative possibilities condition is denied, see Keith Ward, *Religion and Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 318-321; James E. Dolezal, *God without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 188-212; Timothy O'Connor, *Theism and Ultimate Explanation: The Necessary Shape of Contingency* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2012), 111-129; and Hugh J. McCann, *Creation and the Sovereignty of God*, 155-175.

³²³ See John M. Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 252; and Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, 55-56.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have articulated and defended a model of divine freedom which I have called Divine Source Compatibilism (DSC). After noting in Chapter 1, the introduction, that William Rowe argues that there is a serious problem of reconciling God's essential goodness and moral perfection with any significant degree of divine freedom, I set out to investigate this allegation.

In chapter 2 I offered an introduction to some of the most important issues under consideration. More specifically, I offered a summary statement of DSC by reviewing some of the recent work of Edward Wierenga, Katherin Rogers, and Thomas Talbott. I then highlighted what I take to be the major factors which serve to motivate the advocates of DSC. Following this exercise, I focused my attention on some crucial philosophical assumptions within the discussion concerning God's freedom.

Chapter 3 dealt with the relation of DSC to the Christian tradition. Here I took a fairly close look at DSC's ability to account for the claims of the Christian tradition with respect to God's freedom. I began by stipulating a set of conditions for what might count as a "traditional" view of God's freedom by drawing attention to authoritative writings and significant theological figures. I first argued that a precise metaphysical outlook with respect to God's freedom is underdetermined concerning authoritative writings. I then argued that, given certain theological representatives of the Christian tradition, DSC seems to be demanded by the tradition. This is not to say, however, that Divine Libertarianism (DL) is inconsistent with the claims of the Christian tradition. Rather, I highlighted that the picture is indeed mixed with some leaning toward a libertarian outlook while others are more sympathetic to a compatibilist view. I concluded by considering an objection from the First Vatican General Council of 1870 and argued that DSC can plausibly account for the statements within that Council.

The charge that DSC violates divine aseity because it makes God somehow dependent upon creation was laid to rest in Chapter 4. After doing some conceptual analysis upon the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, I argued that if the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* holds true, then God has aseity. I then argued that the idea that God creates from internal necessity (which DSC

affirms) is consistent with *creatio ex nihilo*. More specifically, I argued that the idea that God creates from an internal necessity does not imply or entail some sort of metaphysical monism, whether that monism be panentheism or pantheism. Therefore, DSC can account for the traditional Creator-creature distinction.

Chapter 5 explored the possibility that DSC jeopardizes a fundamental component of perfect being theism, namely, divine thankworthiness. I began by constructing an argument against DSC and divine thankworthiness called the Basic Argument (BA). I first highlighted two possible ways in which one might argue that God can be morally responsible for performing some token act (e.g., creating) even if he performs that token act necessarily. But even upon supposing that those two responses are in fact false, I then argued that God can be found thankworthy without being morally responsible for performing some token act necessarily. My argument was founded upon what I called the “gracious-and-necessary” condition (i.e., that God can be gracious with respect to some token act he performs while he does it necessarily) and the “thankworthy-if-gracious” condition (i.e., that God is thankworthy with respect to performing a token act so long as the act he performed is a gracious act). Because of the plausibility of these two conditions, it is possible that God can be thankworthy without being morally responsible.

Chapter 6 considers how DSC fares with a particular outlook on theism and human freedom, namely, Theistic Compatibilism. I began by highlighting the general argument of the chapter, namely, that there is inconsistency between Theistic Compatibilism and Divine Libertarianism (DL). After drawing attention to the argument, I articulate (via two metaphysical claims) just how the Theistic Compatibilist accounts for an intelligible (non-arbitrary) free choice. I then argue that the Theistic Compatibilist’s account of an intelligible free choice undermines God’s libertarian freedom. I then chronicle five possible responses open to the Theistic Compatibilist with respect to my argument. I suggest, finally, that DSC is the most plausible way to answer my argument that Theistic Compatibilism is inconsistent with DL.

DSC, however, might well be criticized and perhaps even rejected on other grounds. Perhaps there are too many problems with respect to our *modal intuitions*. Some might worry, for instance, that if God creates and creates this particular world necessarily, then it is difficult to see in what sense any other worlds are in fact possible. Laura Garcia puts the problem this way:

[W]e should note one unfortunate consequence of accepting (1) [i.e., If God's willing a certain universe is rational, then that universe must be the optimific alternative] and (2) [i.e., There is an optimific universe, a best of all possible worlds]. If these were correct, it would follow that the actual world...is the only possible world, since it is necessarily the only world which could have been created by the necessarily existing creator. If God's existence is necessary and his eternal act of will is also necessary, then...there is only one possible world....In the end, [one] must simply accept the counter-intuitive result that many things which appear to us to be eminently contingent...are in fact metaphysically necessary.³²⁴

Similarly, Edward Wierenga adds:

The assumption that there is a best possible world thus has an extraordinary consequence, namely, that it is necessary that God creates it. If 'the best possible world' is a rigid designator, as it would seem to be if it designates at all, then it is hard to see in what sense any other worlds are so much as possible. No other world could possibly be actual, so no other world would be possible. And every true proposition would turn out to be necessarily true. Nothing could be different from the way it is.³²⁵

Accordingly, if God creates and creates this particular world necessarily, then it seems that no other world could be actual. What this suggests is that the idea of *modal collapse* ensues: no other world is possible, in which case everything in the actual world is necessary. So, given the truth of DSC, it seems that nothing could be different from the way it is since truth collapses into necessity, and this, apparently, unduly violates our modal intuitions and judgments.

Now proponents of DSC could respond to this objection by highlighting something we have already seen from Katherin Rogers, namely, to stipulate an important distinction between "the best possible world *simpliciter*" and "the best *actualizable* world."³²⁶ Or, as Wierenga similarly suggests between "possible worlds generally" and "*feasible* worlds,"³²⁷ where the latter are worlds that God is able to actualize. These types of distinctions from Rogers and Wierenga

³²⁴ Laura L. Garcia, "Divine Freedom and Creation" *Philosophical Quarterly*, 42 (1992): 204.

³²⁵ Edward Wierenga, "Perfect Goodness and Divine Freedom," *Philosophical Books*, 48 (2007): 208.

³²⁶ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 195.

³²⁷ Edward Wierenga, "Perfect Goodness and Divine Freedom," 208 note 3 (emphasis original).

are no doubt engendered by a commitment to *human* libertarian freedom. The distinctions, in others words, which Rogers and Wierenga highlight, are dependent upon the alternative possibilities condition applied to human freedom. Here is Rogers:

Is ours, then, ‘the best of all possible worlds’?...If created agents have libertarian freedom, then the state of the world is partially up to us. Clearly we do not always do what is best. We sin....God can bring about the best results consistent with our choices, but it is not clear that...this entails the best possible world *simpliciter*. Thus it is probably better to say that God brings about the best ‘actualizable’ world, that is, the best world He can, taking into account created choices. Given God’s omniscience and omnipotence, God’s plans cannot really be thwarted, but given creatures with libertarian freedom, the free choices of created agents must immutably and eternally play a role in those plans.³²⁸

Similarly, Wierenga explains:

[W]e can say that God weakly actualizes a possible world by directly or strongly actualizing a part of that world. God does his part [by, say, creating necessarily], and then any [libertarian] free agents he creates add their share. More precisely...we can say that for any given possible world, W , there is the largest state of affairs included in W that God strongly actualizes, $T(W)$. But since $T(W)$ does not determine all of W , there is some other possible world, W' , such that $T(W)' = T(W)$. Whether God can actualize a world W then depends on which of the following is true:

- (i) If God were to strongly actualize $T(W)$ then W would be actual, or
- (ii) If God were to strongly actualize $T(W)$ then W' would be actual.

Just as God’s ability to actualize a world depends on one these ‘counterfactuals of world-actualization’ being true, for whichever one is false, there is a world that God is unable to actualize even though it’s possible that he do so. For example, if (ii) is false, then God cannot actualize W' . To do so, he’d have to strongly actualize $T(W)$, but if he were to do that, he’d get W instead of W' .³²⁹

The important point to highlight provided by this response is that it can be possible that God actualize a world without its being feasible, that is, without God being able to actualize it. So, taking our cue from Wierenga’s remarks, if (i) is true but (ii) is false, then W is feasible but W' is

³²⁸ Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, 195 (emphasis original).

³²⁹ Edward Wierenga, “Perfect Goodness and Divine Freedom,” 211-212.

not. Or, as Wierenga puts it, “[A] world is feasible just in case there is some state of affairs God can strongly actualize and which is such that if God were to strongly actualize that world would be actual.”³³⁰

Consequently, those who affirm *human* libertarian freedom (and perhaps that God does not have foreknowledge of future contingent truths nor middle knowledge of counterfactual of freedom) could accept the existence of a restricted *set* of possible worlds, with only the divine determined component fully fixed. God creates what he does necessarily, in other words, but what he creates necessarily would not be necessary in all its details since some of these possible worlds would be dependent on *human* libertarian free choices.

Of course in order for this type of response to carry any weight *human* libertarian freedom must be true. How, then, might a compatibilist (perhaps a Theistic Compatibilist) with respect to human freedom respond to the objection from modal collapse? To put it simply, I think the most plausible thing for the compatibilist to do is to make some distinctions with respect to *possibility*. For example, perhaps worlds other than the actual world are simply *epistemically* possible, that is, these worlds are possible for all we know. Or, maybe instead these worlds other than the actual world are *conceptually* possible, that is, there is in fact no internal inconsistency in the description of them. So, while all possible worlds other than the actual world may be epistemically possible and/or conceptually possible, these possibilities are nonetheless not metaphysically possible. Whether or not this type of response is a satisfactory response from the compatibilist is for another discussion. Suffice it to say, however, there are plausible responses to the objection from modal collapse whether one affirms a libertarian notion of human freedom or a compatibilist notion of human freedom. Nevertheless, as we can see, it will be up to the advocate of DSC whether or not to carry his or her compatibilist intuitions over to human freedom. But whether or not the advocate of DSC is willing carry his or her compatibilist intuitions over to human freedom is, as is typical to say, discussion for another day.

³³⁰ Edward Wierenga, “Perfect Goodness and Divine Freedom,” 212.

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