

Counterfactuals of Divine Freedom

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Abstract Contrary to the commonly held position of Luis de Molina, Thomas Flint and others, I argue that counterfactuals of divine freedom (*CDFs*) are pre-volitional for God within the Molinist framework. That is, *CDFs* are not true even partly in virtue of some act of God's will. As a result, I argue that the Molinist God fails to satisfy an epistemic openness requirement for rational deliberation, and thus she cannot rationally deliberate about which world to actualize.

Keywords Counterfactuals of freedom · Deliberation · Divine freedom · Libertarianism · Middle knowledge · Molinism

Introduction

Molinism purports to reconcile a robust account of divine providence with creaturely libertarian freedom.¹ The central Molinist thesis is that God has middle knowledge. This knowledge consists (at least) of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (*CCFs*)—counterfactuals concerning what some creature would freely do if they were placed in certain circumstances. A distinctive feature of *CCFs* is that they have their truth-value both contingently and logically prior to any act of God's will.

While Molinism is perceived to have a number of fruitful applications in the philosophy of religion and theology,² it has been simultaneously plagued with a number of philosophical difficulties due to its commitment to true *CCFs*. Specifically, anti-Molinists argue that true *CCFs* do not exist because there is nothing to ground such truths (Adams 1977; Hasker 1989: 29–52; Cowan 2003),³ or because they are ruled out by Lewis-Stalnaker semantics for counterfactuals (van Inwagen 1997).⁴ Anti-Molinists have also argued that true *CCFs* are incompatible with libertarian freedom (Hasker 1986).⁵ True *CCFs* are perceived to be a threat not only to free *creatures*, but also to certain features that *God* is supposed have. Specifically, true *CCFs* pose a threat to God's sovereignty or omnipotence since their truth-value is independent of any act of God's will (Mackie 1982: 174; Rogers 2007). Additionally, true *CCFs* pose a threat to God's omniscience given that God may have no means of knowing which *CCFs* are true (O'Connor 1992). In contrast to *CCFs*, very little attention has been given to

¹ For the purpose of this paper I will be assuming that Molinism is committed to libertarianism. Though, see Perszyk's (2000) attempt to reconcile Molinism with compatibilism. Moreover, I will also be focusing exclusively on actions that agents can avoid performing. While not all Molinists may affirm the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (Frankfurt 1969: 829), it is a standard assumption within the Molinist framework that the kinds of free actions in the consequent of *CCFs* are ones in which an agent does in fact have the ability to do otherwise.

² For a summary of such applications, see Perszyk (2013: 764–765). Molinism has also been applied to areas outside of philosophy of religion, such as in Stump (2003: 148–150) and Hartman (ms).

³ For a reply to this argument, see Flint (1998: 121–137), Wierenga (2001), Craig (2001), and (Merricks 2007: 146–55).

⁴ For a reply to this argument, see Plantinga (1974: 178; 1985: 377–378).

⁵ For a reply to this argument, see Flint (1999).

counterfactuals of *divine* freedom (*CDFs*), and to what sorts of problems they may raise for Molinism. My aim is to investigate this rather unexplored territory.

I will argue that, contrary to the position of Luis de Molina, Thomas Flint and others, *CDFs* are pre-volitional for God within the Molinist framework. That is, *CDFs* are not true even partly in virtue of some act of God's will. As a result, I argue that the Molinist God fails to satisfy an epistemic openness requirement for rational deliberation, and thus she cannot rationally deliberate about which world to actualize. Before turning to my argument, I must highlight certain aspects of Molinism that are crucial to our discussion of *CDFs*.

1. Molinism

According to Molinism, God's knowledge is divided into three types: natural, middle, and free. These types of knowledge stand in a non-temporal, logical or explanatory relation to one another with respect to God's decision to actualize a world. Moreover, these types of knowledge are individuated on the basis of both the modal status of their truth-value as well as the dependence status of their truth-value on acts of God's will. Thomas Flint (2003: 93) calls a proposition whose truth-value does not obtain in virtue of some act of a person *S*'s will a pre-volitional truth for *S*. Although it is not explicitly stated, I take Flint to mean that such a truth-value does not obtain *even partly* in virtue of some act of *S*'s will. So, the notion of pre-volitionality I will be working with goes as follows:

A truth *TR* is pre-volitional for a person *S* if and only if *TR* is not true even partly in virtue of some act of *S*'s will.⁶

By contrast, a truth that *does* obtain at least partly in virtue of some act of *S*'s will is post-volitional for *S*. With these two notions in hand, I now turn to the three types of divine knowledge within the Molinist framework.

First, God's *natural* knowledge consists of knowledge of necessary truths. These truths are pre-volitional for God. Second, God's *middle* knowledge consists of propositions that are, like God's natural knowledge, pre-volitional for God. But unlike the propositions of God's natural knowledge, the truth-value of these propositions is a contingent matter. Third, God's *free* knowledge consists of propositions whose truth-value is a contingent matter and which are post-volitional for God.

As noted above, the central propositions that are a part of God's middle knowledge are *CCFs* that have the following structure:

If creaturely person *S* were in circumstance *C*, *S* would freely ϕ .

In order for these counterfactuals to be relevant to God's decision concerning which world to actualize, '*C*' must refer to a complete or maximally detailed description of the relevant circumstances since ordinary counterfactuals do not permit strengthening the antecedent; adding more to the antecedent can change the truth-value of the

⁶ I employ '*TR*' to refer to a truth in order to reserve the term '*T*' to refer to a creaturely world-type.

counterfactual (Lewis 1973: 31–32). Hence, as Dean Zimmerman (2009: 56–59) puts it, it is the maximally described *ultima facie* counterfactuals, rather than the non-maximally described *prima facie* counterfactuals, that are *useful* to God.

Next, a creaturely world-type is, roughly, any complete set of *CCFs* that are compossibly true. There are a number of ways to formulate a precise account of a creaturely world-type (Flint 1998: 46–50). The following relatively simple formulation of a creaturely world-type should suffice for my purposes here:

T is a creaturely world-type *iff* for any counterfactual of creaturely freedom ($C \Box \rightarrow A$), either ($C \Box \rightarrow A$) or ($C \Box \rightarrow \sim A$) is a member of *T*, and all of the *CCFs* that are members of *T* are compossibly true.⁷

A creaturely world-type *T* is true *iff* all *CCFs* that are members of *T* are true. Now, the Molinist should be open to the possibility of other propositions in addition to *CCFs* having their truth-value contingently and being pre-volitional for God. For example, some Molinists entertain the existence of contingently true, pre-volitional (for God) counterfactuals concerning indeterministic scenarios at the microphysical level (Flint 1998: 42–43, 193–196; Craig 2007: 63; Perszyk 2011: 18). In that case, if we wish to equate God’s middle knowledge with knowledge of the true creaturely world-type, we must be open to the possibility of incorporating propositions other than *CCFs* into a creaturely world-type.⁸ However, I argue later on that even if *CDFs* are both contingently true and pre-volitional for God, God’s middle knowledge should not be equated with God’s knowledge of the true creaturely world-type. The reason for this is complex, and has nothing to do with the fact that the set in question is labeled a *creaturely* world-type.

Next, a world *W* is feasible *iff* the creaturely world-type that is in fact true is true in *W* (Flint 1998: 51–54). It is in God’s power to actualize a world only if that world is feasible. Since it is not up to God which creaturely world-type is in fact true, God is able to choose which world to actualize among the set of feasible worlds without in any way constraining creaturely libertarian freedom. It is in this way that God’s middle knowledge plays a central role in reconciling a robust account of divine providence with the existence of creaturely libertarian freedom.

The final, less familiar notion that is crucial to this paper is resilience, a notion that Flint (2003: 93) defines as follows:

[A] truth $T[R]$ is resilient for a person *S* if and only if *S* lacks counterfactual power over $T[R]$ —i.e., if and only if it’s not the case that *S* has or had the power to act in such a way that $T[R]$ would not have been true.

⁷ This is a modification of one of Flint’s (1998: 49) formulations of a creaturely world-type. I add the compossibility component in order to rule out logically inconsistent creaturely world-types. Note that I will assume that the law of conditional excluded middle is true in order not to unnecessarily complicate things further. To be clear, how exactly one defines a creaturely world-type does not affect the core of my argument.

⁸ Flint (1998: 47) himself understands a counterfactual of creaturely freedom to include propositions in which a being is not properly speaking free. So Flint in fact already grants that the objects of God’s middle knowledge can include propositions other than the ones I am labeling as a *CCF*.

The concept of resilience has been discussed primarily by Flint (2003) and Kvanvig (2002, 2011: ch. 6) in regards to the coherence and plausibility of ‘Maverick Molinism’. According to this view, although *CCFs* are pre-volitional for God, they are non-resilient for God. In other words, God could have acted in such a way such that, had she acted that way, certain *CCFs* would (or might) have had a different truth-value from that which they actually have. I take no stand on the coherence of Maverick Molinism here. Instead, I will explore the relationship between *CCFs* and free creatures, as well as the relationship between *CDFs* and God with regards to the notion of resilience. So, with this brief sketch of Molinism in hand, I now turn to the finer details of the relationship between *CCFs* and free creatures. This will in turn help us understand the relationship between *CDFs* and God.

2. *CCFs* and Free Creatures

In this section I argue that the Molinist must accept two propositions concerning the relationship between *CCFs* and free creatures. Here is the first proposition:

(A) For any creaturely person *S*, every *CCF* about *S* is pre-volitional for *S*.

The Molinist must accept (A) for two reasons. Here is the first reason. According to the grounding objection, in order for *CCFs* to be true, they must be true in virtue of some categorical aspect of the world. But, so the objection goes, there is no such aspect to ground their truth (Adams 1977; Hasker 1989: 29–52; Cowan 2003). The objection relies on a grounding principle that excludes the grounding of *CCFs*. Here is an example of such a principle:

(GP) Any true contingent proposition is true in virtue of the existence or non-existence of some concrete state or event (Hasker 2004: 195; 2011: 27).

There are roughly two responses the Molinist can make to the grounding objection, and some Molinists wish to remain neutral between which response ultimately ought to be endorsed. Either response, however, commits the Molinist to accepting (A). First, she could maintain that *CCFs* are grounded by replacing (GP) with the following principle:

(GP+) Any true contingent proposition is true in virtue of some concrete state of affairs that does exist, or has existed, or will exist, or *would* exist (under specified conditions) (Flint 2009: 281; cf. Wierenga 2001).

If the Molinist were to endorse (GP+), she would be committed to the claim that what (wholly) grounds the truth of *CCFs* is the “subjunctive aspect” of the world (whatever exactly that is). In that case, *CCFs* are not true even partly in virtue of some act of a free creature’s will, and thus (A) is true. The second response to the grounding objection simply denies that all contingently true propositions are true in virtue of some aspect of the world, and thus that *CCFs* are among such brute or ungrounded truths (Plantinga 1985; Craig 2001; Merricks 2007: 146–55). *A fortiori*, *CCFs* are not true even partly in

virtue of some act of a free creature's will, and thus (A) is once again true. So, no matter how the Molinist answers the grounding objection, the Molinist is committed to (A).

I now turn to the second reason as to why the Molinist must accept (A) which will only come to light after a good deal of setup. According to Molinism, God decides which world to actualize by considering all of the true *CCFs*. However, if any *CCF* were true even partly in virtue of some act of a free creature's will, then that *CCF* would be true *too late*, so to speak, for the purpose of deciding which world to actualize. But at least certain *CCFs* are true too late (Adams 1977: 113–114; Kenny 1979: 69–71), viz. those that are entailed by the truth of the antecedent and consequent of said *CCFs*. This has been coined by Wierenga (1989: 148) as the 'not true soon enough' objection. Let us flesh out this objection with an example. Suppose that Martha is in (maximally specified) circumstances *C* such that she has the opportunity to either go hiking or go fishing, and she in fact freely decides to go hiking. In that case, the following *CCF* is true:

Hiking If Martha were in *C*, she would freely decide to go hiking.

The Lewis-Stalnaker possible worlds semantics, a formal theory, is often accompanied by a metaphysical theory concerning the truth-makers for counterfactuals (cf. Mares and Perszyk 97–101). Hence, it is widely assumed that the truth of *Hiking* depends upon the truth of the antecedent and consequent of *Hiking*. But then *Hiking*—and every additional *CCF* that is entailed by the truth of its antecedent and consequent—apparently cannot be true logically prior to creation, and thus cannot play a role in God's decision to actualize a world.⁹ The argument may be formulated as follows:

1. The truth of *Hiking* depends at least partly upon the truth of the antecedent of *Hiking*.
2. The truth of the antecedent of *Hiking* depends at least partly upon God's actualizing *C*.
3. Therefore, the truth of *Hiking* depends at least partly upon God's actualizing *C*. [(1) & (2)]
4. If (3) is true, then the truth of *Hiking* cannot be of use to God.
5. Therefore, the truth of *Hiking* cannot be of use to God. [(3) & (4)]

Plantinga's (1985) reply to the 'not true soon enough' objection reveals that he thinks the inference from (1) and (2) to (3) is invalid because the notion of dependence at issue here is not transitive. Plantinga (1985: 376) offers the following counterexample to the transitivity of dependence:

- 1*. The truth of *The Allies won the Second World War* depends on which world is actual.
- 2*. Which world is actual depends on whether I mow my lawn this afternoon.
Therefore,
- 3*. The truth of *The Allies won the Second World War* depends on whether I mow my lawn this afternoon.

⁹Despite the somewhat misleading name, *CCFs* are really subjunctive conditionals that can have antecedents that are not contrary to fact (Lewis 1973: 3–4).

Since (1*) and (2*) are true but (3*) is clearly false, Plantinga (1985: 376) concludes that “the relation expressed by the relevant sense of ‘depends’ isn’t transitive.”¹⁰

Plantinga’s alleged counterexample is unconvincing. The dependence relation, like explanation, is widely understood to be non-monotonic (Rosen 2010: 116–117; Raven 2012: 689). That is, roughly, if something *A* depends upon set *s* whose sole members are *W*, *X*, and *Y*, then each member of *s* must play a role in *A*’s dependence upon *s*. Hence, if *Z* plays no role in what *A* depends upon, then *A* does not depend upon set *s** whose sole members are *W*, *X*, *Y*, and *Z*. The upshot is that we should reject (1*); since Plantinga’s mowing his lawn in the afternoon plays no role in what grounds the truth of *The Allies won the Second World War*, the truth of *The Allies won the Second World War* does not depend upon which world is actual. Instead, it only depends upon a *proper part* of the actual world. So, the Molinist should not reply to the ‘not true soon enough’ objection by rejecting (3). Instead, she can and should reject premise (1). Let me explain.

The Molinist is committed to the truth of *CCFs* whose antecedents are not true. At least *these* counterfactuals are not true in virtue of any act of a free creature’s will, as we have seen in the previous discussion of the grounding objection. Hence, in response to the ‘not true soon enough’ objection, the Molinist should adopt the exact same position in regards to *CCFs* whose antecedents are true. In other words, although the truth of *Hiking* is *entailed* by the truth of the antecedent and consequent of *Hiking*, the Molinist should deny that the truth of *Hiking* even partly *depends upon* the truth of the antecedent and consequent of *Hiking*. This way, the Molinist can treat all *CCFs* in the same manner *and* provide a principled reason for rejecting (1). In that case, since no *CCF* depends upon the truth of either its antecedent or consequent, no *CCF* depends upon an act of a free creature’s will. So no *CCF* about a creaturely person *S* is post-volitional for *S*. This concludes my second reason for thinking that the Molinist must accept (A).

The other proposition I think that the Molinist must accept is the following:

(B) For any creaturely person *S*, if *S* freely ϕ -s in circumstance *C*, then the following *CCF* is non-resilient for *S*: ‘if *S* were in circumstance *C*, *S* would freely ϕ ’.

To see why the Molinist must accept (B), consider the following two *CCFs* (note that ‘the restaurant’ is shorthand for a maximally specified description of certain circumstances):

Pizza If Roy were in the restaurant, he would freely order pizza (rather than spaghetti).

Spaghetti If Roy were in the restaurant, he would freely order spaghetti (rather than pizza).

Suppose that *Pizza* is true, *Spaghetti* is false, and that Roy does in fact freely order pizza in the restaurant. Since Roy could have ordered spaghetti instead, and since Roy’s ordering spaghetti in the restaurant entails that *Spaghetti* is true, it follows that Roy has some sort of counterfactual power over the truth-value of *Pizza* and *Spaghetti*. In other words, there is something Roy could have done (viz., order spaghetti rather than pizza),

¹⁰ Plantinga’s reply to the ‘not true soon enough’ objection is also endorsed by Wierenga (1989: 148–150).

such that if he were to have done it, *Pizza* would have been false and *Spaghetti* would have been true (Flint 1999: 303). In that case, *Pizza* is non-resilient for Roy. Generalizing from this case, it follows that (B) is true. So I conclude in this section that, within the Molinist framework, (A) and (B) are true. I now turn to discuss the relationship between *CDFs* and God.

3. *CDFs* and God

Recall that a *CCF* has the following structure:

If a creaturely person *S* were in circumstance *C*, *S* would freely ϕ .

Similarly, the relevant kind of *CDF* with which I will be concerned has the same structure:

If God were in circumstance *C*, she would freely ϕ .

Now, Flint (1998: 55) and others conceive of “God’s decision as to what he will do [to be] a single, all-encompassing one which follows upon his middle knowledge and precedes his free knowledge.” I will thus understand ‘ ϕ ’ to stand for actualizing some world and ‘*C*’ to stand for the logical moment that immediately logically precedes God’s act of will.^{11,12} Thus, *C* is individuated, at least in part, on the basis of which creaturely world-type happens to be true. However, as I noted earlier, there may be other objects of God’s middle knowledge besides *CCFs*. In that case, it would seem at first glance that *C* should be individuated on the basis of God’s exhaustive middle knowledge. But this isn’t exactly right either. For, *if CDFs* are pre-volitional for God (and contingently true), *C* should be individuated on the basis of God’s exhaustive middle knowledge, *with the exception of God’s knowledge of the true CDFs*.¹³

To see why the true *CDFs* should be excluded from *C*, it will be instructive to return for a moment to *CCFs*. Suppose once more that *Pizza* is true and that Roy freely orders pizza (rather than spaghetti) in the restaurant. Now, as I noted earlier, the salient *CCFs* for Molinism are the *ultima facie* counterfactuals, rather than the non-maximally

¹¹ For simplicity’s sake, I bypass Plantinga’s (1974: 169–74) weak/strong actualization distinction that is no doubt crucial for a full-fledged account of Molinism.

¹² Notice that Flint would presumably still want to grant the existence of what I’ll call *local CDFs*—*CDFs* that are more narrow in scope such as the following:

If Suzie were to freely request God to cure her of some illness, God would freely grant Suzie’s request.

If one thought of God’s interaction with the world as one single, comprehensive act of will, but one also wanted to affirm the existence of such local *CDFs*, one may want to posit a kind of priority of the true global *CDF* over the true local *CDFs*. For reasons I will not discuss here, I think that the true global *CDF* is not in fact prior to the true local *CDFs* within the Molinist framework (Otte 2009; Plantinga 2009; Wierenga 2011: 130). Note, however, that I will be focusing on global *CDFs* rather than local *CDFs* *merely for simplicity’s sake*, as nothing I say below hinges on which kinds of *CDFs* are logically prior.

¹³ I am indebted to Ed Wierenga and Kenny Boyce for helpful discussions on this issue.

described *prima facie* counterfactuals. This is why I noted earlier that ‘the restaurant’ is shorthand for a maximally specified description of certain circumstances. Now, does ‘the restaurant’ include the truth of the very counterfactual under discussion, viz. *Pizza*? No. For, if ‘the restaurant’ *did* include the truth of *Pizza*, then ‘the restaurant’ would simply *entail* that Roy orders pizza. However, within the Molinist framework, if Roy *freely* orders *Pizza* in the restaurant, then Roy could have refrained from ordering pizza in the restaurant. So, ‘the restaurant’ cannot entail the fact that Roy orders pizza. The more general point here is that *the circumstances specified in the antecedent of a CCF do not include the truth of that very CCF* (Wierenga 2011: 127–30).

In light of these considerations, we should similarly hold that *the circumstances specified in the antecedent of a CDF do not include the truth of that very CDF*. So, even if *CDFs* are pre-volitional for God (and contingently true), circumstance *C* in the antecedent of a *CDF* should be individuated on the basis of God’s exhaustive middle knowledge, *with the exception of the true CDFs*. So, the creaturely world-type should not include *CDFs*, even if it includes other propositions besides *CCFs* that are both contingently true and pre-volitional for God. With this understanding of *CDFs* in hand, I now turn to the more detailed kind of *CDF* I will be discussing in this paper:

If creaturely world-type *T* were true, God would freely actualize world *W*.

Now, unless there is some relevant difference between God and free creatures, just as the Molinist must affirm that *CCFs* are both pre-volitional and non-resilient (in certain circumstances) for free creatures, the Molinist likewise should maintain that *CDFs* are both pre-volitional and non-resilient (at least in certain circumstances) for God. In other words, barring some relevant difference between God and free creatures, just as the Molinist is committed to (A) and (B), the Molinist also ought to accept the following two propositions:

(A*) Every *CDF* is pre-volitional for God.

(B*) If God freely ϕ -s in circumstance *C*, then the following *CDF* is non-resilient for God: ‘if God were in circumstance *C*, God would freely ϕ ’.

No Molinist should have a problem accepting (B*). To illustrate, suppose that creaturely world-type *T*₁ is true, and that God actualizes world *W*₁. In that case, the following *CDF* is true:

(i) If *T*₁ were true, God would freely actualize world *W*₁.

Since God freely actualizes *W*₁, God could have actualized some other (feasible) world instead, say, *W*₂. If God did that, then (i) would be false, and the following *CDF* that is in fact false would have been true instead:

(ii) If *T*₁ were true, God would freely actualize world *W*₂.

So God has a kind of counterfactual power over the truth of (i). So (i) is non-resilient for God. Generalizing from this case, it follows that (B*) is true. Now, while (B*) is not controversial, many Molinists seem to assume with Molina (1998: 173/*Concordia* 4.52.11.) and Flint (1998: 56–57) that (A*) is false. Such Molinists maintain instead that *CDFs* are post-volitional for God. The only Molinist I know of who accepts (A*) is one of Molina’s contemporaries, Francisco Suarez (1741) (cf. Craig 1988: 225–226).

Now, as previously stated, unless some relevant difference can be found between God and free creatures, the Molinist must accept (A*) on pain of arbitrariness. Is there a relevant difference between God and free creatures that might block the inference from (A) to (A*)? I fail to see what that difference might be.¹⁴ At any rate, the burden seems to be squarely on the Molinist to provide some difference between God and free creatures that in turn casts doubt on the inference from (A) to (A*). As Freddoso (1988: 53) notes, if Molinists reject (A*), they “are burdened with the task of finding some way to explain the fact that God has prevolitional cognition of the free actions of creatures but lacks prevolitional cognition of His own free actions.” What I will do in the next section, then, is assess the reason Molina and Flint offer for rejecting (A*), the only reason offered in the literature to my knowledge. I will argue that their case against (A*) is unconvincing precisely because they do not mark a relevant difference between free creatures and God. If I am correct, then the Molinist must indeed accept (A*) on pain of arbitrariness.

4. Are *CDFs* post-volitional for God?

For ease of exposition, I will refer to a *CDF* that is pre-volitional for God as a ‘Pre-*CDF*’, and refer to a *CDF* that is post-volitional for God as a ‘Post-*CDF*’. Now, Molina (1988: 171–175/*Concordia* 4.52.11–13) thought that Pre-*CDFs* are incompatible with God’s freedom, despite also affirming that pre-volitional *CCFs* for free creatures are compatible with creaturely freedom. I take Molina’s argument against Pre-*CDFs* to go roughly as follows. Assume for the sake of argument that Pre-*CDFs* exist. In that case, logically prior to God’s decision of what to do, God knows both that creaturely world-type *T* is in fact true, and also that if *T* were true God would actualize world *W*. So God knows logically prior to God’s decision of what to do that God will (or does) actualize *W*. But this is incompatible with God’s freely actualizing *W*: “For if such knowledge [of Pre-*CDFs*] existed, then He would in no way be able to choose the [alternative action]” (Molina 1998: 171). The argument may be constructed as follows:

The Argument Against Pre-CDFs

6. If Pre-*CDFs* exist, then God knows that God ϕ -s logically prior to God’s ϕ -ing.

¹⁴ Thanks to Mike Rea for the suggestion that a proponent of divine timelessness might note as a relevant difference that the circumstances in the antecedent of a *CDF* are non-temporal, whereas the circumstances in the antecedent of a *CCF* are temporal. While the temporal/atemporal distinction certainly marks a difference between *CCFs* and *CDFs* (given divine timelessness), it is difficult to see how this difference is *relevant* to the issue of truth-making. And, until some reason is given for thinking it is, this difference cannot block the inference from (A) to (A*).

7. If God knows that God ϕ -s logically prior to God's ϕ -ing, then God does not ϕ freely.
8. Therefore, if Pre-CDFs exist, then God does not ϕ freely. [(6) & (7)]
9. God does ϕ freely.
10. Therefore, it's not the case that Pre-CDFs exist. [(8) & (9)]

Flint agrees with Molina that (A*) is false within the Molinist framework, but it is not exactly clear why Flint thinks this. For, Flint (1998: 57 fn 27) simply asserts that “the conditional which indicates what God would do given the *true* creaturely world-type *cannot* be true independent of God's free act of will” (emphasis in the original). I presume that Flint wishes to endorse something like *The Argument Against Pre-CDFs*. At any rate, my hope is that assessing the above argument will explain why Flint should give up his commitment to Post-CDFs. Let us then turn to that argument.

While open theists may find (7) attractive, it is extremely difficult to see how the Molinist can accept (7). This is because Molinists are committed to the compatibility of creaturely freedom and divine knowledge of the true CCFs logically prior to God's creative act of will. In that case, unless some relevant difference can be found between God and free creatures, the Molinist should presumably also commit to the compatibility of divine freedom and divine knowledge of the true CDFs logically prior to God's creative act of will. I will now further elaborate on this point.

Is the truth of (A) incompatible with creaturely libertarian freedom? The Molinist is committed to saying no since she is committed to (B), the claim that, roughly, CCFs are non-resilient for free creatures. That is, the Molinist is committed to the claim that free creatures could have done otherwise, and had they done otherwise, certain CCFs that are in fact true would have been false, *despite* the fact that such CCFs are true logically prior to God's creative act of will.

Now, in regards to the question of whether (A*) is incompatible with divine freedom, the Molinist can and should provide a similar answer: given the truth of (B*), God could have actualized a different feasible world, and had God done so, at least one CDF that is in fact true would have been false, *despite* the fact that that CDF is true logically prior to God's creative act of will. We can thus see that if Molina and Flint wish to assert that (A*) and (B*) cannot both be true, they must explain how (A) and (B), by contrast, *can* both be true. And, as I have stressed in the previous section, in order to accomplish this task, they must point to some relevant difference between God and free creatures. But no such difference is provided within *The Argument Against Pre-CDFs*. So we have not been given any good reason to accept (7)—and ultimately to accept the existence of Post-CDFs—within the Molinist framework.

Perhaps the Molinist can establish (7), not by marking some relevant difference between God and free creatures, but rather by showing that there is a relevant difference between an agent *S* foreknowing what *S herself* will do, rather than foreknowing what some other agent *S** will do. In other words, perhaps *de se* foreknowledge alone is incompatible with freedom.¹⁵

Notice that if the Molinist were to defend (7) in the above manner, she would presumably have to admit that if God provided each of us with knowledge of *our* future actions—perhaps by providing each of us with a book like ‘*The Life of Osmo*’ (Taylor

¹⁵ Thanks to an anonymous referee for this suggestion.

1991: 58–63)—then we would not be able to do otherwise. Such a method for defending (7) thus comes at a serious cost, and also seems to go against the spirit of Molinism.

More importantly, however, I do not see what is unique to *de se* foreknowledge such that it precludes the possibility of a free action. This is because it is difficult to see how *gaining* knowledge can *reduce* one’s abilities.¹⁶ Perhaps losing one’s abilities is possible when one attains knowledge about the *consequences* of certain actions. For example, if I come to learn that pressing a certain elevator button will result in the detonation of a nuclear bomb that will end millions of lives, it is not implausible to suppose that I had but now lack the ability to press that button given my subjective motivational set. However, God’s knowledge does not fit this description; God’s *de se* foreknowledge has nothing to do with the *consequences* of acting in some manner. I thus conclude that *The Argument Against Pre-CDFs* fails because premise (7) has not been established in a way that does not undermine the compatibility of (A) and (B).

To be clear, I think there *is* a case to be made for the incompatibility of (A) and (B), as well as for the incompatibility of (A*) and (B*). Elsewhere I (Cohen 2015: 241–243) have suggested that, roughly, in order for it to be up to an agent whether a proposition *p* is true, *p* must be true at least partly in virtue of something the agent does (or refrains from doing), or in virtue of something that was caused by something the agent did (or refrained from doing). But the important point to grasp for our purposes here is that the Molinist’s commitment to both (A) and (B) precludes her from endorsing any such principle. More generally, any reason for doubting the compatibility of (A*) and (B*) is irrelevant to the present discussion *if* it similarly casts doubt on the compatibility of (A) and (B).

Turning now to a slightly different issue, one general concern with *The Argument Against Pre-CDFs* is that it does not explain *why* Pre-CDFs do not exist. For, even if it *could* be shown within the Molinist framework that Pre-CDFs are incompatible with divine freedom (and we assumed that God is in fact free), we would not thereby have an explanation for *why* Pre-CDFs do not exist, but only a demonstration *that* Pre-CDFs do not exist. An explanation for *why* Pre-CDFs do not exist would presumably appeal to the nature of propositions, truthmaking, and so forth.¹⁷

Admittedly, Molina does appeal to the doctrine of supercomprehension in order explain why, logically prior to God’s actualizing some world, God does not know which world God actualizes. Accordingly, in order to know directly (i.e. not through, say, the testimony of another reliable source) not just what a possible person could do, but rather what they *would* do under any possible circumstance, one must supercomprehend the essence of that person which in turn requires infinitely surpassing that person, at least in intellect.¹⁸ Molina (1988: 174/*Concordia* 4.52.13) thus appeals to this doctrine to mark a relevant difference between God and free creatures:

¹⁶ I certainly grant that gaining knowledge can *enhance* one’s abilities; see Shabo (2014).

¹⁷ The point I am making here mirrors Patrick Todd’s (2014) claim (which is made in a more detailed and eloquent manner) that the alleged incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and creaturely freedom does not explain *why* divine foreknowledge does not exist, but only demonstrates *that* it does not exist (given the assumption that we are in fact free).

¹⁸ For further discussion of this doctrine, see Craig (1988: 178–183), Freddoso (1988: 51–53), and Flint (1998: 56–57).

[W]hile the divine intellect and knowledge surpass in perfection by an infinite distance each *created* faculty of choice which they contain eminently in themselves and which for this reason they comprehend in a certain infinitely more eminent way than that in which it is knowable, they do not likewise surpass the *divine* will in perfection or comprehend it in a more eminent way than that in which it is knowable itself.

Let us grant just for a moment that the doctrine of supercomprehension is not implausible. It is important to see that *even if* God does not know which world she actualizes logically prior to actualizing some world, it does not follow that Post-*CDFs* exist. To suppose otherwise is to conflate metaphysics with epistemology. For, recall that the Pre-*CDF*/Post-*CDF* distinction concerns what, if anything *makes CDFs* true. By contrast, the doctrine of supercomprehension, at best, points to which logical moment God *knows* the true *CDFs*, irrespective of whether they are Pre-*CDFs* or Post-*CDFs*.

More importantly, however, I find the doctrine of supercomprehension to be, in the words of Flint (1998: 56 fn 26), “murky and unhelpful”, to say the least. For, it is difficult to see, among other things, why one must infinitely surpass some person in intellect in order to know (directly) certain truths about that person. At any rate, until we are given a contemporary defense of the doctrine that appeals to metaphysical and epistemological concepts with which we are at least somewhat familiar, our credence in the doctrine of supercomprehension should be low.

In the next section, I will defend Derk Pereboom’s epistemic openness requirement for rational deliberation, and then amend it in certain respects for our purposes here. Then, in the final section I will show that, given the truth of (A*) within the Molinist framework, the Molinist God fails to satisfy the epistemic openness requirement, and thus she cannot rationally deliberate about which world to actualize.

5. The Epistemic Openness Requirement for Rational Deliberation

At a bare minimum, rational deliberation is a mental process that consists of figuring out what to do. Figuring out what to do seems to presuppose that there is more than one possible action under consideration. In order for a possible action ϕ to be under consideration for a subject S with respect to figuring out what to do, it seems that S must not believe that S cannot ϕ . Must S instead believe that S can in fact ϕ ? It seems sufficient for S to simply be agnostic about whether or not S can ϕ (Kapitan 1986; Pettit 1989). Rational deliberation also seems to have an important connection to the reasons an agent has for performing certain actions under consideration. The exact connection between deliberation and reasons for actions is an issue I will explore both here and in the next section.

Now, Pereboom (2008: 294) defends the following epistemic openness requirement for rational deliberation:¹⁹

(S) In order to deliberate rationally among distinct actions $A_1 \dots A_n$, for each A_i , S cannot be certain of the proposition that she will do A_i nor of the proposition that

¹⁹ While I will focus on Pereboom (2008), see also Pereboom (2014: ch. 5). For other defenses of an epistemic openness requirement, see Hampshire and Hart (1958), Ginet (1962), Taylor (1964: 75), Kaufman (1966), and Kapitan (1986: 235–41).

she will not do A_i ; and either (a) the proposition that she will do A_i is consistent with every proposition that, in the present context, is settled for her, or (b) if it is inconsistent with some such proposition, she cannot believe that it is.

The word ‘settled’ in (S) is used as a technical term to be understood in the following manner (Pereboom 2008: 294):

(Settled) A proposition is settled for an agent just in case she believes it and disregards any doubt she has that it is true, e.g., for the purpose of deliberation.

In support of (S), Pereboom (2008: 295) says that the best explanation for why he cannot rationally deliberate about (e.g.) presently becoming a mercenary in Africa is that he fails to satisfy the condition in (S). Pereboom does not satisfy the condition in (S) because the proposition that he will now become a mercenary is inconsistent with his (occurrent or dispositional) beliefs concerning his values and his character.

Dana Nelkin (2011: 137) thinks, however, that there are counterexamples to (S):²⁰

[S]uppose that you are engaged in an enjoyable activity (watching the seventh game of the world series, reading the seventh Harry Potter book, dining at your favorite restaurant), and you receive a call from your friend in need. It seems possible that you could know what you are going to do, and even be certain of what you will do (help your friend) and so, *a fortiori*, be settled with respect to this fact, without having made the decision or formed the intention to do it. I am not sure why this isn’t coherent: one simply has no doubts about what one is going to choose, and still not yet have chosen from among one’s alternatives.

Given Pereboom’s (2008: 293) insistence that if an agent is certain of what she will do, the agent cannot still figure out what to do, Nelkin suggests that we should thus understand Pereboom’s conception of ‘figuring out what to do’ as a mere epistemic notion of figuring out what one will in fact do. Nelkin (2011: 138), by contrast, maintains that the notion of ‘figuring out what to do’ involves something more robust, viz. an aim at adopting reasons, or aiming at the best (or a good) action, where this notion of ‘figuring out what to do’ is consistent with having no doubts about what one is going to do.

I offer two responses to Nelkin in defense of (S). First, we need not interpret Pereboom’s notion of ‘figuring out what to do’ as a mere epistemic activity of finding out what one will in fact do. Rather, Pereboom can agree with Nelkin that ‘figuring out what to do’ involves aiming at adopting reasons for action. However, if there is absolutely no doubt in S ’s mind that S will in fact ϕ , all that is left for S to do is find out what reasons S has for doing what S has no doubt that S will in fact do, viz. ϕ . This does not sound like rational deliberation at all precisely because it is already settled for S that S will ϕ .²¹ Rather, figuring out what to do seems to involve figuring out what the reasons are for ϕ —*in order to determine whether or not to ϕ* . This reading of Pereboom’s conception of ‘figuring out what to do’ involves more than just an epistemic activity.

²⁰ See also Clarke’s (1992) rejection of an epistemic openness requirement for rational deliberation, as well as Henden’s (2010) response.

²¹ This point may be applied to cases that Clarke (1992: 108) and Pendergraft (2014: 348–349) offer against (S). Henden (2010: 323–324) makes a similar point in response to Clarke’s case.

Second, in Nelkin's case of receiving a call from a friend, notice that even if it is settled for you that you are going to help your friend, typically there are still many *ways* in which you can help your friend. Consequently, there is still much to deliberate about. For example, suppose I receive a call from my friend who is in need of help while I'm dining at my favorite restaurant. Even if I am certain that I will help my friend, I might still deliberate about any of the following things: whether to get dessert before helping my friend, whether to have one final word with the person with whom I am dining before helping my friend, how long I am willing to spend with my friend, and whether I will return to the plans I had in mind for the evening after helping my friend. So, I claim that Nelkin's example does not undermine (S) once we see that it is easy to conflate deliberation about *how* to help your friend with deliberation about *whether* to help your friend (cf. Kapitan 1991: 110).

As further support for this claim, consider an alternative scenario where I must push a button exactly at time t in order to save my friend's life, despite the fact that pushing the button at t will cause me some pain. Since I believe that I am a morally decent person, it is settled for me that I will in fact press the button at t in order to save my friend's life. Moreover, it doesn't appear to me that I can deliberate about whether to push the button at t , even if I can still inquire into all of the reasons I in fact have for pressing the button at t . Why is it clearer in this case rather than in Nelkin's case that one cannot rationally deliberate? It is precisely because, in my case, it is more difficult to conflate deliberation about *how* to help my friend with deliberation about *whether* to help my friend since there just aren't multiple ways in which I can help my friend. It seems, then, that Nelkin has not offered a strong reason for rejecting (S).

Suppose, however, that you remain convinced of Nelkin's alleged counterexample to (S). It doesn't follow that a weaker analogue of (S) is also false, according to which absolute certainty about the fact that one will ϕ is incompatible with rationally deliberating about whether to ϕ . Nelkin (2011: 127) notes that such a proposal purchases immunity from counterexamples at the price of explanatory power since we are certain of very little. But this is of course an important concession for our concerns here since, for any proposition *God* believes to be true, *God* is surely certain of that proposition. Hence, despite my previous remarks, I will grant for the sake of argument that (S) is false and instead affirm the following weaker analogue of (S) that even Nelkin seems to admit is immune from counterexamples:

(S*) In order to deliberate rationally among distinct actions $A_1 \dots A_n$, for each A_i , *S* cannot be certain of the proposition that she will do A_i nor of the proposition that she will not do A_i ; and either (a) the proposition that she will do A_i is consistent with every proposition of which *S* is certain, or (b) if it is inconsistent with some such proposition, she cannot believe that it is.

Now, I need to modify (S*) in order to apply an epistemic openness requirement to the Molinist *God*. For, recall that the Molinist *God* proceeds in logical stages rather than temporal ones. We thus need an epistemic openness requirement that takes such logical stages into account:

(S**) In order to deliberate rationally among distinct actions $A_1 \dots A_n$, for each A_i , at logical stage l , S cannot be certain of the proposition that she does A_i at logical stage l^* (such that l^* is posterior to l) nor of the proposition that she does not do A_i at l^* ; and either (a) the proposition that she does A_i at l^* is, at l , consistent with every proposition of which S is certain, or (b) if it is inconsistent with some such proposition, at l , she cannot believe that it is.

We are finally ready to apply the results of this section, in conjunction with my defense of (A*), to Molinism.

6. The Molinist God Cannot Rationally Deliberate

At a first glance, one might think that only an open theist God can satisfy the condition in (S**). But that is a mistake. To illustrate, consider the simple foreknowledge view, according to which, at all points in time, God has complete foreknowledge of everything that will occur, including of what God will do. Despite this exhaustive foreknowledge at all times, the simple foreknowledge God nevertheless proceeds in non-temporal, logical or explanatory stages in order to deliberate about what to do in the future (Hunt 1993; cf. Zimmerman 2012). Accordingly, even on the simple foreknowledge view there are logical moments at which God is not certain of what God will do at a later time (or what God does at a later logical or explanatory moment). Hence, the simple foreknowledge God can satisfy the condition in (S**), despite having exhaustive foreknowledge at all times. Besides open theism and the simple foreknowledge view, one could arguably consistently maintain that God satisfies the condition in (S**) given other accounts of divine providence, such as divine timelessness (Stump and Kretzmann 1981) and theological determinism (Pereboom 2011). However, as I will now show, the Molinist God does not satisfy the condition in (S**).

Suppose that the circumstances God is in that are logically prior to God's decision of which world to actualize are such that creaturely world-type T_1 is true. Furthermore, given the existence of Pre-CDFs (recall my defense of (A*)), suppose that God knows the truth of at least the following three CDFs logically prior to God's decision of which world to actualize:

- (I) If T_1 were true, God would freely actualize world W_1 .
- (II) If T_2 were true, God would freely actualize world W_2 .
- (III) If T_3 were true, God would freely actualize world W_3 .

So, logically prior to God's free knowledge, she knows both that T_1 is true, and also that (I) is true. Given that God's knowledge is closed under entailment, God also knows logically prior to God's free knowledge that God actualizes W_1 .²² In other words, logically prior to her decision of what to do, God is certain of the truth of the proposition that God actualizes W_1 . So God fails to satisfy the condition in (S**) that is required for

²² There is apparently no knowledge left for God to have that is to be categorized under God's free knowledge given the existence of Pre-CDFs. This is an interesting consequence that I will not further explore here.

rational deliberation. Generalizing from this case, it follows that the Molinist God cannot rationally deliberate about which world to actualize.

Somewhat ironically, it has been widely assumed that the “doctrine of divine middle knowledge...affords room for a sort of deliberation on God’s part logically prior to His decision to actualize a world” (Craig 1991: 278). But, as I have argued, matters seem to be quite the reverse; it is precisely the doctrine of divine middle knowledge, and certain consequences thereof such as the existence of Pre-CDFs, that in fact *preclude* God from possessing the ability to rationally deliberate.

How costly it is for Molinism that God cannot rationally deliberate? If, as some think, rational deliberation is required for intentional action, this consequence would indeed be a significant cost.²³ There are further reasons for taking God’s ability to rationally deliberate to be a *desideratum* for a theory of divine providence. David Basinger (1986: 171) goes so far as to say that he is aware of no theist that has ever granted that God’s choices of what to do “were *never* formulated as the result of any sort of temporal or timeless deliberation on his part”, and then further suggests that most theists would not view God’s responses to prayer to be a non-deliberative manner.

While Kvanvig (2011: 105) states that an omniscient and omnipotent being has no need to deliberate, Kvanvig also says that we need a deliberational *model* of God’s activity in creation. Such a model will be adequate only if God’s omniscience is explanatorily dependent upon God’s creative activity (Kvanvig 2011: 108). But the Molinist cannot secure even this condition for an adequate deliberational model since the existence of Pre-CDFs seems to render God’s omniscience explanatorily *independent* of God’s creative activity precisely because God knows which world God actualizes logically prior to God’s decision to actualize a world. So, I have still shown that, in accordance with Kvanvig’s remarks, given the existence of Pre-CDFs within the Molinist framework, Molinism cannot offer an adequate deliberational model of God’s interaction with the world.²⁴

Now, while I cannot possibly offer an adequate assessment of these issues here, it is safe to say that there is no clear consensus as to how costly it is for a theory of divine providence that it implies that God cannot rationally deliberate, or that it cannot offer an adequate deliberational model of God’s activity in creation. I want to conclude, however, by considering an argument the Molinist might be tempted to endorse in order to explain why, unlike for finite beings like us, God has no use for rational deliberation, even understood as a progression in logical or explanatory moments rather than temporal ones from a state of indecision to a further state of resolving such indecision. I call this *The No Use Argument*:

²³ In defense of the claim that intentional action requires rational deliberation, see Kapitan (1991, 1994), Basinger (1986), and Peterson, et al. (2009: 81). Against this position, see Reichenbach (1984), and Hunt (1992, 1996).

²⁴ It is worth noting that the notion of deliberation Kvanvig seems to be focusing on is a *temporal* progress from a state of indecision to a further state in which the indecision is resolved. I think that we ought to think of the kind of deliberation that we undergo as strongly analogous to a progression in *logical* moments or stages (rather than temporal ones) from a state of indecision to a further state in which the indecision is resolved. Hence, Kvanvig’s remarks are consistent with the claim that it would be useful for God to rationally deliberate, *if* the notion of rational deliberation employed here is understood analogically (cf. Swinburne 1993).

The No Use Argument

11. If there is some world that God has most reason, all things considered, to actualize, then God can know what which world that is without deliberating.
12. There is some world that God has most reason, all things considered, to actualize.
13. Therefore, God can know which world God has most reason, all things considered, to actualize without deliberating. [(11) & (12)]
14. The sole purpose of rational deliberation is to aid one in figuring out what one has most reason, all things considered, to do.
15. If (13) and (14) are true, then God has no use for rational deliberation.
16. Therefore, God has no use for rational deliberation. [(13)–(15)]

Premise (12) might be thought to be plausible under the assumption that there is a best possible world. But that assumption is highly contentious. Instead, there is good reason to think that either there is a ‘tie at the top’, an infinite hierarchy of better worlds, or set of worlds that are incommensurable with one another in terms of their overall value (Senor 2008: 187–94). Suppose, however, that there *is* a best possible world. Does the existence of such a world show that there is something that God has most reason, all things considered, to do? Not necessarily. If Molinism is true, then, possibly, God cannot actualize the best possible world because it is not feasible, and thus God would not have *any* reason to actualize that world.²⁵

Now, there *may* be a best feasible world even if the best possible world is not feasible. But this would only be a contingent matter. For, possibly, God is stuck with a (contingently) true creaturely world-type such that there is no best feasible world. In that case, according to Molinism it is possible that (12) is false and also possible that (12) is true. But in that case, the Molinist is not rationally permitted to accept (12), barring some sort extraordinary evidence for the claim that actual world happens to be the best feasible one.²⁶

Premise (14) is dubious as well. There are arguably many times in our life in which the course of action we choose matters immensely, *despite* the fact that the relevant courses of action available to us are incommensurable (Raz 1997). Hence, considering all of the reasons for choosing a particular course of action in order to figure out what to do seems to play an integral role with respect to which course of action one ends up choosing.²⁷

At this point, the Molinist might give up *The No Use Argument* and argue instead that even if rational deliberation can be employed when there is nothing that an agent has most reason, all things considered, to perform, rational deliberation would only be useful in such a situation for finite beings like us rather than for God who is immediately aware of all of the reasons there are for performing each available action. But this line of

²⁵ I am implicitly appealing to a principle that is defended, among others, by Haji (2012: 24): “If *S* has most reason to do something, *A*, and, thus, if *S* reasons-wise ought to do *A*, then *S* can do *A*.”

²⁶ It is surely also too big of a concession for the Molinist to assert that God just *happens* to have no use for rational deliberation, but very well could have if some other creaturely world-type were in fact true.

²⁷ Pendergraft (2014: 344) seems to accept premise (14), although perhaps a more charitable interpretation suggests he is only defending that claim that God has no use for rational deliberation *if* there is something God has most reason, all things considered, to perform. I accept this claim, but do not think it will help the Molinist given that, as explained above, premise (12) is possibly false if Molinism is true.

reasoning seems to wrongly assume that rational deliberation is only an epistemic activity of coming to see what reasons one has for performing certain actions. As I have suggested in the previous section, however, the notion of figuring out what to do involves more than that. So, even if God—an omniscient being—is immediately aware of all of the reasons for performing certain actions, God may still undergo the process of weighing these reasons against one another as an integral role in figuring out what to do, even when she lacks most reason, all things considered, to actualize any specific world.

Conclusion

I have argued that *CDFs* are pre-volitional for God within the Molinist framework. This is because *CCFs* are pre-volitional for free creatures, and there is no relevant difference between God and free creatures. The burden is now on a Molinist who says otherwise to show that there is in fact such a difference. I then defended an epistemic openness requirement for rational deliberation against Nelkin's criticisms, though I ultimately upheld (S*) and (S**) which are both immune from Nelkin's alleged counterexample. I then showed that, as a result of Molinism's commitment to Pre-*CDFs*, only the Molinist God fails to satisfy the epistemic openness requirement for rational deliberation according to (S**). Moreover, I argued against the claim that God has no use for rational deliberation, although I do not expect to have settled that issue here. We may thus tentatively conclude that the nature of *CDFs* may come at a significant cost to Molinism.

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