# From Báñez with Love: A Response to a Response by Taylor Patrick O'Neill

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From where I stand, the traditional options of Molinism and Báñezianism seem logically exhaustive possible accounts of the way in which God can cause people to love him, under the influence of grace, while at the same time being able to affirm that those people remain free. Either God's giving efficacious grace to an individual is such as to cause that individual to act a certain way, merely in virtue of giving that grace to that individual, or it is not. If that grace is not intrinsically efficacious, then you need to explain the way in which God can cause an action by giving grace which does not require grace to be intrinsically efficacious. On the latter front, Molinists aim to affirm that human beings are free even while acting under the influence of God's grace, and hold that God's grace is not such as to make it that one could not have done otherwise. They explain this by appeal to counterfactual truths about what human beings would do, metaphysically prior to and independent of God's subsequent decisions to give or withhold grace. These "counterfactuals of freedom" are central to Molinist accounts of freedom, since the truth of these counterfactuals alone secures the fact that human beings are acting freely even when God gives them grace and causes them to perform certain actions. Those human beings could have acted otherwise. Conversely, since God knows these truths, he can use them in order to give grace to an individual at those times when he knows it will be efficacious.

To me, the Molinist view is a non-starter. What these truths consist in, what grounds them, how God uses them—I find the critiques compelling

and Molinist answers to these questions metaphysically problematic.[1] I am committed to finding a Báñezian solution, therefore, to the riddle. From my perspective, the mystery of predestination invites confusion ultimately because the issue is a subtle philosophical, not a theological, problem. The resolution to the riddle of grace and free will can come only through an adequate account of the nature of human freedom. And I remain unsatisfied by a lack of philosophical clarity among Báñezian authors on the nature of freedom. In a recent paper, I therefore posed a problem for Báñezianism that resembles what is called the "grounding problem" for Molinism: where do the truths about alternative possibilities come from? And I illustrated the problem in the context of the account of grace given by one famous defender of the view, Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, whose work in turn was recently promoted by Taylor Patrick O'Neill.

In short, Garrigou-Lagrange appears to accept that there needs to be alternative possibilities if human action is to be free. He gives an accounting of those possibilities as follows. On one side, when I sin, Garrigou-Lagrange argues that God's denial of efficacious grace, even though this denial occurs prior to anything I do or could have done, does not necessitate my sin because I performed the sin by means of my normally operating volitional and intellectual capacities (which God merely *refrained* from interfering in), and I had alternative possibilities provided by the possibility of God providing efficacious grace. Then, on the other, when I do good, he appeals at many points to non-culpable "defects" regarding my intellectual or volitional capacities as grounding those alternative possibilities that I could have sinned even when acting under efficacious grace. In both cases, my acts are still metaphysically contingent. However, neither case provides a sufficient grounding for alternative possibilities (I argued), because I had no relevant control over God's decision to deny efficacious grace, nor were those "defects" in light of which I could have sinned under my control. Instead, I argued that Garrigou-Lagrange's account of humans having alternative possibilities for action would be successful only if there were facts about what I would have done under sufficient grace, truths prior to and independent of God's decision to give efficacious grace. Then the account makes sense. But these

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[1] E.g., Robert Adams, "An Anti-Molinist Argument," *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991): 343–53; Thomas Flint, "A New Anti-Molinist Argument," *Religious Studies* 35, no. 3 (1999): 299–305; William Hasker, "The (Non-)Existence of Molinist Counterfactuals," in *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. Ken Perszyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25–36. For a recent set of such objections, see Nevin Climenhaga and Daniel Rubio, "Molinism: Explaining Our Freedom Away," *Mind* 131, no. 522 (2021): 459–85.

are Molinist counterfactuals of freedom, and the account is thus incoherent as a version of Báñezianism.

O'Neill responds in this present journal issue to that paper, arguing that I failed to be attentive to distinctions drawn by Garrigou-Lagrange which would resolve the dilemma. However, I fear that O'Neill's presentation of both the dilemma and his own resolution is conceptually confused. To take the more obvious confusions about the dilemma, O'Neill claims at points that I allege that "some of what Garrigou-Lagrange holds *is rooted in* a Molinist rather than Báñezian understanding of human freedom and divine causality."[2] What I argued is that Garrigou-Lagrange's account of the way in which humans have alternative possibilities for action would be successful only if Molinism is true. I did not claim Garrigou-Lagrange's *understanding* of grace was rooted in Molinism—which would be patently absurd. Similarly, O'Neill claims that I hold that "Báñezianism as a system rejects the notion of 'alternative possibilities,'"[3] when, in fact, I argue nothing of the sort. I argued that Garrigou-Lagrange does not provide a satisfactory account of those possibilities and, too, that other Báñezians who might deny that such alternative possibilities are necessary for an act to be ~~a~~ "free" ~~one~~ would still be in theoretical trouble.

At one point, I contrast Molinism with Báñezianism by noting that Báñezians do not hold that there are any "individual essences" which would account for all of the counterfactuals about what, for example, Peter would do. Instead, I said, "in the same 'logical moment' that God chose to create Peter, God can be imagined to thereby have chosen to create all of Peter's other actions because, even though Peter comes to exist and act at definite points in time, those acts are all present to God in eternity."[4] O'Neill reads this as a statement of my own position, such that I was endorsing some kind of occasionalism where there was creation of each free act at every moment.[5] I spoke a bit loosely, perhaps, but the context of this remark was merely to illustrate that, on Báñezianism *generally*, there are no truths about what Peter would have done in light of which God chooses which of Peter's acts to bring into being, or actualize, in time. (I have, in fact, defended the view

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2 Taylor Patrick O'Neill, "A Báñezian Grounding for Counterfactuals of Creaturely Freedom," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 21, no. 2 (2023): {XXX–XXX}, at ## (emphasis mine).

3 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {1}.

4 James Dominic Rooney, "Banez's Big Problem," *Faith and Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2021): 91–112, at 99–100.

5 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {8}.

that God brings these into being as changes or "motion," not by creation[6]). Again, O'Neill appears at many junctures to deal with a question as to whether God is "passive," but my argument had nothing to do with divine passivity. The dilemma for Báñezians had to do with the grounds for the fact that (i.e., what makes it true that) I have alternative possibilities for action even when acting under efficacious grace. The metaphysical situation around God's impassibility is neither here nor there.

Finally, O'Neill claims that I argued "that Garrigou-Lagrange posits a circular argument regarding the reality of sin."[7] I made no claims about the reality of sin, but posed a dilemma as to what grounds the alternative possibilities for free action. This dilemma was not the claim that Garrigou-Lagrange's account of sin was circular. Instead, I merely introduced the dilemma by pointing out that Garrigou-Lagrange himself stated that his account would *appear* circular unless one dissolved the circularity by appeal to alternative possibilities. I then explored the way in which Garrigou-Lagrange believed this account could be made coherent by an appeal to a distinction between God's permissive will and God's causal activity.[8] In fact, O'Neill's own response appeals to just this distinction and fails for the reasons presented in the paper. Perhaps the confusions as to my argument can be attributed to my presentation, so I will begin by trying briefly to lay out the dilemma again. In light of this re-presentation, I will try to illustrate that O'Neill's own responses are at many points either a concession to a certain fork of the dilemma, and fail for the reasons outlined in the paper, or change the subject and fail to address the concern except superficially. However, since at many points O'Neill implies that I reject Báñezianism, despite my explicit qualification in the paper that I do not, I will end by proposing what *would* constitute a sufficient response to the dilemma.

## Re-Presenting The Dilemma for Garrigou-Lagrange

Garrigou-Lagrange explains that human sin results when God fails to give efficacious grace to individuals in the following way. After the Fall of Adam

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6 See my "Why All Classical Theists Should Believe in Physical Premotions, But It Doesn't Really Matter (For Freedom)," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 88 (2020): 139–66, and "The Metaphysics of Creation: Secondary Causality, Modern Science," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas Joseph White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 107–25.

7 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {1}.

8 Rooney, "Banez's Big Problem," 97.

and Eve, human beings cannot persevere in avoiding sin without grace and, hence, eventually will sin if God chooses not to give them efficacious grace; further, they can perform no supernatural actions, such as loving God or having faith, without that grace. This requires that God chooses to give efficacious grace to individuals in order to make them perform good actions. You could not avoid sin if God did not give you efficacious grace. By yourself, you can do nothing supernaturally good. Yet Garrigou-Lagrange also holds (with Catholic theology generally) that *everyone* is given sufficient grace for avoiding sin. When someone sins, they therefore reject God's grace and it is only subsequent to this rejection that one is culpable for failing to avoid sin.

As a Báñezian, Garrigou-Lagrange rejects that there would be counterfactual truths about what someone would do independent of God's choices to cause that person to perform a good action. Grace is such that, when given, it is necessarily the case that someone perform a supernaturally good action. Similarly, if efficacious grace is not given, it is necessarily the case that someone will not perform a supernaturally good action. And, according to Garrigou-Lagrange, the decision of God to give or withhold efficacious grace to an individual is made from eternity, logically prior to and independent of anything that individual does. These views, combined, seem to undermine the possibility that an individual has alternative possibilities for action. If God chooses to deny me efficacious grace, prior to and independently of anything I do, then there would be no possible situation in which I would do anything supernaturally good. I would choose to sin, certainly, from my ordinary volitional processes, but it does not appear as if those processes are sufficient to explain why I could have done otherwise. I could not have done anything to cause God to give me grace, and so there was no possible situation in which I did not sin, regardless of those processes. And Garrigou-Lagrange's defender O'Neill admits that there would be a problem if there were no alternative possibilities: "It would do away with the real possibility for me to uphold the divine laws of God. God would command something that was impossible."[9]

An initial answer to this problem is unsatisfactory. He proposes that, since God can give grace to whom he wills, God sometimes does not give efficacious grace to an individual to avoid sin. But this does not mean that those sinful actions would be necessitated by God's decision to fail to give efficacious grace, Garrigou-Lagrange claims, because—when you sin—God merely does not causally interfere with your ordinary process of choice. These

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[9] Taylor Patrick O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 282.

sins are therefore entirely a product of your own volition.[10] What grounds your alternative possibilities in this case would be your capacities *plus* the fact that God could have, in some other situation, given you efficacious grace. But this is not satisfactory because the alternative possibilities which we need to secure, in this case, are the possibilities to do good, not evil, and these possibilities need to be in my control to bring about or actualize. The fact that I would freely choose to do evil apart from God's grace is irrelevant, since God has (by stipulation) given an individual a power through sufficient grace to avoid sin. It is not by the fact that I am acting from my capacities that I have alternative possibilities to choose the good, it appears, but by the fact that I am acting under sufficient grace.

A more developed answer that Garrigou-Lagrange proposes is that God *merely fails* to give efficacious grace, rather than causally interfering with volitional capacities, when he permits an individual to sin. There is some defect in the individual for which they are not culpable but which is such that, if God does not intervene, the individual will inevitably sin. "God foresees the sin and its beginning in His permissive decree; . . . if God wills to permit the evil which He is not bound to prevent, that real [antecedent] power [to avoid sin] will never be reduced to act. Hence knowing His permissive decree, God infallibly recognized the deficiency, though He does not cause it."[11] Since God did not cause me to have that defect which inevitably leads to sin, the sin might result inevitably from it, but that does not mean I did not have alternative possibilities for avoiding sin precisely because God *could* have intervened. As long as I retain my volitional capacities, that sin is free even if inevitable. Conversely, when I perform a good act under influence of grace, God is interfering with my capacities such as not to allow my deficiencies to be operative—those deficiencies ground my alternative possibilities to sin even when God is acting to cause me to perform a good act, because God *could* have permitted me to act defectively, under my own steam.

However, this too fails as a response, for the same reason as the last. The plain fact is that that the relevant alternative possibilities—the occurrence or non-occurrence of the efficacious grace—are just simply not in my power or control. The situation where, given God's decisions from eternity, he has chosen to deny me efficacious grace to avoid sin is not one that was voluntary or was chosen by the individual, and so it appears as if, in fact, the lack of alternative possibilities is not the product of my own choice. It is beside the

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10 See Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination,* trans. Dom Bede Rose (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1939), 275, 280–81.

11 Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, trans. Dominican Nuns of Menlo Park (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1952), 228.

point that God is not interfering to cause me to sin if, by failing to give me efficacious grace, I lack alternative possibilities to avoid sin. The only way this response works is that, once God gives me sufficient grace, there are truths about what I would do, prior to and independent of God's decision to give efficacious grace—namely, that I retain this defect such that, *even acting under sufficient grace*, it is true that I *would* sin *anyway* if God does not intervene. Then we also get an understanding as to what it is that accounts for my alternative possibilities to sin when I am acting under efficacious grace as well. But such a claim about this "defect" clearly implies a counterfactual of freedom that needs to have a definite truth-value about what I would do under sufficient grace, prior to and independent of whether God chose to give efficacious grace, if it is to account for why I have alternative possibilities. If it were *not* true that I would have sinned anyway, then we would still be owed an explanation as to what it was that accounted for the fact that I had relevant control over the restricted range of possibilities open to me—precisely because there would be no *truths* about those other situations prior to God's decision to give that grace. If I had no control of any sort over God's decision to give or deny efficacious grace, or what led to it (e.g., the "defect"), then it seems to be such that God's decision "makes" me do what I did, since I could not have done otherwise, in any possible situation. All the facts about my capacities, their defects, and so forth would not be enough to ground whether or not, acting under sufficient grace, there was a truth about what I would have done if God had not given me efficacious grace.

## The Response by O'Neill

O'Neill states that he intends to respond to my dilemma by arguing that the Báñezian can hold that there are "counterfactuals of creaturely freedom."[12] From my perspective, this is already a conceptual confusion, since the existence of such counterfactuals—truths about what one would do in non-actual circumstances, independent and prior to God's decisions to give efficacious grace—is the hallmark of Molinism. O'Neill's statement of his thesis would imply that he will be arguing in favor of Molinism. What O'Neill seems to mean is instead that there are truths about alternative possibilities for my actions under grace, grounded in facts about the way in which God decides to give efficacious grace to individuals. Specifically, O'Neill insists that I have made a mistake by speaking of possible worlds where one can act otherwise, and instead proposes that we should speak of

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12 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {1}.

actions as either contingent or necessary. O'Neill then argues that nothing in the account requires that an individual's actions under efficacious grace fail to be contingent, and therefore Garrigou-Lagrange need not deny that there are other ways that my action could have been, even though (O'Neill concedes) there is no possible world where God both gives me efficacious grace and I fail to act in the way he wants me to.[13]

All of this is, however, irrelevant. What I argued was *not* that alternative possibilities required that there was a possible world where, in those circumstances where God causes me to do something under the influence of efficacious grace, I did otherwise than what God intended. In fact, I set up the problem as: "In virtue of what are humans responsible for their actions, if God so restricts (from eternity) the course of actions open to them, so that some lack any alternative possibilities for acting otherwise?"[14] The worry about possible worlds did not then presume that having the relevant alternative possibilities for a free or responsible act required that there are always possible worlds open to one, at every moment, at which one can avoid sin. Instead, the worry is that God's decision to deny efficacious grace to someone from eternity would *put* one in the situation of being unable to avoid sin, with no *relevant* alternative possibilities to avoid sin, on the basis of *no fault of that person.* That is to say, I would—through no fault of my own and no preceding sin—be put in a position where I literally lacked any possibility to avoid sinning. The question of alternative possibilities concerns my control over having the possibility to do otherwise either in the situation where God is causing me to do something (via grace) or where I am not doing what I ought to do.

Much of what O'Neill has to say about these matters is beside the point. To illustrate, let us consider a parody argument in favor of the view that, when I unplug my backup hard disk drive, there are still alternative possibilities open to my backup hard disk to continue to function. Could I therefore *rightly punish* my hard disk drive for failing to function when I want it to, after I unplug the electricity? Just as with a human being whose volitional processes and faculties are intact, the human being could certainly do what they ought, so too my hard disk's parts are all in good working order. If only it was provided with electricity of the right sort, it would function normally—just as the human being would if given efficacious grace to perform a supernaturally good act. What we of course need is that the hard drive, or the human being, had the relevant control over when and how it

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13 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {5}.

14 Rooney, "Banez's Big Problem," 98.

actualized those powers, not merely that it had those general powers to make decisions or to back up my files.

O'Neill at points associates having alternative possibilities with being a "contingent" act: "If God can move me infallibly but freely (i.e., contingently) to perform *x* in this world, then he could just as easily do so in all possible worlds."[15] Of course, nothing about my hard disk or its functions is metaphysically necessary—I could destroy all of its parts easily—and so all of its acts remain contingent with or without electricity. And O'Neill says that, "When the creature determines itself to one act *in fact*, it remains simultaneously true that the creature remains logically undetermined to that one act."[16] But, if this is only mere metaphysical contingency, so too with the hard disk: all of its functions remain contingent even at the moment they occur. Clearly, my choice to plug or unplug the device does not cause it to act necessarily, just as the choice for God not to give grace to someone does not cause their acts to become metaphysically necessary, and at the same moment that they choose to sin, God could have granted them efficacious grace (just as, when the hard drive fails to function, I could have plugged it in).

What we need is not mere metaphysical contingency, but that sort of contingency where an action was in the power of the individual to actualize. Such contingency would account for the fact that an individual in a situation where God denies them efficacious grace is still responsible for being in this situation and for all the non-good acts that might result from it. O'Neill argues that I have failed to be attentive to the order of material causality, where God allows a sin to occur not in directly causing a sin but by permitting some non-sinful defect. Then, "that permission is not the permission of an act or sin, but rather a defect in the intellect which will account for freely choosing to act in an evil way."[17] O'Neill is unclear on this point, as at times he seems to accept that there are such circumstances where one necessarily commits a sin, and where that person was not responsible for being in those circumstances, but where that person is nevertheless responsible for that sin:

> For Garrigou-Lagrange, the refusal of efficacious grace normatively follows (ontologically, if not temporally) a defect in the intellect. The intellect disregards some rule or misapprehends something lower as something higher. This defect is not itself a sin, for it has not yet

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15 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {5}.
16 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {9}.
17 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {10}.

> come forth *from the will* as an *act* contrary to the natural or revealed law. Moreover, the defect itself (or an antecedent sinful action) is punished only insofar as the creature had a potency not to defect (e.g., disregarding a known rule rather than being ignorant of it).[18]

Maybe I am misreading O'Neill, but he both states that the defect "is not itself a sin," seeming to imply that this defect was not a non-culpably acquired defect, and nevertheless holds that God is the one who allowed the defect to occur. As O'Neill puts it elsewhere: "The material cause of the *sin* is the defective state of the creature and its non-consideration of the rule. The proximate motivation of God's withholding in this case is to befit, in justice, a defect which he antecedently permitted."[19]

The final clause that "the creature had a potency not to defect" is what remains ambiguous, partially because of an equivocal sense of "defect," which here appears to mean to be negligently culpable, and partially because it is unclear in what respect God could punish a person for culpable negligence, since O'Neill has just claimed that the defect was not a sin and not in the person's control to avoid. Then it looks like a flat contradiction that "The creature had the potency not to defect." So, in these cases, what apparently results is that one's intellect has a defect, non-culpably, such that this occurs without any relevant control over the occurrence of the defect by the human being. Then O'Neill claims that the refusal of grace "normatively follows" God allowing the defect. This entails, as far as I can see, that those actions that proceed from the "defect" are sinful actions which are nevertheless attributable to non-culpable causal factors, where God's decision to withhold grace (on the basis of a defect which was not the individual's proximate or remote fault) made it such that the person could not *but* sin. I do not see how someone in these circumstances had the relevant alternative possibilities to avoid sin. Notice that the hard drive failing to function without electricity exemplifies a similar non-culpable defect: it was made to require electricity. It is not the hard drive's fault that it was designed this way, nor did my allowing myself to buy a hard drive designed to function while plugged in entail that I intended that the hard drive not function (for failing to be plugged in) when I want to use it. Sure, the drive needs electricity to function, but I interfered in no way with its parts and merely omitted to plug it in. Yet, if it fails to function without electricity, it seems to me very silly to yell at the poor thing: "Bad hard drive; to hell with you!"

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18 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {11}.

19 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {15}.

Whatever the reading, accepting a position on which alternative possibilities are not required for freedom would be contrary to O'Neill's own claim that the lack of such possibilities "would do away with the real possibility for me to uphold the divine laws of God. God would command something that was impossible."[20] As I pointed out in the paper, even this position does not really resolve any problem for the Báñezian, as source compatibilists still need *some* way to differentiate what it is for an agent to have the relevant sensitivity or modal character. As far as I can see, O'Neill's only appeal is to modal contingency, such that the act was not metaphysically or logically necessary; but this is clearly the wrong kind of contingency, and so seems a problematic route. Thus, at other times, O'Neill seems to endorse Garrigou-Lagrange's claim that "God's withdrawal of efficacious grace is a punishment, and it is a punishment that presupposes at least a first defection."[21] This implies that God does not withdraw efficacious grace except because of some prior culpable fault, so that it is, as O'Neill repeats, "penal." But then the idea that God permits non-culpable defects, and that these can sometimes be the material occasion by which someone commits a sin, would be entirely irrelevant for the explanation of that in virtue of which we have alternative possible courses of action open to us and in our control.

The relevant parallel question is thus not about the material occasions by which God's permits a non-culpable "defect" which inevitably leads to sin (as a "material condition"), but the very formal question as to whether God's denying an individual efficacious grace is within their control in the relevant sense required for those subsequent sinful acts to be culpable, as to whether that person has it in the range of their power to self-determine those relevant alternative possibilities to avoid sinning as a result of that defect. The crux of the matter is that O'Neill provides no account of *what* the alternative possibilities are grounded in except to say that "those 'possibilities' are the range of potencies which were truly *in the power of the creature to have brought forth into act.*"[22] According to O'Neill's own account, however, it seems that these possibilities were not in the range of potencies which were in the power of the creature to actualize, since God's decision was required to actualize those potencies (by efficacious grace), and that decision to give or withhold efficacious grace was in no way affected by anything that was in the creature's power to do. So, again, O'Neill just sidesteps the way in which those potencies are in the power of the creature to actualize, leaving

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20 O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and Permission of Sin*, 282.

21 Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 208–9.

22 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {9}.

the Báñezian claim that there are relevant alternative possibilities within the control of the creature without any grounding at all.

Now, what *does* respond to the question is raised at a few junctures by O'Neill, but in a very cursory and passing way. For example, that the freedom of the agent consists in being able to "determine itself to one act" or in having a range of actions "in the power of the creature to actualize." Yet we get no explanation as to the way in which God's causing and determining the creature to do something preserve those features of the act. It is repeatedly asserted that God causing someone to do something preserves the "mode" of their causality as self-determining and as having the right power of their actions, but there is no explanation as to what it is that makes the agent still "self-determining" when they are under the influence of efficacious grace. Because it looks quite obvious to me that we are owed an explanation as to how it is simultaneously true that the agent is "determining itself" and that the causality of God made the agent to produce *just that* determinate act.

In the end, what O'Neill proposes just seem to be assertions that the creature remains free to determine itself, that God is causing a mode of action in the creature such that the creature has real potencies irreducible to mere possibilities, and so forth, while also endorsing that "the free creature does not cause in God the withholding of efficacious grace," and that God is not "responsive to anything in the creature."[23] Those look plainly incompatible. O'Neill's analogies with doll-makers and appeal to Providence only point to facts that an individual had control over other previous acts or defects in the creature, to their habituation or inclinations, but not the ones we care about—God's causing or denying the creature efficacious grace. Similarly, the appeal to the fact that an agent remains essentially an agent is irrelevant, in the given situation where God was causing the agent to perform one act, to why it remains true *in that situation* that the agent could have done otherwise, when the agent *did not participate in God putting the agent in that situation*.[24] The latter is the most relevant point, since O'Neill at times seems to think the fact that God determining me to do something is entirely the same as me determining me to do something, since my choosing to act does not undermine my ability to have done otherwise even when I am performing that freely chosen act—but, of course, what is at issue is just whether and in what respect these cases are relevantly similar.[25] What the agent needs is—granting that the necessity of grace means that the agent

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23 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {18}.

24 See Rooney, "Banez's Big Problem," 103–5.

25 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {9–10}.

cannot do something prior to grace which merits that God should give them grace—nevertheless some relevant control over whether God gives or denies efficacious grace; otherwise, God is the full and sufficient cause of the agent's actions under grace, or is holding agents responsible for actions that they literally had no power to avoid, and in neither case is the agent "self-determining" in the right way at all.

## The Sequel

The appropriate resolution to these issues can be illustrated in regard to three claims that O'Neill makes in passing, but does not develop sufficiently. First, he claims that "God has control over not only the coming-to-be of a given effect but also the mode by which that effect comes to be."[26] Second, "there is simply no reason why the timelessness of God's decrees necessitates that individual decrees or motions are not responsive to previous ones."[27] Third, "*Not giving* efficacious grace . . . [does not remove] the *potency* to have done otherwise, which is grounded in a *sufficient grace which the will does indeed already possess.*"[28] As a Báñezian myself, I take all of these claims as true, even though I do not think O'Neill or Garrigou-Lagrange have seen the way in which to combine or appeal to these principles in order to discover a solution to the problem. What we are looking for, again, is that which makes it true that, even while a person is acting under the influence of efficacious grace, or has been denied efficacious grace, they have alternative possibilities of the relevant kind within their control. I propose that those relevant possibilities involve "to have participated in bringing about" that situation of being acted upon by grace or to be denied grace.

When Aquinas explains the way in which God does not act "violently" upon the will when causing a free action, he notes that "a thing moved by another is forced if moved against its natural inclination; but if it is moved by another giving to it the proper natural inclination, it is not forced. . . . In like manner God, while moving the will, does not force it, because He gives the will its own natural inclination."[29] Many Báñezians, including O'Neill (in what I suspect to be a naïve version of "source compatibilism"[30]), appear to take as sufficient for freedom that "to be moved voluntarily, is to be moved

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26 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {7}.
27 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {8}.
28 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {12}.
29 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] I, q. 105, a. 4, ad 1.
30 Rooney, "Banez's Big Problem," 107–9.

from within, that is, by an interior principle."[31] As long as the inclination God causes is appropriately interior to the will (the compatibilist Báñezian thinks), as long as God's grace or withholding of grace "allows the creature to continue on as it currently thinks and wills,"[32] or as long as God does not cause the individual to lose its intellect or will or its essential character as a rational agent, then any such desire or act of choice which God causes in that individual counts as appropriately "natural" and "interior." While, in one way, this constructs an answer from the words Aquinas uses, and correctly identifies what Aquinas proposes as a necessary condition for free action, it misses the fact that this is insufficient for freedom. God needs to act in such a way that the interior inclination of the will (which God produces by grace) belongs to the normal sort of process that is natural to the will—that is, determining itself to produce such an inclination.

The question is then how God could produce such a desire in us while preserving that inclination's free or natural character, even though a desire to love or have faith in God is outside of our power. What we want to affirm is that we retain counterfactual control over our actions, and have alternative possibilities open to us, despite God's causal agency. My own attempt at a solution is to note that this desire is not natural merely because it is "interior" to my own will. What God needs to do is produce this desire *with me*. Consequently, to say God has control over the mode of producing a desire is not merely to say God can cause things in my will without me. In fact, nothing about the Báñezian position requires that God acts in such a way that his decisions give me *no* control over what he does in granting efficacious grace. Rather, God has intentions such that, because he creates me to be a free creature, he freely limits the mode of his interaction with me to those modes of causing my acts which are compatible with me determining my own activity. Sufficient grace is supposed to be a *real* power to engage in friendship with God, allowing alternative possibilities, thus making us culpable when we do not produce this desire with God. What we need to do is indicate the respect in which sufficient grace gives us such a power over the occurrence of efficacious grace.

I propose that it would be appropriate to think of acting under efficacious grace as a paradigm case of shared agency or joint activity. I intend to develop the account further elsewhere, but the relevant point is that, in cases of shared agency, an action is produced by agents whose intentions are appropriately

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31 *ST* I, q. 105, a. 4, ad 2.

32 O'Neill, "Báñezian Grounding," {12}.

interrelated.[33] When we begin to desire or turn to God under the effect of sufficient grace, God can make himself known to us in a way such that "God is the sole mover"[34] of the beginning of our inclination towards him, and where "a certain preparation of man for grace is simultaneous with the infusion of grace,"[35] but where we begin to engage in a relationship with God insofar as God begins first to make such friendship possible to us. When we recognize this offer of friendship, we can become partners in the production of efficacious grace; then, "in him who has the use of reason, God's motion to justice does not take place without a movement of the free-will; but He so infuses the gift of justifying grace that at the same time He moves the free-will to accept the gift of grace, in such as are capable of being moved thus."[36]

Aquinas's logic of the "divine indwelling" seems to me to point precisely to a vision like this one, where "the invisible mission [of the divine persons] is directed to the blessed at the very beginning of their beatitude," because it is by means of such a personal presence to each person that they are "renewed" or justified by grace.[37] The invisible mission or indwelling consists in the way in which "God is said to be present as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved in the lover. . . . The rational creature by its operation of knowledge and love attains to God Himself."[38] This mutual knowledge and love, a kind of joint sharing of attention, is both what undergirds the ability of a human being to freely come to cooperate with God's offer of friendship and that in which that friendship consists. In my turning in love to God, not only was I acting on God's reasons in coming to love him, because he made himself present to my intellect and will as an object of choice, but God was acting to cause me to love him in light of my intentions or reasons for action, causing this act of love in me in a way that was not contrary to my own inclinations. Báñezians need a suitable metaphysics on which sufficient grace—conceived in this way—gives the individual counterfactual control over whether they will respond to God in love (in some relevant sense), and so over whether God will give them efficacious grace.

Central to my account is then an assumption that human beings are free in virtue of an ability to act on reasons, and that their actions are free only

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33 See Abraham Sesshu Roth, "Shared Agency," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2017 ed., plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/shared-agency/ (esp. sec. 2).

34 *ST* I-II, q. 111, a. 2, resp.

35 *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 2, ad 1.

36 *ST* I-II, q. 113, a. 3, resp.

37 *ST* I, q. 43, a. 6, ad 3.

38 *ST* I, q. 43, a. 3, resp.

when they do so act on reasons.[39] The compatibilist account fails to provide any relevant sense in which God causing me to do something results in me acting on *my own* reasons (reasons that could have been otherwise), rather than merely acting on reasons God has decided from eternity. That is, when I come to love God, it would be "violent'" for God to choose from all eternity that I come to choose to love him for no reasons of my own, merely because he caused me to. This makes it appear as if I was not properly acting on reasons at all, as long as he caused that desire to love him "in" me or within my volitional capacities by some factor that was not within my relevant control—just as pushing me down the stairs is to cause me to perform an action, but not one which was attributable to me or my reasons. Similarly, God would seem capricious if failing to act on his sufficient grace were not within my relevant control, such that my sin was an inevitable result of God choosing from eternity to permit me to do so, making it such that, given his decision and no decision of mine, loving him would never have been within the relevant scope of possibilities for me. I take it, instead, that I came to love God because my reasons to love God and God's reasons to move me to have that desire were appropriately related. From my perspective, what sets aside my own position from the compatibilist Báñezian position is that God's bringing about my justification or conversion or causing me to perform a supernatural act is one in which God brings about this act *by means of reasons for acting which we share*. The fact that God so desires free friendship is what grounds alternative possibilities when they do act under the influence of efficacious grace; these acts are produced under the same mode by which an individual acts on their own reasons in other cases, although I would be unable to form the appropriate intentions upon which I could love God without God making himself (and his intentions) present to me *first*.

Further, it seems to me there is a gratuitous assumption that my control over efficacious grace must be either causal or none at all. Yet God need not be "passive," waiting for me to do something *causally* independent of him before he can act, but can manifest himself to me in an illumination that results from sufficient grace precisely in order to give us joint reasons for acting together. There is room here for a different kind of counterfactual control over whether God gives efficacious grace.[40] Instead, the fact

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39 See Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 24, a. 1. Báñez endorses an account like this in *Apologia de los maestros dominicanos*, in *Domingo Báñez y Las Controversias Sobre La Gracia* (Salamanca: Ediciones Aldecoa, 1968), 170.

40 My account therefore differs from Molinism in that it does not require God to be responsive to counterfactual *truths* about me, but only to (the actual) *me* and my intentions.

that God can decree, from eternity, that one thing happen on account of another does not limit God. God's causing everything (including free acts), and being impassible rather than acted upon by creatures, does not rule out that God might cause things to happen because of what creatures are or do, and thus that he might choose to cause some effects in creatures only when those creatures appropriately relate to him—that is, God could then be responsive to creatures and their intentions in the order of final causality when he grants efficacious grace. It seems to me that these principles can allow one to develop even a complete account of the way in which God's predestination from eternity, or eternal decrees, can also respect human freedom. However, I leave it to another place and time to develop the elements of this account sufficiently.

Even if my specific account of the way in which God and human beings act jointly is defective, I take it that the Báñezian needs to propose some way in which God's decision to give efficacious grace to a creature preserves the creature as source of their action and gives the creature the right kind of counterfactual control over whether God will give them efficacious grace. The key logical move (as I see it) is to show that God is properly sensitive to the creature, and their reasons for action, so the individual has the relevant kind of control over whether they receive or fail to receive efficacious grace as to avoid compatibilism. My specific account of the way in which this is possible, which I call "neo-Báñezian," therefore holds that supernatural free actions must be such that individually neither God nor the human being is a sufficient cause of that action.[41] When God bestows that efficacious grace, the movement in my will that results does not count merely as his action, but mine as well, because we are acting together in a way that neither of us acting alone could have done. God could not have caused me to love him without my voluntary consent, and I could not have loved God without his making this possible.

O'Neill has not shown me any reason for thinking that human beings have supernatural acts relevantly in their control or that they would be culpable for failing to perform them, since he seems to either deny that they need alternative possibilities or merely superficially to assert that they have such possibilities without providing any account of why they have them. What I nevertheless hope to have made plausible is the idea, first, that Báñezians *do* need an account of those alternative possibilities which many—including

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41 Of course, God is metaphysically sufficient to cause whatever he wants, but the point is that God would contradict his own intentions if he were to cause an inclination in my will by way of violence.

O'Neill and Garrigou-Lagrange—do not seem to be providing and, second, that the fact that supernatural actions that are outside of our control in the sense that God must give us grace to perform them does not entail that they cannot be in our control in any sense, let alone that relevant sense in which any other free act of mine is in my control.