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POSSIBILITIES FOR DIVINE FREEDOM

INTRODUCTION

This essay considers the nature of God's freedom and asks which conception of freedom is most plausible when applied to God. It outlines a number of challenges to the idea that God is free, and considers how some of these might be met, with a particular focus on the challenge posed to God's freedom by his moral perfection. Before taking up those topics, however, I review a number of reasons why we might want to ascribe freedom to God.

First, as Richard Swinburne says, "the common understanding of Western religion is" that God is personal (SWINBURNE 1994, 127). Given that, and given that freedom is often taken to be central to the notion of personhood, we have one good reason for saying that God is free: without freedom, God would not be a person. A second reason for attributing freedom to God is the intuition that freedom is a perfection and that therefore God must possess it. Laura Garcia puts the point like this: "Just as humans are said to be more perfect than the lower animals in possessing the power of free choice, so God, who is the most perfect agent, must be said to have free choice in an even greater degree" (GARCIA 1992, 191).

A third reason is to secure God's moral praiseworthiness. It is an extremely plausible thought that people are only morally responsible for things they do freely. If, therefore, we are to praise God for creating us, and for things he does more generally, we must assume that he does those things freely. William Rowe has gone further on this point, arguing that it speaks in favour of a specifically libertarian understanding of God's freedom: "something in the religious attitudes toward God that theistic religions suppose to

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be proper and right (thanking God for creating us) would not make sense if God lacks libertarian freedom with respect to the world he creates" (ROWE 2004, 114).

A fourth reason for ascribing freedom to God concerns the significance of God's purposes. If God's creative activity is free (as opposed to being, e.g. an inevitable emanation from some aspect of his being) then what he does appears to be more meaningful or valuable in some way. One way of expanding on this would be to say that the existence of the particulars God creates is more significant than it would have been had creation been an emanation from God's character because these particulars are—but needn't have been—the object of God's choice.

The fifth and final reason I wish to mention for thinking God is free arises from the doctrine of God's aseity. Roughly, this doctrine states that God is wholly self-sufficient, dependent on nothing for his existence, and that all else which exists depends on God for its existence. But if creation were necessary in some sense—as it might be, for example, if the reason for God's creating were his own essential goodness—then God's independence would be compromised. As James Dolezal writes, "in order to maintain God's absolute self-sufficiency and independence of the creature it seems incumbent upon the Christian theologian to uphold God's freedom not to create" (DOLEZAL 2011, 212 fn. 10). These reasons help explain why the traditional view is, as Thomas Morris and Christopher Menzel describe, "that God is a free creator of our physical universe: He was free to create it or free to refrain from creating it; he was free to create this universe, a different universe, or no such universe at all" (MORRIS and MENZEL 1986, 357).

There are, however, a number of challenges to the idea that God is, or even could be, free. First, God is morally perfect: he cannot sin or do any wrong action. But if God must always and inevitably do the good then we might wonder whether there is any room left for freedom. After all, some of the most important decisions that human persons face involve both good and bad options. And when someone opts for the good, we often praise them precisely because we know that they could have done wrong. So if doing wrong is not an option for God, then his freedom would seem to be curtailed if not removed altogether. In fact, a stronger worry can be pressed. Rowe has argued, for example, that morally perfect agents must always do the best available action, even if all of the available options are good. Now, in addition to being perfectly good, God is omniscient and omnipotent, so he will know about all the available good options and also be able to actualise them.

But then it would seem that God's perfect goodness will undermine his freedom even if there are only good options available.

A version of this worry applies also to perfect but non-divine agents. It is part of Christian orthodoxy to maintain, for example, that the saints in heaven are (once they get to heaven) impeccable. As William Shedd writes, heaven "is marked by sinless perfection. … indefectibility, … the absence of the possibility of apostasy" (SHEDD 1888, 665). If the saints are unable to sin then their freedom is restricted in the first way mentioned above. And if they are perfected then, of all the possibilities for action they recognise, it might seem that they too must choose the best one (of those they can realise).

Nevertheless, *necessary* perfection and *necessary* omnipotence make the problem more acute in God's case. Because the saints are not necessarily perfect, we can appeal to points earlier in their history when they had the ability to sin in order to explain their now fixed character, and why they are responsible for things which issue from that character. Kevin Timpe provides a very well worked out account of how this might work, the key idea being that created agents might use their freedom to form their character in such a way that at some point doing wrong is no longer a possibility for them (TIMPE 2014, Ch 6). This option is not available in the case of God because being necessarily good he could never have had the ability to choose between right and wrong. In addition, God's necessary perfection rules out the following response. God, it might be suggested, has the ability or power to choose less than the best (but a still good) option, it's just that he never has and never will exercise that power. This response takes it that *merely possessing* the power to choose less than the best does not count against God's perfect goodness. Only if God were to *exercise* that power would it count against his perfect goodness. Even if we grant that latter point, however, God's necessary perfections rule this response out because if God did have such a power he would have the power to cease to be morally perfect. But if he's necessarily morally perfect, he cannot have such a power.

A second and parallel threat comes from God's perfect rationality. Given his rationality, God will always act for a reason. Moreover, he will be aware of all and only the actual reasons there are, and will weigh them perfectly. Thus it seems that God will always and only do the most rational thing in each situation and this appears to undermine God's freedom for reasons similar to those adduced above. This challenge is arguably more general than that concerning God's perfect goodness, for it appeals to the idea that God will always do the best thing—in the sense of most rational thing—even

when the considerations in favour of the available options are not moral. There might also be particular challenges which concern the idea of God's acting for reasons. Recently, for example, Rebekah Rice has argued that acting for reasons is inconsistent with agent causal accounts of divine agency (RICE 2016). If such accounts of divine agency are offered because they are thought to provide satisfactory accounts of freedom, Rice's challenge is pertinent to the topic at hand.

The final challenge to divine freedom to mention comes from the doctrine of divine immutability. The essence of this doctrine is that God can never change because any change would be for the worse. The doctrine has stronger and weaker forms according to the scope of the immutability. In its stronger forms the doctrine has it that God cannot change in any respect. As Jesse Couenhoven helpfully makes clear, however, the weaker forms of the doctrine, where just those properties essential to God's internal life are taken to be immutable, are sufficient to raise problems for the idea that God is free (COUENHOVEN 2016, 297–98). For example, it seems sensible to suggest that God's inner life is an expression of his perfect, and therefore unchanging, properties. But that makes it implausible to think of the relationships of love that eternally exist between the persons of the Trinity, say, as being a result of God's choice (COUENHOVEN 2016, 299). But if no aspect of God's inner life is the object of his choice, then in what sense is it free? And that's not the end of the story, either. For it is not just that God has, say, a faculty of the will that is unchanging; rather, God exercises his will and so, despite the inadequacies of this language, we might think of God's mental life involving a volition for a particular thing. But if the *exercise* of God's will is also unchanging, the content of his volition is immutable, and it is only more difficult to make sense of his freedom. Dolezal's recent treatment of divine freedom and the doctrine of simplicity illustrate how these problems become more serious for those who endorse the doctrine of divine simplicity (DOLEZAL 2011, 188–212). Having noted the challenge from divine immutability, I will for the most part set it aside. In section 2 I critique Couenhoven's attempt to avoid this challenge, but I myself will not try to meet it. In section 4, however, I will present an account which I think can meet the challenges to divine freedom from God's perfect goodness and his perfect rationality.

1. FREEDOM IS COMPATIBLE WITH DETERMINISM AND LACK OF ALTERNATIVES

The challenges to God's freedom outlined above all rely on the assumption that freedom requires alternatives. One way of dissolving these challenges, then, is simply to reject the idea that freedom requires alternative possibilities. Freedom, in other words, doesn't require choice.

Such a rejection of alternative possibilities is consistent with holding either that freedom is compatible with determinism or that it is incompatible with determinism. That is because one might think that there are good reasons for thinking that freedom is incompatible with determinism besides the one motivated by the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP). Contemporary writers on divine freedom who reject the need for alternatives and say that freedom is compatible with determinism include Ian McFarland (2007; 2008) and Jesse Couenhoven (2012; 2013; 2016). This section will discuss Couenhoven's account while the following section will discuss a prominent account which denies that freedom requires alternatives but maintains that freedom is *incompatible* with determinism, namely, Kevin Timpe's account (2014; 2016).

Couenhoven's aim is to address the final challenge discussed in the introduction, namely, that of showing how God's immutability is compatible with his freedom. He writes:

> A significant puzzle created by these affirmations—that God is eternal, necessary and immutable, as well as free—is tied to the fact that today the average Westerner tends to conceive of freedom of persons ... as tied to a history of mental actions that involves movement from one choice or state to another. It is difficult to apply this picture of freedom to a God with the more or less traditional attributes just described, however, because they appear to rule out the possibility that God has such a history of action. (COUENHOVEN 2016, 298–99)

The problem is that even if we accept that God has some accidental properties—and that already constitutes a departure from the traditional understanding of eternity and immutability[1]—God's essential properties, of which freedom is one, will be unchanging and fully actualised. That is, because these properties are as good as can possibly be, they possess no potentiality whatsoever. That means not just that God's will is unchangable but that it is neces-

[1] Ryan Mullins (2016, 50–51) discusses, for example, how Boethius, Augustine and Lombard all reject the idea that accidental properties can be predicated of God.

sarily what it is. And so, as Couenhoven sums up, God seems to "be trapped by [his] perfections" rather than free in them (COUENHOVEN 2016, 299).

Couenhoven's answer to this revolves around his acceptance of a normative theory of freedom. He stresses this in his paper 'The necessities of perfect freedom' where he endorses Augustine's claim that "the highest freedom involves being determined by proper loves" (COUENHOVEN 2012, 398). Augustine thought, and Couenhoven agrees, that being determined by loves proper to one's nature is a form of self-determination that involves a "blessed necessity" and which is "not inimical to but characteristic of freedom" (COUENHOVEN 2012, 398–9). Freedom involves this blessed necessity because agency is teleological and so, at its best, is about acting in accordance with one's proper end (COUENHOVEN 2016 #5402: 298–9). To put it differently: the purpose of agency is to facilitate the agent's living out a fulfilled life where what counts as a fulfilled life depends on the nature of the agent in question. Having the abilities to live such a life need not require the making of choices. This is especially true of God who, being omniscient will not face any uncertainties about his actions, and being omnipotent will not face any obstacles to realising his goals.

This gives us a good handle on what Couenhoven means when he speaks about normative freedom. But does this kind of freedom amount to a form of *self*-determination? Is it a form of control, and if not, why does it count as a kind of freedom at all? To answer these questions we need an account of the agency that is operative in such freedom. At this point Couenhoven suggests that we might fruitfully combine the normative account of freedom outlined above with a non-volitionalist theory of agency (COUENHOVEN 2016, 296). As the name suggests, non-volitionalist theories of agency reject the idea that volitions or choices are central to agency and responsibility. Instead, the focus is on some kind of ownership relation which, it is hoped, will explain the agent's responsibility. The idea is that the action, state or event for which the agent is responsible relates in some way—a way which constitutes some form of ownership—to the agent's values, commitments or judgements. As Angela Smith helpfully explains, views focusing on ownership might be spelt out in terms of the action or state *expressing* the agent's character, or *depending on* or *being sensitive to* the agent's evaluative judgements, or similar (SMITH 2008, 368). Volitionalist theories, by contrast, say that an agent's responsibility for bodily actions, emotions, attitudes and other mental states, *derives from the agent's choices*, and they say *that*, because the agent is *in control of* her choices.

In 'The Problem of God's Immutable Freedom', Couenhoven combines his Augustinian normative view of freedom with Smith's non-volitionalist theory of agency which he says "offers a helpful way of thinking about how to understand the freedom and praiseworthiness of the immanent Trinity" (COUENHOVEN 2016, 304).[2] Smith calls her view the "rational relations view" and its key claim is that people are responsible for those attitudes, behaviours, mental states and so on which reflect their rational judgements (SMITH 2008, 368). As Smith sees it the states we can be responsible for are "'judgment-dependent' in the sense that they generally reflect and are sensitive to our (sometimes hasty, mistaken, or incomplete) judgments about what reasons we have, and they are generally responsive to changes in these judgments" (SMITH 2008, 370). We can be responsible for states which depend on our rational judgements, Smith thinks, because it is fair to ask us to account for those rational judgements. Moreover, these rational judgements are a key part of the agent's *rational activity* which is important, Smith argues, because what moral appraisal seems to make demands of just is the agent's rational agency (SMITH 2008, 380–81). Importantly, if this account is correct then agents can be responsible for many states which bear no connection to a conscious choice. Smith gives the example of forgetting a friend's birthday; obviously, the forgetting was not the result of a conscious choice. Yet she takes herself to be responsible for the forgetting and explains this judgement by saying that it expresses the lack of "appreciation for the significance of [the birthday]," whereas if she had remembered the birthday that would have been illustrative of a rational judgement that the birthday was significant (SMITH 2005, 248). It is in this way that Couenhoven can affirm that "God's unchanging love, and all the qualities associated with that love in its perfection, express God's way of seeing things and what God is committed to"—in Smith's terms, they express God's evaluative rational judgements (COUENHOVEN 2016, 304). According to Couenhoven, this is a valuable and significant kind of agency which secures God's praiseworthiness even if God never has any choices to make. On this reading, then, Couenhoven is employing Smith's view to give further content to the self-determination that is appealed to in his normative Augustinian view of freedom. The self-determination that is *being-determined-by-ones-proper-loves* counts as an instance of agency precisely because it satisfies the conditions Smith lays down.

[2] In his 2013 book, *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ*, Couenhoven presents his own non-volitionalist theory of agency; in the later paper he focuses on Smith's account because it is an account philosophical audiences will be more familiar with. I follow his lead in this.

Still, the volitionalist will point out that on this view God is *determined* by his nature to act the way he does. Everything he does is inevitable and that seems to be problematic. Couenhoven accepts God's acts are inevitable, but of course he doesn't think that is problematic. Indeed, he takes the necessity involved in God's freedom to be intrinsic to it such that "[even] creation is less a choice than an implication of God's overflowing love" (COUENHOVEN 2012, 401). Given the long standing view that creation is contingent we might think then, that even if Smith's account provides plausible conditions on something's being an instance of agency, that these actions are necessitated appears (at the very least) to be a cost to the view. But Couenhoven is not so sure. God's actions are necessitated but "the necessity of perfection is not external, forced on God, but arises from God's own nature" (COUENHOVEN 2012, 401). Not being external, the necessities cannot be conceived of as things which compel or coerce God; they are instead aspects of his own perfect nature and precisely because they arise from God's aseity they constitute, rather than count against, God's self-determination (COUENHOVEN 2012, 412).

At this point the volitionalist might point out that necessities do not need to be external to an agent to undermine freedom. In the case of human agents it is widely accepted, for example, that a person might have a set of beliefs and desires which necessitate them to act in some way but which that person disowns. Here the necessity, which might well be part of the person's nature, undermines freedom despite being internal to the agent. Couenhoven replies to this worry by pointing out that instances of internal discord will be impossible in God. God, as unchangingly perfect, could never have conflicting desires. Nor could he have desires for less than the perfect good. As a result, even if we concede that God's being able to do only one thing is a "limitation" we can still argue, Couenhoven says, that this "limitation" is an excellence because being able to do something different would only be a move to something less perfect, "a capacity to choose the unhappy" (COUENHOVEN 2012, 412).

Couenhoven suggests that this account of divine freedom also brings with it a number of advantages. First, it straightforwardly dissolves the puzzle that Couenhoven describes, namely, that freedom and responsibility seem to require choice. On this view, that challenge to divine freedom only arises due to an inadequate, choice-centered view of agency. Another point in its favour is that divine freedom and (perfected) human freedom are the same kind of freedom. That is, on this view, freedom is about being unobstructed

in doing the good. Humans partake of this kind of freedom the better they become. Once in heaven their freedom is perfected and they, like God, become unable to sin. By contrast, Couenhoven suggests that volitionalist views are in the "awkward position" of having to say that choice-based freedom—which the volitionalists want to claim is a great good—either does not exist or is severely curtailed in heaven (COUENHOVEN 2012, 405).

A general worry for accounts which downplay the role of choice is the difficulty of giving an account of the notion of agency they are employing. After all, these accounts do not want to deny that God is an agent. Consider then, Couenhoven's suggestion that Smith's account of agency fits well with an Augustinian view of normative freedom. Central to Smith's understanding of agency is the notion of ownership, where ownership is a matter of some action, omission or state bearing the right kind of relation to the agent's evaluative judgements. Smith is explicit in denying that *volitional* control is needed for agency, but does she consider her ownership-based notion of agency to involve a different kind of control? It is not clear, although the general thrust of the approach suggests her answer would be 'no.'[3] What is clear is that it's a central assumption of many philosophers of action that agency just is a matter of control. So if ownership is not a matter of control then we need a clear explanation of why it's a matter of agency. (This point will also hold for Couenhoven's own non-volitionalist view).

On the other hand, if Smith's notion of ownership is intended as a matter of control, then further details of how it constitutes a kind of control would be useful. In discussing her view, Smith talks frequently of *rational activity*. So for example, when someone recognises, assesses or responds to reasons, that is an instance of the agent's *rational activity* (SMITH 2008, 386). And Smith says further that it is in the nature of moral appraisal to be connected to rational activity:

> Moral criticism in general, I would argue, can only be directed to a person with regard to things that involve her rational activity in some way. Our physical traits and natural abilities, in themselves, do not seem to reflect our rational agency or activity in a way that would make them an appropriate basis for moral criticism. (SMITH 2008, 381)

[3] In a footnote Smith says that she rejects the idea that we need to have "direct control"—a wider category than voluntary control?—"over anything legitimately subject to moral demands." Angela M. SMITH, "Control, responsibility, and moral assessment," *Philosophical Studies* 138,3 (2008): 382 fn. 16, doi:10.1007/s11098-006-9048-x.

So the notion of rational activity plays a central role in Smith's account, yet little is said of the nature of this activity. In particular, it's not clear what makes these rational judgements *active.* In ordinary language 'judgement' sometimes just means 'decision' or 'choice' but obviously it cannot take that meaning here. Indeed, Smith does not even require these judgements to be conscious:

> As I have said a number of times, we need not assume that these judgments are, or ever were, explicit: we may never have consciously entertained the judgments in question, and we may even be surprised by our own reactions in certain circumstances, precisely because they reveal rational or evaluative commitments which we were hitherto unaware of holding. (SMITH 2005, 252)

Now these underlying processes may be active in the sense in which any causal process is active, or the sense in which we describe, for example, chemical reactions as active. That much is uncontroversial, but also trivial and not what we are after. What we need is a notion of activity which distinguishes responsible agents from these wider senses of activity. Smith says that we're responsible for (and so active with respect to) those things which are *or should be* sensitive to these judgements (SMITH 2005, 263). But, as Neil Levy points out, this appeal to things which "*should be* sensitive" is not an account of the kind of control at issue but (at most) an appeal to things which *are in principle controllable*, and not by the particular agent in question but by agents in general (LEVY 2005, 10). But why does Smith think in-principle controllability is relevant? Levy captures the point neatly:

> I don't have a kind of ersatz control over my car if the steering wheel falls off; the fact that cars are *in principle* controllable does not alter my lack of control in that particular circumstance. (LEVY 2005, 10)

Levy's point is that what matters is whether he can *in fact* control his car, and that depends on whether it does *in fact* have a steering wheel. When the steering wheel falls off it's still the case that the car "should be" sensitive to the motions of steering a wheel (because it "should have" a steering wheel), but that isn't much good to Levy and it isn't any form of control. Without an account of the notion of activity appealed to here, then, this view is missing the key ingredient.

One possibility—which would explain why it is so difficult to provide an account of agency without invoking a notion of actual control—is that the

normative conception of freedom on the one hand, and the conception of freedom which understands it as 'the control condition that justifies ascriptions of moral responsibility' on the other, are simply accounts of different phenomena between which, perhaps, there is no direct connection. As Couenhoven himself says, the normative view of freedom isn't tied to non-volitionalist accounts of agency; it could be paired with a choice-focused control based theory (COUENHOVEN 2016, 296). But this might suggest that the "normative conception of freedom" is, in the end, a conception of something else: some notion of autonomy, perhaps, or living in accordance with one's true purpose. Put otherwise: the normative view of freedom is about human flourishing, not about control (and therefore not about moral responsibility).

This idea can be supported by noting how in ordinary language we use the term 'free' in a number of diverse ways. We say, for example, that the water is free to flow down the channel, but that doesn't imply that the water exerts any kind of control over how it flows. This use of 'free' does suggest a lack of external obstacle but does not suggest an exercise of control. The use of 'free' in normative accounts of freedom concerns whether or not the agent has the capacities which allow it to achieve its true end and whether it exercises those capacities. But it's possible that, like with the use of 'free' applicable to water, it implies nothing about the agent's ability to control things.

To see this, suppose that there is a natural end or good for all humans and then consider two conscious beings: one is living in accordance with her true, God given purpose; one is living a destructive life against his true purpose. For both beings we can ask: is he or she in control of what she's doing? And we can flesh out the cases so that a positive or negative answer can be given in each case. The first being, for example, might have thoughts about different possible futures and find herself with a judgement that one alternative is preferable, a judgement which corresponds with the Good. She might experience a desire for that alternative, and then experience herself as being causally involved with its production. Yet all the while she might be passive in the sense that though she is an experiencing subject she is not herself doing anything; she experiences all this as *happening to* her. On the other hand, the second being might also experience various thoughts about possible futures but then go on to direct his attention here but not there, to actively dwell on this consideration but not that one, to seek more information before, finally, deciding to do some particular thing. He is an experiencing subject but in addition an acting one, and all this might be the case even while his exertions of control are thoroughly contrary to the Good.

So even if, as Augustine wants to claim, there is a sense of 'free' in which the agent living in accordance with the Good is free while the agent who is living in accordance with the Good is unfree, it's not clear the same is true of the language of control nor the sense of 'free' which requires control. But that's what needs to be shown if, in providing an account of God's freedom, the theorist is attempting to demonstrate why we are justified in giving *moral* praise to God—and it's this that Couenhoven is aiming at: "This chapter … proposes [that] 'non-volitionalist' theories of responsibility … are in a better position to account for the nature of divine freedom *and responsibility* than their competitors" (COUENHOVEN 2016, 294—my emphasis).

The above does not demonstrate that Couenhoven's apporach is wrong; but it does demonstrate the account is missing the central piece.[4] The theorist taking this approach needs to do one of two things: either provide an account of agency which is explicitly control based (without being volition or choice based), which would thereby establish the connection to moral responsibility in the standard manner (via control), or, provide an account of the agency which is not control based while being explicit about why it is indeed an account of agency and why that notion of agency justifies ascriptions of moral responsibility. In other words, Couenhoven might well be right to say that it is greater for God to be unable to sin than to be "free" to do evil (Couenhoven 2012, 401); what he hasn't shown is why this implies anything about the notion of freedom which is connected to responsibility.

2. FREEDOM IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH DETERMINISM BUT COMPATIBLE WITH LACK OF ALTERNATIVES

We turn now to the second position, that of rejecting the need for alternative possibilities while maintaining that freedom is incompatible with determinism. My focus here will be on Kevin Timpe's work on divine agency, first discussed in relation to the freedom of the saints in heaven in a number of papers co-authored with Timothy Pawl (2009; 2013), and further developed in Timpe (2014; 2016). The particular challenge to divine freedom that Timpe sets out to address is the threat posed to God's freedom by his perfect goodness. He begins by citing a worry Couenhoven raises for the libertarian: "Libertarian accounts of God's freedom quickly run into a conceptual prob-

[4] I would like to thank an anonymous referee for pushing me to clarify the point being made here.

lem: their focus on contingent choices undermines their ability to celebrate divine freedom with regard to the essential divine nature. … For a [compatibilist], by contrast, God's freedom is not at odds with the necessities of perfect love" (Couenhoven, as quoted in Timpe 2014, 104). Timpe is explicit in saying that he will address this problem by applying his preferred account of free will—a version of what Dean Zimmerman has called *virtue libertarianism*—to the topic of divine freedom (TIMPE 2014, 103–5). It will thus behove us to take a look at Timpe's virtue libertarianism before continuing.

There are two aspects of Timpe's account which it is important to distinguish. The first is his *source incompatibilism*. Traditionally, libertarians have focused on the agent's ability to do otherwise when presenting accounts of the control required by moral responsibility. That is, they have argued that central to the control required for bearing moral responsibility is the agent's ability to select from between alternatives or to make choices. However, the well-known Frankfurt-style cases have for some cast doubt on the principle which undergirded such reflection, namely, the Principle of Alternative Possibilities, which states that "a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise" (FRANKFURT 1969, 829). Many philosophers who accept Frankfurt-style cases—compatibilists and incompatibilists—suggest that what these cases show is that the control required for moral responsibility is a matter of the agent being the *source* or *origin* of her action in some important way. Source incompatibilists thus think that *sourcehood* should be the primary focus of investigation. Inasmuch as source incompatibilists are incompatibilists they will think that some alternatives exist, but they will typically hold that these alternatives play no role at all in grounding the agent's responsibility.[5]

Timpe's commitment to source incompatibilism should be distinguished from his commitment to *historicism*. Historicism is the view that whether an agent is responsible (or perhaps free) depends not just on how the agent is

[5] Timpe suggests that the correct account of sourcehood will entail that some minimal alternative possibilities condition is satisfied; but that is because the correct account of sourcehood will be (for Timpe) an incompatibilist account which will entail the presence of some alternatives Kevin TIMPE, *Free will: Sourcehood and its alternatives*, 2nd ed (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 158. The order of explanation here is that sourcehood explains alternatives, rather than the other way around. Moreover, there is no suggestion that the agent is—even in part—the source because they have access to (i.e. can realise/choose between) different alternatives. Thus, although strictly speaking Timpe does not think free will is compatible with a total lack of physically possible alternatives, he does think it's compatible with a lack for alternatives *for* the agent, and so his account is an apt focus of this section.

then, but also on the agent's history. It is often endorsed as a theory about responsibility (not freedom) and used to account for drunk-driver style cases. For example, suppose a drunk driver causes an accident at *t*. Being drunk at *t*, the driver was out of control and so, intuitively, unable to do anything different. Yet he is responsible. This is explained by appealing to the fact that we can trace back through the driver's history and find a point prior to *t* where he had the requisite control: e.g. a point where (say) he decided to get drunk. Historicism can also be used to explain an agent's responsibility for things which they do as a result of their character. Here the idea is that the agent performs a series of actions which contribute to the forming of their character. In doing so, they become responsible not only for their character but also for any actions which subsequently issue automatically from that character.

It is this latter idea that Timpe develops into a position he classifies as virtue libertarianism. To understand how this position is applied to divine freedom, we must consider how it applies to the perfected freedom of the saints in heaven. As already indicated, although the saints in heaven are only impeccable once they get to heaven (and not necessarily so), there is nevertheless a prima facie problem reconciling their freedom with this acquired impeccability. Timpe argues that virtue libertarianism successfully addresses this problem. The key is to sharply distinguish two claims that libertarians have sometimes made, one of which is true and the other false. These two claims, first articulated by Thomas Talbott in his discussion of divine freedom, are as follows (TALBOTT 1988, 17):

(1) No action that can be traced back to a sufficient cause external to the agent is truly free.
(2) An action is free only if it is logically and psychologically possible for the person who performs it to refrain from it.

Talbott suggests that because historicism is true claim (1) is correct and claim (2) is incorrect. Indeed, he argues that being in a state where one cannot perform a given action actually may in many cases be a very good thing. He gives the example of a husband being unable, at t_2, to decide to hurt his wife to support this idea (TALBOTT 1988, 17). It is good that husbands can acquire such a state. And although being in such a state means that at t_2 the husband, of necessity, can only will his wife's good, libertarianism is not falsified because in order to achieve such a state the husband needs, at some time t_1 prior to t_2, to "freely appropriate" such a character (TALBOTT 1988, 18).

But it might be, not just that someone could reach a state where, at that moment, their character precludes them willing a certain thing, but also that their character becomes fixed so that they will from then on be unable to will that thing. This is how historicism and character formation can be combined to explain the impeccability of those in heaven.

How then does this account apply to divine freedom? Well, *created* agents need to freely form or appropriate their characters because if they didn't, their characters would be imposed on them from the outside, either by natural causes or God (this comes with being a created being). But that is not true of God: all of God's actions satisfy (1) simply because he is not the kind of being who could be (sufficiently) caused to do things by something other than himself. That would mean him being (sufficiently) caused to do something by an object he had created, which is contrary to God's aseity and omnipotence. In other words, by affirming (1) the libertarian intends to ensure that only those actions not produced by externally-bestowed dispositions can be free. But as Talbott writes, in a passage cited and endorsed by Timpe, "that point . . . has no relevant [sic] in the case of God, since *none* of God's dispositions to behave are imposed upon him by an act of creation" (TALBOTT, as quoted in TIMPE 2014, 108).

To put it another way, Timpe thinks that created agents must perform a series of "base case" indeterministically free actions[6] by which they form their characters—that's the only way their characters can trace back ultimately to them. But that—i.e. to have their characters trace back to them—is the only reason they need to perform such actions. In God's case this requirement is irrelevant because he necessarily has the character he has and there never was any possibility of its being imposed on him from without:

> God need not have moral freedom [i.e. a choice between good and evil options] in order to be free and responsible since God doesn't have his moral character contingently. He's not just perfectly morally good, but essentially perfectly morally good. So moral freedom isn't instrumentally valuable in the same way for God as it is for creatures. (TIMPE 2014, sect. 7.3)

[6] How does Timpe understand these actions? It's not clear. He sometimes refers to them as *choices* or *decisions* but does not require the agent choose from among alternatives. Moreover, in personal correspondence Timpe has indicated he is officially neutral about whether the agent needs to be conscious of these base case "actions" (Kevin Timpe, Email to Simon Kittle, September 8, 2016). In this essay I reserve the term 'choice' for the mental episodes which involve conscious choosing between alternatives, so I refer to the base case control bestowing instances of agency in Timpe's theory as actions, but not choices.

So God, in performing actions in accordance with his character—indeed, as a necessary result of his character—acts freely. That such actions are necessitated by his character is not a problem, because God's character is not a cause external to his own being. I have spoken so far as if all of God's free actions are necessitated by his character. Timpe's position is consistent with that being the case, but he is not committed to that being the case. Timpe says, for example, that if there were a set of best possible worlds, all equal in value, then in choosing one from among that set to create, God would be choosing freely (TIMPE 2014, 116). Timpe does not think, then, that divine freedom *requires* necessitation, as Couenhoven appears to think. Equally, however, God doesn't *need* to make any undetermined choices to be free: even if everything God does is determined by his character, God would still be free.

The main problem with Timpe's account concerns the reason he gives for thinking that when God's character determines him to act in a certain way, this does not undermine God's freedom. Timpe seems to treat Talbott's (1)—no action that can be traced back to a sufficient cause external to the agent is truly free—as a general truth about determination which applies to both human and divine agents. This principle explains why humans, if they are to have perfect freedom (and so be unable to sin), need to have a history of undetermined actions by which they form their characters. But it fails to apply to God because he has his character necessarily. Talbott, commenting on criterion (1), writes that "nothing God does, after all, not even that which flows from the necessity of his own nature, is causally determined, and there are no causal conditions that prevent him from doing anything he chooses not to do" (TALBOTT 1988, 10).

However, not all objectionable cases of determination are cases where the determination comes from an external source. Rather, those with incompatibilist sympathies should, I suggest, endorse the idea that any determination that is not ultimately traceable back to a dependence on an undetermined exercise of the agent's will will be freedom-undermining. In support of this, note how the principle that Timpe endorses excludes cases of psychological determination. But there are many cases where psychological determination clearly undermines freedom. Consider, for example, Klara the kleptomaniac. Assume that the nature of kleptomania is that it results, at various points, in a psychological state that makes stealing inevitable. Now in Klara's case her kleptomania was entirely the result of a series of indeterministic causal processes going on within her: there was nothing external to Klara which be-

stowed on her the kleptomania. And yet she will at times experience psychological states that inevitably lead to her stealing. I take it that the libertarian will want to deny that she is responsible for these acts of theft. But what this shows is that principle (1) is incomplete inasmuch as it does not encompass all those cases of determination which undermine freedom.

Now, principle (1) is offered as a sufficient condition on an agent's being unfree, but not also a necessary condition on unfreedom, so it might be suggested that the Klara example doesn't pose a problem for Timpe because he can deem Klara unfree on other grounds. My point, however, is that Klara's freedom is undermined *because she is determined*. If this freedom-undermining determination isn't excluded by (1), then either we adapt (1) so as to accommodate such cases, or we introduce another principle designed to exclude such cases. Either way, Klara lacks freedom because she's determined, and my claim is that God is unfree for that very reason too. In addressing such cases, Timpe has pointed out that God, being necessarily perfect, will perfectly detect all the (correct) reasons there are for doing good, he will weigh those reasons correctly, and being necessarily omnipotent, he'll have all the power he needs to act on those reasons (TIMPE 2016, 282). God, therefore, could never have a character trait such as kleptomania. That, of course, is correct, but also irrelevant. The pertinent aspect of the analogy isn't that agents may acquire character traits which lead them to inevitably perform *bad* actions; it's that agents may acquire character traits which lead them to *inevitably* perform actions (good or bad, it makes no difference).

Consider the following case. Colin is like Klara in that he's acquired a character trait as the result of indeterministic causal processes going on within him, but which were independent of any choices he made. The trait he acquires in this manner is one which entails that at various points he experiences a psychological state that makes it inevitable that he will pick up a phone and donate some money to charity. The libertarian should say of Colin that he is not responsible (and so not praiseworthy) for the charitable donations he makes as a result of this character trait. Of course, we might be glad that he donates money, but that's a different issue. Whatever our attitudes, we don't morally praise him. God's situation (on the view under consideration) is similar to Colin's inasmuch as both have characters that inevitably lead to certain behaviour the production of which they did not control. It's true that neither trait was produced by an external process, but that point is irrelevant as far as control is concerned: freedom is undermined because the action is an inevitable result of something that was not itself

controlled. And I'm suggesting that whatever principle is formulated to rule as unfree cases like Klara's and Colin's will also rule as unfree the actions God performs as an inevitable result of his character.

If Timpe's position appears plausible, it's because libertarians can and should employ historical tracing conditions to explain (a) responsibility for actions which flow from an agent's character and (b) responsibility for actions in drunk driver style cases. When we employ the tracing condition in this way, we employ it not because the agents are contingent beings, but because we recognise that behaviour which flows automatically from one's character or current state is not controlled in the way that is required if the agent is to be responsible. Thus, we trace back to a point where the agent has the relevant kind of control. Zimmerman, an author Timpe cites in support of his own position, and who endorses a similar position to Timpe's, recognises this. He says, of those actions which flow automatically from a formed character, "strictly speaking, such choices and actions are not freely taken—that is, they are not examples of the base case of indeterministic, free choosing" (ZIMMERMAN 2011, 177). Zimmerman says there is "a sense" in which we might call such actions free: they are "the expression of a character formed by a history of freely chosen actions" (ZIMMERMAN 2011, 177). But, and here we might continue Zimmerman's thought, if we insist on using the term 'freedom' even though "the agent no longer has a choice about [his or her] behaviour in these circumstances" (ZIMMERMAN 2011, 177) we must be clear that this is a derivative sense of freedom parasitic on the agent having performed earlier "base case" free choices. So if we do label such actions as 'free' (and not just actions for which the agent is derivatively responsible in virtue of having previously exercised their freedom), then we should qualify this by saying they are only 'derivately free'. Once we're clear about this, we'll see that this sense of freedom is not applicable to God because there are no such base case choices to trace back to.

What does the work in Timpe's account is not so much his virtue libertarianism as the assertion that God can be determined by his necessary character and yet still be free. It is for this reason, I want to suggest, that Timpe's account of divine freedom is best understood as a compatibilist account (despite being presented as incompatibilist). As mentioned, Timpe does allow that God might face some undetermined choices (and indeed, he seems find that desirable). But he agrees with Couenhoven who writes, of supremely free persons, that though "[t]hey may sometimes make undetermined choices … *that is no necessary part* of their freedom" (COUENHOVEN,

as cited in TIMPE 2014, 89—My emphasis). So even if God does make undetermined choices, they are not required for God's being free. And that means that God's freedom is *compatible* with him facing no undetermined choices, and *compatible* with all his actions intead *being determined* by his character.

In his 2014 work Timpe identifies two kinds of compatibilism: causal and theological. And it's true that on Timpe's definitions God won't be determined in either of those senses: God's decisions aren't caused by "the conjunction of non-relational past and the laws of nature" (TIMPE 2014, 8), and nor are they caused by his decisions or willings (because they just are those decisions or willings) (TIMPE 2014, 9). What that shows is not that Timpe's account is incompatibilist, but that these compatibilisms don't encompass all the forms of determination that exist and are hostile to free will. Timpe's account of divine freedom is compatibilist because, as Timpe himself writes, "according to the compatibilist, it is possible for an agent to be determined in all her choices and actions and still make at least some of her choices freely", and on Timpe's picture that is how it is with God (TIMPE 2014, 9). I conclude therefore that Timpe's account of divine freedom fails. The same will be true of the accounts of divine freedom offered by Edward Wierenga (2002, 433–34) and Thomas Senor (2008, 182–83) both of which rely on the idea that determination of an agent's actions by internal factors undermines freedom only when those factors are pathological.

3. FREEDOM REQUIRES ALTERNATIVES

In the previous sections I have argued that two recent accounts of freedom which attempt to do without alternatives are deficient. Freedom is about control, and control requires alternatives. Moreover, it requires not just that alternatives exist but that the agent is able to intentionally realise or access those alternatives—Seth Shabo (2014) has developed this point at some length recently, and I have argued for something similar elsewhere (KITTLE forthcoming). In this section I will address views which seek to reconcile this understanding of freedom with God's perfect goodness and his perfect rationality. I will follow the contemporary literature in discussing divine freedom in the context of God's decision to create.

As outlined above, the challenge posed to God's freedom by his perfect goodness may be summarised as follows. God is perfectly and necessarily good. That means not just that God *will* never perform any wrong action but

that he *cannot* perform a wrong action and, moreover, that he cannot acquire the power to perform a wrong action. Furthermore, Rowe argues that God would always perform the best available act, since a being who didn't perform the best available act wouldn't be God (ROWE 2004, 82–83). (In this, Rowe is following Philip Quinn (1982)). Suppose then that the possible worlds are arranged or configured such that there is only one that is best. In that case, it seems that God must create that single best world. But if God must create the best world he is not free with respect to that action, because to be free with respect to an action *A* an agent must be able to *A* and also able to refrain from *A*–ing. Rowe summarises: "Given God's absolute perfection, he would of necessity create the best world….[so] in the matter of creating among possible worlds God cannot be free" (ROWE 2004, 74).

One way of replying to this thought is to question the idea that there is exactly one best world. There are (at least) three other configurations of possible worlds that might be useful to the theist replying to Rowe's argument. There might be no best world because there is, as Aquinas thought, an infinite series of increasingly better worlds. Call this configuration two. If this were the case then for any given possible world, no matter the value it contains, one could always point to a possible world which had more value. It would therefore be logically impossible to create the best possible world because there wouldn't be one. Daniel and Frances Howard–Snyder have argued that if God faced this configuration of worlds he would be able to choose freely (Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994); Richard Swinburne takes a similar line (SWINBURNE 1994, 134–36). Rowe (among others) has objected that this is not so clear (ROWE 2004, 91–98). I will not discuss this option further here. A third possibility for the configuration of possible worlds that God might find himself with is that there are a number of possible worlds tied for top in terms of the value they contain. That is, there is a set of (more than one) best possible worlds. In this scenario, the theist could argue that God is free because there are a set of equally good actions from which he can choose. The fourth possibility for the configuration of possible worlds is that there is a set of possible worlds that are incommensurable with respect to the value they contain.

Prima facie if any of options 2–4 obtain it is easier to give an account of God's freedom. Nevertheless, the theist would ideally have a way of accounting for God's freedom on the assumption there is only a single best world. A number of replies have been offered. Nelson Pike, in a discussion not explicitly about God's freedom but his omnipotence, famously argued

that although God *cannot* sin inasmuch as it is logically contradictory to affirm that the individual bearing the title 'God' sins, and also inasmuch as God's character rules out him ever sinning, God *can* sin in the sense that he has the ability—that is, the "creative power"—to sin (PIKE 1969, 216). Indeed, Pike suggested God must be able to sin in this latter sense if he is to be omnipotent. This applies to the problem at hand in that for 'can sin' we could read 'can create less than the best'. Similarly, Talbott has presented a view according to which God has the power to create less than the best (and so is free in creating the best) even while he necessarily creates the best (TALBOTT 1988, 3). That is, Talbott presents an account of power according to which God might have the power to *A* even while it is logically impossible that he *A*. Both of these options are, in effect, versions of classical compatibilism: they agree that freedom requires being able to do otherwise and develop accounts of power or ability which abstract away from significant features of the agent (i.e. the features which do the necessitating; Pike abstracts away from everything save God's "creative power", Talbott abstracts away from God's nature as "a perfectly loving being"). This opens them up to the charge that they are simply not talking about the kind of power required for freedom. I have argued for this conclusion elsewhere, suggesting that the concept of ability relevant to free will cannot abstract away from anything (KITTLE 2015). As such, in this essay I will put solutions such as Talbott's to one side and instead focus on a different approach, namely Robert Adams's appeal to God's grace as a way of solving the problem.

Adams's key idea is that God might be able to create less than the best (in the strongest possible sense of 'able') and yet still do no wrong and so retain his moral perfection. Adams developed this idea in his 1972 article 'Must God Create the Best?'. He suggests that "ethical views typical of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition" do not require adherence to the following principle:

> (P) If a perfectly good moral agent created any world at all, it would have to be the very best world that he could create. (ADAMS 1972, 317)

Adams says that, putting utilitarian ethical views aside, there are only two reasons for the theist to hold to (P). The first is that were God to create a less than the best possible world, he would thereby wrong someone. But, as Adams persuasively argues, this is implausible. God cannot be obligated to beings he has not yet created, whether those merely possible beings are in the best possible world or any other world. If God bears obligations at all, it will

only be to beings he has created. I therefore want to focus on the second reason for holding to (P), which is the belief that "if the creator chose to make a world less good than he could have made, that could be understood only in terms of some defect in the creator's character," and that would be so even if no one was thereby wronged (ADAMS 1972, 323).

Adams points out that whether this is true will depend on what counts as a character defect. And while some philosophers—Adams cites Plato in this regard—do think that a perfect character will always lead the agent to perform the best available action, others will disagree. In particular, Adams argues that many theists in the Judeo–Christian tradition would reject this because for them a significant aspect of being virtuous is being gracious. Adams defines grace as "a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved" (ADAMS 1972, 324). And this means that the "gracious person sees what is valuable in the person he loves, and does not worry about whether it is more or less valuable than what could be found in someone else he might have loved" (ADAMS 1972, 324). Grace is an important part of the moral ideal in the Judeo–Christian worldview and so, given that God perfectly fulfils that ideal, God "might well choose to create and love less excellent creatures than He could have chosen" (ADAMS 1972, 324). Adams is not saying that God *must* create less than the best, just that moral virtue being what it is, he may create less than the best and yet do no wrong. Furthermore, Adams is not saying that God could thereby create any world. The world must be good and the following two conditions must be met:

(A) No creature is, on the whole, so miserable that it would be better for him if he had never existed.

(B) For each creature, no being who came into existence in better or happier circumstances would have been the same individual.

As long as these conditions are met, then God will do no wrong in creating a world which is not the best possible world, and so, according to Adams, God is free in his creative choice even if there is a single best world.

Rowe is unconvinced by Adams's argument. He accepts that the creatures in the best world will not be wronged by God, if God chooses not to create them (ROWE 2004, 80). Still, "it remains difficult to see how God would be justified in creating creatures whose prospects for a good life are known by him to be mediocre in comparison with other creatures" (Rowe 2004, 81). Moreover, Rowe thinks that even if we grant Adams's claim that God need not create the best, still that doesn't show how God can be free if there is a single best world. The most it shows, Rowe argues, is that "God's moral per-

fection imposes no *moral obligation* on God to create the best world he can….[so that] God need not be doing anything *morally* wrong in creating some other than the best world" (ROWE 2004, 82—Rowe's emphasis).

There are two reasons why this is not enough. First, being perfectly morally good encompasses more than just fulfilling one's obligations. A being might be better than another because it performs an extra supererogatory act, for example (ROWE 2004, 82). Second, being perfectly good encompasses more than morality and being perfect involves more than just being perfectly good (conceptually, at least). Rowe expands on this latter point by connecting God's graciousness to the reasons on which he acts. God's perfection means that God is perfectly rational and so always has a reason for acting (ROWE 2004, 85). But for Rowe, Adams's picture disconnects God's love from his reasons. The nature of grace means that "if God creates a world with creatures, his love of the creatures in that world cannot be his reason for creating it"—that's because if God based his love for his creatures on "the kinds of lives they lead" then God would be treating those who live better lives as more deserving of his love than others (ROWE 2004, 84). So whatever reason God has for creating, it does not involve his loving his creatures. Thus, as Rowe sees it, although Adams's points about grace remove one potential obstacle to God's being free, namely, that God has a moral obligation to create the best world, they fail to show that God's goodness doesn't require that God create the best anyway, and they also remove one source of explanation for God's creating (his loving his creation).

I believe that Adams's position—or an Adams-inspired position—has the resources to address these worries. I will begin with the second worry. Rowe's claims here appear to be based on the demand for a contrastive explanation for God's decision to create. He writes that "since grace is a disposition to love without regard to merit, God will be unable to select one world *over another* if all he has to go on is his grace" (ROWE 2004, 84my emphasis). And after summarising his claim that on Adams's picture God's love for his creatures cannot feature in any reason for his acting, he asks "[i]n what then, given that God has a reason for creating one world *over another*, would that reason reside?" (ROWE 2004, 85—My emphasis). It's unclear whether Rowe means to make a general demand for a contrastive explanation here, or whether he thinks Adams's appeal to grace warrants the demand.

Either way, as far as the libertarian is concerned, the demand for a contrastive explanation will for the most part be unacceptable. Of course, it

might be that, as Timothy O'Connor (O'CONNOR 2000, 91–92) has argued, certain kinds of contrastive explanation are available to the libertarian. In that case, the demand for a contrastive explanation won't be an objection at all.[7] But even assuming O'Connor is wrong about this, the objection isn't a problem because the libertarian is within rights to reject the demand for a contrastive explanation. Such a libertarian will point out that non-contrastive explanations can be informative and that there is little reason to think we need a contrastive explanation.

Part of Rowe's case in developing this objection is that, given Adams's picture, God's love becomes completely disconnected from his reasons for acting. But it seems that we can accept what Adams's says about grace not necessitating God's creating the best without having to acknowledge this complete disconnect. Adams defines grace as "a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved" (ADAMS 1972, 324). One way of expanding this idea is to say that God's love is freely given and not in any way earned by the recipients while at the same time God delights in the particularities of his creatures and loves them in a way appropriate to their natures. So the *giving* God's love is independent of the person's merits, but it is *sensitive to* the person's value and needs. But this means that being able to love creature *X* in ways suitable for *X* will be a reason for God to create that person. God's being able to love *X* (if he creates *X*) doesn't give him a reason to create *X rather than Y*—it doesn't give God a contrastive reason for creating *X*. But it gives God a reason for creating *X* nonetheless. And that means that any worries regarding God's lack of reasons on Adams's picture are misplaced. On an Adams-inspired picture, God's love for his creatures will provide a reason for creating whoever it is he creates. And so, contrary to Rowe's assessment, on such an Adams-inspired model, God is not "reduced to playing dice with respect to selecting a world to create" (ROWE 2004, 85). There is a basis for God's choice—namely, the value in the particulars he creates—and so God's choice is in no way random or irrational.

This answer to the second problem makes the first problem easier to address. The first worry could be put like this: God's love does not put constraints on what God creates. But there are such constraints: as Adams's himself recognises when he puts forward his two minimal conditions for a possible world's being a candidate for being actualised, God is not free to create regardless of how good or bad its inhabitants are. But if God's love

[7] See O'CONNOR 2000, 91–92 and STEWARD 2012, 133–36 for further discussion of this issue.

for those he creates doesn't explain these minimal conditions, what does? Rowe suggests it is God's "desire to create the very best state of affairs he can" (ROWE 2004, 85). Moreover, given that Rowe thinks God's love for his creatures provides no reasons on which God can act, Rowe suggests that God must have a desire such as that just mentioned if he is not to be "reduced to playing dice" with respect to creation (ROWE 2004, 85). Rowe goes on to say that the basis for God's choice is that God will always do the best and wisest thing, which is "surely" to create the best world he can (ROWE 2004, 86), as reflected in the desire Rowe attributes to God.

Once we recognise, however, that God's being gracious does not preclude his love featuring in his reasons for acting, much of the force of this objection falls away. We need not follow Rowe in positing a desire to "create the very best state of affairs he can" in order to secure the rationality of God's decision because, as we've seen, God's decision being based on considerations of love makes God's decision rational. Furthermore, the pressure to explain why the source of Adams's two minimal conditions doesn't also create stronger conditions lessens, because we can say that part of what grounds those conditions is God's love. On Rowe's construal of Adams's position, there is a kind of tension: God's love puts no constraints on which worlds God might create, so we must cite another source for those constraints in order to avoid the conclusion that God could create a world that is on balance evil and in order to secure the rationality of God's decision. The result then seems to be that the lack of constraints imposed by God's love become irrelevant in the face of the new source—God's goodness, or his rationality—of the constraints that everyone is keen to accept. But (at least) part of what it is for God to be good is for God to be loving. God's good, loving nature puts some constraints on what he is able to create—constraints along the lines of those outlined by Adams. But as the nature of God's love is that it is gracious, it doesn't impose constraints such as "creating the very best that I can."

The observations just made with respect to Adams's view also help when it comes to the third and fourth configurations. In the third configuration of possible worlds, there is a set of best worlds all equal in value. In the fourth, there is a set of worlds which meet Adams's minimal conditions but which are incommensurable in terms of the value they contain. As Timpe observes, Rowe only briefly discusses the third option and often just in passing. Nevertheless, we can find in Rowe three objections to configuration 3. First, assuming that the possible world which contains only God is not among the set of best worlds, then although God will be free with respect to which world

he chooses "he will of necessity, not freely, create one" from that set (Rowe 2004, 132). This will be a cost for those theists who wish to maintain that creating anything at all (as opposed to creating a particular world) is a free act of God, a statement which has a good claim on being, as Lutheran theologian Philip Hefner writes, a "universal theological assertion in the Christian tradition" (HEFNER 1984, 299). Second, the freedom that God does have in this scenario—i.e. his being able to choose which world to create from among a set of equally good worlds—is, according to Rowe, hardly worth having. Here Rowe endorses Edward Wierenga's summary of this scenario: "God is free only when it does not matter what he does" (Wierenga as cited in ROWE 2004, 166). Wierenga says that it doesn't matter what God does because the options are of equal value, each option being "on a par with any other," and so God might as well choose blindly or randomly (WIERENGA 2002, 433). Third and finally, Rowe notes in a footnote that those who endorse this view "are still burdened with having to defend the rather implausible claim that the actual world with all its evil is a world than which it is logically impossible that there should be a better world than it" (ROWE 2004, 132 fn. 43).

Here I wish to focus on the second objection. When Wierenga writes that the choice God faces "does not matter," what does he have in mind? The idea might be that it doesn't make any difference to the amount of value that will obtain after the decision is made. That's true, but it doesn't follow from that that God's decision doesn't matter *simpliciter*. For example, worlds could be equal in value if there are different kinds of value which are commensurable. Suppose there are three kinds of value: aesthetic, moral and experiential. All the worlds God could create have the same total sum of value (and each again meets the kind of minimal conditions Adams outlines), but some of the worlds vary according to the amounts of each kind value possessed (some, of course, have exactly the same amount of each value and differ in which particulars possess that value). By hypothesis, the worlds are equally valuable, so there is no answer to the question of which is the best world, even if it seems intuitive to want to ask this question once again now that we have distinguished different kinds of value. Now, it's true that with respect to the total amount of value "it does not matter what God does"—that is, what God does will not affect the total amount of value. But it seems obvious that the choice God faces is significant and meaningful. For there are, of course, plenty of things that do depend on God's choice and the possible worlds available for God to actualise will vary widely in their charac-

ter. A world with little moral value but with huge amounts of aesthetic value (and the sentient creatures to appreciate that value) will look very different to a world where the amount of aesthetic value is minimal but that of moral value greatly increased.

Indeed, I would like to argue that even if there is only one kind of value, so that it is not possible for the worlds God is choosing between to vary in the way described above, still God's choice is significant and meaningful. Consider an analogy. Suppose I face a choice between two different flavours of ice cream. Both ice creams cost the same, they are the same size, have the same consequences for my health. I haven't had either one in the last year (so there is no chance I'll think "Well I had that flavour last week, so I'll choose the other one"), and perhaps too I know that I won't get another chance to have either for another year. Neither one burdens the ice cream seller more than the other, neither flavour is in short supply. Assume too that I like both flavours to the same degree. There is, in other words, nothing to choose between them except the flavour and the experience I will have while eating. It seems to me that this kind of choice is worth having. I can—in this case only to a small degree, but to some degree nonetheless—choose to have one experience or the other. I exercise control over which will become a part of my history. It might be objected that even if I do exercise control, there is no *reason* to pick one flavour *over the other*, and so the control is worthless or empty. But this is the demand for a contrastive explanation once more, which we've already seen is illegitimate. So while there might be no consideration that would make it true to say, 'Choosing that flavour, and not the other, was the rational thing to do', there is still a reason for choosing either option: to have the experience (enjoying the taste, and so on). "Yes", the objector might continue, "but you would have ice cream, enjoy a taste, and be able to savour an experience either way". True, but so what? Either way I would enjoy *a* taste; but I get to choose *which* taste (and as the tastes are different, despite being equal in value, this matters). Explanation always stops somewhere, and here it stops with the agent's will. Indeed, that is part of what makes agency valuable. Now, if that's right, and the choice described above between two flavours of ice cream is valuable, how much more valuable will be a choice with respect to, say, my career or family? It might be less obvious that the considerations in that kind of case could ever be in balance in the way I've described for the ice cream case, but that is at least a conceptual possibility, and if configuration 4 obtains, so that there are different kinds of value which are incommensurable, then such a choice sce-

nario seems highly likely. If these thoughts are on the right lines, then far from it not mattering what God does, God's choice with respect to creation would be of supreme value. It's where the explanation for creation stops and that seems most fitting (even if there isn't a contrastive explanation for why this particular world rather than that one is created).

Perhaps Wierenga means to put less emphasis on whether anything significant depends on God's choice and more emphasis on the idea that God would have to choose blindly or at random. At bottom, I take it that this is an objection not to any special features of God's freedom but simply to the libertarian idea of freedom itself. And the considerations outlined above also demonstrate why this worry is misplaced. In choosing which ice cream to have I do not choose blindly or randomly. I make a decision to bring something—albeit something fairly small—into existence, namely, my intention to eat a particular ice cream and the experience of then eating said ice cream. There is no blindness there. Neither is there any blindness in God's decision to create. If these considerations are plausible and make a robust account of divine freedom defensible given configuration 3, then they do so all the more for configuration 4 (where the worlds are incommensurable). Configuration 4 has the added advantage that if it obtained the Christian theist would no longer have the burden of defending the idea that the actual world is one of the best possible worlds, and thus have an answer to Rowe's third objection. I conclude then that if we accept the idea that freedom requires alternatives, as I think we should, we can nevertheless show how God is free. The strongest solution requires a commitment to a certain configuration of possible worlds (i.e. configuration 4), but a robust account of divine freedom can be offered on the assumption of configuration 1 or 3.

5. SUMMING UP

There are plenty of reasons to affirm God's freedom, especially with respect to his creative activity. But there are also a number of challenges that can be raised for the claim that God is free. Much of the force of these challenges depends on the assumption that freedom requires alternatives. I have argued, contrary to two recent proposals, that that is the correct view of freedom and that therefore the theist is ill advised to try to escape these challenges by adopting a view of freedom which rejects the need for alternatives. But I have also outlined how at least some of the arguments

against the idea that God could be free fail. In particular, I've suggested that points made by Adams about the graciousness of God help us to meet this challenge whether or not there is a single best world.[8]

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POSSIBILITIES FOR DIVINE FREEDOM

Summary

I examine three accounts of divine freedom. I argue that two recent accounts which attempt to explain God's freedom without appealing to alternative possibilities fail. I then show how a view of divine freedom based on Robert Adams's idea that God's grace means he has no obligation to create the best world is able to explain how God can be free while also being perfectly good and perfectly rational.

O MOŻLIWOŚCIACH BOŻEJ WOLNOŚCI

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W artykule przeprowadzam analizę trzech ujęć Bożej wolności. Staram się wykazać, że dwa teoretyczne ujęcia, które pojawiły się ostatnio i które próbują wyjaśnić Bożą wolność, nie odwołując się do koncepcji alternatywnych możliwości, nie osiągają postawionego sobie celu. Następnie pokazuję, w jaki sposób wizja Bożej wolności oparta na idei Roberta Adamsa, że Boża łaska oznacza, iż nie jest on zobligowany, by koniecznie stwarzać najlepszy z możliwych światów, jest zdolna wyjaśnić, w jaki sposób Bóg może być wolny, a zarazem doskonale dobry i rozumny.

Key words: freedom; free will; divine freedom; alternative possibilities.
Słowa kluczowe: wolność; wolna wola; Boża wolność; alternatywne możliwości.

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