

Unrestricted Actualization and Divine Providence

Bruce Langtry

Michael Almeida has recently made interesting and highly ingenious contributions to philosophical discussion of divine providence. Some of them have involved his making use of his novel claim that necessarily, God can *unrestrictedly actualize* various states of affairs, actions, events, and possible worlds.¹ (From now on, except in quotations, I will abbreviate “unrestrictedly actualize” by “U-actualize,” and “possible world” by “world.”) This chapter introduces the core idea, draws attention to its bearing on some current issues in the theory of goodness, and discusses whether Almeida provides good reasons for believing that

(C) Necessarily, God has available an infallible method by which God can bring about whatever undetermined events God chooses, except those which it is metaphysically necessary or accidentally necessary that God does not bring about.

Almeida works with a libertarian view of free choice and action, but rejects Molinism, a variety of libertarian theism which implies that some worlds containing free human actions and other undetermined events are *feasible* for God, in the sense that contingently, God has available an infallible way of bringing it about that any one of them is actual; other worlds, however, are not feasible for God, even though it is metaphysically possible that God has an infallible way of bringing it about that one of these is actual. Which worlds are

¹ I take a *world* to be a possible state of affairs S such that for every other state of affairs S*, either S* or not-S* is contained in (i.e., is a part of) S. The possibility involved will always be metaphysical possibility, i.e., what some people call *broadly logical* possibility. The actual world is the world that contains all and only the actual states of affairs. The proposition that p is *true in a world S* if and only if S contains the state of affairs *Its being true that p*. Necessarily, if God brings it about that p then the actual world contains the state of affairs *God's bringing it about that p*. So necessarily, God can bring it about that a world S is actual only if S contains *God's bringing it about that S is actual*. Whether God *can* do anything that it is metaphysically possible that God does is a controversial matter, to which Almeida's ideas are directly relevant.

feasible for God is said to depend on which *counterfactuals of creaturely freedom* (CCFs) are contingently true, a matter which is not up to God.² Thus Molinism implies that (C) is false. Open Theism, another variety of libertarian theism, implies that no worlds containing undetermined events are feasible for God in the foregoing sense; if God aims to bring it about that one of these worlds is actual, whether he succeeds is not completely within his control. Thus Open Theists agree that God cannot do everything such that it is metaphysically possible that God does it.

Almeida describes himself as a Moderate Anselmian. That is, he believes that God is a necessary being and is necessarily omnipotent, all-knowing, and perfectly good, yet (unlike Traditional Anselmians) does not believe that these truths about God are knowable a priori.³ Almeida is also a libertarian. For brevity's sake, in this chapter I'll speak as if both Anselmian theism and libertarianism are true.

1. Interpreting Almeida's Core Ideas about U-actualization

Almeida (2012, chapter 4) declares that as well as strong actualization and weak actualization, there are two other approaches to world-actualization open to God: *restricted* actualization and U-actualization.⁴ He explains U-actualization this way:

It is also true that, necessarily, God can strongly actualize the state of affairs T that includes the state of affairs of God's having predicted or prophesied that E_n will perform A.⁵ But if, necessarily, God can predict

² This view is expounded and defended by Flint 2006, amongst others. Almeida (2012, pp. 113–14) explains “counterfactual of creaturely freedom”—and says that Molinists regard CCFs as extending to non-free, chancy events as well as free, undetermined actions. Perhaps there is some philosopher who holds that necessarily, for every possible free creaturely action (not already ruled out by prior divine activity) God has available a method of infallibly bringing it about, on the grounds that in every world there are true CCFs suitable for his doing so (though these differ from world to world). Since any good argument for this view would need premises which are all necessarily true, the prospects of finding one seem poor.

³ I will assume that Almeida holds that God is in time, and that his being all-knowing involves his having foreknowledge of undetermined events; everything that he says is compatible with this assumption, and much that he says strongly suggests it.

⁴ The expressions “strongly actualize” and “weakly actualize” seem to have been introduced by Alvin Plantinga, who uses them, for example, in Plantinga 1974. Almeida's explanations of their meaning are, respectively, at 2012, pp. 56, 108, and at pp. 57, 109.

⁵ Almeida describes E_n as an “instantiated essence”; the expression is explained in 2012, pp. 59–61, which in turn reflects Plantinga 1974, ch. 5. Since instantiated essence E_n performs actions, we can safely say that instantiated essences are persons. Although “ E_n ” is intended to

that E_n performs A then it is true in every world that God can bring it about that E_n performs A without causing E_n to perform A. Call that *unrestricted actualization*. Unrestricted actualization ensures that God can strongly actualize a state of affairs T such that necessarily, T only if God actualizes a morally perfect world.⁶ And God can actualize T in every possible world unrestrictedly, simply by making a suitable prediction.⁷

Almeida normally uses “T,” in relation to any given world W, to denote the largest state of affairs which God strongly actualizes in W, i.e., the state of affairs which includes all and only the other states of affairs which God strongly actualizes in W. Although in typical cases a counterfactual conditional whose antecedent is T and whose consequent is *E_n will freely perform A* is a CCF, if T includes God’s having predicted or prophesied that E_n will freely perform A, then, given Almeida’s view that God is necessarily all-knowing, the counterfactual conditional is a necessary truth, and is thereby disqualified from counting as a CCF.

If T includes God’s having predicted that E_n will freely perform A, then Almeida’s sentence “God can actualize T in every world unrestrictedly” must be understood as expressing the proposition *Necessarily, God can actualize T unrestrictedly*—not *For every world W, God can bring it about unrestrictedly that W contains T*. For consider some world W_1 in which E_n does not exist, or exists but does not freely perform A. Given that God is necessarily all-knowing and necessarily avoids telling lies, it is impossible that God brings it about that W_1 contains T, and therefore impossible that T is true-in- W_1 . Similarly the proposition *Necessarily, God can U-actualize E_n ’s freely performing A* does not entail *For every world W, God can bring it about that W contains E_n ’s freely performing A*. If Almeida’s account of U-actualization is correct, then for every world V which does not contain E_n ’s freely performing A, it is true in V both that God can U-actualize E_n ’s

denote a particular individual, distinct from (say) E_{n+1} , it is plain Almeida does not envisage a situation in which two people are both free with respect to reciting a poem and God can U-actualize the first one’s freely reciting a poem but cannot U-actualize the second one’s doing so. Accordingly Almeida is to be understood as making claims about what is necessarily true concerning all free created agents and all actions such that it is neither necessary nor (at the relevant times) *accidentally necessary* that the agent does not freely perform A.

⁶ “Morally perfect world” is defined at Almeida 2012, p. 58. Almeida 2016 discusses issues related to worlds that are both morally and naturally perfect.

⁷ Almeida 2012, p. 9; similar passages appear on pp. 102, 110, 116. Plainly, Almeida is tacitly employing a convention such that “T” serves both as a placeholder for a singular term and as a placeholder for a corresponding sentence.

freely performing A, and that if God were to do so then the actual world would be some world other than V.⁸

Almeida uses both “strongly actualizes” and “causes” as equivalents of “is causally sufficient for” or “causally determines.”⁹ In this narrow sense of “cause,” the striking of a match never causes it to light. Presumably Almeida would say that in typical cases in which someone lights a match, the match’s being struck, the match’s dry condition, and the presence of oxygen each made a causal contribution to the lighting, without causing the lighting. Although the second sentence of the quotation relies on a distinction between causing and bringing about, in such a way that one might think that “bring about” is intended to denote a weaker relation than “cause,” Almeida has in mind divine *infallible* bringing about—i.e., necessarily, God’s attempt to bring something about is successful. In that case, Almeida must hold that necessarily, if God predicts an event or state of affairs without qualifications such as “almost certainly,” or “unless I revise my plans,” then the predicted event or state of affairs occurs. The expressions “bring about” and “predict,” in the quoted passage and elsewhere, should be interpreted accordingly. “Strongly actualize God’s prediction that p” means “strongly actualize God’s predicting that p.”

Here I have recast part of the quotation as an argument:

- (1) Necessarily, God can predict that E_n will perform A.¹⁰ [premise]
- (2) If, necessarily, God can predict that E_n performs A then, necessarily, God can bring it about that E_n performs A without causing E_n to perform A. [premise]
- (3) Necessarily, God can bring it about that E_n performs A without causing E_n to perform A. [from (1), (2)]

⁸ Similarly, Almeida’s premise (1) (see below) does not entail the false proposition *In every world W, God can predict that in W E_n will freely perform A*. After all, W might be one of the worlds (W_1 , say) in which E_n does not exist. If in W_1 God *can* predict that E_n will perform A, then in W_1 God *does not* predict that E_n will perform A, but there are other worlds, suitably related to W_1 , in which God does.

⁹ This clearly emerges, for example, from statements in Almeida 2012, pp. 56, 108, 114. Almeida 2016, footnote 9, uses the expression “probabilistic causation”; but if “cause” is understood in the way it must be intended when in the opening paragraph of the paper Almeida says “Not even God can cause moral agents to act freely,” probabilistic causation does not count as a kind of causation.

¹⁰ Since “T” does not appear in the antecedent of the conditional embedded in (2), I have omitted talk of “T” from the formulation of (1). I have omitted talk of prophesying because Almeida gives it little or no attention and it plays no significant role in his argument.

Almeida evidently regards the foregoing argument as very strong. For in his next chapter (2012, p. 140), he says flatly, “We have shown in Chapter 4 that God can unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world. It follows that, necessarily, God *can* actualize a morally perfect world.”

Obviously, there is a sense of “bring it about” in which it often happens that one human brings it about that another other human freely does such-and-such without strongly actualizing the latter’s doing so; here the method the first human uses can fail, but in this instance does not fail, to bring about its intended outcome. Open Theists hold that in the foregoing sense God often brings it about that a human freely performs some specific action. The quoted passage, however, shows that Almeida is not an Open Theist. Nor is he a Molinist.¹¹

If (3) is true, then there are worlds in which God brings it about that E_n freely performs A without causing it. In those worlds, *how* does God bring about E_n ’s action? Almeida does not explicitly tell us. But there is little doubt that he holds that God brings about E_n ’s action *by predicting it*. Here are three reasons why:

- Almeida offers no suggestion as to what other steps God might take in order to U-actualize a created being’s action, and without some suggestion his ideas concerning U-actualization, while incompatible with Theological Determinism, Molinism and Open Theism, would not sit alongside them as a candidate *theory* of divine providence.
- He distinguishes four “senses” in which God can bring it about that E_n performs A: strongly actualizing, weakly actualizing, restrictedly actualizing and U-actualizing E_n ’s performing A. The first two, at least, are proposed *ways* in which God might bring about E_n ’s action, rather than senses of the sentence “God brings it about that E_n freely performs A”.¹² So it is easy to see restricted actualization and U-actualization as proposed ways. The supposed difference between U-actualization and restricted actualization of a specific action is not merely that the former occurs when there is a divine prediction and

¹¹ If this truth was not already obvious from the quotation, it has emerged by the end of Almeida 2012, section 4.5. Nevertheless, Almeida seems to believe that it is possible that there are true CCFs.

¹² Similarly, handing the waiter two \$10 bills, using one’s credit card, writing a check, and so on, are different ways of paying \$20 to a restaurant rather than different senses of “paying \$20 to a restaurant.”

the latter when there is a divine announcement: it is that if God U-actualizes a free action he does so by predicting it (and in every world he can U-actualize the action), while if God restrictedly actualizes a free action he does so by announcing it (and only in some worlds can he restrictedly actualize the action).

- The quotation implies that there is at least one course of action C, namely, making a suitable prediction, such that in every world it is true that if God were to take C then God's target undetermined state of affairs S_t would be actual.¹³ Almeida does not say: There is at least one state S_k that God can be in, namely, having infallible knowledge that matches S_t , such that in every world it is true that if God were to be in S_k then S_t would be actual. If Almeida holds that if God infallibly actualizes S_t then he does so by predicting it then there is an obvious explanation of why Almeida does not make the alternative statement: neither he nor anyone else thinks that if God were to infallibly actualize S_t then he would do so merely by infallibly knowing that S_t is actual.

Thus Almeida's proposition (3) can be strengthened to read:

(3a) It is true in every world that God can, by predicting that E_n will freely perform A, bring it about that E_n freely performs A without God's causing E_n to do so.

A corresponding adjustment to Almeida's premise (2) can easily be made.

It is likely that Almeida would accept two further strengthenings of his (3).¹⁴ The first is inclusion of the phrase "at all candidate times" in (3a), immediately before the first occurrence of "God"; I stipulate that a "candidate" time is a time t such that at no time before t has there occurred any state of affairs x such that x is incompatible with E_n 's freely performing A.¹⁵ The second is extending actualization-by-prediction to events such as particle-decays which God does not cause. Generalizing the definition of "candidate time" in an obvious way, I interpret the relevant sections of Almeida 2012 as indicating that he would accept the following conclusion:

¹³ This is stronger than the proposition that in every world it is true that there is at least one course of action such that if God were to take it then S_t would be actual.

¹⁴ My suggestions are prompted by remarks in Almeida 2012—specifically, the sentences following B3 on p. 116, and the second new paragraph on p. 117.

¹⁵ For example, if at time t_1 God has unconditionally predicted or promised that x will not obtain then no time after t_1 is a candidate time.

(3b) *It is true in every world that at all candidate times God can, by predicting that an uncaused state of affairs, event or action z will occur, bring about z without God's causing z.*

Neither of the strengthened premises commits Almeida to the view that in the actual world there is some uncaused state of affairs, event or action z such that God *does*, by predicting that z will obtain, occur or be performed, infallibly bring about z without God's causing z.¹⁶

2. The Significance of U-actualization for the Theory of Goodness

Almeida is concerned with the requirements and constraints that perfect goodness places on an agent who is both omnipotent and all-knowing. He thinks that his work on U-actualization is relevant in the following ways, amongst others:

1. Suppose that God must actualize some world which has a quantitative overall value expressed by some minimum positive number at least as high as N. Let us say that such worlds are all and only the *good enough* worlds. Almeida argues that even if all the good enough worlds include uncaused events such as free creaturely actions, necessarily, God can actualize a good enough world. Suppose that necessarily, if God can actualize a good enough world then he does so. It follows that necessarily, God actualizes a good enough world. Almeida argues that this last proposition entails a contradiction, and that therefore it is false that necessarily, if God can actualize a good enough world then he does so.¹⁷ Combining this result with Almeida's assertion that a perfect being must actualize some world or other,¹⁸ we obtain the conclusion that it is possible that God actualizes a world which is not good enough; and this result is independent of any specification of where the threshold constituting what is just *barely good enough* is located.

2. Assume that necessarily, if there is a uniquely best world then it contains free human actions, and therefore human actions that are not strongly

¹⁶ Having made the point that (3b) should be understood as covering states of affairs and events as well as actions, from now on, for brevity's sake, I will in most places speak of z as if it is an action, unless the context requires otherwise.

¹⁷ Almeida 2012, pp. 153–9.

¹⁸ Almeida 2008, p. 170, footnote 3.

actualized. Assume also that it is not necessary that there are true CCFs suitable for making it the case that necessarily, God can weakly actualize the best world. It has hitherto seemed to follow that even if there is a uniquely best world, it is not necessary that God can actualize it. Almeida, however, declares the contrary, that (N) *Given that there is such a world, it is necessary that God can actualize it.* The only reason for doubt has been the suggestion that the best world would contain undetermined events including free human actions. Almeida, however, affirms (O) *Necessarily, it is within God's power to predict the undetermined events contained in the best world (if it exists), and thereby to actualize them.* Nevertheless, Almeida argues, if there is a best world, it is not necessary that God does actualize it.¹⁹

3. Almeida holds that a similar point applies to morally perfect worlds, i.e., worlds in which there are significantly free beings, each of whom performs morally significant actions and “goes morally right” with respect to each of those actions.²⁰ He argues that necessarily, God can U-actualize every morally perfect world. This conclusion threatens the viability of the Free Will Defence developed by Plantinga.²¹

It is obvious that Almeida's account of U-actualization is incompatible with Open Theism (which denies that God can have infallible foreknowledge of undetermined events). Furthermore, although the last sentence of my previous section implies that God's having the option of U-actualizing events is compatible with Theological Determinism, the availability of this option would undermine some important motivations for theists' adopting Theological Determinism. The three foregoing paragraphs suffice to indicate that Almeida's account also has other significant philosophical implications which make it worth careful evaluation.

¹⁹ Notice that Almeida's premise O does not suffice to license his conclusion N. Suppose that (for at least one agent E_n and action A) the uniquely best world W_{ub} contains the state of affairs *Its being the case that E_n freely performs A and E_n 's action is not actualized by God*; in the case, then it is impossible that God actualizes W_{ub} , and therefore God cannot actualize it. The supposition is compatible with O: what follows from O is that if God were to predict the undetermined events contained in W_{ub} then it would not be W_{ub} that was actual.

²⁰ “Significantly free being” and “morally significant action” and “an agent's having significant freedom in performing an action” are defined in Almeida 2012, p. 87.

²¹ It should be clear from footnote 19, however, that Almeida's argument requires the premise that no morally perfect world contains an agent E_n and an action A such that the state of affairs *Its being the case that E_n freely performs A and E_n 's action is morally significant and E_n 's action is not actualized by God.* My criticisms of (1b)–(3b) undermine this premise.

3. Evaluation of Almeida's Argument for (3b)

After Almeida's argument in support of his main claims about U-actualization has been modified in the ways proposed in Section 1 above, it looks like this:

(1b) Necessarily, at all candidate times God can strongly actualize the state of affairs T that includes the state of affairs of God's having predicted or prophesied that a specific uncaused action z will be performed. [premise]

(2b) If, necessarily, God can do so, then, necessarily, at all candidate times God can, by predicting that z will be performed without God's causing z, bring it about that z is performed. [premise]

(3b) Necessarily, at all candidate times God can, by predicting that z will be performed, bring it about that z is performed without God's causing z. [from (1b), (2b)]

Call this *Almeida's Argument Modified*. Almeida does not quite advance it, but my foregoing remarks explain why I think that he would accept it as sound, and should do so if he continues to advance his original argument from (1) and (2) to (3).

3.1 Should we accept premise (2b)?

Consider the propositions

(i) It is necessarily true of God that if he were to make an unqualified prediction that some human agent would freely perform some action z, then the agent would freely perform z.

(ii) It is necessarily true of God that if he were to make the unqualified prediction, then God would, merely by making the prediction, bring it about that the agent freely performed z.

If (ii) is true then (i) is necessarily true, and so (in classical logic) every proposition entails (ii). So let the sentence "p is eligible to establish q" express the proposition *If one were to come to know that p is true in a way that did not depend on one's already knowing that q is true, then one's coming to know that p is true would provide one with an epistemically impeccable, deductively valid argument for the truth of q.* (2b) is plausible only if it is plausible that (i) is eligible to establish (ii).

Almeida does not provide an argument for the view that (i) is eligible to establish (ii). It is worth considering, however, whether some remarks at 2012, p. 116, somehow indicate a candidate reason for thinking that (i) is eligible to establish (ii).²² Almeida says that in every world God can predict (without causing), and thereby U-actualize, every person's always going right; he adds that the state of affairs (R) *Every person's always going right* counterfactually depends on the state of affairs (P) *God's predicting that they will always go right* but does not causally depend on it. Given the context, he is committing himself to the view that necessarily, if P is actual then R is actual and R counterfactually depends on P. By "R counterfactually depends on P" he must mean " $P \Box \rightarrow R$." He cannot mean " $\text{non-}P \Box \rightarrow \text{non-}R$ " or " $\text{both } P \Box \rightarrow R \text{ and non-}P \Box \rightarrow \text{non-}R$," since he should deny that necessarily, $\text{non-}P \Box \rightarrow \text{non-}R$.²³

In general, is either *y* counterfactually depends on *x* or Necessarily, *y* counterfactually depends on *x* eligible to establish that *x* brings about *y*? Some specific pairs of propositions satisfying the schema $x \Box \rightarrow y$ or the schema Necessarily, $x \Box \rightarrow y$ are such that if the state of affairs identified in the antecedent were actual then it would bring about the state of affairs identified in the consequent. But others are definitely not—for example, *Adam drinks tea today* $\Box \rightarrow$ *Adam dies before turning 150*; and Necessarily (*Alice is 40 years old* $\Box \rightarrow$ *Alice is more than 20 years old*). Hence the remarks I summarized from Almeida 2012, p. 116, would require a lot of supplementation in order for Almeida to have a good reason for thinking that (i) is eligible to establish (ii).²⁴

²² Cf. the remarks about restricted actualization in the sentences following B2 at Almeida 2012, p. 109.

²³ Non-P is the state of affairs consisting in P's not obtaining. Surely Almeida is not at this point in the discussion entitled to assume that necessarily God predicts every future undetermined event—after all, such an assumption would be question-begging in an argument whose premises are disputed by Theological Determinists and Open Theists. So he cannot exclude the conjecture that there is at least one world W_r in which God does not predict that everyone will always freely act rightly but nevertheless they all do. (Almeida is using "predict" in such a way that *God foreknows that p* does not entail *God predicts that p*.) Since at 2012, pp. 91–2, Almeida defends the view that for all propositions *x* and *y*, $x \& y$ entails $x \Box \rightarrow y$, he would infer that in W_r it is true that *God does not predict that everyone will always freely act rightly* $\Box \rightarrow$ *everyone always freely acts rightly*, i.e., he would infer that in W_r , $\text{non-}P \Box \rightarrow R$. This, together with the stipulated fact that, in W_r , P does not obtain, would commit him to concluding that in W_r it is not the case that $\text{non-}P \Box \rightarrow \text{non-}R$. So Almeida should accept that the situation in W_r constitutes a counterexample to the proposition Necessarily $\text{non-}P \Box \rightarrow \text{non-}R$.

²⁴ Remarks Almeida makes at 2016, pp. 445–8, suggests that he would endorse the following line of thought: In every world, God can strongly actualize the existence of a perfect predictor,

Here is a *prima facie* strong argument, in the form of a direct objection to (ii), for doubting that Almeida can provide such a reason. No doubt Almeida would affirm that God could have made the following prediction a billion years ago: (D) *There will occur free human actions bound up with the use of tanks and submarines in a major war between the British and German empires.* Almeida would also affirm that if God had in fact made the prediction then God would have brought about the truth of (D). But for (D) to be true, there needed to come into existence human beings, the British and German empires, tanks, and submarines, and there also needed to occur such developments as industrialization (which did not form part of the prediction's explicit content). It is not plausible to suppose, as Almeida is committed to supposing, that predicting the truth of (D) was all that God needed to do in order to *bring all this about*.

If Almeida's account of U-actualization is to contribute substantially to the theory of divine providence, then it has to connect, in the right kinds of way, God's practical reason, his goals, what he can do, and what he does. If God has a reason all-things-considered to act with some specific state of affairs S as his goal, then he has to be able to *contribute effectively* to S's being actual. But God's merely doing something such that necessarily, if he were to do it then S would be actual does not suffice for God's contributing effectively to S's being actual, and so God needs some additional reason to act in the relevant way—e.g., that what he does will somehow *make an important causal contribution* to S's being actual (even if it does not cause this). But it is hard to see that God's merely predicting, a billion years ago, the truth of (D) could make an important causal contribution of the right kind.

I conclude that it is very doubtful that (i) is eligible to establish (ii), and therefore that it is very doubtful that (2b) is true.

an agent PP who God knows will make many predictions including the prediction that every free agent always goes right, and is such that, for any contingent q, (PP predicts that q) $\square \rightarrow$ q and (PP predicts that not-q) $\square \rightarrow$ not-q, even though PP does not cause it to be the case that q. Then in every world in which PP predicts that q, where q asserts the occurrence of a contingent uncaused event or state of affairs, God thereby brings it about that q, without causing it to be the case that q. This epicycle, however, does not help. Suppose that an engineer makes a fault-detector F, such that when F scans a solar panel, *F's indicator light flashes red* $\square \rightarrow$ *The solar panel is faulty*, and *F's indicator light does not flash red* $\square \rightarrow$ *The solar panel is not faulty*; the engineer does so knowing that F will be used to scan a specific batch of solar panels in the factory where he works. Furthermore, relative to the actual laws of nature, F is infallible. It does not follow that when F scans a solar panel from this batch and F's indicator light flashes red then the engineer brings it about that this particular solar panel is faulty.

3.2 Should we accept premise (1b)?

Let us, however, for the sake of discussion, accept (2b), despite its precarious status. Having done so, should we argue from (2b) and (1b) to (3b), or instead from (2b) and the negation of (3b) to the negation of (1b)? Alternatively, should we suspend judgment concerning each of (1b) and (3b)?

Since the truth of (1b) is not obvious, and is denied by some theists, Almeida needs a positive argument in favor of (1b). He does not provide one.²⁵

I suspect that if (1b) initially seems appealing, it is because of some line of thought which one has only partially articulated. For the rest of this chapter I propose to bring a few such considerations into the daylight, evaluate them, and thereby end any grip they may have in at least some stages of one's thinking.

The first thought is that God must be able to predict free creaturely actions in virtue of his infallible omniscience. Let us treat it as obvious that if God *knows* that E_n will freely perform A then God can predict that E_n will freely perform A. Nevertheless, it remains less obvious that if God *can know* that E_n will freely perform A then God can predict that E_n will freely perform A.²⁶ So the first thought needs to be developed somehow into a formal argument. The attempt below comes in two stages: the first starts with (a1) and reaches (f1), and the second begins with (f1) and takes us down to (j1).

(a1) Necessarily, God exists and is at all times all-knowing. [premise]

(b1) There are worlds in which specific human persons p_1, p_2, \dots freely perform actions of type A. [premise]

²⁵ Is there a sign of such an argument at Almeida 2012, p. 117, when he says, "But since the set S_U of CCFs whose antecedents God can strongly actualize is true in every possible world, we know that there are undetermined states of affairs that God can unrestrictedly actualize"? Almeida is unlikely to offer this proposition in support of (1b): the conclusion he draws from the line of overall line thought on pp. 116–18 (and then defends against objections) is merely that "the thesis that God can unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world is consistent with the Molinist position on the prevolitional truth of CCFs" (pp. 9, 102). Furthermore, if the (infelicitously worded) proposition *The set S_U of CCFs whose antecedents God can strongly actualize is true in every possible world* were a premise of such an argument, then the supposed argument would depend on the assumption that every possible world contains true CCFs. This premise would be difficult to defend, and very few non-Molinists (and not all Molinists) would accept it; so Almeida can hardly think that relying on it would be widely persuasive.

²⁶ After all, if I learn to speak French well, then I will be able understand conversations conducted in French; and I can learn to speak French well. Nevertheless I will not in fact do so. So I will not be able to understand conversations conducted in French. Thus in the supposed circumstances it is false that if I *can* learn to speak French well then I will be able to understand conversations conducted in French. (I do not claim that this point suffices to *disprove* the "less obvious" proposition.)

(c1) In all such worlds, God has infallible foreknowledge, at all times, that these agents freely perform these actions. [from a1, b1]

(d1) For all worlds W and for all contingent untensed propositions q compatible with *God at all times knows that q* , if it is false in W that q , then it is true in W that $q \square \rightarrow$ *God at all times knows that q* . For all contingent tensed propositions of the form *It will be the case that q* , and for all worlds W , if it is false in W that q then in W $q \square \rightarrow$ (*There is some time t such that at t it becomes the case that q and God knows at all times before t that at t it becomes the case that q*). [from a1]

(e1) Even in worlds which do not contain p_1, p_2, \dots freely performing actions of type A, at all times God can at all candidate times infallibly know that they will do so.²⁷ [from d1]

(f1) In every world W , and for all candidate times, if the human agents freely perform actions of type A at those times then God can infallibly foreknow that they do. [from (c1), (e1)]

(g1) Necessarily, (f1) is true if (3b) is true, and (f1) can be true only in virtue of the truth of (3b)²⁸ [premise]

(h1) Hence (3b) is true [from (f1), (g1)]

(i1) Necessarily, (3b) is true only if (1b) is true [premise]

(j1) Therefore (1b) is true [from (h1), (i1)]

Whatever its merits, (a1)–(i1) is best seen as in effect *replacing* Almeida's Argument Modified—which proceeds from (1b) and (2b) to (3b)—with an argument whose second stage moves in the reverse direction: from (f1) and (g1) to (3b), and then from (3b) and (i1) to (1b).

The key idea underlying the second stage is that God's essential ability to know infallibly about future free creaturely actions (and other uncaused contingent items) is *provided by and metaphysically depends upon* God's essential ability to predict free actions and thereby to bring it about that they obtain without God's causing them. In that case, however, if (f1) is true

²⁷ A scientific instrument may be *capable* of detecting events of a certain kind even though there are none—e.g., messages from inhabitants of other solar systems. If some world W_1 does not contain the relevant free actions then in W_1 God does not predict that they will obtain; nevertheless in W_1 it is true, let us suppose, both that he *can* predict them and also that if he were to do so then some world other than W_1 would be actual.

²⁸ (g1) cannot be replaced by the weaker proposition *Necessarily, (f1) is true if and only if (3b) is true*, because (g1)'s role is to provide a reason for believing that (f1) entails (3b), assuming that there are no other reasons for believing that the entailment holds.

then God's essential ability to make the prediction is not provided by, is not explained by, and does not metaphysically depend upon, his essential ability to foreknow the actions. Hence if both (f1) and (g1) are true then God's essential ability to make the prediction is metaphysically fundamental and unexplained.

In that case, (g1) is surely self-undermining. For if it is legitimate to suppose that God's ability to make the prediction is metaphysically fundamental and unexplained, why would it not be equally legitimate to suppose instead that God's ability to foreknow free human actions is metaphysically fundamental and unexplained?

Could a successful argument from God's essential, infallible omniscience to the truth of (1b) be based on the premise that, necessarily, in all worlds, including worlds in which there are no free human actions, God can predict free human actions of type A in virtue of the fact that he can have direct, non-inferential, infallible awareness of them? In effect, this new argument proceeds through (a1)–(d1), defends (f1) from the objection that there is no way that (f1) could be true by identifying a way, and then moves immediately to (1b). But the transition from (f1) to (1b) surely requires justification by intermediate premises.

Plainly, in any context—philosophical discussion with Open Theists, for example—in which one needs an argument for God's being able to infallibly predict future free human actions, then there is at least as great a need for an argument in favor of God's being able to have infallible foreknowledge of them, and if appeal is made to infallible direct awareness then there is at least as great a need for an argument in favor of God's being able to be aware of future free actions directly, non-inferentially, and infallibly.

Can (1b) be supported by some argument whose premises are compatible with the proposition that God's ability to predict future uncaused items is not provided by, and does not metaphysically depend on, God's foreknowing them? I will consider two candidates. Call the first of these *the argument from divine practical rationality*.

(a2) Necessarily, God can have a desire all-things-considered that finite human persons p_1, p_2, \dots freely perform actions of type A.²⁹ [premise]

²⁹ For brevity's sake, (a2) is inexplicit about a qualification which should be understood as present, namely that it is possible that God has a desire that specific events *will occur and will be uncaused*.

(b2) Necessarily, if God has such a desire all-things-considered then it gives God a good practical reason all-things-considered to bring it about that p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A. [premise]

(c2) Necessarily, if God has a good practical reason all-things-considered to bring it about that p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A then God can infallibly bring it about that they will. [premise]

(d2) Therefore, necessarily, God can infallibly bring it about that they will. [from (a2), (b2), (c2)]

(e2) Necessarily, God brings it about that p_1, p_2, \dots freely perform actions of type A only if both God predicts that they will freely perform actions of type A and also he brings it about that they do so by his prediction. [premise]

(f2) Necessarily, God can predict that specific human agents p_1, p_2, \dots freely perform actions of type A. [from (d2), (e2)]

Let us consider the argument (a2)–(f2), on its merits as a candidate proof of (f2). Here is why, even if we have good reason to accept (e2), the argument fails. Firstly, the proposition whose conjunction with (c2) is eligible to establish (d2) is not (a2)&(b2). What is required is a proposition which says or is eligible to establish

(NPR) *Necessarily, God has a good practical reason all-things-considered for bringing it about that human agents p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A.*

For suppose that NPR is false—i.e., that there are worlds in which God lacks a good practical reason all-things-considered to bring it about that p_1, p_2, \dots freely perform actions of type A. In those worlds, (f2) implies, God still has the ability to make the prediction. Yet in those worlds, it cannot be a practical reason all-things-considered, or anything which entails that God has one, whose presence, together with the truth of (c2), is eligible to establish that God has the ability to make the prediction.

But NPR and (c2) cannot both be true. For necessarily, God is not akratic. So necessarily, if God has a good practical reason, all-things-considered, to bring about an item x , and he can bring about x , then he does bring about x . Therefore NPR and (c2) together entail that necessarily, God brings it about that p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A. Suppose that one of the persons is Julius Caesar and that type A is *cross the English Channel*. It follows

that, necessarily, Julius Caesar exists and that he crosses the English Channel. Since this modal proposition is false, at least one of NPR and (c2) is false. Hence (d2) is left unsupported.

I conclude that the argument from divine practical rationality is unsuccessful.

Here is a second argument purporting to support (1b) using premises compatible with the proposition that God's ability to predict future uncaused items is not provided by, and does not metaphysically depend on, God's foreknowing them. Call it *the argument from divine firm intentions*. Let a divine intention that *p* be *firm* if and only if in any world in which God intends that *p*, it is certain both that God will not abandon this intention (before it is implemented) and also that God will take any steps he needs to take in order to ensure that *p*.³⁰ Hence if God has any firm intentions, then they are all fulfilled. Most Theological Determinists and Molinists hold that necessarily all of God's decisions are firm. Open Theists hold that, necessarily, God's decisions to bring about specific free creaturely actions are non-firm: they are often abandoned or revised in the light of new incoming information, and God cannot ensure that they will be fulfilled.

(a3) Necessarily, God can firmly intend that finite human persons p_1, p_2, \dots freely perform actions of type A. [premise]

(b3) Necessarily, God can bring about whatever he firmly intends to bring about. [premise]

(c3) Necessarily, God can bring it about that p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A. [from (a3), (b3)]

(d3) Necessarily, if God can bring it about that p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A then God can predict that they will. [premise]

(e3) Necessarily God can predict that p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A. [from (c3), (d3)]

³⁰ If it is certain that God *will* take any steps he needs to in order to ensure that *p* then it is certain that God *can* take steps which will guarantee that *p*. In the case of any specific actual divine firm intention, God's ability to take such steps, and his immunity from *akrasia*, will be underwritten by his essential omnipotence, omniscience, and other excellences. The definition of "divine firm intention" does not imply that if *p* and God firmly intends that *p* then God brings it about that *p*; he might, for example, leave it to other agents or processes to do so, while being prepared to intervene if it turns out that they were not going to.

It should be plain from my comments on the argument from divine practical rationality that argument (a3)–(e4) cannot be employed in support of (1b) by anyone who is advancing Almeida's Argument Modified. Furthermore, even assessed independently of its latter role, it is defective.

To establish (c3), given (b3), one needs not (a3) but

(a3*) Necessarily, God firmly intends to bring it about that finite human persons p_1, p_2, \dots freely perform actions of type A.

For suppose that (a3*) is false—i.e., that there are worlds in which God lacks the firm intention. In those worlds, (c3) implies, God still has the ability to bring it about that p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A; yet in those worlds, it cannot be the specified divine firm intention whose presence, together with the truth of (b3) guarantees that God has the ability to bring it about that p_1, p_2, \dots will freely perform actions of type A.

(a3*), however, entails that in every world p_1, p_2, \dots freely perform actions of type A. But Almeida's premise (1b), if it is true, applies to such cases as *David Cameron's resigning the Prime Ministership*, even though it is obvious that David Cameron does not exist in every world, and that in many worlds in which he does exist, he does not resign the Prime Ministership. So (a3*) is unacceptable. Hence the argument from divine firm intentions fails. There is no need to investigate or discuss it further.

I conclude that premise (1b) of Almeida's Argument Modified, like premise (2b), is at best very insecure, and unable to serve in a strong argument for (3b).

If Almeida's Argument Modified is sound, then even if in the actual world there are no true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, in the actual world God is able to engage in hands-on micromanagement of all that occurs, including causally undetermined actions, events, and states of affairs. In that case, God can act in such a way that all libertarian-free human actions are either intended by him or are foreseen consequences of what he intends. This is an example of the ingenious lateral thinking which Almeida's contributions to philosophy of religion richly manifest. Unfortunately, this specific contribution is unsuccessful, because Almeida provides us with no reason to believe the central, novel claims that underlie it. This takes us back to the three main contemporary accounts of divine providence: Theological Determinism, Molinism, and Open Theism.

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