DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND HUMAN LIBERTARIAN FREEDOM:
REASONS FOR INCOMPATIBILITY AND THEOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVES

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Abstract

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I argue that God’s meticulous sovereignty is incompatible with our libertarian freedom. I do not claim to prove this claim, where doing so would involve showing that it is irrational to maintain that the two are compatible. Instead, I seek to identify principles that are intuitively plausible from which valid arguments for the incompatibility of libertarian freedom with the traditional view of divine providence can be constructed, and I seek to trace certain implications of maintaining their compatibility. My overall argument may be seen as a cumulative case for incompatibility: I believe that many readers will judge that the costs of maintaining the compatibility of the traditional view of providence with human libertarian freedom outweigh the costs of accepting the principles to which I appeal.

I approach the central issue of divine providence indirectly, by first considering principles that would lead one to “stronger” incompatibility claims: that libertarian freedom is incompatible with prior truth and with divine foreknowledge. As I proceed from the problem of logical determinism to that of the compatibility of libertarian freedom with divine foreknowledge and finally to its compatibility with divine
providence, I expect that more readers will judge that the principles that lead to the
particular incompatibility thesis being discussed have greater plausibility than the
implications of maintaining compatibility. I believe that many readers will find that at
least some of the principles to which I appeal are more plausible than the implications of
accepting the most controversial compatibility thesis – that the traditional Christian view
of divine providence is compatible with human libertarian freedom.

Finally, I end my dissertation by considering the two most plausible theological
alternatives open to those who reject the compatibility of the traditional Christian view of
divine providence with human libertarian freedom: Thomism and Open Theism. The
former gives up libertarian freedom to maintain the traditional view of providence; the
latter maintains libertarian freedom at the expense of meticulous sovereignty.
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INTRODUCTION

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to argue that divine providence, understood in terms of meticulous sovereignty, is incompatible with human libertarian freedom. The relationship between providence and human freedom has been a topic of vigorous debate among theists for millennia. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that I do not believe that any proof of their incompatibility is possible. That is, I do not believe that it is possible to show that one who would maintain their incompatibility would thereby commit oneself to irrationality.

The reason that I do not believe that it is possible to prove that the traditional Judeo-Christian view of divine providence is incompatible with our libertarian freedom is that the arguments against compatibility seem to me to rest on principles very close to the level of fundamental intuitions. I do not see how one could “get below” these principles to others that are more fundamental and more likely to be accepted by both sides of the debate. Rather, one’s considered opinion on the compatibility of providence and freedom will be based on one’s initial intuitions about a variety of principles that support arguments for incompatibility and on one’s evaluation of whether these principles and their implications are more or less plausible than the implications of maintaining both libertarian freedom and divine providence. My argument in this dissertation may thus be

1 An appendix of definitions and principles utilized in this dissertation may be found on pp. 304-307.
seen as a cumulative case for my claim that human libertarian freedom and meticulous sovereignty are incompatible. I proceed by appealing to more and more plausible principles in arguing for various incompatibility theses, while pointing out less and less plausible implications of maintaining that providence and freedom are compatible. The reader must weigh for herself the relative plausibility of the principles that lead to incompatibility vs. the implications of maintaining compatibility.

My approach in this dissertation is indirect. Rather than considering divine providence initially, I first consider the problems of logical determinism and of theological determinism arising from divine foreknowledge rather than divine providence. I believe that if we have libertarian freedom, then there are no prior truths about what we will freely do, and God cannot know what we will freely do. These are stronger claims than that God cannot providentially determine that we will freely act in certain ways, where that freedom is libertarian in nature. Any of the principles to which I appeal in arguing these stronger claims would also support an argument that the traditional view of providence is incompatible with libertarian freedom. Any readers inclined to agree with me in these earlier chapters should also agree with me when I turn to the issue of divine providence.

Approaching my central topic indirectly allows me to delineate some of the relationships between concerns about prior truth, past truth, foreknowledge, and providence, such that the reader can clearly see at each step what principles would lead to incompatibility and what is at stake in maintaining compatibility. At each step, readers can weigh the relative plausibility of the principles that lead to that particular incompatibility thesis vs. the implications of maintaining compatibility. I think that many
readers will find that at least some of the principles I appeal to are more plausible than
the implications of accepting the most controversial compatibility thesis – that the
traditional view of providence is compatible with human libertarian freedom. Thus, I
believe that many readers will weigh the costs of maintaining this compatibility thesis
relative to the arguments that I put forward for incompatibility and judge that those costs
are too high. Perhaps some of these readers will judge the costs differently when
considering only the implications of accepting the compatibility of foreknowledge with
human libertarian freedom, but many will deny this compatibility claim as well. And for
those readers who remain unconvinced by my arguments, this dissertation will at least
provide them with an understanding of why one (such as myself) might deny that human
libertarian freedom is compatible with the traditional conceptions of divine providence
and foreknowledge.

I begin this dissertation by explicating the view of libertarian freedom that I hold,
which involves understanding one’s ability to do otherwise as constrained by the
circumstances in which one acts, and which involves understanding these circumstances
as including all truths that are true prior to one’s act. I go on to suggest that given this
“Aristotelian” understanding of libertarian freedom, a broadly Aristotelian argument for
logical determinism from prior truth is sound. In order to maintain the strong view of
freedom that I hold, the Principle of Bivalence (PB) must be denied.

Of course, not everyone will agree that libertarian freedom should be understood
in this way. Most readers will choose to understand it differently rather than jettison PB.
Chapter two considers Ockhamism (named for William of Ockham) as providing a theory
of how one might alternatively understand libertarian freedom in such a way that PB is
maintained. I initially sketch the argument for logical determinism from past truth and the Ockhamist response to it, which depends upon distinguishing propositions that are accidentally necessary in virtue of their subject matter being about the past from propositions that while grammatically past-tense are not necessary per accidens. Most of chapter two then seeks to bring Aristotelians and Ockhamists into dialogue over the grounding relation between propositional truth and the events or states of affairs that guarantee and explain these truths. I argue that Ockhamists might accept an Aristotelian understanding of this grounding relation, termed Presentist Grounding Intuition Plus (PGI+), and that doing so would allow them to easily distinguish between propositions that are and are not necessary per accidens.

In chapter three, I initially apply the potential agreement over PGI+ to a consideration of whether divine foreknowledge is compatible with libertarian freedom. This application of PGI+ is inconclusive: Ockhamists might maintain the compatibility of our freedom with divine foreknowledge by asserting that propositions about divine beliefs are not grounded by belief-states, as propositions about our beliefs plausibly are. The reader may judge the plausibility of such a move. I then directly consider what intuitions we might have about divine beliefs, and suggested that we should initially be inclined to apply the Personal Belief Intuition (PBI), that propositions about a person’s past beliefs should be understood to be necessary per accidens, to God as well as us. Even if one does not accept my understanding of libertarian freedom, one might accept the applicability of PBI to propositions about God’s beliefs, and thus conclude, based on an argument from past truth, that divine foreknowledge (forebelief) is incompatible with human libertarian freedom. I go on to argue that, given our ability to conceive of various
ways of understanding God’s knowledge as dissimilar to our own, the burden of proof should be on the Ockhamist to explain how God might know the future without His beliefs being subject to PBI.

Chapter three also discusses an implication of maintaining the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with human libertarian freedom: that we have counterfactual power over the past. I suggest that our having this power, the power to do things, such that were we to do them the world’s history would have always been different from the way it actually was, is a strange and marvelous power which our intuitions attest we do not have. For instance, if I have counterfactual power over the past, then it is possible that I have the power to do something such that were I to do it, Abraham never would have existed. I believe that many readers will judge that PBI is more plausible than this implication of maintaining the compatibility of freedom with divine foreknowledge.

Chapter four seeks to explore the grounds one might have for rejecting middle knowledge, even if one accepts PB and views Ockhamism as a viable means of maintaining the compatibility of human freedom with divine foreknowledge. I argue that even if one accepts an account of grounding (PGI) that Aristotelians reject, and that is at least very similar to an account that contemporary Molinists have espoused, one might still believe that the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (CF\(\rightarrow\)’s) upon which Molinism relies are not grounded, and thus neither true nor available to God’s knowledge. One might accept the Principle of Bivalence and believe that absolute future contingents are grounded according to PGI, and yet still deny the Principle of Conditional Bivalence [PCB: If A were true, then (B would be true or B would be false)], viewing many counterfactuals as insufficiently grounded and thus false. This denial of middle
knowledge rests upon viewing the grounding relation as applicable not only to propositional truth, but to states of affairs as well (a view that is discussed in appendix one). Thus, a CF à is not sufficiently grounded by the mere fact that in the nearest possible antecedent world, an agent performs the act specified by the consequent, unless the state of affairs of this world’s being the most similar antecedent world is also guaranteed and explained. If no explanation for this state of affairs’ obtaining is available, then the fact that a relevant world is the most similar antecedent world is a brute fact that cannot ground the CF à in question. The concerns about counterfactual power over the past also remain, and I believe that many readers will find my concerns about the brute truth of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom compelling.

Having set out what I take to be the most plausible reasons for rejecting the compatibility of libertarian freedom with prior truth, forknowledge, and providence, chapters five and six briefly discuss Thomism and Openism, the two main alternative views of the relationship between divine providence and human freedom that one might adopt if one rejects Molinism. These chapters outline the views, and perhaps more importantly seek to identify issues that persons attracted to one or the other view would need to consider further before wholeheartedly advocating it. If I am right that disagreements over the compatibility of providence and freedom rest on disagreements over the fundamental principles that I have identified, and that these disagreements are disagreements of fundamental intuitions, then philosophers concerned with this topic should turn their attention to continuing the project that I have begun of tracing the implications of accepting or denying these principles. Rather than seeking proofs that their views on Ockhamism and Molinism are correct, philosophers of religion should
concern themselves with philosophical theology as they consider the theological implications of accepting or denying Ockhamism and Molinism. Chapters five and six may be seen as beginning to explore what is at stake in adopting a particular theology that denies these views.
CHAPTER ONE:

LOGICAL DETERMINISM – ARISTOTELIANISM AND THE ARGUMENT FROM PRIOR TRUTH

In this dissertation, I argue that human libertarian freedom is incompatible with both divine foreknowledge and the traditional understanding of divine providence as involving meticulous sovereignty over all events, and then consider what I take to be the most promising alternatives available to theists who agree with me. However, before turning to my arguments for these incompatibilities in chapters three and four, I will begin with a discussion of how human libertarian freedom may be maintained in the face of logical determinism.

There are two kinds of arguments for logical determinism that have had significant currency in the history of philosophy. I will call these arguments the argument from prior truth and the argument from past truth. In discussing logical determinism, I will outline what I will call Aristotelianism and Ockhamism. The former accepts the argument from prior truth and denies the Principle of Bivalence in order to deny logical determinism. The latter assumes that the argument from prior truth is unsound, and shows that the argument from past truth is no more convincing. I begin with the argument from prior truth and Aristotelianism, before considering past truth and Ockhamism in chapter two.
1. Libertarian Freedom and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities

I begin this chapter by outlining one of the starting points of my overall project: libertarian freedom. Libertarian freedom is meant to be the type of freedom required for moral responsibility. A cursory survey of the literature related to freedom quickly shows that the essential notion of libertarian freedom has to do with the ability to do otherwise. That is, if one performs some act E, a necessary condition of one’s being morally responsible for that act is that it have been freely performed in the sense that in addition to performing E, one must also have had the ability to refrain from performing E. This condition is often termed the Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP).

**PAP:** A person is morally responsible for her action only if she could have done otherwise.

Harry Frankfurt is famous for developing a kind of purported counterexample to this principle meant to suggest that the ability to do otherwise is not a necessary condition of moral responsibility and thus of libertarian freedom.¹ His argument has received enough discussion over the last thirty years to suggest that it has been seen as at least sufficiently compelling to warrant a short discussion by any philosopher who wishes to maintain, as I do, that libertarian freedom does indeed require the ability to do otherwise. Thus, a short discussion follows.

Frankfurt asks us to imagine a case in which we would all agree that an agent, Jones, freely chooses to perform some action, E. He then asks that we add to this case another agent, Black, who can perfectly predict Jones’s actions, and who would, if Jones

were about to decide not to perform E, intervene and force Jones to decide to perform this action. Frankfurt then asks us to attend to our intuitions. Since Jones is not in fact coerced, and Black has not in fact taken any part in bringing about Jones’s act, do we not believe that Jones is still morally responsible for his act? Yet hasn’t the possibility of Jones’s doing otherwise been ruled out? One may then conclude that the ability to do otherwise is not a necessary condition upon libertarian freedom, the kind of freedom required for moral responsibility.\(^2\)

John Martin Fischer has furthered Frankfurt’s project by suggesting that what is essential to libertarian freedom is that there is not “actual-sequence compulsion” in the series of events culminating in an act, though there may well be some type of counterfactual intervener such as Black who ensures that an agent such as Jones cannot do otherwise than he does.\(^3\) That is, libertarians will still disagree with compatibilists, who hold that freedom and moral responsibility are compatible with causal determination, because causal determination would of course constitute actual-sequence compulsion. But libertarians, according to Fischer, need not be committed to any principle as sweeping as that the ability to do otherwise is a necessary condition for the freedom required for moral responsibility. Other philosophers have of course entered the debate on both sides of the issue.\(^4\)

\(^2\) Alternatively, one could claim that libertarian freedom requires the ability to do otherwise but that it is not then necessary for moral responsibility.


I believe that Frankfurt-style counterexamples fail to show that the Principle of Alternate Possibilities is not required for moral responsibility. I thus also believe that those who seek to understand libertarian freedom without reference to the ability to do otherwise are needlessly weakening our intuitive understanding of freedom. The reason that I believe Frankfurt-style counterexamples fail can be relatively easily sketched here, though of course a more thorough explication would be possible.\(^5\) The key to my response is that events, including acts, should be individuated in a fine-grained way. I take what Fischer calls the “essentialist principle of event individuation” to be correct. This principle states that \(x\) is the same particular event as \(y\) if and only if \(x\) and \(y\) have the same causes.\(^6\) Thus, it is not enough to say that the act \(E\), which Jones performs, is Jones’s voting for Al Gore (to alter a Frankfurt-style example of Fisher’s). There might be several different acts that could fall under such a general heading. One of them might be Jones’s voting for Gore as a result of an unimpeded personal decision to do so and another might be Jones’s voting for Gore as a result of the impeding intervention of Black after Jones shows an inclination to vote for Bush. While in Frankfurt-style cases, Jones cannot avoid instantiating the general state of affairs having voted for Gore, the act

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\(^6\) Fischer, “Responsibility and Control,” p. 29. For a stronger view of event individuation, according to which events are the same if and only if they have both the same causes and the same effects, see Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
for which he is purportedly morally responsible is more specific and is individuated on
the basis of the causal history of that act.

If the act for which Jones is purportedly morally responsible is *Jones’s voting for
Gore as a result of an unimpeded personal decision to do so*, then Jones is indeed
morally responsible for this act. Jones made a decision to vote for Gore, and that
decision led to Jones voting for Gore in the way one would expect. In this case, however,
the Principle of Alternate Possibilities is in no way impugned since Jones could indeed
have done otherwise. He could have, for instance, instead performed the act *Jones’s
voting for Gore as a result of the impeding intervention of Black after Jones showed an
inclination to vote for Bush*. He could have performed this act by freely causing the
indicator of his inclination to vote for Bush rather than Gore in the Frankfurt-style
circumstances in which he is. Although Jones presumably does not know that he is in
Frankfurt-style circumstances, and thus does not know that the alternative acts open to his
free causal contribution are *Jones’s voting for Gore as a result of an unimpeded personal
decision to do so*, and *Jones’s voting for Gore as a result of the impeding intervention of
Black after Jones showed an inclination to vote for Bush*, there are in fact these two acts,
each of which Jones has the ability to bring about in the circumstances in which he is. In
performing the first act, Jones thus does have the ability to do otherwise, and PAP thus
remains intact.

It should be apparent that given an understanding of acts as including their causal
histories, agents will rarely if ever fully understand what it is that they do, for they will
rarely if ever fully understand the other causal factors that contribute to the causal history
of an event. This might seem an unwelcome consequence if one believes that agents are
only morally culpable for actions that are done freely and are such that the agent is aware of what she is doing. But in the first place, the distinction between those things that we intend to do and those things that we as agents freely cause has been an important consideration in discussions of libertarian freedom for some time. It may well be that on any account of libertarian freedom, those things that we do and for which we are morally responsible are events that result from our agent-causing something else that is unintended and unknown by us, in circumstances in which the thing that we directly cause in turn causes that which we intend to bring about. In such cases, we are plausibly considered morally responsible for bringing about an event if we intended it and if we directly brought about a cause of that event via agent-causation.

If one is a libertarian, one will add to these conditions the claim that the agent had the ability to do otherwise. It seems to me that this ability to do otherwise should obviously be understood as relating to that which the agent agent-causes, and need not apply to the end that the agent has in mind for which he agent-causes what he directly does. If in intending to raise one’s arm one directly agent-causes certain neurons to fire, the firing of which lead via event-causation to one’s arm rising, one must be able to avoid agent-causing these particular neurons to fire in order to be able to do otherwise. And if Jones in intending to vote for Gore causes certain neurons to fire, the firing of which lead via event-causation to his vote being cast for Gore, then Jones must be able to avoid causing these particular neurons to fire in order to be able to do otherwise. What one agent-causes and what one intends are (likely) distinct things. Moral responsibility no doubt involves the end intended in some way – but it probably cannot require that one
fully understand how it is that one contributes to bringing about this end, no matter how events are understood. Thus, it seems unproblematic to me to accept an understanding of events whereby the act for which one is morally responsible is not an act that is fully understood or intended by the agent.

If one considers acts in the fine-grained manner I am suggesting, then I think it quickly becomes clear that no matter how one delineates the act in question, there either is an alternative act open to the agent in question, in which case the agent is morally responsible for the act she performs, or the act is causally rather than merely counterfactually determined, in which case the agent is not responsible for the act. There must always be some predictor of Jones’s impending decision according to which Black decides whether or not to intervene, and that predictor may or may not enter into the causal history leading up to Jones’s voting for Gore. So long as we assume that this predictor (perhaps a guilty glance at his staunchly Democratic wife or the beginning of a neural sequence corresponding with the decision to vote for Bush) is not causally determined, there will always be two separate acts open to Jones since he controls whether the predictor is part of the causal history leading up to his vote: Jones’s voting for Gore as a result of an unimpeded personal decision to do so (i.e., sans predictor) and Jones’s voting for Gore as a result of the impeding intervention of Black after Black witnessed the predictor that Jones would vote for Bush if left alone.

In every Frankfurt-style example, there will be one act (the one Jones actually performs) in which neither the predictor in question nor Black enter into the causal history, and one (the counterfactual possibility that is meant to rule out the possibility for

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Jones to do otherwise) in which they do. I believe that these are separate acts, and that short of one or the other being causally determined, Jones has it within his power to perform either. Thus, the purported counterexamples do not in fact rule out the ability to do otherwise, and PAP survives unscathed.

Another way of putting the above point would be that so long as Jones can try to bring about a series of events that would lead to his voting for Bush rather than Gore, he will always have an alternative act open to him, even though the act he in fact performs and the alternative act both result in his voting for Gore. It does not matter how far back the chain of events one pushes the example. Whether it be a decision on whom to vote for or merely a guilty glance as the first inkling of deliberation crosses his mind – a glance that unbeknownst to Jones is a perfect indicator that he will in fact vote for Bush if left to himself – Jones will always be able to either take or refrain from taking some action that is the trigger for Black’s intervention. It is only if Jones truly cannot even try to act in such a way that he would vote for Bush, cannot himself determine whether or not he performs the triggering act, that he cannot do otherwise. But unless we posit additional counterfactual triggers that in turn make the triggering acts themselves acts that must be discussed in a more fine-grained way, a case in which Jones cannot perform the trigger act is a case in which he is causally determined not to. And then the example is no longer a counterexample to the principle of alternate possibilities, for it does not supply a case in which libertarians will see Jones as morally responsible for his act.

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8 I agree with Goetz that the “interrupting” Frankfurt-style counterexample that Stump outlines in “Dust, Determinism, and Frankfurt: A Reply to Goetz” is incoherent. See Goetz, “Stump on Libertarianism and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities.”
2. Libertarian Freedom Defined

I hope that the above discussion of Frankfurt’s dissenting view adequately sketches my reasons for maintaining that the ability to do otherwise is indeed essential to libertarian freedom. At any rate, I will assume that libertarian freedom must be so understood throughout this dissertation, and trust that in so doing I am not misrepresenting mainstream libertarianism. I thus propose the following as an initial definition of libertarian freedom:

\[
\text{Libertarian Freedom} = \text{df} \quad \text{An agent } A \text{ is libertarianly free with regard to an act } E \text{ at time } t \text{ if and only if in either performing or refraining from performing act } E, \text{ she had the ability to do otherwise} - \text{ to refrain from performing } E \text{ or to perform } E. \\
\]

What must be explained next, and what is not nearly as clear, is what exactly having the power or ability to do otherwise requires. Peter van Inwagen, I think, aptly represents the approach of many contemporary philosophers to this issue in writing:

‘Free will’, then, is to be defined in terms of ‘can’. But how is ‘can’ to be defined? I am afraid I do not know how to define ‘can’…. Nevertheless, I think that the concept expressed by ‘can’…. – the concept of the power or ability of an agent to act – is as clear as any philosophically interesting concept is likely to be.  

Alvin Plantinga expresses a similar sentiment in the following longer passage:

What I can do depends upon what I can directly do, together with the facts, with respect to each of the actions A* I can directly perform, as to what would happen if I were to perform A*. What I can do depends (among other things) on two things: (a) my repertoire of direct actions, and (b) the question which counterfactuals are true – which counterfactuals whose antecedents specify that I perform some action or series of actions that are direct for me. Now of course possible world thought has been abundantly illuminating and clarifying with respect to the second. It is hard to see, however, how it can help us with the first; it is hard to see, that is, how to give an illuminating account in terms of possible worlds of what it is within a person’s power to do directly.

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9 Peter van Inwagen, An Essay on Free Will, p. 8.
It seems to me that both van Inwagen and Plantinga are operating on the assumption that we have a pretty good idea of what actions are immediately within our power, are things that we can directly do, and that our intuitions about this are sufficiently strong that we need not seek a further understanding of the concept of ‘can’. Van Inwagen will not attempt to define ‘can’, and Plantinga expresses his opinion that possible worlds semantics, at least, will not be a useful tool for shedding light on this notion. Furthermore, the context of Plantinga’s passage, coming at the end of an article in which he among other things rebuts an argument by Nelson Pike that implies logical determinism, indicates that he believes that our intuitions about what we can directly do are sufficiently strong that considerations to the contrary based on possible worlds analyses need not be entertained. I will call this intuition the Basic Power Intuition (BPI).

**BPI:** There is a set of actions that I can perform and that are such that my awareness of my ability to perform them is more basic than any considerations to the contrary.

I am willing to accept that BPI is a foundational assumption for libertarians, plausibly providing much of the intuitive attractiveness of the libertarian view of freedom, and that there are indeed certain actions that must be allowed to be such that our ability to perform them is a given in any theory concerning libertarian freedom.

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However, one may incorporate BPI into different theories depending on what other intuitions one maintains or rejects. I would like to suggest that while van Inwagen may be right that the concept of having the ability to do otherwise is indeed as clear as any other philosophically interesting concept, so that we should not expect to find a reductive analysis of the concept into simpler terms, we can yet shed light on what it is to be able to do otherwise by helping ourselves to possible worlds semantics. Perhaps possible worlds thought is not needed to help us see what is in our power to do directly, but I think that it is needed (or at least very helpful) when one considers the necessary conditions for having this ability. We may gain insight, for instance, into what a theory of the relationship between propositional truth and libertarian freedom should include, by considering the question in terms of how we understand the ability to do otherwise couched in terms of access to possible worlds.

Consider the following as an initial definition of the ability to do otherwise that should be relatively uncontroversial and that appeals to possible worlds semantics:

\[
\text{Ability to do otherwise} = df \text{ In addition to the actual world, in which A performs E at } t, \text{ there is at least one possible world accessible to A at } t \text{ in which A refrains from performing E at } t. 
\]

I intend that both ‘A performs E at t’ and ‘A refrains from performing E at t’ be understood as intentional actions. This definition captures the intuition that libertarian freedom requires that if A freely performs E at t, then there is a world accessible to A at t in which A freely refrains from performing E. But that is all that it does. While uncontroversial, the above definition remains relatively uninformative, defining the ability to do otherwise in terms of the access-ability of a possible world to an agent. And it is likely right that we cannot define accessibility without circularly re-introducing the
term ‘ability’ or ‘can’. We can, however, seek to clarify a necessary condition upon this accessibility relationship in terms of possible worlds; and it is this necessary condition that is plausibly informative but also divisive, and thus potentially helpful in adjudicating between competing theories about the relationship between propositional truth and libertarian freedom.

I suggest the following as a necessary condition upon the accessibility relationship between a libertarianly free agent and possible worlds in which that agent does otherwise:

**W is Accessible to A at t only if:** The (almost) complete circumstances C obtaining at t in which A performs E are consistent with A refraining from E. That is, in addition to the actual world, in which A performs E in C, there is at least one alternative possible world, W, in which A refrains from performing E in C.

This condition restricts the relevant possible worlds to those that share C at the relevant time t. The intuition underlying this condition, based on a branching-paths conception of possible worlds, is that worlds in which C does not obtain are not worlds that are accessible to A at t. I will call this intuition the Constraining Circumstances Intuition (CCI).

CCI: What I am able to do must always be consistent with the circumstances in which I perform my action.

I find this intuition extremely compelling – surely what it is possible for me to do now has something very important to do with the situation in which I find myself. What I am able to do now, in the sense relevant to libertarian freedom, is what it is possible for me to do in the circumstances that now obtain, not what it is possible for me to do should these circumstances have been otherwise than they are. Something like this intuition
seems likely to be at the heart of one’s reasons for adopting a libertarian rather than a compatibilist view of freedom.

I believe that focusing on CCI and the above condition on the accessibility relation between a libertarianly free agent and other possible worlds will allow us to see more clearly the locus of disagreement between an Aristotelian view of the relationship between propositional truth and libertarian freedom that accepts the conjunction of BPI and CCI and thus believes that the Principle of Bivalence must be rejected, and an Ockhamist view that accepts the conjunction of BPI and the Principle of Bivalence, but then must understand CCI differently from the Aristotelian. Before beginning to directly discuss the question of logical determinism, then, we must attempt to specify the circumstances that CCI and the condition on accessibility above refer to. If everything is included in C, including that A performs E, then one could never have the ability to do otherwise. The “circumstances in which I perform my action” must be understood in such a way that my action, at least, is not understood to be included in the circumstances. But other than my action and whatever else must minimally be left out, the Aristotelian will hold that the circumstances in which I perform my action should be complete. In particular they should include most (though not all, as we will see) propositions true at t.

It might initially seem that one should define the almost complete circumstances that constrain an agent’s range of actions as follows:

(Almost) Complete Circumstances, $C = df \text{The maximal state of affairs obtaining at } t, \text{ less A’s performance of E.}$

While this definition of C certainly communicates the idea that the relevant circumstances should include as much as possible without including the action in question, it is unacceptable because it is not clear that there is any way in which
libertarian free agency is possible in such circumstances. Even if one rejects the

**Principle of Bivalence** (PB), which claims that all propositions are either determinatively true or false, such that propositions about states of affairs obtaining or events occurring at \( t \) need not be true prior to \( t \), such propositions presumably become true at \( t \). For instance, the proposition *A performs E at t* presumably becomes true contemporaneously with A’s performance of E at \( t \). Thus, the maximal state of affairs obtaining at \( t \) would still include the truth of the proposition that A performs E at \( t \). While the above definition ostensibly rules out this particular proposition being included in C, there are other propositions that become true at \( t \) as a result of A’s performing E but are not clearly ruled out of C, and that together entail that A performs E at \( t \). For instance, the propositions *A does something at t* and *A does nothing distinct from E at t* together entail that A performs E at \( t \), and presumably become true at \( t \) even if PB is denied. Thus, a way to avoid including such propositions in C must be found in order to maintain libertarian freedom.

What is needed in order to capture the Aristotelian understanding of CCI is a definition of C that includes all truths whose truth is determined prior to \( t \), but that does not include those truths, if any, that become true at \( t \) as a result of A’s action. Such a definition would allow the Aristotelian to maintain that we have libertarian freedom by denying that many future-tense propositions have a bivalent truth-value. We might introduce a notion of logical priority, such that though propositions such as *A performs E*

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12 I am assuming throughout that states of affairs and propositions are isomorphic. Strictly speaking, the maximal state of affairs obtaining at \( t \) would include the state of affairs *A’s performing E at t*, and the maximal proposition corresponding to the maximal state of affairs would include the truth of the proposition *A performs E at t*. 

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at $t$, $A$ does something at $t$, and $A$ does nothing distinct from $E$ at $t$ become true at $t$, their truth is nonetheless logically dependent upon, and thus posterior to, A’s action. Or we might define $C$ without recourse to further concepts such as logical priority as follows:

(Almost) Complete Circumstances, $C =_{df}$ The maximal state of affairs obtaining at $t-1$, the moment immediately prior to $t$, plus all causation occurring at $t$ other than A’s performing $E$.  

This definition includes all propositions whose truth is determined prior to $t$ as well as any causal factors that might determine $A$ to perform $E$ at $t$, whether these might be physical or divine. But so long as PB is denied with regard to propositions about the future and nothing causally determines $A$ to perform $E$, propositions such as those above will be left out of $C$.  

Let us incorporate this understanding of the circumstances in which one acts into CCI, and label the resulting principle CCIA (for Aristotelian):

**CCIA:** What I am able to do must always be consistent with the circumstances in which I perform my action, where those circumstances are understood to include

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13 This definition depends upon a very controversial position – that there is a moment immediately prior to $t$. Of course, if time is mathematically continuous rather than discrete, there would be no immediately prior moment. But similarly to my use of tenseless propositions, explained in a footnote below, my appeal to an immediately prior moment should not unduly alarm the reader, since a comparable definition of $C$ should be expressible without appeal to such an ontologically suspect concept. If time is continuous, then $t-1$ could indicate any moment prior to $t$ such that the temporal distance between $t-1$ and $t$ is insufficient for the occurrence of any change in the maximal state of affairs obtaining at $t-1$. This means of translating the notion of a discrete moment would depend on the additional controversial assumption that there are no instantaneous events. And of course, if time is continuous, and events are not instantaneous, then to refer to events as occurring at a specific moment, $t$, as opposed to referring to them as occurring over some duration of time, is clearly artificial. Perhaps the best that I can offer my readers is the assertion that it seems to me easier to communicate the points I wish to make by appearing to assume that time is discrete such that we can refer to events occurring at particular moments and to the existence of immediately prior moments, rather than by introducing the additional concept of logical priority. I hope that the reader will therefore grant the assumption that the points I am making could be made without assuming a particular view of time and bear in mind as she reads that I do not intend that anything rest on whether time is continuous or discrete.

14 Note that if $E$ is a specific action, and if $A$ does more than just $E$ at $t$, then the proposition $A$ does something at $t$ would be included in $C$, along with more specific propositions detailing exactly what $A$ does (other than $E$). But the more problematic propositions, $A$ performs $E$ at $t$, and $A$ does nothing distinct from $E$ at $t$ would not be included in $C$. And of course, $E$ might stand for any of the other things that $A$ does at $t$, or even the conjunction of all the things that $A$ does at $t$, such that the definition of $C$ could be applied to all of $A$’s actions at $t$. 

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the maximal state of affairs obtaining at \( t-1 \), the moment immediately prior to \( t \),
plus all causation occurring at \( t \) other than A’s performing E.

CCIA leaves open the possibility of there being libertarianly free actions, of there being \( \neg E \) worlds accessible to A, and thus of A having the ability to do otherwise, by allowing that there may in fact be neither prior truths to the effect that A will perform E at \( t \), nor concurrent causal factors that force A to perform E at \( t \). As we will see shortly, logical determinism will result if CCIA is true and if PB applies generally to all propositions, including future-tense ones. But if there are not prior truths about A’s action at \( t \), then CCIA may be maintained along with BPI, and logical determinism need not threaten libertarianly free action. Any of one’s actions that are not determined in some other manner are indeed libertarianly free, a result that conforms to our everyday intuitions about many of our actions.

We can see then, how one who accepts CCIA might also maintain BPI, by rejecting the Principle of Bivalence. The rest of this chapter will specifically explicate the argument for logical determinism from prior truth as resting on the acceptance of CCIA, and the Aristotelian view of the relationship between propositional truth and libertarian freedom as a theory that denies PB in order to maintain both CCIA and BPI.

3. Logical Determinism

Determinism may be understood as the thesis that every event is such that certain conditions (other than its occurrence) determine that it and no other event could occur. Causal determinism identifies these conditions as physical causes and theological determinism identifies these conditions as implicit in God’s relationship to creation. Logical determinism with which I am here initially concerned, claims that these
determining conditions are present within principles of logic often taken to be known *a priori* and accepted as constraints on our understanding of our world. I will discuss two kinds of arguments for logical determinism that were considered as far back as Aristotle and Diodorus Cronus, one from prior truth and the other from past truth. The argument from prior truth will be the topic of the remainder of this chapter, while the argument from past truth will be considered at the beginning of the next.

Proponents of the argument from prior truth claim that simply by considering the notions of truth and falsity, and specifically the Principle of Bivalence with regard to future-tense propositions, one can see that every event must in fact occur in accordance with the prior truth of the proposition predicting it, and that thus there can be no libertarian freedom. If PB is true, then every proposition is either true or false. But then take any event that one thinks might or might not occur in the future: it is now either true or false that this event will occur. Suppose it is true that this event will occur. A true future-tense proposition becomes false, strictly speaking, when the event or state of affairs to which it refers is no longer future. However, each true future-tense proposition entails a tenseless proposition referring to a definite time or period of time at which the future event will take place or state of affairs obtain. And this tenseless proposition will not, indeed cannot, change in truth-value. For it is another logical principle that all tenseless propositions, if true, are eternally or timelessly true.\(^{15}\) So, if the relevant future-

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\(^{15}\) The above assertion obviously depends upon the somewhat controversial view that there *are* tenseless propositions. I would prefer here to avoid taking a firm stance on that issue. I myself am a presentist concerning time, and thus believe that tensed, not tenseless, propositions are basic ontological entities in our world. I will, however, primarily refer to tenseless propositions in my discussion of logical determinism in this chapter because I believe that the argument from prior truth can be presented most favorably by focusing on the unchanging truth-values of tenseless propositions. The points that I make can be translated into a discussion of tensed propositions, and the following should give the reader a roadmap of how to do this if she so desires.
tense proposition is true, then the fact that this event will occur is already established, in virtue of the unchanging truth-value of a corresponding tenseless proposition. Likewise, if the relevant future-tense proposition is false, then the fact that this event will not occur is already established, in virtue of the unchanging truth-value of the same corresponding tenseless proposition. In either case, whether or not this event will occur (or tenselessly occurs at a time $t$) is already established. And if an event’s future occurrence is already established, how can it be within an individual’s power to prevent that occurrence? Since the Principle of Bivalence applies to all propositions, every event is such that there is, prior to this event’s occurrence, a proposition truly predicting that this event will or will not occur. Merely in virtue of the nature of propositions and principles of logic, according to which every proposition is either true or false, and when tenseless is unchangingly true or false, determinism is established.

Aristotle’s *De Interpretatione* 9 is the most often discussed classical locus of the above argument from prior truth to logical determinism. The correct interpretation of this
passage has been the subject of significant debate, but I believe it appropriate to label as standard the reading according to which Aristotle is indeed arguing that the application of PB to future-tense propositions yields determinism. (Perhaps the Law of Excluded Middle (LEM: Either p or ~p) also leads to determinism – Aristotle arguably argues that these are equivalent for future-tense singular propositions.) I will not enter into this interpretational debate. Instead, I will ask my readers to grant me the assumption that what I have called the standard interpretation is correct, and that “Aristotelianism” is an appropriate moniker for the view that logical determinism can be avoided only by denying the Principle of Bivalence for future-tense propositions.

A denial of PB for future-tense propositions might take several forms. One might deny that these propositions have any truth-value. One might claim that they have an intermediate truth-value that is neither true nor false. One might claim that there are an infinite number of truth-values between true and false corresponding to the probability of

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16 See William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez*, (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 8-10 and 27-33. See also Martha and William Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 46-48, where they suggest that Aristotle should view PB and LEM as equivalent given his understanding of truth, but that he confusedly attempts to maintain the latter while denying the former. Richard Gaskin, in “Conditionals of Freedom and Middle Knowledge,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (1993), p. 422, also suggests that Aristotle should be understood as maintaining LEM while denying PB.

the occurrence of the event described by the future-tense proposition. While I believe that the term “Aristotelian” is most appropriately applied to the first of these options, I am not averse, at least initially, to also using the term more broadly for any theory that denies PB for future tense-propositions. Also, it is important to note that denying PB requires only that there are some propositions that are neither true nor false, since the principle is perfectly general. Not only does the Aristotelian response to logical determinism deny PB only with regard to future-tense propositions,\(^\text{18}\) as opposed to either past or present-tense propositions, it need not be committed to the claim that all or even most future-tense propositions are neither true nor false. At the extreme, Aristotelianism need only claim that at least one future-tense proposition is neither true nor false, and thus that at least one event is undetermined, in order to respond to the general thesis of logical determinism. More practically, I will call Aristotelian any theory that allows that many future-tense propositions do have bivalent truth-values in virtue of other than logically determining conditions of the events they describe. These conditions, most obviously, might include physical or divine causation that would determine an event to occur.\(^\text{19}\)

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\(^{18}\) And tenseless propositions, assuming that they are entailed by future-tense propositions and cannot change in truth-value.

\(^{19}\) I realize that Aristotle himself did not deal with anything like a theistic conception of God, and that there are certain difficulties with attributing to him the belief that events might be determined as a result of physical causes, thus allowing that corresponding future-tense propositions about these events might then be true. In *De Generatione et Corruptione* 2.11, Aristotle argues that only events that are part of everlasting cyclical processes are absolutely necessary, and that rectilinear physical causation is only conditionally, never absolutely, necessary. It might be argued that this passage clearly implies that Aristotle would not allow the attribution of truth to any propositions predicting the occurrence of a merely conditionally necessary event. But *Metaphysics* 6.3 seems to allow that when the series of conditionally necessitating causes is traced back to a present or past condition, the future event is indeed necessary, and this seems to be very close to our current understanding of causal determination. At any rate, it seems clear that Aristotle allowed for some type of exception to the general thesis that future-tense propositions were neither true nor false – where events are absolutely necessary, they will be, and thus it is true to say that
Aristotelianism, then, as I will use the term, is the view that some future-tense propositions (and the tenseless propositions entailed by them) are neither true nor false, and that this allows that the future is at least partially undetermined such that we are libertarianly free with regard to at least some of our actions. In terms of the condition on accessibility given above, there will be a world accessible to A in which A refrains from doing E (the act A performs in the actual world) only if the truth-value of any proposition describing A’s action at time \( t \) was neither true nor false prior to A’s action at \( t \). That is, in order for a possible world in which A refrains from doing E at \( t \) to be accessible to A, and thus in order for A to have the ability to do otherwise, the almost complete circumstances C obtaining at \( t \) cannot include a prior truth-value of a proposition to the effect that A does E at \( t \). Prior truth-values threaten libertarian freedom, and thus there can only be libertarian freedom if there are no prior truth-values to propositions predicting what A does at \( t \). The Aristotelian view is that all truths that are established prior to A’s doing E at \( t \) should be included in C, and thus if a proposition to the effect that A does E at \( t \) is true prior to A’s action, then A’s action cannot be libertarianly free, because no \( \neg E \) worlds are accessible to A and thus A cannot do otherwise: every possible world that shares C includes A’s doing E at \( t \). CCIA, which incorporates the above definition of the almost complete circumstances relevant to the accessibility relationship between agent and possible worlds, captures this Aristotelian understanding of the Constraining Circumstances Intuition.

they will be. If I am allowing the term Aristotelian to be expanded to types of causal necessitation and divine determination that Aristotle would not have allowed, so be it. I trust that this footnote will be sufficient to warn any naïve readers that I am doing so, and thus avoid unintentionally propagating a false view of Aristotle’s own position. See also Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez*, pp. 12-18.
We can now see how the Aristotelian might understand the conditions necessary for libertarian freedom and the ability to do otherwise. But maintaining freedom in this way may seem to come at a rather high cost – the denial of PB as it applies to future-tense propositions. Need we really acquiesce to the logical determinist who, like Aristotle on the standard interpretation, believes that prior truth precludes the ability to do otherwise? Many have claimed that the Aristotelian argument rests on an obvious modal fallacy, symbolized as follows, where the box stands for broadly logical necessity:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{\textit{\{p \supset q\}}} \\
p \\
\therefore \text{\textit{\{q\}}}
\end{array}
\]

If we let p stand for \textit{it is true that E will occur} and q stand for \textit{E will occur}, one quickly sees the force of the objection. If no necessity attaches to the truth that E will occur, then why think that necessity attaches to E’s occurrence? And if no necessity attaches to E’s occurrence, then why think that an agent’s ability to either bring about E or not to bring about E is impugned? Thus, many philosophers have quickly rejected the Aristotelian type of argument for logical determinism from prior truth. And it seems likely to me that the respect with which Aristotle is held is at least part of the reason that many philosophers support a non-standard interpretation of \textit{De Interpretatione} 9, unwilling to allow that Aristotle could have made such an obvious mistake.

But has Aristotle made such an obvious mistake? Before turning to Ockhamism, a theory that denies logical determinism while maintaining PB, I would like to briefly consider whether the argument from prior truth can be dismissed as easily as the preceding paragraph suggests. I think that it cannot. This is because I believe that

\footnote{But see the third paragraph of footnote 15 with regard to the parenthetic comment about tenseless propositions.}
although Aristotle asserts all three of the propositions represented above (*Necessarily, if it is true that* $E$ *will occur then* $E$ *will occur; It is true that* $E$ *will occur; Necessarily,* $E$ *will occur*), he does not invalidly derive the latter merely from the former. Furthermore, I think that an argument from prior truth to logical determinism can be stated that is faithful to Aristotle’s intent, and is both valid and sound.

Let us first consider a passage from *De Interpretatione* 9 where the argument from prior truth is concisely laid out.\(^1\) Aristotle writes,

Again, if it is white now it was true to say earlier that it would be white; so that it was always true to say of anything that has happened that it would be so. But if it was always true to say that it was so, or would be so, it could not not be so, or not be going to be so. But if something cannot not happen it is impossible for it not to happen; and if it is impossible for something not to happen it is necessary for it to happen. Everything that will be, therefore, happens necessarily.\(^2\)

Undoubtedly, Aristotle’s conclusion is a claim of necessity for future events. But he does not reach it via the modal fallacy above. The first conditional in this passage states the assumption that future-tense contingent propositions can be true. The second part of the first sentence is a conclusion based on the implicit premise that if a future-tense proposition is true, then it has always been true. The second sentence and first part of the third sentence provide the key to seeing that Aristotle is not merely committing the modal fallacy discussed above. For Aristotle here equates a proposition’s always having been true with the impossibility of it’s being false. He then states the equivalence of the

\(^{21}\) Again, I will merely register my belief that this passage is clearly Aristotle’s own argument, based on the assumption that future-tense contingent propositions can be true, rather than entering into an interpretational debate over this point. Also, while this passage has been thought by some to suggest a separate argument for logical determinism from past truth, I do not think it need be read in this way, and am here discussing it as suggesting an argument from prior truth.

impossibility of something not happening and the necessity of its happening, and
concludes that what will be happens necessarily. Aristotle’s argument from prior truth,
then, can be represented as follows:

1. It is true that it will be white.
2. If it is true that it will be white, then it has always been true that it will be white.
3. If it has always been true that it will be white, then it is impossible that it will not be white.
4. If it is impossible that it will not be white, then it is necessary that it will be white.
5. It is necessary that it will be white.

We can formalize the argument more generally as follows, where p represents any true
tenseless proposition.

1. p
2. p ⊃ always p
3. always p ⊃ impossible that ~p
4. impossible that ~p ⊃ necessary that p
5. ∴ necessary that p

No modal fallacy, or indeed fallacy of any kind, is committed in this argument. What is
objectionable from the point of view of contemporary logicians is the equation of
something’s always being the case with it’s necessarily being the case. That is,
contemporary philosophers will see no reason to think that premise three is true.

I think the denial of premise three is appropriate. Suppose, as many believe, that
laws of nature are not broadly logically necessary, and that a certain law of nature has
always been true, and will always be true. Isn’t it nonetheless possible that this law of
nature might not have been true? If we consider the question in terms of possible worlds
semantics, how does the truth at every moment of a proposition at one possible world
indicate anything about whether that proposition is true at every possible world? We
might also consider premise three from a theistic point of view. Aristotle’s equation of
eternity and necessity was based on the assumption that the world was eternal. But the
traditional theistic belief that God freely created the world is inconsistent with this
equation, at least on the assumption that the creation of the world included the creation of
time. Though the world has existed throughout all time, belief in a free creation requires
that God existed logically prior to His creation, and that in this logically prior moment,
He was free to create the world in any way He chose.23

So, while Aristotle is not guilty of committing an obvious modal fallacy in
debating that logical determinism results from the prior truth of future contingent
propositions, the argument suggested by his text, though valid, is still unsound.
Nevertheless, I believe that a simple argument for logical determinism from prior truth
can be formulated, where each premise other than the assumed premise that PB applies to
future-tense contingent propositions is true. Recall the first two premises of the argument
sketched above: ‘p’, and ‘p ⊃ always p’. Rather than seeking to equate ‘always p’ with
‘necessarily p’, let us instead consider what statement would be sufficient for denying
libertarian freedom. The statement that I propose is ‘no agent has it within her power to
change the truth-value of p’. But all that is needed to achieve this conclusion is the
conditional premise, ‘always p ⊃ no agent has it within her power to change the truth-
value of p’. And isn’t this clearly true? While p’s being true at every moment may not
be equivalent to p’s being broadly logically necessary, surely it entails that its truth-value
cannot be changed. I think that the word ‘change’ is important here. For an agent to

23 Alternatively, if God exists in time, and does so necessarily, such that He and time have the same
everlasting duration, then I suppose that I would agree that anything that has always been true is necessarily
true. Such truths would presumably be in some way dependent upon God’s nature. But in order to
preserve the concept of a free creation, it seems to me that we would have to posit some moments of time
(or logical moments within the first moment of time) before God made decisions about how to create the
world, at which many propositions were neither true nor false.
change something implies that that something was one way, and then became another way as the result of an agent’s action. To say that no agent has the power to change the truth-value of a proposition is to say that no agent can do something such that the proposition was true (false), and then became false (true) as a result of her action. It seems to me that its truth is clearly guaranteed by the logical principle that tenseless propositions are always true and do not change in truth-value.

Thus, the argument from prior truth that I propose as sound is the following, where p represents any tenseless proposition:

1. p
2. p ⊃ always p
3. always p ⊃ no agent has it within her power to change the truth-value of p
4. ∴ no agent has it within her power to change the truth-value of p
5. ∴ ◊ for an agent to bring about ~p once p is true
6. ∴ [ ] for an agent to bring about p once p is true

What the argument claims is that given the truth of p, it is necessary that the agent will act in such a way that p remains true. Given the truth of a proposition, p, the event that p describes will occur, and given that p is true, no agent can change the truth-value of p such that the event described by p would not occur. In the specific case of the event in question being an action performed by an agent, the ability to do otherwise required for libertarian freedom is precluded.

Many libertarians will object at this point, however. They will claim that while the argument culminating in 4. (∴ no agent has it within her power to change the truth-value of p) is sound, the move from 4. to 5. (∴ ◊ for an agent to bring about ~p once p

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24 This argument is clearly inspired by the Aristotelian argument, but I hesitate to call it “the Aristotelian argument from prior truth” because Aristotle did not entertain the existence of tenseless propositions. Nonetheless, I think that he would recognize this argument as valid and would choose to reject the first premise.
is true) is invalid. For no one, they will say, thinks that an agent can change the truth-value of a tenseless proposition, where p is true at t and false at t+ later than t, but it might nonetheless be the case that an agent has the ability to do something such that p would always have been false. The agent’s inability to change the truth-value of a proposition, properly understood, has no bearing on her ability to do otherwise. What the libertarian of such a persuasion is claiming is that the agent has accessible to her possible worlds in which the truth-value of the relevant proposition is other than it in fact is. Rather than the possible worlds that are accessible to an agent being thought of as myriad branches from the agent’s fixed past, where that past includes any and all propositional truths that held at past times, the accessible possible worlds are thought to include worlds that are discontinuous from the past of this world.  

Those who believe that discontinuous worlds are accessible to an agent can be seen, I suggest, as accepting the implications of their acceptance of both BPI and PB. The conjunction of these beliefs leads such persons to reject the intuition (CCIA) that what we may do is constrained by the circumstances in which we find ourselves, where these circumstances are understood to include all propositional truths true at t-1, as outlined above. A theory of the relationship of propositional truth to libertarian freedom in which PB is maintained cannot include CCIA. If, on the other hand, one accepts CCIA, then one will hold that if those circumstances in which we find ourselves include

25 It should be noted that one might maintain the view that the accessible possible worlds to an agent are those that share the same “history” as the actual world, but limit what is included in this history in such a way that the truth-values of certain propositions are not included. That is, one might agree with the definition of accessibility given above, but limit what is included in C in such a way that certain prior truth-values are not included. Or in terms of CCI, one might deny that prior truth-values are part of the circumstances that constrain one’s range of actions. See for instance, Alfred J. Freddoso, “Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism,” Journal of Philosophy 80 (1983): 257-278. For a graphic representation of what is being claimed in denying this argument, see appendix two.
truths about what we will do, and if we cannot change the truth-value of these truths, then the possible worlds accessible to us are limited to those in which these truths remain. We cannot “jump” to some world in which the truth-value is different. This, of course, requires that one reject the Principle of Bivalence so long as one maintains that we have libertarian freedom.

One’s initial view concerning the relationship between libertarian freedom and propositional truth is likely to depend to a large degree on whether one views CCIA as at all approaching PB in intuitive plausibility. We are taking it for granted that libertarians will generally find BPI quite compelling. And it might seem initially obvious that a view of the relationship of truth and libertarian freedom that maintains both BPI and PB will be preferable to any alternative that requires one to give up either of these. But if one finds CCIA compelling (and the more general CCI, at least, plays a part in the attractiveness of a libertarian view of freedom), then one must choose between giving up BPI or giving up PB. Giving up the latter yields an Aristotelian view, and I do not think that any libertarian will seriously consider giving up the former. We may thus see the argument from prior truth, and specifically the move from 4. to 5. in the above formulation, as resting upon CCIA. The question then, is whether it is preferable to maintain BPI by giving up PB, as Aristotelians do, or by giving up CCIA and adopting the view that we have access to possible worlds that do not share all of the past truths of this world, as Ockhamism, a view to be considered further in the next chapters, does.

I believe that the above argument from prior truth is sound. In terms of possible worlds, the argument from prior truth makes the unobjectionable claim that there are no possible worlds in which ‘E occurs at t’ is true, and E does not occur at t, and then goes
on to claim that not only do no agents have the power to change the truth-value of a proposition, but that this claim should be understood as the claim that no agents have access from a world in which a proposition has one truth-value to any possible worlds in which the proposition in question has a different truth-value. If one agrees with my judgment of the above argument, then it is likely that one will also agree with much of what I say in the next three chapters. If one does not (and I expect that most of my readers will not), if one is more ready to give up CCIA than PB, then one will read the next chapters with a skeptical eye. I ask such a reader to attempt to keep as open a mind as possible, however, and this for two reasons.

Giving up PB may seem too high a price to pay in order to maintain CCIA. But the next three chapters will not only draw out the implications of adopting an Aristotelian view engendered by maintaining CCIA; they will also draw out further implications of adopting an Ockhamist view, implications that I believe have significant counter-intuitive force. Perhaps the reader who strongly feels the conflict between the intuitive force of CCIA and PB will judge the balance between them differently after further considering the implications of maintaining them than she does now. Secondly, I will appeal to further principles in the next chapters that, while clearly more easily acceptable to those already sympathetic to Aristotelianism, are not dependent upon CCIA. It may be that certain readers will judge that libertarian freedom is compatible with PB, but not with divine foreknowledge or the traditional view of divine providence.

Before turning to those questions, however, I now turn to a consideration of the argument from past truth for logical determinism, and Ockhamism as a response to this argument and to logical determinism generally.
CHAPTER TWO:

LOGICAL DETERMINISM – OCKHAMISM AND THE ARGUMENT FROM PAST TRUTH

The previous chapter was largely devoted to a discussion of the Aristotelian argument for logical determinism from prior truth. Aristotle concluded that logical determinism could be avoided only by denying the applicability of the Principle of Bivalence to propositions about the future. With respect to libertarian freedom, accepting the Aristotelian view obviously entails that this denial of PB is a necessary condition for libertarian freedom. The almost complete circumstances in which an agent must have the ability to do otherwise required for libertarian freedom were outlined in such a way that this insight could be accommodated. I ended the previous chapter by outlining an argument from prior truth for logical determinism that is Aristotelian in its inspiration, and suggested that how one viewed this argument would be largely dependent upon whether one found the Constraining Circumstances Intuition as understood by Aristotelians similarly compelling to PB, given the assumption that one would not be willing to give up the Basic Power Intuition.

In this chapter I will initially consider another type of argument for logical determinism, the argument from past truth. Ockhamism will then be presented first as a response to the argument from past truth and then also as a theory of how logical
determinism generally may be denied. The discussion of Ockhamism as a general response to logical determinism will take us far afield into a consideration of the grounding relation between propositions and events or states of affairs. I will suggest that the view of the grounding relation that arises from the Aristotelian denial of the Principle of Bivalence is more compelling than the understanding of the grounding relation that Ockhamists have offered, such that even Ockhamists may wish to adopt it. If they do so, then their point of contention with Aristotelians is shifted to the question of whether all contingent truths must be grounded. Thus, those who believe that they must, and accept the reasoning in this chapter, will have an additional reason to advocate Aristotelianism over Ockhamism.

1. Ockhamism: Accidental Necessity and the Argument from Past Truth

The argument from prior truth considered in the last chapter is not the only argument for logical determinism, and it was in response to a type of argument from past truth that the response to logical determinism that has been commonly labeled Ockhamism was developed by William of Ockham in the middle ages. The significance of an argument based on the past truth of propositions is that it seems that a kind of necessity might well attach to past-tense propositions that does not so obviously attach to the future-tense propositions with which the Aristotelian argument was concerned.¹ Our

intuition that the past is fixed in such a way that nothing can be done about it (“what’s done is done,” “there’s no use dwelling on the past”) is much more firmly and generally held than any intuition that the future is fixed in a similar manner. If an argument for logical determinism can be constructed based on the past truth of propositions, rather than merely on their truth prior to the time which they are about, then it might seem that a kind of necessity does attach to the truth that E will occur, such that the modal fallacy commonly attributed to Aristotle and discussed in the previous chapter is not committed. This necessity, most commonly associated with the necessity of the past, was termed necessity *per accidens*, or accidental necessity, by medieval logicians, including Ockham. ²

**Accidental necessity** is a property that attaches to propositions in virtue of the events or states of affairs that they describe *no longer* having a potency for occurring or obtaining in a manner other than that described by the propositions in question. This property of “no longer” having such a potency is most clearly associated with the accident of the subject matter of a proposition becoming past. Thus, for instance, there need be nothing necessary about the proposition *A does E at t*. However, if *t* is in the past, then A’s performance of E is intuitively no longer contingent in the same sense that it was prior to *t*, when A performed E. The act is now in the past, and no longer has the

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potential to be otherwise. Thus, the proposition \( A \text{ does } E \text{ at } t \) may now be said to be necessary in virtue of the accident that the time is now later than \( t \).

Armed with this concept of necessity \textit{per accidens}, a valid argument form that might seem to yield logical determinism may be easily constructed.\textsuperscript{3} The form is,

\[
\begin{align*}
\Box (p \supset q) \\
\Box a p \\
\therefore \Box a q
\end{align*}
\]

where the box stands for broadly logical necessity and the box with the subscript-a stands for necessity \textit{per accidens}. We now substitute for \( p \) the proposition \textit{it was true that \( E \) will occur} (or just \textit{occurs} \textit{at} \( t \)), with the understanding that \( t \) remains in the future, replace \( q \) with \( E \text{ occurs at } t \), and seem to get the result that \( E \)’s occurrence at \( t \) is indeed accidentally necessary. This argument form can be generally applied to any event for which a future-tense or tenseless proposition that details the event’s occurrence at \( t \) was true in the past. But since future-tense propositions, if true, remain true until the time that they are about is no longer future, and since tenseless propositions never change in truth-value, logical determinism seems established at every moment subsequent to the first moment of time, so long as PB is maintained. Indeed, since the present is, strictly speaking, no more open to a potency for the world being otherwise than it in fact \textit{is} than the past is open to a potency for the world being otherwise than it in fact \textit{was}, such that necessity \textit{per accidens} may just as well be said to apply to truths about the present as truths about the past, logical determinism seems established from the very beginning of time.

\textsuperscript{3} The validity of the following argument obviously depends on the claim that accidental necessity is closed under entailment. This claim will be discussed later in this chapter (pp. 69-70).
Ockham’s response to this type of argument is to deny that necessity *per accidens* attaches to propositions of the form *it was true that E will occur (occurs) at t* where *t* remains future. He writes:

Some propositions are about the present as regards both their wording and their subject matter (*secundum vocem et secundum rem*). Where such propositions are concerned, it is universally true that every true proposition about the present has [corresponding to it] a necessary one about the past – e.g. ‘Socrates is seated,’ ‘Socrates is walking,’ ‘Socrates is just,’ and the like.

Other propositions are about the present as regards their wording only and are equivalently about the future, since their truth depends on the truth of propositions about the future. Where such propositions are concerned, the rule that every true proposition about the present has [corresponding to it] a necessary one about the past is not true.⁴

Ockham primarily has in mind present-tense propositions such as ‘Peter is predestinate,’ which are really about the future though their wording is present-tense. Such propositions do not have corresponding ones, such as ‘It was the case that Peter is predestinate’ that are accidentally necessary, since both the present-tense and past-tense propositions “are equivalently about the future,” depending upon the future event of God granting Peter eternal life. Ockham’s view might generally be put as denying that accidental necessity characterizes propositions that grammatically seem to be about the past or present (“as regards their wording”), but really are about the future. And propositions of the form *it was true that E will occur (occurs) at t* where *t* remains future, are the most obvious examples of such propositions.

If we examine our intuitions, I think we will find that Ockham is certainly right that there are many propositions that while initially appearing to be about the past, have meanings which are infected with futurity and are such that we do not intuitively feel that

⁴ Ockham, *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge and Future Contingents*, pp. 46-47.
the potency for the event described turning out otherwise is over and done with.

Explicitly stating what conditions must be met in order for a proposition to be necessary *per accidens* is a technical task that has been attempted with more and less success by others.\(^5\) I will discuss what I think is an intuitively compelling way of distinguishing those propositions that are accidentally necessary from those that are not later in this chapter, but I believe that it is initially enough to point out that accidental necessity does not attach to a proposition merely by stating it in a manner such that its grammatical structure is past-tense. Thus, although the argument form above involving accidental necessity has the advantage of being valid, which the modal fallacy oft associated with the argument from prior truth does not, one cannot construct a sound argument for logical determinism as simply as suggested above. Indeed, the Ockhamist response makes it appear no likelier that logical determinism can be established via appeal to accidental necessity due to a proposition’s past truth than that it can be established via a proposition’s prior truth. For however one explicitly demarcates the class of accidentally necessary propositions, it seems that propositions that are explicitly about times that remain future, only barely disguised by a claim that they were already true in the past, are exactly the sort of propositions to be first eliminated from any claim to accidental necessity.

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If one does not find the Aristotelian argument from prior truth for logical determinism compelling, it is unlikely that one will find the argument from past truth any more so. The claim that certain propositions about the future were true need appear no more threatening to one’s freedom than the claim that these same propositions are true. The argument from past truth should appear no more threatening than the one from prior truth. But nor should it appear less so. The soundness of both will rest on whether one maintains CCI in such a way that one views propositional truths as constraints on the range of actions open to an agent. If one accepts CCIA, then it is not important whether those truths are fundamentally, merely grammatically, or in no way past-tense.

2. Ockhamism: A Rejection of the Argument from Prior Truth

The Ockhamist response to the argument from past truth does nothing to directly refute the argument from prior truth, but it does show that the appeal to the past truth of propositions about future times does nothing to strengthen that argument. Ockhamism constitutes a rejection of the thesis of logical determinism as opposed to merely a rejection of a kind of argument for that thesis only if it is also understood to include the rejection of the Aristotelian argument from prior truth. But what are the grounds for such a rejection? If Aristotle had committed the obvious modal fallacy already discussed, then there would be good reason for such a rejection. But I have suggested that Aristotle can be more charitably understood, and that indeed an arguably sound argument from prior truth for logical determinism can be constructed that is still recognizably Aristotelian in inspiration. To consider the question of whether Ockhamism should be accepted as a theory effectively denying logical determinism, and thus allowing the possibility of
libertarian freedom, we must consider the theory in more detail. Ultimately, we must consider the manner in which it rejects CCIA.

Ockhamism is an attempt to maintain our intuition that the past is necessary in a way that the future is not while refusing to resort to the seemingly extreme expedient of denying PB. In order to reject the Aristotelian argument from prior truth, Ockhamism must explain how it is that having bivalent truth-values does not imbue propositions about the future with any kind of necessity or inevitability that might threaten libertarian freedom. The central intuition that is the basis for this Ockhamistic view of the world is that the present is metaphysically primary, such that the truth of propositions about the past and future asymmetrically depends on the truth of present-tense propositions in the past or future.\textsuperscript{6} I will call this the ‘Presentist Intuition’. The \textbf{Presentist Intuition} is that past and future-tense propositions are true now because a corresponding present-tense proposition was or will be true. That is, where \( z \) stands for any nonconditional present-tense contingent proposition

\begin{quote}
“It was the case that \( z \)” is now true because “It \textit{is} the case that \( z \)” \textit{was} true;

“It \textit{will be} the case that \( z \)” is now true because “It \textit{is} the case that \( z \)” \textit{will be} true.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

This “because” relationship is taken by the Ockhamist as \textit{sui generis}, an intuitively accepted aspect of the nature of time and truth.\textsuperscript{8}

This Ockhamist emphasis on the metaphysical primacy of the present purports to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}


\item See Freddoso, “Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism,” pp. 264-266.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
provide a picture of how truth-values of propositions about the future can be seen as non-threatening to libertarian freedom, a positive conception of the relation between truth-values and time in which logical determinism does not result. The Ockhamist idea is that while there are truths about the future, these truths depend upon present-tense truths that have not yet come about. Until these present-tense truths do come about, there is no reason to think that an agent cannot bring about a particular proposition’s falsity rather than truth. Thus, although “It will be the case that $z$” is now true because “It is the case that $z$” will be true, if an agent were to do otherwise, then “It is the case that $z$” will not be true, and thus neither would “It will be the case that $z$” be true now. Unless some reason is given for doubting the ability of an agent to do otherwise, there is no reason to think that libertarian freedom is threatened. The Ockhamist can thus be understood as beginning with the assumptions that we have the ability to do otherwise and that PB is true, and then constructing a theory of the relations between truth-values, time, and human free agency that accommodates these assumptions. In the terms introduced in the last chapter, the Ockhamist begins with the assumption that both BPI and PB are true, and then is led to reject CCIA.

To summarize and reiterate: based on what I have termed the Presentist Intuition, the Ockhamist believes that truths about the future asymmetrically depend upon present-tense propositions that have not yet but will become true. Furthermore, the Ockhamist believes that while the moment upon which the present-tense truths in question depend is yet future, an agent has the power to affect the truth of those present-tense propositions, and thus also of the propositions about the future to which they correspond. If “It is the case that A does E” will be true when a particular time, $t$, is present, then “It will be the
case that A does E at t” is now true. If “It is the case that A does E” will not be true when t is present, then “It will be the case that A does E at t” is now false. There is now a truth-value for the proposition “It will be the case that A does E at t,” but that truth-value depends upon what A does at t. Although this proposition is either true or false at every moment prior to t and does not change in truth-value prior to t, no necessity attaches to the truth-value the proposition has until A does in fact or does not in fact perform E at t. The present is metaphysically primary, truths about the future depend upon present-tense truths in the future, and thus nothing is fixed, determined, or necessitated (where those terms are taken in a sense that is incompatible with an agent’s ability to do otherwise) until after the agent does or does not do E at t. The Ockhamist strategy is to claim that, on the assumption that we have the ability to do otherwise, Ockhamism provides a coherent picture of the relation of truths about the future to present-tense truths in which an agent’s ability to do otherwise is not impugned. Thus, Aristotelian arguments from prior truth that purport to threaten libertarian freedom must fail in some way.

3. Dialectical Contact with Aristotelianism?

Of course, Aristotelians will argue that it is very difficult to really grasp how this asymmetrical relation works, and will ask why the claim that the present is metaphysically primary is cashed out as it is. In claiming that the asymmetrical dependence relation is sui generis, the Ockhamist will be unable to say very much in an effort to explain the relation to any Aristotelians who claim not to share the Presentist Intuition. While Freddoso assures us that “many an undergraduate will hasten to assure
you” that the Presentist Intuition is correct,\(^9\) such anecdotal evidence is unlikely to convince those of an Aristotelian persuasion. Aristotelians may well have several questions they would like addressed with more than an appeal to intuitions they do not share. For instance, why are present-tense propositions, whether about times that are now past, present, or future, metaphysically primary? Why is this preferable to the claim that present truth-values are metaphysically primary, whether they are truth-values of propositions about the past, present, or future? Does not the latter suggestion, as well as the former, give a sense of the present having metaphysical primacy? If there really are bivalent truth-values for all propositions, regardless of the times they are about, then why shouldn’t these truth-values be included as essential elements in any understanding of what is present? Why should the truth-values of some propositions be seen as dependent upon the truth-values of a privileged kind of proposition, if all propositions alike entail tenseless propositions that have unchanging bivalent truth-values? If the future-tense proposition, “It will be the case (at \(t\)) that \(z\)” entails the tenseless proposition “\(z\) occurs at \(t\),” and the present-tense proposition “It is now the case (at \(t\)) that \(z\)” entails the same tenseless proposition “\(z\) occurs at \(t\),” why should the present-tense proposition have primacy over the future-tense proposition? Indeed, if the future-tense proposition is true now, while the present-tense proposition will not be true for some time yet, should not the present truth-value of the future-tense proposition be metaphysically primary? How can one say both that there is now a bivalent truth-value for a particular proposition about the future which entails an unchanging bivalent truth-value for a particular tenseless proposition, and also that that unchanging truth-value is dependent upon an as yet

undetermined truth-value for a corresponding present-tense proposition? Is it not much easier to grasp the idea that the present truth-values of all propositions are metaphysically primary and determine what will happen, rather than that what will happen, as yet undetermined, determines the present truth-values of propositions about the future? And of course, if the metaphysical primacy of the present is understood in this way, then the Aristotelian argument from prior truth seems just as troubling as before.

The Ockhamist may suggest that a compelling reason for the Presentist Intuition, that the truth-values of present-tense propositions have metaphysical primacy over the present truth-values of past and future-tense propositions (the latter being most important in this context), can be given by considering another intuition at the heart of both a presentist view of time and a correspondence theory of truth. Since Aristotelians are both presentists and correspondence theorists, reasoning based on an intuition central to these theses should have dialectical contact with Aristotelianism. The intuition in question is that it is only in the present that states of affairs obtain and events occur, and that furthermore, propositions are true because they correspond to the obtaining of the states of affairs or occurring of the events that they describe. Ultimately, the basis of all truth-values for contingent propositions is the obtaining or occurring of the states of affairs or events that such propositions are about. Since it is only in the present that states

10 It is at this point that I expressly assume that Ockhamists are presentists with regard to time. While I labeled the intuition that the truth-values of other-than-present-tense propositions asymmetrically depend on present-tense propositions’ truth-values the “Presentist Intuition” above, one could, I suppose, maintain this intuition without being a presentist in the standard sense. Of course, there would be no obvious reason for maintaining such an intuition absent the underlying view that presentism is correct, and thus I do not think that labeling the earlier intuition the ‘Presentist Intuition’ is at all untoward. If Ockhamists chose to respond to the critique that follows in this chapter by claiming that they are not in fact presentists, I believe that the burden of proof would be upon them to defend what I have termed the Presentist Intuition, since it seems that an eternalist would at least prima facie be drawn more towards the view that all truth-values are equally important at all times in the absence of the asymmetrical relations of past and future that only make sense given the metaphysical primacy of the present.
of affairs obtain and events occur, it is the truth-values of present-tense propositions that are basic. Thus, the Presentist Intuition seems to be supported by this other intuition that Ockhamists and Aristotelians share.

Here then, is another type of asymmetrical “because” dependence that the Ockhamist can point to as underlying the Presentist Intuition: the truth of propositions depends upon the obtaining of states of affairs or the occurring of events that these propositions are about. That is, in the present-tense case,

“It is the case that \( z \)” is now true because the state of affairs or event described by \( z \) now obtains/occurs.

This correspondence relationship between propositions and the states of affairs or events that they are about is a paradigmatic kind of ‘grounding relation’, a relation in which what is grounded is guaranteed and explained by what serves as grounds. The intuition that the truth of propositions paradigmatically depends upon the obtaining or occurring of what those propositions are about might be called the ‘Grounding Intuition’.\(^\text{11}\) Rather than continuing to always talk about propositions being true because the states of affairs

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\(^{11}\) Discussion of the grounding relation has become quite prevalent in discussions of Molinism with respect to what grounds counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. For a discussion of a general account of the grounding relation meant to apply both to tensed and counterfactual propositions, see Alfred J. Freddoso, “Introduction,” in On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia, tr. by Alfred J. Freddoso, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 72-73, and Flint, Divine Providence, pp. 128-137. As far as I know, the term ‘Grounding Intuition’ is my own. As noted above, the notation I have been using to express the Presentist Intuition is based upon notation that Flint uses in the passage just cited.

Adams and Kretzmann report that Ockham agreed with Aristotle that the truth of propositions depends upon their correspondence with reality. See Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge and Future Contingents, p. 15. It thus seems to me that Ockhamists should not take issue with the claim that the Grounding Intuition underlies the Presentist Intuition despite Freddoso’s assertion that the Presentist Intuition is sui generis. Furthermore, if the Grounding Intuition is not accepted as underlying the Presentist Intuition, then I see no way to attempt to bring Aristotelians and Ockhamists into meaningful dialogue.

or events they are about obtain or occur, I will hereafter sometimes simply say that propositions are true because they are grounded. Thus, in the present-tense case,

“It is the case that \( z \)” is now true because \( z \) is now grounded.

Having recognized that the Grounding Intuition underlies the Ockhamist Presentist Intuition, we can now say a bit more about the Ockhamist’s view of the present truth-values of propositions about the past or future. Past-tense propositions are true because corresponding present-tense propositions were true, and these present-tense propositions were true because the states of affairs or events they describe obtained or occurred. That is, past-tense propositions are true because the corresponding present-tense propositions not only were true, but were also grounded. Future-tense propositions are true because corresponding present-tense propositions will be true, and these present-tense propositions will be true because the states of affairs or events they describe will obtain or occur. That is, future-tense propositions are true because the corresponding present-tense propositions not only will be true, but will also be grounded. We can incorporate the Grounding Intuition into our original statement of the Presentist Intuition as follows:

“It was the case that \( z \)” is now true because \( z \) was grounded;
“It will be the case that \( z \)” is now true because \( z \) will be grounded.

I will hereafter call this the **Presentist Grounding Intuition** (PGI).

I believe that the Presentist Grounding Intuition can provide a point of dialectical contact for Ockhamists and Aristotelians. That does not mean, of course, that Aristotelians will accept PGI. The Ockhamist is surely right that Aristotelians agree that the truth of present-tense propositions is grounded in the occurrence or obtaining of the events or states of affairs that these propositions are about, and that it is only in the present that events occur and states of affairs obtain. However, the way in which
Aristotelians should understand the grounding relation between past or future-tensed propositions and the world is somewhat different from PGI. A discussion of that difference will allow us to push the disagreement between Ockhamists and Aristotelians into a new channel and to see how Aristotelians would understand the concept of accidental necessity.


I have suggested that Ockhamists and Aristotelians might find a point of dialectical contact in their shared acceptance of presentism and a correspondence theory of truth, such that they might focus their disagreements over how truth and time are related on the question of whether PGI adequately captures our intuitions about the grounding relation between events or states of affairs and true propositions. It will be helpful in examining these questions to introduce some formal notation. The notation is adopted from the discussion of the grounding relation by Tom Flint already alluded to above.\(^\text{12}\) Let F, P, and G stand for future, past, and grounding operators respectively. Thus, F\(z\) stands for “it will be the case that \(z\),” P\(z\) for “it was the case that \(z\),” and G\(z\) for “\(z\) is now grounded.” The Presentist Grounding Intuition can then be stated as follows:

\(\text{P}z \text{ because } P(Gz); Fz \text{ because } F(Gz)\)

The first point that one should note in discussing any Grounding Intuition that deserves the moniker of “presentist” is that if one accepts presentism, then one accepts that only the present is “really” real. While past moments and their contents were real, and while future moments and their contents might come to be real, only the present moment and its

\(^{12}\) See Flint, *Divine Providence*, p. 132, n. 17.
contents are now real. Nonetheless, many presentists maintain that it is possible to truthfully refer to the occurrence of events or obtaining of states of affairs in the past and future.

The question of what grounds true past and future-tense propositions is a question that perhaps is unlikely to receive truly satisfactory treatment. PGI, in its appeal to past and future moments as the grounds for propositions, does not fully capture the presentist dogma that it is only the present occurrence of events and the present obtaining of states of affairs that are real. It might seem that if one wanted to really honor the presentist view that only the present is real, then one should seek to ground all truths in the present. I believe that something like this view, at least in regard to future-tense propositions, can be found in a passage by Timothy O’Connor in which he suggests that future-tense propositions cannot be grounded by the future grounding of the present-tense counterpart of the future-tense proposition. In comparing his view that future-tense propositions are true just in case their present-tense counterparts will be grounded (F₁ iff F[G₁]) with an account of grounding very similar to PGI, (G₁ iff F[G₁]), O’Connor writes,

I would hasten to add that a parallel problem does not arise for the claim (which I endorsed) that a future-contingent proposition is true just in case it will have grounds at some future time t. For this biconditional is not intended to prescribe a procedure by which it may be determined whether a future contingent is grounded – it is simply indicating that it has no grounds now, but, if it is in fact true, it will have grounds at a later time. Nor is it prescribing how one may determine whether such propositions are true. One cannot make that sort of determination, I believe, precisely because there are as yet no grounds for its truth.¹³

This passage suggests a rejection of the kind of indirect grounding that PGI admits. If the proposition in question, \( F_z \), is true, then it will have grounds, i.e. \( z \) will be grounded, but the truth of \( F(G_z) \) does not give one reason to claim that \( G(F_z) \).

Despite the initial attractiveness of this desire to appeal only to the present to ground truths, it is not clear how to go about carrying out such a project. As appendix one argues, there are very real, possibly insurmountable, problems with attempting to ground all propositions solely in the present. Furthermore, presentists have often simply not felt the need to attempt such an approach; they have instead been willing to opt for a view like PGI, identifying the grounds of true past or future-tense propositions with the prior or future occurrence of the event or obtaining of the state of affairs described by the proposition in question. A past-tense proposition is true so long as, and because, its present-tense counterpart was grounded by an event that occurred or a state of affairs that obtained in the past. And a future-tense proposition is true so long as, and because, its present-tense counterpart will be grounded by the occurrence of an event or obtaining of a state of affairs in the future. The question to be considered is whether the Aristotelian should accept PGI as the Ockhamist does. Or rather, since it should be obvious that the Aristotelian will not accept PGI for at least some future-tense propositions, the question to be considered is whether the Aristotelian can point to anything as justification for not accepting PGI, and what the implications of such a justification are regarding the grounding relation.

Given the assumption that past- and future-tense contingents cannot be grounded wholly in the present, and thus that it is unlikely that there are any viable alternative accounts of grounding that come closer to the paradigmatic correspondence relation than
PGI does, why should the Aristotelian reject this indirect account of grounding? If we are to admit that the presentist dogma cannot be fully respected, what might be objectionable about PGI? An Ockhamist might well suggest that to look for a further justification of a proposition’s truth than PGI provides must indicate some confusion about the nature of truth and grounding. For both the Ockhamist and Aristotelian agree that truth is based on the correspondence of propositions with reality, and PGI maintains that notion of grounding, although it points to times other than now to identify the relevant grounding activity. According to PGI, only present-tense propositions are directly grounded, and they are grounded by their correspondence with presently occurring events or presently obtaining states of affairs. Other-tensed propositions are grounded indirectly, in virtue of their correctly pointing out that a corresponding present-tense proposition was or will be grounded at the time the proposition in question specifies.

I think that the Aristotelian can accept that the best we can do in accounting for how other-than-present-tense contingent truths are now grounded is to admit this type of indirect grounding, and yet still have good reason to reject PGI. For the indirect grounding of past- and future-tense propositions affirmed by PGI depends upon two related assumptions. The first is that if a present-tense proposition is true, then it will forever afterwards be the case that past-tense counterparts of that proposition will also be true. The second is that if a present-tense proposition is true, then it has always been the case that future-tense counterparts of that proposition were true. It is only if the truth of present-, past-, and future-tense propositions are “linked” in these ways that we can presume that indirect grounding relationships similarly link the current grounding of past-
or future-tense propositions to prior or future grounding activity. If the fact that a present-tense proposition was grounded and true isn’t sufficient to guarantee that a past-tense counterpart of that proposition is now true, then it certainly isn’t sufficient to guarantee that the same past-tense counterpart is now grounded.

The Ockhamist will presumably view PGI, as well as the two assumptions mentioned above, as necessarily true. We might state these assumptions as the following principles, where the box represents broadly logical necessity, \(z\) represents a true present-tense proposition, \(x\) represents any event or state of affairs, and \(Ox\) represents the obtaining or occurring of that state of affairs or event:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{FPZ:} & \quad \Box [(z \land F(Ox)) \rightarrow F(Pz)] \\
\text{PFZ:} & \quad \Box [(z \land P(Ox)) \rightarrow P(Fz)].
\end{align*}
\]

That is, if a present-tense proposition is true, then so long as something obtains or occurs in the future (so long as there is a future), appending the past-tense operator to that present-tense proposition will thereafter result in a truth. And so long as something occurred or obtained in the past (so long as there is a past), appending a future-tense operator to the present-tense proposition in question results in a proposition that was true at any point prior to the moment at which the present-tense proposition is true. But of course, while the Aristotelian presumably will want to affirm FPZ, she will not think that PFZ is true. Since FPZ and PFZ are both necessary conditions of PGI, the Aristotelian may reasonably deny PGI if she can explain why denying PFZ is appropriate.

We can think of the Aristotelian’s reason for denying that PGI appropriately captures the grounding relationship as based on the idea that its truth is not itself adequately grounded. The Ockhamist might suggest that PB and the nature of past- and
future-tense operators provide adequate grounds for FPZ and PFZ. But of course, the Aristotelian views PFZ, and thus PGI also, as false, since she denies that PB applies to all future-tense propositions. The first question that she must answer then, is whether she can give some other account of grounding that adequately explains the truth of FPZ and of past-tense contingent propositions, which she wants to affirm. If she can do so, then the subsequent questions that we must consider are whether the Aristotelian alternative account of grounding is preferable to PGI in any respects, and whether Ockhamists could or should accept it.

Let us continue to assume that the indirect grounding relationship affirmed by PGI is as close as we can come to maintaining the correspondence relation that is the paradigm for the grounding relation. Since a radically different account of grounding is not possible, the Aristotelian must then seek to supplement PGI in some way. I will call the resultant principle PGI+. If she can add to PGI a condition that is such that its truth is based on the present obtaining of certain states of affairs, and if FPZ (but not PFZ) can be grounded in the same condition, then the Aristotelian would have a grounding relation where the “link” between P(Gz) and the current truth of Pz would itself be grounded. She could then claim that the indirect grounding relationship between P(Gz) and Pz, such that the latter is now grounded, holds in virtue of PGI plus this condition, but that a similar account does not apply to future-tense contingent propositions. The condition that I think that the Aristotelian can appeal to might loosely be labeled “the nature of time”. The question of what time is is not a question that I wish to pursue at any length that would do justice to the difficulty of the question. I will merely record several assumptions that will play a role in the forthcoming discussion.
First, I assume that time is something real, that it is not merely a construct created by our human minds. In part, I assume this out of a desire to maintain a certain symmetry in my ontology. Just as I believe that there are propositions, properties, and states of affairs because the existence of these kinds of entities provides good answers to questions that arise from a consideration of our experiences of the world and how we relate these experiences, I believe that time is something because this supposition provides good answers to questions about how we experience the world. It may well be possible to fully explain the phenomena explained by the supposition that time is real in terms of time’s being merely a psychological construct of the human mind, just as it may well be possible to explain the phenomena that lead me to posit that there are propositions, properties, and states of affairs without recourse to such entities. I here merely record my belief (a belief, like most, that is open to further consideration) that a desire for a spartan ontology is at least no greater a consideration in such questions than a desire for an ontology that allows relatively uncomplicated and uncontrived explanations of phenomena, and that on balance, I find that the explanatory resources of a rich ontology are sufficient to outweigh any intuitions in favor of a more spartan view of the inhabitants of the world.

Second, I assume that time has an essential nature. Clearly, if I am to argue that “the nature of time” underlies the first necessary principle above, I must claim that time’s nature is also necessary. I believe that certain features of time, at least, are not like laws of nature where such laws might have been otherwise than they are. At least some of the properties of time are necessarily the way that they are. This is not to say that I am committed to the view that the existence of time is necessary. Perhaps God is eternal rather than everlasting and might have created nothing, including time. All that I wish to
assume here is that if time exists (as it clearly does) then certain properties necessarily accompany it.

Third, and most important to an evaluation of PGI, I assume that whatever time is, it essentially involves asymmetrical directionality. Of necessity, time progresses, and change takes place as the present moves forward into the future. Change does not take place “backwards”; the “and then” of any change is always forward – a thing is one way, and then it is another. Time inherently includes “before” and “after.” The reason for this, moreover, is that the present is metaphysically primary and only “moves” forward. Both eternalists and presentists presumably accept the directionality of time, but only presentists have an explanation for time’s directionality.14 And based on the presentist understanding of time’s directionality in terms of the metaphysical primacy of the present, always moving forward, it seems to me that assuming that the past is “fixed” is warranted. If time essentially involves the present “moving forward,” then once the present has passed earlier moments, these moments and their contents, no longer real, cannot be revisited or made otherwise than they were. We can to some extent “create” the present, both in this present moment and in future moments that will be present. But the past has been created and because the present can never again visit these moments, they and their contents remain fixed ever afterwards. I think that our experience of time clearly supports this conception of time, and while my description of this aspect of time may be partly metaphorical, I believe that it cannot be wholly so – an essential aspect of

14 This may be seen as the positive thesis of McTaggart’s famous century-old argument: that time essentially involves an A-series of positions running from past to present to future, and that this A-series is required for the directionality of time and underlies the B-series of earlier than and later than relations. See J. Ellis McTaggart, “The Unreality of Time,” Mind 17 (1908), pp. 457-474.
time is its directionality, that aspect can be adequately explained only in terms of the
metaphysical primacy of the present, and that explanation supports the intuition that the
past is fixed.

Given these assumptions, we can explain the necessary truth, \( \Box [(z \& Fx) \supset F(Pz)] \), in terms of the nature of time. It is precisely because time flows “forward” that
any true present-tense proposition will have corresponding past-tense propositions true at
any point after the present-tense proposition is true. It is because events occupy moments
of time and because change only occurs forward, never backward, that it is a necessary
truth that once something is a fact, it remains a fact ever afterward. Once it is true that
the event *Clinton’s voting for Gore* occurs, it will ever afterward be true that this event
occurred. Events occur or states of affairs obtain at particular moments. As the present
moves on, these moments no longer exist, but facts about the contents of those moments
remain fixed. While which future events will occur may yet remain to be determined, the
determination of what events occurred in the past has been settled since their occurrence
became past, merely by virtue of the nature and passage of time. The truth of FPZ can be
and is explained by the essential asymmetrical directionality of time.

The claim that \( \Box [(z \& Px) \supset P(Fz)] \), is not similarly explained by the nature of
time. It is no doubt true that the nature of time plays a role in explaining our use of the
past and future-tense operators P and F, so that perhaps there is a sense in which we
might say that the nature of time would be partly responsible for the truth of PFZ. But
the nature of time provides much less than a full or sufficient explanation of PFZ, as it
plausibly does for FPZ. Time’s asymmetrical directionality is understood in terms of the
present moving forward, leaving behind a past that cannot be revisited or changed, but
there is nothing in this understanding of time that suggests that propositions about
moments of time that have not yet existed should be true now. Insofar as we just
consider our understanding of time, there is no reason to assume that if a present-tense
proposition is true now, then corresponding future-tense propositions were true at
moments prior to now, as opposed to assuming that corresponding future-tense
propositions simply did not have a determinate truth-value, since the event’s occurrence
that serves to ground the present-tense proposition’s truth had not yet occurred. The
acceptance of PFZ as well as FPZ by Ockhamists is based on their understanding of the
nature of truth as bivalent, not solely on the nature of time.

Given this understanding of the nature of time, the Aristotelian may claim that
metaphorically speaking, the present’s moving forward through time provides the “link”
between the event or state of affairs that directly grounded a present-tense proposition
and the past-tense propositions that are true thereafter. The nature of time grounds FPZ
and the “link” between the prior truth-values of present-tense propositions and the current
truth-values of past-tense propositions. Given the acceptability of FPZ, the Aristotelian
need see no impediment to the indirect grounding relationship affirmed by PGI for past-
tense propositions. Thus, the Aristotelian will suggest the following ‘Presentist

**Grounding Intuition Plus**’ (PGI+) as an alternative to PGI:

\[ P_2 \text{ because } P(G) \text{ and } N_t, \]

where \( N_t \) of course refers to the nature of time.

PGI+, unlike PGI, is not applicable to future-tense propositions. The nature of
time, being essentially asymmetrically directional, plays no role in justifying, explaining,
or grounding the “link” between future grounding activity and the current truth of future-
tense propositions. The Aristotelian suggests that PFZ is not true, and thus Fz cannot be true because of F(Gz) – Fz’s truth cannot be indirectly grounded by F(Gz). Thus, any contingent proposition, Fz, if true, is not grounded. The Aristotelian will of course happily suggest that it is preferable, in light of other important considerations related to human freedom, to accept that certain propositions are neither true nor false, rather than to accept that there are true but ungrounded propositions. But the Ockhamist might accept PGI+ and that future-tense contingent propositions are true but not grounded. Is there any reason for her to consider doing so?

The Aristotelian cannot accept PGI, for it clearly implies that all future-tense propositions are true so long as, and because, the future event that they describe will occur. But the Aristotelian need not simply decry PGI as contradicting a favorite tenet of her belief system, for she can point out an additional justification, or ground, for FPZ that is unavailable for PFZ. This justification appeals to the nature of time, which Ockhamists arguably and plausibly view as underlying accidental necessity. So the alternative account of grounding that the Aristotelian can suggest, based as it is on the addition to PGI of an appeal to the nature of time, should have some initial plausibility to Ockhamists. Ockhamists need not accept PGI+ in place of PGI, of course, for they may see FPZ and PFZ as grounded in PB and the nature of tense-operators, but one of the questions that is relevant to evaluating whether Ockhamists might find PGI+ preferable to PGI is whether PB and the nature of tense-operators provides as good a ground for FPZ and PFZ as the nature of time does for FPZ.

I think that it can be argued that they do not. Remember that the paradigm for the grounding relationship is the correspondence of propositions to the way the world is. The
nature of time, as I have described it, involves states of affairs obtaining that I believe all of us experience as a part of the world. While we can’t literally point to the nature of time as we could point to the cat’s being on the mat, we can’t help but “feel” that time is essentially asymmetrically directional, “moving” from past to future. It thus seems to me that propositions that describe the nature of time are such that they correspond to the way the world is in the paradigmatic sense of the correspondence relation. And therefore, the nature of time seems to me to ground FPZ as well as one could ask. Leaving aside the question of the role of PB in grounding FPZ and PFZ, it seems to me that it is not nearly as obvious that the nature of tense-operators obtains as it is that the nature of time does. If tense-operators are not merely defined, such that they need have no attachment to the world other than in their acceptance as having certain meanings by a particular community, then it seems that truths about how they operate are likely to be grounded in the nature of time. Past- and future-tense operators are likely understood in the way that they are because we believe that they accurately reflect certain temporal relationships between past, present, and future. And these temporal relationships are just what I have suggested are involved in the nature of time. Thus it seems to me that one might well see tense-operators as themselves grounded in the nature of time. Of course, as discussed above, if one wants to accept PFZ as well as FPZ, then one cannot ground these principles solely in the nature of time, but rather must also appeal to PB in order to plausibly claim that PFZ is grounded. But if the reasoning in this paragraph is accurate, then it is plausible to think that the nature of time better grounds FPZ than does the combination of PB and the nature of tense-operators, since propositions about the latter are plausibly themselves grounded in the nature of time. This might provide one reason
for an Ockhamist to consider accepting PGI+ rather than PGI, choosing to acknowledge the nature of time explicitly in her account of grounding, and thus viewing future-tense contingents as true but ungrounded.

The Aristotelian rejection of PGI remains based on the prior rejection of PB, and any case for Aristotelianism as opposed to Ockhamism must begin from the realization of a real conflict between CCI and PB. If one has no inclination to accept CCIA, then Aristotelianism can gain no traction against a view of the relationship between truth and time such as Ockhamism, for one does not feel that anything is lost in recognizing the need to give up CCIA. But given that one recognizes the force of the Constraining Circumstances Intuition and finds the Aristotelian understanding of it plausible, the case for Aristotelianism is a cumulative one, based on the ability of an Aristotelian view of truth and time to systematically answer questions that arise from a consideration of the relationship of truth, time, and libertarian freedom in a more compelling manner than Ockhamism can. One of the questions that I believe fits this description is that of how past-tense contingent propositions are presently grounded. It seems to me that PGI+ better grounds these propositions because the claim that there is the relevant “link” between the prior grounding of a present-tense truth and the present truth of a corresponding past-tense proposition (FPZ) is itself better grounded. My belief that PGI+ is preferable to PGI gains additional support by the ease with which propositions that are necessary per accidens and propositions that are not may be differentiated based upon PGI+.
5. Applying PGI+ to Accidental Necessity

The previous section suggested that while the Presentist Grounding Intuition might well provide a point of dialectical contact between Aristotelians and Ockhamists, the two groups would reach different conclusions about the acceptability of PGI. PGI+ was suggested as the Aristotelian alternative to PGI, and the question was raised of whether Ockhamists could or should accept PGI+ as opposed to PGI. I think that the answer is that they clearly could, and that there is no reason that they shouldn’t so long as the topic of discussion is limited to prior truth. PGI+ has the implication that future-tense contingent propositions cannot be presently grounded. Far from being an obstacle to their view, I believe that PGI+ promises an easy means of differentiating those propositions that are accidentally necessary from those that are not. Simply put, if a proposition is grounded, then it is imbued with some type of necessity. And if the passage and nature of time is the primary factor in that proposition’s being grounded, then the proposition is necessary \textit{per accidens}. The difference between Aristotelians and Ockhamists need not lie in whether they believe that PGI or PGI+ captures our understanding of the grounding relation; their disagreement might instead lie in whether they think that propositions may be true and yet not grounded. Ockhamists might think that they can be, Aristotelians will not.

One of the apparent advantages of adopting PGI+ for Ockhamists, and an additional reason that it is preferable to PGI, is that PGI+ can be used to delineate which propositions are and which are not accidentally necessary in a clear-cut and intuitively compelling manner. One could not, of course, similarly delineate those propositions that are and are not accidentally necessary on the basis of those that are grounded according
to PGI, since future-tense propositions are also grounded on that view. A proponent of PGI might object that this simply shows that the properties of being grounded and of being necessary in any sense, including being accidentally necessary, have nothing to do with each other. But it does seem to me, as I will attempt to show over the next few pages, that being grounded according to PGI+ and being accidentally necessary are properties had by the same propositions. And it does not seem unreasonable to me to think that these propositions’ accidental necessity is had by them because they are grounded in part by the nature of time, since it seems to me that accidental necessity is meant to be a modality based upon the passage of time. (I will say a bit about an alternative view of accidental necessity at the end of chapter three, however.)

The most obviously paradigmatic examples of propositions that seem to have the accidental necessity that being past imparts are propositions about events that occurred in the past or states of affairs that obtained in the past. For example,

“It was the case that *Socrates dies from drinking hemlock,*” or
“It was the case that *Socrates is Xanthippe’s husband.*”

What is obviously true of such propositions is that they are now true because (in part) the internal present-tense propositions were grounded in the past by the events or states of affairs that they are about. The event of Socrates’ death occurred; the state of affairs of Socrates’ being Xanthippe’s husband obtained. And thereafter, as our intuitions attest, nothing could be done to change the fact that Socrates died or that Xanthippe was his wife. At every subsequent moment after their grounding, corresponding past-tense propositions are not only true but are also indirectly grounded in virtue of the passage and nature of time. Past-tense propositions about this event and this state of affairs are rightly seen as having become accidentally necessary at every moment after Socrates’ death and
marriage. We may conclude that paradigmatic examples of propositions that are necessary *per accidens* are characterized by their present-tense counterparts having been grounded in the past, and by the past-tense propositions themselves being indirectly grounded thereafter at every present moment, according to PGI+.

PGI+ allows us to explain the status of the merely grammatically past-tense propositions that Ockhamism rejects as necessary *per accidens* as well. For instance,

“*It was the case that Al Gore wins the 2004 presidential election,*” and
“*It was the case that Al Gore is president in 2005.*”

The internal propositions here, on the assumption that they are true, were not grounded in the past. These propositions, if true, will be grounded in the future by the occurrence of the event of Al Gore’s winning the 2004 presidential election and the obtaining of the state of affairs of his being president. The nature of the grounding relation between these propositions and the event and state of affairs that they are about points out that these propositions are not really about the past. Rather, they are really about the future, but have been thinly disguised as past-tense by appending “*it was the case that*” to tenseless propositions about a future event and a future state of affairs. The past-tense disguise is even thinner when we substitute a future-tense proposition for *z*. For instance,

“*It was the case that Al Gore will win the 2004 presidential election.*”

So here we have what may be taken as paradigmatic examples of merely grammatically past-tense propositions that our intuitions strongly suggest are not accidentally necessary. And the point to be seen here is that a characteristic of these types of propositions is that their present-tense counterparts have not been grounded in the past, nor are the past-tense propositions themselves in any way grounded in the present. Instead, if the past-tense propositions are true, then their internal propositions *will be* grounded. I would like to
suggest that the reason that merely grammatically past-tense propositions are not accidentally necessary is simply that they have not yet been grounded. Furthermore, I think that continuing to consider our intuitions in an organized manner will confirm that whether or not a proposition is presently grounded according to PGI+ accurately determines whether or not it is necessary *per accidens*.

Our intuitions are pretty clear about whether paradigmatic examples of past-tense propositions like those above are necessary *per accidens* or not. And indeed, I think that our intuitions about most logical permutations of the paradigm cases are also quite clear. For the most part, I offer no argument that the following is correct, but merely ask that my readers examine their intuitions about the cases put before them. The hypothesis that I am suggesting is that considerations of whether a proposition is presently grounded according to PGI+ will line up exactly with our intuitions about whether or not a proposition’s truth-value is determined in such a way that it no longer could be otherwise: if a proposition is grounded, then its truth-value no longer can be otherwise. And if a proposition’s present grounding is primarily due either to the present occurrence of the event it describes or to a combination of the prior occurrence of the event it describes along with the passage and nature of time, then it is necessary *per accidens*. Otherwise, it is not.\(^\text{15}\)

Since propositions that are necessary *per accidens* are by definition true, negations of accidentally necessary propositions will not themselves be accidentally

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\(^{15}\) Unless it is entailed by an accidentally necessary proposition, since we will see below that accidental necessity should be construed in such a way that it is closed under contingent entailment.
necessary. However, affirmative propositions that are not necessary per accidens and their negations will both have the same status. That is, both

“Al Gore will win the presidential election in 2004” and
“It is not the case that Al Gore will win the presidential election in 2004”

are not necessary per accidens. This is because whichever of this pair is true, its truth has not yet been grounded.

All conjuncts of a conjunction must be necessary in some way in order for the conjunction to be so, just as all conjuncts must be true for the whole conjunction to be true. If at least one conjunct of a conjunction is necessary per accidens, and all other conjuncts that are not accidentally necessary are logically necessary, then we may say that the entire conjunction is necessary per accidens.

“Socrates died from drinking hemlock and Al Gore lost the 2000 presidential election”

is necessary per accidens (objections of ardent Democrats aside). But

“Socrates died from drinking hemlock and Al Gore will win the 2004 presidential election”

is not necessary per accidens.

“Socrates died from drinking hemlock and 2 + 2 = 4”

is also necessary per accidens.

Only one disjunct in a disjunction must be necessary per accidens for the disjunction as a whole to be so. Again, this parallels the truth-conditions for a disjunction.

“Either Socrates died from drinking hemlock or Al Gore will win the 2004 presidential election”

is necessary per accidens, although
“Either Socrates died from being hanged or Al Gore will win the 2004 presidential election”

is not, even if we assume the truth of the second disjunct. However, if both disjuncts are true, one is necessary *per accidens* and the other is logically necessary, the disjunction as a whole will be logically necessary. For instance,

“Either Socrates died from drinking hemlock or 2 + 2 = 4”

is logically necessary, not merely accidentally necessary.

There is an initial similarity between the conditions necessary and sufficient for conjunctions and disjunctions to be accidentally necessary and the conditions necessary and sufficient for their being true. However, I have stipulated a caveat in the case of both conjunctions and disjunctions that removes a bit of that similarity. These stipulations are made in order to maintain that accidental necessity is closed under logically contingent entailment. The initial similarity between accidental necessity conditions and truth conditions might suggest that this modality, like all well-behaved modalities, is closed under some type of entailment, and being closed under (contingent) entailment is certainly a characteristic that Ockhamists should want any account of necessity *per accidens* to yield if it is to be systematically applicable to analyses of whether or not the truth-values of certain propositions are determined beyond our ability to influence. It is important that accidental necessity be closed under contingent entailment, rather than closed under entailment generally, in order for it to mark out a separate modality that is essentially related to the passage of time. Freddoso explicitly claims that his account of accidental necessity is closed under contingent entailment, limiting the modality to
logically contingent propositions, and it seems that Ockham himself intended the term ‘necessity per accidens’ to mark out a different type of necessity than logical necessity.\(^\text{16}\)

The stipulation that I made for conjunctions was that only one conjunct had to be accidentally necessary, though all conjuncts had to be accidentally or logically necessary, for the conjunction as a whole to be necessary per accidens. If this stipulation is not made, then accidental necessity is not closed under logically contingent entailment, for while the proposition *Socrates died from drinking hemlock* is both logically contingent and accidentally necessary, and while this proposition entails the conjunction *Socrates died from drinking hemlock and 2 + 2 = 4*, this conjunction would not itself be accidentally necessary if both conjuncts had to be accidentally necessary.

There is no similar counter-example to understanding disjunctions without the stipulation above. Without this stipulation, disjunctions would be accidentally necessary just in case one disjunct is such, even if another disjunct were logically necessary. I do not think that this understanding would allow there to be a disjunction, itself logically contingent and accidentally necessary, that entails another logically contingent proposition that would not be accidentally necessary. However, I believe that there is another kind of case that warrants making the stipulation that disjunctions in which at least one disjunct is logically necessary are themselves logically necessary, even if

\^\text{16} \text{See Freddoso, “Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism,” pp. 258-260, and Adams and Kretzman, *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, p. 38, n. 14. Closely related to the question of whether logically necessary propositions should also be considered accidentally necessary is the issue of whether broadly logically necessary truths are “hard facts” (i.e. facts that are “fixed” such that agents do not have any power over their truth-values) along with truths that are necessary per accidens. Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosenkratz explicitly point out that their account of hard facts results in logically necessary states of affairs being soft facts in “Hard and Soft Facts,” *Philosophical Review* 93 (1984), p. 432. William Hasker stipulates that necessary truths are hard facts in “Foreknowledge and Necessity,” p. 134. It would certainly seem that logically necessary truths should be considered as hard facts, though not as accidentally necessary, but this question is not at this point important to my discussion.}
another disjunct is accidentally necessary. Consider our favorite accidentally necessary proposition *Socrates died from drinking hemlock*. This proposition of course entails the disjunction *Socrates died from drinking hemlock or 2+2=4*. Without the stipulation that such a disjunction in which one disjunct is logically necessary should as a whole be considered to be logically rather than accidentally necessary, this would be a case suggesting that accidental necessity is closed under entailment generally, rather than merely under contingent entailment. The stipulation allows us to maintain that accidental necessity is a modality distinct from broadly logical necessity.

One can consider the stipulations about how accidental necessity conditions differ from truth conditions for conjunctions and disjunctions in another way as well. Logical necessity is without question a stronger necessity than accidental necessity. If accidental necessity is being understood as a property that propositions have because they are grounded indirectly according to PGI+, then it might well seem that the truth of disjunctions in which one disjunct is logically necessary and another is accidentally necessary are not primarily grounded in PGI+, but in the logical necessity of the logically necessary disjunct. When we ask why the disjunction is true, it might seem that the fact that one of its disjuncts is logically necessary is a stronger reason in some sense than that another of its disjuncts correctly describes the prior occurrence of an event that is linked to the present by the essential nature of time. It might seem that a proposition whose truth is guaranteed by both a logically necessary component and an accidentally necessary component should be thought of as logically rather than accidentally necessary because there is a sense in which we might say that the former component is more strongly grounded.
With regard to construing the modal status of conjunctions, it seems plausible that "a necessity weaker than logical necessity can be transferred by strict implication." The most commonly discussed transfer of this sort is the argument form that I earlier claimed was valid:

$$\Box (p \supset q)$$  
$$\Box a p$$  
$$\therefore \Box a q$$

But the argument form,

$$\Box q$$  
$$\Box a p$$  
$$\Box a (p \& q)$$

also reflects this view. Causal and physical necessity, on the assumption that they are weaker necessities than logical necessity, might also be transferred as just described.

One might wonder how such modalities should be related to accidental necessity. Where there is a conjunction in which one conjunct is accidentally necessary and all other conjuncts are necessary in some other weaker-than-logical-necessity way, it is not clear to me that there is an obviously appropriate description for the necessity that attaches to such a proposition. It seems plausible to me that whatever necessity attaching to one of the conjuncts is "weakest" should be used to describe the conjunction as a whole, but I do not think that we need to delve too deeply into such questions. The reason for this is that while accidental necessity plausibly should be construed as demarcating a modality

\[\text{Zagzebski, } \textit{The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge}, \text{ p. 7.}\]

\[\text{Following Freddoso, I use the term physical necessity to refer to the necessity that laws of nature have and the term causal necessity to refer to the necessity that events have in virtue of a determining relationship between causal conditions and laws of nature. See Freddoso, } \textit{“Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism,”} \text{ p. 257.}\]
primarily based on the passage of time that is separate from logical necessity, such that it extends only to logically contingent propositions, there is no evident reason that it could not overlap with causal and physical necessity. While we do not want to say that a proposition is both accidentally and logically necessary, I see no reason not to say that a proposition is both accidentally and causally, or physically, necessary. Thus, for instance, if a disjunction has an accidentally necessary and a physically necessary disjunct, we might label the disjunction as a whole both accidentally and physically necessary.

Assuming that the conditions under which conjunctions and disjunctions are accidentally necessary are correct, stating the conditions necessary and sufficient for material conditionals to be accidentally necessary is easily done. Since \((p \supset q)\) is equivalent to \((\neg p \lor q)\), we can state the conditions thus:

\[
\text{a material conditional is necessary } \textit{per accidens} \text{ just in case a) its consequent is accidentally necessary and its antecedent is not logically impossible, or b) its antecedent is accidentally impossible and its consequent is not logically necessary.}
\]

The b) clause is required for what should be obvious reasons. These conditions do not rule out a conditional being necessary in some other-than-logically-necessary way in addition to being accidentally necessary. However, biconditionals will be accidentally necessary if and only if either both sides of the biconditional are necessary \textit{per accidens} or the negations of both are necessary \textit{per accidens}. Thus, both

“Al Gore lost the 2000 presidential election if and only if George W. Bush won the 2000 presidential election” and

“Al Gore won the 2000 presidential election if and only if George W. Bush lost the 2000 presidential election”

will be necessary \textit{per accidens}. 
I think that the above should accord fairly well with our intuitions about accidental necessity, and thus confirm the hypothesis that whether or not a proposition is primarily grounded in a way that accords with PGI+ provides an easy means of distinguishing propositions that are and are not accidentally necessary. Of course, given that accidental necessity is closed under logically contingent entailment, any logically contingent propositions entailed by accidentally necessary propositions will themselves be accidentally necessary. But at least initially it seems that some of these propositions might not be grounded either by presently occurring events or presently obtaining states of affairs described by the proposition, or by the past occurrence of events or obtaining of states of affairs described by the proposition in conjunction with the nature of time. For instance, if a future-tense proposition is entailed by an accidentally necessary proposition, then it would be accidentally necessary, but would of course not be grounded, according to PGI+, by the prior occurrence of the events or the obtaining of the states of affairs that it describes in conjunction with the nature of time. In such a case, I think that one should say that the future-tense proposition is currently grounded by what might awkwardly be called the nature of logic, in conjunction with whatever it is that grounds the accidentally necessary proposition that entails the future-tense proposition in question.

6. Summing up Ockhamism in Light of the Above

The above discussion has suggested that the question of whether or not a true proposition is presently grounded in virtue of a corresponding present-tense proposition’s having already been grounded, in conjunction with the passage and nature of time, provides a very simple criterion for determining whether or not a true proposition is in
fact necessary *per accidens*. This criterion suits the paradigm cases discussed above, as well as complex propositions whose components are clearly either necessary *per accidens* or not. Given the difficulty of giving intuitively compelling criteria that delineate those propositions that are accidentally necessary from those that are not (some of which will be discussed in the next chapter), it might thus seem that the Ockhamist should help herself to PGI+. Before doing so, however, she should consider how an Ockhamist theory that accepts PGI+ compares with one that accepts PGI.

According to the Presentist Grounding Intuition, a proposition’s truth-value is determined *because* its corresponding present-tense proposition was, is, or will be grounded. The Ockhamist idea is that no necessity attaches to a proposition’s truth-value until the time at which the grounding of the present-tense counterpart takes place. Nonetheless, all propositions are currently grounded in virtue of tensed propositions to the effect that the present-tense counterpart was, is, or will be grounded. I have not considered how the classes of propositions that are and are not necessary *per accidens* might be delineated for this type of Ockhamism. An Ockhamist who accepts PGI+ instead of PGI has a readily available means of determining which propositions are accidentally necessary. For on this view, only propositions that are presently grounded are necessary, and only propositions that are directly grounded by their correspondence with presently obtaining states of affairs, are indirectly grounded according to PGI+, or are entailed by propositions that are presently grounded in these ways, are necessary *per accidens*. This type of Ockhamism will maintain that there are contingent future-tense truths, but these truths are not presently grounded, nor can one say that they are true.
because of anything. All that one can say is that a given future-tense proposition, \( F_z \), is true just in case its present-tense counterpart, \( z \), will be grounded: \( F(Gz) \).

It seems to me that all that the Ockhamist who accepts PGI+ rather than PGI is giving up is the claim that all propositions are currently grounded. Nonetheless, this is likely to seem like quite a lot to give up for many Ockhamists, for the Ockhamist can no longer claim to have an explanation for the truth of all propositions. Rather than explaining that future-tense propositions are true because their present-tense counterparts will be true, and will be grounded, the Ockhamist must be satisfied with making a claim that even the Aristotelian can accede to: a future-tense proposition is true if and only if its present-tense counterpart will be true, and will be grounded. The asymmetrical dependency of present truth-values on the truth-values of corresponding present-tense propositions that I suggested was at the core of the Ockhamist theory has been effectively removed for future-tense truths. And this will seem to many Ockhamists to be a pointless concession towards the Aristotelian point of view.

However, it seems to me that if one intends to put forth a view that accepts a presentist view of time, then one must find some link between the events or states of affairs in the past or future that contingent propositions are about, in order to claim that these propositions are grounded, rather than merely true. The nature of time provides such a link, allowing for an explanation of the truth of past-tense propositions that is simply unavailable for future-tense propositions. Of course, if future-tense propositions are now causally or physically necessary, then there will be presently occurring events and/or presently obtaining states of affairs that guarantee and explain, and thus ground, the truth of such propositions. But contingent future-tense propositions, if true, are
inexplicably true. If there are any Ockhamists who share this kind of intuition, then an
Ockhamism based on PGI+ would allow them to maintain their view that all propositions
have bivalent truth-values while honestly facing the fact that there is now no reason that
certain propositions should have one truth-value rather than another.

Ockhamists must define the accessibility relationship between an agent and
possible worlds in which the agent performs one or another action at a particular time in
such a way that CCIA is not assumed. One way that the Ockhamist might do this is to
deny that the almost complete circumstances, C, in which an agent must have the ability
to do otherwise in order to have libertarian freedom, should be defined as the Aristotelian
who accepts CCIA defines them. The Ockhamist does not see prior truths, in and of
themselves, as threatening to the ability to do otherwise. Rather, she believes that there is
a legitimate potential for opposites with regard to the truth-value of many propositions
referring to future times, despite there being a determinate truth-value that will not and
cannot change for every tenseless proposition. In other words, a world in which A does
not perform E might be accessible to A even if there were prior truths in the past of the
actual world to the effect that A will do E. The prior truth-values of certain propositions
then are a part of what is left out of the “almost complete” circumstances, C. To include
all prior truth-values in C as the Aristotelian does (on the assumption that there really are
prior truth-values), would necessitate drawing the conclusion that there is no libertarian
freedom. But since (the Ockhamist believes) we clearly have libertarian freedom, and
there clearly are truths about what will happen in the future, the definition of libertarian
freedom must not allow such truths to preclude the ability to do otherwise. And so CCI
must not be understood to include certain prior truths.
Prior truths that are necessary *per accidens*, or that are necessary in some other way, will of course be included. Ockhamists who maintain PGI+ thus have an easy means of delineating which propositions are and are not included in C. In light of the above discussion about the relation between PGI+ and the concept of accidental necessity, propositions whose truth-values are presently grounded must be included in C. But propositions whose truth-values are not presently grounded should not be included. Thus, the Ockhamist who accepts PGI+ can express her understanding of C as follows:

**Almost** Complete Circumstances, \( C_{\alpha} \) The maximal grounded state of affairs obtaining at \( t-1 \), the moment immediately prior to \( t \), plus all causation occurring at \( t \) other than A’s performing E.

The definition must be formulated in this way in order to rule out propositions such as those discussed in the prior chapter that would on the Ockhamist view be grounded at \( t \), as A performs E. It should be clear that this definition of C allows that an agent might be free to perform or refrain from performing E, even if there is a prior (ungrounded) truth detailing that A does perform E at \( t \). The Ockhamist who accepts PGI+ thus has a convenient means of explicating her theory of the relationship of truth to libertarian freedom, both in regard to the differentiation of propositions that are and are not necessary *per accidens*, and also by extension in regard to the way in which she maintains BPI and PB but rejects CCIA. She may be seen as instead advocating that CCI be understood as follows:

**CCIO**: What I am able to do must always be consistent with the circumstances in which I perform my action, where those circumstances are understood to include the maximal grounded state of affairs obtaining at \( t-1 \), the moment immediately prior to \( t \), plus all causation occurring at \( t \) other than A’s performing E.
7. Re-evaluating Aristotelianism vs. Ockhamism

I want to end this chapter by calling attention to a point that has been alluded to above, and that may seem a bit surprising: both Aristotelians and Ockhamists can agree on the truth-conditions for future-tense contingent truths. That is, both can accept that a future-tense proposition is true just in case its present-tense counterpart will be grounded. Furthermore, both can agree (though I do not say that all Ockhamists will agree) to PGI+. Despite being so diametrically opposed over the question of whether prior truth results in logical determinism, significant and perhaps surprising room for agreement has been shown. How can these central points of agreement be reconciled with such vastly different conclusions?

The difference in the views, of course, lies in whether or not one thinks that propositions can be true without their truth being grounded, and it might be fair to say that the primary reason for Aristotelians and Ockhamists believing different things about this is the direction of the biconditional truth-conditions for future-tense propositions that they emphasize. The Aristotelian begins by pointing out that if a future contingent is now true, then the event it describes will occur, and goes on to point out that given that a particular proposition about the future is true, there is nothing anyone can do to change its truth-value. Since there being prior truths in conjunction with CCIA seems to lead to a conclusion that we cannot practically countenance, the most reasonable thing to do seems to be to deny that there are bivalent truth-values for future-tense contingent propositions. And since such propositions are not presently grounded, such that there is no explanation for the supposed truth of such propositions and thus no reason to think that they are in fact true, it is a small step to simply claiming that only propositions that are presently
grounded have bivalent truth-values. The Aristotelian is thus perfectly content to accept
the biconditional statement of the truth-conditions for future-tense propositions, but she
will think that the conditions are vacuous unless something presently grounds the truth of
the future-tense proposition.

The Ockhamist is perfectly content to accept the same biconditional truth-
conditions, but gently submits that she sees no reason not to say that future-tense
propositions describing events that actually do occur were true all along (PFZ). Although
nothing now grounds the truth of any particular future contingent, events will transpire
either as the proposition describes or not. Why not then say that the future-tense
proposition is now either true or false, though the determination of its truth or falsity will
not be known until its present-tense counterpart is or is not grounded? That is, PB may
be maintained by simply allowing that some propositions are true though not grounded,
so long as one specifies that CCI be understood as CCIO.

The commonality between Aristotelianism and Ockhamism discussed above
suggests to me that so long as we compare these views just in terms of how they treat
bivalent truth-values of future contingent propositions, there is absolutely no practical
difference between them, despite their significant disagreement over such a practically
important topic as whether or not libertarian freedom is threatened by these prior truths.
The Aristotelian believes that if future-tense propositions are presently true, then logical
determinism results. The Ockhamist claims that future-tense propositions are now true,
and that this does not threaten libertarian freedom because the present truth-values are not
grounded and thus remain open to having been either true or false until their present-tense
counterparts become grounded. Aren’t both parties saying that the truth-value of any
particular future-tense contingent proposition is not determined until after the event it
describes either comes to pass or does not? Of course, the Ockhamist insists that the
truth-value is determinate, but since no one knows what that truth-value is until, strictly
speaking, the future-tense proposition is necessarily false since what it describes is no
longer future, does it really matter? The Ockhamist view has certain formal advantages,
preserving the Principle of Bivalence as it does. I personally believe that the Aristotelian
view more honestly faces the implications of there being unchanging truth-values of
propositions detailing future events in accepting CCIA, and I believe that the argument
presented at the end of chapter one is compelling. But it seems to me that lengthy
consideration of these views will not lead anyone to deny that we have libertarian
freedom. BPI remains a bedrock intuition that will be adamantly defended, whatever one
concludes about which of CCIA and PB must be jettisoned.

If the debate between Aristotelianism and Ockhamism were limited to these
differences in how one understands propositional truth, I believe that the debate would
quickly become esoteric. However, the implications of this debate for theists are such
that thinking individuals cannot avoid choosing sides. For the Ockhamist seeks to
maintain a traditional understanding of God’s omniscience by claiming that not only
future-tense propositions that were and are presently true, but also propositions about
God’s past beliefs, are truths that are not accidentally necessary and thus are subject to
being otherwise. The Aristotelian, of course, holds that if human libertarian freedom is to
be maintained, there are certain things that God simply cannot know. It is to this aspect
of the debate, and thus finally to the issue of the relation of divine foreknowledge with
human libertarian freedom, that I turn in chapter three.
CHAPTER THREE:

OCKHAMISM AND DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

The last two chapters have been primarily concerned with the Aristotelian argument for logical determinism from prior truth and with the Ockhamist response to logical determinism. While I personally prefer the Aristotelian approach to the Ockhamist one in dealing with logical determinism, both views are consistent and which view one opts for is largely dependent on how one sees the comparative plausibility of CCIA vs. PB, or of PGI+ vs. PGI, in conjunction with the question of whether all contingent truths must be grounded. In this chapter, we finally move on to the question of whether libertarian freedom is threatened by divine foreknowledge. I will argue that the insights furnished in chapter two with regard to grounding are inconclusive when applied to the issue of divine foreknowledge. Ockhamists may maintain the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with human libertarian freedom, whether they accept PGI+ and CCIO, as I suggested in chapter two that they should, or instead maintain PGI. Since considerations based on grounding are inconclusive, we will need to seek other arguments for the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge with human libertarian freedom, or recognize that this issue, like that of logical determinism, rests primarily on whether one finds the Constraining Circumstances Intuition, as understood by Aristotelians, compelling.
After outlining the manner in which contemporary Ockhamists have approached the question of whether propositions about past divine beliefs are accidentally necessary, I will review the conclusions of chapter two and explain how Ockhamists can resist the claim that these conclusions show that such propositions are indeed necessary *per accidens*. I will then suggest two additional lines of argument in this chapter. The first is based on an intuition that arises for the first time when divine foreknowledge rather than prior truth is considered, the intuition that propositions about a person’s past beliefs are necessary *per accidens*. The second is based on the recognition of an implication of accepting Ockhamism that might be seen as counter-intuitive, and thus as reason to reject that view. Ultimately, however, I will stop well short of claiming that the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom cannot be consistently maintained along Ockhamistic lines. The force of my arguments will instead rest on a comparative judgment of the plausibility of the principles that lead to the denial of the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with human libertarian freedom relative to the implications of maintaining that compatibility.

1. The Contemporary Ockhamistic Approach

Recall that Ockhamism is meant to provide a means of denying the soundness of a particular argument form for many propositions which, though grammatically past-tense, “are equivalently about the future.”¹ That argument form is:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\Box (p \supset q) \\
\Box a p \\
\hline
\therefore \Box a q
\end{array}
\]

where the box stands for broadly logical necessity and the box with the subscript-a stands for necessity per accidens. Propositions such as it was true that E will occur (or just occurs) at t, with the understanding that t remains in the future, are ruled out as candidates for replacing p because they are deemed not to be necessary per accidens. The question that arises when God’s foreknowledge is considered is whether a proposition such as God believed that E will occur at t is accidentally necessary, or a “hard fact,” and thus a candidate for substitution for p. If it is, and q is replaced by E will occur at t, then we have a sound argument showing that future events that are the subject of God’s beliefs in the past are indeed determined to occur. Where these events are human actions, the humans in question will not be libertarianly free with regard to their actions. Contemporary proponents of an Ockhamist solution to this problem have sought to describe ways in which the propositions that are and that are not accidentally necessary may be divided so that God’s past beliefs end up categorized as not being necessary per accidens (and are thus “soft facts”).

Linda Zagzebski has argued that the approach sketched above can at best provide a negative solution to the problem of how divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom might be consistent. After providing a short survey of some of the ways in which the hard/soft fact distinction has been drawn by various contemporary

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2 While I have suggested in the previous chapter that accidental necessity should mark out a modality separate from logical necessity and primarily based on the passage and nature of time, the class of hard facts may plausibly include, in addition to accidentally necessary propositions, any true propositions whose necessity is due to a stronger modality, including logically necessary propositions. See footnote 16 of chapter two for some discussions of the hard/soft fact distinction, including one in which Hoffman and Rosenkratz argue (somewhat counter-intuitively to my mind) that logically necessary propositions should be considered to be soft facts.
Ockhamists,\(^3\) she expresses her view that whether or not any of the attempts she surveys succeed in defining the hard/soft fact distinction in such a way that they fit the paradigm cases and put God’s past beliefs about the future in the soft fact category without being subject to counterexample, it is undoubtedly possible to successfully perform such a task.

Given some set of clear examples of hard facts and clear examples of soft facts, it is surely possible with enough ingenuity to devise a definition of hard facts that is consistent with the set and that has as a consequence that God’s past beliefs are soft facts.\(^4\)

But, she goes on, “To present a definition is not to show that it bears any connection to a distinction in the nature of things.”\(^5\)

Zagzebski’s point is that it is not enough for a definition to fit our intuitions about the paradigm cases and also get the result we want with regard to one special kind of proposition; the definition should also accord with whatever intuitions we have about that special kind of proposition. If these intuitions are not expressly considered, then the solution is at best a negative one: one that merely shows a way in which foreknowledge and freedom might be compatible without giving any positive reason for thinking that God’s beliefs really should be characterized as they have been in order to construct the solution. A negative solution at best provides a defense of the doctrine of divine

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\(^4\) Ibid., p. 74.

\(^5\) Ibid.
foreknowledge against accusations of inconsistency – it does not attempt to argue that its solution is plausibly true. Zagzebski’s opinion of the contemporary Ockhamist approach is actually even less favorable than the above suggests. She ends her discussion of this approach by writing:

Incompatibilists about divine foreknowledge hold that the claim that God’s past beliefs are either not really past or are such that our power is unaffected by them violates necessary truths about the structure of time. I have not defended the intuitions the incompatibilist relies on, but I argued in Chapter 1 that they are common enough and strong enough to be considered common sense. I think, then, that even a negative solution to the foreknowledge dilemma of the type we are considering must attack these intuitions directly. The supporters of this approach, unfortunately, do not do this. Until they do, we have no reason to think their distinctions are more than purely nominal.  

That is, I think, the contemporary Ockhamist approach should be considered as purely arbitrary, not even rising to the level of a defense, if it does not consider and expressly reject the intuitions that the incompatibilist relies on, thereby showing at least that the Ockhamist account is possible.

Of course, if our intuitions suggest strongly that God’s past beliefs should not be accidentally necessary, then the approach taken by contemporary Ockhamists would be appropriate. And strong theological convictions that God’s foreknowledge should not be inconsistent with our libertarian freedom would also provide good reason to pursue the approach that contemporary Ockhamists have taken, provided that one does not have a comparably strong belief that God’s past beliefs are prima facie candidates for being necessary per accidens. But if one’s intuitions about the past beliefs of God do initially suggest that true propositions about these beliefs should be considered to be hard facts, then some reason should be given for denying that they are, aside from one’s ability to

6 Ibid., p. 76
provide a consistent definition of what it is to be a hard fact that results in such a denial. The task before us then, will be to consider what can be said about our initial intuitions about God’s past beliefs, and then to evaluate whether Ockhamistic responses to the supposed inconsistency between divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom either accord with or give us reason to revise these intuitions. But before turning to any new intuitions that might be relevant to this task, let us revisit the conclusions reached in light of our discussion of logical determinism in the first two chapters, and see what impact they have on the Ockhamists’ project.

2. Ockhamism and Prior Principles

As in our discussion of logical determinism, it should be pointed out that throughout the course of this chapter the Basic Power Intuition, that there is a set of actions that I can perform and that are such that my awareness of my ability to perform them is more basic than any considerations to the contrary, is taken for granted. Whether one is an Aristotelian or an Ockhamist, so long as one maintains one’s libertarian view of freedom, one will not question BPI. The Aristotelian, in denying that the Ockhamist is right in classifying God’s beliefs as soft facts, is thus rejecting the traditional view that God has complete foreknowledge. The disagreement between Aristotelians and Ockhamists over whether libertarian freedom is compatible with foreknowledge might be seen in very similar terms to their disagreement over whether libertarian freedom is compatible with prior truth. That is, we might see Aristotelians as maintaining CCIA and BPI and therefore rejecting the traditional view of God’s foreknowledge while Ockhamists maintain BPI and this traditional view and thus reject CCIA. In this
economy of intuitions, the belief that God has complete foreknowledge simply takes the place of, or is added to, PB.

If the disagreement is viewed in this way, then the implications of our discussion of grounding in chapter two should be considered, before turning to a consideration of other intuitions that might be involved in delineating accidentally necessary propositions from those that are not. Specifically, can Ockhamists and Aristotelians continue to agree that PGI+ adequately captures the grounding relation, and that accidental necessity may be understood in terms of whether propositions are grounded according to PGI+? Given that this conception of the grounding relation and the understanding of accidental necessity in terms of PGI+ was suggested without any consideration of divine beliefs, the possibility for agreement between Aristotelians and Ockhamists on these issues makes this account of accidental necessity a good starting point that would avoid Zagzebski’s concerns that the delineation of hard and soft facts by Ockhamists is somewhat arbitrary, if not also capricious. Given that both parties can agree on delineating accidentally propositions on the basis of their being grounded according to PGI+ when the issue is that of logical determinism, and given that the principles that lead one to Aristotelianism or Ockhamism with regard to the issue of divine foreknowledge are similar (where foreknowledge replaces PB), we should expect similar agreement over PGI+ and accidental necessity to be possible here as well.

Initially, however, it might seem that the Aristotelian can use the Ockhamists’ temporary agreement to show a greater difficulty in maintaining the compatibility of human libertarian freedom with divine foreknowledge, as opposed to its compatibility with prior or past truth. To see why this is so, let us revisit the contours of the last
chapter. In the previous chapter, we saw that Ockhamism serves as a response to logical determinism by considering the relationship between truth and time in light of the Presentist Intuition: the intuition that the truth of propositions about the past and future asymmetrically depends on the truth of present-tense propositions in the past or future. This intuition is meant to provide the means of maintaining the Principle of Bivalence and the Basic Power Intuition while rejecting the Constraining Circumstances Intuition as understood by Aristotelians and outlined in chapter one, thereby denying the validity of the move from 4 to 5 in the argument from prior truth at the end of that chapter. As such, it is unlikely to be accepted by Aristotelians, who accept CCIA, as the *sui generis* aspect of our understanding of the relationship of truth and time that Ockhamists believe it to be.

I thus suggested that a point of dialectical contact between Ockhamism and Aristotelianism was needed, and that Ockhamists might provide it by incorporating another intuition, termed the Grounding Intuition, into the Presentist Intuition. The grounding intuition stated that propositions are true because they correspond to the obtaining of the states of affairs or occurring of the events that they describe, and the resultant Presentist Grounding Intuition was stated as follows:

“*It was* the case that *z*” is now true because *z* was grounded;
“*It will be* the case that *z*” is now true because *z* will be grounded.

However, I then argued that Aristotelians would prefer an alternative – Presentist Grounding Intuition Plus – that required that there be a link between the present truth of past-tense propositions and the past obtaining or occurring of the states of affairs or events described by the past-tense proposition in question, a link provided by the nature of time.
I concluded chapter two by suggesting that Ockhamists could accept PGI+ in place of PGI: though they would have to give up the claim, with regard to future-tense truths, that there is an asymmetrical dependence of present truth-values on present-tense propositions, they would have a ready-made means of distinguishing propositions that are accidentally necessary from those that are not. Accidental necessity could be understood as a property attaching to those propositions that are presently indirectly grounded, partly in virtue of the passage and nature of time. Contingent propositions about the future might be true, but they would not presently be grounded. Thus, the disagreement between Aristotelians and Ockhamists could be seen as a disagreement over whether all true propositions must also be grounded. Aristotelians would think that they must, such that future-tense propositions that are not presently determined to one truth-value or another do not presently have determinate bivalent truth-values. Ockhamists would allow that all propositions have determinate bivalent truth-values, but that it is only those that are presently grounded that are such that their truth-values can no longer be otherwise, whether because they are imbued with accidental necessity or some other modality.

Chapter two outlined a way to push the disagreement between Aristotelians and Ockhamists with regard to the issue of logical determinism into new channels, focusing that disagreement on the relationship between the grounding and truth of propositions. Does this agreement, which I suggested was possible at the end of chapter two, have any significant implications for the question of whether divine foreknowledge is consistent with human libertarian freedom? It might initially seem that it does, because it might initially seem that true propositions about God’s past beliefs are clearly grounded according to PGI+, are thus accidentally necessary, and are thus incompatible with the
contingency of future-tense propositions that are the objects of divine past beliefs. However, based on certain questions raised in appendix one, I think that the Ockhamist has an adequate response to this suggestion.

The Ockhamist who accepts that accidental necessity can be understood in terms of PGI+ is committed not only to claiming that future-tense contingent propositions are true but ungrounded, but also that propositions about God’s knowledge of and beliefs about future events are true but ungrounded, even if God’s knowledge or beliefs are in the present or were in the past. The reason for this is that since accidental necessity is closed under contingent entailment, and since God’s knowledge and beliefs both entail the truth of the objects of His knowledge or beliefs, if propositions about God’s knowledge or beliefs are accidentally necessary, then so too are propositions that are the objects of His knowledge or beliefs. If propositions about God’s past knowledge or beliefs of future events are now grounded according to PGI+, then propositions about these future events are also now grounded, and now accidentally necessary, in virtue of what grounds the propositions about God’s past knowledge or beliefs in conjunction with what I awkwardly termed the nature of logic in chapter two. Thus, to maintain the contingency of these propositions about the future, the Ockhamist who accepts PGI+ as a criterion for accidental necessity is committed to maintaining that propositions about God’s past or present beliefs and/or knowledge, while true, are not grounded.

It might seem, however, that this is clearly wrong, especially with regard to propositions about God’s past beliefs. Isn’t it clear if one accepts PGI+ that a proposition about what God believed, if true, is now grounded by the fact that God did have the relevant belief, in conjunction with the nature of time? And isn’t it thus clear if one
accepts PGI+ as the criterion for determining whether propositions are accidentally necessary that one should reject the traditional view that God has complete foreknowledge? Assuming that God’s beliefs are in important respects like ours, such that God’s mental states are of the same kind as ours except for the fact that His beliefs always correspond to the way the world is, was, or will be due to his essential omniscience, it seems that propositions about His beliefs will be grounded by particular mental states, just as propositions about our beliefs are grounded by particular mental states. If God believes that \( A \text{ will do } E \text{ at } t \), then it seems that the proposition \( \text{God believes that } A \text{ will do } E \text{ at } t \) is grounded by his being in a state of belief with regard to the proposition \( A \text{ will do } E \text{ at } t \), no less than is the case when I believe a similar proposition.

The grounding of a proposition about an individual’s present belief is the presently occurring event of that individual’s believing such and such, or is the present obtaining of the state of affairs \( X \text{'s being such that she believes…} \). In either case, a proposition about a present belief is presently grounded by a person’s having that belief at the present time. The content of the belief, and whether that belief is past, present, or future-tense, has no bearing on the grounding of the proposition stating that a particular person has a particular belief. If the proposition in question is a past-tense proposition, then we evaluate whether this proposition is accidentally necessary by determining whether it is presently indirectly grounded by the prior obtaining of a relevant state of affairs in conjunction with the nature of time. Where the past-tense proposition is about a past belief, it is presently grounded by these things. Thus, if PGI+ is accepted as the proper account of grounding, and if accidental necessity is understood in terms of
whether or not propositions are grounded according to PGI+, then propositions about past beliefs are indeed accidentally necessary. They are hard facts, a part of the history of our world.

If this reasoning is correct, then Ockhamists cannot maintain PGI+ and understand the Constraining Circumstances Intuition in terms of CCIO. The Ockhamist must retreat from any agreement with the Aristotelian that she thought possible at the conclusion of chapter two. But is this reasoning correct? Let us suppose that the reasoning in the prior paragraph, that propositions about past beliefs are accidentally necessary because they are indirectly grounded in terms of PGI+, is generally sound when the beliefs in question are those of human persons. Are God’s beliefs sufficiently like our own to warrant drawing the same conclusion with regard to propositions about His past beliefs? Given the concerns raised at the end of appendix one, it is not nearly as clear that this is warranted as I suggested in the paragraph two prior to this one. In the appendix, I suggest that if we see God’s knowledge as partially grounded in the truths known in the same way as our knowledge is, then we might well conclude that His beliefs also will be so grounded, given the logical equivalence of God’s knowings to His believings. I go on to suggest that we might well question that God’s belief-states could serve as sufficient grounds for propositions about His beliefs, just as I had earlier questioned whether God’s knowledge-states could serve as sufficient grounds for propositions about His knowings. Instead, divine belief-states and knowledge-states alike may require further grounding in the truths believed and known. But if these are valid concerns, then there is plenty of room for the Ockhamist who accepts PGI+ to deny that propositions about past beliefs of God are presently indirectly grounded. And if they are
not presently grounded, than she may assert that they, like the future-contingent truths
that they entail, are true but ungrounded, such that understanding the Constraining
Circumstances Intuition in terms of CCIO allows divine foreknowledge to be compatible
with human libertarian freedom.

So the Ockhamist may continue to agree with the Aristotelian about PGI+ and
about how to understand accidental necessity in terms of it. Unless some reason may be
given to think that God’s beliefs should be understood as similar to ours in providing
adequate grounds for relevant propositions about them, the disagreement between
Aristotelians and Ockhamists will remain primarily based on the intuitive force of CCIA.
Before turning to an explicit consideration of what we should think about God’s beliefs, I
would like to first make two further points related to the issue of grounding. First, if one
does come to see God’s belief-states as adequate to ground propositions about His
beliefs, such that understanding accidental necessity in terms of PGI+ would result in
propositions about God’s past beliefs being accidentally necessary, then one might well
wish to reconsider whether one could ground other-than-present-tense truths in God’s
infallible beliefs about the corresponding prior or future grounding activity. The only
reason for thinking this suggestion is questionable given in appendix one would have
been removed. However, I still believe that further thought would be required about this
possibility – for instance, would the infallibility of God’s beliefs require additional
grounding, even if the belief-states themselves did not? It seems to me that it might, and
that the grounding of the infallibility of God’s beliefs ultimately might have to be traced
back to the truth of the propositions believed, such that the order of priority concerns of
the appendix would reappear.
Second, the Okhamist may allow that propositions about God’s past beliefs are grounded by God’s belief-states. She may either develop a God’s-beliefs-account of grounding such as that discussed in appendix one, or accept that propositions about God’s past beliefs are indirectly grounded in His prior belief-states, so long as she denies that grounding has anything to do with accidental necessity. While she might continue to accept PGI+ but no longer understand it as providing an identification of those propositions that are accidentally necessary, it seems more likely that she would view the grounding relation in terms of PGI or some sort of God’s-present-beliefs account rather than PGI+, since any initial plausibility of understanding accidental necessity in terms of grounding is removed if the nature of time is not essential to the indirect grounding relationship. The point is that however she understands the grounding relationship, so long as she does not see it as providing a criterion for determining accidental necessity, the Ockhamist can maintain that propositions about God’s past (or future) beliefs are now grounded, but are not accidentally necessary.

In light of the last several pages, it seems that the considerations of grounding in chapter two and appendix one do not have significant implications for whether Ockhamism is right that divine foreknowledge is compatible with human libertarian freedom. If the disagreement between Aristotelians and Ockhamists over this question is to rest on more than the considerations of chapter one related to CCIA and PB, and the considerations of chapter two related first to which account of grounding is more plausible and second to whether all contingent truths must be grounded, then we must search for other principles that might shed light on the question of this chapter. The rest of this chapter will thus largely leave aside the discussion of grounding and instead focus
first on two conflicting intuitions concerning accidental necessity that we have not yet considered, and then on an implication of Ockhamism that people might see as counterintuitive and thus as an unwanted cost of accepting that view.

3. **Personal Belief and Future Indifference Intuitions**

The economy of intuitions relevant to the disagreement between Aristotelianism and Ockhamism need not be understood as limited to those so far discussed, where the doctrine of divine foreknowledge takes the place of, or is added to, PB. To these intuitions, we might add two others that are directly relevant to the question of how to distinguish propositions that are accidentally necessary from those that are not. These two intuitions are that propositions about past personal beliefs are accidentally necessary, and that only future-indifferent propositions are such that they might be accidentally necessary. I will label the first of these the Personal Belief Intuition (PBI) and the latter the Future Indifference Intuition (FII). They may be defined as follows:

**PBI:** Propositions about a person’s past beliefs should be understood to be necessary *per accidens.*

**FII:** The distinction between propositions that are and are not accidentally necessary is essentially tied to whether or not they are future-indifferent.

As Zagzebski points out, propositions about the past beliefs of persons are prime candidates for being classified as accidentally necessary.

Most people have strong intuitions about the necessity of the past in a large variety of cases, the past spilling of milk being the most common folk example. Past beliefs of persons would automatically be put in this category if it were not for the foreknowledge dilemma.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Ibid., p. 75.
I think that Zagzebski is right here. Thus, we have a *prima facie* strong intuition to categorize any propositions about a person’s past beliefs as necessary *per accidens.* PBI competes with a desire to maintain both human libertarian freedom and a traditional conception of divine omniscience that includes complete foreknowledge. To the degree that God’s beliefs are in important respects like ours, we undoubtedly have a problem. And to the degree that Ockhamists do not attack this intuition, perhaps Zagzebski is right that their means of distinguishing between propositions that are and are not accidentally necessary will not even provide a negative solution, but a merely nominal one, even if these means get the “right” results and are not subject to counterexample.

Do contemporary Ockhamists attack the intuition that propositions about past personal beliefs are accidentally necessary? I think that they do, based upon the Future Indifference Intuition. I indicated previously that I found the means by which Alfred Freddoso distinguished between propositions that are and are not necessary *per accidens* in his “Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism” to be among the more successful attempts to draw such a distinction. I think that a brief examination of his attempt to draw this distinction will show the importance of FII and allow us to see that, based on this intuition, contemporary Ockhamists can be understood as at least indirectly attacking PBI. Freddoso’s definition of accidental necessity, as summarized by Zagzebski, is the following:

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8 Of course, we will have to consider the degree to which the strength of this intuition might be mitigated when the beliefs in question are those of an essentially omniscient being.

9 Ibid., p. 73. I have quoted Zagzebski’s summary rather than directly from Freddoso’s article because his definitions involve technical references to a propositional language and model theory for that language that he introduces as a formal mechanism to ensure that his development of the definition is as systematic and as free from ambiguity as possible. For this development and the resultant definition of accidental necessity, see Freddoso, “Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism,” pp. 269-276.
D3. p is necessary *per accidens* at \((w, t)\) iff (i) \(p\) is logically contingent and (ii) \(p\) is true at \(t\) and at every moment after \(t\) in every world \(w^*\) such that \(w^*\) shares the same history with \(w\) at \(t\).

D3.1 Two worlds \(w\) and \(w^*\) share the same history at \(t\) iff \(w\) and \(w^*\) have identical series of \(t_k < t\) and [are such] that for any submoment \(k\) and time \(t_n < t\), \(k\) obtains at \((w, t_n)\) iff \(k\) obtains at \((w^*, t_n)\).

D3.2 A submoment for any \((w, t)\) is the set of immediate propositions true at \((w, t)\).

D3.3 An immediate proposition \(p\) is (i) an atomic, nonquantified, present-tense proposition and (ii) temporally indifferent, such that either (a) \(p\) is not logically contingent or (b) it is possible that \(p\), as well as its negation, be true at a first, a last, or an intermediate moment of time.

Though Freddoso has done a great deal towards explaining the Ockhamist position in providing his definition of necessity *per accidens*, it is probably inaccurate to label him an Ockhamist. In addition to the fact that he defends Molinism in later writings,\(^\text{10}\) he never directly applies his definition to the issue with which Ockham was primarily concerned: divine foreknowledge. The only reference Freddoso makes to divine foreknowledge in the article in which he develops this definition of accidental necessity is in a footnote where he notes that he is for present purposes simply assuming that no propositions attributing beliefs to God will be considered to be atomic constituents of the propositional language he has introduced. This has the result that God’s beliefs would not be considered part of the history of the world, and thus would not be accidentally necessary. But as he (correctly, in my view) notes, such an assumption,

would require a separate argument if we were dealing with divine foreknowledge. In short, the argument for determinism from divine foreknowledge is, contrary to

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what some have claimed, more difficult to contend with than is the argument for logical determinism.¹¹

I know of no place where he advances such an argument, though he does note that the Ockhamist position with regard to divine foreknowledge “is analogous to the position I defended in “Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism,” as a response to the argument for logical determinism.”¹²

I think that the important point to draw from Freddoso’s complex definition is that the notion that serves as the basis for the development of this definition is that of a proposition being temporally indifferent. Only such propositions are eligible for membership within the submoments of a possible world, and it is these submoments that establish what possible worlds are to be considered in evaluating whether a proposition’s truth-value could be otherwise than it is. In the terms introduced in chapter one, these submoments establish what is included in the (almost) complete circumstances, C, relevant to the Constraining Circumstances Intuition. So long as no future-tense propositions are entailed by accidentally necessary propositions (since accidental necessity is closed under contingent entailment), accidentally necessary propositions are effectively those that are present or past-tense and are such that the truth-values of the constituent propositions to which tense-operators are attached are not dependent upon any particular times; it is logically possible for these constituent propositions to be true or false at any particular moment of time.

The impetus for such an approach is clearly Ockham’s statement that propositions that “are about the present as regards their wording only and are equivalently about the future, since their truth depends on the truth of propositions about the future” do not have corresponding to them past-tense propositions that are accidentally necessary. If one is to develop a genuinely Ockhamistic definition of accidental necessity, then it seems that one will want to constrain the class of propositions that are accidentally necessary to those that are not “equivalently about the future.” Freddoso does this by initially defining what it is for a proposition to be temporally indifferent and then only considering possible worlds whose histories are determined by considerations of the temporally indifferent propositions that are and have been true. Propositions that depend upon the future for their truth-values do not get included in the histories that determine what propositions are in fact necessary per accidens.

Not all of those who have been concerned with accidental necessity have built up their definitions from the notion of temporal indifference; many have instead tried to directly consider the notion of future-indifference. Marilyn Adams initially suggested that hard facts about a particular time, t, were those that were “not at least in part about any time future relative to t.” Though her means of defining what it is to be “at least in part about any time future relative to t” in terms of the occurrence or obtaining of an event or state of affairs in the future being a necessary condition for the truth of the

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13 Ockham, *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge and Future Contingents*, p. 46.

proposition has been roundly criticized, her intuition that accidental necessity should be defined in terms of future-indifference has continued to be the basis for the development of such definitions and indeed for any discussion of accidental necessity. William Hasker explicitly attempts to delimit a class of future-indifferent propositions, and Alvin Plantinga suggests that accidentally necessary propositions must be genuinely and strictly about the past, where the strictness criterion is meant to ensure future-indifference.

It seems to me that contemporary Ockhamists are following Ockham’s lead in developing accounts of what it is for a proposition to be necessary *per accidens* by depending upon FII, the intuition that the distinction between propositions that are and are not accidentally necessary is essentially tied to future-indifference. And I believe that we do indeed generally share this intuition; any account of accidental necessity must address the issue of whether its delineation of propositions that are and are not accidentally necessary lines up with a delineation of which propositions are and are not future-indifferent. It seems, however, that tying the notion of accidental necessity to future-indifference begs the question against the proponent of the argument from past truth. As Plantinga puts the point:

> We couldn’t sensibly *define* accidental necessity in terms of being strictly about the past; for the whole point of the argument for theological determinism is just that propositions about the future that are entailed by accidentally necessary propositions about the past will themselves be accidentally necessary.

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18 Ibid., p. 252.
The Ockhamist who relies on FII is arguing that it is never (non-trivially)\textsuperscript{19} true that the fact that an accidentally necessary proposition entails a future truth gives one good reason to conclude that the future truth is accidentally necessary as well, and the Ockhamist comes to this conclusion not by giving independent reasons for this denial, but based on the intuition that accidental necessity cannot apply to propositions (really) about the future, and thus that the conclusion of the argument from past truth must be false.

Though the appearance of begging the question is not entirely unfounded, I do not think that this should be unexpected when one is thinking about issues at the level of fundamental intuitions. Rather, what this reveals is that FII and PBI really do come into conflict when we are dealing with God’s infallible beliefs. The contemporary Ockhamist should not be seen as arguing that the argument from past truth cannot be sound, but rather as pointing out a conflicting intuition that must be weighed against PBI. And I should remind the reader that Ockhamists cannot be claiming that the argument from past truth is invalid, assuming that my argument in chapter two and Freddoso’s explicit stipulation in “Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism” are right that accidental necessity is closed under contingent entailment.\textsuperscript{20} Rather, Ockhamists are denying, based on FII, that there are any (non-trivial) substitutions of propositions for p and q in the argument from past truth that result in a sound argument.

\textsuperscript{19} Of course, \textit{The Northern states won the civil war} is accidentally necessary and entails the following future truth: \textit{It will be true in thirty years that the Northern states won the civil war}. Presumably Ockhamists might conclude that such a proposition is also accidentally necessary. I propose that we label such entailments, in which the future-tense proposition’s truth is primarily based on the continued passage of time and the principle that I labeled FPZ in chapter two, trivially sound. The future truths in cases such as these are arguably not “really” about the future. In the passage to which this note is appended, I am not concerned with these cases, but with more substantive ones in which the future truth entailed has no initial appearance of being grounded according to PGI+.

There are thus two widely and firmly held intuitions that must be taken into account when considering whether an Ockhamistic view of propositional truth allows for the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom. Propositions about past beliefs are intuitively accidentally necessary, and accidentally necessary propositions are intuitively such that they are future-indifferent. Propositions about God’s past beliefs, insofar as His beliefs are similar to personal human beliefs, would seem to be accidentally necessary. But given the traditional theistic assumption that God is omniscient and indeed is essentially so, God’s past beliefs about the future entail that the objects of His beliefs occur or obtain as He believes they will. Propositions about God’s past beliefs therefore seem not to be future-indifferent. Thus, when they are considered in conjunction with the traditional view of God’s omniscience, there is a conflict between two strongly held intuitions about accidental necessity in any discussion of the relationship between God’s foreknowledge and our libertarian freedom.

In light of the above discussion, I would like to share my opinion that Zagzebski is a bit too harsh in her criticism of the approach that many contemporary Ockhamists have taken. While I agree that this approach provides a primarily negative solution, such solutions should not be discarded as merely “nominal.” While contemporary proponents of Ockhamism do not directly attack the intuition that propositions about God’s past beliefs, as all propositions about personal past beliefs, are accidentally necessary, they do indirectly attack this intuition by developing their account on the basis of another strongly held intuition that is in apparent conflict with the Personal Belief Intuition. The reason for concluding that propositions about God’s past beliefs are not accidentally
necessary simply is that a definition of accidental necessity that gives this result is supported strongly by a prior intuition, FII.

When a conflict between intuitions that are held with roughly equal strength is discovered, a rational course of action is to seek reasons to maintain one intuition at the expense of the other, or to distinguish the case in question in such a way that the conflict does not arise. Unless corroborating evidence for one or the other of these intuitions can be discovered, the fact that traditional theists may strongly desire to maintain the compatibility of human libertarian freedom with divine foreknowledge seems sufficient reason to opt to maintain the intuition that hard facts must be expressed by future indifferent propositions. Furthermore, in any case involving considerations of the nature of God, it seems reasonable to appeal at some point to His transcendent nature and to our inability to fully understand that nature. Thus, if our best reasoning results in the appearance of a legitimate conflict of intuitions and our faith declares that one of these intuitions must not be applied to God’s beliefs, it seems that there could be nothing that accords more with either reason or faith than to humbly conclude that God’s beliefs must not accord with PBI, although we cannot understand why or how this is the case. Thus, contemporary Ockhamists should not be condemned for their approach, so long as both intuitions in question are equally strongly held, and so long as there is no way of resolving the apparent conflict through exercising our limited but not insignificant rational faculties. That is to say, although this type of Ockhamistic approach provides a merely negative solution, the defensive nature of the solution should not count against it unless those who wish to criticize such Ockhamistic solutions can themselves give a positive account of how the conflict can be resolved.
Let me stress what I am saying here. Ockhamistic solutions that proceed by defining accidental necessity in such a way that propositions expressing God’s past beliefs are not necessary \textit{per accidens} are not plausible merely because they have contrived a definition that gets the right result. This seems to be what Zagzebski accuses them of, but I am suggesting that though negative, these solutions are plausible to the extent that they are based on a positive intuition that is in legitimate conflict with the intuition that propositions about past personal beliefs are hard facts. The Ockhamist solution is negative to the extent that it remains unable to say why, or how, God’s beliefs are not subject to PBI; but so long as no positive reason for this divine exception can be expected to be discovered, and so long as opponents cannot demonstrably show that God’s beliefs are subject to this intuition, it seems that the negative solution that Ockhamists have provided is the most that can be expected. Nevertheless, I think that more can be done in considering the apparent conflict between the Personal Belief Intuition and the Future-Indifference Intuition.

It seems to me that so long as God’s having a belief is an event occurring at a time, then propositions about God’s past beliefs are relevantly similar to propositions about other agents’ past beliefs, and indeed about any past event, such that we should expect PBI to be applicable to the former no less than the latter. Agents doing things comprise events that are intuitively a part of our history, such that it would seem that it is no longer possible that they not have occurred. Propositions about such events seem to be such that they are accidentally necessary and hard facts, and PBI is just an intuition about a special class of such events and the propositions about them. But PBI remains an intuition, and the Ockhamist is likely to respond by claiming that the fact that God’s
beliefs, unlike our own, are essentially infallible, removes some, perhaps much, of the intuitive force of PBI when applied to God’s beliefs.21 Perhaps this is so. I merely wish to insist that so long as we continue to think of God’s beliefs as like ours in being events that occur at times, PBI will continue to have some (I think some significant) intuitive force. So long as Ockhamists’ reasons for denying PBI are indirect or negative (that it conflicts with FII, or that PBI need not apply to God’s beliefs since they differ from ours in some manner), they will not be able to remove the intuitive force of PBI. The degree of plausibility of the negative Ockhamistic account that does not directly address PBI will remain lower than an account that goes some distance towards explaining how God’s beliefs might differ from our own such that PBI would not apply to propositions about His past beliefs.

In order to argue that the negative solution that Ockhamism offers should be rejected, I must show that given further consideration we may have a reasonable expectation of discovering why PBI should not be applied to propositions about divine beliefs if it is not in fact so applicable, but that Ockhamists have thus far been unable to provide such a reason for the divine exception to PBI that they advocate. That is, I must show that a positive solution, or at least a positive hypothesis that would show that FII is preferable to PBI, is within reach of our limited cognitive faculties. If we can conceive of ways in which God’s beliefs might be understood such that His beliefs would be distinguished from our own and PBI would not apply to propositions about His beliefs, then it seems to me that one who thinks PBI is so applicable might be justified in asking

21 And the Ockhamist might also suggest that this is as much of a direct attack on PBI as one could ask for.
the Ockhamist to provide such a positive account of the nature of God’s beliefs that is plausible and consistent with Ockhamism, before giving up her belief that PBI is indeed applicable to propositions about God’s past beliefs. If there are such accounts available for consideration but Ockhamists have either not pursued these avenues of thought or these avenues clearly would lead to the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom, then I suggest that in view of PBI, Ockhamism should be viewed skeptically rather than embraced. Such an argument is itself patently indirect, attempting to shift the burden of proof to Ockhamists. It will at most appeal to fence-sitters for whom PBI has considerable plausibility, and thus those committed to the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom may continue to defend Ockhamism on the basis of FII or on the basis of the mere possibility that God’s beliefs are sufficiently unlike ours that they are not subject to PBI. But there may be more persons for whom the application of PBI to God’s beliefs has considerable plausibility than there are those who see CCIA as plausibly true, or who think that all contingent propositions must be grounded and view PGI+ as the correct account of the grounding relation. Thus, I believe that the considerations that follow may appeal to a larger class of persons than do the considerations of chapters one or two.

Ockhamists might argue that positive hypotheses about how or why PBI does not apply to God’s knowledge and beliefs should not be expected. In “Divine Knowledge,” Alvin Plantinga has suggested that we should not expect to be able to discern much about how God knows or believes what is true. 22 His reasoning is that our knowledge is

plausibly based on our cognitive and perceptive faculties properly functioning according
to their design in an intended environment. But of course, God’s knowledge cannot be
similarly based on these factors, for presumably this account of our knowledge is based
on God’s having knowledge of how to bring about His design of our faculties logically
(and perhaps temporally) prior to His doing so. Plantinga thus concludes that the most
we can expect to do in attempting to understand God’s knowledge is to focus on ways in
which His knowledge is analogous to our own.

I agree with the general thrust of what Plantinga is saying. His account of how
theists should view epistemology seems plausible, and the idea that God’s knowledge is
prior to our own has obvious independent appeal at any rate. But the fact that we should
not expect God’s knowledge to be exactly like our own does not seem to me to suggest
that we cannot engage in speculation about what that knowledge might be like. As
Plantinga is quick to emphasize, we are created in God’s image, and this resemblance is
most likely to have something to do with intelligence or cognition. God’s knowledge
might very well be very similar to our own. Of course, it will not involve the same kinds
of causal input as ours does, but as Plantinga suggests, it might be analogically similar.
God might well “see” or “remember” or even “infer” things, in a sense similar to that in
which we do these things. Or He might not. The point that I wish to argue is that we can
expect to be able to conceive of ways in which God’s knowledge and beliefs might or
might not be similar to our own, such that one who believes that PBI should apply to any

23 See Platinga’s trilogy of volumes on warrant for more details: Warrant: The Current Debate (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Warrant and Proper Function (New York: Oxford University Press,

propositions about beliefs that were events in the past may justifiably ask that one who says otherwise give some sort of guidance as to how or why this might be so.

As a step toward evaluating how one might understand God’s beliefs in such a way that they are distinguished from our own and such that PBI might not apply to propositions about God’s beliefs, I would like to discuss four approaches to the conflict between PBI and FII, and to the broader question of whether human libertarian freedom is compatible with divine foreknowledge. I will title these approaches Aristotelianism, Ockhamism, Timeless Ockhamism, and Thomism. The first two will primarily review what has already been said about these views, while the latter two will suggest alternative conceptions of God’s beliefs. I believe that our ability to sketch these views shows that we can hypothesize about God’s knowledge to such an extent that we should expect to be able to speculate as to how His knowledge might be such that PBI does not apply to it. Until such time as Ockhamists engage in this speculation and show that the resulting conception of divine knowledge is not subject to PBI and does not suggest in other ways that God’s knowledge is inconsistent with human libertarian freedom, those who find PBI initially plausible should view Ockhamism skeptically.

3.1 Aristotelianism

In many ways the easiest means of removing the conflict between PBI and FII and between God’s foreknowledge and our libertarian freedom is the Aristotelian one. Aristotelians deny that there are bivalent truth-values for future contingents, and believe that if God has knowledge of future events, then these future events must be determined in some way. The obvious solution to the foreknowledge problem and to the apparent
conflict of intuitions about accidental necessity is to deny that God has knowledge of future contingents in order to maintain our libertarian freedom. If He has beliefs about the contingent future, they will be more or less likely to be true, just as ours are, but they will not be infallible. This view has the advantage of allowing us to understand God’s beliefs as similar to our own and to maintain the intuition that propositions about past beliefs are indeed accidentally necessary. The intuition that propositions that are not future-indifferent are not accidentally necessary is also maintained, though of course the Aristotelian would go further and claim that such propositions are not true either, unless they are determined by a modality other than accidental necessity.

Both Ockhamists and Aristotelians, as I have presented their views, accept that accidental necessity is closed under contingent entailment. Both accept the validity of the argument from past truth. I earlier noted that Ockhamists should thus be seen as denying that there are any (non-trivial) true substitution instances for p and q in that argument. The Aristotelian response makes the same claim, but for different reasons. Whereas the Ockhamist thinks that God does have infallible beliefs about the future, but that a proposition about God’s past belief is not accidentally necessary, an Aristotelian thinks that such a proposition would be accidentally necessary if it were true, but that God does not have infallible beliefs about the future. Where p is “It was the case that God believed that A will do E at t,” and q is “A will do E at t,” the Ockhamist will say that both are true and that p entails q, but that p is not accidentally necessary because it is not future-indifferent, while the Aristotelian will say that if p is true at all, then it is accidentally necessary but does not entail q because God’s beliefs are not infallible. More likely, the
Aristotelian might simply deny that God has any beliefs, infallible or otherwise, about contingent events that will happen.

The disadvantage of the Aristotelian response, of course, is that God’s omniscience seems significantly limited. Aristotelians may point out that God still knows all the truths there are – there just aren’t as many truths as some of us might have thought. But the resultant view of God’s knowledge of the world is likely to leave something to be desired for many traditional theists.

3.2 Ockhamism

Ockhamism, as already discussed, wants to distinguish God’s beliefs and knowledge from our own such that the Personal Belief Intuition does not apply to propositions about God’s past beliefs. Their reasons for choosing such a solution are obvious, but Ockhamists have had little success in explicating how God’s beliefs differ from ours – how God’s beliefs are infallible– other than by mere appeal to the traditional understanding of God’s omniscience. That is, Ockhamists appeal to one difference between God’s beliefs and our own, the infallibility of the former, without attempting to discuss whether their might be other accompanying differences that would explain how it is that God’s beliefs are infallible and that might shed light on why we should not expect PBI to apply to propositions about God’s beliefs.

Ockhamists may suggest that it is obvious that propositions about God’s knowledge are not future-indifferent and that it is simply misleading to talk about God’s beliefs rather than his knowledge. Propositions about past human beliefs are accidentally necessary because the belief can turn out to have been false without changing the truth-
value of the proposition about that belief. But since God cannot be mistaken, the truth-value of any propositions about His past beliefs does depend upon what occurs in the future, no less than is the case with propositions detailing God’s or anyone’s past knowledge of the future. We commonly think of knowledge as true belief plus something, and by extension think of belief as something less than knowledge. Of course, God does not traditionally have beliefs in this sense, where the term implies a lack of knowledge. We also tend to think of beliefs as things that we have a certain amount of control over. We can choose to believe, or condition ourselves to believe, many things, regardless of whether or not these beliefs are true. Knowledge, on the other hand, must correspond to reality. Knowing something may be in a certain sense a more passive state than believing something, or perhaps an addition (truth) to belief that one often has no control over. Knowledge requires that we conform our mental states to the world, whereas belief does not. There is, so to speak, a fixed amount of knowledge that we can come to have, whereas the horizon of what we may believe is much greater. But here again, when we consider God’s knowledge, we presumably do not find this difference in the range of belief and knowledge. Since all of God’s beliefs are true beliefs, what He can believe is no greater in range than what He can know. And of course, what He can know is the same as what He does in fact know – all truths.

The Ockhamist view recognizes that there are these differences in the relationship between belief and knowledge for God, and claims that these differences are sufficient motivation for not applying PBI to propositions about God’s past beliefs. However, it seems to me that as long as God’s beliefs/knowledge involve the occurrence of events or the obtaining of states of affairs at a time, His beliefs/knowledge are sufficiently like ours
for PBI to have considerable force. Unless and until Ockhamists can give a positive account of the nature of God’s beliefs/knowledge, the Ockhamist solution will be a negative one, satisfactory as a defense, but implausible to any who are puzzled by the relation of Ockhamism to PBI. And Ockhamists have not held out much promise for such a positive account.

The most that William of Ockham himself could say about how God knows future contingents is the following:

I maintain that it is impossible to express clearly the way in which God knows future contingents…. Despite [the impossibility of expressing it clearly], the following way [of knowing future contingents] can be ascribed [to God]. Just as the [human] intellect on the basis of one and the same [intuitive] cognition of certain non-complexes can have evident cognition of contradictory contingent propositions such as ‘A exists,’ ‘A does not exist,’ in the same way it can be granted that the divine essence is intuitive cognition that is so perfect, so clear, that it is evident cognition of all things past and future, so that it knows which part of a contradiction [involving such things] is true and which part false.25

There are two points to draw out from this passage. First, Ockham is doing little more than asserting the thesis he is defending as an explanation for how that thesis can be true. And secondly, to the extent that he does suggest a conception of God’s knowledge as perfect and clear intuitive cognition, he is maintaining a close parallel between God’s knowledge and ours. Just as we see that certain things are and certain things are not in the present, God sees via perfect intuitive cognition what things are and are not in all times. But so long as God’s “evident cognition of all things past and future” is understood to suggest that these things are past and future with regard to that cognition rather than merely with regard to our view of things, God’s beliefs are still events in time

25 Ockham, Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge and Future Contingents, p. 50.
and PBI appears to remain applicable: nothing is done towards alleviating the conflict of
intuitions concerning accidental necessity.

Unless Ockhamists can suggest a difference that relevantly removes God’s
knowledge from the realm of events occurring or states of affairs obtaining in time, the
assertion based on faith that God’s knowledge is relevantly different from ours is a
patently negative solution to the problem of how our libertarian freedom may be
consistent with God’s foreknowledge. And if there is reason to think that human reason
has the capability of hypothesizing about alternative ways of conceiving of God’s
knowledge and beliefs, then the negative aspect of the Ockhamist solution is reason to
view it skeptically until such alternatives are explored and one is found that supports the
Ockhamist tenet that PBI does not apply to propositions about God’s past beliefs.

3.3 Timeless Ockhamism

An obvious and traditional suggestion for a way in which God’s knowledge might
be different from our own is that God, and His knowledge, are timeless. Thus, rather
than God’s beliefs/knowledge corresponding to the occurrence of events or the obtaining
of states of affairs in time, His knowledge would somehow be outside of time. This
would provide a pictorial suggestion for how it is that God sees all times, and
propositions about God’s past beliefs/knowledge would not be accidentally necessary,
because they wouldn’t be strictly true. Zagzebski suggests that this approach is
promising, and William Hasker implies the same.26 Neither of these find Ockhamism

26 See Zagzebski, The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge, pp. 85-97, and Hasker,
alone compelling but hold out greater hope for some variety of what I have termed Timeless Ockhamism.

It is important to note certain constraints on such a view, however. Inasmuch as this view remains a form of Ockhamism, where the Presentist Intuition is central to the view, it must continue to maintain that time is dynamic rather than static – characterized by an A-theory rather than a B-theory of time.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, God’s existence will be different from everything else’s in that it does not exist through time. Also, God’s eternal knowledge cannot be related to the temporal sequence in which we live in such a way that His eternal present is simultaneous with any or all moments of our time. For if there was such a relation, then propositions such as,

“It was the case (at $t_{1} < t$) that God timelessly believes that A does E at $t$,”

would be obvious candidates for being accidentally necessary. Such propositions lead Plantinga to conclude that, “The claim that God is outside of time is essentially irrelevant to Edwardsian arguments.”\textsuperscript{28} And Hasker warns of this danger in writing:

Note that it is a cardinal error to consider God’s eternal present as simultaneous with our present moment, or indeed with any moment at all of our time. Once this error is committed, the doctrine of timelessness collapses into chaos and contradiction.\textsuperscript{29}

Thus, while Timeless Ockhamism may go some distance towards at least pictorially suggesting how God’s knowledge might differ from our own, the nature of God’s knowledge, as well as His relationship to the temporal world as a whole, remains a mystery. For instance, if God is a passive observer of the occurrence of events

\textsuperscript{27} See J. Ellis McTaggart, “The Unreality of Time,” \textit{Mind} 17 (1908): 457-474.


\textsuperscript{29} Hasker, “Foreknowledge and Necessity,” p. 129.
Throughout the entire temporal sequence, how does He affect any of these happenings without entering that sequence? If He cannot affect the course of events, then some of the attractiveness that the doctrine of divine foreknowledge has traditionally had inasmuch as it has been related to the doctrine of divine providence may be lost.

Clearly, more detailed accounts of God’s timeless knowledge would have to be developed and evaluated individually to see if they successfully provide a coherent and intuitively plausible account of how God’s knowledge is relevantly different from our own, such that PBI does not come into play. Unfortunately, I know of few such attempts. Zagzebski has perhaps gone the furthest in developing such an account, suggesting that a Thomistic account of knowledge according to which God primarily knows His own essence and only secondarily or accidentally knows what events occur or states of affairs obtain might be satisfactory. Interestingly, Zagzebski argues that one could either view God as outside the temporal sequence or maintain that God exists in time but that His beliefs are essentially independent of the temporal sequence.\(^\text{30}\) Without pursuing a detailed analysis of her account here, I would like to suggest that it seems unlikely to me that this part of Aquinas’s account of God’s knowledge can be successfully separated from other parts, such as that God’s knowledge is essentially identical to His will, which plausibly precludes the possibility of human libertarian freedom. Nonetheless, it seems to me that her approach in evaluating Ockhamism is the right one: attempting to put forth an account of God’s knowledge that removes the apparent conflict between our intuitions about accidental necessity by explaining how His beliefs are relevantly different from our own such that propositions about His past beliefs are not necessary \textit{per accidens}.

3.4 Thomism

A fourth view that I will label the Thomistic approach and only briefly mention here also maintains that God’s knowledge is not constrained by temporality, such that PBI would not apply to God’s beliefs/knowledge, but also explicitly maintains that God’s knowledge is primarily creative or practical rather than speculative, and that it is essentially identical to God’s will. Thus, considerations of providence as well as omniscience are brought up, and God’s knowledge alone is sufficiently “divinely” determining to eliminate our ability to do otherwise.\(^{31}\) The Thomistic approach to the relationship of human freedom and divine providence will be discussed further in chapter five. I mention it here only because it suggests another means of conceiving of God’s knowledge (as practical and creative) such that we might expect that God’s beliefs and knowledge would have different characteristics than knowledge and beliefs in general. Thomism also provides one horizon in a survey of the terrain of possible responses to the relationship between divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom. At one horizon is the Aristotelian response that maintains human libertarian freedom by denying that God can have knowledge of future contingent truths, since there are none. At the other is the Thomistic response that maintains God’s traditional knowledge of past, present, and future, but views that knowledge as determining of its objects, such that it is plausibly incompatible with human libertarian freedom. In the middle is Ockhamism.

\(^{31}\) Though note that Thomists maintain that despite the divine determination, we remain free – God as transcendent Creator is capable of determining us to freely act. I cannot see how this “freedom” could be libertarian in nature, and will consider Thomism’s treatment of our freedom in more detail in chapter five.
Having briefly surveyed this terrain of possible responses, what should one conclude about the relationship between divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom? Specifically, what should one conclude about Ockhamism? I think that in light of my allusion to two ways in which God’s beliefs/knowledge might be understood as significantly different from our own (as eternal and as practical rather than speculative), one who thinks that PBI is applicable to propositions about God’s past beliefs is justified in rejecting Ockhamism as an adequate response to the foreknowledge problem until such time as a detailed account of God’s knowledge is given that shows that we should not apply PBI to propositions about God’s past beliefs. An Ockhamist who instead claims that nothing can be said about how God’s past beliefs might relevantly differ from our own, except that they are infallible, should at least argue that nothing more can be said. For Ockhamists such as Plantinga presumably reject both Thomism and Timeless Ockhamism: Plantinga includes among the analogies between God’s beliefs and ours that God’s beliefs, like ours, are based on truth rather than being creative of truth, and he assumes that “God has a temporal perspective.” If we can make these judgments about God’s knowledge/beliefs, why should we not expect to be able to hypothesize about how His beliefs might be in time and yet not subject to PBI, if this is in fact the case?

We have been discussing divine foreknowledge in light of two intuitions regarding accidental necessity, both of which I believe are strongly held: PBI and FII. Should one give up one of these intuitions in order to maintain the traditional view of divine foreknowledge, or should one be skeptical of the traditional view until such time

33 Ibid., p. 46.
as one can reconcile these strongly held intuitions, maintaining them both by advocating Aristotelianism? I have not argued that the former response is irrational; I have merely argued that it is unsatisfying to any who feel the intuitive force of PBI. Of course, as with any undertaking in philosophy of religion, one should leave room for mystery where philosophy cannot probe, and one should have great humility about one’s conclusions. Nevertheless, until Ockhamists attempt to flesh out their theory by adding to the skeletal structure of their view of the relationship of truth to time a conception of God’s knowledge that directly attacks the applicability of PBI to propositions about His beliefs, I believe that PBI will remain an impediment to acceptance of Ockhamism for many people. While perhaps relatively few people will judge the Constraining Circumstances Intuition, as understood by Aristotelians, as sufficiently compelling to give up the Principle of Bivalence, I believe that many more people will find the Personal Belief Intuition difficult to give up. Thus, to the extent that they attempt to maintain a faith that accords with reason, they will be unwilling to whole-heartedly endorse Ockhamism until such time as it can present a plausible hypothesis of how God’s beliefs and knowledge differ from ours such that propositions about them would not be hard facts.

Perhaps many Ockhamists will be content to think of Ockhamism as a negative or defensive theory and merely suggest that skeptics of their view are being misguided by their intuitions. With regard to such Ockhamists, perhaps further avenues of consideration cannot be found whereby Ockhamists and their skeptical interlocutors might hope to convince each other. But before acquiescing to such a conclusion, we should consider the possibility of advocating Ockhamism by considering it directly in terms of the Basic Power Intuition rather than merely in terms of the conflict between the
Personal Belief and Future Indifference intuitions. To do so may be seen as essentially a return to the conflict between CCIA and PB, or between CCIA and the doctrine of divine foreknowledge. However, the way in which this approach returns to these principles reveals an implication of Ockhamism that may be more clearly unwelcome than is the need for an alternative understanding of CCI.

4. Counterfactual Power over the Past

I have identified the move from 4. to 5. in the argument from prior truth at the end of chapter one as the point at which Ockhamists would deny that the argument is valid, and suggested that how one views this argument is dependent on how compelling one finds CCIA in comparison to PB. But what initially appears to be a somewhat different response to that argument might provide a transition to how some Ockhamists might respond to the above discussion concerning the conflict between PBI and FII. This response to the argument from prior truth is to deny premise three – that one cannot change the truth-value of a proposition once its truth-value is determined – and this response is suggested by some things that Freddoso says in his “Accidental Necessity and Power over the Past.”

Ockhamists believe that, in a certain sense, the past can be altered. Freddoso writes, where F and P are future and past operators as above, and N is a negation operator:

Nor does my view entail that David can alter the past, if we mean by this that he can bring it about that \( F (David \ is \ in \ Chicago \ at \ T) \) has always been true and that its negation has also always been true…. However, if we mean only that while \( NF (David \ is \ in \ Chicago \ at \ T) \) has in fact always been true before \( T^* \), then my view does entail that David has the power to alter the past. For this is just to say
that \( \text{PNF (David is in Chicago at } T) \), while true at \( T^* \), is not necessary per accidens… at \( T^* \).\(^{34}\)

Since \( \text{PNF (David is in Chicago at } T) \) is not necessary per accidens, the Ockhamist believes that it may yet be the case that \( \text{F (David is in Chicago at } T) \) is true, rather than \( \text{NF (David is in Chicago at } T) \), even though \( \text{NF (David is in Chicago at } T) \) was true at \( T^* \), earlier than \( T \). This would be the case if David did something to bring it about that he was in fact in Chicago at \( T \). In this case, it would never have been true that \( \text{NF (David is in Chicago at } T) \). Rather, it would always have been the case that \( \text{F (David is in Chicago at } T) \). While \( \text{A will do } E \text{ at } t \) has been true at every moment prior to \( t \), it may yet have been false at every moment prior to \( t \), since the truth of these propositions is asymmetrically dependent upon A’s libertarianly free performance of \( E \) at \( t \). Although \( \text{A will do } E \text{ at } t \) has in fact been a true proposition throughout every moment prior to \( t \), A has the power to do something (refrain from doing \( E \)) at \( t \), such that this proposition would always have been false – there would have been no time at which it was true. A does not have the power, by doing something other than \( E \) at \( t \), to bring it about that \( \text{A will do } E \text{ at } t \) has always been false while the past truth of this proposition remains intact. A does not have the power, in other words, to bring about a contradiction. But A does have the power, says the Ockhamist, to alter the past in such a way that the propositions whose falsity she has ensured never were true.\(^{35}\) In Ockham’s words, a proposition that

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\(^{35}\) See Ockham’s *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge and Future Contingents*, esp. Q II, Art. II (pp. 56-58), and Freddoso’s “Accidental Necessity and Power over the Past,” pp. 65-66.
is not accidentally necessary “can be true and can be false and can never have been true.”

It might seem that Freddoso’s view that (correctly understood) we can alter the past should be understood as denying premise three (3. always p ⊃ no agent has it within her power to change the truth-value of p). However, it is clear that he does not think that we can bring it about that the past is one way and then is another, and thus perhaps it is misleading to represent his view as one that claims that we can change the past, given my discussion of that term in chapter one. Rather, I think that his view, and the power to alter the past that he is describing, should be seen as based upon a denial of CCIA, which is responsible for the validity of the move from 4. to 5. in the argument from prior truth. I believe that Freddoso is in effect arguing that we have access to worlds with different circumstances than the actual world, specifically to worlds where prior truths are not true.

This type of power over the past that Freddoso is describing has been frequently termed counterfactual power over the past: if David were to do something such that he was in Chicago at $T$, then it would be the case that $F (David$ is in Chicago at $T)$ was always true. In terms of the discussion in chapter two, any Ockhamists who are willing to accept PGI+ as the criterion for accidental necessity would still differ from Aristotelians over whether there is such counterfactual power over the past, claiming that there is such power over any past truth-values of propositions that are not grounded. And in terms of the discussion of this chapter, Ockhamists will claim that we also have counterfactual power over God’s past beliefs. Even if it was the case that God believed that David will be in Chicago at $t$, David has the power to avoid being in Chicago at $t$, 

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36 Ibid., (p. 58).
and to thereby bring it about that God never believed that he would be in Chicago at \( t \).

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to consider the question of whether we have counterfactual power over the past.

Ockhamists might object to my characterization of their view above as being essentially related to the claim that accidentally necessary propositions are future-indifferent. Rather, they might say, the bedrock intuition at play just is the Basic Power Intuition. The key to differentiating between propositions that are and are not accidentally necessary must ultimately come down to whether or not I have the power to impact their truth-values. It may well seem that in most cases this lines up with whether or not the propositions are future-indifferent, but this is not the fundamental factor. If I had the power to determine the truth-values of propositions that are future-indifferent, then there would be good reason to conclude that future-indifference is not a sufficient criterion for identifying hard facts. Furthermore, the Ockhamist might say, consideration of God’s foreknowledge leads us to see that there is a class of propositions that might initially seem to be hard facts but that cannot be so long as we maintain both BPI and the traditional view of God’s foreknowledge. God’s past beliefs about future contingent truths, for instance, are subject to our counterfactual power over the past, and thus propositions about His past beliefs cannot be accidentally necessary.

Alvin Plantinga, in “On Ockham’s Way Out,” has taken such an approach to the development of an Ockhamistic account of the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and libertarian freedom. Plantinga quickly points out the difficulties of providing a definition of accidental necessity in terms of future-indifference, or of being strictly about
the past. And, as mentioned above, he suggests that any attempt to define accidental necessity in such terms is misguided, since “the whole point of the argument for theological determinism is just that propositions about the future that are entailed by accidentally necessary propositions about the past will themselves be accidentally necessary.” That is, incompatibilists about the relationship between divine foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom expressly want to say that accidental necessity can apply to propositions about the future as well as those about the past. Thus, as already discussed above, to claim that future-indifference is an essential aspect of accidental necessity seems to beg the question against those who advance the argument from past truth for theological determinism.

Plantinga instead proposes to begin consideration of the relationship between God’s foreknowledge and our libertarian freedom by concentrating upon what it is in the power of agents to do. His initial suggestion is that we might define the accidental necessity of a proposition at a time in terms of the impossibility of an agent’s having the power to perform an action at a later time such that if the agent were to perform this action, the accidentally necessary proposition in question would have been false. Intuitively, accidentally necessary propositions are facts such that we can’t do anything about their facticity. They are facts that are such that we do not have counterfactual power over their past truth-values. And I believe that this lack of power intuition is the basic intuition regarding accidental necessity for Ockhamists like Plantinga.

However, after a very interesting story about how to remove ants from one’s yard and a lengthy discussion of Newcomb’s Paradox, Plantinga comes to the conclusion that,

“It is possible (though no doubt unlikely) that there is something you can do such that if you were to do it, then Abraham would never have existed.” In general, there are very few, if any, contingent facts about the past that we know are accidentally necessary in the sense that we do not have the power to do something such that were we to do it, the fact would have been false. Plantinga goes on to develop a definition of accidental necessity based on agents not having the power to do something such that necessarily, the accidentally necessary proposition in question would have been false, and concludes that this definition “is more satisfying.” By this, I assume that he means that the definition more satisfactorily puts the propositions that are paradigmatically accidentally necessary or not accidentally necessary in the right categories.

Without delving much further into the details of Plantinga’s account of accidental necessity, I think that I can explain why this approach to outlining the Ockhamist view strikes me as no more and perhaps less compelling than attempting to base Ockhamism on the Future-Indifference Intuition. I said near the beginning of this chapter that the disagreement between Ockhamists and Aristotelians over theological determinism could be understood as parallel to their disagreement over logical determinism, with the traditional view of divine foreknowledge taking the place of the Principle of Bivalence. I then suggested that when God’s foreknowledge is introduced, another intuition supports the Aristotelian view – the intuition that propositions about past personal beliefs are accidentally necessary. The Future-Indifference Intuition at least indirectly calls the applicability of PBI to God’s past beliefs into question. But if FII is removed from the

38 Ibid., p. 257.
39 Ibid., p. 261.
Ockhamist case against PBI, then the only thing counteracting the intuitive force of PBI is the belief in divine foreknowledge itself. All of the points that I made above concerning the need for some explanation of how God’s beliefs differ from ours such that we should not expect PBI to apply to them remain. Additionally, an account of Ockhamism that bravely lays out the implications of accepting BPI and the traditional view of foreknowledge without being distracted by attempts to define accidental necessity in terms of criteria such as future-indifference, seems to me to quickly run up against more specific intuitions that it is very difficult to give up.

The reason for this last assertion is that Plantinga’s account results in its possibly being the case that we have the power to affect the truth-values of propositions when our intuitions strongly attest that we do not have such power. Truth-values of propositions about Abraham’s existence are clearly determined such that no one has or might have the power to do something that would result in them being (and having been) different, or so I believe that our intuitions attest in no uncertain terms. And yet it seems to clearly follow from the conjunction of BPI and the traditional view of foreknowledge that there may well be something that I can do, such that were I to do it, God would not have created Abraham. If I have counterfactual power over God’s past beliefs, and if these past beliefs had some relationship to God’s past decisions, then Plantinga seems surely right that following this train of thought through yields the conclusion that there might be something that I have the power to do such that if God had known that I would do it, he would have decided to bring about a radically different course of events.

One person’s modus ponens is another’s modus tollens, and when it becomes clear that accepting the traditional view of foreknowledge in conjunction with BPI results
in my possibly having the power to bring it about that events and states of affairs that are
the object of paradigmatic examples of accidentally necessary propositions never
occurred, it strikes me as being time to opt for *modus tollens*. It thus seems to me that
Plantinga’s account could be seen as a *reductio ad absurdum* against itself. The
conclusions it entails are such that we mentally recoil from them and should, I think,
determine that something is wrong with the account that results in them. Of course, the
denial of CCIA implies this counterfactual power over the past, at least with regard to
past truth-values. And so there is not really anything significantly new being introduced
to our economy of intuitions in this section. But sometimes considering the implications
of principles that we wish to hold can be revealing, and I think that this is one of those
times. One might well be unwilling to accept CCIA, until one realizes that denying it
requires that one predicate of oneself the far-reaching power to do something such that
the past might have been very, very different.

5. Conclusion

Is this chapter meant to give Ockhamists reason to give up their view, or is it
solely aimed at those who are not already committed to the compatibility of divine
foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom? I think it is certainly closer to the latter.
Certainly, this chapter has done nothing to show that Ockhamism is an inconsistent view
resulting in contradiction. If PGI+ were agreed upon as the right account of the
grounding relation between propositions and world and the right criterion for determining
whether propositions are accidentally necessary, and if God’s beliefs are like ours in
serving to ground propositions about them, then I think that Ockhamists would have to
admit that propositions about God’s past beliefs are indeed accidentally necessary. While Ockhamism would remain a viable response to logical determinism, it would fail as a response to theological determinism. But Ockhamists need not accede to the claim that God’s belief-states are sufficient to ground propositions about His beliefs, and even if they were so inclined, they might continue to advocate PGI rather than PGI+ as the appropriate account of grounding.

The majority of this chapter has attempted to show a real conflict in our intuitions about accidental necessity, and to suggest that this conflict must be addressed by Ockhamists. At the very least, I hope that this chapter will encourage Ockhamists to carefully consider what they think the nature of God’s beliefs and knowledge are like such that PBI would not apply to God’s past beliefs. Until such time as they can shed some light on this issue, it seems to me that Ockhamists should continue to ask themselves whether their reasons for maintaining a traditional view of divine foreknowledge outweigh the intuitive force of PBI. And in light of Ockhamism’s implication that we have counterfactual power over the past, possibly over significant historical events, CCIA may seem more appealing than it initially did in chapter one. I doubt that any committed Ockhamists will give up their view on the basis of the considerations of this and the prior chapters. But I do think that persons new to a consideration of these views might recognize that accepting Ockhamism requires that one reconsider what are intuitively plausible beliefs, and might reject, or at least remain skeptical towards Ockhamism, on the basis of this chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR:

MOLINISM AND THE GROUNDING OBJECTION

I have thus far argued that there is an array of intuitions that supports, so long as one wishes to maintain human libertarian freedom, rejecting both the general applicability of the Principle of Bivalence to future contingent propositions and the traditional thesis that God has complete foreknowledge. In this chapter I turn to the traditional theological doctrine of divine providence: that every event is under God’s control and a part of His plan for His creation. I will argue that there are good reasons for rejecting the possibility that God can providentially govern the world in the strong traditional sense while not impugning our libertarian freedom.

The particular account of providence that I will consider in this chapter is Molinism, named thus after its initial expositor, the 16th century Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina.\(^1\) I believe that Molinism is clearly the view of providence with the best chance for reconciling human libertarian freedom and the strong traditional view of providence. In the words of both a leading proponent and a leading opponent of Molinism, if you are

\(^1\) For Molina’s development of the theory of middle knowledge, see Alfred Freddoso’s translation of and introduction to Part IV of Molina’s Concordia: *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
committed to both of these, then Molinism is “the only game in town.” Molinism is the view that God’s providential control of His creation is based on “middle knowledge,” a knowledge of propositions that are contingent despite being true logically prior to any decision on God’s part about what or how to create. These propositions thus occupy a middle position among the objects of God’s knowledge between necessary truths known pre-volitionally and contingent truths known post-volitionally. These propositions are paradigmatically subjunctive conditionals expressing what an agent would freely do in various circumstances. While some of these subjunctive conditionals have antecedents that are true, I will nevertheless adopt the terminology that has become accepted in the literature concerning these propositions and call them counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (CF→’s). Knowing what any possible agent would do in any possible circumstances, God can have complete providential control over the events that occur by knowing how the history of the world would go given any creative decision He might have made.

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3 The notions of logical priority, and pre- and post-volitional knowledge will be considered in greater detail in appendix two.

4 If there are indeterministic events not brought about by libertarianly free actions, then presumably God’s middle knowledge would also encompass subjunctives about which such events would take place in various indeterministic circumstances.

God might also have knowledge of what He would do in certain circumstances, where the relevant counterfactual is contingent, though the consequent action that God performs is not free. Suppose that C→D represents the CF→ concerning Adams’ free act in circumstances which include God’s promise to expel Adam from the Garden if he disobeys God. On the assumption that God cannot break a promise because of His essential goodness, C&D entail E. But then C→E is also true, and is a part of God’s middle knowledge, though E is not a free action by God. If there are truths about what God would freely do in various circumstances, these truths are part of God’s free knowledge, and are true as the result of His determination of their truth, given that a necessary condition for a proposition’s being a part of middle knowledge is that it is true independent of God’s will. See Flint, Divine Providence, pp. 42-43 for his discussion of this example.
make about which circumstances to cause to be actual, and by then making that initial creative decision. Yet human libertarian freedom is obviously also maintained.

I believe that the Molinist view of providence should be rejected because there are good reasons to think that there are not any (and certainly not enough) true counterfactuals of freedom. If the considerations of the previous chapters are accepted, then it is fairly obvious that middle knowledge should be rejected out of hand. However, the thesis that God has control over all events is prima facie a much stronger thesis than that He merely knows these events, and it might thus seem that there should be additional arguments that may be advanced against Molinism, or that those already advanced against Ockhamism should be more compelling when aimed at Molinism. In support of the claim that Molinism makes more ambitious claims about God than does the doctrine of simple foreknowledge, one might note that several philosophers have argued that simple foreknowledge can be of no help to God in providentially governing His creation. According to Molinism, foreknowledge is “the causally impotent byproduct” of God’s creative act of will. Viewing God as provident as well as foreknowing also has obvious

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5 This initial creative decision might be the only point at which God directly causes certain circumstances to obtain, or it might also include decisions about whether and how God will intervene in the course of the world in the future.


7 Flint, *Divine Providence*, p. 45.
and significant implications for various theological issues such as the problem of evil and the efficacy of prayer, implications that may well play an integral role in an individual’s decision whether or not to maintain the traditional view of providence. The question about relative strength of theses that is most relevant to this dissertation, however, is neither that of the role foreknowledge plays in providence, nor that of the implications of each with regard to other theological issues. Rather, it is the question of the logical relationship between middle knowledge and foreknowledge, or between counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (CF→’s) and absolute future contingents (AFC’s – categorical future-tense contingent propositions).

Certainly, if the reasons discussed previously for rejecting divine foreknowledge and the truth of AFC’s are good reasons, then there are also good reasons to reject divine providence based on middle knowledge. But might one reject middle knowledge and the truth of its objects of knowledge without also being committed to rejecting foreknowledge and the truth of its objects? That is the question that I will explore in this chapter. I believe that one may plausibly reject the Molinist account of providence even if one accepts the Ockhamist view of foreknowledge and an unrestricted Principle of Bivalence.

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1. Does Denying Middle Knowledge Require the Denial of Foreknowledge and the Principle of Bivalence?

Many philosophers who have considered middle knowledge have at least strongly suspected that an unwillingness to accept the truth of $CF\rightarrow$’s should be accompanied by a similar unwillingness to accept the truth of $AFC$’s. Richard Otte writes,

If one rejects accounting for true conditionals of freedom in terms of what would happen, one should also reject accounting for true propositions about future free actions in terms of what will happen. Neither is more problematic than the other.\(^9\)

Alfred Freddoso suggests that,

Sophisticated Molinists will not only welcome but insist on this parallel between antirealism regarding conditional future contingents and antirealism regarding absolute future contingents. Indeed, they will go so far as to claim that the former entails the latter. For on the Molinist view, the absolute future is conceptually posterior to, and emerges by divine decree from, the many conditional futures that define the creation situation God finds Himself in.\(^10\)

Tom Flint approvingly comments on the above passage by writing,

Freddoso, I think, is clearly right here; from the Molinist perspective, the two antirealisms go hand in hand. Indeed, even from a non-Molinist perspective, it is at least difficult to see how the two could be separated…. In any event, it is, perhaps, worth noting that, to the best of my knowledge, neither Robert Adams nor William Hasker, two of the foremost contemporary proponents of the “grounding” objection, affirm in their published writings on this topic that there are any truths… about the contingent future.\(^11\)

William Lane Craig criticizes an argument by Robert Adams against Molinism in writing,

Moreover, if Adams’s distinction between entities and facts or truths successfully averts fatalism, it would also undermine Adams’s anti-Molinist argument, for the

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truth of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom is more akin to the truth of future contingent propositions than the existence of singular propositions.\(^\text{12}\)

Richard Gaskin originally claimed that if one accepts the Principle of Bivalence (PB: Either A is true or A is false), then one is committed to accepting the Principle of Conditional Bivalence [PCB: If A were true, then (B would be true or B would be false)], putting forth an argument to this effect in two separate articles.\(^\text{13}\) And if this is true, then in order to deny PCB (and with it the truth of at least some CF→’s), one must obviously also restrict PB:

And now if those who find themselves having to concur with Aristotle’s policy on PB were to disavow his reason for following that policy (acceptance of fatalism), it is very hard to see what alternative reason could be produced.\(^\text{14}\)

Later, Gaskin suggests that the argument he had advanced might be seen as begging the question, but continues to maintain that,

It is hard to see how the reasoning, if good for the hypothetical case, can be prevented in any principled way from having application to the case of the actual future.\(^\text{15}\)

What is common to all of these philosophers, as anyone familiar with the literature will

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\(^{13}\) See Gaskin, “Conditionals of Freedom and Middle Knowledge,” p. 423, and also “Molina on Divine Foreknowledge and the Principle of Bivalence,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 32 (1994), pp. 565-6. PCB should not be confused with the Law of Conditional Excluded Middle (CEM: (A → B) v (A → ~B)). Gaskin explicitly focuses on PCB rather than CEM because he believes that one could maintain CEM while rejecting PCB by utilizing Bas van Fraassen’s method of supervaluation. (See footnote 46 for references to discussions of supervaluation.) Gaskin argues that David Lewis is effectively committed to fatalism because he sees himself as having to deny CEM. While Lewis could maintain CEM via supervaluation, he is committed, says Gaskin, to denying PCB. And then given Gaskin’s argument that PB entails PCB, Lewis is also committed to denying PB, for which the only plausible reason available is a belief that not denying PB results in fatalism.

\(^{14}\) Gaskin, “Conditionals of Freedom and Middle Knowledge,” p. 423.

have recognized, is that they are all Molinists. One might then wonder how those who have argued against Molinism view the relationship between middle knowledge and foreknowledge, or between PCB and PB, or between CF→’s and AFC’s. As one might expect, several anti-Molinists reject the idea that they are committed to restricting PB by their desire to restrict PCB and their subsequent claim that all or all of a certain kind of CF→’s are false. The question that must be addressed is whether these anti-Molinists can deny middle knowledge while rejecting foreknowledge in any “principled way,” to use Gaskin’s words.

Before considering the ways in which anti-Molinists have tried to suggest that realism with regard to AFC’s and with regard to CF→’s are disanalogous, a prima facie reason for rejecting the truth of CF→’s should be quickly mentioned. That reason has to do with the way in which David Lewis understands and interdefines “might” and “would” counterfactuals. The “might” counterfactual (<>→) is defined in terms of the “would” counterfactual (→) as follows:

\[ A <> B \equiv_{df} \neg (A \rightarrow \neg B). \]

Furthermore, Lewis evidently believes that the might counterfactual really is equivalent to the denial of the appropriate would counterfactual, for he introduces this pair of

\[ A <> B \equiv_{df} \neg (A \rightarrow \neg B). \]

If PB is restricted, then there will of course be some propositions that are neither true nor false. If PCB is restricted, it is still open to the anti-Molinist to claim that all (or all of a certain kind) of CF→’s are false, rather than neither true nor false. In fact, given that the question that we want to consider here is whether one can restrict PCB without restricting PB, the anti-Molinist of this ilk must claim that the relevant CF→’s are false, rather than neither true nor false. Those who do reject PB for the kinds of reasons discussed in prior chapters should, I think, view CF→’s as neither true nor false.

counterfactual operators with the intent that they “correspond to the various
counterfactual conditional constructions of ordinary language.”

Given our ordinary understanding of the term ‘might’, it is quite plausible to
assume that libertarian freedom requires that if one freely performs some action, then one
might also have freely refrained from performing that action. That is, we would like to be
able to say for any free action A undertaken in antecedent circumstances C that C \( \Rightarrow \neg A \) is true. But if there is a true counterfactual C \( \Rightarrow A \), then given Lewis’s definition of
the might counterfactual, it follows that \( \neg (C \Rightarrow \neg A) \). So if the “might not” claim is
essential to libertarianism and if the would and might counterfactuals are understood in
the way that Lewis suggests, then one would have to reject the truth of would
counterfactuals about free actions in order to maintain libertarian freedom. William
Hasker and David Hunt explicitly point out this fact. Since this is a problem that
plausibly arises only for counterfactuals rather than AFC’s, one might conclude that
CF\( \Rightarrow \)'s should be rejected even if one accepts PB for AFC’s.

The most likely (and it seems to me plausible) Molinist response is that there are
alternative definitions of the might counterfactual that do not rule out by stipulation the
possibility of libertarianly free actions being the subject of would counterfactuals, and
that satisfy our intuitions about what the phrases “if C were the case, then A would
occur” and “if C were the case, then A might occur” mean. That is, a Molinist might
claim that Lewis has simply misunderstood the relationship between ‘might’ and ‘would’

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18 Ibid., p. 1.

claims in ordinary language. If I understand Gaskin correctly, his suggestion is that C⇒A continue to represent the latter, but that the former (C<>⇒A) be understood as asserting that if C were the case, then it would be the case that A is possible. 20 That is, the might conditional might be understood as follows:

A<>⇒B =df A⇒<>B.

This would allow both C⇒A and C<>⇒¬A to be true, for some free action A in antecedent circumstances C, such that would counterfactuals about free actions would not be inconsistent with libertarian freedom. However, Lewis himself considers this suggestion and gives a counterexample in which while A⇒¬B is true and A⇒<>B is also true, A<>⇒B is false, showing that A⇒<>B does not adequately translate A<>⇒B. 21

The counterexample is this: let A be I looked in my pocket and B be I found a penny. 22 Assume that I did not look and there is no penny in my pocket. A⇒¬B is true. A⇒<>B is also true since B is only contingently false. But A<>⇒B, If I had looked in my pocket, then I might have found a penny, seems false in ordinary contexts.

It seems that the Molinist might respond in either of two ways, both related to the very Lewisian notion that counterfactuals are vague and that assessing their truth-values depends to some degree on the context of discourse. 23 The Molinist might claim that the


21 Lewis, Counterfactuals, pp. 80-81. It is because I presume that Gaskin is aware of this passage that I am not sure that I have understood his suggestion for how to interpret the might counterfactual correctly.

22 Note that in Lewis’s example, B is not an action undertaken in circumstances A, but rather the result of an action undertaken (A); B is something that would happen to me if I performed A. I do not think that this is significant with regard to Gaskin’s suggestion for interpreting A<>⇒B, but I do think that it points to why this is not a counterexample to Wierenga’s interpretive suggestion (see below).

23 See for instance, ibid., pp. 91-95, where Lewis discusses the relation of vagueness to comparative similarity.
might counterfactual should be understood in different ways in different contexts. Perhaps sometimes $A \rightarrow \langle \rangle B$ means $A \rightarrow \langle \rangle B$, while at others it means $\langle \rangle (A \& B)$ or $\langle \rangle (A \rightarrow B)$ or $A \rightarrow \langle \rangle (A \& B)$ or something else either in terms of broadly logical possibility or of some other modality.\textsuperscript{24} Edward Wierenga suggests that the might counterfactual might at times be understood as $C \rightarrow A$, where ‘*’ indicates that the agent specified by $A$ has it within her power to bring about the state of affairs described by $A$.\textsuperscript{25} This would avoid Lewis’s counterexample, since $B$, $I$ found a penny, is plausibly something that happens to me rather than an action within my power to bring about. $A \rightarrow \ast B$ as well as $A \rightarrow \langle \rangle B$ comes out false, since it is not the case that *If I had looked in my pocket, then I would have had the power to bring it about that I found a penny.*

Or the Molinist might instead claim that the sphere of worlds over which the possibility operator ranges is itself determined by conversational context. For instance, in the example Lewis gives, it seems to me that we are confident that *If I had looked in my pocket, then I might have found a penny* is false because we evaluate this claim in terms of there in fact not having been a penny in my pocket. Perhaps then, $A \rightarrow \langle \rangle B$ should be understood in terms of $A \rightarrow \langle \rangle B$, but with the understanding that the possibility operator ranges over only those worlds that share this particular fact. That is, in the closest possible $A$-world, it is not ranging-over-only-no-penny-in-my-pocket-worlds-possible that I find a penny in my pocket, though of course it is broadly logically possible. More common modalities such as causal possibility might also apply in this particular case. In

\textsuperscript{24} These are the candidates that Lewis considers and rejects – ibid., pp. 80-81. The counterexample mentioned above is a counterexample to all of these. But if $\langle \rangle$ is taken to refer to epistemic possibility, then a different counterexample must be found.

the closest possible A-world, which will presumably include the fact that there is no penny in my pocket given ordinary contexts in which the might counterfactual is false, it may not be causally possible that I find a penny in my pocket.

At any rate, the general point that I wish to make is simply that Molinists may well be able to explicate alternative understandings of the relationship between might and would counterfactuals such that libertarian freedom is not ruled out by stipulation. Arguments that (at least most) counterfactuals about libertarian free acts should be held to be false should proceed differently.

Other than the above concern regarding the relationship of might counterfactuals to libertarian freedom, there have been two basic kinds of reasons that anti-Molinists have given for denying middle knowledge that arguably need not also apply to foreknowledge. The first has to do with the question of what grounds CF\rightarrow’s. Some anti-Molinists have been willing to grant the Ockhamist view that agents have counterfactual (or even causal) power over the past such that their actions might retroactively serve as the indirect grounds for AFC’s and for those CF\rightarrow’s that describe the situations in which they act. These philosophers go on to point out, however, that such an account of grounding seems unavailable for those CF\rightarrow’s whose antecedents do not describe actual situations. Since those circumstances are never actual and there are thus no actual agents in those situations to make decisions, actual decisions made by agents clearly cannot be responsible for its being the case that such and such a decision would be freely made by an agent were she to exist in the antecedent circumstances. I’ll quote just one of these philosophers:

…foreknowledge is grounded in something that actually happens, and it is the occurrence of that future event that sanctions the foreknowledge of it. In contrast,
whatever grounds the truth of counterfactuals of freedom is something other than an actually occurring event. The indeterminateness of those [counterfactual] states of affairs in virtue of which counterfactuals of freedom are true is therefore of a wholly different order from the indeterminateness of those [future] states of affairs in virtue of which future-factuals of freedom are true. Though the latter are not yet determinate, they nevertheless will be.²⁶

Even if one allows that events or agents at other times might serve to ground propositions about these times, as PGI [P₇ because P(G₇); F₇ because F(G₇)] allowed in the previous chapters, there are no times at which events occur or agents act in a way that might plausibly ground CF→’s that are about non-actual circumstances. Thus, these philosophers deny the truth of (at least most) CF→’s on the ground that their supposed truth is ungrounded.²⁷

It may be worth explicitly making some points here about how I will treat the grounding objection to Molinism. First, I am primarily concerned in this chapter with whether or not one might reject Molinism while not rejecting Ockhamism or PB. Thus, I will not explicitly argue that all true CF→’s must be grounded rather than true as a matter of primitive fact (though the previous chapters should make it clear that I believe this). Rather, I will argue that if one thinks that contingent truths, including CF→’s, must be grounded,²⁸ then one might well reject the truth of (at least most) CF→’s even if one


²⁸ Note that the appeal to grounds that I am considering need only apply to contingent truths. Just as one might argue that one may only require a sufficient reason for contingent truths, on penalty of any principle to the effect that a sufficient reason is required for all propositions being self-defeating, one might also claim that only contingent truths require grounds. This still leaves many questions about grounding, such as what grounds negative truths, but these are questions that I do not think I need be committed to.
maintains PB and believes that AFC’s are grounded in terms of PGI. Even if one is a 
realist about the future, one might be an anti-realist about (most) CF→’s.

Second, this thesis that I will be advocating in what follows is strictly consistent 
with what (to my knowledge) Molinists have themselves said. While Gaskin may have 
originally believed that he could demonstrate that a denial of the truth of PCB requires a 
denial of PB as well, his later statements suggest that he sees himself as merely putting 
forth an argument (but not a proof) that one who rejects PCB should also reject PB. 
Freddoso and Flint might also be interpreted as arguing that those who reject anti-realism 
with regard to the future should also find attractive a similar rejection of anti-realism with 
regard to CF→’s, without claiming to have shown that the views are logically equivalent. 
(Let us call this the “Strong Defense” interpretation.) But of course, even if such 
arguments are sound, they are strictly consistent with the possibility that the status of 
AFC’s and CF→’s, or of PB and PCB, or of foreknowledge and middle knowledge, are 
not logically equivalent, such that one might accept the former but not the latter of these 
pairs. (Let us call this the “Weak Objection” thesis.) I think that many Molinists would 
willingly grant the Weak Objection. In fact, I intend my discussion of the grounding 
objection to Molinism to show something somewhat stronger – the denial of the Strong 
Defense. I intend to argue that it is not the case that realism concerning the contingent 
future should lead one to realism concerning CF→’s, but that rather there is good reason 
to remain skeptical of the latter even if one accepts the former. (This is the “Strong 

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attempting to answer here. For the primary project of this chapter is to ascertain whether one might consistently demand grounds for CF→’s, and believe that there are none, while accepting that AFC’s are adequately grounded according to PGI. Carefully seeking, explicating, and arguing for an analysis of grounding would undoubtedly be philosophically interesting in its own right, and would allow for a more direct argument against Molinism, but it is not required for the more modest task that I have set myself here. In large part because I believe that any frontal assaults (so to speak) on Molinism are doomed to failure, I do not attempt a more direct argument. See my comments in the conclusion to this chapter.
Objection” thesis.) But even if this is so, the Strong Objection remains consistent with another interpretation of what Freddoso and Flint (and perhaps Gaskin) are arguing: that the reasons for rejecting CF’s and AFC’s are plausibly related, such that Molinists should not be condemned for thinking that the intuitive acceptability of PB and AFC’s gives them reason to also accept PCB and CF’s. (We may call this the “Weak Defense” interpretation.) None of what follows should be read as intended to demonstrate that Molinism is untenable, but rather that there is at least logical room, and plausibly significant intuitive force, for denying Molinism while accepting Ockhamism and PB.

The third point I will make is to remind the reader that, as I suggested that we should in chapter two and appendix one, I will continue to think of adequate grounds of a truth as meeting at least the criteria of guaranteeing the truth in question and of explaining that truth. Paradigmatically, the kind of explanation that I have in mind involves being able to “see” a correspondence between what a proposition states and the state of the world. In the case of present-tense propositions where the proposition is about a free act, one could literally point to causal activity by the subject of a proposition that guarantees the truth of that proposition. Of course, in other-than-present-tense cases, this paradigmatic grounding is unavailable, but the idea behind grounding remains based on a metaphorical pointing or observation - if we could just look at the moment or place that the proposition in question is about, we could see that a relevant event occurs or that a relevant state of affairs obtains; we could see something that clearly “makes true” the proposition in question. This is the notion at work in PGI, which will be reviewed below in the discussion of the Flint-Freddoso account of how CF’s are grounded.
I will also reiterate in passing here that although the paradigmatic sense of explanation germane to the grounding relationship is based on the correspondence relation between truths and world, it is more broadly akin to the request for a sufficient reason for a proposition’s truth. As such, those who advance the grounding objection against Molinism are unlikely to think that a state of affairs such as Peter’s having the property of being such that were he in C he would do A would be an adequate ground for a counterfactual to the effect that Peter would do A in C, whether or not Peter names an actual person or an individual essence. Peter’s having this property is not the right sort of grounding activity that we can metaphorically point to or see, and while Peter’s having this property guarantees the truth in question, it is itself a state of affairs about which the question “why does it obtain” is just as applicable as the question “why is it true” is with regard to the proposition If Peter were in C, he would do A. Thus, though Peter’s having a relevant counterfactual property would guarantee the counterfactual proposition in question, those who seek an explanation as well as a guarantee for this truth are unlikely to be satisfied unless a “ground,” in the sense of something that guarantees and explains, is also found for Peter’s having the relevant counterfactual property. If no explanation is available, then both truth and obtaining are “brute” facts, ungrounded in the relevant sense.29

The second reason that some anti-Molinists have denied the possibility of middle knowledge is that they believe that there are in principle greater difficulties in supposing that God might know CF→’s than that He might know AFC’s, even if questions of

29 See footnote 59 for references to Suarez’s development of something like this account of grounding.
whether enough of them can be true are ignored. Suppose that we assume that God can somehow know everything that occurs in the future. It might be suggested that the way in which He has knowledge of AFC’s is by directly “perceiving” the grounds of these truths. For instance, Tim O’Connor suggests that, “God’s infallible knowledge of a genuinely contingent proposition p involves or just consists of an immediate acquaintance with the grounds for p.” If this is so, then with regard to CF→’s with non-actual antecedent circumstances, there are of course no actual free decisions or free actions to know about in these truly counterfactual circumstances:

In ordinary foreknowledge, it may be argued, what God knows is the agent’s actual decision to do one thing or another. But with regard to a situation that never in fact arises, no decision is ever made, and none exists for God to know…. Lacking the agent’s actual making of the choice, then, there is nothing that disambiguates the situation and makes it true that some one of the options is the one that would be selected.

But even those CF→’s with actual (true) antecedents whose truth might in principle be determined by actual agents seem to be such that God could not know them prevolitionally, if He must directly perceive their grounds. For until God decides which agents and which circumstances to cause to be actual, there aren’t any actual decisions that God could in principle know as the grounds of these CF→’s. Since middle knowledge is meant to be the aid by which God determines the actual world, and yet it seems as if He could not have this knowledge logically prior to determining the actuality

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30 O’Connor, “The Impossibility of Middle Knowledge,” p. 158.

31 Hasker, God, Time, and Knowledge, p. 20. There is nothing that disambiguates the situation unless the agent or individual essence has the kind of counterfactual property discussed briefly above. If an agent/essence had such a property, then there is the question of what grounds (in the sense of guarantees and explains, or provides a sufficient reason for) the possession of this property, and the related question of how God might know such a “brute” fact.
of a particular possible world, “middle” knowledge seems both incorrectly described and unhelpful for providential creation decisions.

It seems to me that, while these kinds of objections to Molinism are similar kinds of objections to those that I earlier lodged against Ockhamism and against PB – objections concerning what grounds AFC’s and how God might know such contingent truths if they existed – one might well believe that these types of objections provide better reasons for rejecting Molinism than they do for rejecting either Ockhamism or PB. In fact, both Hasker and O’Connor seem to believe that God could not have foreknowledge. But one could in principle deny only middle knowledge based on their considerations, and Hunt and Reichenbach give no indication that they have reason to doubt either the truth of AFC’s or God’s ability to know them in the articles cited above.

I believe that the knowledge objection to Molinism gains any efficacy it has against Molinism in virtue of its reliance on the claim that God’s knowledge must be some type of acquaintance with whatever grounds particular truths, in conjunction with the greater difficulty of explaining what grounds CF à’s as opposed to what grounds AFC’s. The alternative is that it is a demand for understanding how God could know such truths. I argued in the previous chapter that in light of the Personal Belief Intuition (that propositions about past beliefs of persons are accidentally necessary), Ockhamists should explain how God’s knowledge might be such that PBI does not apply to His beliefs. This requirement was based on the idea that if we have strong intuitions that conflict in some way with a traditional belief about God, and if we have reason to believe

32 See Ibid., ch. 10, pp. 186-205, and O’Connor, “The Impossibility of Middle Knowledge,” pp. 164-165, footnote 32. But O’Connor’s footnote 37 on p. 165 suggests that he might allow that one could have knowledge, though not certain or infallible knowledge of CF à’s, and thus presumably also of AFC’s.
that we have the intellectual resources to consider various hypotheses about God’s nature, then we should attempt to come up with a hypothesis that explains why that intuition does not apply to God. I do not believe, however, that in the absence of a particular reason to think that God couldn’t know particular truths, we need to understand how He knows them. Thus, it is only in the context of a belief that, for instance, ungrounded contingent truths cannot be known by anyone and (at least most) CF→’s are ungrounded that I believe Molinists should have to explain how God might know CF→’s. I therefore think that the knowledge objection depends upon, and is more difficult to pursue than, the grounding objection, and I will not explicitly consider the knowledge objection apart from the grounding objection. Rather, I will focus on whether the grounding objection to Molinism may be advanced even if one accepts PB, Ockhamism, and PGI as an adequate account of the grounding of AFC’s. It seems to me that PGI does not give one compelling reason to also accept the truth of (most) CF→’s if one believes that some account of grounding must be available for these truths.

1.1 Comparing Grounding Objections

In support of the above claim, let us first consider how Freddoso and Flint extend their account of grounding to CF→’s. Since Flint summarizes as well as develops Freddoso’s account, I’ll allude to Flint’s text. Beginning with past-tense contingent truths, Flint advocates the following familiar account of the grounding of such truths (recall that z is a nonconditional present-tense contingent proposition):

“It was the case that z” is now grounded iff “z is now grounded” was the case, as well as the more specific formulation involving Y as a temporal specifier:
“It was the case (Y) that z” is now grounded iff “z is now grounded” was the case (Y). 33

In parallel form, it is suggested that the grounding activity for AFC’s should be found in the future, not the present. Thus,

“It will be the case (Y) that z” is now grounded iff “z is now grounded” will be the case (Y). 34

The only difference between the Flint-Freddoso account and PGI is that PGI is stated in terms of a proposition being true because certain conditions are met [Pz because P(Gz); Fz because F(Gz)], while the Flint-Freddoso account is stated in terms of a proposition being grounded so long as these same conditions are met. The use of “because” in PGI is meant to draw attention to the asymmetric reliance of the truth of a contingent past- or future-tense proposition on the prior or future grounding of the corresponding present-tense proposition, a reliance that I believe is suggested by the Presentist Intuition at the heart of Ockhamism, and by our intuitive understanding of the grounding relation as some type of asymmetric dependence relation. So long as we keep in mind this asymmetric aspect of the grounding relation, the Flint-Freddoso account for past- and future-tense contingents may be seen as equivalent to PGI. G(Pz) and P(Gz) are logically equivalent, which is to say that the latter explains or is the reason that Pz is true, while this explanatory relationship does not hold reciprocally. PGI draws more explicit attention to this asymmetry than the Flint-Freddoso account, but so long as grounding

33 Flint, Divine Providence, p. 131.
34 Ibid., p. 132.
requires an explanatory and asymmetric dependence, this aspect is implicit in their
account as well.\textsuperscript{35}

Noting that Linda Zagzebski has approvingly commented on a parallel
formulation where possibility claims are involved, Flint moves beyond past- and future-
tense propositions by suggesting that what grounds a truth that something might be the
case is not anything about what is the case here, but rather what is the case in some other
possible world. Thus,

“It might be the case that $z$” is now grounded iff “$z$ is now grounded” might be the
case.\textsuperscript{36}

Finally, if looking to other worlds for grounding activity is permissible, then for
counterfactual truths, one must look for the relevant grounding activity “in those nearby
worlds” where the conditions specified by the antecedent hold. That is, if we represent a
CF to as $(c \rightarrow z)$,

“It would be the case (if $c$ were true) that $z$” is now grounded iff “$z$ is grounded”
would be the case (if $c$ were true).\textsuperscript{37}

The general formulation of the grounding relation claimed to be applicable to all of these
cases, where $X$ is a temporal or modal operator, and $Y$ specifies further when or where
the grounding takes place, is the following:

“It $X$ the case ($Y$) that $z$” is now grounded iff
it $X$ the case ($Y$) that “$z$ is now grounded.”\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35} It is not clear to me whether either Freddoso or Flint would accept this strong asymmetric account
of grounding. The reader should thus read what follows as a discussion of an extension of PGI to CF à’s
in a manner suggested by the Flint-Freddoso account of grounding. I will try to refer to the resultant
account with such phrases as “the Flint-like extension of PGI.”

\textsuperscript{36} Flint, \textit{Divine Providence},. pp. 132-133. For Zagzebski’s comments, see \textit{The Dilemma of Freedom

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 133.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 134.
If we wanted to more explicitly reflect the asymmetric relationship between grounded proposition and ground, we might restate this general formula as follows:

“It X the case (Y) that z” is now *true because*

it X the case (Y) that “z is now grounded.”

There are two ways in which anti-Molinists might respond to Flint’s suggestion that if one accepts his account of the grounding of past and future-tense contingents, then one should also accept the analogous principle for counterfactuals. (This is the Strong Defense interpretation, with which the Strong Objection that I am developing is in tension. Alternatively, Flint may only intend the Weak Defense, in which case he could readily grant that one may have reasonable grounds for denying the truth of many CF→’s while accepting PB, maintaining only that there are also reasonable grounds for accepting these truths if one already accepts the truth of many AFC’s.)

If one is an eternalist, then past and future are, strictly speaking, subjective psychological constructs, such that tensed propositions are not needed to accurately describe the world (though they may be required to carry out practical reasoning). To the extent that tensed truths cannot be simply translated into tenseless ones, an eternalist might adopt something like Flint’s account of grounding (with tense-operators suitably understood) for past and future-tense propositions, but deny the extension of this account to possibility claims (and thus of course also to counterfactual claims) on the grounds that while there really is grounding activity in what subjectively appears to us as past or

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39 But again, note that Flint may not agree with this restatement – see footnote 35.

future, there isn’t really any parallel grounding activity in other possible worlds. W. Matthews Grant suggests that, “If one adopts a B-theory of time… one will have discovered a significant disanalogy between counterfactuals of freedom and future contingent propositions with respect to their grounding.”41 We might also note that Flint, in responding to an accusation by O’Connor that Flint’s account of grounding for AFC’s engenders a vicious regress, writes, “So long as z itself is at some point independently grounded by the state of the world, the fact that the various biconditionals to which O’Connor calls attention are all true seems to me to be an innocuous fact.”42 A similar regress could be developed for possibility and counterfactual claims. But of course, according to the Flint-Freddoso account, there isn’t any point in the actual world at which z is independently grounded when a possibility or counterfactual claim is made about z, and presumably this is the world that Flint’s comment most obviously identifies. So an eternalist might well reject the extension of the grounding account to modal claims.

If, however, one is a presentist who accepts the indirect grounding of past- and future-tense truths by PGI (assumed to be equivalent to Flint’s account of the grounding of past- and future-tense contingents), then this kind of reasoning is unavailable. For in none of the cases (past, future, possible, counterfactual) does the presentist think that the event that serves as the ground of the proposition is really occurring now. For those who are presentists but accept PGI, some other reason would be needed for thinking that the question of what grounds CFà’s presents a greater problem than the parallel question of


42 Flint, Divine Providence, p. 132 footnote 17. The passage Flint is responding to is from O’Connor’s “The Impossibility of Middle Knowledge,” p. 156.
what grounds AFC’s. In our development of such a reason, let us begin with a quote from the passage in Zagzebski that Flint alludes to.\textsuperscript{43}

For example, the proposition \textit{It is possible that Linda Zagzebski visit Antarctica} is true in that there is some possible world, no doubt not the actual one, in which I visit Antarctica. We might take this to mean that my act in some other world grounds the truth of a proposition in this world. But there is nothing mysterious about this unless possible worlds semantics is itself mysterious.\textsuperscript{44}

The part of this passage to which I would like to draw attention is Zagzebski’s claim that “there is nothing mysterious about this [account of grounding] unless possible worlds semantics is itself mysterious.” I would like to suggest that while the Lewis-Stalnaker possible worlds semantics for counterfactuals are not in themselves mysterious, their application to the Flint-like extension of PGI as an account of grounding for many counterfactuals and for the creation situation outlined by Molinism is quite mysterious. Furthermore, I suggest that this mystery might well provide one with good reason to reject Molinism even if one accepts Ockhamism, to reject middle knowledge even if one accepts foreknowledge, to reject the truth of (at least most) CF\textsuperscript{à}’s even if one accepts the truth of AFC’s, and to reject PCB even if one accepts PB.

The anti-Molinist who accepts PGI and PB might accept Flint’s extension of this account of grounding to counterfactuals in principle, but deny that all counterfactuals can be so grounded. Actual-antecedent counterfactuals – subjunctive conditionals that are not \textit{counter}factual at all – should undoubtedly be acceptable to such an anti-Molinist. If the circumstances specified by the antecedent in fact obtain at some point in the actual world, ...

\textsuperscript{43} It should be noted that it is not clear to me whether the argument that I present in what follows would be accepted by Zagzebski.

\textsuperscript{44} Zagzebski, \textit{The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge}, p. 142.
then there is also a fact of the matter about what occurs in those circumstances, so long as one accepts PB. In terms of Flint’s formulation, the specifier Y - “if c were true” – points us to an actual point in time where we (metaphorically) look to see if (in the case of a CF\(\rightarrow\)) there is the relevant activity specified by the consequent that can serve to ground \(z\). So long as one accepts PGI, one will be happy to allow that this activity can serve to ground a counterfactual of the form \(c\rightarrow z\), since \(z\) is independently grounded by a state of the actual world.

The claim that anti-Molinists who are realists about the future should also accept many counterfactuals that truly are counterfactual is harder to make. The standard possible worlds semantics tells us that a counterfactual that states that an agent would freely perform a particular action if she found herself in particular counterfactual circumstances is true just in case the nearest possible world(s) in which the antecedent circumstances obtain is also a world (are also worlds) in which the consequent behavior obtains. If we consider Flint’s account of grounding in terms of these semantics, then \(c\rightarrow z\) is now grounded just in case the consequent behavior that grounds \(z\) really does take place in the nearest possible \(c\)-world(s). And if we keep in mind that the grounding relationship is an asymmetric explanatory relationship \([c\rightarrow z\ is\ true\ because\ the\ consequent\ behavior\ that\ grounds\ z\ really\ does\ take\ place\ in\ the\ nearest\ possible\ c\-world(s)\)], then the question of whether such activity takes place in the nearest possible \(c\)-world must be determined independently of the truth of \(c\rightarrow z\). For if we assume, as discussed in appendix one,\(^{45}\) that there is a univocal sense of grounding (based on the idea that a ground must guarantee and explain what it grounds) applicable both to the

\[^{45}\text{See pp. 277-279.}\]
truth of propositions and the obtaining of states of affairs, then we might well ask what grounds the obtaining of the state of affairs \( w \)’s being the nearest possible \( c \)-world, where \( w \) names a world in which \( z \)-grounding activity takes place. And if an answer cannot be given without appeal to the truth of \( c \rightarrow z \), then that truth plays an integral role in guaranteeing and explaining the fact that the requisite similarity relationship obtains, and is thus at least a partial ground of the obtaining of that relationship. Thus, if the truth of \( c \rightarrow z \) is a determinant of which \( c \)-world(s) is most similar to the actual world, its truth would be at least a partial ground of the fact that relevant \( z \)-grounding activity takes place in the nearest possible \( c \)-world, violating the asymmetric nature of the grounding relationship.

Of course, if the reasoning above is to support the claim that there is good reason to reject middle knowledge even if one does not take issue with foreknowledge, then it must be the case that this reasoning may plausibly be directed at \( CF \rightarrow s \) but not at \( AFC \)’s. Molinists will suggest that parallel reasoning could be applied to future-tense propositions: according to Flint’s account of grounding, \( Fz \) is now grounded just in case the behavior that grounds \( z \) really does take place in the future. And if we continue to maintain that the grounding relationship is an asymmetric explanatory relationship, then it would seem that the question of whether such activity takes place in the future must also be determined independently of the truth of \( Fz \).

The key difference between accepting PGI and accepting a Flint-like extension of PGI to \( CF \rightarrow s \) lies in the plausibility of our having a stronger intuition that necessarily, some future will be, than that a similar necessity applies to there being a nearest possible antecedent-world for truly counterfactual \( CF \rightarrow s \). I will argue shortly that it is plausible
to believe that PB is true and that thus there is a determinate future, while believing that PCB is false, and that thus there is not necessarily a most similar antecedent-world for certain counterfactuals. If we take this for granted for the moment, then we can see how one might deny that the concerns about the grounding of AFC’s and CF→’s are exactly parallel.

If one is satisfied with PGI as an account of grounding for future-tense propositions, then one is implicitly denying the application of the kind of reasoning sketched above to AFC’s. That is, one is denying that any further explanation is needed for F(Gz), which is claimed to ground Fz. One is denying that any further explanation is needed of the fact that a relevant event will ground the present-tense proposition z. F(Gz) is claimed to be a sufficient explanation, as well as guarantee, of the truth of Fz, and it is denied that F(Gz) in turn needs to be grounded. Of course, one might well apply the above reasoning and, on the basis of the fact that it seems that F(Gz) should in turn be grounded, reject PGI as an adequate account of the grounding relationship. As chapter two made clear, this is my own view. But if one accepts PGI, then one believes that, “so long as z itself is at some point independently grounded by the state of the world,” no further explanation is needed of the fact that this grounding will or did take place. Given that PB is true, there is a determinate actual world, including the future. Fz is in fact either true or false, and if it is true, its truth can only be due to the fact that the event it describes will in fact occur and thus correspond with and ground the present-tense counterpart of Fz, z.

So says the realist about the future who accepts PGI as an account of grounding. The Molinist (according to the Strong Defense interpretation) suggests that such a realist
about the future should then also accept that $c \rightarrow z$ is grounded in virtue of a relevant event occurring in the most similar $c$-world, without demanding further explanation for that fact. But if one accepts PB and PGI but does not accept PCB, then it is not a given that there is in fact a most similar $c$-world. To be sure, says the anti-Molinist of this ilk, the fact that the consequent proposition is grounded in the most similar antecedent-world is exactly the kind of explanation that we should expect for the truth of $c \rightarrow z$. But whereas there is a single determinate future, there may not be a single answer to the question of whether a relevant $z$-grounding event does or does not occur in the most similar $c$-world, precisely because there may be equally similar $c$-worlds in which $G_z$ and in which $\neg G_z$. And thus unless there is reason to believe that there is a single most similar antecedent-world, there is no reason to believe that there is a determinate answer to the question of what would occur were the antecedent true. Necessarily, there is a fact of the matter about whether $z$ will be grounded or not, and according to PGI, if $z$ will be grounded, then this fact guarantees and explains the truth of $F_z$. But if PCB is false, then there isn’t necessarily a fact of the matter about whether $z$ would be grounded or not, if $c$ were true; and thus there isn’t necessarily a fact that can serve to ground $c \rightarrow z$. If there is such a fact, it is the right kind of fact to ground $c \rightarrow z$, for one who accepts PGI; but unlike AFC’s, counterfactuals require additional grounding for the fact that there is the relevant kind of fact, so long as PCB is false. And if the only means of guaranteeing that there is a single most similar antecedent-world is to appeal to the truth of the very counterfactual that one is seeking to ground, then the asymmetrical explanation that the grounding relationship requires is not present.
It remains to be argued that there is in fact good reason for thinking that many counterfactuals, and especially CF\rightarrow’s, are such that there is not a most similar antecedent-world in which \(z\) either is or is not grounded. That is, it remains to be argued that PCB is plausibly false, even if one believes PB to be true. One reason to think this is plausible just is that the strongest intuitive reason for accepting PB is unavailable as a reason for accepting PCB. PB is intuitively quite plausible on the ground that for any future set of circumstances, the agent involved in these circumstances must do something, and that, given that the agent will in fact do something, it seems a small step to claiming that for any particular act that the agent might perform, it is either true or false that the agent will do so. The desire to maintain the truth of the claim that the agent will do something has led many philosophers who deny PB to nevertheless maintain the Law of Excluded Middle via Van Fraassen’s method of supervaluation,\(^{46}\) but the key point here is that one of the most intuitively compelling reasons for accepting PB and thus being a realist with regard to AFC’s is the idea that the actual world must go some way or other, and that thus there must be a truth of the matter about what way it will go. And one reason for thinking that there is greater reason to accept PB than to accept PCB just is that parallel reasoning breaks down when applied to counterfactuals, at least insofar as they are understood in terms of the standard possible worlds semantics. For while for any

given antecedent world it remains true that the agent must do something in the given circumstances, there is no guarantee that there is only one such world to consider, or that the agent will do the same thing in all the relevant antecedent worlds.

To put this another way, an anti-Molinist who accepts PB will grant that in counterfactual circumstances, PB would still be true. That is, if antecedent circumstances c were actual, it would be the case that the consequent proposition z is true or false. But it is a further question as to whether PCB is also true. That is, it is a further question whether it is true that if c were true, then (z would be true or z would be false). This is because, as Gaskin points out, the standard semantics for counterfactuals are such that “would” effectively means “would have to” in terms of the consequent holding at all most similar possible worlds. But if c&z worlds are as close as c&~z worlds, then we can say neither that if c were true, z would be true, nor that if c were true, z would be false. There must thus be some determinant of the relative similarity of c&z vs. c&~z worlds in order for there to be a fact of the matter about whether z is grounded in the most similar c-world, a fact that, according to the extension of PGI, would ground the truth of c⇒z. But if we cannot explain the relative proximity of c&z vs. c&~z worlds to the actual world without appealing to the truth or falsity of c⇒z, then the asymmetry requirement of grounding is violated such that the purported truth of c⇒z cannot be grounded by the Flint-like extension of PGI, an account that depends on there being a closest possible c-world.

The key question, then, is whether there might be cases in which the truth or falsity of the very counterfactual in question would be the only determinant of the relative

proximity of c&z vs. c&~z worlds. And it seems clear when we are considering CF→’s, paradigmatically counterfactuals about created agents with libertarian freedom, that there will be many such cases. If one is a libertarian, then one will presumably hold that insofar as c specifies only causal behavior up to the time specified by c along with the causal behavior not involving the agent in question at that time, there is at least one world sharing this causal history in which z is true and one world sharing this causal history in which z is false.48 Insofar as the truth or falsity of c→z is not considered as a determinant of similarity of c-worlds to the actual world, we might say that c&z worlds are equally similar to c&~z worlds up to the point of the free decision. If one also believes that the “history” of these worlds after the time of the decision is irrelevant to assessing similarity, then one might well conclude that there is no single closest c-world, since there are equally similar antecedent-worlds in which the agent does and in which she does not perform activity that grounds z.49 Given such a tie in similarity, it seems that

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48 I think that counterfactuals related to causal laws (whether causal laws are counterfactuals or merely entail counterfactuals) may be allowed in a consideration of what grounds various similarity relationships between possible worlds. For while (at least many) closest-possible-antecedent-world relationships claimed to ground CF→’s cannot themselves be grounded without appeal to the very CF→’s they are meant to ground, similarity relationships that would serve to ground causal law counterfactuals on the Flint-Freddoso account might plausibly be grounded in similarity of divine intentions. Alternatively, causal law counterfactuals might be directly grounded in divine intentions whether or not the Flint-Freddoso account of grounding succeeds in guaranteeing and explaining their truth. It is worth keeping in mind that theirs is merely one account of grounding, the only that I am aware of with some plausibility when applied to CF→’s; but there are other accounts of grounding that might well apply to the truth of other contingent propositions, even other counterfactual truths.

Consideration of the status of causal law counterfactuals may also be side-stepped by pointing out that the issue here is whether the relevant similarity relationship can be determined independently of the truth of the CF→ that is to be grounded by activity at the closest possible c-world. The Molinist is welcome to help herself to the truth of other counterfactuals not logically related to the one in question, or not, as she wishes. The argument is that no matter what other truths she appeals to, unless the CF→ in question is itself included as a determinant of similarity, there will be no reason to conclude that a c&z world is any closer than a c&~z world, where z describes some libertarianly free act.

49 See Rod Bertolet, “Hasker on Middle Knowledge,” Faith and Philosophy 10 (1993), pp. 10-12 and Gaskin, “Middle Knowledge, Fatalism, and Comparative Similarity of Worlds,” p. 192. As Bertolet notes, David Lewis clearly thinks that the after-decision history is relevant to evaluating comparative
there simply isn’t any fact of the matter about whether “\(z\) is grounded” would be the case if \(c\) were true, and thus Flint’s account of grounding would result in \(c \rightarrow z\) being ungrounded. On the basis of the above reasoning, anti-Molinists, even if they are realists about the future and accept the Flint-like extension of PGI in principle, might deny PCB and regard all such counterfactuals about libertarianly free acts as false, claiming that a metaphorical survey of the nearest antecedent-worlds does not provide a determinate answer to whether the agent does or does not ground \(z\) in \(c\).

An anti-Molinist might take such a line, but it is not quite clear to me that she should if she is committed to realism about the future. For is she is so committed, then presumably there are facts about the future that might also be considered in comparing similarity. These facts needn’t be included in the antecedent circumstances in question, and (given that \(z\) describes a free action) couldn’t be included if they imply the performance or non-performance of the activity that grounds \(z\). There still will be \(c\)-worlds in which the agent performs the action described by \(z\) and \(c\)-worlds in which she does not, and insofar as only the actual causal history up to the time specified in \(c\) is concerned, there still may be no determinate answer as to whether \(c \& z\) worlds or \(c \& \sim z\) worlds are more similar to the actual world. But one who accepts that there is a determinate future in the actual world might conclude that worlds in which \(z\) is grounded in \(c\) are more in keeping with the entire “history,” including the future, of the actual world than are \(c\)-worlds in which the action described by \(z\) is not performed. Let us consider Flint’s favorite example of Cuthbert and his iguana and see if we can develop an example that makes plausible the idea that the future “history” of the actual world might

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determine the comparative similarity ranking of antecedent-worlds that are otherwise plausibly tied in similarity.

Suppose that in the actual world Cuthbert is very fond of his pet iguana. He has always taken very good care of it, and they have happily kept each other company for the last five years. Furthermore, given the fifteen-year average life expectancy of iguanas, Cuthbert fully expects to have the company of his iguana well into his middle age. In fact, let us assume that the actual world’s future includes another ten years of happy iguana-ownership before he sadly buries his iguana and purchases a python with an average life expectancy of twenty-five years, fully intending that his pet outlive him. Let us suppose that at the present time, $t$, in the actual world, Cuthbert has just come home from his work as a philosophy professor and, before leaving for a conference at which he is to present a paper, is carefully feeding his iguana a mixture of leafy greens (not lettuce), vegetables and a little fruit. Finally, let us consider the counterfactual $C \Rightarrow F$ where $F$ represents Cuthbert feeding his iguana and $C$ represents the following counterfactual circumstances that might have obtained:

Rather than the usually satisfying kind of day that Cuthbert has become accustomed to having in his profession (and that he has had in the actual world), today has been a very bad day. Two separate students have demanded that their grades be changed, accusing Cuthbert at the point of tears of ruining their chances to get into medical school. Cuthbert has just gotten a letter from a prestigious journal rejecting his submission for publication with very little in the way of commentary on the reasons for the rejection. And it is a miserable snowy/sleety day that has caused the weekend conference at which Cuthbert was to have presented a paper, a paper that he stayed up half the night completing, to be canceled. In fact, had the weather not turned unexpectedly bad, Cuthbert would have left the university several hours earlier, missing the tearful students and putting off the letter, and would now be on his way to that conference after having fed his pet iguana. As Cuthbert walks home in the sleet and snow several cars splash slush onto his legs and one almost hits him as it slides off the road. Cursing his decision to teach at an upper-midwestern university, Cuthbert finally arrives home (somewhat later than $t$), strips off his wet clothes, takes a hot
shower, and has just collapsed in bed (at a time which we shall label \( t^+ \)) when he remembers that he has not fed his iguana in over twenty-four hours (between working on his paper and being late coming home). Furthermore, Cuthbert knows that his iguana has been a bit off-color lately and that the veterinarian has said that she would be fine so long as she was fed regularly.

According to the anti-Molinist, the most that can be concluded from Cuthbert’s character and past history is that in C, he would probably get up and feed his iguana. That is, given that Cuthbert is libertarianly free with respect to this action, insofar as only the past history of the actual world is considered, there are equally similar C-worlds in which Cuthbert feeds and in which he does not feed his iguana. The question is whether the anti-Molinist who is a realist about the future might admit that \( C \rightarrow F \) is true in virtue of the fact that in the actual world, Cuthbert and his iguana live together happily for another ten years. Should this fact lead one to say that a C&F world is more similar to the actual world than a C&~F world, while one would not say this so long as one just considers the actual world up to \( t^+ \), in which Cuthbert is contentedly on his way to his conference in cloudy but non-precipitous weather, having fed his iguana some hours ago?

I do not know whether such considerations should lead the anti-Molinist who is also a realist about the future to conclude that \( C \rightarrow F \) is true. I fear that my own antirealist intuitions about the future make it difficult for me to confidently assert that one answer has much greater intuitive force than another. If such considerations need not lead the future-realistic anti-Molinist to accept the truth of counterfactuals such as \( C \rightarrow F \), then we have already discovered a point at which the anti-Molinist may suggest that the application of the standard possible worlds semantics for counterfactuals to the Flint-like extension of PGI as an account of grounding for truly counterfactuals \( \text{CF} \rightarrow \)’s is mysterious, and thus that there is room for denying the truth of almost all \( \text{CF} \rightarrow \)’s even if
one has no similar qualms about AFC’s. For while according to this account of grounding we are to metaphorically look to the nearest possible antecedent-world(s) and see if the consequent behavior obtains there, our intuitions about comparative similarity straightforwardly suggest that given that this consequent behavior is free in the libertarian sense and given that the counterfactual itself is not a determinant of worldly proximity, there are some closest antecedent worlds in which the behavior obtains and some in which it does not. The extension of PGI as an account of grounding in terms of what occurs in the nearest possible antecedent-world(s) thus gives us the result that all counterfactual CF’s are false. We need not say the same of CF’s with actual antecedent circumstances (even if these circumstances will obtain in the future), for we believe that there is a fact of the matter about what happens in the future, and the eminently plausible (strong) centering principle tells us that no world is as close to the actual world as the actual world is to itself.50 Thus, an anti-Molinist who accepts PB and accepts the Flint-like account of grounding for counterfactuals in principle might still argue that when we are considering truly counterfactual antecedents and truly free consequent behavior this account of grounding fails to provide us with any reason to conclude that there is a determinate fact of the matter about what an agent would do in counterfactual circumstances, and thus fails to provide us with any reason to maintain that there are true CF’s which could be the object of God’s middle knowledge. One might thus reject PCB and stipulate that all such counterfactuals are false.51


If the future course of the actual world does appropriately determine the comparative similarity of antecedent worlds for counterfactuals involving free consequent behavior, then the anti-Molinist must seek further cases in which considering the Flint-like account of the grounding of CF→’s in terms of the standard possible worlds semantics becomes mysterious. The most obvious cases are those that involve true CF→’s in the initial creation situation that are about individual essences that are never instantiated. While one might allow that those CF→’s about individual essences and circumstances that God does actualize might be grounded in the free action of the agent in a manner very similar to the manner in which AFC’’s are grounded by PGI, and while one might even allow that CF→’s about actualized agents in truly counterfactual circumstances might be grounded in virtue of the actual history of the world providing a determinate comparative similarity judgment with regard to what the agent would do in the counterfactual circumstances, CF→’s that involve neither agents nor circumstances that are actual seem to be such that what the agent would freely do were she in those circumstances is a paradigmatically vexed question. When the standard possible worlds semantics involving comparative similarity are applied to the Flint-like extension of PGI, there simply does not appear to be a determinate answer that could ground, or explain, the truth of such a counterfactual. So long as the truth of these counterfactuals must be grounded, any particular counterfactual of this sort should be judged false. And when we consider the creation situation on the Molinist view prior to any divine decision as to which circumstances and essences to actualize, this kind of consideration seems applicable to all CF→’s. The question of how the truth of even those counterfactuals
whose grounding we are not currently questioning might be grounded in the creation situation pre-volitionally thus remains mysterious.

Flint does not consider the possibility that the future might serve as a ground for determining which antecedent-world(s) are closer to the actual world in response to the kind of objection based on libertarian freedom discussed above. Rather, he writes,

In response to such an objection, the Molinist can probably do no better than repeat the point made years ago by Plantinga that, in comparing worlds, one point of similarity is similarity regarding counterfactuals. A Z-less world may be no less similar to the actual world than is a Z-ful one if only fundamentally non-conditional propositions are considered. But if, as Plantinga contends, “one feature determining the similarity of worlds is whether they share their counterfactuals,” then the Z-ful world may well be more similar to the actual world due to the fact that, both in it and in the actual world, (c \( \rightarrow \) z) is true, whereas the same counterfactual is false in the relevant Z-less worlds.  

Flint goes on to admit that even many Molinists find this response unsatisfying, and even view it as a tacit endorsement of the claim that CF\( \rightarrow \)’s are ungrounded, since, “as usually interpreted, such [standard possible-world] semantics imply that similarity among worlds is independent of or prior to the truth of counterfactuals.” But Flint himself advocates this response, arguing that,

The fact that Plantinga’s line exudes a hint of heterodoxy in this respect seems to me poor grounds for rejecting it, since it is a kind of heterodoxy which seems but a natural extension for a realist about the future.

Once again, we are returned to the purported parallel between antirealism with regard to AFC’s and antirealism with regard to CF\( \rightarrow \)’s. Flint suggests that we return to considering how an antirealist about the future might claim, based on the assertion that it

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53 Ibid., p. 136.

54 Ibid.
is not determinate which future course of events will come about or is more similar to the world as it is here and now, that AFC’s cannot be presently grounded. Flint then continues:

The natural realist response, I take it, would be to say that the two types of possible futures are *not* equal, for only one is part of the actual world. But won’t such a response be rejected by the antirealist, whose whole point is that there is no such thing as *the* actual, fully determinate world?  

Flint goes on to suggest that just as the realist about the future must be allowed to appeal to fundamentally future propositions in order to respond to the antirealist’s objection, the realist about CF→’s must be allowed to appeal to fundamentally conditional propositions in order to respond to antirealists about CF→’s. “But, of course, to the antirealist, assuming there to be such truths here and now is sure to seem unsatisfying, question-begging, perhaps even amusing in a Pickwickian sense.”

I would like to reiterate two points discussed above about Flint’s suggestion that Molinists must be allowed to appeal to fundamentally conditional propositions to explain why otherwise equally similar antecedent-worlds are not in fact equally similar. First, it seems to me that to so appeal forces one to abdicate the claim that counterfactual truth is grounded in the relevant causal activity at the closest possible antecedent-world, so long as one understands grounding as an asymmetric and explanatory relationship. Molinists may assume that there are true CF→’s, but in doing so it does seem to me that they are admitting that such truths are ungrounded. It is undoubtedly true that relevant causal activity occurs at a particular possible antecedent-world suitably similar to the actual

55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
world; but for many CF→’s, it is also undoubtedly true that there is another possible world, indistinguishable from the first except for the occurrence of this activity and the truth or falsity of the CF→ in question. In such circumstances, it seems impossible to claim that the CF→ is true because the relevant activity occurs in the closest possible world, given that which world is closest can only be determined by the truth of that same CF→.

The second point that I would like to reiterate is that the antirealist objections need not be seen as exactly parallel, though the Molinist responses regarding CF→’s and AFC’s certainly are. To present the objections as parallel, or to assume that they are such, does seem to me to be question-begging, at least in the context of this chapter in which I have set out to explicitly consider whether or not an anti-Molinist could be a realist about the future but deny the truth of CF→’s. The antirealist objector to AFC’s is making the claim that there is no determinate actual world, in much the same way that I have advocated in previous chapters. But the antirealist objector to CF→’s that we have been considering grants that there is a determinate actual world, including the future. To be sure, in doing so she gives up the demand for a link, furnished by the nature of time, between present truth-value and the prior or future grounding of the present-tense counterpart of the past- or future-tense proposition in question. That is, she opts to allow that PGI rather than PGI+ adequately captures the grounding relationship. But her advocacy of PGI still leaves room for denying the Flint-like extension of PGI to CF→’s. The indeterminacy that is asserted by this anti-Molinist is not a parallel claim to that asserted by the antirealist about AFC’s regarding the actual world, but rather is a claim about the comparative similarity relations between worlds. The anti-Molinist is denying
that there is an objective fully determinate similarity relationship between the relevant possible worlds that could serve to ground the truth of (most) CF→’s. And this denial of PCB seems plausible in light of the unavailability of reasoning parallel to the most compelling intuitive reasoning for PB (that the agent must do something), and in light of the nature of libertarian freedom.\footnote{This chapter has been presented as developing a grounding objection to Molinism. It may be important to note, however, that the grounding objection presented in this chapter is somewhat different from that presented to AFC’s in chapter two, for instance. There, the objection was that if an indirect account of grounding, like that posited by PGI and PGI+, is to be acceptable, there must be a link between present truth-values and the prior or future grounding of the present-tense counterpart of the proposition in question, but that while such a link between past and present is provided by the nature of time, no link is available between present and future. Thus, while the Aristotelian may grant that Fz is true iff z will be grounded, she denies that Fz’s truth, absent a link between present truth-value and future occurrence of an event that will ground z, is true because z will be grounded. Here, we’re granting that no link is required, such that if the consequent-proposition of the CF→ in question is grounded in the nearest possible world, it is appropriate to label the truth of CF→ as grounded. However, the considerations of this chapter are meant to suggest that there may not in fact be a most similar world, even if there is a determinate future, and that thus there may not be a determinate answer to where we should look for the grounds of the consequent-proposition. The fact that there is a closest possible antecedent-world itself needs grounding in a way that the question of which future is actual does not. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly true that one could simply assume that there is a determinate similarity relationship between possible worlds, that one galaxy of worlds is in fact feasible, in a similar manner to that in which realists about the future assume that there is a determinate future. I believe and have tried to show that this assumption is less intuitively plausible; that is, I have tried to suggest that PB has greater plausibility than PCB. While the concerns of this chapter have traditionally been presented as related to a grounding objection, and while I think that this remains appropriate, any readers who feel that grounding-language confuses more than clarifies the central disagreement might recast much of the thought in this chapter in terms of a fundamental disagreement about the truth of PB and PCB.}

In light of the discussion of this chapter, it seems to me that one might well reject Molinism without rejecting Ockhamism, reject the truth of many CF→’s without rejecting the truth of AFC’s, and reject PCB without rejecting PB. It is fairly clear that an extension of PGI to counterfactuals at least engenders questions about whether such an account, understood in terms of the standard possible worlds semantics for counterfactuals, really provides an asymmetric grounding relationship. Freddoso suggests that it cannot, and Gaskin explicitly advocates accepting that CF→’s are basic
truths rather than continuing to seek for an account of grounding. In light of the “mysterious” nature of the purported grounding relationship for CF→’s in terms of what occurs in the closest possible antecedent-world(s), we might well hesitate to assume that something like Flint’s account of grounding is ultimately tenable. I know of no other plausible candidates for grounding accounts, and thus it seems right to me that the Molinist should retreat to the position of advocating that CF→’s are true as a matter of brute fact.

2. Closing Thoughts

I think that it is clear that the Molinist has not shown or proven that antirealism regarding CF→’s entails antirealism regarding AFC’s. But I know of no attempts by Molinists to perform such an ambitious task, with the possible exception of Gaskin’s earlier articles. We might almost admit from the start that there is logical space for denying that CF→’s are appropriately grounded while not having similar qualms about AFC’s. I think that what I earlier termed the Weak Objection to Molinism should be granted by all Molinists. If one interprets the Molinists that we have discussed as engaging in a Strong Defense of Molinism, as arguing that one who accepts AFC’s should also accept CF→’s, then I believe the considerations of this chapter suggest that


59 Other candidates for accounts of grounding that have been discussed and dismissed both by Adams and subsequent authors can be found in Adams, “Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil,” pp. 110-112. Adams cites Molina’s Jesuit defender Francisco Suarez as arguing that a primitive or basic understanding of CF→’s as counterfactual properties of creaturely essences is required in “De scientia Dei futurorum contingens,” Bk. 2, c. 5, n. 6, 9, 11 and in De gratia, prol. 2, c. 7, n. 21, 24, 25. Note that I do not consider this a plausible candidate for a grounding account of CF→’s because I cannot see how such a property would suitably explain, as well as guarantee, their truth. See pp. 142-143 above.
this conclusion can be resisted. There are plausible grounds for denying PCB even if one maintains PB, such that the Flint-like extension of PGI to CF→’s results in their being ungrounded and false. That is, I believe that the Strong Objection to Molinism is plausible. But nothing that I have said in support of the Strong Objection need be seen as inconsistent with the Weak Defense of Molinism. Molinists are within their rights to continue to claim that one might plausibly see how one views AFC’s and CF→’s as linked in important ways. How one views these categories of truths does depend on related principles, PB and PCB. If one does not agree with me that the former has a greater degree of intuitive plausibility than the latter, then one might well see the fates of foreknowledge and middle knowledge as closely linked.

At the end of this last chapter that is dedicated to claiming that a view is incompatible with human libertarian freedom, this recognition that neither the Molinist nor anti-Molinist need be seen as attempting to prove that the other is wrong perhaps merits some closing comments about how I have approached this dissertation and why I have approached it in this way. Nowhere in this dissertation have I attempted to demonstrate or prove that any of the views that I have rejected are false. Instead, I have relied on laying out and attempting to motivate an array of principles that I think are intuitively plausible and that lead to the rejection of the views that I am calling into question. I began in chapters one and two with my reasons for doubting that the Principle of Bivalence is true, and I have attempted in the subsequent chapters to identify additional reasons that one might reject subsequently stronger claims (truth of AFC’s, foreknowledge of AFC’s, providence based on middle knowledge of CF→’s). If one finds the Constraining Circumstances Intuition, as understood by Aristotelians, plausible,
then one is likely to deny PB in order to maintain libertarian freedom. The preferability of PGI+ to PGI might also lead one who thinks that all contingent truths must be grounded to deny PB. The Personal Belief Intuition, and the realization of the extensive counterfactual power over the past that we may have if Ockhamism is true, are additional reasons to deny that God has complete foreknowledge. And finally, this chapter has suggested that one might find PB plausible while not finding PCB plausible, such that one would deny that all CF→’s are appropriately grounded.

Nevertheless, I do not believe that the considerations of this dissertation will convert any committed Ockhamists or Molinists, nor do I think that opponents of these views should expect to convert them, whether by similar or different arguments. The reason for these beliefs is that I believe that all of the views that I have attacked remain coherent. Ultimately, if one is willing to accept the truth of CF→’s as basic, then the truth and foreknowledge of AFC’s is easily explicable in Molinist terms. If one accepts PCB and that there is a basic determinate similarity ordering of possible worlds, then the Flint-like extension of PGI should satisfy any concerns about grounding that those who accept PGI itself might have. If one rejected Molinism but was willing to assert that grounding has no relation to accidental necessity by denying PGI+, or to accept an account of accidental necessity in terms of PGI+ but deny that propositions about God’s past beliefs are grounded, and if one was willing to accept the incumbent characterization of God’s beliefs and indeed, for all we know, many facts about the past as such that they might have always been otherwise than they are, then Ockhamism as a theory of foreknowledge is viable. Ockhamism is even easier to maintain when one is only concerned with propositional truth. And certainly even if one rejected Ockhamism, one
might maintain PB simply by understanding the circumstances in which one must have
the ability to do otherwise for libertarian freedom as including only the causal history of
the world rather than AFC’s as well.

Many have argued against Ockhamism and/or Molinism on the basis of the idea
that the past, understood appropriately, is fixed and cannot be altered, or on the basis of
the idea that all truths, or all truths of the relevant kinds, must be grounded in certain
ways. I believe that all arguments on these bases have no chance of convincing a
thoughtfully committed proponent of either of these views. For those who accept
Ockhamism or Molinism and who have taken the time to consider the implications of this
acceptance presumably recognize that certain principles about the fixity of the past or
about grounding requirements would be inconsistent with their own views. But these
principles are at least very close to the level of basic principles – such that there is little
room “beneath them” for arguing that they are true or false. One can only consider one’s
initial intuitions about these principles and then whether one should modify these initial
intuitions in light of the implications of their acceptance. While I myself find relevant
intuitions that lead to the rejection of Ockhamism and Molinism sufficiently compelling,
and find the implications of accepting Ockhamism and Molinism sufficiently strange to
counteract the initial attractiveness of the views, I see no reason why one could not find
these relevant intuitions utterly mysterious and judge that the ability of Ockhamism and
Molinism to maintain both human libertarian freedom and traditional accounts of
foreknowledge and providence is sufficiently compelling to override any qualms one
might have about the implications of these views. We might focus on just one
implication of these views, counterfactual power over the past, to further make this point.
From my perspective, counterfactual power over the past is an extraordinary, and extraordinarily far-reaching, power to predicate of us mere mortals. Given this power, we have the ability to bring it about that the world would have always been very different. This power does extend to God’s prior beliefs on Ockhamism and to which galaxy of feasible worlds God found Himself within on Molinism, and it may extend to more mundane but no less important facts such as whether Abraham existed or not. This is an implication of these views that strikes me as an additional reason to reject them, confirming that my intuitions about libertarian freedom (CCIA), about past beliefs (PBI), and about grounding (PGI+) are true. But an Ockhamist or Molinist presumably sees the situation far differently. She clearly recognizes that libertarianly free agents must have this far-reaching counterfactual power if God has foreknowledge or is provident, but she does not find this power nearly so extraordinary, perhaps because she sees it as a very weak sort of power. It is a power to do something (that clearly one can do - BPI) such that were she to do it (though she will not in fact do it) things would have been different. But to expect that things would have been different had she done something different is just what one would expect and just what counterfactuals are meant to express. Far from being an unwelcome implication of Ockhamism or Molinism, the idea that we have such counterfactual power may well be itself intuitively compelling to some people. And when an Ockhamist or Molinist turns her attention to the principles that I have suggested are intuitively compelling and that would lead to the rejection of her eminently attractive view, she may find them strange to the point of absurdity. Why would anyone think that libertarian freedom requires that, she might say of CCIA. Why would anyone think that one must ground contingent propositions in that way, she might say of PGI+. Why
would anyone think that we must give a positive account of why PBI does not apply to God’s beliefs, she would add. And so, Molinists, Ockhamists, and their detractors, once they understand the intuitions underlying their various vantage points and the immediate implications of their views, must ultimately end up staring incredulously at each other, or agreeing to disagree, or both.

It thus seems to me that little progress can be made in convincing thoughtful and committed Molinists or Ockhamists to abandon their views, whether by attempting to motivate intuitions that would lead to the rejection of these views or by pointing out the immediate implications of these views. In the first place, given that they are antithetical to the view in question, the relevant intuitions are unlikely to be either initially shared or such that their acceptance by Molinists (or Ockhamists) can be sufficiently motivated. In the second place, the immediate implications of these views might be not only accepted but welcomed by their proponents. At the very least, given the extensive philosophical discussion of Molinism and Ockhamism in the last twenty or so years, any thoughtful proponent of these views today is presumably aware of the immediate implications of her view and has judged them sufficiently palatable. If real dialogue is to continue between Molinists and anti-Molinists, it is likely that it must be concerning the more far-reaching implications of Molinism as well as alternative views of providence. Perhaps (but only perhaps) heretofore unthought of theological implications might sway one from one camp to another, and at any rate, the project of considering the theological implications of one’s philosophical understanding of God’s relationship to His creation is undoubtedly of great import.

60 See footnote 8 for a citation to Flint, where he makes a very similar point.
As I conclude this chapter, I have now laid out my reasons for rejecting Molinism, Ockhamism, and the Principle of Bivalence with regard to absolute future contingent propositions. I do not expect to have convinced thoughtful and committed proponents of these views to give them up. But I do hope that a Molinist or Ockhamist or proponent of PB, having read this far, will have a greater awareness of why one might choose to reject their views. More specifically, I hope that each chapter has raised additional and more plausible reasons for one to reject Molinism, so long as one is committed to human libertarian freedom. Given my own rejection of these views and specifically of Molinism, this dissertation would not be complete without some consideration of the alternative views of providence that one might adopt. While my discussion in the next two chapters is only the barest propadeutic to a careful consideration and adjudication of these alternatives, that careful consideration must remain a life-project. In the subsequent and penultimate chapters of this more limited project, I will merely sketch what seem to me to be the two most plausible alternatives to Molinism as views of providence and gesture towards some of the issues that would need to be considered in making any final choice between them.\footnote{Of course, without fully considering these issues, it would be presumptuous of me to claim that such a consideration could not also lead to a reconsideration of my rejection of Molinism, and thus also to revisiting much of the thought leading up to that rejection. I think that my commitment to the relevant intuitions that have led to that rejection (CCIA, PGI+, PBI) is sufficiently strong that such a result is unlikely, but it cannot and should not be ruled out - humility remains appropriate when working in philosophy, and especially when working in philosophy of religion.}
CHAPTER FIVE:

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO PROVIDENCE – THOMISM

Over the course of the four preceding chapters, I have argued that human libertarian freedom is not compatible with the traditional understanding of divine providence, with divine foreknowledge, or with an unrestricted Principle of Bivalence. A theist is thus left with the question of what she should believe regarding freedom, truth, foreknowledge, and providence. Leaving aside the Principle of Bivalence, which a theist need have no special allegiance to, should a theist be willing to give up the traditional claims that God has complete knowledge of and sovereignty over all truths and events in order to maintain libertarian freedom? This is a more properly theological than philosophical question, and thus a definitive answer is more properly the subject of a different dissertation than this. But for any who have been led to agreement with this author on some part of the foregoing, some indication should be given as to the alternatives and considerations relevant to attempting to provide an answer to this question. In this chapter and the next, I will thus sketch what I see to be the most viable alternatives to Molinism, explain how they view foreknowledge, providence, and freedom, and draw preliminary conclusions about them while also indicating considerations that should be considered further before making any final pronouncements.
There are two obvious categories of alternatives to Molinism for one who believes that divine providence and human libertarian freedom are incompatible. One alternative would maintain the traditional conception of a sovereign and omniscient God at the expense of the belief that humans have libertarian freedom. The other would maintain the common-sense notion of libertarian freedom at the expense of some degree of foreknowledge and providence. The first of these alternatives I will label Thomism, the latter Openism.¹ Thomism will be the subject of this chapter, and Openism of the next.

The name ‘Thomism’ is bound to have many competitors for proper ownership, for many views will claim to properly represent the thought or development of the thought of what most would agree is the preeminent theistic philosopher of religion / theologian ever. To attempt to develop Aquinas’s views on providence and freedom in a historically accurate way is not a task for a single chapter. In what follows, I will rely heavily on works by others who have carried out such a task: Harm Goris’s *Free Creatures of an Eternal God*, Bernard Lonergan’s *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, and J. Michael Stebbins’ *The Divine Initiative*. The latter of these three works does not itself attempt to explicate Aquinas’s views of providence and freedom, but rather Lonergan’s early work on those views. In defense of not attempting to explicate the view that I will label Thomism in a manner more closely connected to Aquinas’s own writing, I will claim not only the constraints of

¹ These are not, of course, my own labels, but commonly used ones. However, I expressly wish to avoid making any claims that what follows accurately represents views universally held by those who identify themselves by these labels. This is especially true with regard to Thomism, a house with many rooms. I trust that the views that I outline under the names of Thomism and Openism will identifiably be species of the genera that these terms commonly identify.
space and time but also offer the following conclusion of Stebbins, representing Lonergan’s thought as well:

To maintain authentic continuity with Thomist thought requires something more than piecemeal adaptation. If one wishes to interpret Aquinas then one must do so in a way that does justice to his thought as a whole. To overlook one or more fundamental elements and try to construct a system out of what remains is to shatter the synthesis: the parts make sense only within the whole, and the whole ceases to exist if deprived of any of its interrelated parts. This was the conspicuous failure of later scholasticism.²

Of necessity, my explication of Thomism in this chapter will be piecemeal, focusing primarily on the issues of providence and freedom, and reporting more than explicating other parts of the Thomistic “system” in which these issues are most properly addressed. It is my hope that by utilizing the fore-mentioned authors’ systematic studies of these issues as my guide, I will be able to sketch the whole sufficiently to give the parts upon which I am focusing their appropriate sense. I have no doubt that relying on these authors will provide a more holistic understanding of Thomas’s thought on providence and freedom than I could glean on my own.

My discussion of Thomism will be in four parts. I will first outline Goris’s explication of the Thomistic view of the compatibility of foreknowledge and contingency and make some initial observations about the “negative” character of this solution that will be discussed further later.³ I will then outline the later scholastic Bañezian

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³ I concentrate solely on Goris’s account of the compatibility of foreknowledge and human freedom, rather than also discussing his account of the compatibility of divine providence and human freedom, because his solution to the latter problem is essentially the same as that of Lonergan, which I discuss later. The one facet of the Thomistic solution that Goris perhaps traces more thoroughly than Lonergan and Stebbins is the notion of modality that Aquinas had, based on essential natures. This allows Aquinas to assert that because God’s divine nature is responsible for all other being, He can transcendently determine that secondary causes have their effects necessarily or contingently. “The relation between God’s causing will or providence and the effect is necessary, but this necessity is not at the expense of the modality the
understanding of Thomas’s thoughts on providence and freedom and explain why I believe this view should be rejected. I will thirdly outline the view that I will label Thomism and that is based on Lonergan’s work, explaining how it differs from and why it rejects Bañezianism. And finally, I will discuss some relevant considerations for deciding whether to adopt Thomism as an alternative to Molinism.

1. Goris on Foreknowledge

The very short explanation of how God’s infallible foreknowledge can be compatible with contingency on a Thomistic view is as follows:

While our human knowledge is intrinsically tensed, God’s is not. Thus, while we rightly say that God knows the future, this claim is imperfectly made, for all things are atemporally eternally present to God, who is simple and eternal. That is, any claim that events are “present-to-eternity” is an analogical claim allowing us a dim understanding of presence that must nonetheless be understood to be a non-temporal presence that is present to every temporal moment without being contemporaneous with any.

We cannot represent this divine mode of knowing through human, tensed language…. We cannot express or grasp this eternal mode of being present, and this concords with Aquinas’ tenet that knowledge of what-God-is-not is the ultimate and most perfect knowledge we may have of Him in this life.4

Since God’s knowledge of what are from our perspective future events is not itself temporally prior to these events, no problems of accidental necessity or even fore-truth

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derive from that knowledge. Thomas can thus maintain with Aristotle that future contingent propositions cannot be known to be true as future, but nonetheless maintain that God can know such truths in a mode other than that in which they exist. Just as we know material things immaterially, God may know tensed and temporal things in a tenseless, atemporal, non-propositional manner.\(^5\)

The detailed explication of Aquinas’ thought leading up to this very short synopsis comprises roughly 250 pages of Goris’s book. Chapters are dedicated to explaining analogical God-talk, eternity as a specific and relevant example of a term that primarily indicates what God is not (i.e., He is not limited by temporal progression), the intrinsic tensedness of our knowledge, and the basis of this intrinsic tensedness in our psychological makeup. But I believe that the essential points for our project may be made without considering these details (though I remain humbly cognizant of the above-mentioned warning).

The primary point that I will make here and stress further later is that this solution to the purported incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom is fundamentally negative. It is a solution that solves the problem by excepting God from certain ordinary presuppositions about knowledge – for instance, His knowledge need not be in terms of tensed propositions that correspond to actual events as ours does. But no positive conception of God’s knowledge is offered in place of our ordinary assumptions. The objections of chapter three may thus be made here as well. To be sure, Goris and Aquinas offer a greater explication of the necessity of our inability to accurately conceive

of God’s mode of knowledge than I believe is offered by Ockham or his contemporary expositors. It is undoubtedly true that the Thomistic solution to the foreknowledge problem can be seen as straightforwardly implied by other elements of the Thomistic (and to an extent, Aristotelian) metaphysical system, elements that are independently argued by Thomas, as well as mutually supported by further elements in that system. For instance, the theory of analogical predication that implies that we cannot speak univocally of God or His knowledge is based on a conception of God as Creator that implies a distinction between being and non-being that is more fundamental than any distinction between actual and possible being, and this conception is argued for on independent grounds. But it remains the case that no philosophical solution (which would be at least in principle fully understandable by human reason) is to be found or even searched for. I will return to this point later; for now I will merely point out that such a solution will not satisfy the goal of this dissertation, which is precisely to apply the tools of philosophy to discerning whether and how divine foreknowledge and providence might be compatible with human libertarian freedom.

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7 Based on my own best attempt at considering this question, primarily in terms of the tools of analytic philosophy, I have concluded that both foreknowledge and providence are incompatible with human libertarian freedom. But it is important to point out that, not only do others using these same tools come to a different conclusion, but it might also be the case that other philosophical tools or categories of which I am not aware might eventually lead one to an understanding of how God’s providence and our freedom might be compatible.
2. Bañezianism

Beginning with the Dominican Domingo Bañez (1528-1604), interpreters of Saint Thomas began to place less emphasis on the problem of how God might know future events as a separate question from how God has providential control of His creation, instead seeking to provide a solution to the providence problem that would also serve to address the foreknowledge question.\(^8\) Thus, Bañezianism is like Molinism in that it seeks to provide a unified solution to both the problems of foreknowledge and providence. Many contemporary philosophers have represented Aquinas’s solution to these problems in terms of Bañez’s interpretation of Thomas, often following Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “the dean of twentieth-century Bannezians,” in their expositions.\(^9\) For instance, Thomas Flint relies heavily on Garrigou-Lagrange in explicating what he terms ‘Thomism’, while acknowledging that the view he is explicating might more properly be labeled Bañezian.\(^10\)

We can explicate the Bañezian view of providence by calling attention to Aquinas’s *De Potentia* q. 3, a. 7, in which Thomas writes that God is the cause of every action whatsoever. The primary respect, for our purposes, in which God is so responsible is that He “applies” every power or potency, including the will, to action. This divine application is interpreted by Bañezians as a “physical premotion,” so named ‘motion’

\(^8\) Ibid., p. 69.

\(^9\) See ibid., footnote 33 for a list of contemporary works in which Thomism is conflated with Banézianism. The description of Garrigou-Lagrange is Stebbins’ in *The Divine Initiative*, p. 199.

because it is a passively received *impulse* rendering the finite potency of the human agent capable of producing an effect, ‘premotion’ because this motion is prior in the causal order to the potency’s production of its act, and ‘physical premotion’ because this impulse acts as an efficient cause – moving the potency to exercise its own efficient causality in act.\(^\text{11}\) This physical premotion may also be labeled a ‘physical predetermination’ in virtue of the fact that as efficient cause, the act must follow this divinely given impulse applied to the will. According to Bañezianism, any meritorious act of the will is preceded in the causal order by an exercise of God’s grace, applying the will to the act in question via this physical premotion.

Unlike Molinists, who believe that God’s grace is intrinsically sufficient for good action but extrinsically (because determined by the agent) efficacious or not efficacious, Bañezians hold that the efficaciousness of God’s grace is also a matter of the intrinsic quality of that grace. While God gives all persons sufficient grace by giving their wills a physical premotion that is said to give them the capacity to will a salutary act, it is only with the addition of another premotion that is intrinsically efficacious that the will actually wills such an act. If this second intrinsically efficacious premotion is not given, then the agent cannot act in a salutary manner, and thus sins.\(^\text{12}\) In order to understand why Bañezians claim that the agent has the capacity to will a salutary act despite remaining dependent on the second exercise of divine grace, one must understand something of Aquinas’s theory of operation as applied to human agents.

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., pp. 197-198.
In *De Anima* III, especially chapters 9-10, Aristotle had represented the will as fundamentally passive, willing whatever end sense, the imagination, or intellect presented to it. Sense or imagination cause the will to desire what is represented; this desire then moves the intellect to practical reason concerning what means to adopt in order to bring about the desired end; this practical reason finally determines the will to movement towards the proximate end judged to best lead to the initially desired end. Lonergan and Stebbins report that overcoming this Aristotelian doctrine was one of Aquinas’s most important insights. The role of the intellect is limited by Thomas to ‘specifying’ acts of willing, while the actual occurrence of acts of willing is due first to God who moves the will to willing an end, and secondly to the will which, given that it wills an end, is sufficient to move itself to an act of willing the particular means specified by practical reason as appropriate for reaching that end.\(^{13}\) This Thomistic understanding of the operation of the will creates a distinction between indeliberate and deliberate acts of the will, the former being the willing of an end, the latter being the willing of the means to that end after a process of practical deliberation. Bañezians hold that the relevant physical premotion of sufficient grace causes the agent to will an end, and that given the Thomistic understanding of the will’s operation, the will is thereafter capable of willing the proximate means to that end. Thus, sufficient grace is claimed to be aptly labeled in that the agent has the capacity to perform the act desired because this grace is sufficient for its capacity to choose to pursue one proximate means or another.

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\(^{13}\) See, ibid., pp. 84-87, as well as Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, pp. 95-96. Lonergan cites Aquinas’s *De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1 as the text in which he develops this notion of the intellect specifying the will.
Despite this theoretic capacity, Bañezians also hold that every good act of the will, including that of willing a particular means, must be applied to act by means of a causally preceding physical premotion. And in order to avoid the Molinist view that grace is extrinsically efficacious or not, this second premotion is also intrinsically determinative of the will’s action. It seems clear, therefore, that the agent necessarily acts in the manner that God causes it to via physical premotions. And given that the agent cannot act meritoriously without intrinsically efficacious grace, it is very difficult to understand how God is not responsible for sin on such a view. Though He does not cause the sin, it is impossible that the sinner instead act rightly.

Most importantly for our purposes, however, is that the Bañezian view of providence leaves no room for libertarian freedom. Bañezians insist that God, being God, may physically predetermine the will to act in a way that nonetheless maintains freedom, but it seems to me that insofar as we can understand this physical premotion, no one but an avowed compatibilist would accept that the agent’s acts are free under these conditions. One might suggest that the fact that the premotion is prior to the act of willing only in the order of causality rather than temporally distinguishes this view from a soft determinism that allows that freedom is compatible with (temporally) prior determination. One might indeed thus distinguish this view, but the distinction will be of no comfort to libertarians who accept that their freedom is constrained by the circumstances in which they act in the way that CCIA details.¹⁴ For the (almost)

¹⁴ Interestingly, even Eleonore Stump’s much weaker understanding of libertarian freedom, according to which “an act is free if and only if the ultimate cause of that act is the agent’s own will and intellect,” would seem to rule out an external physical premotion as cause of a free act. Stump sees Aquinas as a libertarian in this sense of the term, and this might thus indicate that she would not view the Bañezian interpretation of Aquinas as correct. I will allude to her view a bit more fully in my discussion of Lonerganian Thomism below (see footnote 23). For Stump’s discussion of human freedom, see chapter 9
complete circumstances relevant to CCIA include not only all prior truths, but also all causal activity at the time of the act other than the agent’s own. Thus, the disanalogy between the Bañezian premotion and other event causes with regard to the sense in which they are prior to their effects is not sufficient to make it plausible that human freedom is compatible with a divine determination effected by physical premotions. The fact that the physical premotion is causally prior and determinative of the act of willing remains straightforwardly inconsistent with the understanding of libertarian freedom utilized throughout this dissertation.

If the physical premotion that Bañezians appeal to is understood as similar to other event-causes except that it is not temporally prior to its effect, then Bañezianism should, in my judgment, be very unattractive to anyone who has agreed with much of anything that I have said in this dissertation thus far. If this is the only “Thomistic” understanding of the compatibility of grace and freedom available, then those who reject Molinism will find little to attract them in Bañezianism, no matter how committed they are to a traditional understanding of providence. Perhaps, however, Bañezians will suggest that the transcendent nature of the premotion that is the mechanism of divine grace should be emphasized, such that we might suppose that it is sufficiently different from other event-causes that it might determine that its effect occur contingently. If this is so, then it would plausibly no longer be the case that we could “see” the incoherence between causally prior determination of an act and the freedom of that act, for a much more significant disanalogy between physical premotion and ordinary event-causes would have been introduced. On the other hand, if this disanalogy is appealed to, then it

is not any longer clear what kind of a thing a physical premotion is. The question immediately arises, then, of the manner in which discussion of physical premotions is meant to be helpful in understanding the compatibility of grace and freedom.

We can make this point again, and point out the direction that I believe one should take in light of this point, by considering the following quotation from a proponent of the alternative view of Thomism that I am about to discuss:

To say that God’s predetermination of free acts is the very cause of their being free – in other words, to pin a blatant violation of the principle of non-contradiction on Infinite Intelligence itself – is to remain tangled in the aforementioned incoherence… And to appeal to divine mystery is mere mystification. The term ‘mystery’ should be reserved for revealed truths and not applied to a system devised by human beings to explain and reconcile revealed truths.\(^\text{15}\)

This quotation implicitly suggests a disjunction in how one might view Bañezianism. Either the view is based on explaining the compatibility of grace and freedom in terms of a causal mechanism that is understandable by humans, in which case it seems that we can straightforwardly see that the explanation does not maintain human libertarian freedom, and the appeal to mystery is inappropriate given the goal of providing an explanation of compatibility in terms of a comprehensible mechanism. Or one may appeal to mystery in order to explain that human freedom and divine providence are compatible, but then there is no need to also attempt to devise a system or a mechanism to reconcile the apparent

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\(^{15}\) Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative*, p. 209. Stebbins cites Hermann Lange’s, *De gratia tractatus dogmaticus* (Freiburg: Herder & Co., 1929) in this passage. Lange is a Molinist, and thus one might wonder if Stebbins himself advocates these claims. In support of the claim that he does, Stebbins ends the relevant chapter by writing, “...it has to be acknowledged that the criticisms I have outlined above are far from trivial. ...however articulately the Bannezians talk out of both sides of their mouths, a created will cannot be free if its acts are the result of a physical predetermination.” (210) It is clear that Stebbins does not think that Bañezianism maintains human freedom. What I would like to consider further in the next sections is the extent to which Lonergan’s “theorem of divine transcendence” is relevantly different from the “mystery” of a non-determining Bañezian physical predetermination.
compatibility. And in fact, one might say that to do so is inappropriate, since it suggests a humanly comprehensible explanation where none is possible.

If Bañezianism is understood in such a way that the supernatural nature of the physical premotion is stressed in order to maintain its compatibility with human freedom, then I believe that the discussion of this mechanism only obfuscates the purported solution. Talk of premotions should be dropped, and the result will be quite similar to the Lonerganian interpretation of Thomism to which I will now turn. The appeal to mystery will be central, but it will not be combined with any attempt to provide a mechanism by which divine determination and human freedom are meant to be understandably compatible, an attempt that in its eventual need to appeal to mystery makes the explanation it offers mystifying.

3. (Lonerganian) Thomism

The most obvious difference between Bañezianism and what I (following Lonergan, Stebbins, and Goris) am labeling Thomism is that the latter denies that God effects a creature’s actions by means of physical premotions. Rather, God’s operative grace immediately actuates the agent’s willing of the end, and then the conjunction of willing this end with the deliberative determination of what means to pursue in order to reach this end move the will to choose those means, a choice with which God’s grace merely cooperates.¹⁶ No physical premotions are necessary for either the indeliberate or

deliberate act – God is immediately responsible for the indeliberate act of willing the end while the will and God are cooperatively responsible for the act of willing the means.\textsuperscript{17}

But how does this maintain the contingence of the will’s choice? Is the will free in anything like a libertarian sense? The following passage from Lonergan suggests not:

Implicit in [the development in speculative theology through the course of St. Thomas’s work] there is discerned, easily enough, a philosophic doctrine that dispositions and habits of will constitute a very real limitation on human freedom. The human will does not swing back to a perfect equilibrium of indifference with every tick of the clock; its past operations determine its present orientation; and though this orientation has not the absolute fixity of angels and demons, still it is characterized by the relative fixity of psychological continuity. It can be changed, but such change always requires a cause.\textsuperscript{18}

That cause is of course some form of grace, given that the past operations of the will as well are determined. While libertarian freedom is compatible with some type of psychological continuity, it is only thus compatible if the agent herself can ultimately will to change her psychological makeup and/or to act in ways not suggested by that makeup. But Aquinas does not affirm this type of freedom for the will. Lonergan continues, based on a consideration of \textit{De Malo}, q. 16, a. 5,

The point is quite clear. Per se the will does not change, and so the angels decide their eternal destiny by a single act. \textit{Per accidens} the will does change, not because it is a will, nor because it is a free will, but because it is \textit{in natura}

\textsuperscript{17} Is God responsible for our willing specific ends, or only the ultimate end of happiness or the good? It seems to me that Lonergan suggests the former: “The general law is that man is always an instrument; that his volitional activity deploys in two phases; that in the first phase he is governed, \textit{mota et non movens} [moved and not moving], while in the second he governs, \textit{et mota et movens} [moved and moving]; that the first phase is always a divine operation while in the second the theorem of cooperation necessarily follows; and finally that, inasmuch as motions to the \textit{bonum meritorium} [meritorious good work] and its supernatural goal are graces, the general law of instrumentality then becomes the special gift of \textit{gratia operans et cooperans} [operative and cooperative grace].” (p. 141 – bracketed text added) Even if God did only determine our ultimate willing of the good and all other acts of will were seen as proximate means toward that end, so long as what follows correctly represents Lonergan’s view of the will as always determined by the prior willing of an end in conjunction with the intellect’s specification of the means to that end, there would still be no room for libertarian freedom as I have understood it.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 55
mutability and either new knowledge, a modification of passion or of habit, or divine grace intervenes.\textsuperscript{19}

There is no suggestion by Lonergan that the will itself might initiate a change in itself. Thus, the relative fixity of psychological continuity that Aquinas affirms suggests to me that the will is not free to choose one or another means given that it wills the end at which the means are aimed and the intellect has determined that these means are the best means to that end. And indeed, it seems to me that our own experience suggests that so long as we truly will an end and truly believe a particular means to be the best way to attain that end, we automatically will that means.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, it seems to me that the will’s “choice” of means is necessitated by the conjunction of its prior willing of the end and the intellect’s determination that those means are best suited for attaining the end.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 57.

\textsuperscript{20} Could we not, at least in the short term, truly will an end, recognize that a certain action is the best or only means to attain that end, but because that act is repugnant to us in some manner still not act? I don’t think so. It seems to me that in such a case we may not have really determined that the means we are considering is the best or only means to achieve our end, and are replaying our reasoning in search of some other means. Or, our willing of the end may be discovered to be conditional upon its being achievable via means that are acceptable to us, such that we begin to reconsider whether we really will the end. But this latter option is not available in Thomism, given that God determines our willing of the end.

\textsuperscript{21} Thomists will nonetheless insist that the will can refuse to follow the dynamic that I have just outlined, that it can function independently of practical reasoning. I cannot see how this can be so if this paragraph is correct. Nor do I really think that Thomists see how this can be so. If the will can refuse to act in accord with its prior inclination toward an end (determined by God’s operative grace) in conjunction with the practical reasoning of the intellect (a separate faculty), then the efficacy of God’s grace and providence becomes mysterious. Yves Simon’s account of freedom, which draws on Aquinas’s writings, suggests such a view, according to which the intellect does not suggest that one act rather than another is better (in the sense of more accurately reflecting the universal Good), and thus the will ultimately must decide which act it wishes to “put my happiness in” (p. 147). Simon’s account strikes me as a plausible account of libertarian agent causation, but if this account is correct, I cannot understand (and Simon does not attempt to consider) how God’s providence might govern this choice. See Yves Simon, Freedom of Choice, ed. Peter Wolff (New York: Fordham University Press, 1969).

If on the other hand, the account of God’s gracious providence is as I have described, then it is impossible to understand how the will can refuse to act in the way that practical reasoning specifies is best to attain the good to which the will has previously been inclined. It seems to me that Lonergan’s suggestion is that God’s grace works in the way outlined, that we thus cannot understand how our responsibility for sin is possible, but that we nevertheless must as a matter of faith admit this responsibility and posit the ability of the will to refuse to follow this dynamic. I will discuss this issue further in the final section of this chapter.
In his explication of Thomas’s conception of human freedom, Lonergan also stresses the notion that the intellect’s deliberation is not on the model of a syllogism but is practical, such that it might reasonably come to more than one conclusion. But it seems to me that so long as the intellect is a separate faculty from the will such that its practical reasoning is not directly affected by the will, any lack of determination of the will’s choice of means arising from this factor is not properly a case of the will or the agent having the ability to do otherwise. The agent would have done otherwise had her practical reason reached a different conclusion, and her practical reason truly might have reached a different conclusion, but she has no control over what her intellect concludes nor over what she wills given a particular conclusion of the intellect in conjunction with her prior divinely determined willing of an end.

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23 Eleonore Stump emphasizes that freedom, for Aquinas, does not reside in the will alone; “On the contrary, the dynamic interactions of intellect and will yield freedom as an emergent property or a systems-level feature.” (Ibid., p. 277) Given her definition of libertarian freedom, quoted above (footnote 14), the agent acts freely if her act is the result of the kind of interaction between intellect and will that I have sketched. Obviously, I think that the statements in this paragraph remain true, and that her definition of libertarian freedom does not at all capture what I understand libertarian freedom to be.

Perhaps, however, Stump’s understanding of Aquinas’s view of grace is consistent with her definition of libertarian freedom. And perhaps we can see a kinship between her account and Lonergan’s. As I understand Stump, her discussion of grace (chapter 13, pp. 389-404) is based on God’s granting a new and gracious form to the will that allows it to will the Good rather than merely goodness generally, which may refer to its own happiness rather than the Good. This granting of a new form to the will would be the operative grace of God; subsequently, God’s grace would be cooperative with specific acts that are means to the Good, acts which originate in the intellect and will of the agent in such a way that they satisfy Stump’s definition of libertarian freedom. Granting this form to the will is not incompatible with the agent’s freedom, says Stump, because a necessary condition for God’s granting this new form is that the agent quell her refusal of grace (an incompatible form of the will) and enter into a quiescence of will whose form is neither for nor against God’s grace. Once the agent has a quiescent will, her will lacks form, and thus God may freely grant it a new form without this action being coercive. The agent is responsible for whether the form of her will is oriented against God or is a quiescent privation of form. Thus her responsibility is maintained while avoiding the Pelagian error that the agent can herself perform good acts without God’s grace.

The direct granting of a new form to the will may be closer to Lonergan’s interpretation of Thomas than Bañez’s, and we might view Stump’s account of grace as an attempt to avoid the error of appealing to Bañezian premotions while still explaining how grace and freedom may be compatible. But it seems to me that unless one adopts her definition of libertarian freedom, one will deny that “it is always in
In further explaining Thomas’s theory of freedom, Lonergan emphasizes that the intellect does not determine the will (as in the Aristotelian theory discussed above) and that the will moves itself. But these claims must be understood in terms of Aquinas’s theory of operation: the will rather than the intellect determines the will to action, but only because its choice of means is determined by its prior inclination toward an end, and it is explicitly clear that this “choice” of end is not determined by the will itself, but by God’s operative grace. If I am correct in my understanding of Lonergan, then I can see no way in which to understand the will as truly free in a libertarian sense of that word. Why, then, should anyone who rejects Bañezianism as forcefully as I did above, find (Lonerganian) Thomism any more plausible?

One reason, though not the main reason, that a libertarian such as myself might find Lonergan’s Thomism more plausible than Bañezianism has to do with the Thomistic understanding of efficient causation. Lonergan, following a discussion of several of Thomas’s texts, concludes the following:

If our interpretation of these passages is correct, then at least in the *De potentia* St Thomas had arrived at a theory of action that was in essential agreement with Aristotle’s. Evidently the two terminologies differ completely: on the Aristotelian view action is a relation of dependence in the effect; on the Thomist view action is a formal content attributed to the cause as causing. But these differences only serve to emphasize the fundamental identity of the two positions: both philosophers keenly realized that causation must not be thought to involve any real change in the cause as cause.25

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24 Ibid., pp. 96-98.

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That is, neither Aristotle nor Thomas advocated a view of efficient causality in which the
cause or agent undergoes a change, as in the common-sense view of efficient causality as
an “influx, that is, an influence that is conceived as somehow passing ‘out of’ the cause
and ‘into’ the effect.” This common-sense view of causation is the view that Bañezians
seem to assume in explicating grace in terms of physical premotions. The alternative
that Lonergan advocates is that efficient causality is nothing more than the relation of
dependence of the effect on the cause.

A more precise way of expressing this point is to say that Aquinas attributes
*action* to the agent by extrinsic rather than intrinsic denomination.… What
denominates the agent as agent, therefore, or its act as *action*, is not some entity
added to the agent, but rather the emergence of the effect precisely as dependent
on the agent.

Given this understanding of efficient causality, we can understand Thomism’s
difference from Bañezianism in terms of the central notion of mediate efficient causality,
of God’s “causing causation.” Just as an agent causes not only the movement of the
axe, which causes the splitting of wood, but also may be said to cause the splitting of the
wood, the Thomistic view of grace is that God causes not only the movement of the
human will to its end but also the act that results from the will’s self-movement after

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25 Ibid., p. 72. The section of text to which this passage is a conclusion runs from pp. 66-73. The
texts from Thomas that Lonergan focuses upon are from *De potentia* q. 7.


27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., p. 224.

29 Ibid., p. 232. Consider the example of a flame burning a piece of paper. Nothing is added to the
flame such that it becomes an agent; rather, when the paper is brought into an appropriate spatial
relationship to the flame, the effect (the paper burning) emerges as dependent on the flame, which is thus
categorized as an agent.

practical deliberation. God directs every happening, but He often does so by utilizing instruments that mediate between Him and the intended effect. So long as one attempts to understand instrumental or mediate causality as a progression of efficient causes understood as influxes from agent to patient, it seems quite impossible to conceive of the mediate human agent as free (unless one accepts a compatibilist view of freedom). The Bañezian picture that we get is of God providentially bringing about an act by physically determining the agent to act via the mechanism of a premotion. Even if there is no other determinant of the agent’s willing as she does within the created order, the physical premotion in terms of which Bañezians explicate grace is itself understood as an influx from God to the agent that is similar to any other efficient cause within creation.

If, however, one understands efficient causality as nothing but a relationship of dependence brought about by God, then such physical determination is avoided in favor of the claim that God can directly effect a complex dependence relationship in which not only is the agent’s willing dependent on God but also the act undertaken by that agent: A causes not only B but also B’s causing of C. Furthermore, this mediated effect is more dependent upon A than B, where A is God, for God alone is proportionate to bringing into being an effect, whereas a human agent depends upon God for many necessary conditions for action. The central idea is that no mechanism by which, or explanation of how, God’s ability to effect this complex dependence relationship is offered. But precisely because no explanation is offered, the appeal to mystery on the grounds that none such can be offered is appropriate.31

31 See Stebbins, The Divine Initiative, pp. 219-227, esp. 226-227, for a further explication of the contents of this and the prior paragraph.
While it may remain impossible for us to understand how God (A) could cause an agent’s willing (B) such that the agent freely wills to act (C), understanding efficient causality in terms of a dependence relation removes the positive understanding that God could not do so, an understanding that was based on positing a specific and comprehensible means (physical premotions) by which God causes. By not attempting to specify the means by which God causes, Thomism leaves room for faith that a transcendent God is capable of causing our causation without thereby precluding our freedom in that causation. Thus, we find Goris concluding the following:

Because God’s will is the cause of being as such, His causation does not compete with the causation of creatures, but rather supports and grounds it…. As we argued earlier, Aquinas distinguishes the being of the Creator from the being of the creature not in terms of necessary being versus contingent being but more radically in terms of being versus non-being, while God causes the either necessary or contingent being of the creature. Likewise, divine causation differs from creaturely causation as being differs from non-being. Without God’s causation, there is no creaturely causation at all. The former constitutes the latter, whether the created cause causes contingently or necessarily.  

No explanation is given of how God might cause without removing freedom; rather, there is only an appeal to God’s transcendent nature and the great divide between Creator


33 For attempts to conceptualize God’s causing our free causation, see the recent writings of Barry Miller and Hugh McCann. For Miller, see especially *A Most Unlikely God: A Philosophical Enquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), esp. ch. 7, pp. 122-141. Miller formulates God’s relationship to our freedom as “God’s causing that (a creature G)” rather than as “God’s causing a creature to G” in order to call attention to the difference in divine and human causality (141). For McCann, see “Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will,” *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995), pp. 582-598, and “Sovereignty and Freedom: A Reply to Rowe,” *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001), pp. 110-116. The reply is to William Rowe’s, “The Problem of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom,” *Faith and Philosophy* 16 (1999), pp. 98-101, which raises concerns about McCann’s earlier article. McCann also uses a ‘that’ clause in his attempt to point out the closeness of the relationship between God’s will and my decision: “He does not make my decision. I do. My decision, and any evil that lies with it, are predicated of me. What belongs to God is His willing that I shall decide as I do, which is an altogether different matter.” (“Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will, p. 589)
and creature. This recognition that the Thomist solution to the problem of the relationship between providence and human freedom is fundamentally negative, ultimately resting upon an appeal to their compatibility based on faith rather than on understanding, brings us to the main reason that I think that Thomism may have a greater degree of plausibility than Bañezianism for one who has rejected Molinism for reasons presented in this dissertation. In this final section on Thomism, I will not only explain further the kind of solution that Thomism offers, but also further explain why I believe one might accept its negative solution and incumbent inability to explain the compatibility of freedom and providence even if one rejected Molinism because of the ultimately negative nature of its solution insofar as it rests on the acceptance of CF’s as primitive.

4. Is (Lonerganian) Thomism a Viable Option?

I begin this section by quickly summarizing Lonergan’s explanation of how the will remains free within the Thomistic view of grace. God, because immutable, “is

McCann’s work is notable in that it is undertaken in terms of contemporary analytic philosophy, as opposed to the categories of Thomism or the alternative understanding of predication that Miller develops. While a trenchant criticism of McCann’s view would require a chapter to itself, I believe that the key to his view depends on the idea that libertarian freedom does not require agent causation, but only intrinsic intentionality and voluntariness, by which is meant a lack of determining event-causation. (In addition to the articles just cited, see McCann’s *The Works of Agency: On Human Action, Will, and Freedom* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), esp. ch. 9, “Agency, Control, and Causation,” pp. 170-191.) If one, *ala* Chisholm and Reid, believe that one can make sense of agent causation and that libertarian freedom requires it, then I believe that McCann’s view fails to explain the compatibility of divine sovereignty and human libertarian freedom.


entitatively identical whether he creates or does not create." Thus, predications about
God’s act of creation, inasmuch as they add only a mental relation to God as pure act, are
predications by extrinsic denomination, dependent on the actuality of the extrinsic
denominator. To say that God wills or knows an event is thus implicitly to say that this
event actually occurs. If we bear in mind the distinction between absolute and
hypothetical necessity, we see that the statement ‘If God knows A, then A must be’ is
only hypothetically necessary, for A is implicitly included in the protasis because this
statement is only true by extrinsic denomination. A is (eternally and atemporally) present
to God, if this statement is true.

Hence when you say, ‘If God knows this, this must be,’ the ‘this’ of the apodosis
must be taken in the same sense as the ‘this’ of the protasis. But the ‘this’ of the
protasis is present; therefore, the ‘this’ of the apodosis is present; it follows that
‘this must be’ is not absolute but hypothetical necessity: ‘necesse… est Socratem
currere dum currit.’

One might also recall Goris’s explication of the Thomistic response to the problem of
divine foreknowledge above. The problem of divine will is no greater a problem than
that of divine knowledge for Aquinas, since Thomas views God’s knowledge as active
rather than passive. Thus, Lonergan arrives at the solution to how creaturely acts may be
contingent, a solution that he terms the “doctrine of divine transcendence.” This doctrine
is introduced as follows:

Once this basic solution is grasped, it is an easy step to the doctrine of
divine transcendence. The solution as such is negative. It does not affirm a
property of divine knowledge, will, and action; as such, it only solves an
objection. But because the objection can always be solved by distinguishing

36 Actually occurs in God’s atemporal present, not necessarily ours – see ibid., p. 106, note 67.
37 Ibid., p. 107. The Latin reads “it is necessary that Socrates be running when he is running” and
Lonergan cites Super I Sententiarum, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, ad 4m as the location of Thomas’s use of this text.
between hypothetical and absolute necessity, it is not difficult to discern therein a
property, to state positively what the objection and its solution state in a negative
form.

Such a positive statement is the affirmation that God knows with equal
infallibility, he wills with equal irresistibility, he effects with equal efficacy, both
the necessary and the contingent. For however infallible the knowledge, however
irresistible the will, however efficacious the action, what is known, willed,
effected is no more than hypothetically necessary. And what hypothetically is
necessary, absolutely may be necessary or contingent.  

This doctrine of divine transcendence is the interpretation of Aquinas that Lonergan
offers us in distinction from Bañezianism, and that allows for the claim that God causes
our causing without thereby removing our freedom in the actions caused concurrently by
ourselves and God.  

The Thomist solution is negative inasmuch as it merely purports to solve
objections rather than explicates the mechanism of God’s knowledge or will. Unlike
Bañezianism, which attempts to explicate “a system devised by human beings to explain
and reconcile revealed truths” that has as its goal a philosophic understanding of how
divine providence and human agency interact such that contingency is maintained,
Thomism does not provide a philosophic understanding by which we are supposed to be
able to see how the terms are compatible. It is Lonergan’s assertion that Thomas does
better than either of his later interpreters, Bañez and Molina, precisely because he does
not attempt this task. Rather, Aquinas appropriately appreciates that, “for the theologian,
philosophical inquiry does not lead away from an appreciation of the utter transcendence

38 Ibid., p. 109. The objection to which this distinction is a solution is that “the equation of intellect
and reality in certain knowledge might be thought to impose necessity on the known,” (p. 107) an
objection that of course can also be applied to the equation of will and reality.

39 But please note that the use of the term ‘concurrently’ should not suggest that God and human
agent each hold an oar and row together – God is always the primary cause.
of divine mystery; rather it allows for a more precise understanding of just how this mystery makes itself felt in the created universe."\footnote{Stebbins, \textit{The Divine Initiative}, p. 31.} The Thomistic “solution” to the question of how human freedom and divine providence may be compatible, according to Lonergan, is the \textit{synthetic} understanding of just what these revealed truths, in conjunction with other truths revealed and natural, imply: that a proper understanding of God’s transcendence shows that “there is no end of room for God to work on the free choice without violating it, to govern above its self-governance.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Grace and Freedom}, p. 117.} This proper understanding is a “synthesis” of revealed truths rightly called mysteries into “a synthetic intelligibility [that] exceeds in scope all less comprehensive intelligibilities and at the same time preserves, includes, and is conditioned by them.”\footnote{Stebbins, \textit{The Divine Initiative}, p. 21.} It is “a theorem, something known by understanding the data already apprehended and not something known by adding a new datum to the apprehension.”\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Grace and Freedom}, p. 147.}

Thus, a proper understanding of Aquinas does not allow us to arrive at a greater understanding of how divine providence and human freedom are compatible by considering clever theories involving physical premotions or middle knowledge. Rather, we arrive at the doctrine of divine transcendence, which only increases our understanding of the kind of relationship that there must be between God and His creatures, not of the mechanism that would explain how that relationship works. “Precisely because it is a theorem, what the theorem of divine transcendence adds to one’s store of knowledge is

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\footnote{Stebbins, \textit{The Divine Initiative}, p. 31.}
\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Grace and Freedom}, p. 117.}
\footnote{Stebbins, \textit{The Divine Initiative}, p. 21.}
\footnote{Lonergan, \textit{Grace and Freedom}, p. 147.}
\end{flushright}
not a new fact but a new way of intelligibly relating a set of facts already affirmed as true. In this instance, the theorem constitutes a synthesis of the efficacy of divine causality and the contingence of created beings.\textsuperscript{44} What is properly a mystery remains so, in contrast to the Bañezian attempt to clearly explain how grace and freedom are compatible only to end up appealing to divine mystery anyway. The Bañezian appeal to mystery is inappropriate because it is directed at a humanly contrived metaphysical explanation of grace based on God’s use of physical premotions. If a human solution is offered, then it should be fully explicable in terms that humans can understand. The Thomist appeal to mystery is appropriate precisely because it does not attempt such a human explanation, but rather pieces together revealed and natural truths until one sees how they must be related in order for there to be compatibility between grace and freedom.

This difference between Bañezian mystery and Thomist synthesis provides a reason why one might reject Molinism on the grounds discussed in the last chapter and yet not dismiss Thomism out of hand. While there are unexplained aspects of both theories, Thomism explicitly warns us that we cannot expect to understand how God’s efficacious grace does not preclude our freedom. Molinism, on the other hand, attempts to provide a theory according to which we can understand the mechanism whereby libertarian freedom and providence alike are assured. This human philosophic solution should, I believe, in principle be fully explicable in philosophic terms. If there are contingent counterfactual truths, then what grounds them should be explicable. If the Molinist is instead forced to accept them as primitive, then one might reject the view on

\textsuperscript{44} Stebbins, \textit{The Divine Initiative}, p. 261.
the basis of contrary intuitions that suggest that providence and human freedom are incompatible, as outlined in the prior chapters of this dissertation. Molinism is a philosophic system that purports to be internally coherent while effectively denying these contrary principles (CCIA, PGI+, PBI). To the extent that essential aspects of Molinism remain primitive and to the extent that Molinism’s implications appear less plausible than the principles that would lead to its denial, an inquirer has good reason to reject Molinism.

Thomism, in contrast, does not attempt to fully explicate a philosophic system in which the compatibility of divine providence and human freedom may be understood. Rather, it warns us that we should not expect to discover this kind of answer to questions about compatibility – the most that we can expect is to discover ways in which God’s relationship to His creation is analogous or disanalogous from other relationships we know of within creation. The intuitions that lead one to believe that providence and freedom are not compatible are not directly denied, but rather side-stepped, so to speak. Because God is not in time, the Past Beliefs Intuition does not apply to God. All truths are ultimately grounded in God’s will, such that PGI+ is relevant only insofar as we merely consider the temporal created order. But precisely because God is the ultimate ground, His grounding need not impart necessity on the truths grounded, as PGI+ suggests is true for all other grounds. And CCIA as well applies only within time. As Goris points out, Aquinas agrees with Aristotle regarding the necessity of future truths,

45 I will again draw attention to the works of David Burrell cited in footnote 6 that draw attention to the Creator/creation distinction as an authentically Thomistic justification for not presuming that God is an element within the set of things to be explained.
but denies that God’s knowledge is of future truths since these truths are atemporally present to Him in a way that we cannot understand.

I suggested at the beginning of my discussion of Thomism that it cannot be seen as maintaining libertarian freedom, given the psychological determination of the choice of means by the conjunction of the divinely determined will of end and the intellect’s deliberation upon the best means available for attaining that end. Acceptance of Thomism thus requires that one give up the view that we have libertarian freedom in favor of the view that we are free so long as there is the relevant sense in which our will determines our act, even if that determination is ultimately traced back to a prior divine determination of the will. We must accept that in the special case of God as cause, a compatibilistic view of freedom is appropriate. God can immediately effect the willing of an end, as well as mediately effect the consequent willing of the means to that end and resultant action, so that there is no question of God’s will being inefficacious, yet we are nonetheless free because God’s transcendent nature as Creator allows Him to cause us to act freely.

If one wishes to maintain the traditional conception of God as strongly provident and fully omniscient and if one finds the intuitions outlined in this dissertation compelling to some significant degree, then I believe that the Thomistic doctrine of transcendence is the appropriate way to maintain the compatibility of human freedom with God’s providence. Given the inability to explain the compatibility of either God’s providence or His omniscience with our freedom, the appropriate means of maintaining that compatibility is to claim that they are compatible *though we know not how*, and to justify abandoning any attempt to discover how by coming to this conclusion
synthetically: that is, putting it forth as a theorem that arises out of a careful consideration of other aspects of God’s relationship to His creation. Thomism, I believe, provides this justification far more systematically than does Molinism or Ockhamism. Thus, although one who has agreed with much of this dissertation will I think find both Molinism and Thomism somewhat unsatisfactory in that neither is able to explain how providence and freedom can be compatible, a strong desire to maintain the traditional conception of a provident God might well lead one to further study of, and ultimately advocacy of, Thomism.

One might be so led to the study and advocacy of Thomism, but one also might not. Even if one finds the negative and synthetic solution to the compatibility of providence and freedom acceptable as a matter of faith, the degree to which Thomism requires one to suspend one’s reasoned search for answers in favor of faithfully excepting God from the realm of the explicable seems much greater with regard to sin. Thomism claims that our freedom is maintained even though our actions are ultimately the result of God’s efficacious will, and that furthermore, God is more the cause of the act than is the human agent. How then, does it address responsibility for sin?

Stebbins explains the occurrence of sin as follows, “In terms of Aquinas’s analysis of the human will, sin occurs when a will that is in act with respect to some good as its end fails to will the means specified by the intellect as appropriate for achieving that end.”\textsuperscript{46} This might seem to suggest that my interpretation of Aquinas’s analysis of the will above must be wrong, for there I suggested that it seemed to me that Lonergan’s statement about the relative fixity of the psychological continuity of an agent left no room

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 270.
for the libertarian freedom to will otherwise than as the intellect specifies. However, I believe that just the opposite is the case. The further discussion of sin by Lonergan and Stebbins (Goris does not address it) indicate that they intend to maintain wholeheartedly both the intrinsic efficacy of God’s grace and the human responsibility for sin. How can this be done? Only by denying that seeking an answer is appropriate.

Lonergan and Stebbins characterize sin as objective falsity – that is, the object under consideration, sin, fails to conform to the intelligibility of the maker of the object. This is in contrast to what Lonergan terms subjective falsity, our more common notion of the failure of an intellect to conform to the object that is to be known. Sin as objective falsity is a third category of the “fundamental order of truth: besides the positive objective truth of being and the negative objective truth of non-being, there is also the objective falsity of moral lapse.”47 Because sin is objective falsity, the only knowledge that we can have of it is the empirical fact that it is – a subjective truth characterized by our intellect’s conformance with acts that we know to be sinful. But this empirical affirmation is of a fact that nonetheless is truly characterized as a privation and a “metaphysical surd,” and that thus, “cannot be related explanatorily or causally with the integers that are objective truth.”48 No explanation of sin can be found. The causes of sin cannot be characterized. We affirm that sin is the responsibility of the agent because the alternative cannot be theologically countenanced. But how it is that the will can fail to act in accord with the specification of means by the intellect given that God has moved


48 Ibid., p. 115.
the will to will a proper end is a question to which no answer is attempted. Stebbins sums up his discussion of sin by making this point as follows:

So long as one conceives of sin as somehow intelligible, its occurrence will appear as a datum susceptible of explanation. But any attempt to arrive at such an explanation is bound to prove unsatisfactory, for whatever is intelligible has an intelligible cause, and all causality is grounded ultimately in the divine causality. Thus, unless one recognizes that sin cannot be understood, any effort to specify the relation of God to sin will inevitably tend to implicate God – however much one might wish to avoid it – as sin’s author.49

Thus Bañezianism effectively makes God the author of sin. And Molinism avoids this only by denying that “all causality is grounded ultimately in the divine causality” by its reliance on CF→’s that are ungrounded, and certainly not grounded in God’s will. Thomism insists that we must simply accept sin as a fact, accept that God permits but does not intend sin as a matter of faith, and refuse to engage in what must be a fruitless exercise – the attempt to understand how it can be that God is not responsible for sin.

Lonergan admits that this view might appear quite strange to modern theologians who “tend to affirm a universal intelligibility that embraces even sin,” and defends it by pointing out that Thomas’s denial of this universal intelligibility should not be surprising given that he was modifying, but not fully rejecting, Aristotelian views of a universe with only a limited intelligibility.50 Perhaps it should not be surprising, but it seems to me that it will continue to appear strange, not only to modern theologians, but also to modern philosophers of religion. For it seems to me that philosophers of religion engage in the type of inquiry that they do precisely because they believe that human reason can understand, at least to some significant degree, religious truths. And those who are

motivated to reject Molinism based on the concerns of this dissertation are likely to have an optimistic view of the intelligibility of the universe, given the skepticism with which purported truths for which adequately explanatory grounds cannot be discovered have been held. It thus seems to me that there may well be an important sense in which accepting Thomism’s explication of the relationship between divine providence and human freedom would be giving up what one who accepts the earlier conclusions of this dissertation sees as the very project of philosophy of religion. One might do this, maintaining a traditional view of God by accepting that a much greater class of truths than previously thought are beyond the reach of human reason. But one also might not accept Thomism, choosing to maintain one’s belief that as creatures created in God’s image, our reason should at least be able to speculate and hypothesize about what the nature of God’s relationship to the world might be such that we are not faced with accepting seemingly contradictory claims on faith. If one chooses thus, then one is more likely to find Openism attractive.

The implications of accepting Lonerganian Thomism after having accepted the reasoning in the previous chapters of this dissertation are quite significant. If we believe that meticulous providence and human freedom must be compatible based, for instance, on revelation, then perhaps the Thomistic appeal to divine transcendence and mystery is appropriate with regard to the question of how they might be compatible. But if we believe that we have good (though not conclusive) reason for thinking that they are not compatible, then accepting by faith their compatibility has implications not only for philosophy of religion but philosophy generally. Given that one’s best reasoning about the concepts of agency, freedom, culpability, grounding, and truth lead one to conclude one thing, but one accepts the opposite on faith, one must believe that one’s best reasoning in these areas is wrong in some way. Insofar as that reasoning is based on an analysis of the meaning of these concepts, one must hold that one does not really know what these concepts mean. And since one cannot understand (and has no prospect for understanding) how one’s reasoning is wrong, or what the relevant concepts really mean, it would be disingenuous to continue to work in these areas. Continuing to do philosophy in these areas would require that one adopt an implicit condition in one’s philosophy – that God and His relation to the world are not as one believes them to be – and this seems a fundamentally wrong approach for a sincere believer to take towards faith seeking understanding.
CHAPTER SIX:

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO PROVIDENCE – OPENISM

The view of providence to be discussed in this penultimate chapter, Openism, requires less in the way of explication of what it is than did Molinism or (Lonerganian) Thomism. This is because I will understand Openism as the view of providence that you get simply by applying the Aristotelian view of the future as indeterminate, or the intuitions upon which much of this dissertation rested, to theism while maintaining that humans have libertarian freedom. The previous five chapters suggest that the only humanly comprehensible understanding of the relation of omniscience, providence, and libertarian freedom available to one who shares the intuitions discussed in previous chapters (BPI, CCIA, PGI+, PBI) involves denying both that God has complete foreknowledge and that He providentially controls the occurrence of every event. Open Theists believe that while God knows all the truths that can be known, there either simply are not yet truths about the “open,” undetermined future, or such contingent truths simply cannot be known by anyone, including God. In William Hasker’s words, “at any time God knows all propositions such that God’s knowing them at that time is logically
possible.”¹ In this chapter, I will understand Openism as involving the denial that there are in fact determinate truths about the contingent future; the future itself is “open.”

Openism affirms that while God might have determined events such that the future would not have been open, He could only have done this at the cost of denying His creatures the libertarian freedom that is required for them to freely enter into loving communion with Him. Valuing our freely given love, God chose to create us with libertarian freedom, and continues to respect that freedom as He works with us toward His ultimate purpose. While God has the power at any and all times to intervene in His creation and unilaterally bring about events that He desires to occur, He cannot unilaterally bring about events involving the free activity of His creatures.

These few sentences sufficiently outline the Openist view of God’s relationship to His creation. But, of course, they only outline that relationship. Some of the questions that might be considered further include the ways in which God might intervene in the world, in what sense and to what degree risk is germane to the manner in which He has chosen to create, the implications of Openism for prophecy, petitionary prayer, and the problem of evil, whether acceptance of Openism is supported by or has implications for specific approaches to reading Scripture, and the way in which God’s transcendence is or is not respected by Openism. It seems to me that it is consideration of questions such as these that should be of most interest to one who shares the intuitions of this dissertation and thus is initially disposed towards Openism. Such a theist must consider whether her “philosophical” view of God and His relationship to creation is a view that she can adopt

in her own life of faith. Can she give up the traditional conceptions of providence and omniscience while continuing to truly worship God?

In what follows, I will consider some of the questions raised above – those for which I feel I have some insight to contribute, even if it is only in sketching alternatives that I believe should be pointed out as deserving additional consideration. For other questions, I have little to offer beyond what others have already said. I will address the issue of petitionary prayer only in passing at the end of the “risk and intervention” section, and will not discuss prophecy at all.²

1. Risk and Intervention

Given the Openist claim that God’s general purpose in creating was to bring persons into freely loving relationships with Him, I believe that Openists should not expect God to frequently intervene in the world in a unilateral and coercive manner. In


One might also consider Boyd’s neo-Molinist suggestion in *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), as providing a resource that God might use in bringing about specific events that He intends. Boyd’s neo-Molinism is based on the idea that human agents initially have libertarian freedom, but may develop characters of sufficient constancy that they would ground counterfactuals about free actions. Subsequently to agents’ characters being developed in this way, God could know what these agents would do. I have significant doubts about this project, which I hope to develop further elsewhere. Two articles that are partially concerned with criticizing Boyd’s view are Stephen J. Wellum’s “The Inerrancy of Scripture,” and Paul Kjoss Helseth’s “The Trustworthiness of God and the Foundations of Hope,” both in *Beyond the Bounds*, ed. John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth, (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2003), pp. 237-274 and 275-307.

I will point out some relevant discussions of petitionary prayer in my brief discussion of it below.
this section, I will briefly sketch the reasons that Openists should acknowledge that God cannot, given the resources afforded Him by Openism, either predict or effect many specific events very far in the future without frequently unilaterally intervening in such a way that human freedom is removed. I will then argue that while God’s frequent intervention in this way might allow Him to ensure that specific events occur soon after His intervention, He could not know the long-term effects of this intervention, and thus would be taking the risk that His intervention would negatively affect the chances that people would freely choose to love Him. I will suggest two broad ways in which Openists might understand God’s project in light of this risk. The first is, I believe, the more usual Openist view: that God attempts to give us the best possible opportunities for salvation based on His knowledge of both long- and short-term probabilities. The second suggests a more radical break from the traditional understanding of providence as meticulous, claiming that it is preferable to see God’s project of bringing us into freely loving relationships with Him primarily in terms of an invitation to do so without any effort to ensure that we do so. Without attempting to adjudicate between these alternatives, I will consider the manner in which each of them can respond to the charge that God risks too much in creating a world in which so much evil is possible.

The reason that Openists cannot affirm that God exercises meticulous sovereignty while respecting our freedom is that it is “extremely implausible (at least from a libertarian perspective) to think that, in every situation, the factors influencing a free agent in one direction vastly outweigh those inclining him toward some other action.”3 This being the case, God’s ability to predict with a high degree of certainty that a

3 Flint, Divine Providence, p. 103.
particular event will occur is significantly limited by His lack of knowledge of what free agents will, or even will likely, do. While He presumably knows us so well that He can predict our actions better than any human person, the further in the future an event is, and the more free agents are involved in bringing it about, the less likely it is that God could know that a specific event would occur. If there is genuine indeterminism in creation other than human freedom, then the problem is multiplied further. Given this lack of knowledge, it is also clear that God could not easily ensure that specific events would occur, without removing the freedom of agents that might impact factors relevant to their occurrence or non-occurrence.

Open theists are in harmony in suggesting that God’s general purpose in creating this world was to bring us into freely loving personal relationships with Him. “The open view of God emphasizes that he is a loving person; love is the very essence of his being. God created others so that he could enjoy them and they could experience his love and reciprocate it.”4 While those who come to advocate Openism based on philosophical considerations often do so because they see the traditional view of providence as incompatible with our libertarian freedom, it is important to note that love, not freedom, plausibly provides the justification for God’s creation of a world in which so much pain and suffering are possible. “God does not desire that we have the liberty of choice without concern for what we choose. Rather, God wants a relationship of personal love and grants freedom to that end.”5 God’s general purpose in creating was not to grant us...

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freedom for the sake of autonomy alone; He gave us freedom solely in order that we might freely enter into loving communion with Him.

Given that God’s general purpose for creation is that we might freely come into loving personal relationships with Him, how should we expect Him to interact with or intervene within the world? I do not think that we should expect God to often override our freedom with regard to any morally significant choice. Given that God, being essentially good, is at least aligned with moral goodness, and may be the source of the ethical standards that apply to us, it is plausible to think that any morally significant choice is a choice for or against a loving relationship with God. Even if one is unaware of God’s existence, how one makes morally significant decisions is a likely predictor of how one would view the choice of whether to love God. 6 If any morally significant choice is at least implicitly a choice for or against a loving relationship with God, then all morally significant choices are also relationally significant. If God removes our freedom to make a morally significant choice, He would thereby undermine His purpose of bringing the agent into a freely loving relationship with Him, by forcing the agent into a stance toward life that is either closer to or further from acceptance and reciprocation of God’s love. If closer, then the freedom of an agent’s eventual choice to love God may be questioned; if further, then it will be harder for the agent to eventually choose to love God. Nor may we presume that any particular morally significant choice is largely independent of other morally significant choices. Actions impact character, and thus the

6 If Openists also affirm inclusivism, as I suggest they should below, then all morally significant choices are more directly relationally significant.
act I am forced to perform now will have some weight in my consideration of future decisions.

I will take it for granted that God does not “sacrifice” some of us to increase the chances that others of us will freely love God. If this is so, then we may assume that God would remove an agent’s freedom to make a morally significant choice only if He knew that doing so would somehow improve that agent’s relationship with God in the long run, or that it would at least do little or no lasting harm to that agent’s relationship while significantly improving others’ relationships with God. But given the unpredictable nature of the long-term effects of events on free creatures, the situations in which God would know this are plausibly few. So long as actions do not determine character, it may be that God could not even be certain of the immediate effect of an act on an agent’s stance for or against the Good and God. Even if this immediate effect could be known by God, it is quite difficult to see how God could be certain of the long-term implications of a forced “choice” on the forced agent and on other free agents that the act affects. It is plausible to think that God could not often know whether His coercive intervention would lead, in the long-run, to an improvement in the relationship between God and the particular agent whose freedom is removed. It is even more plausible to think that God could not know the long-term effects of His intervention on all of the other agents that might be impacted. Any attempt that God makes to further His overall project of bringing persons into freely loving relationships with Him is thus bound to be significantly risky. It seems that God simply cannot know, at least in most instances, whether His intervention would have an overall beneficial or deleterious effect on humanity’s free response to Him.
Are the considerations relevant to the question of whether God’s intervention is risky significantly different if His intervention does not determine a morally and relationally significant choice? Such intervention would not obviously directly undermine God’s purpose, since the intervention would not directly impact one’s stance towards God, or one’s moral character. And the near-term potential effects of such a decision on an agent’s relationship with God will likely be inconsequential, given that the decision itself is relationally insignificant. But what of the long-term effects? Presumably, given God’s project, He would have no interest in coercively intervening unless He believed that doing so would have a positive impact on the chances of persons freely choosing to enter into a loving relationship with Him. But I cannot see how the issue of whether the removal of freedom has to do with a moral or amoral decision has any bearing on God’s ability to predict the long-term effects of that decision, given that those effects involve free agents and their decisions.

In light of the considerations of the past several paragraphs, it seems plausible to suppose that God cannot know the long-term consequences of coercively intervening in the world. While intervening in this way might allow God to determine that specific events occur that are not too distantly future in relation to His intervention, He cannot know what the overall impact of this intervention will be with regard to His overarching project of bringing persons into freely loving relationships with Him. The question then, is how we should view God’s relationship to the world, given that each attempt to further His overall project of bringing persons into freely loving relationships with Him will be risky. Should we expect God to frequently take this kind of risk? Should Openists think that God is constantly playing the odds, intervening whenever it seems more likely than
not that His intervention will make it more likely that particular persons will come to freely love Him while not unduly threatening others’ chances of salvation? Or should Openists think that God generally has a policy of not exercising coercive intervention, instead relying on us to discern and carry out His will?

Traditionally, Openists have understood God as exercising what we might term semi-meticulous sovereignty – God does His best to ensure that His project of bringing us into a freely loving personal relationship with Him succeeds by acting on the basis of His knowledge of what events will probably occur and what consequences with regard to His project will probably come about, given the current state of the world and the ways in which He might act. Perhaps there is often approximately a 50-50 chance that the long-term consequences of a particular act God might take will be beneficial to His project. But perhaps too the odds of certain acts having beneficial long-term effects are occasionally (or often) somewhat higher. If so, then many Openists would suggest that God should intervene when He can see that the odds of His intervention leading to good in the long-run are 51-49, or 50.1-49.9. Or if the long-term odds are exactly 50-50, then perhaps God should act upon the short-term consequences if they are likely good, while being prepared to intervene further if things begin to go awry. Of course, there are many questions that need to be addressed in delineating the conditions under which God would or would not intervene: how probable must it be that the long- or short-term consequences of intervention will be beneficial, in order to justify divine action? where exactly do we draw the line between long- and short-term consequences? could consequences be probably good for a year, probably bad for the next ten years, probably good for the next twenty, and then 50-50? if so, how would this affect divine activity?
The general point, however, is that Openists have usually held that there is some class of circumstances in which God has knowledge of what would probably occur as the result of His intervention, and on the basis of this knowledge does in fact intervene.

The alternative view that I would like to explore holds that God generally has a policy of not unilaterally exercising coercive intervention, instead relying on us to discern and carry out His will. Given the risk that any particular intervention will lead to lesser rather than greater success in His project, in intervening God would be taking an action that potentially puts human agents at greater risk of rejecting God’s offer to love Him than they would have been had God not intervened. In criticizing John Sanders’ discussion of risk, David Hunt worries that, “Our eternal felicity is on the line! Yet the ethics of risk-taking when others bear the brunt is not even raised by Sanders.”

For reasons that will become apparent below, I believe that Hunt’s criticism is off the mark if God has a policy of not intervening coercively in His creation. But the charge might well seem appropriate if God is frequently removing our freedom in order to bring it about that we freely choose to love Him, without its being significantly more likely than not that such intervention will be beneficial either for the individual or for God’s overall project. In the next several pages, I will sketch how this alternative “hands-off” view handles the charge that God risks too much in creating, given the limited knowledge He has of what will occur, while also pointing out some implications of this view that, prima facie, constitute objections to adopting it.

If God does not often unilaterally and coercively intervene in creation, then any charge that God risks too much would have to be aimed at His initial creation and

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The subsequent policy of not coercively intervening. The broad contours of the response that might be adopted by Openists who see God as unilaterally intervening only infrequently is based on the idea that since it would be certain that no persons would come to freely love God unless God took the risk of granting us libertarian freedom, only admiration is due God for giving us the gift of the opportunity to enter into loving relationships with Him. Once He has given us this gift, and assuming that all that is required for salvation is to take advantage of this opportunity by faithfully loving Him, responsibility for failing to enter into a loving relationship with God falls solely on our human shoulders, unless God subsequently intervenes in ways that do not respect human freedom and negatively impact our chances of loving God. It is important in this response to the charge that God risks too much to stress that God’s creation is a gift. This view of God’s project allows that for any particular person, there is a very high degree of risk concerning whether that person will accept God’s invitation to love Him. But it also suggests that even in the limiting case in which everyone rejects God, we should still affirm the goodness of God’s project, because there is a sense in which results are not needed to justify God’s creation.

Thus far, I have referred to God’s project in terms of His seeking to bring us into freely loving personal relationships with Him. But how should that phrase be understood? Openists have usually understood it in terms of God taking actions to ensure that as many of us as possible will choose to love Him – in terms of God exercising semi-meticulous providence. We might then think of God as frequently intervening in creation, trying to make do with His probabilistic knowledge and wishing that He had middle knowledge. The alternative view that I am sketching suggests instead that Openists should resist this urge to think of God as doing His best to ensure success, and
instead understand God’s desire to bring us into freely loving personal relationships with Him in terms of an invitation to enter into relationships with Him, where God only hopes for success with regard to each individual. This way of understanding God’s project will allow Openists to claim that in a fundamental sense, God’s project is wholly successful, regardless of the number of persons who accept His invitation to freely love Him.

If Openists understand God’s project in terms of His providing creatures with the opportunity to enter into communion with Him, an opportunity that can only be considered a gift, then God’s project, the giving of a gift, is a project whose success depends only on Him. A gift remains a gift even if the one to whom it is given rejects it, though this rejection may well bring pain to the giver. God has freely given us a great gift, and we may assume that He has given it despite recognizing the likelihood that many would reject it, and despite recognizing the possibility that all would reject it. Understanding God’s creation as purposed towards giving creatures the gift of the possibility of communion with God, God’s project can be seen as a success regardless of our cumulative response. The gift, and the sacrifices God has made to allow and encourage humanity to freely enter into communion with Him are admirable, regardless of whether we accept or reject that communion. With regard to the effects of an individual’s rejection upon that individual, so long as acceptance of God’s gift requires only that – acceptance – then responsibility for any rejection and the consequences of that rejection must fall squarely upon the individual’s shoulders.⁸ With regard to the effects

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⁸ One might understand acceptance of God’s gift as acceptance that God has given us the opportunity for communion with Him. This would be a kind of epistemological awareness. When I discuss the acceptance or rejection of God’s gift of this opportunity, I have in mind the moral or relational stance one adopts towards God. In this sense, acceptance of the gift implies not only that one recognizes that one has the opportunity to freely enter into a personal loving relationship with God, but that one freely does enter into such a relationship.
of our rejection upon God, He will continue to exemplify the perfect loving relationship
that we are invited to partake in, by eternally being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whether
or not we also enter into relationship with Him.\textsuperscript{9} God has extended a marvelous gift to us
in creation; while it may pain Him when we reject that gift, it is neither His fault nor does
it in any way diminish His essential goodness if we reject His gift.

An objection to this view is that it is part of our Christian faith that God not only
gives us the opportunity for salvation, but also does His best to ensure that as many of us
as possible freely accept that opportunity. Thus, predicating of God a policy of generally
not intervening in a coercive manner is inappropriate. I think that absent arguments that
coercive intervention is inappropriate on grounds other than its ultimate ineffectiveness,
this objection is basically right. We thus should expect God to play the odds whenever
He believes that doing so will give His creatures a better chance of freely reciprocating
His love for them. Whether an Openist opts for a view of God as exercising semi-
meticulous providence or for one in which God generally has a policy of not unilaterally
and coercively intervening should depend to a large extent on whether she believes that
frequent intervention based on probabilistic knowledge would make it more likely that
we would freely accept God’s offer of communion.

But of course, discerning whether or not God’s knowledge of the probable
consequences of acts He might take is sufficient to warrant a policy of semi-meticulous
providence is difficult. The questions I raised above about what kinds of odds would
justify intervention need to be answered, as well as the question of what kinds of odds
God faces. There are other questions related to the criteria by which God would judge

\textsuperscript{9} See Sanders, \textit{The God Who Risks}, pp. 228-229 for a similar discussion.
the success of His project. (Would sheer numbers be an appropriate standard?) I wish to insist only that if the long-term odds are 50-50 with regard to whether God’s intervention will ultimately have good or bad consequences, and if the short-term consequences are not appreciably better, then this alternative view of God’s relationship to the world should be a live option for Openists, especially in light of its ability to respond to charges that God risked too much in creating this world.

Openists have often sought to reduce the degree of risk incumbent in their view of God’s relationship to creation by arguing that the prospects for success, in terms of the occurrence of specific events that God desires, are higher than one might fear. I think that this approach is misguided. John Sanders, for instance, suggests that while there is a “high amount of risk in the sense that it matters deeply to God how things go[, t]he decision to create beings who could receive and return the divine love and enter into loving personal relationships with each other was not much of a risk, given all the blessings that God provided.”10 I disagree. To suggest that God was as surprised by sin as Sanders suggests, is, in my opinion, to predicate a more demeaning lack of knowledge to God than to believe that while aware of the very risky nature of creation, God nonetheless chose to allow us the opportunity to come into a loving relationship with Him. Openists should accept that God’s self-imposed lack of control over what occurs in the future is significant. With that emphasis, Openists may respond to the charge that God has taken an inappropriate risk in creating not by seeking to keep their view of God as close to that of the tradition as possible, but by embracing a view that predicates of God greater concern for relationships than for meticulous sovereignty.

10 Ibid., p. 172.
Openists must admit that God could not have known that His entire project would not go awry, in the sense that no one would freely accept His offer of personal communion. But Openists should affirm that this possibility was seen by God as very unlikely to become actual, “given all the blessings that God provided.” (And Openists should indeed believe that God has offered us as many blessings as are consistent with His desire that we freely take the opportunity He offers us to love Him.) To suggest that the complete failure of God’s project was other than very unlikely seems to impute one of three things of God: either a lack of even general knowledge of how human nature would be likely to react to God’s offer, or an inability on God’s part to create creatures for whom there are no impediments to entering into a loving relationship with God, impediments that would make it overwhelmingly probable that they would reject Him, or an unwillingness to do the same. There is no reason that an Openist need consider any of these three as accurate depictions of God, and thus I believe that while Openists should acknowledge that God must have been aware of the possibility that no creatures would accept His offer, this possibility was truly a *mere* possibility. If we understand God’s project as an invitation and gift, then this mere possibility does not at all suggest that His decision to create a world in which we might use our freedom to do evil as well as good was inappropriate. While God takes a significant risk of many persons rejecting Him, this risk is acceptable within the context of viewing His purpose in creation primarily as affording us the *invitation* to freely love Him, rather than as attempting to *ensure* that we respond as He hopes. In this fundamental sense, God’s project is an unmitigated success.

We must yet return to the issue of whether this view of God’s project engenders a risk to us that it is inappropriate for God to allow. I think that it does not. I agree with
Sanders that, “God is more vulnerable than we are because God cannot count on our faithfulness in the way we may count on his steadfast love.”\(^ {11}\) We may be assured that God loves us and will grant us eternal felicity if only we trust in Him. What risk is there for us? We cannot be assured that we will not face significant difficulties in our lives, but our lives here plausibly have very little to do with our eternal felicity except insofar as our free acceptance or rejection of God’s love has implications for our afterlife.

Hunt’s charge that God puts us at risk inappropriately must thus be aimed at the fact that it might seem that God has created a world in which people are not given equal opportunities to consider and accept God’s offer of love. But this charge is certainly no worse when advanced against Openism than when advanced against more traditional views of divine grace and election, and it may be met by advocating an inclusivist view of Christianity. Inclusivism affirms that one need not be fully aware of the Gospel message in order to commit oneself to God, but instead may implicitly accept His salvation through Christ even if one has never heard of God’s Son.\(^ {12}\) Perhaps the circumstances in which we decide whether or not to reciprocate God’s love are more difficult for some of us than others, but we may affirm that the opportunity is afforded to all persons regardless of culture or knowledge of Christ. (And we may trust in God’s mercy that He does not condemn those who die before reaching an age at which they may make a responsible choice for or against a relationship with God.) Affirming inclusivism remains consistent with the view that each of us bears significant responsibility for

\(^ {11}\) Ibid., p. 178.

working to *optimize* the conditions in which others come to this decision of whether to accept God’s love, through evangelism and through humanitarian efforts that work to ensure that persons do not find life so oppressive that they curse their lives and any God who allowed them to come into such a world.

Openism, understood in the way I have been sketching, fares no worse than other views of God’s providence with regard to the issue of risk to us, so long as God’s probabilistic knowledge does not offer Him an effective resource for increasing the likelihood of His project’s success. While God cannot even ensure that a single person will accept His invitation to loving communion, neither does He ensure that anyone is damned. The responsibility for our salvation or damnation rests solely on us. While this is very far from the traditional understanding of grace, I believe that Openists may and should thank God for graciously allowing us to enter into a freely loving relationship with Him merely by responding positively to the gift of His invitation, and work with God to enable others to more fully experience His presence that they might also trust in Him.

Let me summarize the view of Openism that I have been outlining, before briefly discussing another kind of objection to the view related to its implications for how we view petitionary prayer. Given that intervening coercively would require that God take what may well be a significant risk that His intervention will harm rather than help the prospects of persons freely choosing Him, Openists should view God as rarely, if ever, unilaterally intervening in this way. Rather, Openists should emphasize that God’s project is an invitation to communion with Him, and that He desires to allow us to work with Him in achieving His goal of creatures entering into loving personal relationships with Him, and by extension, with each other. We may trust that God will always listen to
us and will often offer guidance to us, but we may not suppose that He will solve our problems, or the problems of the world, unilaterally. If we “lift up the scriptural principle of relationships of love with freedom, which upholds human dignity and significance,” then “a biblically grounded humanism is on the mark.”\(^{13}\) God interacts with creation by calling us to be His partners in becoming more faithful to His will and in making this world one which reflects His respect for us in our mutual respect for all persons. While Openists must respect God’s prerogative to intervene unilaterally, they should not expect Him to exercise it.

The last objection that I will raise to this view has to do with how this partnership between God and us is possible. Specifically, what effect can our petitionary prayers have on God’s activity? One might think that while God should not unilaterally intervene if He cannot know that His intervention is likely to have ultimately good consequences, such intervention is somehow appropriate in response to our faithfully asking that He do so. But how does our asking that God intervene make such intervention appropriate? If the reason that God rarely unilaterally intervenes is that such intervention will probably not, in the long-run, increase the odds of His project succeeding, why shouldn’t this consideration also mitigate against His intervening in response to prayer? The most plausible response is that the petitioner in some manner accepts responsibility for God’s taking this action. However, this response, when developed, may be at odds with the practical experience of prayer that many believers have.

If one adopts the view I have been outlining, according to which God has a general policy of not frequently unilaterally intervening in creation in a coercive manner,

\(^{13}\) Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, pp. 140-141.
then one believes that God depends upon us to play a significant role in determining the degree to which His project of bringing us into loving personal relationships with Him succeeds. And, presumably, one faithfully believes that this state of affairs is good. It is good (even if we do not fully understand its goodness) that God has given us limited epistemic abilities and powers and yet expects us to do our best to make the world which we inhabit as good as we are able. We may view God’s creation as a gift, such that subsequent inaction on His part is not blameworthy in light of there being neither metaphysical nor moral necessity to His participating in the economy of creaturely activity. But we, as a part of this created economy, must act, even if our actions are inactions. And again, we must judge that this is good.

Given that we are charged with improving our world, we must utilize whatever resources are available to us, and one of these resources is petitionary prayer. The key difference between unilateral intervention and divine intervention in response to prayer, it may be suggested, is that whenever one petitions God for something specific, one is at least implicitly accepting the risk consequent upon God’s taking an action without knowledge of its probable long-term results. While God, we are assuming, does not unilaterally act without such knowledge, we cannot help acting in this manner, and we must judge that this is good, given that God has created us in this manner. We thus entreat God to act in a manner that we think will be beneficial, despite the risk that it may not be so, faithfully believing that this is what God desires that we do, and that He may and does often respond to these prayers.

Suppose that we could further develop an explanation of the appropriateness of God’s intervention in response to petitionary prayer on the basis of our assumption of the
risk consequent upon His response. A number of questions related to the practice of prayer would still need to be answered. When we pray, do we see ourselves as accepting the risk of God’s responding to our prayers, as opposed to at least implicitly adding a “thy will be done,” by which we mean that God should act as He thinks best? If not, then the view that I have been outlining might require Christians to pray in a manner other than they have been wont to. Aside from any general considerations of the proper relationship between theory and praxis, this implication would be at least somewhat surprising given that Openists have often claimed that their ability to theoretically make sense of the actual practices of prayer is a point in favor of Openism.  

A second question that this view would engender would be that of why God would ever refuse to answer prayers made with sincere faith and motives, including the requisite acceptance of risk. The more traditional Openist view of God exercising semi-meticulous providence can appeal to His probabilistic knowledge, but since I have suggested that my alternative view’s attractiveness rests in large part upon God’s not having knowledge of this sort that would be sufficient to effectively guide His activity, this response is not here available. One might simply claim that God does always respond to appropriately sincere prayers, perhaps subject to certain limitations related to policies of generally not acting in certain ways: coercively or supernaturally, for instance. However, it seems that God might often see likely short-term consequences of an action that we do not, and that are such that we would probably not request that God perform

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that action if we knew this. Shouldn’t we maintain God’s ability to wisely allow such knowledge to inform His decision of whether to respond to our prayer? It seems that we should, but God’s doing so would seem to mitigate our ability to truly accept the risk incumbent upon God’s acting in the ways we request. It would be consistent with everything that I have said in outlining this view for God to non-coercively make known to us the likely short-term consequences in question. John Sanders suggests that,

We may prevail with God because God genuinely takes our desires into account. Yet God may also prevail with us, getting us to change our minds and pursue a course of action that we did not initially think best. In this regard prayer provides a dialogical resource for God to work with in the world.\textsuperscript{15}

But it is not clear, short of God directly speaking to us, how God might non-coercively get us to change our minds, and “burning bush” experiences have been, I think, relatively rare in Christian history.

There are then, significant questions that would require further exploration before adopting a version of Openism that maintains that God generally does not unilaterally intervene in His creation. I believe that this view provides a compelling response to the charge that God risks too much in creating, and allows Openists to avoid predicating of God and themselves the wish that Molinism were in fact true. But its plausibility depends upon the thesis that God does not have sufficient knowledge of the probable effects of actions that He might take to warrant His striving to improve creation via frequent intervention, and it requires a significant reconsideration of the praxis of prayer. In light of the significant objections to the view, one might wonder why it should be seriously considered as an alternative to the semi-meticulous view of providence that

\textsuperscript{15} Sanders, \textit{The God Who Risks}, p. 273.
Openists have more generally suggested. I have primarily concentrated on outlining and considering the “hands-off” view in which God does not frequently intervene, and so perhaps I should reiterate the concerns that I have about an Openism that affirms semi-meticulous sovereignty. These concerns are at least implicit in the above, and are evident in the section that follows on the problem of evil.

In general, I think that it is difficult for Openists to respond to the charge that God has risked and does risk too much in creating as He has, if they believe that God is doing the best He can to ensure that His project succeeds by frequently intervening on the basis of probabilistic knowledge. On the one hand, as alluded to above, this view may end up demeaning God’s knowledge of human nature in claiming that our sinfulness truly surprised God. On the other, responsibility for evil is not shifted as effectively from God to us if God has His hand, so to speak, in the everyday events of the world. Given that God presumably has on occasion pre-ordained that events would take place (such as His Son’s death for our salvation), doing whatever necessary to ensure that they did occur, an Openist who opts for semi-meticulous providence may be forced to claim that the Holocaust did not warrant such intervention, despite God’s not having any clear idea of its necessity for some greater good. This is a thesis that one feels one should at most whisper, if state at all. It is largely a desire to avoid the need to whisper such claims that I believe should motivate Openists to continue to consider a more radical break from tradition by exploring the reasons that God might have a general policy of not unilaterally intervening in His creation.
2. The Problem of Evil

Whether Openism or a traditional view of meticulous providence is more comforting in the face of evil is a question that may ultimately depend on one’s individual psychology. John Sanders introduces *The God Who Risks* by sketching how happening upon the car accident in which his brother died spurred his reflection on divine providence, reflection that eventually led to Openism. But Mark Talbot, writing 35 years after being paralyzed from the waist down, 35 years in which he has suffered numerous related health problems, reports that he has “reached very different conclusions than Sanders has reached.”

Sanders concludes that God is not the “ultimate cosmic explanation for each and every thing, including all the bad things we experience.” I conclude that nothing happens to us – nothing good and nothing bad – that is not ultimately from God. David Hunt claims that “meticulous sovereignty has the advantage of being more comforting (as it was to my brother and sister-in-law) because it promises that this tragedy is connected in some intimate and mysterious way with a greater good which somehow redeems it.” And David Basinger, who finds it comforting to assume “that God is often as disappointed as are we” at evil, nevertheless adds that some Christians may prefer to “assume instead that all evils are necessary components in God’s overall plan for this world… for instance, that the death of a child who has been hit by a drunk

16 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
17 Mark Talbot, “True Freedom: The Liberty that Scripture Portrays as Worth Having,” in *Beyond the Bounds*, p. 79.
18 Hunt, “Perfection at Risk?”, p. 94. This assertion, coming as it does amidst an extended critique of Sanders’ views, seems to me to border on callousness. However, perhaps this should be excused since Hunt is referring to the death of his nephew and may similarly feel that the implication of Sanders’ view – that God does not necessarily have a mysterious plan to utilize the nephew’s death for some greater good – is offensive to his (Hunt’s) mind. Perhaps this is further evidence of the deeply felt and widely divergent reactions different people have to what they find comforting in the face of tragedy and evil.
driver or the failure of a student to be accepted into graduate school is part of some meaningful, perfect divine plan.”19 It may be that which of these views one finds more comforting plays a very significant role in the initial orientation of many towards or away from Openism. In this section, I want to do two things. I want to respond to a particular criticism regarding Openism’s ability to respond to the problem of evil. And I want to tentatively explore the idea that how strong one’s faith in God is may play some role in whether one finds more compelling the Openist view that evil is primarily our fault, or instead finds more compelling the traditional view that evil fits within a mysterious divine plan for the greater good.

The particular criticism to which I want to respond has to do with whether Openism really succeeds in shifting sufficient blame for evil from God to human agents. David Hunt leads into the passage quoted above by writing:

On the assumption of meticulous sovereignty, God sees goods connected to my nephew’s death and judges that his death is not sufficiently lamentable to outweigh those goods. On the risk model of divine sovereignty, God has freely adopted a general policy of nonintervention in cases of suffering whether or not the suffering is connected to outweighing goods, and He judges that my nephew’s death is not sufficiently lamentable for Him to make an exception to this policy. It’s just not clear how Sanders’ preferred alternative comes any closer to making lament legitimate. Indeed, meticulous sovereignty has the advantage of being more comforting…20

Fred Freddoso, in reviewing Hasker’s *God, Time, and Knowledge*, argues:

Ask yourself whether Hasker’s risk-taking account fares any better with regard to Hitler. Once Hitler accedes to power and gets the Holocaust rolling on its grisly way, even the risk-taking God, who is after all pretty knowledgeable, should have a crystal-clear idea of the further specific evils that are almost certain to occur. So if he does not intervene early on to stop Hitler, this can only be because of some worthy (though very hidden) purposes he has in mind. In that case, would it not

20 Hunt, “Perfection at Risk?”, p. 94
be just as true on the risk-taking account as on the traditional account that “God has deliberately and with full knowledge chosen that these good purposes shall be fulfilled through a plan that entails the actual occurrence (not just the possibility) of specific evils” (p. 200)? Let’s face it. Hitler is a problem for everyone.21

And Paul Helseth writes:

So what is the point? It is simply that openness theologians should not presume to have anything approaching a solution to the problem of evil until they have wrestled with the implications of God’s alleged willingness to intervene in human history in a coercive fashion.22

The criticism is fairly clear, and I think that Helseth, at least, is right. Openists must explain the degree to which God is willing to intervene in human history in a coercive fashion and draw out the implications of this for the problem of evil. The more “hands-on” God is, the less blame for evil can be shifted from Him. And while Openists might appeal to God’s having formed a mysterious plan on the basis of His current probabilistic knowledge, in which particular evils are necessary for greater goods, they must also acknowledge that there is an element of risk in God’s belief that the evil will result in the good. The more undetermined factors there are between the evil and the good, the greater the risk; and if a sizeable period of time passes in which we cannot see that any good has come about as a result of the evil, then we might well conclude that God did not have a mysterious plan or that His plan has gone awry.

If Openists adopt a view of God’s relationship to the world according to which He does not often coercively intervene in creation, then there are some general points that can be made here in response to the above. If one believes that God does not override

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human freedom in anything but the most exceptional circumstances, Freddoso’s accusation is not correct. Openists need not say that God, forseeing the likely results of Hitler’s rise to power, “chose” to fulfill His plan by utilizing these evils. Freddoso may be right that Hasker has run “roughshod over hundreds of pages of the best scholastic theology by declaring ex cathedra that those who adhere to the traditional account cannot distinguish what God intends from what He merely permits,” but it is undoubtedly the case that Openists can allow that God merely permits the Holocaust rather than intends it. The reason for God’s non-intervention in this specific case may be nothing more than His general policy of not coercively intervening. If there are good reasons for such a policy, then the fact that God can accurately predict, say in 1939, what will occur during World War II does not imply that He intends that it occur. It may well be that when He put the policy of non-intervention in place, God could not have predicted the Holocaust, but that there are very good reasons for not renouncing that policy once made, even in the face of the Holocaust (and even in the face of fervently faithful prayers that He do so). While God must have in mind reasons for maintaining this policy, it is not necessary (or even likely, given Openism) that God’s purposes entail the actual occurrence of specific evils. God’s purposes might entail a policy of non-intervention that makes such evils possible, but that is just what an Openist claims in advocating a free-will theodicy.

Can anything further be said about what might be God’s good reasons for refusing to make exceptions to His policy of not coercively intervening, other than to reiterate the need for further work on this question? Perhaps not much. It may, however, be worth responding to a consideration that suggests, prima facie, that God does not have good

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reasons for maintaining such a policy. Openists often stress the metaphor of God as a loving parent, and it might seem that a loving parent would not allow His children to harm each other so greatly. It is thus important to stress the manner in which God is not like a human parent: “God is uniquely responsible for upholding the ontological, moral and relational structures of the universe…. In his role as the one who establishes and sustains the project, God cannot also bring it about that he abandons the very conditions for the project.”24 Or in Clark Pinnock’s words:

Having created free agents, God cannot simply terminate them and their evil deeds. God has committed himself to working with finite powers. To prevent his creatures working evil would be to act against the liberty God gave them and removing that freedom would show that God was not serious in giving it in the first place. He made a kind of covenant of non-coercion with creatures, which involved the necessity of his enduring their decisions as free agents for a time. Thus, he also accepted the need to work around their evil influences.25

Of course, God can simply terminate persons and their evil deeds. But He cannot do so without undermining His project of seeking to bring us into a freely loving personal relationship with Him. As soon as God intervenes to unilaterally prevent the normal course of history from developing as a product of our free decisions, He has given up on His ultimate purpose, at least with regard to those whose freedom He revokes.

One might also speculate further about the possible ramifications of such an intervention, or about other reasons that God might not intervene. Perhaps those who become aware of God’s revocation of an agent’s freedom will also see that there is a limit to what is expected of them: if things get too out of hand, God will intervene. It may well be that any obvious unilateral action taken by God that indicates that there are limits to

our responsibility to work with Him would significantly undermine the kind of relationship that He hopes to draw us into. Or perhaps removing Hitler is not as easy as we might think. Sanders takes this line, suggesting that society plays a significant role in the development of such people such that we should not presume that their death would entail that no one similar would play their role.  

The possibility that preventing a particular evil in a suitably “quiet” way might be quite difficult might be conjoined to speculation about God’s reasons for having a general policy of not coercively intervening. And the force of analogies that initially might be used to argue that God would intervene may be resisted by concentrating on the manner in which the analogies remain disanalogous. But work speculating on the reasons that God might have a policy of not coercively intervening undoubtedly needs to be done, as Helseth points out. I will merely reiterate that the alternative to doing this work is to whisper that while God generally exercises semi-meticulous providence based on His probabilistic knowledge, He did not intervene to prevent the Holocaust. Given that Openism does not provide the resources for one to faithfully maintain that God had a greater good in mind for which He permitted this evil, it seems to me that the need to acknowledge this plausibly constitutes an informal *reductio ad absurdum* against the semi-meticulous providence version of Openism.  

Openism, understood in terms of God’s exercising a policy of generally not coercively intervening in creation, provides a means of shifting the blame from God to us for much of the evil in the world. If that move is appropriate, then we should not expect God to provide a safety-net if we mess things up too badly. We must shoulder our

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responsibility as free creatures of God and work to better the world, whether through physical labor, charitable giving, political solutions, or prayer. We may always pray, and Openists believe that our prayers provide an opportunity to communicate with God and to learn from Him. We may lament the death of a nephew and the Holocaust. We may ask God why. But we must always be open to hearing in response that it is we who must do more. Of course, this answer may not be the kind of “because” that we seek in answer to our “why.” And the fact that this may in the end be the only answer that Openists can give to particular evils indicates that God as described by Openism remains beyond our comprehension. The appeal to mystery is perhaps taken later and less often by Openists, but it remains appropriate. We will always have questions for our Lord, for we are not His equals and He does not reveal all to us. There may be reasons that God does not intervene as often as we would like, in addition to those we can think of, that are beyond our comprehension. Ultimately, no matter what view of providence one takes, one must acknowledge of God’s ways that “a complete evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of the policy awaits the eschaton.”27

Having sketched how Openists might try to respond to the above criticism of their general response to the problem of evil, I would like to close this section by suggesting that the general contours of this type of solution may be available to a class of people for whom more traditional solutions based on an affirmation of meticulous providence are not. Specifically, those who are either agnostic or whose faith in God is tenuous may not be able to believe that despite appearances, the evil in the world is part of God’s perfect plan. If one already has faith in God, and abundant faith, then it may well be more

27 Ibid., p. 267.
comforting to believe that He has some good reason for allowing (even intending) that a tragedy occurs. But if one is struggling to discern whether one believes, if one has little if any initial disposition towards belief in God, then one might well conclude that a meticulously sovereign God could not possibly be responsible for this world, if He is also good. In that case, the Openist view that it is we who are primarily responsible for the actuality of evil, and that God has only allowed its possibility in order to also allow the possibility that we might enter into loving fellowship with Him, may allow the agnostic to choose to believe, or the tenuous believer to grow in faith.

This is mere speculation, but I can attest that this accords well with my own faith journey, and I believe that Sanders feels the same. He writes,

After my conversion some Christians informed me that my brother’s death was ordained for the purpose of bringing me to faith in Christ. What? God killed my non-Christian brother so that I would become a Christian? But without middle knowledge God could not have known that this would happen. This would mean that God kills people and causes disasters in the hope that some may then repent and confess Christ.²⁸

I hear in this passage an almost visceral revulsion to the idea that one could worship a God who would act to bring about His purposes in this manner. (There is, of course, also the assumption that Molinism is false so that the middle alternative between Thomism and Openism is ruled out.) I do not know whether I am reading this into the passage or if this is an accurate perception of Sanders’ feeling. But I believe that it is at least a possible reaction to the problem of evil, and that thus it is at least possible that there are

²⁸ Ibid., p. 262.
persons who might come to believe in God as understood by Openists who could not
have faith in a more traditionally understood God.\textsuperscript{29}

3. Scripture

I turn now to a consideration of an issue that has been at the heart of debates
about Openism, but which has not always been explicitly considered. That is, what is the
role of Scripture in discussions of Openism? Does it straightforwardly support either the
relational God of open theism, or the meticulously provident and foreknowing God of the
traditional view? In the other direction, does the acceptance of Openism have important
implications for how one views the role of Scripture in one’s theology?

For the most part, Openists have been appropriately careful to avoid claiming that
Scripture straightforwardly establishes the truth of Openism, while maintaining that a
more or less compelling argument for Openism on the basis of Scripture can be made.
Richard Rice acknowledges that, “the portrait of God’s relation to the world that emerges
from the Bible depends heavily on the angle of vision from which we approach it.”\textsuperscript{30} The
angle that Rice and Openists in general advocate is one in which divine love is the
“controlling metaphor.”\textsuperscript{31} But Openists usually acknowledge, explicitly or implicitly,
that other controlling metaphors could yield an understanding of the Bible that suggests a

\textsuperscript{29} Does this indicate that Openism is really a kind of “halfway house” to true faith – Christianity lite? I will only say that the answer to that question, for me as well as Sanders, might well depend on whether one finds Molinism plausible.


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., pp. 17-22. Rice cites (on p. 17) Terence Fretheim as the author of this expression and as understanding the role of controlling metaphors as “able to bring coherence to a range of biblical thinking about God; they provide a hermeneutical key for interpreting the whole.” The citation is to Terence Fretheim, \textit{The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective} (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), p. 11.
more traditional view of God’s relationship to His creation. In one of his more moderate passages, Clark Pinnock writes:

Perhaps in large measure the debate comes down to the fact that we all approach the Bible with a vision of God in our mind. It does seem possible to read the text to be saying that God is an all-controlling absolute Being who knows it all, or that God is a triune God of self-giving and suffering love. Intellectually we can read it either way but how does the Spirit want us to read it?  

John Sanders introduces his exposition of the case for Openism by acknowledging that:

Because the arguments put forth are all situated in a contextual web of belief, those who do not share my larger web of belief are not likely to agree with my conclusions. Moreover, I make no claims of “proving” my case. This book is an attempt to offer what may be called a cumulative case in support of divine risk taking. It does not pretend to be the only model a Christian may be rationally justified in holding. But I do believe it is superior to the no-risk model of providence in having greater fidelity to the biblical story, a more coherent view of the nature of God and better approaches to life-application issues such as evil, prayer, guidance and a personal relationship with God.

To be sure, Openists also make statements that indicate that they do not see alternative readings of Scripture as anywhere near equally plausible, but I believe that they should, and usually do, stop short of claiming that Openism can be proven on the basis of Scripture.

One of the reasons for thinking that Openists have proceeded appropriately in stopping short of claiming that Scripture cannot be read except as teaching their view is

32 Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, p. 64. See also, Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” in *The Openness of God*, p. 103.


34 Pinnock states without qualification, “The Bible does not teach that God exercises all-controlling sovereignty,” and “reform in the doctrine of God is required on the basis of the scriptural foundations.” (*Most Moved Mover*, pp. 55, 65) Pinnock is rightly criticized for this first statement by Michael Horton in “Hellenistic or Hebrew? Open Theism and Reformed Theological Method,” in *Beyond the Bounds*, pp. 224-5. Boyd generally speaks in terms of showing that there is “room” for an Openist view in Scripture, but indicates that he himself cannot make sense of Scripture unless he reads it through the lens of the Open view of God. See Boyd, *God of the Possible*, esp. pp. 7-9, 18, and 51. See also the quotation from Boyd cited by Helseth, in “The Trustworthiness of God and the Foundation of Hope,” pp. 278-279.
that it is simply the case that any hermeneutic will struggle to coherently make sense of all of the Biblical data. (Another reasons is that hardly anyone, until recently, has read Scripture as teaching the Openist view; it’s unlikely that Scripture can’t be read in the traditional manner, given the long tradition of reading it thus.) Traditional readings that maintain God’s meticulous providence and complete foreknowledge must interpret passages that seem to suggest that God changes His mind, or regrets decisions, or is frustrated by actions that humans take, as anthropomorphisms that mean something other than they initially seem to mean. Openists who maintain a relational, risk-taking God who does not meticulously govern or foreknow everything must interpret passages that seem to suggest that God does these things as meaning something other than they initially seem to mean. The Biblical data underdetermine any choice of systematic theology regarding God’s nature and relationship to creation. It is only if one brings a particular theological or philosophical lens to one’s reading that more or less compelling arguments can be made for a particular view of divine providence and omniscience. This claim perhaps comes perilously close to denying the sola scriptura basis for theology that many Evangelical Protestants advocate. This is of little personal concern for those who find compelling, as I do, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience as bases for theology. But it is an interesting question as to whether being an Openist must result in having a different view of Scripture from Evangelicals.

In attempting to answer this question, let me first say that I am not sure exactly what those who claim that Scripture is the only basis for theology mean. If they mean that one’s theology must be consistent with a plausible reading of Scripture, or primarily based upon a plausible reading of Scripture, then I believe that Openists have been
working hard to show that their theology is. Four of the primary texts espousing Openism begin with a lengthy consideration of Scripture before going on to consider other considerations in favor of Openism.\textsuperscript{35} If, on the other hand, \textit{sola scriptura} is taken in a strong sense as really meaning that one should appeal only to Scripture, then I believe that this view, despite its apparent simplicity, may not be a coherent approach.

I am not a Biblical scholar, but it seems to me that there are a finite number of broad alternatives for understanding how Scripture reveals God, and that a consideration of these alternatives shows that one must appeal to something beyond Scripture in order to come to know anything about God on the basis of Scripture. One might believe that everything predicated of God and His relationship to creation in Scripture is predicated univocally. If this were so, then perhaps no principled hermeneutic would be required to interpret Scripture. But in addition to Boyd’s claim that certain passages, such as those representing God with a body or as the Church’s husband, are “ridiculous if taken literally,”\textsuperscript{36} this would seem to have the result of removing the possibility that apparent contradictions are merely apparent rather than true antinomies. Obviously, a reading of the Bible on the assumption that it always univocally speaks of God does not provide one with a coherent understanding of Him. Openists might be seen as claiming that their willingness to take anthropopathisms literally allows them to read more of the Bible univocally than those with a more traditional view of God’s nature and providence, but

\textsuperscript{35} In the \textit{Openness of God}, Rice’s “Biblical Support for a New Perspective” is the first chapter and comprises fifty pages of a 175 page book. In \textit{Most Moved Mover}, Pinnock’s first chapter is on “The Scriptural Foundations” and is forty pages out of 186. Sanders devotes two chapters and one hundred pages of 282 to a careful exposition of the Scriptural support for Openism in \textit{The God Who Risks}. And Boyd in \textit{God of the Possible} devotes two of four chapters plus an appendix, over half his book, to an explicit consideration of the Scriptural case for and against Openism.

\textsuperscript{36} Boyd, \textit{God of the Possible}, p. 118.
the sheer number of verses that can be taken univocally on one view rather than another does not seem an obvious criterion for thinking it preferable. So absent some argument to the effect that such a criterion is appropriate, this alternative will not remove the need for some decision, based outside of Scripture, on a hermeneutic.

One might instead believe that everything predicated of God and His relationship to creation in Scripture is predicated equivocally. But of course if this were so, then we would lose the ability to make any truth-claims on the basis of Scripture, and must remain either agnostics or fideists. The third alternative is that Scripture in general analogically predicates properties of God, such that predicates applied to Him reveal His nature to a degree but inexact. But how does analogical predication work? A. B. Caneday seems to suggest that we need only recognize that we and our language are in some way in the image of God without attempting to determine the ways in which we reflect Him. He writes:

Simultaneously, man is like God and unlike God, which, by definition, is what likeness implies. God bestowed his likeness upon man, but man is of the earth, a creature. God is not like man, for man is only an image or resemblance of him. This accounts for God’s analogical self-disclosure to humans. God, who is not human, reveals himself to humans as though he were human (i.e. analogically or anthropomorphically).  

Prescinding from the Incarnation, there is a sense in which this might be right, but nowhere does Caneday suggest how we might determine the degree to which we or Scriptural portrayals resemble or image God. God is not like us, and Caneday is adamant that to postulate a “shared context” in which certain predicates are taken to univocally

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reveal God is idolatry.\textsuperscript{38} All of creation and Scripture are anthropomorphic and analogical, such that, “apprehension of God and relation to God are ours only in terms of analogies that derive from the fact that God made man in his own image.”\textsuperscript{39} But if this is right, if “the essence of anthropomorphism” is that “God reveals himself to us in human terms, yet we must not compare God to us as if we were the ultimate reference point,”\textsuperscript{40} then how can we say or believe anything about God? If all univocal predication is ruled out because of the Creator/creature distinction, if nothing that we say can be compared to us as an ultimate reference point such that it means what it normally means, then how are we to have any relationship to God other than, perhaps, a Kierkegaardian fideism?\textsuperscript{41}

Richard Swinburne suggests that terms are used analogically when either the syntactic or semantic rules for their use are relaxed:

> When the meaning of word ‘W’ is modified by changing the role of examples in the semantic rule for its use (\textit{viz.} saying that to be ‘W’ an object has only to resemble the standard objects more than objects which are standard cases of ‘not-W’ objects, but need no longer resemble the former to the extent to which they resemble each other) and by loosening some syntactic rules (so that some inferences are no longer valid), I shall say that the word ‘W’ has come to be used

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., pp. 157-163. It is Sanders’ ascription of a shared context between God and us, to be discussed below, that Caneday is rejecting.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 163.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} I’m afraid that I cannot resist pointing out as well that Caneday’s own “definition of anthropomorphism, a definition that emerges from the soil of Scripture” is as follows: “Because God formed Adam from the “dust of the earth” and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, making him in his own image and likeness, God makes himself known to his creatures in their likeness, as if he wears both their form and qualities, when in fact they wear his likeness.” (p. 161) On the face of it, this definition seems to be claiming that all Scripture is anthropomorphic (and analogical – Caneday often uses the terms interchangeably) \textit{on the basis of a univocal reading of Genesis} \textsuperscript{2}! But surely this passage is not high on the list of those that should be read literally. Perhaps I simply do not understand Caneday’s view. The general points that I am making may stand independently of an actual example of the dangers of denying all univocity in speaking of God, if Caneday does not in fact serve as such.
(by comparison with its old use) ‘analogically’. The loosening of rules means that ‘W’ comes to designate a different property W*. Thus, we understand an analogical term by understanding what the term originally meant and the ways in which the rules for its use have been relaxed. For instance, we might understand that ‘father’ ordinarily means one who is the biological sire of a child and whose relationship to that child is usually characterized by loving care of and responsibility for the child’s well-being. We might then relax the rules for the use of ‘father’ such that the term applies to persons who have not biologically sired the child but who nonetheless exemplify the relationship of loving care of and responsibility for the well-being of the child. In this sense, God might analogically be said to be our ‘father’. And if ‘sired’ is also understood analogically, the sense in which God is ‘father’ may reveal even more about the way in which He is our father.

The important point to note about this understanding of analogy is that our understanding of the analogy depends upon an understanding both of how a term is normally used and of the ways in which the rules for the use of that term are being relaxed in the analogical context. A univocal core to our understanding of the term remains as the reference from which we extend our use of a term analogically. Thus, analogical predication only tells us something about God if we understand not only that we are like Him in some manner, but also that we are like Him in this manner while recognizing that in these other manners the term is not appropriately predicated of Him. The clearer our understanding of the original meaning of a term and of the ways in which the rules for its use are being relaxed, the greater an understanding of God we will have.

in predicating that term of Him. But, “if theology uses too many words in analogical senses it will convey virtually nothing by what it says.”

For this reason, Sanders claims that a “shared context” must be posited between Creator and creation. We can know nothing of God apart from His interaction with us in and as His creation; we know nothing of a God unrelated to us. And in light of considerations like Swinburne’s above, “there must be some properties that are used of God in the same sense that they are used of things in the created order. Otherwise we will be back in the cave of agnosticism.” In order to understand the ways in which the rules are relaxed for analogical terms, we must be able to hold onto a univocal core sense of the term in which what is predicated of God means what it ordinarily means. And thus in order to predicate some properties of God analogically, some properties must be predicated of God univocally. The strategy of Sanders, and of Openists generally, seems to be to assume that certain parts of Scripture univocally reveal God, and to interpret other parts in light of this: “If God shares the same context with us by entering into relation with us, as the biblical revelation presupposes, then we have a basis for our language about God.” And this is what Caneday accuses Sanders of doing, preferring instead to claim that all Scripture is anthropomorphic and analogical in a sense that rules out any univocity of language about God.

If Swinburne and Sanders (and many others) are right that analogical predication requires that there also be some univocal predication, then the obvious question is which

43 Ibid., p. 72.
45 Ibid.
Biblical predicates to take as univocal. And I would suggest that any answer to that question must rely on an appeal to something beyond the Bible, which portrays God in so many, and not always obviously consistent, ways. Reason, experience, and tradition seem to me to be very good bases for attempting to answer this question; at any rate, some further basis other than Scripture must be found for doing theology. If *sola scriptura* says otherwise, then it is wrong. But it may well be that Evangelicals do not mean anything like the strong view that *only* Scripture may be appealed to in doing theology. Michael Horton writes:

Open theism claims to be biblical. But where Reformed theology recognizes Scripture alone as the source of theology, while experience, reason, and tradition are treated as significant influences, open theists adopt the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral, with Scripture as the first but not sole normative source.  

What precisely is the difference between these other aspects of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral being normative and being merely significant influences on how one interprets Scripture? I cannot say. My guess is that Protestants have always appealed to some degree to tradition, at least implicitly, even while explicitly acting as a needed corrective to that tradition. That tradition and the corrective are undoubtedly both grounded in Scripture, but not solely so grounded. Whether or not traditional theism is too much grounded in Platonic philosophy as many Openists have charged, it is certainly also grounded in the reason and experience of the initial Christians, and on subsequent rational reflection upon the Christian faith. It seems to me that so long as Openists continue to maintain that Scripture is a primary (perhaps even the primary) basis for theology, and so long as those who affirm *sola scriptura* qualify that view by appealing

to experience, reason, and tradition, as “significant influences” on their interpretation of Scripture, then both sides may well find common ground regarding the role of Scripture in theology.

There is another reason to be skeptical of this optimistic view, however. Stephen Wellum has argued that Openism “undermines… a strong epistemological grounding to our belief in and defense of the inerrancy of Scripture.” And it is plausible to assume that unless Scripture is inerrant, and perhaps also is at least rationally believed to be inerrant, then it is irrational to base theology on Scripture alone, whatever that means precisely. Wellum’s argument that Openism undermines the belief that Scripture is inerrant might be reconstructed as follows:

1. Assume that Openism is true.
2. The inerrancy of Scripture is based upon a concursive theory of inspiration, in which Scripture is the joint production of God and human authors in such a way that God’s intentions are fully but freely carried out.
3. It is extremely unlikely that Scripture is inerrant (From 1-2 and understanding of Openism)
4. If it is extremely unlikely that a text is inerrant, and there seem to be inconsistencies within that text, then it is irrational to believe that the text is inerrant.
5. There are passages of Scripture that seem to contradict each other.
6. Therefore, it is irrational to believe that Scripture is inerrant. (From 3-5)
7. Openism “undermines a strong epistemological grounding to our belief in and defense of the inerrancy of Scripture.” (From 1-6)

The key move in the argument is from 1 and 2 to three, on the grounds that if Openism is

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47 Wellum, “The Inerrancy of Scripture,” pp. 237-274. The quote is from p. 274.

48 I say that one might reconstruct Wellum’s argument in this manner. He does not formally present the argument, and relies on rhetorical questions to move from my 3. to his conclusion that Openism undermines any strong epistemological grounding for a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture. I have interpreted the thrust of his rhetorical questions (p. 263) as 4., but one might instead interpret Wellum as merely arguing that under the antecedent circumstances of 4., it is rational to believe that the text is not inerrant, and that this weaker principle is sufficient to conclude that any strong epistemological grounding is undermined.
true, there can be no guarantee that the human authors will reliably record what God intends. (The creation of the Canon is not discussed by Wellum, but might be used to strengthen the second premise.) If this is granted, then the rest of the argument is clearly valid, such that Openists could rationally maintain that Scripture is inerrant and that theology should be based on Scripture alone only if they adopted a theory of inspiration other than the concursive theory favored by Evangelicals.

Let us assume that there is adequate Biblical evidence that the human authors of many passages were free in writing what became canonized. This would rule out a dictation theory of inspiration according to which the human authors to whom God dictated could not refuse to faithfully render His Word.49 At any rate, Openists will appeal to such a theory as a last resort, preferring not to assume that God chose to reveal Himself in a way fundamentally at odds with the manner in which Openists believe He usually interacts with His human creatures. Are there then any alternatives that would allow Openists to maintain the inerrancy of Scripture? Wellum suggests, following Paul Feinberg, that

Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences.50

As a practical matter then, there are a number of factors that prevent us from knowing that we have rightly interpreted Scripture. We do not have the original autographs, do

49 Wellum suggests (p. 247) that we see I. Howard Marshall, Biblical Inspiration (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 32-33 for an argument that the dictation theory of inspiration is contrary to biblical evidence.

not know all the facts, and can only be sure that Scripture does not affirm certain things by ruling out (seemingly plausible) interpretations of them on the basis of knowledge that does not itself come from Scripture. Given that everyone denies the plain meaning of at least some Scriptures in favor of metaphorical interpretations (whether those Scriptures seem to teach that God predetermines those who will be saved, that He changes His mind, or that He is a rock), it seems possible that what many passages of Scripture affirm might not be what they initially seem to affirm. But if we admit this, then I believe that there is room for Openists to claim that the Bible is inerrant in the sense defined by Feinberg and Wellum.

Openists could, despite the lack of guarantee that human authors would faithfully render God’s Word, maintain that the move from 1 and 2 to three is invalid. Why should it be so extremely unlikely that the human authors would “cooperate” with God, Openists might ask. Might we not presume that God chose faithful and reliable persons to record His Word, persons such that it is extremely unlikely that they would intentionally misrepresent His will, despite their libertarian ability to do so? And might we not also presume that those who selected the Canon also were faithful people whom God could non-coercively guide? If so, then isn’t it at least fairly likely that the Bible accurately represents what God wanted it to? Unlike the course of history, in which distant events are quite unlikely even if the probability of intervening events is quite high but not certain, and in which God must work with many persons of varying degrees of discipleship, the writing of Scripture need have only relied on a few persons of good faith. Perhaps one might object that unless God somehow controlled the human authors’ writing, they would have been unable to represent the truths He intended them to. But if
we admit that the truth intended might lie hidden within a passage of Scripture rather than clearly stated on its face, then this problem is alleviated. And indeed, given the Scripture that we have, it certainly seems as if whatever truths are affirmed are not always affirmed baldly, and may well be hidden in or behind concepts that are culturally and humanly conditioned. Thus, it seems to me that there is room for Openists to maintain the inerrancy of Scripture, suitably understood, even in terms of Wellum’s definition.51

Let us summarize and reiterate what has been suggested above. First, if Scripture cannot be the only basis for theology, at least without the “significant influence” of the other bases of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, then Scripture does not straightforwardly suggest either Openism or a more traditional view of divine providence. Openists have generally proceeded appropriately by stopping short of claiming that Openism is required by Scripture alone.

Secondly, Openists may plausibly claim that advocacy of their view need not result in their denying the inerrancy of Scripture, suitably understood (though nothing I have said suggests that they need affirm inerrancy either). While their presuppositions certainly inform their reading of Scripture, it is necessary that something informs one’s hermeneutic, and Openists have generally been forthright about the other bases that they appeal to in interpreting Scripture in such a way that it suggests Openism, despite the accusations often leveled against them that their views are based primarily on the belief that if one simply “dehellenizes” the Christian tradition and returns to Scripture, it will clearly demonstrate the truth of Openism. William Hasker acknowledges the central role

51 But note that this may well include the denial that certain passages are true when interpreted to affirm what they prima facie seem to affirm.
that both philosophy and one’s personal religious experience plays in his advocacy of Openism. Clark Pinnock explicitly organizes *Most Moved Mover* in terms of the Wesleyan quadrilateral, and John Sanders is careful to present his work as a presentation of a model that he argues is consonant with tradition (primarily Scripture), conceptually intelligible, and adequate to the demands of life. On the other hand, we unfortunately (to my mind) find Pinnock claiming that “the Bible itself assumes libertarian freedom when it posits personal give-and-take relationships and when it holds people responsible for their actions.” It is only if one accepts the argument that moral responsibility requires libertarian freedom that the latter factor would suggest libertarian freedom, and it is only if one accepts that the passages of Scripture which seem to present personal give-and-take relationships are not to be explained away as anthopomorphisms that do not univocally represent God’s relationship to His creation that the former is evidence for libertarianism. Openists have generally done well in this respect, but should continue to strive to explicitly examine and point out those factors that influence their reading of Scripture.

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55 Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, p. 115. Sanders also at one point claims that “If the language of Scripture is taken seriously, then another view of freedom must be affirmed,” p. 221 of *The God Who Risks*. The other view of freedom that he has in mind is, of course, libertarianism. Two pages later, however, Sanders supports this claim by drawing upon that part of the theological tradition that has distinguished between formal (libertarian) and material (freedom from sin) freedom.

56 For a view that Scripture straightforwardly teaches a form of compatibilism rather than libertarian freedom, see Talbot, “True Freedom: The Liberty that Scripture Portrays as Worth Having,” in *Beyond the Bounds*, pp. 77-109.
As a general prognosis of the current debate between Openists and Evangelical Christians advocating a traditional view of God and His providence, I might suggest that it is only if they can find agreement on the role of Scripture in doing theology that real dialogue between them can occur. Evangelicals should recognize that in interpreting Scripture they already, at least implicitly, appeal to a tradition that was informed by reason and experience in its own interpretation of Scripture. And Openists should always be explicit that libertarian freedom is a necessary condition of their view that thus serves as a primary guide to their reading of Scripture (whether it is advocated as intrinsically valuable or, as is more common, as a necessary condition for God calling us to freely loving relationship with Him). Is there hope for real dialogue? I hope that the above has suggested that there is. Openists have gone to great lengths to defend their view as Biblical, and their opponents have put their efforts into rebutting the Biblical warrant for Openism. This work is fundamentally important and should continue. But if both sides also recognize that personal and corporate experience, tradition, and reason all play some role in their interpretation of Scripture, then perhaps the sides can begin to dialogue about the impact that beliefs based on these other bases/influences have on their hermeneutics, and greater clarity concerning where disagreements lie can be attained. This is a dialogue that I do not see productively underway in the literature thus far. There remain too many accusations that the other side is not aware of what influences their reading of Scripture, and not enough careful presentation of what influences one’s own reading, or consideration of whether and how common hermeneutical ground might be found.
4. Transcendence

I will end this chapter by considering what remains for me the chief reservation about Openism: whether God understood in terms of Openism is sufficiently transcendent, holy, and worthy of worship. I will introduce the concern with a lengthy quote from Freddoso.

In effect, then, the *via remotionis* constitutes an inquiry into the difference between Creator and creature. And within St. Thomas’s system a being capable of creating *ex nihilo* is ultimately characterized in two basic, and, as I have argued elsewhere, complementary ways, one stemming from the Aristotelian tradition (*Pure Actuality*) and the other stemming from the Platonic tradition (*Unparticipated Being*). Within their respective traditions, these are limiting notions which strain our cognitive and imaginative resources but which for that very reason provide us with a powerful characterization of the ontological abyss that divides the transcendent Creator of all things from the entities he creates. In the Thomistic system, then, there is no doubt about the utter “otherness,” incomprehensibility, and ineffability of the divine nature.

By contrast, even though the authors of *The Openness of God* affirm God’s transcendence, they have not as yet provided any correspondingly forceful metaphysical account of that transcendence. Unlike St. Thomas, they have given us no principled explanation of what sort of being is capable of creating *ex nihilo*, or of how such a being differs in its own nature from created beings.⁵⁷

As far as I know, Openists have been perfectly consistent in rejecting process theology and affirming both God’s transcendence, creation *ex nihilo* and the distinction between Creator and creation that follows upon that affirmation and that Robert Sokolowski has termed the “Christian Distinction.”⁵⁸ But the question is whether they can do justice to the “ontological abyss” that separates us from God, or whether, in the worst case, God as understood by Openism has become merely a “convenient God,” an idol created in our

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own image. Do Openists seek first the kingdom of God, or, to paraphrase a point made by David Burrell about liberal theology generally, does Openism instead seek first the intelligibility of the kingdom of God?  

At the end of his *The Coherence of Theism*, Richard Swinburne considers whether the conception of God that he has argued is coherent (or at least may rationally be affirmed to be coherent), a conception that accords well with the Openist conception, is also a conception of a being that is worthy of worship. This conception can be seen as an Openist answer to what sort of being is capable of creating *ex nihilo*: God is an eternally existing omnipresent spirit who is perfectly free, creator of the Universe, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and a source of moral obligation; and God is this essentially. Openists affirm the existence of God in many of the same terms that more traditional theists are likely to. Of course, they may disagree about the meaning of these terms; most obviously, omniscience is understood by Openists as not extending to knowledge of future contingents, omnipotence is understood not to extend to the ability to determine or bring about free actions, and eternal existence is understood as existence throughout all time. These ways of understanding the predicates applied to God are affirmed on the basis of arguments that this is the strongest sense in which these predicates can be coherently understood, given that we have libertarian freedom. Of  

59 The phrase is William Davis’s in “Why Open Theism is Flourishing Now,” in *Beyond the Bounds*, p. 114.  
61 Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, p. 291. Swinburne does not understand God’s essential nature and existence in terms of broadly logical necessity, but I believe that Openists can affirm that God necessarily exists and is essentially the being that He is as a matter of broadly logical necessity.
course, as in any area of philosophical theology, our arguments may ultimately be unsound for reasons that we cannot now fathom; but reason leads Openists to this conception of God, and so long as we are to affirm the relevance of both faith and reason, this is the conception of God that Openists must have.  

Is this conception of God worthy of worship? He is our “ultimate benefactor,” responsible for allowing the very conditions for our agency; He has “unequalled greatness and goodness,” and is uniquely independent of all other beings; He is Himself without explanation while being the ultimate explanation of all else; and He has redeemed us from our fallen sinfulness. Openists claim all these things. And yet, there may remain the suspicion that these affirmations are reduced in some sense by the fact that mystery has largely been left out of the explanation of these affirmations. Swinburne goes on to affirm that the God he has described fits the criteria for being “numinous,” as Rudolph Otto (in *The Idea of the Holy*) has described the quality which in addition to perfect goodness is sufficient for making a being holy. “A numinous being is one on whom we depend, something fearful, overpowering, vital, wholly other, and attractively fascinating.” But it might seem that God as traditionally conceived is “more numinous” than God as conceived by Openism. For it is undoubtedly true that when Swinburne affirms that God is “wholly other” because “he is a person of a kind very different from ourselves,” the difference in kind is not nearly as great as that between the God of

62 Sanders frequently reiterates the point that our discourse concerning God is limited to what we can coherently understand, whether or not God somehow transcends these limits. See *The God Who Risks*, pp. 34-37, 190-191, and 226.


64 Ibid., p. 303.
Thomism and ourselves. And when Swinburne introduces the idea of worship in terms of explicit respect, we may well wonder whether respect is a little too tame, suggesting a relationship with a dissertation advisor more than one with the Creator of heavens and earth, no matter how great the degree of respect. I believe that Openists must find a way to acknowledge God’s transcendence in such a way that their worshipful attitude is not reduced to an attitude of merely great respect.

I think that Michael Horton has almost captured the difference in how Openists and traditional theists understand God’s transcendence as Creator. He suggests that while Openists affirm the ontological distinction between Creator and creature, they do not recognize the epistemological boundary that prohibits univocal access to God’s being that has traditionally been motivated by the Christian distinction. Openists do recognize this epistemological boundary, but they recognize it very differently, and it is this difference that leads to their unwillingness to respect God’s transcendence in the way that Thomists, for instance, do. While Openists recognize that the Christian Distinction must be respected, and thus recognize that the possibility that God is utterly other can never be ruled out, they nevertheless have some doubt about “the utter “otherness,” incomprehensibility, and ineffability of the divine nature.” Openists believe that the Christian Distinction can be understood in such a way that God may not be wholly incomprehensible, they believe that God might be considerably more like us than the tradition has claimed, and they believe that rational discourse, at any rate, is limited to considerations of our experience within creation and God’s revelation to us in creation

Ibid.

which presupposes a shared context of discourse between God and ourselves. If God is wholly other, we cannot know it, and we cannot know Him. Since He has revealed Himself to us in Scripture, we may attempt to understand His relation to us as best we can, and have no more right to claim that we know Him to be ineffable than that we know that He is not. Thus, while Thomists respect the epistemological boundary Horton refers to by systematically constructing a metaphysic that emphasizes the ontological difference between Creator and creation, and thus rules out univocal knowledge of God, Openists respect this epistemological boundary by maintaining humility in their beliefs about God while affirming that as far as we can understand, God not only can but must reveal Himself univocally to us in certain respects if we are to understand anything about Him, and that this is exactly what it seems He has done in Scripture.

Openists have intentionally jettisoned much of the Thomistic metaphysic. In doing so, they no longer have available to them certain categories that many theologians have found helpful in gesturing towards the radical difference between God and ourselves. While Openists rightfully suggest that they cannot be expected to have as fully developed an apologetics or systematic theology as the traditional view, given the relative infancy of Openism, it seems to me that Openism is best understood as suspicious of importing mystery into philosophical theology. It seems to me unlikely that Openists will feel the need to attempt to incorporate a greater understanding of God’s transcendence, beyond what they see as implied by His role as Creator and Redeemer, into their systematic theology. Openists will find it sufficient to keep 1 Corinthians 13:12


Ibid., pp. 18-19.
firmly in mind and assume that beyond reaching a coherent understanding of God that allows us to faithfully relate to Him and seek His will, we may wait until God reveals Himself more fully to us to evaluate how closely our concepts have come to capturing God’s nature.

This does not mean, however, that Openists cannot give God’s transcendence its due. While their philosophical theology does little more than claim that “God is at least this much greater than us, and we can’t say more,” Openist theology explicitly allows for practically significant recognition of God’s mysterious transcendence within believers’ lives. Because God’s immanence is conceptually understandable rather than itself a transcendent mystery that must be gestured towards in terms of our having our being within God, and because God is understood to be listening to and conversing with us, there is room within prayer to experience God’s transcendence in His immanence. If God is beyond our comprehension in various ways, this transcendence can be felt in one’s interaction with God. God’s transcendence may be respected precisely by experiencing it rather than by attempting to understand it. The awareness of the mystery of God is allowed to flourish within Openism, whether in individual experiences or in reports of mystical encounters with God. But this mystery is left as a mystery, rather than attempting to bring it within a systematic theology. From an Openist perspective, it may well appear that the systematic understanding of God’s immanence allows us to better experience both God’s immanence and His transcendence: we can understand that which we might expect to understand based on God’s entering into a shared context with us – God’s immanence, and we do not try to understand that which we cannot – God’s transcendence.
5. Conclusion

I have considered in this chapter what I see to be some of the implications of affirming Openism with regard to certain topics. Openism is the natural theological model for one who finds compelling chapters 1-4 of this dissertation. But the considerations of this chapter should serve to emphasize a point with which I closed chapter four: acceptance of Openism may not rest only on one’s best philosophical reasoning, but also on more properly theological considerations. Those who find Openism initially plausible owe it to themselves and their fellow Christians to consider whether they can faithfully accept the Openist characterization of God’s purpose, the significantly lesser degree of control that He exercises within His creation, and the greater responsibility that falls upon us to work with Him in achieving His purpose. They must carefully read Scripture and answer the question: “how does the Spirit want us to read it?” Can passages that seem to suggest prophecy, foreknowledge, and predetermination be plausibly understood in such a way that they are consistent with Openism? How much agreement can Openists reach with more traditional Christians concerning hermeneutic principles? Those attracted to Openism must think through the apparent advantage of Openism in understanding prayer and responding to the problem of evil and make sure that the advantage is not merely apparent. And lastly, if God’s transcendence must be experienced immanently rather than systematically understood, then Openists must seek out God’s presence in prayer, expecting not only to strive with and be comforted by God, but also to experience something of His mysterious transcendent Holiness. Undoubtedly, this dissertation is not the last philosophical word upon the relationship of God to His creation, even for its author. But philosophers of
religion should never wait until they have answered all of their philosophical questions to their satisfaction before exploring other avenues to understanding in religion. For myself, these other avenues now invite greater attention, and perhaps will inform future philosophical reflection.
CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

In concluding this dissertation, I will do two things. I will retrace the contours of the argument I have advanced against the compatibility of the traditional understanding of divine providence with human libertarian freedom. And I will offer my own perspective on what I believe I have accomplished in this work.

The overarching goal of this dissertation was to argue that divine providence, understood in terms of meticulous sovereignty, is incompatible with human libertarian freedom. A passage from John Sanders quoted in the last chapter can serve to nicely remind the reader of what kind of argument I have given:

Because the arguments put forth are all situated in a contextual web of belief, those who do not share my larger web of belief are not likely to agree with my conclusions. Moreover, I make no claims of “proving” my case. This book is an attempt to offer what may be called a cumulative case in support of divine risk taking. It does not pretend to be the only model a Christian may be rationally justified in holding.¹

My exploration of the compatibility of human freedom and divine providence has been limited, such that it is appropriate to remind the reader that “the arguments put forth are all situated in a contextual web of belief.” I have been concerned with libertarian freedom and the traditional Christian understanding of providence as meticulous. This

notion of providence and the concern about its tension with human freedom is most appropriate to the Judeo-Christian context of religious belief with which I am most familiar, and which I assume in this dissertation. Taking libertarian freedom as a starting point means that I assume an understanding of freedom that is in the minority among contemporary analytic philosophers. Those who are not at all concerned to maintain one or the other of the terms that this dissertation suggests are incompatible need be concerned neither with their incompatibility nor with struggling to discern which term should be rejected given their incompatibility.

I have also assumed presentism, the view that only the present moment exists, throughout my discussion. I have done this for two reasons. First, I believe that all of the interlocutors with whom I have been in dialogue in this work clearly are or were presentists. Second, I believe that there are significant *prima facie* difficulties with maintaining libertarian freedom, at least as I have understood it in chapter one, if eternalism, the view that all times eternally exist, is true. To consider the compatibility of libertarian freedom and eternalism would be another dissertation-length project; here, I will merely point out that the assumption of presentism is another assumption that partially defines the “contextual web of belief” in which this dissertation is situated.

Like Sanders, I have offered arguments that rest on principles which others may rationally deny. Furthermore, I see no way to “get beneath” these principles with further arguments. Thus, I do not claim to have “proven” my conclusion such that readers could not rationally maintain the compatibility of libertarian freedom with a) prior truth, b) divine foreknowledge, or c) divine providence. Like Sanders, I see my argument as being a cumulative case, dependent on weighing the relative costs of the principles to
which I appeal vs. the implications of maintaining each of these compatibility theses. I have proceeded by explaining what I took to be the most plausible grounds for a rejection of each progressively stronger thesis. The arguments of each chapter for denying one of these compatibility theses may stand alone, dependent upon one or more particular principles discussed in that chapter. If one finds plausible the principles relied on by an earlier argument, one is more likely to accept a later argument, but I believe that the later principles (such as PBI) also have greater independent intuitive plausibility than the earlier ones (such as CCIA). Thus, one might agree with my conclusions regarding divine providence (specifically Molinism), without agreeing with my conclusions regarding foreknowledge and Ockhamism, or my conclusions about logical determinism.

I began this dissertation by explicating the view of libertarian freedom that I hold, which involves understanding one’s ability to do otherwise as constrained by the circumstances in which one acts, and which involves understanding these circumstances as including all truths that are true prior to one’s act. Thus, the following Aristotelian Constraining Circumstances Intuition is a necessary condition upon what it is within an agent’s power to do:

CCIA: What I am able to do must always be consistent with the circumstances in which I perform my action, where those circumstances are understood to include the maximal state of affairs obtaining at t-1, the moment immediately prior to t, plus all causation occurring at t other than A’s performing E.

I went on to suggest that given an understanding of libertarian freedom in which one’s ability to do otherwise is explicated in terms of CCIA, an argument for logical determinism from prior truth was sound. That argument was, where p represents any tenseless proposition:
1. p
2. p ∴ always p
3. always p ∴ no agent has it within her power to change the truth-value of p
4. ∴ no agent has it within her power to change the truth-value of p
5. ∴ ~◊ for an agent to bring about ~p once p is true
6. ∴ [ ] for an agent to bring about p once p is true

The move from 4. to 5. is valid so long as one accepts CCIA. Given that the circumstances in which one acts include p’s truth, and given that an action that would entail p’s falsity is inconsistent with these circumstances, one may not do otherwise than an action consistent with p’s truth. Thus, accepting both CCIA and the Principle of Bivalence leads to logical determinism. In order to maintain the strong view of freedom that I hold, PB must be denied.

Of course, not everyone will agree that libertarian freedom should be understood to require CCIA. Chapter two considered Ockhamism as providing a theory of how one might alternatively understand libertarian freedom in such a way that PB is maintained. After sketching the argument for logical determinism from past truth and the Ockhamist response to it, most of chapter two sought to bring Aristotelians and Ockhamists into dialogue over the grounding relation between propositional truth and the events or states of affairs that guarantee and explain these truths. I argued that Ockhamists might accept an Aristotelian understanding of this grounding relation, termed Presentist Grounding Intuition Plus, and that doing so would allow them to easily distinguish between propositions that are and are not necessary per accidens.

In chapter three, I initially applied the potential agreement over PGI+ to a consideration of whether divine foreknowledge is compatible with libertarian freedom. This application of PGI+ was inconclusive: Ockhamists might maintain the compatibility of our freedom with divine foreknowledge by asserting that propositions about divine
beliefs are not grounded by belief-states, as propositions about our beliefs plausibly are. I then directly considered what intuitions we might have about divine beliefs, and suggested that we should initially be inclined to apply the Personal Belief Intuition, that propositions about a person’s past beliefs should be understood to be necessary per accidens, to God as well as us. Even if one does not accept CCIA as a condition upon libertarian freedom, one might accept the applicability of PBI to propositions about God’s beliefs, and thus conclude, based on an argument from past truth, that divine foreknowledge (forebelief) is incompatible with human libertarian freedom. I went on to argue that, given our ability to conceive of various ways of understanding God’s knowledge as dissimilar to our own, the burden of proof should be on the Ockhamist to explain how God might know the future without His beliefs being subject to PBI.

Chapter four sought to explore the grounds one might have for rejecting middle knowledge, even if one accepts PB and views Ockhamism as a viable means of maintaining the compatibility of human freedom with divine foreknowledge. I argued that even if one accepted an account of grounding (PGI) that Aristotelians reject, and that is at least very similar to an account that contemporary Molinists have espoused, one might still believe that the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (CF→’s) upon which Molinism relies are not grounded, and thus neither true nor available to God’s knowledge. One might accept the Principle of Bivalence and believe that absolute future contingents are grounded according to PGI, and yet still deny the Principle of Conditional Bivalence [PCB: If A were true, then (B would be true or B would be false)], viewing many counterfactuals as insufficiently grounded and thus false. This denial of middle knowledge rests upon viewing the grounding relation as applicable not only to
propositional truth, but to states of affairs as well (a view discussed in appendix one). Thus, a \( \text{CF} \rightarrow \) is not sufficiently grounded by the mere fact that in the nearest possible antecedent world, an agent performs the act specified by the consequent, unless the state of affairs of this world’s being the most similar antecedent world is also guaranteed and explained. If no explanation for this state of affairs’ obtaining is available, then the fact that a relevant world is the most similar antecedent world is a brute fact that cannot ground the \( \text{CF} \rightarrow \) in question.

Having set out what I take to be the most plausible reasons for rejecting the compatibility of libertarian freedom with prior truth, foreknowledge, and providence, chapters five and six briefly discussed Thomism and Openism, the two main alternative views of the relationship between divine providence and human freedom that one might adopt if one rejects Molinism. These chapters outlined the views, and perhaps more importantly sought to identify issues that persons attracted to one or the other view would need to consider further before wholeheartedly advocating it.

Having written almost three hundred pages for this project, I think that it is important to spend a page or two discussing what I believe that I have accomplished in these three hundred pages. Given that I do not take myself to have proven that divine providence, divine foreknowledge, or prior truth are incompatible with human freedom, such that maintaining one or more of these compatibility theses would be irrational, what have I accomplished? Primarily, I believe that I have made clearer the reasons that persons with similar intuitions about the principles to which I appeal might deny that human libertarian freedom is compatible with prior truth, divine foreknowledge, or divine providence. I have tried to explain why I find plausible the principles that lead to these
claims of incompatibility, and I have traced the manner in which the principles that I find plausible lead to these claims. In doing so, I have also pointed out some of the implications of accepting the various compatibility theses. Thus, I believe that my dissertation can introduce those who have not already carefully examined its questions to what is at stake in affirming or denying the compatibility of our libertarian freedom with divine providence, foreknowledge, or prior truth.

In tracing what I take to be the fundamental outlines of the dispute about whether human libertarian freedom and the traditional understanding of divine providence are compatible, I have facilitated the task of weighing the relative costs associated with maintaining compatibility on the one hand, and with holding the principles that lead to a denial of that compatibility on the other. If I am right that disagreements on this topic rest on disagreements over the fundamental principles that I have identified, and that these disagreements are disagreements of fundamental intuitions, then philosophers concerned with this topic should turn their attention to continuing the project that I have begun of tracing the implications of accepting or denying these principles. Rather than seeking knock-down proofs that their view on Ockhamism or Molinism is correct, philosophers of religion should concern themselves with philosophical theology as they consider the theological implications of accepting or denying Ockhamism or Molinism. Chapters five and six may be seen as beginning to explore what is at stake in adopting a particular theology that denies these views, and I am pleased that contemporary Molinists have begun to explore some theological implications of their view.

Of course, it remains possible that additional work considering the principles that I rely on in this dissertation might result in arguments for or against them that I was
unable to discern. For instance, my reasons for denying Molinism rely on the idea that the grounding relation is one of guaranteeing and explaining. Further precisification of this relation and its immediate implications might make it easier for persons to consider whether or not they believe such a grounding relation is required. So this dissertation, even in pointing out what is at stake in advocating a particular view of the relationship between human freedom and truth, foreknowledge, or providence, does not succeed in fully pointing out what is at stake. Far from being a deficiency of the project, I believe that this is a characteristic that should be embraced in a dissertation. Until we grasp the Platonic Forms, or, what is more theologically tenable, attain the beatific vision, our exercise of reason should always be ongoing. The goal of philosophy, and especially of philosophy of religion, is not only the attainment of understanding, but also the seeking of it. It thus seems to me that in the life of one who proposes himself for membership in the ranks of professional philosophers of religion, the dissertation should be a propadeutic to a life of faith seeking understanding, rather than a demonstration of having already fully attained understanding, even in a circumscribed area. Of course, the propadeutic should promise some degree of success in attaining understanding as a result of one’s search. I trust that this project does so.
APPENDIX ONE:

CAN WE GROUND ALL PROPOSITIONS IN THE PRESENT?

In chapter two, I stated that there are “very real, possibly insurmountable, problems” with attempting to ground all propositions, or even all past-tense propositions, solely in the present.¹ What follows here is a discussion of those problems.

It might seem that there are not significant problems with grounding future-tense propositions that are causally necessary in the present, so long as one accepts a plausible assumption. This assumption is that the laws of nature are not subject to change. While laws of nature may have been different, the ones that do in fact obtain are not subject to change. I believe that this is a plausible assumption based on the intuition that, “whatever else a law may be, it is at least an exceptionless regularity.”² It may be that there are “gruesome” laws, but even these strange laws (such as a particular material appearing green until a particular time t, and thereafter appearing blue) will be without exception.³ Thus, we can infer from this assumption that if a law obtains at one moment, it obtains at all moments. If we use the term ‘physical necessity’ to refer to the necessity

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¹ See p. 53.


that laws of nature have, then we might say that a proposition may not become physically necessary after not having been so, or vice-versa.\textsuperscript{4} That is, lawhood is not time-relative.

Given the truth of the assumption that physical necessity is not time-dependent, causally necessary future-tense propositions may be grounded in the present by the obtaining of relevant laws of nature and the occurrence of an event or events that is/are the cause(s) of a future event. That is, where L represents an applicable law (or laws) of nature, Fe represents a future-tense proposition about an effect, and c represents a cause (or causes) of that effect, the following statement might capture the grounding relation for future-tense propositions that are causally necessary:

\[ Fe \text{ because } (L \& c). \]

The assumption that laws of nature are not time-dependent is clearly needed to ensure that the relevant L will continue to obtain, such that the occurrence of particular events now really will cause the relevant effect in the future. This assumption is also needed for the approach to grounding contingent past-tense propositions in the present that follows in the course of the next several pages.

Of course, the presentist must also explain how it is that we can help ourselves to the truth of relevant laws of nature – are these laws grounded in the present? How can an exceptionless regularity that makes claims about the past, present, and future be so grounded? If one is a theist, one might attempt to ground laws of nature in God’s present and unchanging will (one would need to argue that God’s will is in fact unchanging with regard to these laws), perhaps in terms of counterfactual intentions with regard to various

\textsuperscript{4} Of course it’s not clear that physical “necessity” is anything but a misnomer on this regularity account of natural laws unless the account is supplemented in some manner that explains the application of the modal term.
circumstances. If one is not a theist, perhaps one might claim that laws of nature express necessary aspects of the natural world. Either of these moves would allow one to claim that there was some type of necessity associated with laws of nature in more than name only. I think that such moves have some degree of initial plausibility; at any rate, if no such move is available to the presentist, then her difficulty is prima facie even greater.5

Suppose that we grant that some account of the grounding relation along roughly similar lines as those sketched above is available for future-tense propositions that are causally necessary. How might we go about attempting to ground past or future-tense contingents in the present? The short answer with regard to future-tense contingents is, I think, that we cannot. And I suggested at the end of chapter two that both Ockhamists and Aristotelians could accept such a conclusion, opting to believe either that future-tense contingents are true but not grounded, or are not yet true. Past-tense contingents seem more important, however. Even if one is of an Aristotelian bent, one presumably wants past-tense propositions to be true. And most such advocates of a correspondence theory of truth also want such truths to somehow be true in virtue of, or grounded by, their correspondence with the world, rather than their being true without there being any explanation for their truth. Of course, past-tense truths cannot correspond to the way the world is in anything like the way that present-tense propositions do. One might emphasize the intuitive notion of correspondence and suggest a view of the grounding relation like PGI discussed previously, whereby a past-tense proposition is indirectly grounded just in case its present-tense counterpart was grounded, and a future-tense

prposition is indirectly grounded just in case its present-tense counterpart will be grounded. PGI+ accepts this same intuitive notion of correspondence and indirect grounding, but claims that only FPZ is grounded by the nature of time, and that only past-tense contingent propositions may be thus indirectly grounded. But I am here concerned with the question of whether there are any plausible alternatives to PGI+ and PGI that do not indirectly ground past-tense propositions, but instead develop an account of the grounding relation between past-tense contingent truths and what is real.

What we might take from the above discussion of causally necessary future-tense propositions is that what the presentist must find are events or states of affairs occurring or obtaining in the present that (at least) guarantee the truth of the contingent proposition in question. For causally necessary propositions, a presently occurring event or events in conjunction with presently obtaining states of affairs guaranteed the truth of the causally necessitated propositions. What we need to find is something in the present that similarly guarantees the truth of past-tense contingent propositions.

Where a presently occurring event is such that it could only have come about by a particular causal process, a similar account to the one given for causally necessary future-tense propositions might be given here for past-tense propositions about contingent events. That is, a past-tense proposition might now be grounded in virtue of the present occurrence of an event that could only have been brought about by a causal chain involving the event described by the past-tense proposition, in conjunction with various laws of nature that also obtain presently. This might be schematized as follows, where Pc represents a past-tense proposition about a cause, e an effect of that cause, and L is as above:
Pc because (L & e).

Of course, if one thinks of events as repeatable states of affairs, then there will be few if any events that are such that they could only have come about as the result of a particular causal chain. And even if one understands events as structured particulars, perhaps as particular entities exemplifying particular properties at particular times, it does not seem that such events will generally be such that they could have come about only via one particular causal process, though perhaps there will be somewhat more candidates on this view than on the previous one for being grounded in the way sketched above.

If, however, one thinks of events as particular entities individuated by their causes, then presently occurring events are sufficient in and of themselves to guarantee the truth of past-tense propositions about their causes. For instance, if one accepts John Martin Fischer’s “essentialist principle of event individuation,” according to which “x is the same particular event as y if and only if x and y have the same causes,” then each presently occurring event had unique causes in the past. Thus, it might initially seem that all past-tense contingent propositions might be presently grounded by the present occurrence of an event, where that event is individuated by its causes. That is, perhaps

Pc because e,

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7 I mentioned this principle near the beginning of chapter one. See John Martin Fischer, “Responsibility and Control,” Journal of Philosophy 89 (1982), p. 29. For a stronger view of event individuation, according to which events are the same if and only if they have both the same causes and the same effects, see Donald Davidson, Essays on Actions and Events, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
where e is individuated in terms of the cause described by c being a part of e’s causal history, might be an appropriate grounding relation for those who wish to ground past-tense contingents wholly in the present.

There is a significant type of problem with this view, however. We might loosely call this problem the ‘no causal history problem’. We can approach this problem through a consideration of events that occur just prior to a free action by an agent. Given the assumptions that the universe is not fully deterministic, that causality is deterministic, and that actions by persons are the primary locus of the indeterminism in the universe, there must be causal chains that dead-end just prior to free actions. For instance, perhaps there is a causal chain that brings about a particular belief on the part of a person. And perhaps this belief plays a role in the agent’s decision to undertake some action, though it is not of course causally sufficient for that undertaking, even in conjunction with the rest of the obtaining states of affairs and occurring events at that time. It might seem that a past-tense proposition about this belief could not be grounded by a presently occurring event for the simple reason that it seems that this belief might not be a part of the causal history of any presently occurring event.

While I suppose that such a case might occur, and while I believe that the problem of there being events in the past that are not part of the causal history of any current events is a real one, it is important to note that such a case is not likely to be common. For in a complex world such as this one, each occurrence of an event is likely to play a part in effecting myriad other occurrences of events. In the words of David Lewis, “Extreme overdetermination of earlier affairs by later ones, on the other hand, may well
be more or less universal at a world like ours.\textsuperscript{8} While Lewis is assuming that a world like ours is completely deterministic, the point is applicable (to a slightly lesser extent) even if there are undetermined free actions, as I am assuming. Specifically, the belief that occurred just prior to a free decision is likely to have caused effects that did lead to the occurrence of events in the present. For instance, if beliefs are related in some way to neurological activity, then whatever neurological activity was associated with the belief in question seems likely to have caused some type of further neurological activity that lead to the occurrence of neurological events in the present.

It might be objected that in order for beliefs not to causally determine an undertaking, there must be a causal gap in the neurological activity associated with the belief and decision-making process. Whether or not such a gap would constitute a complete break such that the neurological activity associated with the belief would not have instigated causal sequences extending into the present is not a question with regard to which I am qualified to make even an educated guess. But I need not attempt to consider this question, for another response is available for grounding many propositions about events that do not initiate causal sequences that extend into the present.

We have been considering a case in which it is assumed that there is an event, call it $e$, that occurred at some time in the past and that did not play a role in initiating any causal series that reach the present. But this past occurrence of $e$ was itself a product of a causal series, we may assume. And so long as that series may be traced back to another event, call it $c$, which in addition to playing a role in initiating the causal series that reached $e$, also played a role in initiating a causal series that reaches the present, we

\textsuperscript{8} Lewis, “Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow,” p. 474.
might still claim that a past-tense proposition about e is currently grounded by presently occurring events and presently obtaining states of affairs. In this case, the presently occurring event will be the effect resulting from the causal series, initiated by c, that did reach the present, and the presently occurring states of affairs will include not only laws of nature sufficient for grounding c, but also any additional laws of nature needed to guarantee, given the occurrence of c, the subsequent occurrence of e, the event whose effects did not reach the present. In other words, a past-tense proposition about an event’s past occurrence at \( t_m \) whose effects do not reach the present may in general be grounded if there is a grounded truth about a prior occurrence of an event at \( t_{m<n} \) whose occurrence (in conjunction with relevant laws of nature) is sufficient for guaranteeing the occurrence of the event at \( t_n \). Of course, if more than one event had to have occurred at \( t_{m<n} \) then the account will be slightly more complicated; but I think that this type of solution may be viable for almost all cases.

The account of grounding just given will not be viable, however, for any cases in which one cannot work one’s way back behind (so to speak) the event in question whose effects do not reach the present. For instance in the most extreme case, it might be that all of the causal series are blocked by the intervention of some agent (God, or some being similarly powerful, is obviously the most likely candidate). Given the assumption that free agents may impede causal series, this seems possible. Although we are assuming that the laws of nature remain in effect, it seems possible that God might annihilate the entire physical universe and begin its creation again from scratch. Perhaps this act of annihilation might have some effect upon God’s state of mind. But since we are assuming that God is a free agent, whatever effect the annihilation had upon Him need
not, perhaps cannot, play a role in initiating a causal series that extends to God’s subsequent free re-creation of the physical universe. Thus, it seems possible that there could be a complete break between a given time in the past and the present moment, such that no causal series extend from that past time to the present. And in such a case, I can see no way of grounding truths about the events that occurred prior to this break in the present along the lines that have been considered thus far.

I thus conclude that an account of the grounding relation that grounds contingent past-tense propositions in presently occurring events and presently occurring states of affairs that somehow guarantee that the past occurrence of the event described by the proposition in question did in fact occur cannot be adapted for all contingent past-tense propositions and all possible ways that our world might have been. We will have to search for some other means of grounding past-tense propositions in the present, if we want our account to be generally applicable regardless of whether our world is one in which all causal series were annihilated in the past.

Let me suggest an account that does not work for several reasons, in order to then discuss a related account that might plausibly address the objections considered in response to this easily dismissed account. The severally objectionable account is based on our knowledge of past events. It might seem that for a given past-tense contingent proposition, our knowledge of the fact that the present-tense counterpart of that proposition was grounded might serve to guarantee that fact. That is, one might suggest that the following appropriately captures the grounding relation for past-tense contingent truths, where A represents an agent, \( z \) a present-tense nonconditional contingent
proposition, and P and G represent past-tense and grounding operators introduced in chapter two:

\[ P_z \text{ because A knows that } P(G_z). \]

This account attempts to avoid appealing to the indirect grounding of PGI and PGI+ by citing the present obtaining of a knowledge-state as the ground for the truth of \( P_z \).

The reason that this grounding relation is put in terms of A’s knowledge of \( P(G_z) \), rather than A’s knowledge of \( P_z \), is that while a presently obtaining state of affairs should at least guarantee the truth of \( P_z \) in order to ground it, it arguably should also serve to explain that proposition’s truth. The kind of explanation that remains the present-tense paradigm for the grounding relation is that of pointing out a correspondence between the way the world is and the way the proposition describes the way the world is. Both PGI and PGI+ try to indirectly draw on this kind of correspondence relation. The above knowledge-account also attempts to draw upon this paradigm of the grounding relation, by pointing out a state of knowing \( \text{that} \) the present-tense counterpart of the past-tense truth in question was grounded. This knowledge-state is more explanatory of why \( P_z \) is true than A’s \( \text{knowing that} \ P_z \) would be, in that it points to the past occurrence of this paradigm grounding relation.

One might wish to reject a knowledge-account of grounding such as this out of hand if one feels strongly that knowledge should be grounded in truth, not vice-versa. One might well insist that there is a kind of logical or explanatory order to events or states of affairs, truth, and knowledge: events occur or states of affairs obtain; propositional truth depends on the occurrence and obtaining of events and states of affairs; and finally, one may have knowledge of truths if one’s beliefs correspond to these
truths. To attempt to explain truths in terms of knowledge is simply backwards. While truths must be grounded in some manner in events or states of affairs, states of affairs about agents knowing truths are not the right kind of states of affairs to ground truths, for knowledge is itself a relation between a belief-state and the truth believed. That is, knowledge is always itself grounded in the truth known.

It might seem that the way in which knowledge is grounded in the truth known and the way in which the truth of $P_z$ is grounded in $A$’s knowing that $P(Gz)$ appeal to different types of grounding. Thus far we have been discussing what grounds, that is guarantees and explains, a proposition’s truth. But $A$’s knowing that $P(Gz)$ isn’t a proposition; it’s a state of affairs. When we ask what grounds the obtaining of a state of affairs, it does not seem that we are asking for anything like the correspondence relation that serves as the paradigm for the grounding relation between propositions and states of affairs or events. Rather, we are asking for a sufficient reason or causal explanation for that state of affairs obtaining. It is in this sense of grounding that part of the explanation for why $A$’s knowing that $P(Gz)$ obtains will include that $P(Gz)$ is in fact a true proposition.

There may well be a univocal sense of grounding common to both of these, however. When I first started discussing grounding in chapter two, I suggested that the correspondence relation was a special case of the grounding relation, itself a relation in which what is grounded is guaranteed and explained by what serves as grounds. It seems that whether we are asking for the ground of a proposition or of a state of affairs, we could say that we are asking for an account of what guarantees and explains that which is to be grounded. We have a special name (correspondence) for the paradigmatic
grounding relationship between propositions and states of affairs or events, but the 
question of what grounds a state of affairs is just as genuinely an appeal for sufficient 
explanatory conditions. The correspondence relation is simply a special case of 
providing sufficient explanatory conditions. It is only if one rejects the idea that the 
grounding relation requires an explanation as well as a guarantee of what is grounded that 
the notions of grounding the truth of a proposition and grounding the obtaining of a state 
of affairs might pull apart. That is, it is only if one does not view the correspondence 
relation as explanatory that one might think that grounding a proposition does not require 
a sufficient explanation in a similar manner to that in which grounding a state of affairs 
would require a sufficient explanation.

The explanatory aspect is essential to the kind of grounding relationship that I 
have in mind, and it does seem to me that the paradigm for grounding propositional truth 
is genuinely explanatory. It seems to me that if one thinks that truths require grounding, 
rather than accepting their brute facticity, then one has in mind the question: why is \( p \) 
true? And it seems to me that this question, as well as answers involving “because” such 
as PGI, PGI+, and the accounts described thus far in this appendix, can only be 
understood in terms of the demand for, and attempt to give, some sort of explanation for 
the truth in question. In the case of propositional truth, the “sort” of explanation will 
paradigmatically be that of pointing out that a relevant state of affairs obtains such that 
we can just “see” that the proposition in question must be true, in that it corresponds to 
this state of affairs. Why is \emph{the cat is on the mat} true? Just look there – the cat \emph{is} on the 
mat; the state of affairs \emph{the cat’s being on the mat} obtains. But I see no impediment to 
claiming that the question: why does \( s \) obtain, where \( s \) is a state of affairs, seeks a similar
explanation, though the “because” answer will no longer be in terms of correspondence. The notion of grounding involved, I think, is still in the important respects the same: to guarantee and explain.

Thus, one might well reject the idea that A’s knowing that P(Gz) might plausibly ground Pz, because one might feel that in the order of logical or explanatory priority sketched above, this account is appealing in the wrong direction, seeking to ground truth in knowledge when knowledge should be grounded in truth.

In addition to the intuitive logical priority reasons for rejecting this knowledge account of grounding, one might also readily note that the circumstances under which this account would not apply to various past-tense truths are much easier to imagine than the circumstances that were problematic for the causal history account given above. For on this knowledge account of grounding, if no one knows that the present-tense counterpart of a particular past-tense proposition was grounded, then the past-tense proposition is not now grounded.

There is also a more technical problem with this knowledge account of grounding, related to the logical ordering of events or states of affairs, truth, and knowledge. Assume that

\[ Pz \text{ because } A \text{ knows that } P(Gz). \]

Corresponding to A’s knowing that \( P(Gz) \) is a proposition that might be represented by \( K[P(Gz)] \). Won’t this also be a truth that requires grounding? And on the assumption that knowledge is to some degree based on truth, won’t this proposition be at least in part grounded by \( P(Gz) \)? What then, is \( P(Gz) \) grounded by? Presumably, given the knowledge account,
P(Gz) because A knows that [P(Gz)]

Corresponding to this state of affairs is the proposition K[P(Gz)], which must also be grounded. And the same line of reasoning will result in more and more complicated propositions that one is required to know in order for the original proposition, Pz, to be grounded.

The essential point that leads to this regress is that for a proposition such as K[P(Gz)], the most likely states of affairs that would serve to ground this proposition are A’s believing that P(Gz) in conjunction with P(Gz)’s being true. The reason for this is related to the order of explanatory priority between events or states of affairs, truths, and knowledge. If one agrees that knowledge is dependent upon truth, then one can explain why it is unacceptable to simply say that A’s knowing that P(Gz) obtains, in the same way as one might say that the cat’s being on the mat obtains. The reason is that there is arguably no such thing as a knowledge-state that can be understood apart from the truth known. Rather, a knowledge-state just is the correspondence of a belief-state with the truth of the proposition believed. Thus, K[P(Gz)] cannot simply be grounded in the seemingly relevant state of affairs, A’s knowing that P(Gz). Rather, it must be grounded in the conjunctive state of affairs A’s believing that P(Gz) and P(Gz)’s being true. Thus, the state of affairs that it is suggested might serve to ground Pz is really a conjunctive state of affairs involving the truth known, P(Gz). That truth known in turn requires grounding, and the infinite regress arises. Alternatively, one might claim that there are such things as knowledge-states, but that they in turn require grounding, plausibly in terms of belief-states and propositions being true. This too, would lead to the regress.
If one accepts that the regress outlined above arises from the knowledge account of grounding, one might respond by suggesting that these more complicated iterated propositions are really the same proposition. Besides seeming implausible, however, this response would not help, for then we would be saying that a particular proposition, \( K[P(Gz)] \), is grounded in itself, \( K(P[G(Gz)]) \). If one does not attempt this implausible move, then one is left claiming that in order for a particular past-tense contingent proposition to be presently grounded, one must know an infinite series of propositions. Perhaps one might claim that this is possible in a theoretical manner since the structure of the propositions one must know involves repeated iterations – one might perhaps know both that \( P(Gz) \) and that if \( P(Gz) \) is true, then \( P[G(Gz)] \), \( P[G[G(Gz)]] \), etc. are all true as well. Even granting this claim, however, it would seem that this account has fallen prey to a vicious infinite regress. The knowledge account of grounding should thus strike the reader as quite implausible.

Despite the implausibility of grounding past-tense contingent truths in our present knowledge, however, theists might suggest that there is greater plausibility in grounding such truths in God’s present knowledge. That is, perhaps,

\[ Pz \] because God knows that \( P(Gz) \).

This would presumably readily remove the second objection I mentioned, that there might be past-tense propositions that are not known, and are thus not grounded. And the idea of God’s knowledge grounding truth is perhaps not nearly so initially strange as the idea of our knowledge doing so. Of course, the initially greater degree of plausibility for such a claim would need to be subjected to further consideration based on accounting for exactly how God’s knowledge is supposed to ground truths. For instance, one might
think that this notion makes the most sense if God’s knowledge is thought of as creative or practical rather than primarily speculative, but then the question of whether the truths He knows could be contingent might require further consideration. That is, for instance, it might seem that the free choice required for libertarian freedom is inconsistent with God’s knowledge of our choice, where that knowledge is in some sense creative of that very choice.\(^9\) If, on the other hand, God’s beliefs are primarily speculative, then one might still have concerns about logical priority with the idea that the speculative knowledge of any agent should serve to ground truth. For doesn’t such knowledge analytically involve belief plus the truth of what is believed? And doesn’t that mean that knowledge is always in part guaranteed and explained by the truth of what is known?

Of course, there is also the vicious regress problem. If God’s knowledge, like ours, is primarily speculative, such that the most plausible candidates for grounding a proposition about God’s knowledge of a past event are His belief state in conjunction with the truth of the proposition known, the vicious regress problem discussed above would seem to apply to this account of grounding no less than the prior one. Perhaps it is slightly more plausible to claim that God might know an infinity of iterated propositions, but I think that this account of grounding is likely to remain unpalatable to many theists if the regress remains.

One might suggest, however, that the vicious regress problem need not arise, for while it might seem that the most plausible candidates for what grounds propositions about our knowledge are our belief-states in conjunction with the truths known, perhaps

\(^9\) This claim will be discussed further in chapter 5, a chapter on the Thomistic understanding of the relationship between divine providence and human freedom.
the latter can be dropped when it is propositions about God’s knowledge that we are talking about. Perhaps such propositions are simply grounded in His knowledge-state. Perhaps there being knowledge-states rather than only belief-states in conjunction with truths believed, or there being knowledge-states that do not themselves require further grounding, makes sense when we’re talking about God. Perhaps this suggestion is made plausible by the fact that God’s beliefs entail the truth of what is believed no less than His knowledge does. True, the truth of what is known is a necessary condition upon the truth of a proposition about God’s knowledge, but it is not needed to guarantee the truth of this proposition – God’s knowledge-state is sufficient.

If one accepts this response, then the God’s knowledge account of grounding may well be viable. However, it seems to me that so long as we assume that God’s knowledge is similar to ours in being speculative – in according with the truth known rather than being creative of the truth known – then knowledge simply means at least true belief. There may not be any mental state that can rightly be labeled a knowledge-state; perhaps all there ever is is a belief-state, where the belief is true. At the very least, if there are knowledge-states, they in turn must be grounded – guaranteed and explained in terms of belief-states in conjunction with the truth known. Knowledge is a relation between a belief-state and truth. Perhaps there are necessary conditions upon that relationship for human knowledge that do not apply to divine knowledge, but unless God’s knowledge is not like ours in according with the truth, I cannot understand how His knowledge would not involve a relationship between His mental belief-state and the truth. So long as His knowledge is to be understood as involving this relationship, God’s knowing that \( P(G_z) \) must still be grounded in God’s believing that \( P(G_z) \) and \( P(G_z)’s \ being \ true \). The
proposition \( K[P(Gz)] \) will not be grounded merely in virtue of God’s knowledge-state, for if this concept is not simply ill-formed, it requires grounding in the case of God just as it does in our case, so long as God’s knowledge, like ours, is speculative. Rather, \( K[P(Gz)] \) will be grounded not only in terms of God’s belief-state that \( P(Gz) \), but also in the truth of what is believed. This means that \( P(Gz) \) requires grounding, and if we attempt to ground it in *God’s knowing that \( P[G(Gz)] \),* there will be the corresponding proposition \( K(P[G(Gz)]) \), and the regress is begun.

The vicious infinite regress that arguably arises for the knowledge account of grounding is due to the fact that it seems that propositions about knowledge must to some degree be grounded in the truths known, and yet the account claims that truth is grounded in present knowledge. But beliefs are not necessarily grounded in truth, and yet God’s beliefs presumably still guarantee the truth of what is believed. A theist might then suggest that the following account might adequately capture the relevant grounding relation:

\[ Pz \text{ because God believes } P(Gz). \]

(Perhaps one could also ground future-tense contingents in God’s beliefs, but I will continue to restrict my discussion to past-tense propositions.)

If we assume that the vicious regress problem does arise for an account of grounding based on God’s present knowledge, then the chief problem with the suggestion that God’s beliefs might serve to ground past-tense contingent truths is, it seems to me, that this suggestion is “tricky.” (Of course, the fact that in expressing what I see as the chief objection I resort to an imprecise pejorative term might suggest to some that this won’t be much of an objection at all.) Given that God’s beliefs are logically equivalent
to God’s knowings, why should an account of the former not be rejected if an account based on the latter is? I mentioned above that more work would have to be done in explicating how it is that God’s knowledge might serve to ground truth – an account of what God’s knowledge is would have to be given. But whatever account is given, it seems to me that God’s beliefs would be explained in a similar manner to His knowledge. Either they are somehow creative of the truth, or they accord with the truth. If propositions about God’s knowledge are in part grounded in the truth of the propositions known, then shouldn’t propositions about God’s beliefs also be so grounded, and also engender the vicious infinite regress discussed above?

Of course, it doesn’t seem that this need be the case. While it is plausibly true that even God’s knowledge involves a belief-state according with the truth believed such that that truth plays some part in grounding the proposition about God’s knowledge, surely all that is needed to ground a proposition about a particular divine belief is a relevant divine belief-state. That is, surely God’s believing that P(Gz) sufficiently grounds the corresponding proposition, B[P(Gz)]. If God’s belief that the present-tense counterpart of a past-tense proposition was grounded is in fact sufficient to guarantee that past-tense proposition, then what more need we ask? I think that one might well not ask anything further, and that thus the God’s-beliefs account of grounding may be available to many theists. The only further question that I would like to suggest that we might ask is this: are truths true because God believes (knows) them, or does God believe (know) truths because they are true? Here we are asking whether the order of logical priority between truth and knowledge discussed above also applies to divine beliefs. Human beliefs are obviously not necessarily grounded in or dependent upon the truths believed.
But surely God’s beliefs will be grounded in truths to the same extent that His knowledge is – talking about God’s beliefs and God’s knowledge are slightly different subjects than talking about beliefs and knowledge generally. If God’s beliefs (knowledge) are in some sense based upon truths, then the intuitive order-of-priority concern mentioned above, that knowledge should be based on truth rather than vice-versa, will apply equally to God’s beliefs. One might well reject the God’s-beliefs account of grounding on this basis.

This kind of concern could be labeled with another imprecise pejorative term by saying that the God’s-belief account of grounding is “mysterious.” Suppose that we allow that beliefs, unlike knowledge, are not in any way grounded in truths. And suppose that we assume that this remains the case for God while also helping ourselves to the notion needed for our God’s-beliefs account of grounding – that God’s beliefs guarantee the relevant truths. We are thus helping ourselves to one difference between our beliefs and God’s beliefs (the infallibility of the latter) while ignoring the likelihood that another difference must accompany it (having to do with the very nature of God’s beliefs – a difference that explains how or why they are infallible, such as that they are grounded in truth in the same way as His knowledge).\(^{10}\) If this is the account we offer, than we are committed to an account of the grounding relation that is fundamentally mysterious in its adopted ignorance of this tension. But I have suggested throughout this appendix that any account of what it is that grounds a proposition’s truth (or the obtaining of a state of affairs) should in some sense explain why that proposition is true (or why the state of

\(^{10}\) This way in which knowledge is grounded in truth may itself be quite mysterious. This topic will receive further discussion in the next chapter.
affairs obtains). Any account of the grounding relation that is as fundamentally mysterious as the God’s-beliefs account remains unsatisfactory to me.

While I think that I have shown points at which theists might set aside the concerns that I have raised about either the God’s-knowledge or the God’s-beliefs accounts of grounding and adopt one of these accounts as providing a means of grounding all other-than-present-tense truths in the present, I personally find these concerns sufficiently troubling to judge that these accounts would at least require further consideration of divine knowledge and beliefs, and may well be a dead end.

I will suggest just one further possibility for attempting to ground past-tense contingent truths in the present, a suggestion that perhaps deserves further consideration than that given it here.11 Perhaps one might appeal to properties presently had by currently existing things - events for instance. Let us assume that events, like propositions, necessarily exist, and thus exist at all times.12 Just as tensed propositions may at some times have the property of being true and at others the property of being false, events may at some times have the property of occurring, at others the property of having occurred, and perhaps at other times the property of being such that they will occur. The suggestion then, is that past-tense contingent truths might be presently grounded by an event’s having the property of having occurred, where the event in question is the one described by the past-tense proposition.

11 For a careful development of this suggestion, see Thomas Crisp, “Presentism and Grounding,” unpublished. Also see John Bigelow, “Presentism and Properties,” Philosophical Perspectives 10, pp. 35-52. My concern with this type of account of grounding is, I think, closely related to Theodore Sider’s concern that such an account is guilty of “ontological cheating” in its appeal to “irreducibly hypothetical” properties. See his Four Dimensionalism, pp. 39-41.

12 Please note that this is a different conception of events than the one I suggested earlier, in which the causal genesis of an event is essential to it.
This suggestion does not seem particularly compelling to me, and the reason for this has to do again with the idea that a grounding relation should provide a sufficient explanation for the truth of a proposition. Pointing to the correspondence of the way the world is to the way a proposition describes the way the world is provides such an explanation of truth. Arguably, metaphorically pointing to a prior correspondence between a present-tense proposition and the world, while recognizing the nature of time, also explains the truth of a corresponding past-tense truth, though less directly than in the present-tense paradigm. But it seems to me that pointing to a presently obtaining state of affairs such as the event (z)’s having the property of having previously occurred, like pointing to a knowledge-state, does not provide a satisfactory explanation of Pz. Rather, all states of affairs involving events or other things having tensed properties themselves require further grounding, just as A’s knowing that P(Gz) requires further grounding. And the only grounding available for contingently having such properties will be an indirect account of grounding such as PGI+. Thus, this suggestion will not succeed in grounding contingent past-tensed propositions solely in the present.

The difference between grounding the truth of a past-tense contingent proposition in an event where the event is individuated by its causal history (discussed approvingly above) and grounding the truth of a past-tense contingent proposition in an event’s presently having the property of having occurred (rejected in the previous paragraph) should perhaps be pointed out. In the former case, the grounding is done by the event itself, and the truth is explained by the essential nature of the event. In the latter case, the grounding is supposed to be done by a contingent property that the event has. At some level, we must no longer seek for a further explanation of a fact assumed to be true, and
the essential nature of a thing seems a plausible candidate for being at that level. In contrast, to ground a proposition’s having a contingent property in an event’s having a contingent property seems to me to beg for further explanation of how it is that the event has this property.

I have considered several means by which one might attempt to ground past-tense contingent truths in the present, and have found none of them to be fully satisfactory. Perhaps there are other accounts available, or perhaps an account could be developed along one of the lines suggested above. But it seems to me that there is good reason to be skeptical of the plausibility of grounding all past-tense contingent truths in the present. Thus, the indirect account of grounding offered by PGI and PGI+ seems to me to be the best that we can hope for.
APPENDIX TWO:

MODELING MOLINISM

I have relegated these next several pages to an appendix for two reasons. First, I do not think that there is anything importantly new in them; rather, I attempt to revisit the same points that I made in chapter four with the help of some informal models. Secondly, while I personally find it helpful to “see” the lack of grounding and the implications of accepting Molinism represented below, models may be more or less intuitively helpful to different persons. Thus, if the reader finds herself more rather than less perplexed about the points revisited here, she may simply skip this appendix. One of the reasons that this section may be difficult to easily follow is that the informal models that I use suggest a temporal ordering that is not appropriate for the merely logical ordering of moments in the Molinist account of creation. Thus, one must in reading this section almost constantly remind oneself of what these logical moments really amount to. The only new material presented here is a short discussion of the Molinist notion of logical priority, based on Tom Flint’s discussion in Divine Providence.

Let us assume in the light of chapter four that one might deny Molinism without denying Ockhamism, deny the truth of at least some kinds of CF→’s without denying it of AFC’s, deny middle knowledge without denying foreknowledge, and deny PCB without denying PB. In this section, I would like to more explicitly consider how we
might informally model the Molinist creation situation, and suggest that the most plausible picture of that situation further highlights the grounding objection.

It is common (and intuitively satisfying) to use a branching paths model of possible worlds to represent free decisions.¹ In such a model, the past may be represented as a straight line, and the various free choices open to an agent at a particular time may be represented as branching lines diverging from that time. Of course, this concept can be extended so that diverging branching paths may be used to represent contingent futures other than those that result from free choices. And we might even extend this informal picture in such a way that all contingencies are represented by branching paths, even if the points from which these branches diverge represent merely logical “moments,” rather than temporal ones. Such a model would have an initial segment representing only those truths and beings that are broadly logically necessary – the maximal broadly logically necessary state of affairs. If we speak analogically, we might say that this segment of the model represents an initial “logical moment” that “contains” God, necessarily existing abstract objects, and whatever truths are broadly logically necessary.² Clearly this “moment” can only be logical: at the first temporal moment, presumably there would have to be many other contingent truths about what exists, for instance, such as whether or not there are horses. This initial logical moment is meant to explicitly prescind from any claims, explicit or implied, about contingent


² If we were to attempt to give a definition of what it is for a logical moment to “contain” truths or beings, we might say that if this moment, i.e. state of affairs, were actual, then propositions contained in this moment would be true, and beings contained in this moment would exist. Of course, the initial logical moment is meant to be such that it necessarily is actual.
matters of fact, precisely because it is meant to be a moment logically prior to any determination of contingent matters of fact.

This may be an opportune time to discuss the Molinist notions of logical priority and of pre- and post-volitional knowledge, notions that play a central role in explicating the creation situation in which God finds Himself. Molina himself is not very helpful in explicating these notions. He speaks of a “priority in our way of conceiving it, with a basis in reality,” and goes on to claim that there is not actually an instant “of either nature or time” corresponding to the “moments” in which the creation situation is explicated.\(^3\) Molina also explicitly denies that there is ever “in reality a moment at which God’s knowledge is \textit{natural} without simultaneously having the added character of being \textit{free knowledge}.”\(^4\) These assertions might lead one to wonder in what sense this logical priority has a basis in reality rather than merely being a priority in our way of conceiving it. Freddoso notes in his introduction that Molina “claims repeatedly that such an ordering has a basis in reality,” but cites only the passage from which the above quotations are taken, and does not himself attempt to explicate this notion.\(^5\)

There must be a basis in reality for the Molinist notion of logical priority if Molinism is to provide a philosophical solution to the question of how divine providence and human freedom are compatible. If there is no such basis in reality, then Molinism can at best be seen as a hypothetical suggestion about how providence and freedom might have been compatible, if creation had taken place in the way Molinism explains. But


\(^4\) Ibid., p. 212.

strictly speaking, given a denial that the central notion of logical priority and the related concepts of pre- and post-volitional knowledge have a basis in reality, Molinists would have to admit that the mystery of the compatibility of divine providence and human freedom is not at all lessened by their system.

It seems to me that the most sense that we can make of logical priority having a basis in reality is in terms of the relationships of (in)dependence between the logical moments of the Molinist creation situation and God’s creation decision. For instance, Tom Flint suggests that the following might capture the relation between pre- and post-volitional truths:

(B) \( x \) is explanatorily prior to my choice and actions = \( x \) is true, and there is no choice or action within my power such that, were I so to choose or so to act, \( x \) would be false.\(^6\)

Thus, necessary truths and CF\( \rightarrow \)'s would be true logically prior to God’s decision about what to create and all other contingent truths that follow from that decision. To capture the sense in which necessary truths are logically prior to the truths that make up God’s middle knowledge, Flint suggests the following, which would apply to necessary truths and God’s natural knowledge but not to CF\( \rightarrow \)'s and middle knowledge:

(B*) \( x \) is prior to my choices and actions = \( x \) is true, and necessarily, there is no choice or action within my power such that, were I so to choose or so to act, \( x \) would be false.\(^7\)

When explicitly discussing the Molinist creation situation, I think that we might alternatively define these two senses of priority in terms of independence from God’s


\(^7\) Flint, *Divine Providence*, p. 175.
power (B) and independence from the power of any agent (B*). Given Flint’s definitions, it is only in a somewhat artificial sense that one can claim that there is a single notion of logical priority at work in Molinism, according to which natural knowledge is prior to middle knowledge and both are prior to God’s creative act of will and the resultant free knowledge. That sense is:

\[(MP) \quad x \text{ is prior to } z = \text{In either sense (B) or (B*), } x \text{ is prior to God’s choices and actions, and } z \text{ is not prior to them.}^{8}\]

Despite the artificial disjunctive nature of Flint’s suggestion for what the Molinist notion of logical priority amounts to, his focus upon understanding it in terms of independence from God’s power seems right to me. The kernel of the Molinist explication of providence is the assertion that an especially helpful class of contingent propositions is independent of any divine power over their truth-values, and it thus seems to me that this is the key reality that Molinists should point to as providing the basis for any explication of logical priority.

Perhaps little more can be said about the notion of logical priority other than that it is based upon a real independence from God’s power, and, in the case of the priority of necessary truths to CF’s, on a real independence from anyone’s power. While we may well tend to imagine God as exercising a process of practical reasoning based on His middle knowledge and then subsequently deciding what He will create, this image is at best analogically truthful in its representation of the reality of these various dependence relationships. The most that we can strictly say about the Molinist view of creation is

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8 Ibid. The “z is not prior to them” clause should be understood as referring to the same sense in which x is prior to God’s choices and actions, not to either sense (B) or (B*).
that it asserts that there is a kind of similarity in God’s decision to ours, though this similarity does not involve any kind of real sequence of thoughts.

Having attempted to shed some small bit of light on the notion of logical priority as used by Molinists, let us return to attempting to informally model the Molinist creation situation. In the following, it is to be remembered that the logical moments that Molinism speaks of and that I represent are not really moments at all, but rather terms in relations of independence from the power of agents, especially God. The initial segment of this model will represent the maximal broadly logically necessary state of affairs, independent of the power of any agents. From this initial segment, various types of contingency will be represented as branching off at subsequent logical, and eventually temporal, moments.

I will not attempt anything like a complete model – I will for instance avoid representing such things as those possible worlds that God would have selected had He been faced with a different set of true CF→’s. And at the expense of stating the obvious, I will also note that any branching paths model involving a significant number of contingencies will of necessity represent only a very few of these branches. The four logical moments (natural knowledge of necessary truths, middle knowledge of CF→’s, creative act of will, and free knowledge of AFC’s) will of course have to be represented, though since there need not be any contingencies that must be modeled in terms of branches between the third and fourth moments, they will occupy a single point in our

See ibid., pp. 55-59 for a representation of this.
model. We will later have to add a fifth, temporal, moment to represent one of the implications of Molinism, but let us begin with just these four.

We have already described the first moment above as including all necessary beings and truths. We can draw a straight line from this first moment, the maximal necessary state of affairs, until we encounter the first point of contingency, the state of affairs involving \( \text{CF\textgreater} \)’s and God’s knowledge of them, as well as the maximal necessary state of affairs, at which point possible worlds will branch off from this line. On the Molinist view, this point of contingency occurs in the second logical moment in which God knows which contingent \( \text{CF\textgreater} \)’s are true. As we have understood logical priority, the first moment is prior to the second moment in that the truth values of the propositions true at the first moment are necessarily independent of the power of any agents to affect, while the truth-values of \( \text{CF\textgreater} \)’s and God’s knowledge of them, true at the second logical moment, being contingent, are not. Let us draw the picture up to this second point:

\[ \sim(\text{C\textgreater} A) \]

\[ \text{C\textgreater} A \]

**Figure 1:** 2\(^{nd}\) logical moment of the Molinist creation situation.

I have used a thick line to represent the actual world up to and through the second logical moment.\(^{10}\) This world includes the contingent truth \( \text{C\textgreater} A \), along with all the other true \( \text{CF\textgreater} \)’s. This set of true \( \text{CF\textgreater} \)’s can be understood as determining the true “creaturely world-type.” The thinner line represents another possible world that includes

\[ \text{C\textgreater} A \]

\[ \sim(\text{C\textgreater} A) \]

\[^{10}\text{Again, read this temporal-sounding language with appropriate caution.}\]
the falsity of this same CF→ and that we may assume is otherwise indistinguishable from
the world in which C→A is true. Of course, there are infinitely many possible worlds
including these two creaturely world-types, and so these two branches should be thought
of as representing the “galaxies” of worlds determined by their creaturely world-types,
with the three branches later in the model representing individual worlds. In order to
keep the model manageable, I have only represented two galaxies and three worlds within
each galaxy. Lastly, the dashed line represents those worlds that are feasible for God to
create, while the thin solid line should be understood as not only representing possible
worlds, but more specifically possible worlds that are not feasible for God. So at the
second logical moment in the Molinist account of creation, God knows which galaxy of
feasible worlds is actual, but no particular feasible world is yet privileged as the actual
one.

Let us now move on to the third logical moment, at which God makes his decision
concerning which of the many possible worlds in the galaxy determined by the true
creaturely world-type will be actualized, and immediately subsequently has complete
foreknowledge, knowing all true AFC’s. God’s decision is logically posterior to both his
natural and middle knowledge, and to the objects of that knowledge, in the sense that
there is nothing that He can do to affect the truth-values of these propositions. His
creative act of will is logically prior to His free knowledge and its objects, in that these

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11 See Flint, Divine Providence, pp. 46-54 for a discussion of galaxies and creaturely world-types.

12 It has been suggested to me that the thin solid line, being more like the thick solid line that
represents the actual world, should represent feasible worlds and the dashed line represent infeasible
worlds. My intuition in using the lines as I have is that the dashed line represents worlds “open” to God,
while the solid lines represent “closed” worlds. The initial segment of the actual world is in a sense also
“closed” because already determined. Varying intuitions about how best to represent things in models is
yet another reason that this section may be more or less useful to different readers.
truths are subject to His determination. Because God’s decision immediately determines His free knowledge, such that there is no contingency between them, we will represent both decision and free knowledge together at the third logical moment. Thus, subsequent to God’s creative act of will, our model looks something like this:

![Diagram](image)

1. necessary beings and truths
2. CF’s
3. God’s creative act of will results in knowledge of AFC’s

Figure 2: 3rd logical moment of the Molinist creation situation.

The actual world has now been determined from among the feasible worlds, and the world’s history will unfold exactly as God has willed while creaturely free agency is nonetheless maintained.

The primary point that I would like to make about this model is that it highlights the concern underlying the grounding objection. The actuality of the galaxy of worlds within which God finds Himself is determined at the first branch (the second logical moment) by contingent truth-values with absolutely no explanation for their truth. C→A and ~(C→A) worlds alike are possible, which of these sets of worlds are feasible is outside of God’s control, and the idea that the relevant CF’s might be grounded in the way the Flint-like extension of PGI suggests, in terms of what uninstantiated individual essences would do if placed in the relevant circumstances, seems preposterous if one seeks to understand this claim in terms of the standard possible worlds semantics. For up until the second logical moment at which possible worlds first branch off on the basis of
different truth-values for CF→’s, ALL possible worlds are EXACTLY alike, as represented by the single line up until this second logical moment. “When God allegedly knows these true counterfactuals, prior to creation, only necessary truths and necessary beings are actual.”¹³ And these necessary beings and truths are of course shared by all possible worlds. To try to extend the standard semantics for counterfactuals to asking which possible world is most similar to this first logical moment will obviously be unhelpful. There is thus absolutely no basis for judging C→A worlds as more similar to the actual world than are ~(C→A) worlds except in terms of the brute facticity of these very CF→’s.¹⁴  

Furthermore, the CF→’s true at the second logical moment are true independently of the determination of the actual world, given God’s responsibility for making that determination. Thus, in thinking about this first branch, it is not as if whether or not possible worlds share their counterfactuals is merely one of many respects in which they may be more or less similar, a respect that in a few odd cases involving libertarianly free choices ends up being decisive. Rather, the only dissimilarity in worlds at this initial branch is with regard to their CF→’s, and there are two worlds that are exactly alike except for the truth-value of that single CF→ (and any truths entailed by it), C→A. Given this model of the Molinist creation situation, it is extremely hard for me to see how

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¹³ Bruce Reichenbach, “Fatalism and Freedom,” *International Philosphic Quarterly* 28 (1988), p. 277. Note that the “when” may be misleading, since given our discussion above, this “when” is a first logical moment merely illustrating the greater independence of necessary truths and beings from the power of agents.

¹⁴ One might suggest that the basis for such a judgment might be that individual essences have relevant counterfactual properties. It seems to me that one must then ask why the actual world is one in which an essence has a particular property rather than its complement. See my comments in chapter four, pp. 142-143.
one might conclude anything other than that CF→’s must be understood by Molinists to be ungrounded, brute, primitive, basic facts whose truth-values are utterly inexplicable, even in a PGI-like sense.\textsuperscript{15}

This is the main point that I wanted to highlight by attempting to informally model the Molinist creation situation. But it may be worthwhile to also model another implication of Molinism, that while God has no control over which CF→’s are true, human agents do have counterfactual power over the truth-values of CF→’s about their actions in situations in which they find themselves. This counterfactual power over the past has already been discussed in the last two chapters. Because agents have libertarian freedom to do otherwise than AFC’s or CF→’s about them predict, Ockhamism and Molinism are committed to the view that agents have the power to do something such that were they to do it, the past, including the truth-values of relevant AFC’s and CF→’s, would always have been other than it in fact was. To make this same point in another way, assuming that AFC’s (or tenseless truths) are true from the first moment of time, Ockhamists are committed to claiming that if an agent exercises their power to do otherwise than an AFC predicts, it would be the case that an entirely different past history of the world would have been actual. We might model this as follows:

![Figure 3: Counterfactual power over the past.](image)

\textsuperscript{15} Or: “it is extremely hard for me to see how one might conclude anything other than that the possession of particular counterfactual properties rather than their complements by individual essences must be understood by Molinists to be ungrounded, brute, primitive, basic states of affairs whose obtaining are utterly inexplicable.”
Again, the solid line represents the actual world. The dotted lines branching off “forward” to the right from \( t \) represent those possible worlds that the agent has the power to bring about. But the dotted lines branching backwards from \( t \) and eventually rejoining the actual world at its initial moment represent the far-reaching power of counterfactual power over the past. For the Ockhamist is committed to saying that the agent has the (counterfactual) power to bring about this entire alternative history of the world. These alternative pasts might be very similar to the actual world, differing only in the truth-value of a single AFC and in whatever other changes this difference entails. Or the alternative pasts might be such that Abraham never existed. In general, we agents have no way of knowing just how powerful we are on the Ockhamist view.

If we return to our consideration of Molinism, we must superimpose the above diagram on our Molinist creation situation, and alter our diagram of that situation slightly. The resultant model is as follows:

![Diagram](image)

1. necessary beings and truths
2. CF’s
3. God’s creative act of will results in knowledge of AFC’s

**Figure 4: Counterfactual power over the past and its implications for Molinism.**

What this model shows is that an agent at \( t \) has the power to bring about a world that even God does not have the power to bring about. If the agent were to freely do something other than A in C, the agent would bring it about that it had always been the case that the creaturely world-type true at the second logical moment involved \(~(C \rightarrow A)\)
rather than \( C \rightarrow A \). The agent at \( t \) has the power to do something (~A) such that were she to do it, God would have found Himself in a different galaxy of feasible worlds than He in fact did. The agent’s counterfactual power given Molinism is even more far-reaching than given Ockhamism, extending even to the power to determine truths whose truth-values are independent of God’s will and that play a central role in His decision of what world to create.

It should be immediately reiterated that this model does nothing to remove the force of the grounding objection that I claimed was highlighted by the earlier model of the Molinist creation situation. For while a Molinist might claim that the actions of actual agents at \( t \) can serve to ground the truth-value of \( C \rightarrow A \), there are of course infinitely many other CF\( \rightarrow \)’s that determine infinitely many other creaturely world-types that would be represented by infinitely many other branches from the second logical moment. There are presumably infinitely many of these branches that involve true CF\( \rightarrow \)’s about individual essences that God never instantiates, and that thus cannot be grounded by actual actions in the future. If anything, this model, in addition to providing an opportunity to reiterate the comments with which I ended chapter three concerning the incredibly far-reaching power that Ockhamism and Molinism predicate of free agents, also provides an opportunity to register another way in which the grounding objection might strike home more forcefully against Molinism than Ockhamism. This is that it seems that the best Molinism can do with respect to grounding is to explain how some CF\( \rightarrow \)’s are grounded. But infinitely many others are such that this account of grounding based on an extension of PGI, the only explanation of grounding for counterfactuals with any degree of plausibility, does not apply to them. Thus, if one attempts to ground any of
them, various CF→’s have what might be termed different “metaphysical status.”\(^{16}\) One might think that this is an unwelcome consequence, especially since God’s creative decision about which individual essences will be instantiated in which circumstances is dependent on, and thus logically posterior to, the determinate truth-values of all CF→’s. It thus seems to me that the Molinist’s best alternative by far is to simply claim that CF→’s are true as a matter of primitive fact.

\(^{16}\) Hugh Rice discusses the claim that different CF→’s might have different metaphysical status in “On Middle Knowledge,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (1994): 495-502, esp. pp. 498-501.
APPENDIX THREE:

PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

The page number on which these principles, definitions, or conditions first appear follows the statement of them.

Principle of Alternate Possibilities (PAP):

A person is morally responsible for her action only if she could have done otherwise. (9)

Libertarian Freedom $=_{df}$

An agent A is libertarianly free with regard to an act E at time $t$ if and only if in either performing or refraining from performing act E, she had the ability to do otherwise - to refrain from performing E or to perform E. (16)

Basic Power Intuition (BPI):

There is a set of actions that I can perform and that are such that my awareness of my ability to perform them is more basic than any considerations to the contrary. (17)

Ability to do otherwise $=_{df}$

In addition to the actual world, in which A performs E at t, there is at least one possible world accessible to A at t in which A refrains from performing E at t. (18)

W is Accessible to A at t only if:

The (almost) complete circumstances C obtaining at $t$ in which A performs E are consistent with A refraining from E. That is, in addition to the actual world, in which A performs E in C, there is at least one alternative possible world, W, in which A refrains from performing E in C. (19)
**Constraining Circumstances Intuition (CCI):**

What I am able to do must always be consistent with the circumstances in which I perform my action. (19)

**Principle of Bivalence (PB):**

All propositions are either determinatively true or false. (21)

**(Almost) Complete Circumstances, C (as understood by Aristotelians) =_{df}**

The maximal state of affairs obtaining at \( t-1 \), the moment immediately prior to \( t \), plus all causation occurring at \( t \) other than A’s performing E. (22)

**Constraining Circumstances Intuition - Aristotelian (CCIA):**

What I am able to do must always be consistent with the circumstances in which I perform my action, where those circumstances are understood to include the maximal state of affairs obtaining at \( t-1 \), the moment immediately prior to \( t \), plus all causation occurring at \( t \) other than A’s performing E. (22)

**Logical Determinism =_{df}**

The thesis that every event is such that principles of logic often taken to be known *a priori* and accepted as constraints on our understanding of our world determine that it and no other event could occur. (24)

**Law of Excluded Middle (LEM):**

Either \( p \) or \( \neg p \). (26)

**Aristotelianism =_{df}**

The view that logical determinism can be avoided only by denying the principle of bivalence for future-tense propositions. (26)

**Accidental Necessity =_{df}**

A property that attaches to propositions in virtue of the events or states of affairs that they describe *no longer* having a potency for occurring or obtaining in a manner other than that described by the propositions in question. (39)
Presentist Intuition:
Past and future-tense propositions are true now because a corresponding present-tense proposition was or will be true.

That is, where $z$ stands for any nonconditional present-tense contingent proposition

“It was the case that $z$” is now true because “It is the case that $z$” was true;
“It will be the case that $z$” is now true because “It is the case that $z$” will be true. (44)

Grounding Intuition:
The truth of propositions depends upon the obtaining of states of affairs or the occurring of events that these propositions are about.

That is, in the present-tense case,

“It is the case that $z$” is now true because the state of affairs or event described by $z$ now obtains/occurs. (49), or

“It is the case that $z$” is now true because $z$ is now grounded. (50)

Presentist Grounding Intuition (PGI):

“It was the case that $z$” is now true because $z$ was grounded;
“It will be the case that $z$” is now true because $z$ will be grounded. (50)

Or, where F, P, and G stand for future, past, and grounding operators respectively, such that $F_z$ stands for “it will be the case that $z$,” $P_z$ for “it was the case that $z$,” and $G_z$ for “$z$ is now grounded,”

$P_z$ because $P(G_z)$; $F_z$ because $F(G_z)$. (51)

Two Principles Acceptable to Ockhamists:

Where the box represents broadly logical necessity, $z$ represents a true present-tense proposition, $x$ represents any event or state of affairs, and $O_x$ represents the obtaining or occurring of that state of affairs or event:

**FPZ:** $\Box \left( (z \& F[O_x]) \Rightarrow F(z) \right)$

**PFZ:** $\Box \left( (z \& P[O_x]) \Rightarrow P(z) \right)$. (55)
Presentist Grounding Intuition Plus (PGI+): 

Where $N_t$ refers to the nature of time, $P_z$ because $P(G_z)$ and $N_t$. (60)

(Almost) Complete Circumstances, C (as understood by the Ockhamist who accepts PGI+) =

The maximal grounded state of affairs obtaining at $t-1$, the moment immediately prior to $t$, plus all causation occurring at $t$ other than A’s performing E. (78)

Constraining Circumstances Intuition – Ockhamist (CCIO):

What I am able to do must always be consistent with the circumstances in which I perform my action, where those circumstances are understood to include the maximal grounded state of affairs obtaining at $t-1$, the moment immediately prior to $t$, plus all causation occurring at $t$ other than A’s performing E. (78)

Personal Belief Intuition (PBI):

Propositions about a person’s past beliefs should be understood to be necessary per accidens. (96)

Future Indifference Intuition (FII):

The distinction between propositions that are and are not accidentally necessary is essentially tied to whether or not they are future-indifferent. (96)

Counterfactuals of Creaturely Freedom (CF→’s) =

Paradigmatically, subjunctive conditionals expressing what a created agent would freely do in various circumstances, though indeterministic events not due to free agency might also be their object. (130)

Absolute Future Contingents (AFC’s) =

Categorical future-tense contingent propositions. (132)

Principle of Conditional Bivalence (PCB):

If A were true, then (B would be true or B would be false)]. (134)

Law of Conditional Excluded Middle (CEM):

$(A \rightarrow B) v (A \rightarrow \neg B)$; that is: either, if it were the case that A, then it would be the case that B, or if it were the case that A, then it would be the case that $\neg B$. (134, footnote 13.)


Cahn, Steven M. (1967) Fate, Logic, and Time, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.


Miller, Barry. (1996) *A Most Unlikely God: A Philosophical Enquiry*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN.


