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# Introduction

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Concerns both about the nature of free will and about the credibility of theistic belief and commitment have long preoccupied philosophers. This is just to make the obvious point that philosophical questions about whether we enjoy free will and about whether God exists are truly perennial. In addition, there can be no denying that the history of philosophical inquiry into these two questions has been dynamic and, at least to some degree, integrated. In a great many cases, classical answers to the one have influenced classical answers to the other—and in a variety of ways. Without pretending to be able to trace the historical integrations of answers to these perennial questions, there is no real question that these philosophical interrelations exist and are worthy of further exploration.

The same is certainly true with respect to contemporary philosophical discussion of these questions. The past three decades, in particular, have been marked by an explosion of interest in philosophical debates both about the nature of free will—particularly whether free will is compatible with the truth of determinism—and about the rationality of religious belief. Although we should have every reason to expect that these contemporary debates would follow their past patterns in such a way as to be illuminated by reflection on the dynamic integrations between these problems, we think that insufficient attention has been paid to these potentialities in the current discussion.<sup>1</sup> The principal goal of this volume is to begin to remedy this inattention.

Putting the volume's goal in these (philosophically bland) terms could be thought to disguise a more pointed motive for conceiving of it and commissioning its contents. One could, after all, take up the goal of exploring the dynamic relationship between theorizing about free will and theorizing about theism from simple philosophical curiosity. Interest in one or the other of these central problems, together with a nose for fruitful philosophical connections, might very naturally lead one to want a collection like the one now before you. In fact, it is not at all unlikely that you have picked this volume up for just these sorts of perfectly legitimate reasons. We confess, however, that our motivations for pursuing this volume's central goal cannot be attributed to pure

<sup>1</sup> In-group membership may be playing a role here. For discussion of the way that such membership might impact views regarding free will in particular, see Lee and Harris 2014.

philosophical intrigue alone. Or perhaps the point could be better put this way. We are alive to the possibility that the dynamic relationship between beliefs about free will and beliefs about the existence of God may turn out to be less philosophically innocent than the motive of pure inquiry would suggest. In fact, we detect an undertone of suspicion within the community of philosophers working particularly on the problems of free will; the suspicion is that theistic beliefs are exerting an untoward influence upon the debates.

This suspicion is likely related to (or may simply be a sub-species of) a wider and sometimes more vitriolic suspicion of philosophy of religion—and of philosophers of religion—within some parts of the discipline. John Schellenberg illustrates this wider suspicion in the following passage: ‘[w]hat Plantinga and Co. are doing is not really philosophy at all, as I have mostly been assuming so far, but rather theology or theological apologetics, on behalf of the Christian community as they understand it, using the tools of philosophy.’<sup>2</sup> Greg Dawes levels a similar charge in a recent interview:

While the arguments put forward by many Christian philosophers are serious arguments, there is something less than serious about the spirit in which they are being offered. There is a direction in which those arguments will not be permitted to go. Arguments that support the faith will be seriously entertained; those that apparently undermine the faith must be countered, at any cost. Philosophy, to use the traditional phrase, is merely a ‘handmaid’ of theology. There is, to my mind, something frivolous about a philosophy of this sort.<sup>3</sup>

Calling these suspicions part of an ‘undertone’ may, indeed, be an understatement with regard to the free will debate. About a decade back, Manuel Vargas brought what appears to us to have been the first explicit attention to the potentially pernicious role that religious belief may be playing specifically in motivating libertarianism over compatibilism in contemporary discussions:

There is nearly always an unremarked upon elephant that lurks in rooms where philosophers discuss free will. In this instance, the elephant may be more difficult to ignore. The elephant is the role of religion in motivating and sustaining various libertarian accounts. It would, I think, be revealing to do a survey of the religious beliefs of contemporary libertarians and compatibilists. My guess is that we would learn that a disproportionate number—perhaps even most—libertarians [in the philosophical community] are religious and, especially, Christian. I suspect that we would also learn that the overwhelming majority of compatibilists are atheist or agnostic. . . . [I] think that understanding the difference religion can make may be a key to understanding some important methodological differences between religious libertarians and their interlocutors. Though one might be a libertarian who is religious [ . . . ], a religious libertarian in my sense is one who, antecedent to and perhaps independent of philosophical inquiry, is committed to a strong belief in a particular divine moral order that requires a strong notion of human freedom. In the doxastic economy of the religious libertarian, libertarianism is inextricably tied to a religious framework.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Schellenberg 2009, 100.

<sup>3</sup> Dawes 2014. For discussion and criticism of this more general suspicion of philosophy of religion, see Taliaferro and Dressen 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Vargas 2004, 408.

There are a few claims here that will be taken up in various ways by the contributors to this volume. For example, Vargas suggests that some significant number of participants in the contemporary free will discussion are what he calls ‘religious libertarians’—whose commitment to this view about free will is essentially bound up with their religious beliefs. Furthermore, he claims that insight might be gleaned into methodological and meta-level elements of the contemporary free will debate by attending to the role that religious belief is playing among its participants. But the big general claim is that the libertarian position in the current debate is being underwritten largely by Christian theistic belief.

The evidence Vargas musters for his big claim regarding the existence of this elephant is (together, we suspect, with his not insubstantial personal experience with philosophers working on the problems of free will, agency, and responsibility) a prediction about how a survey would turn out. As it happens, recent sociological work on the beliefs of philosophers confirms at least some of his predictions.<sup>5</sup> In keeping with them, this sociology indicates that theistic philosophers are significantly more likely to be libertarians than are atheists, and atheists are significantly more likely to be compatibilists than are theists.<sup>6</sup> This isn’t to say that there aren’t counterexamples to these tendencies; in fact, counterexamples to both tendencies will be found in the following pages. Still, the correlations are quite striking; striking enough, by our lights, to motivate special attention to the real philosophical interconnections between belief in free will and belief in God. We ought to look very carefully at the pachyderm Vargas has called to our attention.

We re-emphasize, then, that even with a plurality of motives for engaging in its inquiry, the primary goal of this collection is to address the interplay between the philosophical debates about free will, on the one hand, and about theistic religious belief, on the other. In the rest of this introduction, our aim is to put you in the best position to profit from the chapters that follow by providing some context for them and by giving you a brief overview of their content.

## From Whence the Elephant? Evil and Desert

It may help to begin by at least gesturing at some explanations for the presence of the elephant in the free will room. And here it seems to us that there can be no ignoring the profound impact that twentieth-century debate over the problem of evil has had in this regard. In particular, it would be difficult to overstate the importance of Alvin Plantinga’s Free Will Defense in response to the logical problem of evil (as this problem

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the survey that David Bourget and David Chalmers conducted as part of *PhilPapers*; see <<http://philpapers.org/surveys/results.pl>> (accessed September 2015). For more on some of the relevant details of the survey’s findings, see Chapter 1. Another worthwhile discussion of the survey’s findings, and their relevance to contemporary philosophy of religion, can be found in Kraay 2013. For responses to Kraay, see Penner 2013 and Moser 2013.

<sup>6</sup> The *PhilPapers* survey does not provide data regarding which of the theistic philosophers included in the data set are Christian theists in particular; however, we think it is exceedingly plausible given what we know about the make-up of the profession that a significant majority of them would in fact self-identify as Christians.

was most famously enunciated by J. L. Mackie).<sup>7</sup> To put this factor in context, we should recall that, by the middle of the last century, theistic philosophy of religion had been pushed to the margins of the discipline.<sup>8</sup> At least in the Anglo-American milieu, enormous philosophical pressures were at work. The intrinsic attractions of naturalized approaches to philosophy that could grant to science the vaunted epistemic credibility it surely deserved had functioned to undercut traditional metaphysics—and theism along with it. Positivist skepticism about metaphysical inquiry in general was only the most visible expression of these impulses—impulses that inoculated a generation (or two) of philosophers not only against post-Kantian idealism but also against any projects that did not respect the emerging stringent empiricism. Many traditional metaphysical topics and approaches were discredited or dismissed by dint of their failure to live up to the prevailing zeitgeist.

It was into this philosophical context that Mackie released his notorious paper, ‘Evil and Omnipotence.’ Initially published in 1955, it might have promised to be a final nail in the coffin of philosophically acceptable theism, arguing, as it did, that belief in a perfect being is rendered positively incoherent by the existence of evil in the world. In this bold project, Mackie appears to have been motivated by his dissatisfaction with what he took to be the weaknesses of the more standard approach according to which critics had shown (by his formidable lights) that there were no good philosophical reasons to believe that God exists. Taking this approach still allowed the theist, he lamented, to be insulated from some amount of rational criticism by way of retreat into a form of fideism. Mackie hoped to block this way of retreat by showing that there is a logical inconsistency in the set of propositions that the traditional theist accepts. To maintain theistic belief in the face of an undefeated argument of the form he proffered would be to abandon even the semblance of a substantive commitment to rationality. Theism could then be dismissed once and for all, having revealed itself, in response to this argument, as an insufficiently serious philosophical interlocutor.<sup>9</sup>

For many, Alvin Plantinga’s response to this argument was an instance of philosophical victory being snatched from the jaws of final defeat. At the very least, there can be no denying that the tide turned. It is not just that the free will defense persuaded almost everyone that Mackie-style efforts to undermine the essential coherence of theism on the basis of the existence of evil could not succeed. The defense also, and certainly with a great deal of work (both by Plantinga and others) on other philosophical topics, initiated a renaissance in the philosophy of religion that would have been nearly impossible to predict in, say, 1950.

The heart of Plantinga’s defense was, of course, an appeal to the possible existence and value of libertarian free will, a form of human freedom that we would lack if antecedent circumstances determined a unique outcome for all of our actions. Condensing

<sup>7</sup> See Plantinga 1974 and 1977. A worthwhile recent collection of papers can be found in McBrayer and Howard-Snyder 2013.

<sup>8</sup> For discussions of the relevant history, see Swinburne 2005 and Wolterstorff 2009.

<sup>9</sup> In what follows, we address the broad contours of the kinds of theism we have in mind.

the complex argument considerably, Plantinga argued that it was possible, in light of libertarian free will, that not even an omnipotent being could actualize just any possible world it wanted to. Even if there is a possible world containing free creatures who always use their freedom well, it may be that God cannot unilaterally bring this world about. Under the Molinist assumptions that Plantinga initially made,<sup>10</sup> this will be because the counterfactual conditionals of creaturely freedom with which God is stuck may simply not allow it. It is now a standard element in the narrative of philosophy of religion that Plantinga's defense decisively silenced the logical problem of evil.<sup>11</sup> To illustrate this profound effect, consider one canonical judgment on the matter issued by William Rowe (a friendly but vigorous opponent of theism):

Some philosophers have contended that the existence of evil is logically inconsistent with the existence of the theistic God. No one, I think, has succeeded in establishing such an extravagant claim. Indeed, granted incompatibilism, there is a fairly compelling argument for the view that the existence of evil is logically consistent with the existence of the theistic God.<sup>12</sup>

Conveniently, this quotation from Rowe both illustrates the standard view about the success of Plantinga's project and highlights the centrality of the incompatibilist conception of free will for its success.

Of course, theism had a problem with evil long before Mackie came on the scene. And, equally obviously, the appeal to free will in responding to this problem has been around at least since Augustine. Nevertheless, Plantinga's defense seemed to bring crisply before the collective mind of theistically inclined philosophers just how crucial an explicit account of the nature of free will would turn out to be for the rationality of belief in God. No doubt this had something to do with radical stakes in the debate as they had been raised by Mackie's challenge. But there is a puzzle here. It is almost certainly true that Plantinga's defense and its supposed success influenced a generation of theistic philosophers in the direction of libertarianism. At the same time, however, Plantinga's defense depended not on the claim that libertarianism is true but only on the weaker claim that it is *possible* that libertarianism is true. So, why the wide attraction among theistic philosophers to a thesis that the supposedly influential argument appealed to only in its modally weakened form? To underscore the puzzle, Plantinga's

<sup>10</sup> Plantinga elsewhere denies that the free will defense depends on the assumption of Molinism, more specifically on the assumption that counterfactuals of creaturely freedom can be true: '[Robert Adams] is right in pointing out that my argument in *The Nature of Necessity* for the consistency of God's existence with the amount of evil [in the actual world] does indeed presuppose that some counterfactuals of freedom can be true. As I see it, however, this presupposition is a concession to the atheologian. Without the assumption of middle knowledge it is much harder to formulate a plausible deductive atheological argument from evil; and it is correspondingly much easier, I should think, to formulate the free will defense on the assumption that middle knowledge is impossible' (Plantinga 1985, 379). For a contrary evaluation of the situation, see Perszyk 1998.

<sup>11</sup> There have been some dissenters (DeRose 1991; Adams 1999; Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne 1998) and we note, with interest, that efforts to resist this claim appear to be on the rise. See Howard-Snyder 2013; Pruss 2012; Rasmussen 2004; Schellenberg 2013; and Otte 2009. See also Chapter 11.

<sup>12</sup> Rowe 1996, 10, note 1.

defense also depended on the possibility of universal transworld depravity (on the possibility, in essence, that every possible person would do something wrong in any world in which they could be actualized with free will). However, theistically inclined philosophers have not taken up the mantle for the unrestricted claim that everyone is transworld depraved. Part of the explanation here must be that libertarianism already had something going for it when its mere possibility made its way into Plantinga's central argument. The libertarian view did, of course, already have erstwhile and able defenders (Roderick Chisholm and C. A. Campbell prominent among them). In any case, the important point is that Plantinga's defense and its perceived success can reasonably be thought to have contributed substantially to the popularity of libertarianism among theistic philosophers.

In a similar way, the most important twentieth-century effort at positive theodicy made explicit appeal not merely to the possibility but indeed to the plausibility of the claim that human beings enjoy a form of freedom that is incompatible with causal and theological determination.<sup>13</sup> In his enormously influential monograph *Evil and the God of Love*, John Hick proposed an Irenaen 'soul-making' theodicy that rested rather fundamentally on the distinctive value of our free efforts to develop good character traits in the face of adversity. Crucially, Hick argued that 'one who has attained to goodness by meeting and eventually mastering temptations, and thus by rightly making responsible choices in concrete situations, is good in a richer and more valuable sense than would be one created *ab initio* in a state of either innocence or virtue.'<sup>14</sup> He goes on to add that on his view this process of soul-making 'is not taking place...by a natural and inevitable evolution, but through a hazardous adventure in individual freedom.'<sup>15</sup> Though Hick does little to defend the claim that we actually enjoy this hazardous libertarian freedom (and he is explicit both that it is libertarian freedom he has in mind and that defending it is a difficult business), he does insist that 'it is the one that seems intuitively most adequate to our ordinary experience as moral agents.'<sup>16</sup>

The larger point here is that twentieth-century philosophers of religion attending to the most important challenges to the rationality of belief in God in the latter half of their century were treated to a substantial diet of libertarianism. As Hick in particular illustrates, the diet included an emphasis not only on the argumentative strategic value of this view of free will but also on its supposedly more intuitively satisfying nature.

Some further (though admittedly anecdotal) evidence for the claim that the problem of evil importantly lies beneath libertarian commitments among theistically inclined philosophers can, we think, be discerned in the fact that theologians seem decidedly more inclined toward compatibilist conceptions of free will than do their philosophical counterparts. Our tentative explanation for this supposed data is that

<sup>13</sup> For the relevance and importance of the distinction between 'defense' and 'theodicy,' see, for instance, McBrayer and Howard-Snyder 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Hick 1978, 255.

<sup>15</sup> Hick 1978, 256.

<sup>16</sup> Hick 1978, 278.

theologians have not engaged with the problem of evil in the same way as have theistic philosophers (whether this is good or bad we do not attempt here to say)—and that theologians have been more concerned with accommodating and elucidating traditional doctrines of divine foreknowledge and providence than have philosophers of religion.

In addition to the impact of the problem of evil on the reception of libertarianism among theists, a second—and not wholly unrelated—part of the explanation for the existence of Vargas' elephant involves the extraordinarily robust conceptions of responsibility that have typically accompanied theistic worldviews. The idea of sin, understood as a serious moral and spiritual failure with respect to what one owes first and foremost to an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent being, can naturally appear to raise the moral bar. And here we find another natural thought: that the higher the moral bar is raised—i.e. the greater the punitive cost of immorality and the greater the potential rewards for moral compliance—the more justice requires that those subject to the heavier evaluative burdens possess an especially robust form of agency.<sup>17</sup> Part of the reason we find the harsh punishment of children unacceptable, for example, is because we do not believe that children are generally able to govern themselves sufficiently by the light of the norms imposed upon them. However, as the powers of self-governance develop, we ordinarily suppose that the costs of non-compliance with social and moral norms can reasonably be raised. If we accept that justice establishes a linkage between possible punishments and rewards for moral behavior and the robustness of underlying agency, then those who believe that serious punishments and rewards are justified will be pressed to endorse stronger forms of agency.

As we said earlier, theistic traditions have ordinarily endorsed rather strong and particular views about the nature and extent of human responsibility. The concept of sinfulness has quite commonly been connected with a robustly retributive conception of punishment according to which the propriety of punishment has to do with *basic desert*. That is, the theistic concept of sin is often taken to presuppose that a person can be properly blamed (and, therefore, punished<sup>18</sup>) only when he *deserves to be* in the basic sense characterized by Derk Pereboom:

to be morally responsible for an action in the [basic desert sense] is for it to belong to him in such a way that he would deserve blame if he understood that it was morally wrong, and he would deserve credit or perhaps praise if he understood that it was morally exemplary, supposing that this desert is basic in the sense that the agent would deserve blame or credit just

<sup>17</sup> The Christian might here point to Luke 12:48: 'From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded' (NRSV).

<sup>18</sup> It might appear that this way of framing the religious impulses to which we are appealing runs roughshod over the distinction between appropriate blame and appropriate punishment. We grant, of course, that blame and punishment can come apart. However, the linkage between them is strong enough, we suppose, for our generalizations to have the explanatory force we claim to detect. Thanks to Joe Campbell for pushing us on this point.

because he has performed the action, given understanding of its moral status, and not by virtue of consequentialist considerations.<sup>19</sup>

We contend that it is a common view within theistic traditions that punishment for sin is justified by the supposed fact that sinners deserve this punishment in something like Pereboom's basic sense.

It is not unlikely that some powerful gravitation toward libertarianism among theists can be accounted for merely in virtue of the common combination of views just enunciated—sinfulness + basic desert. But an additional common feature of theistic commitment will almost 'seal the deal' for many theists; for it is also quite common for theists to believe that the moral stakes in human life are extraordinarily high, involving both heaven and hell. Some people, by virtue of their proper moral/religious choices, will enter into an eternal state of beatitude in the presence of God; and others, by virtue of their improper moral/religious choices, will be forced to suffer in eternal torment and despair apart from God. Furthermore, most theists who endorse traditional doctrines of heaven and hell will want to insist that it is fair—that God is just in allowing—that this is so. Given the natural thought we developed earlier linking the justice of the severity of punishment with the robustness of the agency undergirding self-governance, the endorsement of traditional doctrines of heaven and hell will almost necessitate imputing to human beings the most dramatic kind of agency conceivable. Here we cannot help pointing out the way that the concept of 'heaven and hell responsibility' functions in Galen Strawson's (in)famous argument for the impossibility of moral responsibility. According to Strawson, 'true moral responsibility is responsibility of such a kind that, if we have it, then it makes sense, at least, to suppose that it could be just to punish some of us with (eternal) torment in hell and reward others with (eternal) bliss in heaven.'<sup>20</sup> Strawson goes on to argue (in ways we will not attempt to evaluate here) that being responsible in so deep a sense would essentially require that we have created ourselves. However, since such self-creation is incoherent, the form of responsibility requiring it is impossible. One natural route of response to Strawson's argument has involved denying that true responsibility really is of the 'heaven and hell' variety. This will be an awkward route for theists who endorse a traditional doctrine of heaven and hell to travel. In light of this concern, libertarianism can appear to be the only morally acceptable option for many theists.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Pereboom 2007, 197. He makes similar points in his contribution to this volume.

<sup>20</sup> Strawson 1994, 9.

<sup>21</sup> One assumption running through this paragraph is that libertarian agency is, in some unspecified sense, 'stronger' or 'more robust' than its compatibilist counterparts. As Joe Campbell has pointed out, making this assumption is bound to annoy those with thoroughly compatibilist sympathies. We apologize for any such annoyance. Our goal here is to offer a kind of socio-philosophical explanation for what appear to be the data of theistic attraction to libertarianism and not to defend its attractiveness in the face of the subtle resistance that compatibilists might offer. So, we hope we can be forgiven for more or less reporting this outlook regarding the strength and robustness of libertarian agency among religious libertarians.

Thus, given both the twentieth-century debate over the problem of evil and the traditional doctrines of heaven and hell, perhaps we should not be surprised about the presence in the free will room of Vargas' elephant.

## Free Will in Philosophy of Religion

It is also true that concerns about freedom, the will, and agency are nearly ubiquitous in contemporary philosophy of religion more generally. So even beyond the problem of evil and the demanding theological conceptions of desert that we conjecture have brought libertarianism in particular to such prominence for theistically inclined philosophers, it may be illuminating to reflect a bit further on why concerns about free will have been so central to debates in the philosophy of religion. We can consider, in this regard, three contexts in which substantive conceptions of free will play a significant role: the context of facing challenges to the rationality of theistic belief, the context of reflection on divine attributes, and the context of engagement with specific theological doctrines.

### *Challenges to rationality of theistic belief*

As we have already emphasized, appeals to free will have been a standard part of the strategy of addressing that most forceful family of objections to theistic belief running under the banner of 'the problem of evil.' It may be worth noting, however, that the importance of appeals to free will in theistic responses to this problem has not diminished over the last three or four decades since the appearance of Hick's theodicy and Plantinga's defense. Nearly every recent systematic effort to address the shifting problem of evil rests significantly on robust (and, indeed, quite frequently libertarian) freedom.<sup>22</sup> Consider, in this regard, Richard Swinburne's *Providence and the Problem of Evil*,<sup>23</sup> Peter van Inwagen's Gifford Lectures entitled *The Problem of Evil*,<sup>24</sup> and Eleonore Stump's *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*.<sup>25</sup> There are rich and rewarding differences between the approaches taken by each of these authors; nevertheless, an essential appeal to the existence and value free will is shared by all of them. And this commonality is not limited to these paradigmatic works, but can be found much more broadly throughout the contemporary literature on the problem of evil.

Furthermore, the emerging 'problem of divine hiddenness' represents a somewhat different challenge to the rationality of theistic belief that also invites reflection on the nature of free will. As J. L. Schellenberg has recently formulated this problem, the existence of reasonable unbelief functions as strong evidence against the existence of

<sup>22</sup> An important counter-instance is the crucial work of Marilyn Adams (see especially 1999); Adams is among the few contemporary Christian philosophers expressing skepticism both about the plausibility of libertarianism and about its probative value for the problem of evil debate. Others—such as Turner 2013, Judisch 2008, Howsepian 2007, and Mawson (this volume)—think that the compatibilist can also give a version of the free will defense.

<sup>23</sup> Swinburne 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Van Inwagen 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Stump 2012.

God.<sup>26</sup> This is because a loving God (and only a loving being would be deserving of the title ‘God’) would always make it possible for creatures to be in life-giving reciprocal contact with this divine love. But a person can be in a life-giving reciprocal relationship with God only if the person is able to believe that God exists. From this, Schellenberg infers that a loving God would always make it possible for creatures to believe—to believe, principally, that God exists. Thus, the existence of fair-minded and good-hearted people who are not able to believe counts significantly in favor of the claim that no perfectly loving being exists.

One important strand of reply to this argument invokes the importance of the preservation of human freedom.<sup>27</sup> What proponents of this reply emphasize is that a degree of epistemic clarity with respect to the proposition that God exists sufficient to eliminate all reasonable unbelief might undermine free will by functioning, in essence, coercively. One supposed value of free will is the special importance it would confer upon right and good actions done from it. This is to say, for example, that my telling you the truth of *my own free will* is more valuable than my telling you the truth as a result of someone’s coercive influence upon me. However, if the existence of God had been made transparently clear to human beings (so that no reasonable unbelief could remain), then—so the argument goes—many people would have been under a kind of epistemic coercion. Knowing that God exists, many people would have been unable to do anything other than what they believed God wanted them to do. Thus, a perfectly loving God who cared deeply about the preservation of free will would need to remain at an epistemic distance from creatures, thereby making the space for what we call divine hiddenness.<sup>28</sup>

Our goals require us to assess neither the problem of divine hiddenness nor the influential line of reply in terms of epistemic coercion that we have sketched. Our purpose here, again, is simply to highlight an important context (specifically involving a challenge to the credibility of theistic belief) in which the philosopher of religion is forced quite deeply into reflection on the nature and value of free will.

### *Divine attributes*

Philosophers of religion are also regularly forced into reflection upon the nature of free will when attempting to provide philosophical accounts of the divine attributes. This is because many of the traditional divine attributes can be understood only against the backdrop of substantive accounts of freedom and action. We highlight two agency-intensive attributes for illustrative purposes.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> See Schellenberg 1993.      <sup>27</sup> See, among others, Murray 1993.

<sup>28</sup> Most theists think that more is needed for the kind of relationship that God desires with His creatures than mere assent to true propositions, even if that is necessary. What is crucial is a certain kind of intimate, relationship-engendering knowing, as Paul Moser stresses in his work; see Moser 2009 and 2010. See also Williams 2011.

<sup>29</sup> We do not think these two examples are exhaustive. Further concerns regarding human free will are raised by other attributes—including, for instance, divine simplicity and aseity.

Consider, first, competing accounts of God's *eternality*. God's eternality seems most obviously to be a matter of God's relationship to time. But it turns out that the debate between atemporalists (who hold that God exists eternally outside of time) and temporalists (who hold that God exists eternally or everlastingly within time) is consistently animated by intuitions and arguments regarding the implications these views have for both divine and human action. For example, temporalists frequently worry that the four-dimensionalist account of time that many atemporalists adopt would be incompatible with robust human freedom. In a similar vein, temporalists have also argued that the timelessness of God would make divine action in the world, including the act of creation itself, impossible or incoherent. Just as these objections rest on substantive accounts of freedom and agency, so the defenders of these views cannot avoid advancing similarly substantive accounts in reply.<sup>30</sup>

The attempt to understand the divine attribute of *omniscience* also quite naturally provokes philosophical reflection upon free will. On the most expansive views of omniscience, God's knowledge ranges over future contingents, including future contingents of creaturely freedom—over what, for example, you *will* (but may not have to) do next week. Thus, the attribute of divine omniscience, so understood, entails that God has exhaustive foreknowledge of everything that will happen in the future.<sup>31</sup> The intuitive concern with exhaustive foreknowledge is that it is not easy to see how my action can be an expression of my freedom when God knew in, say, 100,000 BCE that I would be performing it at this time in precisely this way (as this view of omniscience insists God did know). On a standard view, a person performs an action freely only if she could have (in some relevant sense of 'could have') done something other than what she in fact has done. Those who object to an account of divine omniscience in terms of exhaustive foreknowledge can rightly worry that, given God's knowledge, no one could ever have done anything other than what one has done.<sup>32</sup> That is, no one acts freely under exhaustive divine foreknowledge. Of course, proponents of the exhaustive foreknowledge view of divine omniscience have replies to this kind of objection. However, these replies, like the objections themselves, rely on considerations regarding the nature and extent of human free will.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Things are more complex than we have them here, as one need not endorse four-dimensionalism to be an atemporalist, and one could be four-dimensionalist and a temporalist.

<sup>31</sup> The 'fore' in foreknowledge might suggest that God is temporal, but this is not essential to the present worry. If God is atemporal, the putative incompatibility of God's unfailing atemporal knowledge with what is for us the future can simply be generated in another way. See Zagzebski 1996 for a related discussion.

<sup>32</sup> Following Nelson Pike's (1965) influential development of this argument, it would seem a person could have done otherwise than what she has done, given God's foreknowledge, only if she could have done something that would either (1) have rendered God's prior belief about what she would do false, or (2) have changed what God believed in the past. But no one can render the beliefs of an essentially omniscient being false. And no one can change the past. Therefore, God's foreknowledge blocks the ability to do otherwise. The responses to this kind of argument are legion, of course; but, reiterating the point we are making in the text, all of them require heavy engagement in the free will debate in various ways.

<sup>33</sup> For replies in the spirit of Molinism, see Flint 2006 and Perszyk 2012; for a broader set of responses, see Zagzebski 1996.

*Specific theological doctrines*

Finally, philosophers of religion also find themselves enmeshed in freedom-related problems when attempting to elucidate and defend specific theological doctrines. Again, we will be satisfied with providing two examples.

The doctrine of creation might at first seem somewhat remote from debates about freedom of will. In fact, however, a moment's reflection on the traditional view of creation brings questions of free will and agency immediately into view.<sup>34</sup> In large part this is because the standard doctrine of creation (in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, at least) emphasizes that God creates *freely*. Behind this emphasis is a view according to which creation is a gift for which we can and ought to be thankful to God. But gratitude will seem to be inappropriate to the degree that creation is not an expression of freedom but rather a necessary emanation. Already, then—just in the framing of the doctrine—we find a substantive commitment to various claims about the nature and value of freedom. But even if we simply grant this element of the doctrine of creation (the element according to which God creates freely), the question that we can hardly escape is what it could *mean* that God creates freely. What would it be for a maximally good, powerful, and knowledgeable being to bring about the existence of the universe out of nothing—*freely*? And once the nature of God's freedom is on the table it will be hard to keep from wondering about the relationship between God's freedom and our own. Does the concept of freedom apply to God in the same way that it applies to human beings? And should, therefore, our model of human agency be isomorphic to our model of divine agency?<sup>35</sup>

A related doctrine of divine conservation raises equally puzzling questions about divine freedom and action. According to this doctrine, God's power with respect to the world is not exhausted by creation. There is more to do after creation, for the created order must be *sustained*. The idea, then, is that the universe depends not only on God's creative power but also upon God's conserving power—a divine energy or action maintaining it in existence. And just as creation is an expression of divine freedom, so also, supposedly, is conservation. But here a problem emerges. If God freely conserves everything in existence, then God freely conserves in existence the intentions and material means by which wicked people will inflict horrible suffering on innocents (for example). This should lead us to wonder why, insofar as God is at least partially *causally* responsible for the horrible event by virtue of conservation, God is not also at least partially *morally* responsible. The theist who hopes to reconcile the doctrine of conservation with the maximal goodness of God will, it seems clear, have to think quite deeply about freedom, agency, intentionality, responsibility, and blame.

We hasten to emphasize that our cherry-picked sample of contexts and cases wherein philosophers of religion have been forced to grapple with the questions of

<sup>34</sup> For a different worry about the relationship between creation and freedom than the one we focus on here, see Rowe 2004.

<sup>35</sup> For one treatment of these questions, see Timpe 2012.

action theory are intended simply to underscore the widespread overlap between these two domains of contemporary philosophy.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, let us briefly address a worry that may be brewing. As is likely already noticeable—and will no doubt become increasingly so in subsequent pages—the brand of theism receiving primary attention throughout this volume is of the Christian variety. The principal explanation for this fact, we contend, is that Christian theism has (as a matter of sociological fact) dominated the larger discussions in philosophy of religion to which our book aims to make some contribution. While we think that philosophy of religion need not be so restricted, and indeed should not be, the dominance of Christian theism is part of the philosophical context we have inherited. The goal of the present volume is not to challenge this inheritance, though we welcome projects that would expand it. Furthermore, we trust that much that is said here in a Christian key could either be endorsed by those belonging to other theological traditions or be transcribed into a key more fitting to them. With these points in mind, we can turn to a brief overview of the contributions to this volume that we hope will allow you to get the most from your careful study of each.

## What is to Come

The first few chapters in the volume address some methodological issues arising from philosophical inquiry into issues at the intersection of libertarianism and theism. The volume opens with Manuel Vargas' 'The Runeberg Problem: Theism, Libertarianism, and Motivated Reasoning.' Drawing on the fictional character Nils Runeberg from a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, Vargas describes 'runeberging' as a kind of motivated reasoning in which we first accept a conclusion and only afterward construct, consciously or not, an argument for that conclusion. While runeberging may happen in many domains, Vargas is particularly interested in potential runeberging with respect to libertarianism. He contends, on both empirical and conceptual grounds, that libertarianism is often the result of motivated reasoning by theists. The empirical grounds for his runeberging hypothesis are constituted by the recent survey data mentioned earlier indicating that, among professional philosophers, theists (and non-naturalists more generally) are significantly more likely to be libertarians than are naturalists. The conceptual grounds he adduces have also been mentioned earlier. Here, Vargas emphasizes that a robust account of the nature of free will is needed to make sense of the possibility of the deserved damnation that many theistic traditions embrace. This demand for robustness naturally presses the theist toward libertarianism. While Vargas grants that these grounds do not entail that the runeberging hypothesis is true, he argues that they support a strong *prima facie* case for the view that theists engage in

<sup>36</sup> We have resisted the temptation to canvas the many other theological doctrines that implicate views of free will. Consider, in this regard, the immense literatures on Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Incarnation, Atonement, etc.

motivated reasoning when considering arguments for libertarianism. Furthermore, since such motivated reasoning is unlikely to track the truth, the runeberging hypothesis (to the degree that it is plausible) gives us a substantive reason to be skeptical of the accuracy of libertarian views of agency, especially those put forward by theists.

Vargas' methodological criticism of theistic libertarianism is underscored by John Martin Fischer's 'Libertarianism and the Problem of Flip-flopping.' Whereas Vargas argues that we have reasons to be suspicious of libertarian views insofar as they may be the product of motivated reasoning, Fischer argues that we have independent reasons comparatively to favor compatibilist views. Fischer makes this argument by way of appeal to what he takes to be a relevant disadvantage of libertarianism by comparison with compatibilism; namely, that the former is susceptible to a disturbing form of empirical refutation in a way that the latter is not. Since libertarianism requires indeterminism, a libertarian who comes to believe that the laws of nature are deterministic will either have to reject her earlier belief in freedom and responsibility or become a compatibilist. In other words, to avoid free will skepticism this libertarian will have to 'flip-flop' on the compatibility question. Fischer uses Peter van Inwagen as an example of a potential flip-flopper. This is because van Inwagen has admitted that if he were to become convinced that libertarianism is false, he would become a compatibilist rather than a free will skeptic, since denying that we are free agents 'is simply not an option.'<sup>37</sup> On Fischer's view, rejecting the premise of an argument (here, Rule Beta of the Consequence Argument for the incompatibility of free will and determinism) simply to avoid an unwanted conclusion is problematic, in part because the evidence involved in coming to believe that determinism is true is not related to the evidence in favor of the transfer principle at the heart of the Consequence Argument. Fischer then extends his criticism of the flip-flopping maneuver to put unique pressure on libertarians who are also theists. As indicated earlier, many theists think that libertarian agency is needed to defend belief in God's existence against the problem of evil. But if such a theist were to come to believe that determinism is true, she would either have to flip-flop now regarding not only libertarianism but also its relationship to the existence of evil—or else give up her belief in God. But surely one's religious beliefs should not be in jeopardy in this way—they should not be held hostage to the possibility of esoteric discoveries about the structure of the laws of nature, for example. Therefore, Fischer concludes, the theist in particular has reasons for preferring compatibilism to libertarianism.

In her contribution 'The Cost of Freedom,' Laura W. Ekstrom directly addresses the role that appeal to the existence of free will has played in the debates about evil, particularly the way the former is used to justify God's allowing the latter. Ekstrom seeks to evaluate whether our having free will is, after all, worth the cost. That is, she asks whether the value of our having free will would outweigh the costs of the various evils that it would make possible. How we answer this question regarding the

<sup>37</sup> Van Inwagen 2008, 341.

value of freedom, Ekstrom notes, will depend on how we construe its nature. Here, then, she canvases three general approaches to free will found in the contemporary literature and offers some reasons the theist might have for being attracted to each. The first is what she calls the ‘rational abilities view,’ which holds that free will consists in the ability to recognize and act for good reasons. While this view has its merits, Ekstrom thinks that such an understanding of free will cannot do the work the theist needs it to do regarding evil, insofar as one could have this kind of freedom without having the ability to do evil. The second approach is a hierarchical understanding of free will, modeled on the influential work of Harry Frankfurt. Here too, Ekstrom argues that such an account of free will cannot do the work the theist needs done with respect to the problem of evil; in this case because, on the hierarchical model, free will appears to be compatible with divinely imposed good desires. The third approach she considers is an incompatibilist account. As an instance, Ekstrom describes an event-causal libertarian view on which freedom is grounded in causally indeterministic connections between an agent’s reasons and her decisions. It is a libertarian conception of freedom such as this one that has hope for undergirding a free-will-based response to the problem of evil.<sup>38</sup> Ekstrom then considers a number of ways that having libertarian free will could be worth the cost of the evil it makes possible, in terms of the intrinsic and extrinsic value of this freedom. She affirms that libertarian free will may be required to secure both a veridical sense of self and moral responsibility of the sort grounding deserved praise and blame. However, she argues that free will of the libertarian variety is not required for love, for meaningfulness of life, or for creativity. Her conclusion is that libertarian free will is not so clearly worth its costs..

The next few chapters directly address the relationship between libertarian views and religious belief. In ‘One Hell of a Problem for Christian Compatibilists,’ Jerry L. Walls argues that while the philosophical case for libertarianism is not decisive, there are a pair of sufficient reasons for theists to reject compatibilist accounts of human agency. According to Walls:

if compatibilism is true by virtue of the reality that God has in fact determined all things and that we are free and responsible for our actions, it is all but impossible to maintain the perfect goodness of God. More specifically, it is all but impossible to maintain the perfect goodness of God in a world full of sinners held blameworthy by God, and altogether impossible to do so if orthodox Christianity is true.<sup>39</sup>

In particular, Walls contends that if compatibilism is true, then God could have created a world in which all persons freely did only the good at all times. But it is clear that the actual world is not such a world; and Walls thinks that the attempt to find a sufficient justification, under determinism, for God’s creating the actual world rather than a

<sup>38</sup> Here, Plantinga’s work on the logical problem of evil is, as mentioned earlier, particularly influential. At the heart of his defense is not just libertarian freedom, but what he calls ‘morally significant freedom,’ which requires the ability to do morally good and morally bad actions. See Plantinga 1977, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Walls (this volume), 80.

morally perfect world is unsuccessful. Here he draws a potentially damning comparison between divine determination of human agents to act in morally problematic ways (this divine determination being required, he thinks, by the assumption of the conjunction of determinism and classical theism) and manipulation. This manipulation result constitutes his first formal reason for concluding that compatibilism sits uneasily within an orthodox theistic framework. However, it is especially when we consider his second reason for rejecting compatibilist accounts of free will, when issues related to eschatological judgment are on the table, that Walls thinks theistic compatibilism can be found decisively wanting. Walls argues from God's necessary love for all creation to the claim, on the assumption of compatibilism, that necessarily God would determine all creatures freely to accept divine love and be saved. But this kind of guaranteed universal salvation, he contends, is at odds with orthodox Christianity—which holds that it is at least possible, if not actual, that some (and perhaps many) persons will be lost. Compatibilists, then, must either deny that God truly loves all persons or deny that damnation is possible for anyone. The orthodox Christian, and the classical theist more generally, thus has good reason, Walls claims, for rejecting compatibilist accounts of human freedom.

In 'Relative Responsibility and Theism,' Tamler Sommers extends the account of responsibility developed in his recent book *Relative Justice*, bringing it to bear upon an earlier version of Walls' argument against compatibilism. One crucial conclusion of Sommers' book is that the quite substantive variations in cross-cultural attitudes and intuitions about responsibility cannot easily be explained away. Given the roles that these attitudes and intuitions have in motivating and defending competing accounts of responsibility, he draws the relativistic conclusion that there is no principled way of establishing *universally true* conditions of moral responsibility. Even within particular theological traditions, Sommers notices conflicting claims about responsibility, such as the commitment (within Christianity) both to a control condition on moral responsibility and to the doctrine of original sin. Sommers argues that libertarian and compatibilist Christians alike have a hard time taking all of the biblical data into account. Here he appeals to cases such as God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart, contending that neither the libertarian nor the compatibilist has a satisfactory account of how God can be perfectly good while holding agents responsible for things that are beyond their control. Turning to polemics, Sommers focuses on two principles Walls has enunciated in support of his libertarian conclusions:

(PP) When the actions of a person are entirely determined by another intelligent being who intentionally determines (manipulates) the person to act exactly as the other being wishes, then the person cannot rightly be held accountable and punished for his actions;<sup>40</sup> and

(EMP) A being who freely and deliberately chooses to determine (manipulate) another being to perform evil actions is himself evil. That being is even more perverse

<sup>40</sup> Walls (this volume), 86.

if he not only determines the other being to perform evil actions, but then holds him accountable, and punishes him for those very actions.<sup>41</sup>

What cases like the hardening of Pharaoh's heart show, Sommers suggests, is the tension between these two claims. Sommers then considers a number of possible avenues for reconciling these two commitments, arguing that they fail in each case—in part because the intuitions that govern our theorizing are neither universal nor fixed. As a result, both theistic libertarians and theistic compatibilists will have to appeal to divine mystery or inscrutability in a way that undermines Walls' claim that libertarianism is comparatively more satisfying than compatibilism.

In 'Libertarianism and Theological Determinism,' Derk Pereboom argues neither for libertarianism nor for compatibilism. More modestly, he argues that while there are reasons for theists to endorse libertarianism over compatibilism, an incompatibilist version of theological determinism actually has substantial advantages. Pereboom begins with a list of the various goods that libertarian agency would secure: basic desert, particularly robust forms of autonomy and creativity, and a way of defending traditional accounts of damnation. The primary advantage of theological determinism, by contrast, is that it affords a strong notion of divine providence, as well as the comfort that this doctrine can provide for the religious believer. The incompatibilist version of theological determinism Pereboom favors entails, he grants, the (apparently costly) conclusion that human agents are not morally responsible for their actions. However, Pereboom connects this theological view with the account of agency he has developed elsewhere, according to which the most important features of human moral and interpersonal life (praise, blame, punishment, love, meaning, etc.) can be retained even in the face of the denial of moral responsibility. The denial of human moral responsibility does, he admits, have two important implications for theology, however. The first is that insofar as humans are not deserving of punishment for their 'sins,' they are not deserving of damnation. Pereboom thus endorses a form of universalism (of the sort that Walls rejects). Second, and more central to Pereboom's chapter, are the implications of responsibility nihilism for God's relationship to evil. Pereboom's argument here is multifaceted. First, he argues that, given his brand of theological determinism, the problem of accounting for God's causing apparently 'moral' evils is akin to the problem *all* theists have regarding the existence of natural evils that God could, but does not, prevent. Pereboom then argues that the theist's best response to the problem of evil generally, a response that the theological determinist can also deploy, will involve skeptical theism.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, he argues, the theological determinist is in a better position to advocate skeptical theism than is her libertarian counterpart.

<sup>41</sup> Walls (this volume), 87.

<sup>42</sup> Very briefly, the skeptical theistic strategy of response to the problem of evil involves centrally a defensive appeal to our human cognitive limitations in the assessment of the reasons an omnipotent and omnibenevolent being would have for permitting the evils the world actually contains. The literature on skeptical theism has burgeoned over the last two decades. For a very useful introduction to the strategy (and criticisms of it), see Dougherty 2014.

As a result, Pereboom reaffirms his commitment to theological determinism (and the robust view of divine providence it supports) and concludes that libertarianism is ‘dispensable’ for the theist.

Pereboom’s chapter is followed by Timothy O’Connor’s philosophical attack on Pereboom’s earlier work on theological determinism (work that is continuous with the above). In ‘Against Theological Determinism,’ O’Connor argues that the consequences of embracing theological determinism are more serious than Pereboom suggests and that incompatibilist versions of theological determinism are ultimately unacceptable—at least to Christian theists. *Contra* Pereboom, O’Connor claims that theological determinism would make God’s involvement in horrendous evil more problematic than it would be on an indeterministic model. Beyond this central point of disagreement, O’Connor also thinks other central beliefs and practices of Christianity are inconsistent with the denial of human freedom; for example, the centrality of confession and repentance, the standard conception of divine–human interaction, in addition to various Christological doctrines. In particular, O’Connor raises a dilemma: either the Incarnate Son of God, like other human beings, lacked free will or was unique among human beings in having it. On the first disjunct, it is hard to see how the Incarnate Son and God the Father could be understood to be engaged in genuine dialogue, since God the Father must be taken to be determining the thoughts and actions of the Son (or, to be more precise, of the human nature of the Son). If, on the second disjunct, the Incarnate Son was unique among human beings in being free and responsible, then the Christian doctrine that the Son was human in the same way that we are human is called into question. In light of the cumulative case these considerations constitute, O’Connor concludes that theological determinism cuts too deeply against Christian belief and practice.

Whereas Walls and O’Connor think that religious beliefs give us reason to prefer incompatibilism (and Sommers and Pereboom disagree), T. J. Mawson argues that ‘Classical Theism has No Implications for the Debate between Libertarianism and Compatibilism.’ Mawson begins both by noting that philosophical commitments come as a package deal and by suggesting that we are seeking to achieve reflective equilibrium among them—seeking to effect a desirable consistency among our commitments and intuitive judgments. According to Mawson, classical theism (on which the usual set of omnipredicates are attributed to God) does not provide an overriding reason for its adherents to endorse either libertarianism or compatibilism. The package view consisting of the conjunction of classical theism and libertarianism has the same degree of internal support as the package view consisting of the conjunction of classical theism and compatibilism. If there are reasons favoring one package over the other, these reasons arise from the superiority of one view of free will over the other, and have nothing to do with classical theism. (Despite being a libertarian, Mawson thus disagrees with other leading theistic libertarians who insist that compatibilists cannot give a satisfactory response to the problem of evil.) Surprisingly, Mawson does not think that the same holds true in the other direction; instead, he argues that an antecedent

commitment to libertarian views *can* give one a reason to be a theist rather than a naturalist. This is because a commitment to libertarianism (particularly an agent-causal form of libertarianism) may raise the relative plausibility of substance dualism—and a commitment to substance dualism may, in turn, raise the relative plausibility of the claim that some form of theism is true. On Mawson's view, then, Vargas' earlier suggestion that theism gives us reason to be libertarians gets the direction of fit backwards.

Helen Steward's 'Libertarianism as a Naturalistic Position' aligns with Mawson's thesis that libertarianism and theism are not so tightly connected. Whereas some argue that libertarian accounts of agency make sense only within a larger supernaturalistic framework, Steward develops her libertarian view while simultaneously endorsing atheism. Not only does she think that one can endorse a naturalistically friendly form of libertarianism, more controversially she suggests that 'libertarianism should, on the contrary, be regarded as the position of choice for those who take their science seriously.'<sup>43</sup> Steward's argument for this striking conclusion rests on three points. First, she insists that contemporary theorists have generally failed to take seriously enough what it means for humans to be *animals*; free will is, she suggests, best understood as a particular sort of animal agency. Once we see the connections between human free will and animal agency more broadly, the suspicion that libertarian accounts of free will require a problematic commitment to human exceptionalism can be dismissed. Steward's second claim is that action *simpliciter*, and not just *free* action, should be seen to be incompatible with determinism. Accepting this form of *agency incompatibilism* makes it easier to see how incompatibilist accounts of freedom could be compatible with naturalism. Third, she insists that the typical understanding of indeterminism as a *threat* to freedom is misguided. In fact, she contends, a more thorough understanding of macrophysical indeterminism (especially in biophysics) undermines the luck or randomness concerns frequently expressed by compatibilists and free will skeptics. Moreover, she suggests that determinism is not a respectable scientific possibility but instead 'a philosophers' mirage.'<sup>44</sup> Steward concludes with some methodological considerations regarding what motivates libertarian belief in the existence of free will.

In 'Agent Causation and Theism,' Meghan Griffith argues that there is a connection between one's religious belief and one's view of free will, though the connection does not principally involve how one approaches the compatibility question. Like Walls and O'Connor, Griffith thinks that an antecedent commitment to theism gives one reason (or, perhaps better, a further reason) for endorsing a particular view of agency—specifically, on her view, agent causation. Given the crucial role that free will and responsibility typically play in their worldviews, theists have special reason for preferring an account that adequately captures the kind of robust agency we ordinarily think we have. Griffith argues that while some non-agent-causal views of human agency (such as those offered by David Velleman and R. Jay Wallace) address and attempt to

<sup>43</sup> Steward (this volume), 158.

<sup>44</sup> Steward (this volume), 168.

solve the problems facing standard reductionist positions, these alternative views ultimately fail to account for the robust agency we take ourselves to enjoy. Griffith argues that, unlike these alternative views, agent-causalism is able to account for our robust conception of agency without incurring the difficulties of reductionism and without appealing to a problematic separation of moral and theoretical standpoints. By way of conclusion, Griffith considers—with an eye toward dismissing—some structural reasons that so many contemporary free will theorists have resisted agent-causation. Like Vargas, Fischer, and Mawson, Griffith shows a particular sensitivity to the way that one's beliefs about free will are intertwined with one's other metaphysical commitments.

Michael J. Almeida's chapter, 'Bringing about Perfect Worlds,' directly challenges a claim that we have already referenced a number of times: namely, that Alvin Plantinga's free will defense (with its appeal to the possibility of libertarian free will) solves the logical problem of evil. As mentioned earlier, Plantinga's response to the logical problem attempted to show the broadly logical compatibility of God and evil. Plantinga sought to show this by arguing that there may be some possible worlds that not even God can actualize. After all, Plantinga argued, it is possible that all creaturely essences suffer from transworld depravity—which would entail that every free creature would go wrong with respect to at least one moral action if God were to create a world containing that creature.<sup>45</sup> Almeida argues that the thesis of universal transworld depravity is not only false but necessarily so, and thus that it is possible that God can actualize a morally perfect world. As Almeida notes, one way that God can actualize a world in which an agent *S* performs some action *A* is by strongly actualizing *S*'s doing *A*, that is, by simply *causing* *S* to do *A*. If libertarianism is true (as Plantinga supposes it is) however, God cannot simply *cause S's freely* doing *A*. But Almeida argues that God can nevertheless actualize *S*'s freely doing *A*—not by causing this state of affairs but by causing another state of affairs that includes it; namely, a state of affairs including God's *predicting* that *S* will freely do *A*. (Almeida refers to this special form of actualization available to God even under libertarianism as 'unrestricted.')

Given that God is, necessarily, a perfect predictor, if God predicts that *S* will freely do *A*, then *S* will, in fact, do *A*. And if God predicts that all created free creatures will always do what is right, then we have a possible world containing free creatures and yet no moral evil.<sup>46</sup> After considering

<sup>45</sup> More technically, 'An essence *E* suffers from transworld depravity if and only if for every world *W* such that *E* contains the properties is significantly free in *W* and always does what is right in *W*, there is an action *A* and a maximal world segment *S'* such that

1. *S'* includes *E*'s being instantiated and *E*'s instantiation's being free with respect to *A* and *A*'s being morally significant for *E*'s instantiation.
2. *S'* is included in *W* but includes neither *E*'s instantiation's performing *A* nor *E*'s instantiation's refraining from performing *A*.
3. If *S'* were actual, then the instantiation of *E* would have gone wrong with respect to *A'* (Plantinga 1977, 52–3).

<sup>46</sup> Almeida also argues that God can create a necessarily perfect predictor and has a second way of ensuring a possible world with free creatures and no moral evil.

a number of objections to unrestricted actualization, Almeida concludes that God can in fact bring about a morally perfect world containing free creatures even if libertarianism is true. And if this is right, then a central theological reason for endorsing libertarianism—that it helps provide a solution to the logical problem of evil—is undermined.

W. Matthews Grant's 'Divine Universal Causality and Libertarian Freedom' examines another frequently claimed relationship between libertarian accounts of agency and divine action. Since libertarianism entails incompatibilism, it can seem, as noted earlier, that God cannot simply cause a creature to perform an action freely in the libertarian sense. But Grant argues that, on a particular account of divine agency, God's causing creaturely action is consistent with the creatures performing those actions freely, even on the assumption of incompatibilism. At the heart of Grant's chapter is the doctrine of divine universal causality, prominent among medieval philosophers and theologians, according to which, necessarily, God directly causes all beings<sup>47</sup> to exist—for as long as those beings do exist. Grant argues that the doctrine of divine universal causality is consistent with libertarianism by arguing for what he calls 'the extrinsic model of divine agency,' which is compatible with both libertarianism and the doctrine of universal causality. On this model, God's causing a creature to perform some action *A* does not introduce a factor external to the agent which is both prior to and logically sufficient for her *A*-ing. Since it is only the existence of a prior and logically sufficient condition for the agent's action that would rule out that action's being free, God's causing a creature to do the action in question does not undermine creaturely freedom. Grant argues that the extrinsic model of divine agency is consistent both with creatures being able to do otherwise and with their being ultimately responsible for their actions. Furthermore, Grant goes on to argue that competitor accounts of divine agency, on which God's causing a creaturely action *does* entail there being a prior and logically sufficient condition for that action, are incompatible with the conjunction of the doctrine of divine universal causality with other plausible theological assumptions.

Neal Judisch's 'Divine Conservation and Creaturely Freedom' addresses a closely related issue. Rather than focusing on God's *causing* of events, he focuses instead on God's *conserving* all beings in existence.<sup>48</sup> Judisch contends that, just as an argument can be given from the truth of theological determinism to the non-existence of free will, so too can a parallel argument be given from the truth of theological conservation to the claim that God conserves or sustains the world and everything in it from moment to moment in such a way that created entities exist only because God makes or enables them to. Another threat to freedom looms. However, whereas classical theists need not accept the doctrine of theological determinism, they must accept the doctrine of theological conservation. This would seem to make theological conservation a

<sup>47</sup> That is, all beings distinct from God, of course. In this domain, quantifiers (almost) always need to be restricted; and depending on one's views regarding abstracta, this particular quantifier might need to be restricted even further.

<sup>48</sup> See note 47 for qualifications.

potentially more menacing threat to human freedom for the theist than theological determinism. To undermine the threat, Judisch draws a parallel between divine conservation and the supervenience of non-physical properties on physical properties. Arguably, such supervenience would undermine free agency since the mental states involved in agency (e.g. beliefs, desires, intentions, etc.) bring about or constitute a purportedly free action while also supervening on physical properties; but neither these subvenient physical properties nor their physical consequences are under the agent's control. One can thus use a Consequence-style argument to conclude that physicalist supervenience would undermine free will just as the incompatibilist thinks causal determinism would. Judisch takes this form of argument seriously and considers the structural similarities between physicalist supervenience and common understandings of theological conservation. He suggests a different approach to the doctrine of theological conservation—one that clearly avoids undermining human free action. On this view, divine conservation does not *cause* human deliberation, action, and intention but, rather, *is responsive to them*. He ends by arguing that this model does not conflict with the doctrine of divine immutability and could be rendered compatible with agent-causal approaches to human freedom.

The last three chapters—Rebekah L. H. Rice's 'Reasons and Divine Action: A Dilemma,' Kevin Timpe's 'God's Freedom, God's Character,' and Jesse Couenhoven's 'The Problem of God's Immutable Freedom'—explore the nature of divine freedom. It is worth noting that God's freedom has received considerably less attention in recent philosophical theology than other divine attributes. The chapters in this group not only aim to develop a more comprehensive account of divine action; in addition, each does so in ways that are sensitive to the potential implications such an account may have for theorizing about human freedom. Rice examines the relationship between two common theistic commitments about divine agency: (1) that divine action should be thought of as a (and perhaps *the*) paradigm example of agent-causal activity; and (2) that God acts for reasons. Rice suspects that there is a tension between these two claims. The vast majority of theists will admit, she believes, that God has motivations for acting.<sup>49</sup> Attributing motivational states (like reasons) to God would prevent divine activity from being capricious—and thereby help preserve God's moral perfection. Nevertheless, Rice worries that agent-causal theories of action cannot adequately account for what it means to act for a reason. While she does not think that the arguments mustered here are clearly decisive against agent-causalism, she does think that they give us reason to begin to look elsewhere for an account of divine action. Rice then outlines what she takes to be a more plausible account of divine action modeled on a form of the causal theory of action that is event-causal (rather than agent-causal) in nature. Rice concludes by suggesting that considerations of divine action could positively influence the broader debate in action theory between agent-causalists and event-causalists.

<sup>49</sup> See Pruss 2013.

Timpe also uses divine freedom as a touchstone for understanding human freedom. While understanding that divine nature and agency is, in many ways, more complicated than understanding human agency, divine agency may nevertheless present a cleaner model for understanding some issues related to its human form. Timpe is especially interested in the connection between an agent's moral character and those actions that the agent is capable of freely performing. Given the assertion, standard to Perfect Being Theology, that God necessarily has a morally perfect character, an investigation into the relationship between God's character and actions may provide a less complicated case for understanding the relationship between a human agent's character and what she wills. Timpe endorses a version of the 'Guise of the Good' thesis, according to which an agent can only will some course of action that appears to her as good in some way. At the same time, an agent's moral character will frame what possible courses of action will appear to her as good. Timpe then argues that even if an agent's character determines her choices or actions, that fact alone does not threaten the agent's freedom so long as her character was not formed in a responsibility-undermining way. In God's case, then, even if the divine character necessitates God's acting in a particular way, this does not mean that freedom is undermined or infringed, provided that God is not determined to have the particular character that issued in the action. According to Timpe, these considerations do not give any special credence to compatibilism, however. If this incompatibilist account of divine freedom is correct, it gives us a way of beginning to understand how human freedom could depend on human character in a way that restricts an agent's possibilities for free choices without violating a commitment to incompatibilism.

In the final chapter of the volume, Jesse Couenhoven addresses many of the issues arising in Timpe's chapter and explores the roles that different conceptions of freedom can and should play in theological reflection on divine freedom. In doing so, he notes that many of these different conceptions cut across (and may, indeed, be orthogonal to) the compatibility question on which contemporary philosophers have tended to focus. Couenhoven attends to the differences between volitionalist accounts of freedom, which treat freedom (and responsibility) principally as the result of acts of the will, and non-volitionalist accounts, which do not. With these differences in mind, Couenhoven first argues that (the popularity of volitionalist views notwithstanding) non-volitionalist views are better able to account for the nature of divine freedom and responsibility. Second, Couenhoven nevertheless argues that non-volitionalism is by itself insufficient to account for divine responsibility, particularly when considering the immanent Trinity. What is needed, in addition, is a normative conception of free will, under which perfected freedom is intrinsically connected with 'the good.' The volume thus concludes by modeling two of its central emphases. The first is a commitment to bringing philosophical reflection on the nature of free will into conversation with related theological reflection (with some confidence that the two disciplines will proceed more fruitfully by engaging in close conversation with each other). The second is recognition of the fact that, while the compatibility question has—and will likely

continue to have—a central role to play in philosophical and theological reflection on freedom, it is not the only question on which such reflection should be focused.

To sum up, we are convinced that the contributors to this volume have advanced our understanding of the relationship between theorizing about free will and theorizing about the rationality of theistic belief and commitment. We are confident that your own understanding will be advanced by careful attention to each of their essays.<sup>50</sup>

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