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AN ANALOGICAL APPROACH TO DIVINE FREEDOM

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Abstract: Assuming an analogical account of religious predication, this paper utilizes recent work in the metaphysics of free will to build towards an account of divine freedom. I argue that what actions an agent is capable of freely performing depends on his or her moral character.

A key issue in much of philosophy of religion, as well as aspects of contemporary theology, concerns the possibility and nature of religious predication. For those who do not share the logical positivists' rejection of the meaningfulness of religious language or D. Z. Phillip's view that religious language functions in a completely different manner than other language, there remains the problem of how finite, human words and concepts can refer to a presumably infinite divine being in such a way that our talk about the nature of divine free will is meaningful. There are three general options as to the nature of religious language: that it is equivocal, that it is univocal, or that it is analogical. Historically, the vast majority of both theology and philosophy of religion has rejected the first of these options (for, I think, good reasons), claiming that if all religious language were equivocal, then we would be unable to conceive of or understand the divine nature. The majority of contemporary theologians and philosophers of religion thus endorse either univocal predication or analogical predication, though there is considerable disagreement on which of these options is to be preferred. It is not my intention to settle this debate in the present project, and ultimately I do not think that the sketch of divine freedom below is to wed to either option. If religious language is univocal, 'free will', when predicated of the divine nature, means the same thing as when predicated of human nature.[1] For instance, traditional theology assumes that God is necessarily omnibenevolent, and thus He is unable to choose morally blameworthy options for action. While other divine attributes might limit the range of divine freedom, the fundamental nature of freedom is the same in both cases, and a theological account of divine freedom can be drawn rather easily from philosophical work on creaturely freedom.

On the other hand, if free will is predicated only analogously of God, then the connection between divine freedom and creaturely freedom is much less tight, and the application of the current philosophical work to the case of God's freedom

[1] This will be true even though there obviously will be other relevant differences between the divine and human natures which will impact their free will.

will be harder.[2] On this view, it is possible for finite, human terms to refer literally and truly to God while still respecting the ontological difference between God's existence and the existence of created, finite beings so long as the way those terms refer to God is analogical. For example, to use a common example from Christian theology, the meaning of the predicate involved in saying 'God is a loving father' is not univocal with the meaning of the predicate involved in saying 'Brent is a loving father.' But neither are the two meanings completely equivocal, for presumably what it means for God to be a loving father bears a significant relationship to what it means for Brent to be a loving father. Saying what exactly this relationship is is at the heart of an analogical approach to religious language. Analogical predication can be approached either through the order of being or the order of knowing. So, to return to our example, what it means for Brent to be a loving father is grounded in, or dependent upon, what it means for God to be a loving father. The order of being is thus grounded in God. But epistemically, we first become aware of what it means to be a loving father through humans such a Brent and then later come to realize what it means for God to be a loving father. This is the order of knowing. According to William Alston's influential work on analogy, we must always begin, epistemologically, on the human pole of analogical predication:

> Is it necessary that we borrow terms learned in other spheres of discourse for talk of God, or could it be otherwise? Could we establish theological predicates from scratch on their home ground, just as we do with terms for speaking of human beings? No, the existing order is our only alternative, and for the following reason. We have the kind of cognitive access to human beings that undergirds a common vocabulary for speaking to each other, but we lack that support for speaking of God.[3]

Thus, even if freedom is predicated analogically of God and creatures, our reflection on the former nevertheless will begin from our reflection on the latter.

My primary goal in the present paper is to use the analogical framework to approach the issue of divine freedom. For while the majority of recent philosophical work on the nature of free will has focused on the nature of human free will, significantly less attention has focused on the nature of divine freedom. And if Alston is right that we must begin our reflection on the nature of God with the order of knowing, then there may be a good reason behind this difference in attention. But true freedom, the kind that grounds and gives meaning to human free will, will be God's freedom. More specifically, I want to explore the ways that ways that divine freedom differs from created freedom, particularly as it pertains to the relationship between an agent's free will and his moral character. A consideration of these issues can, I believe, have both theological and philosophical import. Theologically, the analogical nature of free will can help increase our understanding of the divine nature. Philosophically, I suspect that the relationship between a being's free will and his moral character will be particularly important for making some important headway in the contemporary analytic debates regarding the nature of free will. It is my hope that focusing on the relationship between a being's free

[2] Whether or not 'analogy by attribution' is really a form of equivocal predication, as Richard Swinburne claims in chapter three of his *Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) is an issue that I cannot address here.

[3] William Alston, 'Religious Language', in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William Wainwright(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 232.

will and his moral character might also prove fruitful for breaking the dialectical stalemate which has arisen between compatibilists and incompatibilists. What is most important for whether an agent acts freely and responsibly is not whether the causes of that action necessitated it, but whether that choice connects with the agent's moral character in a way that suggests genuine agency.

I
Two Central Controversies Regarding the Nature of Free Will

Two central controversies are the foci for the majority of the contemporary philosophical literature on free will.[4] The first controversy involves which of two general conceptions regarding the nature of free will is more apt. According to the first of these, free will is primarily a function of being able to do otherwise than one in fact does. For example, you have free will with respect to listening to this lecture if you could have attended a different lecture or perhaps gone for a walk instead. According to the second approach, free will is primarily a function of an agent being the ultimate source of her actions. On this approach, you are listening to this lecture of your own free will if nothing outside of you—say a hypnotist or a nefarious neurosurgeon—is the ultimate explanation of your action or choice. Both of these notions can be seen in the following passage taken from Robert Kane:

> We believe we have free will when we view ourselves as agents capable of influencing the world in various ways. Open alternatives, or alternative possibilities, seem to lie before us. We reason and deliberate among them and choose. We feel (1) it is 'up to us' what we choose and how we act; and this means we could have chosen or acted otherwise. As Aristotle noted: when acting is 'up to us,' so is not acting. This 'up-to-us-ness' also suggests (2) the ultimate control of our actions lie in us and not outside us in factors beyond our control.[5]

The vast majority of the contemporary free will literature focuses on the first of these two approaches, so much so that John Martin Fischer sometimes speaks of this as being the traditional view: 'Traditionally the most influential view about the sort of freedom necessary and sufficient for moral responsibility posits that this sort of freedom involves the availability of genuinely open alternative possibilities at certain key points in one's life.'[6] In contrast, a smaller – but fortunately, in my opinion, growing – percentage of the extant literature focuses primarily on the issues of 'source', 'ultimacy', and 'origination' that are at the heart of the second approach to free will. For ease of use, I will refer to the first of these approaches – the conception that free will is primarily a matter of having alternative possibilities – as the 'alternative possibilities approach.' Similarly, I refer the second of these approaches to the nature of free will – that free will is primarily a matter of our being the ultimate source of our choices – as the 'sourcehood approach'. Elsewhere, I have argued that the recent turn from primarily leeway-based accounts of human freedom to sourcehood based accounts is a positive development, for it takes

[4] The next few paragraphs are taken, with minor adaptation, from chapter 1 of Kevin Timpe, *Free Will: Sourcehood and Its Alternatives* (London: Continuum, 2008).

[5] Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6. See also Robert Kane, 'Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free Will Debates', in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 10. for a similar discussion.

[6] John Martin Fischer, 'Recent Work on Moral Responsibility', *Ethics* 110, no. (1999): 99.

seriously the connection between an agent's moral psychology and her choices. Even if, as some claim, alternative possibilities are a necessary condition for free will, not all alternative possibilities are equally relevant for free will; so the focus simply on their presence (or absence) does not get at the heart of the matter.[7] Rather, what needs to be shown is that the resolution of the leeway is under the control of the agent in some appropriate way. It is at this point that issues of sourcehood are raised. In elaborating this source-based approach below, I shall argue that what an agent chooses is dependent upon what she sees as being good in some way. What we see as being good, as well as the degree to which we are likely to pursue what we take to be the most important good, in turn depend on our moral character.

The second major controversy in the contemporary philosophical literature on free will, and the one that has garnered the most attention, is the relationship between free will and determinism – what Robert Kane calls 'the Compatibility Question.'[8] Most often, the kind of determinism at issue in addressing the Compatibility Question is causal determinism, but the Compatibility Question can also be applied to theological compatibilism. Causal determinism is the thesis that the course of the future is entirely determined by the conjunction of the non-relational past and the laws of nature. Theological determinism, in contrast, is an account of divine providence. According to theological determinism, God's willing an event to happen is both necessary and sufficient for that event occurring. The first part of theological determinism (i.e., 'God's willing an event to happen is necessary for that event occurring') means that no event happens without God's willing that particular event to happen. The second part of this doctrine (i.e., 'God's willing an event to happen is sufficient for that event occurring') means that nothing else is needed in addition to God's will, and what all that willing entails, to guarantee or ensure that the event in question happens. In other words, if God wills a particular event, nothing else can prevent that event from occurring. It could be that both forms of determinism – causal and theological – are true; it could be that God determines all events via causal determinism. But it should be clear from this description that the truth of causal determinism would not entail the truth of theological determinism, nor vice versa.

The two possible answers to the Compatibility Question provide a helpful way to differentiate two of the main positions regarding free will. Compatibilists answer the Compatibility Question in the affirmative, believing that agents could have free will even if either causal or theological determinism were true. In other words, the existence of free will in a possible world is compatible with that world being deterministic. According to the compatibilist, it is possible for an agent to be determined in all her choices and actions and still make at least some of her choices freely. Incompatibilists, on the other hand, answer the Compatibility Question in the negative. According to incompatibilists, the existence of free will is logically incompatible with the truth of determinism. If a given possible world is deterministic, then no agent in that world has free will for that very reason. Furthermore, if one assumes that having free will is a necessary condition for being

[7] Those interested in further discussion of arguments for preferring a source-based rather than leeway-based approach to free will are referred to my *Free Will: Sourcehood and its Alternatives*, particularly chapters 4, 5, and 7.

[8] Kane, 'Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free Will Debates', p. 9.

morally responsible for one's actions, then the incompatibility of free will and determinism would entail the incompatibility of moral responsibility and determinism.

I turn now to the relationship between the dispute between source-based and leeway-based approaches, on the other hand, and the Compatibility Question on the other. The distinction between these two approaches to the nature of free will is orthogonal to the debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists regarding whether or not the truth of determinism would *per se* preclude agents from having free will. One can find compatibilists as well as incompatibilists working primarily within the alternative possibilities approach, as well as both compatibilists and incompatibilists working primarily within the sourcehood approach. I have elucidated these options at greater length elsewhere,[9] and the central argument of that work was that some version of source-based incompatibilism is true. But for present purposes, it is the commitment to sourcehood that will be most important. So while some of what I say below will assume the truth of incompatibilism, those of you who are compatibilists instead will hopefully find much with which to acquiesce despite this fundamental disagreement.

The account of free will that I have previously defended elsewhere is a version of what Dean Zimmerman has more recently called 'virtue libertarianism'. (Again, for those who reject incompatibilism, you can perhaps think of a parallel version of 'virtue compatibilism'.) Zimmerman describes the view as follows:

> According to virtue libertarianism, (i) we sometimes bear moral responsibility for choices we make even when our doing so is not a base case of free choice; what matters is whether the choices spring from genuinely moral virtues and vices.[10]

What is particularly important in Zimmerman's discussion of virtue libertarianism for purposes of my paper today is not the requirement of indeterminism, but rather the connection between an agent's free actions and her moral character. And this connection is one that the compatibilist can adopt – and should – if she endorses a source-based approach to free will. Zimmerman writes:

> Libertarians think that, if all of our choices were determined by prior states of the universe, or divinely determined by God, we would never freely choose to act in one way rather than another. For us, at least, the 'base case' of a free action must be one in which the choice so to act was the outcome of an indeterministic process. The reason libertarians care about whether free choices of this sort occur is *not* that they think that such choices are always important, in and of themselves. Free choices between trivial alternatives would not be very valuable. Even free choices between momentous alternatives can seem insignificant, in the larger scheme of things, if they have no connection with the formation of character. Imagine a free agent, torn between noble and base desires, sometimes freely choosing the good, sometimes the bad. And suppose further that a good or bad choice never makes it easier to choose the good or the bad on further trials. The agent may be choosing freely on each occasion, but she cannot undergo anything like moral growth—if her character improves or declines, the change is not due to the normal sort of moral improvement or

[9] See *Free Will: Sourcehood and its Alternatives*, especially chapters 5-7.

[10] David Zimmerman, 'An Anti-Molinist Replies', in *Molinism: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. Ken Perszyk(New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), p. 26 in manuscript. Actually, this is not quite true, insofar as in my earlier book I am committed only to incompatibilism, and not the existence of free will. Here, however, I will here be assuming the existence of free will.

> deterioration for which we often praise and blame one another. Freedom is needed primarily as a necessary condition for other moral goods. The highest such good is the very possibility of creatures capable of displaying moral virtues—hard-won habits due, at least in part, to a lifetime of free choices.
>
> Choices made because of a genuinely moral virtue (as opposed to a merely excellent disposition) redound to the credit of the agent even when the virtue is so ingrained to make the choice, now, inevitable. Likewise, *mutatis mutandis*, for choices rendered inevitable by vices. Strictly speaking, such choices and action are not freely taken—i.e. they are not examples of the base case of indeterministic, free choosing…. Instances of the base case of free choice are valuable primarily because each one plays a small role in making long-term moral growth a possibility for creatures like us.[11]

Now, I've said that hopefully there is much here that even a compatibilist could concede, particularly provided she were inclined to accept a source-base approach to free will. Though they use different terminology, both of the leading source-based compatibilists think that there is an important connection between an agent's character and her volitions. For Harry Frankfurt, an agent, e.g. Allison, chooses freely if she has a second-order desire for a particular first-order desire to become her volition. Rather than simply being at the whim of her first-order desires, as a wanton is, agents like Allison care about which desires become their volitions – that is, they care about what kind of will they have. And such a caring is indicative of at least something crucial to that agent's moral character. Likewise, on John Martin Fischer's view, an agent wills freely if he chooses as he does (i) because of an appropriately reasons-responsive mechanism and (ii) he sees that mechanism as his own in an appropriate way. Though I do not have the time to go into the details of Fischer's view, both conditions here are linked to a person's moral character. Regarding the first, surely our moral characters – the kinds of people we are, morally speaking – shape what kinds of reasons we respond to; e.g., compassionate individuals see the perceived need of others as a reason for choosing a course of action that will help alleviate that need. Likewise, the virtues of prudence and diligence, among others, involve properly recognizing our moral characters and being willing to put in the requisite work to improve them as much as possible.

So, pausing for a moment to take stock, we see that for all those who adopt a source-based approach to free will, not only the actions themselves but the connection between an agent's actions and her moral character will be important for our evaluation of those actions. This does not mean, of course, that an agent cannot act out of character; in fact, it is precisely that an agent has acted 'out of character' that affects how we evaluate what an agent has freely done. Compare two agents, Brent and Paul, who both freely do a particular morally praiseworthy action; say they both contribute to a charity for those in need. However, Brent has contributed because he has, over the years, fostered the virtues of charity and compassion (and perhaps justice as well); in contrast, this is the first charitable action that Paul has done in years. Most of the time, he's a self-centered, egoistic prat. Not only do we think more highly of Brent's character than we do of Paul's, but we also evaluate his action more highly—even if they give the same amount to the charity, Brent's act of giving is more praiseworthy because it originates from a consistently compassionate character. And Paul's act of giving is less praiseworthy for not having been a part of a consistent pattern of such behaviors. (In other

[11] Ibid., 25f in manuscript.

sense, there is also perhaps some extra moral credit that goes to Paul in this case for acting contrary to his normally vile character. His action may reflect a degree of self-control and perseverance in the face of temptation that Brent's action does not reflect.)

II
FREEDOM AND MORAL CHARACTER

In this section, I consider in more detail the connection between an agent's moral character and her exercise of free will.[12] Though I do not have time to argue for the claim here, I think there is a closer connection between one's free will and the good than is at work in much of the contemporary literature.[13] It was common for the medievals to describe the will as 'an appetite for the good', and thus they saw free will as always oriented towards what the agent believed to be good.[14] Despite this connection's pedigree, the majority of contemporary philosophical work on free will avoids any explicit connection between free choice and 'the good' or even 'the perceived good', instead preferring the language of 'reasons'. But the discussion of reasons for action can be used to make a parallel connection to the one the medievals drew. Consider, for example, the following passage from Richard Swinburne:

> In so far as an action is good, there is reason to do it; and overriding reason for doing the best action or one of the equal best actions. In so far as an action is bad, there is reason not to do it; and in so far as overall it is bad, there is overriding reason not to do it. In general there is overriding reason not to do an action which is wrong (i.e. a breach of obligation). To believe an action is good or bad is to believe these things about it; and our beliefs guide our actions […] .[15]

Though Swinburne is an incompatibilist, one can also find the connection between reasons for action and the perceived good in compatibilists, such as in John Martin Fischer's account of reasons-responsiveness.

Freely performed actions are done with the aim of a goal, and the achieving of that goal serves as a purpose or reason for why the agent did that action. What is key to understanding an agent's choice is the fit between the agent's reasons-giving structure and the goal that she is trying to accomplish in making that choice. If Deanna freely chooses to go to the kitchen to have a cup of coffee, her choice and subsequent behavior were directed at the goal of drinking coffee. The action is performed by the agent for a reason, and the action cannot be fully explained without mention of either (a) the agent and (b) the goal to which she directs the choice and which served as the reason for her choosing to perform that particular action. As R. Jay Wallace points out:

[12] I consider this issue in greater detail in my Kevin Timpe, *Free Will in Philosophical Theology* (London: Continuum, forthcoming).

[13] I thank Susan Gottlöber for pointing out that I need to make this connection in the present context.

[14] See, for just three examples, Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*; Anselm's *On Freedom of Choice*; and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* IaIIae q 8 a 1.

[15] Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 66f.

> It is important to our conception of persons as rational agents […] that [their] motivations and actions […] are guided by and responsive to their deliberative reflection about what they have reason to do. Unless this guidance condition (as we might call it) can be satisfied, we will not be able to make sense of the idea that persons are genuine agents, capable of determining what they shall do through the process of deliberation.[16]

So, when choosing which of various alternatives for action to do, agents are have in mind an end (or ends) that they want to achieve, and the purpose of the action, or the reason for which the action is done, is the achievement of that end. And this purpose or reason that a choice is done for will be connected with the judgment by the agent that the end to be achieved by choice is good. In speaking of reasons here, I mean motivating reason – the reasons that an agent has for doing a particular action and are capable of explaining her choice if she were to perform that action.[17]

There are a number of ways in which an agent's various moral character traits can shape what she freely chooses to do.[18] Here, I just want to focus on two such ways. First, one's character directs one's choices both by influencing what one sees as reasons for actions and influencing how one weighs her reasons, in the sense of rank-ordering the various reasons she has. (For present purposes, I shall focus primarily on one's intellectual reasons, though similar points can be made about affective reasons.) To put this point a slightly different way: in making free decisions, one's character traits affect not only the weights, they also affect the scales. Both of these aspects can be seen as follows. First, given my present moral character I can see no good in torturing a child for a nickel (i.e., I judge that a nickel is not a good reason for willing such an action). Furthermore, when I weigh the good of having a nickel against the goods of the child's bodily and psychological integrity, I easily and clearly decide that the child's welfare wins. My character is involved insofar as if I were more avaricious, I might find monetary gain, even small monetary gain, a good reason to inflict bodily harm on another. Similarly, if I were less empathetic, I may weigh the good of monetary gain more heavily than I do against the good of an innocent child's welfare. Since we freely choose to do only things that we think we have some reason to do, our character affects our free choices by affecting both the weight or strength we assign to reasons, and by affecting the scale by which we compare a reason or set of reasons for acting one way against a reason or set of reasons for acting another.

Given this fact, as well as the fact that moral character can change over time, an agent may develop her moral character in such a way that, given how that agent evaluates and compares her reasons, there may be actions which she no longer sees as reasonable in any way at a particular time, even though another agent may see good reason to perform that same action at that time and the agent herself may have had similar reasons at an earlier time. For example, I no longer see any good in staying up all night simple to watch movies by myself, though I did during my days in university. I no longer judge the mindless enjoyment that comes from

[16] R. Jay Wallace, *Normativity and the Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 44.

[17] Motivational reasons are differentiated from normative reasons; see, for example, Timothy O'Connor, 'Reasons and Causes', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, ed. Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis(Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010).

[18] This paragraph is taken, with modification, from Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe, "Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven," *Faith and Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (2009): 407. The example is adapted from one initially given by Eleonore Stump.

movies as a good reason for engaging in such behavior. And given that movies no longer produce the same emotional enjoyment that they used to, I also lack affective reasons for watching them all night. So, unsurprisingly, I simply do not stay up all night watching movies; nor could I without my current character changing. This is, of course, a rather uninteresting example, but the larger point is worth making explicit. Our characters can be such that we are simply no longer capable of freely choosing certain courses of action without our character first changing from what it is given the role that our character has in shaping our reasons for action. And the reason for this is the connection between one's reasons and the exercise of free will seen earlier. Over time, the performance of certain actions, and the lack of performance of others, will become more and more natural for her to do (or not to do) given her character. As a person's moral character develops even further, she may come to no longer have any reasons for doing certain actions. In these cases, an agent need no longer consciously consider at the time of action what is good for her to do since her character makes that determination automatically, and she will not freely choose to perform those actions.

The exact degree to which we can expect that a person's moral character will become developed in this kind of way will depend on a variety of factors related to the actual psychology of individuals, the time involved in fortifying habits, the degree to which the agent's reasons track what morality demands of this, how attuned their passions are to the demands of virtue, etc. But there seems to be nothing which would, in principle, preclude an agent from so developing her character that she is only capable of the good, and no longer sees any motivational reason for doing wrong actions. Elsewhere, I show how such character formation need not mean an agent loses her free will, even if her moral character precludes her from doing any morally bad actions.[19] It is instead an instance of what Augustine refers to as genuine freedom—our metaphysical free will always used for the good because of our perfected moral character.[20] And this is a point on which Aquinas agrees, at least for an agent who is constrained by a morally good character:

> There is a necessity of compulsion: and this lessens the praise due to virtue, since it is opposed to what is voluntary; for compulsion is contrary to the will. – But there is another necessity resulting from an interior inclination. This does not diminish but increases the praise due to a virtuous act: because it makes the will tend to the act of virtue more intensely. For it is clear that the more perfect is a habit of virtue, the more strongly does it make the will tend to the virtuous good, and the less liable to deflect from it. And when virtue has attained its perfect end, it brings with it a kind of necessity for good action; … and yet the will is not, for that reason, any the less free, or the act less good.[21]

This is, of course, only the broadest of sketches for how a creature's moral character constrains the actions that are available to her while not undermining her freedom and responsibility. But the general shape of the view should be clear enough for present purposes.

III

[19] For more along these lines, see Timpe, *Free Will in Philosophical Theology*, especially chapters 2 and 6.
[20] See *On Free Choice of the Will*.
[21] Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, trans. English Dominicans (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1934), bk. 3b, chap. 138.

COMPLETING THE ANALOGY

So far in my discussion of free will, I'm been approaching the analogy through the order of knowing, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper. That is, I've started with the kind of freedom that is most familiar to our experience, human freedom. This discussion has lead to two conclusions. First, free will is primarily an issue of sourcehood rather than leeway (or the mere having of alternative possibilities). Second, an agent perfects her freedom when her actions are the inevitable (or conditionally necessitated) result of her virtuous moral character. Both of these conclusions are also applicable to the case of divine freedom, particularly within the Christian tradition as represented by Perfect Being Theology and expressed by, among others, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas.[22] Katherine Rogers puts it this way in her recent book on Anselm:

> I follow Anselm in holding that whether or not the choice should be considered determined in that instance will depend upon whether or not the agent's character is ultimately caused by the agent himself, or is traceable to something outside the agent. Anselm argues that the scope for an agent to create his own character is narrow, in the sense that his options are limited by a nature given by God. And yet there are options, and it is ultimately up to the created agent to form his character through choice. When a choice is caused by the agent's character, for which the agent can be said to bear the ultimate responsibility, then the choice is not determined. The agent is not, in the final analysis, necessitated by anything outside the agent.[23]

As with source-based approaches, Rogers thinks that on Anselm's view, free will involves self-determination; i.e. not being determined to act as you do by anything causally prior to yourself. Of course, it is not possible for a perfect being to be causally determined by anything causally prior to itself, since there can be nothing that is causally prior to the God of Perfect Being Theology. (It is for this reason that the account on offer is still an incompatibilist account.) However, being determined to act in a certain way by one's moral character is not being determined to act as you do by anything causally prior to yourself, provided that one's moral character is not itself causally determined by something outside of the agent in question. This leaves open the possibility that God's freedom can be determined by His moral character, in the same way that a creature's freedom can be. But even if this consideration holds in the case of both creaturely and divine freedom, we here begin to see some of the ontological differences between the two. Inasmuch as created moral agents are contingent and have their moral characters contingently, it will be necessarily for their free choices to have played a role in the development of their moral character. (And this is also why, as I've argued elsewhere, that with respect to human freedom, satisfying the sourcehood condition will entail having alternative possibilities at some point in the causal history of an action.[24]) But the case is different with respect to God insofar as the divine nature is itself necessary. According to Perfect Being Theology, God's essential nature cannot be determined by anything outside of Himself. So even if God need not nor has not alternative

[22] For considerations in favor of Perfect Being Theology, see Katherin A. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000). and Brian Leftow, 'Why Perfect Being Theology?', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 69, no. (2011).
[23] Katherin A. Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 3.
[24] See my *Free Will: Sourcehood and Its Alternatives*, particularly chapter 6.

possibilities for action (though whether or not divine freedom never includes the having of alternative possibilities is an issue that still needs to be addressed[25]), He is able to be the source of His action given that His action is the result of His essential nature.[26] This is why God's freedom does not require the ability to do evil, even if it seems from our current perspective that human freedom does require this ability, at some point or other. Aquinas makes this point explicit in *De Malo*:

> We note a … difference regarding which there can be free choice as the difference between good and evil. But this difference does not intrinsically belong to the power of free choice but is incidentally related to the power inasmuch as natures capable of defect have such free choice…. And so nothing prevents there being a power of free choice that so strives for good that it is in no way capable of striving for evil, whether by nature, as in the case of God, or by the perfection of grace, as in the case of the saints and the holy angels.[27]

So, for Aquinas, being able to do evil is not essential to having free will. Thinking that free will always requires alternative possibilities is a result of following the order of knowing without taking seriously enough the ontological differences between the two cases. This makes it easy to fail to neglect that our talk about free will is not always univocal, as we would if we kept in mind the order of being that grounds analogical predication. And if, as I've suggested using the account of analogical predication with which I began, the primary sense of free will is what we find in the case of God—true freedom has its source is the outflowing of a good moral character, one which need not have the ability to do otherwise, particularly the ability to do evil, in order to be free. The considerations on the previous section point to this conclusion, even if the reason *why* this is true is itself primarily an implication of the nature of divine freedom.

None of this is to deny that there are important ontological differences between human freedom and its divine exemplar. Rather, the present point is to note that failing to keep these differences in mind can lead to distortions, both theological and moral. Timothy O'Connor devotes a valuable recent paper to the subject: 'Freedom with a Human Face'. According to O'Connor, 'perfect freedom is

[25] This issue is related to a number of important discussions in philosophy of religion, including whether God *must* create given his goodness (see, for example, Norman Kretzmann, 'A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything at All?', in *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Scott MacDonald(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).) and God's alternatives in creating if there is no best possible world (see William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).). Unfortunately, the present context does not allow for an exploration of these issues, though on the latter issue I point the reader to Kevin Timpe and Shannon Murphy, 'Review of William Rowe's *Can God Be Free?*', *Philosophia Christi* 8, no. (2006). Here let me just note my own position, which is that nothing in either of these philosophical issues forces one to abandon the traditional theological claim that God does have alternative possibilities with respect to creation.

[26] I suspect that this line of thought, if pressed, will also show that there is no conflict between God's freedom and His impassibility. But that is a connection for another time. See also Timothy O'Connor's review of William Rowe's *Can God be Free?*, Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews. 2005-04-08: 'But the better reply [to Rowe's argument], which I haven't the space to develop here, is to challenge Rowe's assumption (64) that freedom in God and human beings are identically realized. To choose freely (in the metaphysical sense) is for one to be the ultimate origin of one's choice. For any created being, this is possible only if there are significantly different alternative choices that one might have made. No such implication holds, however, for the causally unconditioned, self-existing perfection which is God.'

[27] *De Malo*, trans. Richard J. Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), q.16, a.5, response.

indeed a prerogative of God alone. Human freedom, by contrast, is always limited, fragile, and variable over time and across agents. It is the sort of thing which comes in degrees, and our theorizing needs to be built around that understanding.'[28] As O'Connor notes, the relationship between an agent and her moral character has implications with respect to the way that external causes can limit our freedom:

> The conditions for freedom in the divine and human cases differ in a way that reflects the difference in ontological status between an absolutely independent Creator and a dependent, causally conditioned creature. God's choices reflect His character— and His character alone. He was not given a nature, nor does He act in an environment that influences the development of individualizing traits. If His character precludes His entertaining various options that are within the scope of his power, this fact cannot be attributed in the final analysis to something else (some combination of nature and nurture [external to His nature]). Rather, their impossibility is solely and finally attributable to Him.[29]

But, with respect to created and contingent agents such as ourselves, our freedom will always be limited by factors outside of our control. So humans can never, of necessity, have perfect – that is, unbounded – freedom. But, what we perhaps can foster is a morally perfect freedom, that which Augustine referred to as genuine freedom – freedom always used to pursue the highest perceived good, where what is perceived as good tracks what really is good. In such a case, our freedom is both rooted in and directing us towards God. And what freedom could be more desirable than that?[30]

[28] Timothy O'Connor, 'Freedom with a Human Face', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29, no. (2005): 208.
[29] Ibid., p. 213.
[30] A previous version of this paper was read at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth in October of 2010. There, I benefitted from numerous helpful comments and questions, not the least of which were provided by Susan Gottloeber, who also kindly asked me to submit a version of my paper to the present venue. A more elaborate treatment of many of the issues dealt with here can be found in my *Free Will in Philosophical Theology* (Continuum, forthcoming).