

WILLIAM HASKER

REPLY TO MY FRIENDLY CRITICS

This reply must begin with an expression of thanks to all those who have consented to contribute to this special issue. Some of them have taken issue with positions I have taken or arguments I have put forth. Others have presented arguments of their own supporting positions I uphold. Still others put forward for our considerations new ideas, concerning which I have not previously stated an opinion. All of them, however, have things to say that enhance our appreciation and understanding of issues that are important to me, and I trust to many of our readers as well. It is not possible to reply to all of these essays as thoroughly as they deserve, but I shall attempt to respond to each of them as fully and as helpfully as the occasion permits. I take the essays in the order as printed; as we proceed through them, it will be apparent that there are some interesting, and perhaps unexpected, overlaps in the issues considered.

OPPY

It is good that Graham Oppy (2022, 15–35) has chosen to address the argument from reason. This argument, in its various forms, has drawn considerable interest from Christian philosophers, but naturalists have generally shown little interest in addressing it. Oppy, however, is generous in this regard, surveying no less than eight other versions of the argument in preparation for his response to my own version. In my view, some of these other versions may have greater merit than Oppy allows, but I am naturally most concerned to respond to his critique of my own presentation.

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Oppy agrees with the first premise of my argument, which states that “Human beings are capable of achieving conscious knowledge and awareness of many aspects of the world through their interactions with the world and their reflections upon it.” His disagreement is with the third premise, that “If naturalism is true, there can be no explanation of the fact stated in 1.” In arguing for this premise, I stated that

on naturalistic assumptions, mental events have no causal consequences and are thus invisible to evolutionary selection. A mental event consists of some substance instantiating a mental property or entering into a mental relation. Causal closure, however, guarantees that the physical characteristics and responses of the organism are completely accounted for by other physical events, so there is no independent role left for mental events to play. The selection pressures are entirely physical in nature, so they can operate only on physical features of the situation, not on any mental events that may happen to be going on. (HASKER 2013a, 124ff.)

As an identity theorist, Oppy rejects the assertion that mental events have no causal consequences. For identity theorists, mental events are identical with physical events; physical events undoubtedly have causal consequences, ergo...

Fair enough so far, but Oppy can’t have failed to notice that the article specifically addresses the rebuttal to my argument that appeals to mind–body identity theory. Now, given the assumption of event-identity, mental events and physical events are not distinct events but rather the same event viewed in two different aspects. Here the mental event, since it is also a physical event, has causal consequences and is subject to selection pressures. However, given causal closure, it is *only the physical characteristics* of the mental-physical event that determine the outcome; the physical characteristics and responses of the organism are completely accounted for (setting aside quantum indeterminacy) by the conjunction of physical antecedent conditions and physical laws, so there is no independent role left to be played by the mental characteristics of those events. For natural selection to explain our coming to have a true representation of the world, we do need the correlation principle:

(CP) In general, when a mental event m is either identical with or supervenient upon a physical event p , if p is such that it contributes to survival and evolutionary success, then, if m is relevant to an accurate mental representation of the world, m makes a positive contribution to such representation. (HASKER 2013a, 126)

But as has been pointed out, (CP) can't itself be the result of evolutionary selection; rather, it is a presupposition without which an epistemically successful selection process can't even get started. The problem of a pre-established harmony won't go away! But the purpose of the harmony is not, as Oppy suggests, to secure the truth of the identity between mental and physical events. Rather, it is to secure the result that an evolutionarily successful physical selection process will contribute to a correct mental representation of the world.

There is reason to think, however, that the kind of naturalism Oppy has in mind is not the kind targeted in my argument. He says:

My second—perhaps more controversial—observation is that evolutionary naturalists who do not go in for eliminativism about the mental can be perfectly comfortable with the idea that something like representational content plays an important role in evolutionary explanations of the development of increasingly complex neural systems in biological organisms.

For this to happen, the mental content *must itself exert causal influence* on the succession of events in the brain, distinct from the causal power deriving from the physical characteristics of those physical-mental events. Oppy goes on to say, "It is because frogs' neural states sufficiently accurately represent the world that, in appropriate environments, there is a significant correlation between frogs' flicking out their tongues and the presence of things that provide sustenance to frogs." If that is the case, this version of the argument from reason is successfully blocked. In doing so, however, *the requirement of physical causal closure has been given up*. Oppy can, to be sure, still affirm the much weaker doctrine that "the natural causal order is closed." This doctrine permits us to allow causal efficacy to all manner of things—Cartesian souls, ghosts, mental telepathy, psychokinesis—so long as we are prepared to consider such items as part of the "natural causal order". The only thing securely excluded is causal interference by a supernatural God and his angels! Oppy goes on to assert: "I am happy to join Hasker in rejecting reductive physicalism. While the study of some kinds of causal processes is the proper preserve of physics, there are other kinds of causal processes whose study is the proper preserve of chemistry, biology, psychology, and so forth." Causally reductive physicalism, of course, is precisely what is asserted by the standard doctrine of physical causal closure, as is made clear in my article. It turns out, then, that Oppy and I are

in agreement concerning many of the main claims made in the article he is discussing! And that, surely, is cause for celebration.

GOETZ

Stewart Goetz (2022, 37–48) also has questions about my argument from reason, but the questions are of another sort than those raised by Graham Oppy. Goetz posits a dichotomy between causal and teleological explanations, and he takes me to be defining physical explanations as those that are mechanistic, meaning non-teleological and non-intentional.

But now consider Goetz’s argument: “All books written by William Hasker are interesting; *The Emergent Self* is written by William Hasker; therefore, *The Emergent Self* is interesting.” Under normal circumstances, if Goetz is aware of and believes the premises of that argument, he cannot help but be aware of and believe the conclusion.¹ But this sequence of events in Goetz’s mind is causal in nature, and therefore non-teleological. If it is non-teleological, it must be physical, which it obviously is not. Clearly, something has gone wrong.

It seems that Goetz and I are talking past each other here. First of all, I do not assume that an explanation’s being causal excludes its being teleological. When an animal eats because it is hungry, the hunger is an (at least partial) cause of the eating. (The connection may or may not be necessitating. The animal may be only slightly hungry, or there may be other things going on that could distract the animal and prevent it from eating on this occasion.) That the connection is causal does not exclude its being teleological. Hunger is an inherently teleological state; it is the desire to consume food. Secondly, I do not equate physical explanations with explanations that are non-teleological and non-intentional. The idea rather is this: physical explanations are explanations of the same general kind as the explanations that are now accepted in the science of physics. It is difficult to be more precise, because future scientists very likely will discover objects and forces unknown to present-day physics, ideas and forces which would still be counted as physical. But we can stipulate, as a necessary condition for future explanations to count as physical, that they should be non-teleological and non-intentional. Being non-teleological does not in itself, however, immediately

¹ Naturally, I am pleased that Goetz believes that *The Emergent Self* is interesting. I am a little perplexed, however, that he makes such heavy work of convincing himself of that fact!

qualify an explanation as physical. There are non-teleological explanations in psychology, but those explanations are not therefore physical.

In view of this, I have no hesitation in saying that the explanation of Goetz's belief, in his example, is both causal and teleological, so there is no problem. But what if Goetz is right on the points on which we disagree? In that case, I can simply accept his proposed solution of the problem: either way, the argument from reason is still in business—as Goetz himself agrees.

But Goetz goes on to say more about the dichotomy between causal and teleological explanations. And here I find it difficult to avoid the impression that the differences between us are mostly verbal in nature. Goetz notes that I speak both of agent causation and of choices made in accordance with reasons, and surmises that I have “knowingly or unknowingly, put two kinds of explanation of a choice on the table.” I don't see them as distinct kinds of explanation: in all normal situations, agents make their choices guided by reasons, and on the other hand reasons do not occasion choices without an agent who does the choosing. He notes that, on my view, the agent-causing of an action is not itself an action but rather an essential part of an action. But he surmises that I would hold that the agent-causing of an action is not an *event*; and he goes on to argue that agent-causing is indeed an event. I agree; what else could it be, if not an event? Summarizing his response to my view, Goetz asks, “why not maintain that an agent, which is a substantial person or self, has the power to choose, and when it exercises its power to choose, which is an event, it does so for a reason?” Why not, indeed? And if he and I are in agreement about this much, isn't the most appropriate situation between us a cease-fire, one that may lead to a permanent truce or even a peace treaty?²

FISCHER

John Martin Fischer (2022, 49–78) has ample reason to know that philosophers of religion are hard to please. For many years he has, to be sure, won the approval of open theists for his arguments showing that comprehensive divine foreknowledge is incompatible with libertarian free

² With all respect, it simply is not the case that agent causation was invented by Roderick Chisholm. Both the term and the idea were present in Thomas Reid, and there are important antecedents in medieval philosophy. One might wonder whether Goetz could be misremembering Chisholm's statement on the topic.

will. This favorable response, however, is outweighed (at least numerically) by the disapproval of opponents of open theism who deny this incompatibility. Furthermore, both of these groups of philosophers will disapprove of Fischer's rejection of libertarian free will, and his adherence to a kind of compatibilism.³ Nevertheless, in spite of this less-than-welcoming reception, he now makes a fresh effort to overcome these disagreements. He now argues, ingeniously, that free will is after all compatible with at least some divine foreknowledge of causally undetermined events. And while he does not abandon his compatibilist stance on free will, he argues at some length that an "actual-sequence theology" (that is, one incorporating a compatibilist view of free will) is more defensible than many have taken it to be.

Fischer will not be surprised to know that I am unable to avail myself of these latest developments. Unlike him, I believe that alternative possibilities are required for robust free will and for moral responsibility. (With regard to the Frankfurt cases, I embrace the "flicker-of-freedom" strategy.) Nevertheless, insofar as he claims to establish the possibility of some divine foreknowledge in an indeterministic world, he has put forward a significant proposal, one that some others may affirm even if I cannot. The central idea is this: God, like humans, will often find himself in a "knowledge-conferring-situation" (KCS), even where the event thus known is subject to causal indeterminism and there are not grounds for the certain knowledge that entails that the event will in fact occur. There are, however, grounds for belief in the future event, even if these grounds do not logically guarantee the event's occurrence. When human beings are in such a state, and the grounds for belief are sufficiently strong, they *know* that the future event will occur. But because knowledge requires truth, and the event is not guaranteed by the existing grounds, this knowledge can be (securely) attributed only *after* the event has in fact taken place. God, we have noted, can be in a relevantly similar situation. He has grounds that support the view that the event in question will occur, even though the grounds do not guarantee the event's occurrence. On the basis of this, God believes that the event will occur. But God has a further advantage that the similarly placed human being does not have: God is essentially infallible, and knows that he is infallible. God, therefore, is in a position to reason as follows: "I believe that E will occur.

³ Strictly speaking, Fischer's view is "semi-compatibilism". This is a view which holds that causal determinism is compatible with moral responsibility, even if it is not compatible with freedom to do otherwise (FISCHER 1994, 180). In this discussion, however, his view will be termed simply "compatibilism".

I am infallible; it is impossible that any belief of mine can ever prove to be false. Therefore, it is impossible that E will fail to occur; its occurrence is certain, and I already *know*, with complete certainty, that it will occur.” God’s knowledge as described here will, however, apply only to future events with regard to which God is in a KCS.

I believe Fischer’s proposal fails, and fails for a rather surprising reason: he has overlooked, or else failed to apply properly, the important theistic doctrine of *analogical predication*. According to this doctrine, in many situations (some would say, in all) where the same predicate is applied both to human persons and to God, the meaning of the predicate in question is somewhat different in the two cases. The predicate does not apply *univocally*, with exactly the same meaning, in the two cases. But neither is it used *equivocally*, with entirely different meanings. Instead, it applies *analogically*: when applied to God, it has a meaning that is similar enough to its meaning in the human situation that it conveys genuine information about God, but there is also a difference in meaning that is required by the differing ontological status of human beings and God. For example, both (some) human beings and God are truly said to be “wise”, but no one could sensibly deny that we are implying somewhat different things when we say God is wise than when we say a human being is wise.

What is true of wisdom, is also true of knowledge. And one important difference (though not the only one) is that knowledge ascribed to God must be *absolutely certain*, whereas human knowledge very often falls short of certainty in the way discussed above. To be sure, that divine knowledge must be certain does not come as a surprise to Fischer; indeed, this difference lies at the very core of his proposal as outlined above. However, he seems not to have considered the fact that *this difference with regard to certainty affects the situations in which knowledge can properly be ascribed*. Since human knowledge need not be absolutely certain, such knowledge can be ascribed even when all available grounds fall short of an absolute guarantee of the truth of the proposition known. Divine knowledge, however, must indeed be absolutely certain, and thus cannot be ascribed in the absence of grounds that guarantee the proposition’s truth. God, in fact, will not *believe* such propositions in an unqualified way, but will only consider such a proposition as very likely to come out as being true. So it may sometimes be the case that a human being and God have the same evidence for the truth of some proposition, but whereas for the human being this is a (human)-knowledge-conferring situation, it is not a (divine)-knowledge-conferring situation for God.

I will not be having much to say about Fischer's compatibilist theology and theodicy. These proposals are of course of little use to me, since I am a libertarian and I insist that free will must involve alternative possibilities. And indeed, Fischer himself admits that a "in various ways the indeterministic model will likely be more attractive to theists." However, I do wish to query another feature of Fischer's article: Why does Fischer insist in sticking to his compatibilist stance, in spite of the fact that libertarianism would have the advantages he concedes?

I believe that one important source of this insistence lies in what I shall term Fischer's "nightmare scenario", a scenario which Fischer considers entirely possible. In this scenario, Fischer awakens one morning to read in the *New York Times* that scientists have finally found decisive evidence that the universe is entirely governed by physical causality, causality that is deterministic with a possible exception for quantum randomness. The long-dreamt-of "final theory" has at last arrived. This news is confirmed by other reliable sources, and the crucial experiments have been replicated by a number of different laboratories. For libertarians such as me, this would indeed be a nightmare, leaving us with an array of unappetizing options. We might carry on as before, in defiance of the scientific evidence, but this is almost certainly doomed to failure. We could become compatibilists, swallowing (choking down?) a view we have long insisted is unacceptable. Or we might decide that humans are not, after all, morally responsible for their actions, a decision that would likely require major changes in our social arrangements. Compatibilists like Fischer, in contrast, could carry on without major disruption of any kind. Surely, he argues, it is a great advantage for a philosophical view not to be held hostage in this way to scientific developments.

Certainly one should not wantonly incur empirical hazard for one's philosophical views when this can easily be avoided. But I am less convinced than Fischer of the importance of this maxim. We should certainly give great deference to scientific conclusions that are supported by well-confirmed empirical evidence. We owe less deference, however, to scientific claims that rest on debatable or questionable interpretations of the evidence, and still less to scientific hypotheses for which there is presently little evidence but for which evidence might conceivably emerge at some point in the future. In the present case, however, I think we can do better than mere defiance. I think Fischer's nightmare scenario is indeed a nightmare: a bad dream that may be distressing while we are in its grip but that, once we have awakened,

is gradually dispelled until we reach the point where it is no longer an obstacle to resuming one's usual sunny disposition!

What ought to wake us up from this bad dream, I submit, is precisely the previously discussed Argument from Reason. If all events in the universe are the result of physical causality (causality which does not involve either intentionality or teleology), then none of our inferred beliefs are accepted because they conform to the requirements for reasons and evidence. If none of these beliefs are accepted because they conform to these requirements, none of them are warranted. This in turn means we do not know many of the things we take ourselves to know, including the scientific knowledge which underwrites our belief that all events are governed by physical causality. In fact, however, we do know a great many things, including that at least many of our scientific beliefs are warranted and are true about the world. Therefore, it is not the case that all events in the universe are the result of physical causality. This, I maintain, is a very strong and secure line of reasoning, and it should be sufficient to awaken us from "Fischer's nightmare". (And I am delighted to have Graham Oppy's agreement that not all causal processes are those studied by the science of physics.) In view of this, I cordially invite John Fischer to reconsider his opposition to libertarianism.

ROGERS

Katherin Rogers (2022, 79–89) also challenges me on the topic of free will, but her challenge comes from a different direction. The occasion for the challenge is her view of God as timelessly eternal, and of time as a four-dimensional or, as she prefers to say, "isotemporal" continuum. Rogers accepts this latter view at least in part because of an argument that I myself accept. Suppose that, as presentists think, there is an absolute, observer-independent fact about what time is *now*—and, correspondingly, about *what is happening right now*. There will in that case be innumerable *temporal facts*, facts about what *has happened*, and what *has not yet happened*. For example, Christians affirm that Christ *has died*, Christ *is risen*, and Christ *will come again*. However, a timeless God cannot know any of these facts. In order to know such facts as these, God would need to *change*: at certain times in the past, God would have known, *Christ has not yet been born*, but now, and at all future times, God knows *Christ has been born*. And such change is impossible for a timeless God. But that God should thus be

ignorant of a vast number of facts—facts that are known with certainty by a huge number of human beings—is surely an unacceptable infringement of divine omniscience.⁴ For isotemporalism, this problem does not arise, because there simply *are no* objective, observer-independent facts about which time is present. The difference between Rogers and me at this point is that I take this to be a reason to reject divine timelessness, whereas she affirms both timelessness and isotemporalism. The point at issue in Rogers’ present essay, however, is this: she holds that isotemporalism is consistent with libertarian free will, while I deny this. If I am right, her position contains an important inconsistency, since she argues emphatically that Christians should affirm libertarianism.

Rogers has some technical problems with my definition of free will. I believe my definition can be defended, but for present purposes I will conduct my discussion with her in terms of her own stated account of free will. She says:

A free choice looks like this: S (some created agent) has (at least) two, mutually exclusive, morally significant desires which he hopes to satisfy.... Call this the torn condition (TC). Somewhat later, at T2, S makes the choice for B, let’s say, by continuing to pursue the desire for B to the point where the desire for A ceases to be viable.... And it is absolutely up to S whether he opts for A or for B. So the truth of the proposition, “S chooses B at T2” is absolutely up to S. This entails that truth about, and knowledge of, a free choice depends upon that actual choice. I label this the “Grounding Principle”.⁵

The libertarian element comes in when Rogers says, “it is absolutely up to S whether he opts for A or for B.” So far, I am completely in agreement. She goes on to say:

In saying it is “up to” S, I mean that S has the unobstructed power to pursue A or to pursue B. “Power” here is understood as an ability or strength in the agent.... “Unobstructed” means (roughly) that the power is free from any external, necessitating factor that makes it inevitable that S choose one way rather than the other.

⁴ Note that this is quite different from the open theist doctrine that God does not have complete and certain knowledge of the future. Open theists hold that these “truths” concerning the future *do not yet exist*—or, if they do exist, they are intrinsically unknowable by anyone. In contrast, the temporal truths that are unknowable to a timeless God undeniably exist, and are known to many.

⁵ One implication of the Grounding Principle is that the counterfactuals of freedom that are central to Molinism cannot be true.

How then is God able to know what S chooses? Rogers points out that, given isotemporalism, all times “have equal ontological status”, and

God, not embedded in, or extended through, time sees things as they really are. All times are equally “present” to God. God knows that S chooses B at T2 because T2, like all moments of time, is present to Him.

Now, Rogers is well aware of my response to this. My view is that, given isotemporalism, human beings *cannot* be free in the required sense, precisely *because* all times have equal ontological status. For this in turn means that, at the moment just before S makes his choice, that choice and its consequences *already exist* as part of the four-dimensional continuum, and cannot be altered as a result of anything S might choose.

What is crucial here, as Rogers recognizes, are certain principles I have entitled *power entailment principles* (PEPs), which have the consequence that, if S does not have it in his power to bring it about that A, rather than B, is part of the four-dimensional continuum, then neither is S able to make a libertarian free choice between A and B. She cites one of these principles:

(PEP7) If “P” is true and entails “Q”, then if it cannot be in anyone’s power to bring it about that “P” is false, it cannot be in anyone’s power to bring it about that “Q” is false. (HASKER 1989, 114)

If this is correct, then S, who in fact chooses B, cannot have it in his power to choose A rather than B, unless he also has it in his power to bring it about that A, rather than B, is part of the eternally existing four-dimensional continuum. Rogers, furthermore, agrees that S does not, cannot, have it in his power to alter the continuum in that way.

Rogers’ attitude towards the PEPs may perhaps best be characterized as one of blithe dismissal. She notes that I have claimed these principles to be intuitively obvious, but she does not share that intuition. On various occasions I have offered a proof-sketch for one such principle (see HASKER 2011, 31n), but she pays no attention to this. Various philosophers have attempted to provide counterexamples, with a noticeable lack of success (HASKER 1993)—but again, Rogers says nothing about this.

It may well be that Rogers enjoys a settled immunity to PEPs; anything I might say on their behalf will be overwhelmed by the antibodies her immune system provides against these principles. But I want to make just one more attempt, this time relying on an empirical parallel. Consider, then,

the linkage between the steering wheel of an automobile and the direction in which the front wheels of the car are turned. The front wheels will follow the direction in which the steering wheel is turned: if the steering wheel is turned to the left, the wheels will follow; otherwise they will not be turned to the left. Normally, then, the driver can turn the front wheels in any direction she pleases, just by turning the steering wheel. But now suppose she is in a car that has just been through a wreck, and the front wheels are locked turned to the right. At this point, she is unable to make those wheels turn to the left; and because of the linkage between the front wheels and the steering wheel, she can't turn the steering wheel to the left either. If it is in her power to turn the wheel to the left, it must also be in her power to steer the front wheels of the car to the left, but this she can't do.

Now of course, the situation may be different if the steering mechanism has been damaged in such a way that the linkage between the front wheels and the steering wheel is broken; in that case, she may be able to turn the steering wheel every which way without affecting the front wheels at all. But in order for S to be able to choose A rather than B without also bringing it about that A rather than B is part of the eternal four-dimensional continuum—well, that just can't happen! The logical entailment between “S has the power to choose option A” and “S has the power to bring it about that A exists as part of the four-dimensional continuum” is unbreakable. And since S undeniably lacks the latter power, neither does he possess the former. And that is bad news for the combination of four-dimensionalism with libertarian free will.

STUMP

Eleonore Stump, like Rogers, wants to defend the compatibility of divine timelessness with libertarian free will for creatures. I believe, however, that the argument given against Rogers on this point suffices also for Stump; we need only make a simple substitution. I wrote that

S, who in fact chooses B, cannot have it in his power to choose A rather than B, unless he also has it in his power to bring it about that A, rather than B, is part of the eternally existing four-dimensional continuum.

If now instead of “is part of the eternally existing four-dimensional continuum” we write “is part of God’s eternally existing timeless knowledge”, the argument is equally effective against Stump. I note in passing that the argument of mine she cites asserting that divine timelessness is compatible with free will is from my book, *God, Time, and Knowledge*, written over thirty years ago. It is gratifying that this book is still considered relevant, but surely one is permitted to change his mind on a few points over three decades! In fact, my opposition to divine timelessness has hardened considerably since that book was published, and the argument in question was repudiated by me nearly twenty years ago (HASKER 2002).

In view of this, and in the interest of economy, I will concentrate here on another point Stump is concerned to defend, namely the usefulness of divine timeless knowledge, supposing it existed, for divine providence. Would the possession of such knowledge assist God in making his decisions concerning the created world, decisions that might turn out differently were God lacking such knowledge?

To give credit where credit is due, Stump (2022, 91–106) begins her discussion on this point with an accurate summary of my argument against her position:

On Hasker’s way of thinking about it, even if there is no temporal succession as between future events and God’s knowledge, there is a logical order; an event’s obtaining is logically prior to God’s knowing it. So it seems as if the future events must be *there* in order for God to know them. And, in that case, Hasker’s point seems to apply: since a future event must be *there* for God to know it, it seems that God cannot use his knowledge of that future event to act on it. And for that reason, God cannot act on a future event in light of his knowledge of it. And so it seems that we have the conclusion Hasker wants: God’s knowledge of things future with respect to us is useless for any action of God’s on future events, even if God’s knowledge is eternal.

She then proceeds to explain why, on her account of God’s eternal knowledge and action, my conclusions do not follow and God’s eternal knowledge is indeed providentially useful. She begins by arguing at some length that it is possible for an eternal God to act in time; this, however, is not a point I have ever denied. She then goes on to address the point I have challenged: whether God’s eternal knowledge would be providentially useful, so that God is able to act in the light of that knowledge in a way he could not have done without it. She offers an example, stated in terms of an event 1 that occurs at t_1 , and event 2 that occurs at t_2 :

It is true that there is a logical dependence between event 2 at time t_2 and God's knowledge of event 2. God knows event 2 because event 2 obtains, and not the other way around. But, in the eternal present, which is ET-simultaneous with times before t_2 , God wills to exercise causal influence at an earlier time t_1 in such a way that event 2 at time t_2 happens at least in part because of what God wills to happen at time t_1 . God's knowledge of event 2 at time t_2 , then, depends on event 2; but event 2 itself depends on God's causal influence on things at t_1 . God's knowledge of event 2 therefore includes knowledge of his own causal influence helping to bring about event 2.

This suggests the following picture: event 2 occurs at t_2 at least partly because God, knowing the situation at t_1 , acted at t_1 so that 2 would occur at t_2 . God's knowledge of event 2, then, is logically subsequent to the actual occurrence of event 2. This picture seems perfectly clear and intelligible; there are three remarks we can make about it:

1. This is an instance of God's using his knowledge to guide his own providential actions. More precisely, it is an instance of God's using his knowledge *of the past and present*, relative to a particular time (in this case t_1) to guide his action that will in turn influence an event occurring at a later time (that is, 2 occurring at t_2).
2. The picture requires that God's eternal knowledge of the future is acquired *sequentially*: God first comes to know about t_1 , then decides about his own action at t_1 , then comes to know about t_2 , and so on. If this is what Stump means to say, we should expect from her some account of the sequential nature of God's knowledge. Obviously this cannot be a temporal sequence, but just what it is, and how this is supposed to work, seem quite mysterious.
3. Assuming that question can be answered, the picture in question shows God having knowledge relevant to his actions in the temporal future that is *precisely equivalent to God's knowledge according to open theism*. (To be sure, according to open theism God obtains this knowledge only as the events actually unfold. But this is no disadvantage; God's "reaction time" is quite adequate for making decisions in "real time.") And this, I submit, is reason to doubt that this is really what Stump has in mind. I do not believe she will be willing to concede that God possessed of eternal knowledge is no better off, with regard to his providential governance of the world, than God as conceived by open theism.

Indeed, Stump makes it clear that this is *not*, in fact, the way she is thinking about the matter. She states, "because God is not temporally ordered

with respect to events in time, God's act of will with respect to any event at a time t_n will be made in light of God's knowledge of *all* the events in time, *including those future with respect to us*" (emphasis added). So God, in deciding on his action at t_1 , is not, as we had supposed, considering only the states of affairs that exist up until t_1 . Rather, in making his decision God has before him the entirety of time and all the events it contains.

But now we have come full circle. For God, as he "decides" what he shall do at t_1 , has before him *all* the events that occur at *all* times, *Including God's action at t_1 and all of the consequences that flow from it*. And this, of course, means that it is *too late* for God to decide anything concerning his action at t_1 ; that decision has already been made. In fact, by the "time" when God has before him the fullness of his eternal knowledge, it is *always already too late* for any decisions to be made concerning God's actions in time. The very completeness of God's knowledge is what insures its providential uselessness!

To be sure, this does not preclude God's actions that are *logically prior* to his eternal knowledge of the world from having contributed to the actual world as God, logically subsequently, views that world. But what knowledge is available to guide those "prior" divine actions remains wholly mysterious. Stump's solution to the problem of the usefulness of eternal knowledge is not a success.

HELM

On various occasions I have enjoyed disagreeing with Paul Helm (but not, I hope, disagreeably!); on this occasion I instead enjoy agreeing with him. His discussion of Quentin Smith's argument against God as cause of the universe is effective in pointing out unwarranted assumptions (HELM 2022, 107–20); in particular, the assumption that the cause–effect relation must invariably be logically contingent. His discussion also brings out a point that we noticed in our consideration of John Fischer's essay: the importance of analogical predication in our speaking about God. God, we may agree, is not like you or me or other contingent, created beings. This means that it is important, when we ascribe to God some property that is characteristic of some created entities, that we be prepared for the possibility that what is said of God may need to be understood somewhat differently than when the same characteristic is predicated of a created being. If on the contrary we approach the divine case with a rigid set of categories derived from our contemplation

of the created world, we may well reach an impasse—which indeed Smith does. That this happens does not necessarily mean that our speech about God is in some way logically inappropriate. It may mean, rather, that the problem is in our lack of metaphysical imagination, which leads us to approach our thoughts about God with a rigid, limited set of categories.

A further merit of Helm’s presentation is that his conception of analogy is well-armed against the criticism that it leaves us not knowing what we actually mean by our speech about God. Helm’s usage is guarded against this by the fact that he is willing to specify, at least in some cases, the elements of univocity and equivocity in the analogical usage. That having been done, objections to analogy as insufficiently determinate in its meaning lose all force.

There is at least one point, to be sure, on which I do emphatically disagree with Helm. According to Helm, God is timelessly eternal, and what is discussed in his essay has to be placed in that context to be correct. I, on the other hand, reject this doctrine of divine eternity, so no such qualification is required. Yet even so, there is something to admire in Helm’s approach. More than most other adherents of divine atemporality, he recognizes the implications of this stance and embraces them. For one thing, he recognizes that he (like Katherin Rogers) must accept the theory of time known as four-dimensionalism—the view that all instants of time and the events they contain literally co-exist; the “present” exists only with regard to a particular temporal reference-frame. Furthermore, Helm emphatically rejects libertarian free will, something that, as I have argued, is inconsistent with four-dimensionalism. And he does not claim that God’s creative actions are guided by his eternal knowledge. On the contrary, this knowledge is itself precisely the result of God’s having executed his own, perfect, eternal plan. Elsewhere I have described Helm’s stance on these issues by saying that he does not so much bite the bullet, as that he chews it up, swallows, and asks for more!

WOJTYSIAK

To say that God is the cause of the existence of the universe is, of course, merely the beginning of what needs to be said about the divine creation of the world. The essay by Jacek Wojtysiak (2022, 121–36) goes on from this beginning. In spite of my warnings about incautious speculation (warnings with which I think he agrees), Wojtysiak manages to say some valuable and illuminating things about the divine intentions in creating. His efforts

encourage me to think that, due caution having been observed, we can indeed say something constructive about why God chose to create a world, and to create this world. Even on points where we disagree, I view this more as a combined effort between us in exploring some difficult topics, rather than as issues on which it is important to reach a decision about winners and losers.

One important difference results from my rejection of divine impassibility, with what Wojtysiak takes to be the implication that “divine life affected by joys and sufferings of creatures would become personally and morally richer.” I am not sure about “morally” here, but let that pass for now. Consider, though, a very simple situation: a human being enjoying the smell of eucalyptus. If there were no creation, indeed if there were no creation involving both human beings and eucalyptus trees (or some equivalents thereof), there would be no such thing existing in reality as a human being enjoying the smell of eucalyptus. Does the presence, rather than the absence, of humans enjoying this scent contribute nothing to the richness of God’s experience? You may perhaps counter this by asking, would God not know what it would be like for human beings to smell eucalyptus, even if that situation were never realized in actuality? To this I answer, Yes, God would know this. But I ask in return, does the actual existence of this sort of situation make no difference to God, in contrast with the state of affairs in which God knows what this would be like, but no such situation ever actually occurs? To say this would mean taking the first steps along a road that leads us to say that nothing in the actual creation makes any difference to God’s own life; his knowing what things would be like “if...” means that God, existing in solitary splendor, already has everything of value to him that could exist in any possible creation. And this, I believe, yields us a picture of God that many will find less than maximally appealing. I don’t say that God so conceived would be morally deficient. Since God is the standard of moral perfection, if this is what his nature requires him to be, it follows that this is the morally best way God could possibly be. But some of us may be disappointed, all the same. And it may be difficult to reconcile with something I trust all Christians will affirm, namely God’s genuine desire for the salvation of human beings.

Does this mean I must deny that “the life of God is or would be characterized by the fullness of happiness and goodness even without ... sharing” feelings of his creatures? Clearly, there is a fine line to be walked here. As an example, think of a person educated in a Western society, deeply immersed in the literature—novels, plays, poetry—in a number of languages,

but who has never learned Chinese, or had the experience of reading Chinese poetry. Then circumstances occur such that she does learn Chinese, and has the experience of reading Chinese poetry. Clearly, there is a sense in which her life has been enriched, but does this mean that she was somehow deficient before this had occurred? I do not think so; her life may have been extremely fulfilling before she learned Chinese, yet all the same Chinese poetry adds something to her life that was not there before. That something can be added does not necessarily imply that there was a lack before. So God's life apart from creation was in no way lacking, even if God's communion with his creatures adds something to that life that was not there before. This is especially important, it seems to me, with regard to God's experience in relation to the sufferings and joys of God's rational creatures. God may after all not care about the smell of eucalyptus, any more than God literally enjoyed smelling the smoke of the Israelites' burnt offerings. But to say that the joys and sorrows, the struggles and triumphs, of God's people mean nothing to God seems to contradict a great deal in Scripture; it also will seem deeply disappointing to many of us.

The "holiness framework" invoked by Mark Murphy now becomes an important feature in the situation. God's willingness, as seen in the Bible, to "get his hands dirty" by interacting with the creation might lead us to give little weight to a framework that would hold God back from such involvement. But the recurrence throughout history of reservations about God's involvement with created realities cannot be ignored; we need to give careful consideration to claims that certain types of relation with the creation would be unworthy of God. There is also, furthermore, a theological balance that we want to maintain. What we need, it seems, are reasons why God might abstain from creating that are sufficient to make thus abstaining a viable alternative, yet are not so strong that the act of creating seems an irrational deviation. The line to be walked is a fine one! Aquinas' claim that God loves the world (only) by loving himself may strike us as excessively defensive. Aquinas, no doubt, wishes to guard God from being, as it were, forced by the world to love it, to have regard for it. But should he not have considered that God is *able to be* generous, and loving towards his creation, by reaching out to it in love and grace? In any case, we can hardly avoid Wojtysiak's conclusion that "the world (whatever it may be like) fits God as little as a plebeian button fits a king's coat"! But perhaps the king chooses to wear that button, just because he is *our* king!

I welcome Wojtysiak's discussion of the question, which world should God create? But I am not, so far, able to move beyond the point I have previously occupied: God creates one of the best kinds of worlds that are available for creation.⁶ What determines these "best kinds" are values that are incommensurable, not in the sense of being wholly incomparable, but in the sense that there is no determinate ratio that shows how much of one value should be sacrificed to gain a certain amount of another. So God *chooses* which values to prioritize, and it is in the light of these choices that one world-type is chosen. Clearly, however, we are working here at an extremely high level of abstraction, and filling in the details of the picture is far beyond our capacity. Further work on these topics is in order, but only if accompanied by a prudent reserve concerning our ability to reach firm conclusions.

Wojtysiak returns, however, to his former advocacy for divine impassibility. I must confess, however, that I have difficulty understanding what is meant by "*Impassibilis est Deus, sed non incompassibilis*". Unless, of course, it means what it meant for Anselm: God *acts* towards us in the way we would expect a compassionate being to act, but the *feeling* of compassion is alien to God.⁷ But if that is what is meant, I will reject it as inadequate. I think Wojtysiak draws the wrong conclusion from his medical example. It is true, of course, that a physician will normally refrain from treating her own family members, because of the danger that emotional sympathy will cloud the objective judgment which is called for in deciding on medical treatment. And physicians will sometimes find themselves needing to suppress their emotional responses, in order to maintain rational objectivity in their medical procedures. But how do these insights apply when we are thinking about God? Is God like an iron-willed practitioner, who manages to completely suppress his emotional responses in order to avoid interference with his rational judgment? Or is God like a physician whose emotions are completely in balance with his reason, able to allow normal emotional responses to occur, without their ever conflicting with the best medical judgment? I do not think the choice between the two is difficult. For myself, I side with my fellow

⁶ Note that according to open theism, which I accept, God did not create an entire possible world, which involves a definitive truth-value for all possible propositions, from eternity past to eternity future. Rather, what God created was a *world-type*, an initial situation which *had the potential to develop* in any of innumerable different ways.

⁷ "Thou art both compassionate, because thou dost save the wretched, and spare those who sin against thee, and not compassionate, because thou art affected by no sympathy for wretchedness" (ANSELM, *Proslogium* 7).

open theist, Clark Pinnock, who held that God is not the Unmoved Mover, but rather the Most Moved Mover.⁸

KOONS

While our ability to understand the “creation situation” is exceedingly thin, philosophy and theology have had a good bit more to say about God’s dealing with the world once created—that is, about divine providence. In recent times a kind of consensus has emerged that, for traditional theists, there are three main options that offer themselves as general views of providence. There is theological determinism, there is divine middle knowledge, or Molinism, and there is open theism. Sometimes it is thought that there are more options than these, but on reflection the suggested alternatives do not allow for fundamentally different ways of understanding God’s dealings with the creation. In the section on Stump (2022, 91–106), I gave reasons to think that divine timeless knowledge does not, in fact, offer greater resources for divine providential governance than are provided by open theism. Similar arguments can be mounted to show that “simple foreknowledge”—foreknowledge without middle knowledge—likewise offers no resources beyond those provided by open theism. In order for divine knowledge of the future to offer a genuine advantage, God must be able to know the consequences that would result from a given divine action *before* (in the logical order of dependence) that action has been decided upon. The one option that provides this, while remaining consistent with libertarian free will, is divine middle knowledge, or Molinism, which is the subject of Robert Koons’ essay (2022, 137–54).

Koons is an opponent of Molinism, as I am. In his essay he raises some questions about Molinism that are seldom discussed. One such question concerns the exact nature of the propositions termed “counterfactuals of creaturely freedom” (CCFs). It is clear that the “short form” of such counterfactuals, expressed in sentences such as Plantinga’s example, “if Curley were offered the bribe, he would accept it”, is seriously incomplete. But what should be added to the antecedents, to give propositions that can satisfy the requirements and serve the purposes that Molinism demands of them?

In the first instance, this is a problem for the Molinists themselves, not for critics of Molinism. If it should turn out that there can be no propositions that satisfy the requirements, that would mean an immediate defeat for

⁸ This is the title of his book, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (2001).

Molinism. In view of this, critics may opt to simply assume the existence of such counterfactuals, and go on to criticize other elements of the Molinist scheme. Nevertheless, it may be of interest also for the critic to inquire concerning the precise nature of such propositions, and this Koons has elected to do. I will not review his discussion of this in detail⁹ but rather, guided by his insights, I will endeavor on my own to understand what these propositions might be like.

My proposal will be most similar to that of Edward Wierenga. I propose that the antecedent of a CCF includes a complete description of the world, the created universe, up to the moment when the decision is made that is described in the consequent. Notice that it is the *world*, the *creation*, that is so described, but not God, the Creator. If God, and God's life, were included in the antecedent, so would be God's knowledge, both of future states of affairs and of the CCFs themselves. And this would mean that any counterfactual of this sort would be necessary rather than contingent, which immediately undermines the entire scheme.¹⁰ But so far as the past of created reality is concerned, the antecedent of the conditional is complete.

One objection Koons raises that would apply to such a scheme concerns Zimmerman's "voodoo conditionals", CCFs such that "which free action would occur depend[s] on tiny events occurring in the remote past or far outside the backward light cone, events without any causal connection to the free action chosen" (ZIMMERMAN 2011a, 2011b). Koons, however, exaggerates the harm done to Molinism by this possibility. Zimmerman does indeed propose that, were all of a created agent's free choices governed by such voodoo conditionals, then that agent, though capable of causally undetermined actions, would not be "free" in any morally relevant sense. In that case, which action would be taken in any situation of choice could be predetermined by God, by God's determining which of the "tiny events" should occur. And in a worst-case scenario, if *all* created free agents were to suffer from such "transworld manipulability"—Zimmerman terms this a "divine voodoo world"—it would be impossible for God to create agents that are free and morally responsible. But Zimmerman does not claim Molinism en-

⁹ I will, however, point out that in my view John L. Pollock has shown that CCFs must be "necessitation conditionals" (though they are not logically necessary), rather than "simple subjunctives", as asserted by Koons (see HASKER 1989, 26–27). Furthermore, LCEM (the law of conditional excluded middle) must hold for CCFs, but it is not a general truth of logic.

¹⁰ In some of my own anti-Molinist arguments, I contend that the counterfactuals are indeed contained in the world's past history, as noted in part 2 of Koons' paper. This however is a point of contention, which will and indeed must be resisted by Molinists.

tails that *in fact* all actual free creatures are transworld manipulable, or that the actual world is a voodoo world, any more than Plantinga, in his free will defense, is committed to holding that all, or indeed any, actual free creatures suffer from transworld depravity. Zimmerman holds only that this is *possible*, and the sting of this for Molinism lies in the fact that God is thus made dependent upon *luck*—that is, on the way the (contingent) CCFs actually turn out—so as not to leave God in this metaphysical “bind”. This may indeed be found objectionable by Molinists, as is shown by William Craig’s impassioned assault on Zimmerman’s argument (CRAIG 2011). But God according to Molinism is subject to luck in any case: Craig himself refers to God as having to “play with the hand he has been dealt” (CRAIG 2017, 38). For instance, it is logically possible for the CCFs to have turned out so badly that there is no feasible world containing free creatures that meets the minimum standard of goodness to be created by God.¹¹ So it would seem that the problem of voodoo conditionals is not decisive against Molinism.

The other main difficulty for my proposal concerns what I shall term “divine guarantees” that entail that a certain free action shall be taken. Now, mere divine foreknowledge, or divine intentions concerning free actions, will not create a problem at this point. That is because the antecedents of CCFs, on my proposal, include only worldly events and not events occurring in the divine mind. But suppose some worldly event has occurred that implies a divine guarantee that a creaturely choice will be made in a particular way—say, a prophet declaring, on God’s authority, that this will happen? Does this mean that the choice is then necessitated, and not free after all?

Such a prophetic declaration need not, as such, create a problem. Prophets, no doubt, are human and fallible, and sometimes even deluded. So the fact that a prophet, even a genuine prophet, foretold an event does not, as such, logically entail that the event will occur. To be sure, in the case under consideration, which is an authentic prophecy, God’s intention stands behind the prophet’s words, and the event will indeed take place. But this divine intention is not included in the antecedent of the CCF, which remains contingent. And the event foretold also remains contingent.

This solution will not work, however, when the speaker is the incarnate Son, as in the often-discussed case of Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s denial. We will not entertain the supposition that Jesus was deluded in supposing that

¹¹ It would explain quite a lot about the actual world, if it were to turn out that it is the best (or one of the best) of feasible worlds, but that it nevertheless barely achieves the minimum standard of goodness to be creatable by God!

his prediction had divine warrant. That possibility having been dismissed, two others remain. The first, which may seem less credible, is that the prediction of Peter's denial was conditional rather than absolute. It was genuinely possible (though perhaps not probable) that Peter, challenged by Jesus' words, would have recognized the shaky ground he was standing on spiritually, and would have sought and received the strength he needed in order to stand firm and profess his loyalty to his Lord, even under the pressure of the situation in the high priest's courtyard. Conditional prophecies are well known and are recognized in Scripture (see Jeremiah 18:7–10), and it need not be the case that, when the prophecy is made, its conditional character is explicitly stated.

The other possibility is that, in the actual situation, Peter's spiritual state was such that he simply did not have the inner fortitude to remain faithful when interrogated. It was, on the contrary, psychologically inevitable that he would deny Jesus, so that his denial was not, at that moment, an action he was capable of avoiding. (It is of course entirely compatible with this that there were other, earlier occasions in Peter's life where he made free choices that contributed to his weakness of character.) Whichever of these solutions is accepted, we do not have a CCF whose truth entails the future occurrence of a particular free decision, and the requirements of the Molinist scheme seem to have been met.¹²

An especially interesting feature of Koons' essay is his argument that, under certain circumstances, creaturely agents can have counterfactual power over the counterfactuals of divine freedom (CDFs), the truths which state what God, confronted with a certain situation, would freely choose to do. This can happen, he shows, if the creatures' own CCFs are within their counterfactual power. Since it is implausible, and has damaging consequences, that CDFs are within the counterfactual power of creatures, this argument of Koons reinforces my own contention that counterfactuals of freedom are resilient for creaturely agents, and that it does not lie in the power of those agents to act in such a way that those counterfactuals would be false. Furthermore, I agree with his refusal to allow Cunningham to evade the problem by attributing to the Molinist a version of free will that dispenses with the requirement of alternative possibilities.¹³ And finally, I view with bemuse-

¹² It is interesting, and may seem problematic to some Molinists, that these are exactly the same options concerning Peter's denial that are available to open theists.

¹³ Note by the way that Cunningham is not himself a Molinist, though his paper is a defense of Molinism against my arguments.

ment Koons' offer to the Molinists of a view according to which *modus ponens* is not valid for CCFs. It will be interesting to see whether any of them will take advantage of his generous assistance!

ŁUKASIEWICZ

I must thank Dariusz Łukasiewicz for his clear and on the whole accurate presentation of my response to the problem of evil (ŁUKASIEWICZ 2022, 155–71). And I am pleased that in general my theodicy meets with his approval. I believe that the general agreement between us on these matters goes some distance towards providing empirical confirmation for my claim that, in dealing with divine providence, open theism and the doctrine of divine timelessness are very much on a par.

The main difficulty Łukasiewicz sees for my view is the one concerning divine continuous creation. However, there are two other issues that I will deal with first. I happily admit that, given God's knowledge of the past and present, as postulated by open theism,

it is unconvincing to accept the biblical image of God as a person who truly *spontaneously* reacts to the decisions people make and their actions. It is not convincing that God, as a being "of unimaginable wisdom and power", is angry like a husband cheated on by his wife.

I entirely agree. Such biblical representations must be seen as involving an element of hyperbole; no doubt they are intended to convey the seriousness of God's reaction to sin and betrayal, but they cannot be literally accurate depictions of God. Taking seriously biblical depictions of divine emotions need not entail taking them with extreme literalness; surely the scriptures do contain elements of both anthropomorphism and anthropopathism.

Another criticism targets my assertion that, were God to intervene in every case of "gratuitous evil", this would tend to undermine our own motivation to prevent harm to our fellow human beings. Łukasiewicz asserts:

Hasker's assumption that God's interference in the course of the world's history would undermine the foundations of human morality is not evidently true. If we assume, for example, that morality is based on duties, then God's action or non-action in the world has no bearing on human moral motivation. If I am obliged to do something, I have this obligation, no matter what happens if I do not fulfil my duty; and I

am morally *motivated* to fulfil my duty because I am convinced that it is morally wrong not to fulfil moral duties. Thus, from this point of view, it does not matter to human morality understood deontologically how many occurrences of evils God will prevent.

I agree that we could still have moral duties, based perhaps on divine commands, to prevent harm and suffering even if we knew that, were we not to do so, God's intervention would guarantee that the sufferers would on balance be benefitted or at least not made worse off. Furthermore, we might still be motivated to fulfil the duties in question. However, I maintain that as a matter of fact,

An important part of what leads human beings to attribute great significance to morality is the perception that pointless harm and suffering very often result from morally objectionable behavior. (HASKER 2004, 82)

If this is true (and I believe that it is), then the belief that God prevents all such pointless harm and suffering would indeed have a deleterious effect on human moral motivation. And I believe we have empirical evidence of this fact, in that sometimes theists who believe that God "always works things out for the best" do in fact display a lack of motivation to prevent evil and suffering.¹⁴

But now we need to address the problem concerning continuous creation. I believe I can best do this by setting out my own conception of this topic, rather than following the details of Łukasiewicz's presentation. First let me say that I prefer, on the whole, to speak of divine *conservation* of the created world, rather than of continuous creation. I agree that a created being, once created, is no more capable of maintaining itself in existence than it was of bringing itself into existence in the first place. But to speak of "conservation" brings out the point that God, in conserving the already existing entity, is *prolonging the existence of something that already exists*, rather than bringing something into existence for the first time. Furthermore, I do not see that we have a need for a doctrine of divine *concurrence*, if this means that there must be an additional divine action, a further input of divine energy, so to speak, in enabling created entities to perform their natural actions. My main reason for saying this is that I think we should reject occasionalism,

¹⁴ As an example of this (but far from the only example), consider the passivity (at best) of many Christians in the United States during the civil rights struggle (HASKER 2004, 88).

which in effect strips created entities of their causal powers in order to “glorify God” by attributing all power to him alone. God is better glorified by affirming that he is able to create entities which have causal powers of their own, and are able to exercise those powers, given that the existence of the created entities along with all their powers must be continually sustained by God. But divine concurrence, insofar as it goes beyond conservation, seems to be a sort of semi-occasionalism: it concedes to created entities some degree of causal power, but power that is unable to produce any effects without additional “input” from God. I find little appeal in this half-way position.

In creating an entity *ex nihilo*, then, God brings it into being with all its inherent properties and powers. Previously there was simply nothing, so there is nothing other than God that can be responsible for anything about the created being. But now there is a real being in existence; one that, to be sure, must be conserved in being by divine power, but all the same a being that *really exists*, and *really does have* its proper powers inherent in it. And when these powers are exercised, God sustains them in their exercise and in producing their proper effects. Now, suppose that the created being has the power to produce an effect that is *causally contingent*, in that a particular outcome is not causally necessitated, but the situation can go in either of two or more different ways. Perhaps the object is a nucleus of Uranium 235, which may or may not undergo fission in the next moment. God continuously sustains the existence of this nucleus, and however the causality expresses itself—whether through a fission event or the lack thereof—God sustains the causal power in question in producing its effect. That is to say, God sustains the fission event *because* the nucleus spontaneously fissions, not the other way around. Is there anything about the doctrine of divine conservation that shows this to be impossible? I do not see that there is. This may be a case of “weak concurrentism”, in Łukasiewicz’s terminology, but I will leave it to him whether this diagnosis is correct.

What works in the case of a radioactive nucleus will also, so it seems, work in the case of a person endowed with the power of libertarian free choice. If so, then I have arrived, through a somewhat simpler discussion, at the same result obtained by Łukasiewicz.¹⁵ I will not attempt to match our

¹⁵ Łukasiewicz’ solution involves the notion of an “SS property”, the property of “being unconserved by God and existent”, which is conferred by God on all created substances. It is as though the substances are created with a battery pack, which enables them to exist and function unconserved for a while, but then runs out so that they need to be reconnected to the divine power source. This strikes me as problematic. It will then be merely an accidental property of any created

solutions line for line; that would require more space, and perhaps more analytical ingenuity, than I can afford just now. Certainly he and I must agree in hoping that at least one of our solutions is successful! For as a theist and a libertarian, Łukasiewicz needs a solution just as much as I do.

JEDWAB

Joseph Jedwab and I have previously discussed our respective doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation (JEDWAB 2011; HASKER 2013b, 2018). In his essay for this issue (2022, 173–89), he has chosen not to continue that discussion. Instead, he presents a new, “Phenomenal Neo-Lockean”, proposal for understanding both doctrines. Interestingly, however, he does not himself endorse his own proposal, because it involves metaphysical assumptions he does not accept. Nevertheless, he presents it in the hope of moving our understanding of these doctrines forward.

I believe this is an entirely reasonable way for him to proceed. True, it is of some significance that he does not himself endorse the proposal he is presenting, but that is not a reason why he should not present it. Some others may accept the principles he rejects; and, on the other hand, it will be difficult to find any acceptable way of understanding these doctrines that does not involve some metaphysical concepts or principles that are subject to dispute. Furthermore, if we have available a variety of ways of construing the doctrines that are not obviously unacceptable, this may encourage us to hope that, eventually, an even better solution may be found.

In view of this, I happily accept Jedwab’s gift of his proposed model. This move does, however, present me with a problem. A full-scale discussion of Jedwab’s proposal, no doubt including comparisons with my own view, would require more space than I can reasonably devote to it. What I propose to do, then, is to offer some observations about his views, including points at which I would disagree with them; this can provide some guidance for readers who wish to explore the topic in greater depth.

A first observation, or rather pair of observations, is that both of the problems with which Jedwab begins his discussion have initial solutions that

substance that it is conserved by God, in case it happens to have exhausted its battery pack. I believe it is more plausible, and more in accord with the tradition, to hold that it is necessarily true that all created substances are conserved by God so long as they exist.

are plausible and not obviously unacceptable. For the “logical problem of the Trinity”, the term ‘God’ in

(3) Each divine person is God

can be understood as an adjective (=“divine”) rather than as a substantive. There is, arguably, good precedent for this move in the usage in the Gospel of John (“the Word was God”; see HASKER 2013b, 189–90), and it removes the immediate contradiction with

(1) There is (only) one God.

To be sure, this leaves the question as to what category the Persons belong to in virtue of “being God”. But an answer is available here also: the predicate ‘God’ applies to each person in virtue of the fact that he is a *divine* person; so understood, (3) is really a tautology. Without doubt, this leaves many other important questions concerning the Trinity unanswered, but the appearance of an immediate contradiction has been dispelled.

With regard to the “metaphysical problem of Incarnation”, one might ask about the warrant for

(5) The human nature the Son assumes, which involves a human body and soul (with intellect and will), is intrinsically just like a complete human person.

This is really an exceedingly strong statement. It implies that if one were to know all of the truths concerning Christ’s human nature (CHN) in itself (but excluding relational statements linking the human nature with other things), one would find *no difference whatsoever* from what would be true in a hypothetical case in which CHN existed on its own, as an independent human person. But this seems highly questionable. As things actually stand, we Christians affirm that Christ’s human nature has never been the locus of any sinful thought or action, but this would almost certainly be false if CHN had existed as an independent human being. However this may be, (5) seems very far from being evidently true.

The prospects may be improved, to be sure, if instead of (5) we were to affirm that

(5') The human nature the Son assumes, which involves a human body and soul (with intellect and will), is *essentially* just like a complete human person.

Very likely this is what was intended by the text Jedwab cites in support of (5). In that case, (6) would need to be replaced by

(6') Anything essentially just like a complete human person is a person.

However, (6') straightforwardly begs the question against the doctrine of the Incarnation; it asserts that it is impossible for a genuine human nature to be assumed by the Word. According to (6'), if assumption means that we do not have an independent human person, it of necessity also means that that which is assumed is not truly human. So far from finding (6') initially plausible, any believer in the Incarnation should find it eminently rejectable.

To be sure, neither rejecting (5) nor rejecting (6') takes us very far in understanding what actually happens when a human nature is assumed by the Word. But whatever the answer to that question may be (or even if we are unable to find a satisfying answer), the appearance of an immediate contradiction has been dispelled.

So far, however, I have not said anything about Jedwab's new proposal. He provides us with a series of five propositions (I shall term them the "five theses") making general statements about his model. Here I quote these theses, followed by some more specific statements that show why each of the theses is true of his model.

(i) God constitutes each divine person.

Each Person exists because "God" (the concrete divine nature) exists and has, e.g., the Father life-stream.

(ii) Some divine experiences are co-subjective but not co-personal.

All the experiences of each of the Persons are experiences of God, the divine nature, and are therefore co-subjective, but the experiences of any two of the Persons are not co-personal.

(iii) When the Son is incarnate, God and the Son's human nature each partly and both together wholly constitute the Son's mental life.

Consider the Son's combined "introspective-visual" experience of seeing a tree. The visual part of this is constituted by the fact that the Son's human nature has this visual experience. The introspective part of it is constituted by the fact that God, the divine nature, has the experience of introspecting the visual experience of the Son's human nature. Taking these together, we have the Son's combined visual-introspective experience.

- (iv) When the Son is incarnate, some divine experience and some human experience are co-personal but not co-subjective.

In the example given above, the divine experience of introspection and the human visual experience are co-personal, in that both are experiences of the Son. But they are not co-subjective; there is no single subject that has both experiences. This implies that the Son is not a subject of experience, distinct from God and the Son's human nature.¹⁶

- (v) God and the Son's human nature are fundamental, but no divine person is fundamental.

This follows from (1) above; each divine Person is constituted by "God", and no constituted entity is fundamental.

It would initially seem that Jedwab's proposed doctrine of the Trinity is broadly similar to my own. Both of us speak of the Persons as being "constituted" by the one concrete divine nature. Admittedly, the concepts of constitution are different; his derives from John Foster, mine from Lynn Rudder Baker. Nevertheless, our respective views of the Trinity seem to be generally in agreement. Each of us holds that the existence of the three Persons consists in the fact that the one divine Nature generates three distinct life-streams of experience, which are the lives of Father, Son, and Spirit. It seems, then, that Jedwab is a social trinitarian, as I am. I will not, however, endorse the closing moves of his paper, in which he argues that "since God constitutes each divine person, there's a natural sense in which each divine person is a God." Most Trinitarians have not wished to say, and in fact have not said, that "each divine person is *a God*." And they have no need to say this, if they avail themselves of the alternative of construing 'God' in the context of (3) as an adjective rather than as a substantive.

However, there seem also to be more intractable difficulties. I do not see how it is possible that "God", the concrete divine nature, can be the subject of the experiences comprised in the Father-life-stream, as is asserted in thesis (i). The difficulty arises because some of these experiences are *first-person experiences*; for instance, the experience that might be expressed by the Father's saying, "I am the Father, who gave my only Son to be the Savior of humankind." The divine nature (= "God") *cannot* say this, because the divine nature is *not* the Father. Nor is the divine nature the Son, who has the experience expressed by the saying, "I am the Son, who became incarnate in

¹⁶ "The fact that the Son has this divine-human experience is wholly constituted by the fact that God has the divine introspective act, the fact that the human spirit has the human experience, and some fact about how God and the human spirit are related."

order to be the Savior of humankind.” And so also, of course, for the Holy Spirit. It seems, then, that the model breaks down right at the beginning.

Furthermore, with regard to thesis (iv), one might think to respond, “The Son’s human visual experience and his divine introspective experience are indeed co-subjective, because both are experiences of the Son.” One might think this, since it seems natural to assume that the Son, who is a person, is thereby a subject of experience. However, when we look at Jedwab’s explanation of what a person is, we do not find there that a person must be a subject of experience. And that the Son is *not* a subject of experience follows from the facts noted in (iv): “some divine experience and some human experience are co-personal but not co-subjective.” But it seems exceedingly strange that the Son, and therefore also the Father and the Holy Spirit, are *not* subjects of experience. This seems very different from what we previously understood the sense of ‘person’ to be, before studying Jedwab’s model; it makes us wonder whether it was after all correct to describe this as a “social” model of the Trinity. In my own version of social trinitarianism, each of the Persons is indeed a subject of experiences. The divine nature, in contrast, is not a subject of experiences, though it constitutes each of the Persons, each of whom is such a subject.¹⁷ I do not want to state dogmatically that Jedwab’s model of the Trinity is unacceptable due to these difficulties. I do, however, believe that these are matters that deserve his attention if he at some point offers a further defense of the model.¹⁸

In my view, the Nicene Creed and the formula of the Council of Chalcedon are jewels of the church, worth preserving and honoring. At the same time, we need to be aware of the limitations of these formulations. They tell us what needs to be said about the divine Trinity and about the Incarnation. Perhaps even more pointedly, they tell us what must *not* be said about these matters. But the formulas do not provide a metaphysical analysis of the Trinity and the Incarnation, so for those seeking a more perspicuous understanding of the doctrines there is much work remaining to be done. I believe, furthermore, that Professor Jedwab shares these sentiments with me. The model he has presented is one way of addressing this need, and my own proposals offer another way of proceeding. May all of us who care about these fundamental Christian teachings give to this task our very best and most faithful efforts.

¹⁷ For my present stance on constitution see HASKER (2021a, 2021b). The view as presented in these articles differs somewhat from HASKER (2013b).

¹⁸ I am not forgetting that Jedwab does not himself endorse the model. But whether the difficulties noted here are all or part of his reasons for not endorsing it, I simply do not know.

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