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PAUL HELM'S "COMPATIBILIST" VIEW OF DIVINE
PROVIDENCE
IN LIGHT OF THE FRANKFURTIAN DEBATE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

SIMON SANG-KYUN KO

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

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For Judy, Ioan, Isen, and Anabel;

and for my mom, Bok-Soo Shin, who is with the LOR

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Simon Ko

ABSTRACT

It is easy to find in prominent scholarly opinion today that to maintain its comprehensive divine determinism the Reformed Christian tradition must endorse metaphysical compatibilism to affirm some semblance of creaturely freedom. Arguably, one of the two Reformed scholars who have promulgated this idea the most is Paul Helm. Interestingly, while Helm's "no-risk" view of divine providence started off with pretty straightforward classical compatibilism, it has since morphed into what is akin to source incompatibilism. At the heart of this transformation is Helm's increasing interest in the feasibility of "*irreducible agency, despite the fixity of the future*" (or to use more technical lingo, "*actual-sequence-indeterminism, despite alternate-sequence-compulsion*"). Since 1969, the feasibility of such "*irreducibly voluntary, yet having only one option for choosing*" has also been rigorously pursued by many able *Frankfurtian* "new-compatibilists" and "source-incompatibilists." Such Frankfurtian analytic philosophers have been trying to undermine the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP, for short) by showing that a certain inability to do otherwise need not interfere with one's meaningful production of morally relevant choice. Through visiting some of the most brilliant paradigmatic cases, I will argue that the trajectory of the Frankfurtian project is headed for complete failure and that this is a strong indication that the relevant ability to do otherwise is ultimately indispensable for exercising our morally relevant freedom. There is then no such thing as truly "*actual-sequence-only-indeterminism,*" as genuine "*alternate-sequence-compulsion*" robs the individual of his or her ultimate sourcing capabilities. The Reformed people with a similar aspiration for such "*irreducible agency*" should therefore look for its Reformed alternative within more robustly libertarian bounds. In utilizing Helm's own distinction, I

suggest a flexible *type*-certainty model, according to which God is said to preordain every *type* of thing that *God* would ever want to ensure (without necessarily determining their corresponding *action-tokens*). I do this to allow more freedom at the *action-token* level without actually becoming either Open-Theistic or Semi-Pelagian, for that would rob God of too much control to be the truly sovereign God of all (*types* of) things that matter.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. Present Status of the Problem

It is easy to find in prominent scholarly opinion today that the Reformed Christian tradition must preclude genuine human freedom (relevant for moral responsibility) because of its strong ties to comprehensive divine determinism. The idea is that it would have to be at best metaphysically compatibilist in order to affirm some semblance of creaturely freedom.¹ Arguably, one of the two contemporary Reformed scholars that

¹ Metaphysical compatibilism typically holds that (morally relevant) freedom is consistent with causal determinism (“determinism,” for short). The reason I enclose “morally relevant” in parentheses is because not all compatibilists believe that we should view the relevant freedom here “in the lens of moral responsibility.” For this opinion, see Kadri Vihvelin, “How to Think about the Free Will/Determinism Problem,” in *Carving Nature at Its Joints: Natural Kinds in Metaphysics and Science*, eds. Joseph Kiem Campbell, Michael O’Rourke, and Matthew H. Slater (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 314-40. According to causal determinism, the complete state of the universe at any given time coupled with its laws of nature causally allows for only one particular state of the universe at any later time. Many of its proponents would maintain therefore that the only way an agent “could have done otherwise” (and act freely) is if the world had been relevantly different in a counterfactual way. That the Reformed perspective must depend on such metaphysical compatibilism to maintain its strong perspective on divine providence is taken for granted by prominent works in the field as follows: William Hasker, “Providence and Evil: Three Theories,” *Religious Studies* 28 (1992): 91-105 and *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1994), 141; Thomas P. Flint, “Two Accounts of Providence,” in *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 147-81 and “Divine Providence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, eds. Thomas P. Flint and Michael Rea (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 262-85; and Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also my reference to Peter van Inwagen’s comment in n2 of chapter 6. Van Inwagen comments in his “Freedom to Break the Laws,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 28 (2004): 350n21 that according to his recent conversation with Ted Warfield, “who comes as close as is humanly possible to knowing what every analytical philosopher thinks about anything and is very knowledgeable indeed about the ins and outs of the free-will controversy, ... the majority of analytical philosophers who had actually worked on the free-will problem were incompatibilists, and that the majority of analytical philosophers (full stop) were compatibilists.” This then perhaps explains the discrepancy that we find in the professional literature on the topic of free will (which is overridingly incompatibilist) and the recent findings by David Bourget and David J. Chalmers in “What Do Philosophers Believe?,” *Philosophical Studies* 170, no. 3 (2014): 465-500, according to which the opinions of many philosophers who currently teach in academia breaks down as follows: Accept compatibilism: 34.8%; lean toward compatibilism: 24.3%; accept incompatibilism and free will (i.e., “libertarianism”): 7.7%; lean toward libertarianism: 6.0%; accept incompatibilism and deny free will: 5.7%; lean toward incompatibilism and no free will: 6.6%; and “other” (agnostic, etc.): 6.9%. As such, only about 26% of the philosophers in general lean toward or accept incompatibilism. The same survey found only about 15% lean toward or accept theism.

contributed the most to this trend is Paul Helm.² Not only is he the famed author of *The Providence of God*,³ he is also one of the four main contributors to the *Four Views* volume on divine foreknowledge.⁴ Since then Helm has published, among other things, two books on Calvin, each of which has at least one chapter devoted to “Calvin’s compatibilism.”⁵ While it is true that these last two volumes are supposed to be about

² The other being John Feinberg. For example, see Feinberg’s “God Ordains All Things,” in *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, eds. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 17-43.

³ Paul Helm, *The Providence of God*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993). For a mostly positive assessment of this work, see the review by John M. Frame in *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 438-42. For a more critical assessment, see Brian L. Hebblethwaite’s review in *Religious Studies* 31 (1995): 401-3. *The Providence of God* (or *TPOG*, for short here on out) is a good place to begin our discussion as it is rather consistent with all his prior works. Helm’s prior works on this topic include “Divine Foreknowledge and Facts,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4 (1974): 305-15; “Fatalism Once More,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1975): 355-6; “Foreknowledge and Possibility,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 6 (1976): 731-4; “God and Whatever Comes to Pass,” *Religious Studies* 14 (1978): 315-23; “Grace and Causation,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 (1979): 101-12; “Theism and Freedom,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 21 (1979): 139-49; “God and the Approval of Sin,” *Religious Studies* 20 (1984): 215-22; and *Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). A few of his later works also bear similarity to *TPOG*. They are “Calvin and Bernard on Freedom and Necessity: A Reply to Brümmer,” *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): 457-65; “Calvin (and Zwingli) on Divine Providence,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 388-405; and “God, Compatibilism, and the Authorship of Sin,” *Religious Studies* 46 (2010): 115-24, which happens to be a mere repudiation of Peter Byrne’s pointed attack on a logical point made by Helm in his *Eternal God* and *TPOG*. As such, “God, Compatibilism, and the Authorship of Sin” need not be understood as representative of Helm’s positive stance on the issue.

⁴ James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). Almost identical to Helm’s perspective in *Four Views* (for short) is his “God Does Not Take Risks,” in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Michael J. Peterson and Raymond J. VanArragon (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 2004), 228-41. Besides this, the following four works seem to be in the same vein of thought as the one found in *Four Views*: “Synchronic Contingency in Reformed Scholasticism: A Note of Caution,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 57 (2003): 207-22; “Synchronic Contingency Again,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 57 (2003): 234-38; “Reformed Thought on Freedom: Some Further Thoughts,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 4 (2010): 185-207; and “‘Structural Indifference’ and Compatibilism in Reformed Orthodoxy,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 5 (2011): 184-205. In this dissertation, these “lesser” works will be consulted only if they are needed to supplement our analysis of *Four Views*.

⁵ Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Calvin's theology, they are also, as we should come to find out, an important window into Helm's own thought.⁶

Given such an ample supply of material and his renown as a representative Reformed compatibilist, one would expect to find a clear, thorough, and perhaps even consistent presentation of Helm's own perspective over the years. However, upon close inspection, we come to discover numerous loose ends and significant variations across his publications on this topic, as they are representatively present in these four volumes.⁷ For instance, in *The Providence of God*, where he devotes the most space to advance his own classical compatibilist version of providence (in a manner fairly consistent with all his prior works),⁸ when it comes to addressing harder questions and challenges pertaining to such straightforward compatibilism, Helm simply recommends that we check out other well-known works on compatibilism.⁹ His endorsement of the (classical) compatibilist perspective in *The Providence of God* then boils down to the grounds that "it is not unreasonable to assume the truth of one side of an issue which is perennially debated."¹⁰

⁶ As it will become clearer in chapters 3 and 4, these volumes are replete with Helm's own personal take on things in terms of the emphasis, evaluative comments, and endorsement of certain ideas.

⁷ Of all the other works of Helm, one that stands out as being the most thorough and precise is his recent essay that critiques Terrance L. Tiessen's "Calvinistic Molinism." See Paul Helm and Terrance Tiessen, "Does Calvinism Have Room for Middle Knowledge? A Conversation," *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (2009): 437-54. I cite this article later in chapter 3 in order to better articulate Helm's newer perspective in *Four Views*.

⁸ See, e.g., Helm's *The Providence of God*, 67, 186-9, where he states, elaborates on, and endorses standard compatibilist conditions that are deemed necessary and sufficient to ground moral responsibility. For his prior works which are for the most part consistent with *The Providence of God*, see the list provided in the third footnote of this chapter. The first place where we see a significant change in Helm's position is in *Four Views* (2001).

⁹ Helm, *The Providence of God*, 186. The philosophers Helm recommends in this connection are Peter van Inwagen, Gary Watson, John Martin Fischer, and Harry Frankfurt. See Helm, *The Providence of God*, 240n25.

¹⁰ Helm, *The Providence of God*, 174.

On the ongoing changes in Helm's own perspective, Helm maintains in the first three volumes that God's efficacious grace in salvation (concerning act-*types*) is the rightful grounds to make proper judgments on the metaphysics of agency *per se* (even though the latter is really about act-*tokens* only). In each of these three volumes, Helm then dismisses the libertarian notion of indeterministic freedom (having to do with act-*tokens*) precisely because he deems that it is incompatible with the Reformed notion of the "causally sufficient" efficacious saving grace of God (again, having to do with broader act-*types*).¹¹ His opinion on this matter then changes completely in *Calvin at the Centre* (2010), where Helm explicates that we should not draw such an inference at all between act-*types* and act-*tokens*.¹²

Another area where we see a significant change in Helm's view is his appraisal of "secular" or general compatibilism. In *The Providence of God*, Helm appears to accept it wholeheartedly.¹³ In *Four Views*, he seems to be totally fine with it in some places, but then in other places, in his effort to make a meaningful distinction between divine efficient causation and willing permission, Helm not only denies divine causal sufficiency in God's willing permission, he also comes right out against "physical (or general) determinism" as "reductionistic" and detrimental to secondary causation.¹⁴ In the

¹¹ See, e.g., *The Providence of God*, 54; *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*, 170-72; and *John Calvin's Ideas*, 128, 148, 152, 165-6.

¹² Helm, *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 228-9, 229n5.

¹³ Referring to the general compatibilist notion of freedom that he adopts in the book, Helm, for instance, says in *The Providence of God*, 67: "The great advantage of such a view of human freedom is that, being compatible with determinism, it is also compatible with a full view of divine omniscience and omnipotence, and thus with a 'no-risk' theory of providence." See also *The Providence of God*, 174, 178.

¹⁴ For instance, Helm says that "though everything that happens has sets of efficient or deficient causes in a way consistent with compatibilist accounts of human actions" (177), "[for God] to knowingly and willingly permit an action [that is morally reprehensible] is not to cause that action; it is to provide a necessary *but not* sufficient causal condition for the action. Whereas *physical determinism* has a strong

last two abovementioned works on Calvin, Helm continues to disparage “naturalistic determinism (heavily influenced by science)” as undesirably *flattening* of all things. Yet, when it comes to “willing permission,” Helm goes back on his earlier stance in *Four Views* to state outright that despite being merely permissive, such willing permission is still causally *sufficient* (for whatever is thus particularly “permitted”).¹⁵ Presenting itself is then the challenge of fully grasping and correctly deciphering Helm’s own perspective as we see it on paper.

As challenging as it may be to decipher some of these aspects of Helm’s view, one thing that is clear and of great interest to us is Helm’s increasing effort to make room for creaturely freedom and its own causality. For instance, Helm’s discomfort with “reductionistic determinism” that we first come across in *Four Views* sees a rather elaborate coverage in *Calvin at the Centre*. In expounding on the Stoics’ so-called “unpredeterministic compatibilism”¹⁶ (as the backdrop of Calvin’s own supposedly “disavowed compatibilism”), Helm then concludes on the importance of *irreducible agency (despite the fixity of the future)* as follows:

Calvin’s form of compatibilism is grounded in the autonomy of human (and angelic) agency, like the Stoics’ – autonomy in the sense that human agency is *not* simply the effect of sets of external forces. In this sense God works through those distinct individual natures that he has created and upholds, and not merely through laws of nature and initial conditions which together are causally necessary and sufficient for everything that occurs in the world.¹⁷

tendency to be *reductionistic* and has difficulty in finding a place for a range of objects having their own causal powers, the divine willing permission is most certainly not reductionistic in this sense” (180, emphasis mine).

¹⁵ *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 99, 123-5; *Calvin at the Centre*, 228, 231-2.

¹⁶ *Calvin at the Centre*, 240.

¹⁷ *Calvin at the Centre*, 248. Emphasis added.

Now, when Helm devotes so much attention on the possibility of securing for the Stoics such irreducible agency so that he could tie it back to Calvin and Calvin's supposedly better "disavowed" compatibilism, we should ask ourselves if there could be a connection between this later trend in Helm and the great line of Frankfurtian scholarship, which seems to be after the same thing: namely, (1) (irreducible or non-causally sufficed) voluntary initiative to X (that can then properly ground the moral responsibility on the person for so choosing it on his own), (2) despite the ultimate inevitability of having to so choose. It is worth mentioning here that Harry Frankfurt and John Martin Fischer (a prominent Frankfurtian) are two of the philosophers that Helm cites the most in connection with possibly not needing any alternative possibilities at all while making responsible free choices.¹⁸ To accurately evaluate the ultimate viability of Helm's own position (that shows new dependence on the realizability of such "irreducible agency despite inalterability"), it is incumbent upon us to explore how the Frankfurtian project has fared in recent years through its massive effort, and what implication this may hold for Helm's own formulizing.

To introduce this subject matter briefly, in his pioneering 1969 paper,¹⁹ Harry Frankfurt challenges the "Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP, for short)"²⁰ by pointing out that unlike a typical PAP-supporting case of coercion or compulsion (whereby the same set of circumstances supposedly *both* bring about the choice *and* make it impossible to avoid it), there may be a set of circumstances "that in no way bring

¹⁸ As, for example, in *The Providence of God*, 187-8; *John Calvin's Ideas*, 150-2, 154, 175.

¹⁹ Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 829-39.

²⁰ According to which, "a person is morally responsible for what she has done *only if* she could have done otherwise (or at least could have avoided it)."

about that a person performs an action” while making “it impossible for her to avoid performing that action.”²¹ If such a set of circumstances existed, it would effectively demonstrate the possibility of volunteering for an act (and so being responsible for it as a result) while completely lacking the ability to avoid it.

If Frankfurt’s new-compatibilist case against PAP really worked, then compatibilists would have a significant victory over the traditional (“leeway”) incompatibilists, according to whom the “more-than-one-way” freedom is indispensable for properly bestowing moral responsibility on the individual who uses it as follows:

- (1) If an action is determined, then the agent could not have done otherwise.
- (2) If the agent could not have done otherwise, then she is not morally responsible for it.
- (3) Therefore, if an action is determined, then the agent is not morally responsible for it.

The crucial point here is that if Frankfurtians were right about the falsehood of PAP, then moral responsibility could be preserved in the absence of all (or even just the relevant)

²¹ Harry Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” 830. This is otherwise known as an “IRR” (standing for “causally *irrelevant*”) situation in that the supposed ensuring condition that should make the given act unavoidable is *not* really *relevant* in the *actual causal sequence* of choosing. An “IRR” situation can be illustrated as follows: Black, the Counterfactual Intervener (CI, for short), waits in the background to see if Jones would make the choice that Black wants Jones to make (preferably) on Jones’ own. Black the CI is supposedly really good at detecting the relevant signs for what choice Jones is about to make. So, Black is ready to intervene and *force* Jones to kill Smith *if* Jones were to show a sign to the contrary. Suppose that Jones does kill Smith on his own with his own set of reasons independently of Black, so that Black need not get involved in the actual causal sequence of choosing. In such a case, Frankfurt plausibly concludes that Jones would be morally responsible for his crime, despite the fact that he could not have but eventually killed Smith. In this way, Frankfurt brings PAP under suspicion by claiming to have come up with a successful IRR counterexample to PAP. To put it more generally, “[i]n such an example, a person P does an action A in circumstances that incline most people to conclude that P is doing A freely, but (in the example) there is some mechanism that would have operated to bring it about that P would have done A if P had not done A by himself. In the actual sequence of events presented in the counterexample, however, the mechanism does not operate, and P does do A by himself. So the counterexample is designed to make us think that P does A freely in the actual sequence of events although it is not the case that P could have done otherwise than A.” See Eleonore Stump, “Freedom: Action, Intellect, and Will,” *Aquinas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 277-306. Or to borrow from Fischer, Frankfurtian cases try to establish the possibility of having “actual-sequence-indeterminism,” despite lacking all (relevant) alternative possibilities due to “alternate-sequence compulsion.” See John Martin Fischer, “Responsibility and Control,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 79, no. 1 (1982): 33-4.

alternative possibilities and even in the face of determinism (as Premise (2) would be false and the conclusion would not follow from (1)). In other words, if PAP were false (as a Frankfurtian would maintain it), then Premise (1) (i.e., “determinism threatens alternative possibilities”)²² would no longer independently threaten moral responsibility and even morally relevant freedom,²³ as first thought.

Now, on the one hand, there have been certain classical compatibilists who would rather challenge Premise (1), according to which determinism threatens freedom *per se*, without ever having to deal with the Frankfurtian CI-scenarios designed to undermine Premise (2) and its thesis about the moral responsibility’s dependence on the ability to do

²² First argued by Carl Ginet through his Consequence Argument in “Might We Have No Choice?,” in *Freedom and Determinism*, ed. Keith Lehrer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), and later popularized by Peter van Inwagen in his *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 106-52. An informal sketch of the Consequence Argument goes like this: “If determinism is true, then all our acts are the *consequences* of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. It is not up to us what went on before we were born; and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Given the above truths, all our (even present) acts – as the *consequence* of these things – are therefore beyond our control and not up to us.” For more on this standard argument against compatibilism, see n2 of chapter 6 in this dissertation.

²³ To clarify, how does showing that “someone could be morally responsible for an action without being able to act otherwise” show even that “someone could act *freely* without being able to do otherwise” (or have “irreducible agency despite the fixity of the future”)? One way is to recast the abovementioned traditional argument for “leeway” incompatibilism as follows and then take the denial of the second premise (through a Frankfurtian counterexample to PAP) as indicative of the fact that one could act freely even though she could not have done otherwise due to determinism:

- (1) If an action is determined, then the agent could not have done otherwise.
- (2) If the agent could not have done otherwise, then she is not morally responsible for it.
- (3) If the agent is not morally responsible for it, then she could not have acted freely.
- (4) Therefore, if an action is determined, then the agent could not have acted freely.

In this argument, Premise (2) is equivalent to PAP, and Conclusion (4) is a denial of compatibilism. So giving an objection to PAP provides a reason to reject Premise (2). Thus, objecting to PAP is a way to undermine an argument for leeway incompatibilism. While this leaves open that compatibilism is nevertheless false, if Premise (2) can be shown to be false, an incompatibilist will not be able to use this argument to show that a determined act cannot be done freely (in a morally relevant sense). In other words, rejection of Premise (2) would lend support to compatibilism and the prospect of attaining “irreducible agency despite the fixity of the future,” which is what Helm wants. My thanks to Edward Wierenga for his suggestion that I make this connection explicit and mention it earlier in the introduction.

otherwise.²⁴ On the other hand, if *libertarians* could establish that determination or governance by laws of nature (as it is held by compatibilism) all by itself entails freedom- and-responsibility-eliminating kind of compulsion or coercion, one could quickly distinguish between (i) the ultimately *non*-threatening inability (to do otherwise) stemming from a Frankfurtian CI-scenario (as its actual sequence would never consist of compulsion or coercion) and (ii) the automatically disconcerting kind of compulsion or coercion entailed by causal determinism *per se*. One could then easily establish an incompatibilist case against standard compatibilism without having to consider any of the

²⁴ According to Kadri Vihvelin, most pre-1969 compatibilists, the so-called “classical compatibilists,” attempt to show that “the the truth of our commonsense beliefs about choice [involving genuine alternatives] are compatible with determinism” by defending different accounts of freedom as follows: (1) “the claim that free will consists in the absence of constraint or impediments to our desires (Hobbes)”; (2) “the claim that we act freely insofar as we act without being compelled or coerced (Ayer)”; (3) “the claim that free will implies a person’s possession of a law-governed power and means the absence of any interference with his exercise of that power (Hobart)”; and (4) “the claim that to have free will is to have an ability to act that can be analysed in terms of counterfactual conditionals along the lines of ‘if he had chosen to do X, he would have done X’ (Moore).” See Vihvelin, “Classic Compatibilism, Romantic Compatibilism, and the Claims of Commonsense,” 18n7, accessed May 3, 2011, <http://vihvelin.typepad.com/vihvelincom/2010/04/classic-and-romantic-compatibilism-and-the-claims-of-commonsense.html>. Generally, according to such *classical* compatibilism, the two conditions of voluntariness ((a) doing as one pleases and (b) finding no constraint in doing just that) are expressly used to characterize and *save* the commonsensical notion of freedom even within a deterministic framework, instead of disposing of it. The post-1969 “new compatibilism,” on the other hand, tries to do the opposite by supplanting freedom with mere voluntariness. Now, the designation of “classical” to this pre-1969 perspective is complicated by the fact that “[t]he project of replacing freedom with voluntariness in the theory of moral responsibility unites thinkers as diverse as John Calvin in the sixteenth century and Harry Frankfurt in our day.” Thomas Pink’s solution is to call the post-Calvin (i.e., “modern”) but pre-Frankfurtian (i.e., “classical”) “two-way” compatibilism (i.e., “supposedly-more-than-one-option” voluntarism) as “modern classical compatibilism.” See Pink, “Self-Determination and Moral Responsibility from Calvin to Frankfurt,” in *Reason, Faith, and History: Philosophical Essays for Paul Helm*, ed. Martin Stone (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 145-63, especially 146, 154. In this dissertation, any time the standard philosophical phrase “classical compatibilism” is used for the sake of brevity and simplicity, it should be understood as the “modern classical” perspective that *postdates* yet more classical thinkers such as the Stoics, Aquinas and Calvin. See also Michael McKenna, “Compatibilism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2009 Edition), n15, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/compatibilism>; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, eds. R. E. Flatman & D. Johnston (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 108; and John Martin Fischer, “Responsibility and Control,” *Journal of Philosophy* 89 (1982): 24-40.

Frankfurtian counterexamples against PAP, as the latter would always skirt around actually bringing about the choice through causal determinism.²⁵

Although some early efforts proceeded in this direction, they stumbled on a failure to establish that the problem with this kind of compulsion (supposedly stemming merely from causal determination) is none other than the mere elimination of alternative possibilities.²⁶ This then accounts for the great subsequent interest in “Frankfurt thought-experiments,” as these are meant to positively establish the dispensability of all (relevant) alternative possibilities for responsible free choice. As a result, the Frankfurtian CI-scenarios have since then been taken seriously and challenged by classical compatibilists²⁷ and traditional libertarians alike (although much more so by the latter).

For the purpose of this dissertation, this present state of scholarship is vitally important in that if Frankfurt and his followers succeed in giving a counterexample to PAP, then they would provide a strong support for compatibilism in general, as it would show that the fact of certain determinism (that would take away our ability to do otherwise) need not for that reason eliminate our moral responsibility and morally relevant freedom for so choosing without the ability to do otherwise. On the other hand, if their objection to PAP does not succeed at all (and this is no accident), then this provides additional support for leeway incompatibilism, as it strongly suggests that with

²⁵ I am indebted to Bernard Berofsky for this insight. See his “Classical Compatibilism: Not Dead Yet,” in *Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities*, eds. David Widerker and Michael McKenna (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 108.

²⁶ Berofsky, “Classical Compatibilism: Not Dead Yet,” 108.

²⁷ Kadri Vihvelin is a good example of such a classical compatibilist who dismisses Frankfurt and his followers as mistaken. See, for example, his “Freedom, Foreknowledge, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 30 (2000): 1-24; “Free Will Demystified: A Dispositional Account,” *Philosophical Topics* 32 (2004): 427-50; and “Foreknowledge, Frankfurt, and Ability to Do Otherwise: A Reply to Fischer,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 38 (2008): 343-72.

the genuine inability to do otherwise comes the effective elimination of all morally relevant (irreducibly self-originating) choice.²⁸

So, how would one go about challenging the Frankfurtian thesis against PAP?

The most common challenge to Frankfurtian new-compatibilism initially took the shape of what is now known as the “*flickers(-of-freedom) defense*.”²⁹ With such a defense, both classical compatibilists and traditional leeway libertarians can jointly complain as follows:

The Frankfurt-type cases seem at first to involve no alternative possibilities. But upon closer inspection it can be seen that, although they do not involve alternative possibilities of normal kind, they nevertheless may involve *some* alternative possibilities. That is to say, although the counterfactual interveners eliminate most alternative possibilities, arguably they do not eliminate all such possibilities: even in the Frankfurt-type cases, there seems to be a ‘flicker of freedom.’ Thus, there is an opening to argue that these alternative possibilities (the flicker of freedom) *must* be present, even in the Frankfurt-type cases, in order for there to be moral responsibility.³⁰

To clarify, one way to think about this is to keep tracing backward in a relevant *alternate* sequence (whereby one supposedly makes a different choice) until we locate a meaningful flicker of freedom. That is, even as the person in the given counterfactual

²⁸ To put it slightly differently, with the success of the Consequence Argument, incompatibilism already has an upper-hand against compatibilism, in that if the argument is correct, determinism does in fact entail the genuine *inability* to do otherwise (contrary to certain classical compatibilists’ contention to the contrary). Now, such an inability to do otherwise would make us uncomfortable with determinism, unless of course a Frankfurtian could enlighten us that such a commonsensical response to our inability is completely mistaken and that we could still make morally relevant voluntary choices without being able to do otherwise. In effectively shutting down the Frankfurtian project, one would have then showed that the success of the Consequence Argument is indeed of paramount importance to incompatibilists.

²⁹ The flicker defense was originally adopted by van Inwagen. See his *An Essay on Free Will*, 161-82. For another attempt, see Margery Bedford Naylor, “Frankfurt on the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” *Philosophical Studies* 46 (1984): 249-58. For a more recent attempt, see Keith Wyma, “Moral Responsibility and Leeway for Action,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1997): 57-70.

³⁰ Taken from John Martin Fischer, “Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities,” in *Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities*, eds. David Widerker and Michael McKenna (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 30.

scenario (i.e., in the “*alternate-sequence*”) could not finally choose to do otherwise than, say, finally vote for Obama (as is the case in the *actual-sequence* of choosing), at least we can envision him or her to show the contrary-sign of “beginning to vote for McCain” in the *alternate-sequence* and so manifest the power to initiate a significantly different choice in a counterfactual situation. Such a backward-tracing flicker-defense would then observe that the presence of *such a small “flickering” alternative* is all that is needed to establish that Frankfurt’s case against PAP is not wholly free of meaningful-alternatives as Frankfurtians first claimed.

However, one major problem with such a Flickers-of-Freedom defense against the new-compatibilist attack on PAP is that a new compatibilist could easily tweak her counterexample to PAP to preclude all such tiny *voluntary* flickers. That is, if a counterexample to PAP is reconstructed to involve only the kind of prior signs which clearly *precede* the moment of all morally relevant voluntary choosing, then while it would still be possible for the counterfactual intervener (or CI) to control the upshot of one’s deliberation based on such reliable involuntary prior signs, no meaningful voluntary control remains for the person to choose otherwise. It is significant to note that with this kind of revision that eliminates all voluntary control from the agent, we are then left with not even one action on which to properly pin moral responsibility for so choosing, as everything would be rather automatic and beyond one’s voluntary control.³¹

This kind of new-compatibilist response (that eliminates voluntary control from all possible flickers of freedom) has therefore provoked from certain libertarians a new set of responses that have now come to be known as the “*(prior-sign-)dilemma*”

³¹ Fischer, “Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities,” 37.

defense.³² Several libertarians³³ spearheaded the way by pointing out that if the prior sign used by a CI in such a scenario could be so reconfigured to preclude all voluntariness (including the *beginnings* of a voluntary mental action, such as intention-formation or deciding), then such a completely *involuntary* sign (say, blushing, twitching, or even some neural firing sequence beyond one's control) could indicate the relevant "free" decision only in the following two problematic ways: either (i) this prior sign (with no element of voluntariness whatsoever yet) *causally determines* the ensuing "free" decision or otherwise (ii) it is merely a *probable* indicator of it. The former clearly founders on presupposing causal determinism between the impersonal and the supposedly personal (even though a Frankfurtian strategy is meant to expressly steer clear from such impersonal causal determinism), while the latter cannot completely block off all relevant abilities to do otherwise. Either way, the Frankfurtian response to the flicker-of-freedom problem fails to establish the unlikelihood of PAP, while PAP has in its favor a naturally much better intuitive appeal.

In today's debate over the potential success of the Frankfurtian project in establishing a legitimate IRR situation (whereby the posited alternatives-eliminating condition is supposedly expressly *irrelevant* to the act's actual coming about) is then a debate over whether one could truly overcome this *dilemma-defense*.³⁴ There are four

³² See David Widerker and Michael McKenna, eds. *Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities*, 8. Henceforth, this oft-cited work will be referred to as *MRAP*, for short.

³³ See, for example, David Widerker, "Libertarianism and Frankfurt's Attack on the Principle of Alternate Possibilities," *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995): 247-61; Carl Ginet, "In Defense of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities: Why I Don't Find Frankfurt's Argument Convincing," *Philosophical Perspectives* 10 (1996): 403-17; and Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 142-3.

³⁴ Widerker and McKenna, *MRAP*, 9.

major schools of Frankfurtian replies that take issue with the dilemma-defense of PAP.³⁵ Two of these strategies make an effort to create ensuring circumstances that do not involve any illegitimate prior-sign.³⁶ Another strategy attempts to create ensuring circumstances that are at work during the entire interval of deciding.³⁷ The fourth strategy attempts to revitalize the use of prior-sign examples by limiting the sign to be a merely necessary condition of whatever choice is to ensue from it voluntarily.³⁸

My research has indicated that the first three types have received much critical attention from various philosophers,³⁹ while the fourth one has not. To this less attended

³⁵ Each of them concede that a prior sign presupposing a causally deterministic relation between itself and the relevant action in question is illegitimate and therefore must be avoided by a successful Frankfurt case.

³⁶ E.g., see Alfred Mele and David Robb, "Rescuing Frankfurt-Style Cases," *Philosophical Review* 107 (1998): 97-112; and David Hunt, "Moral Responsibility and Unavoidability," *Philosophical Studies* 97 (2000): 195-227.

³⁷ E.g., see Eleonore Stump, "Libertarian Freedom and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities," in *Faith, Freedom and Rationality: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Daniel Howard-Snyder and Jeff Jordan (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), 73-88. For a critical response to Stump, see Stewart Goetz, "Stump on Libertarianism and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities," *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001): 93-101.

³⁸ So, while, in the actual world, the agent freely wills a desired course of action, she could not have done otherwise because if she were to satisfy some merely necessary condition for doing otherwise, the intervener would have taken over and guaranteed the course of action the agent supposedly takes in the actual world. By making the prior-sign merely a necessary condition for the relevant alternative action, the fourth strategy is designed to steer clear from an impersonal prior-sign necessitating a supposedly personal action. For a good example of this strategy, see Derk Pereboom, "Alternative Possibilities and Causal Histories," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 119-38, as well as *Living Without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 18-28. For Pereboom's latest work on this strategy, see "Source Incompatibilism and Alternative Possibilities," in *MRAP*, 185-99. This last work will be the focus of the discussion in chapter 5 of this dissertation, along with Michael McKenna's related strategy in "Robustness, Control, and the Demand for Morally Significant Alternatives: Frankfurt Examples with Oodles and Oodles of Alternatives," in *MRAP*, 201-17.

³⁹ E.g., see David Widerker, "Frankfurt's Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities: A Further Look," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 181-201; "Responsibility and Frankfurt-type Examples," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 323-34; and "Blameworthiness and Frankfurt's Argument Against the Principle of Alternative Possibilities," in *MRAP*, 53-73. See also Robert Kane, "Responsibility, Indeterminism and Frankfurt-style Cases," in *MRAP*, 91-105 and *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 88-92.

fourth strategy, we could also add Michael McKenna's latest attempt to use a limited form of blockage, one that allows an agent full access to "oodles and oodles" of voluntary alternative possibilities of a very particular type.⁴⁰ Although these two latest articles (by Pereboom and McKenna) have not received the attention that they deserve,⁴¹ they are in my opinion two of the finest and most advanced efforts made on behalf of an IRR-situation against PAP. I will therefore devote a bulk of space in chapter 5 to deal with these two particular cases, after first addressing Mele and Robb's potentially potent case. In the end, what is most telling in all of this is that Michael McKenna's small concession in the abovementioned paper⁴² is then followed by an even greater one, according to which Frankfurtian theorists may never succeed in coming up with a successful IRR-situation to demonstrate the total dispensability of all morally and deliberatively relevant alternative possibilities for making a significant voluntary choice.⁴³

Now, both Frankfurt and McKenna are still on the surface optimistic about what is otherwise a dim prospect. They are optimistic that despite the complete lack of success on their part, their examples (as Helm would maintain) still uphold their basic message

⁴⁰ Michael McKenna, "Robustness, Control, and the Demand for Morally Significant Alternatives: Frankfurt Examples with Oodles and Oodles of Alternatives," in *MRAP*, 201-17.

⁴¹ During my research, I could not find any published article specifically devoted to countering them.

⁴² See, e.g., Michael McKenna, "Robustness, Control, and the Demand for Morally Significant Alternatives," in *MRAP*, 212: "Maybe there is some weakness in the example Brain Malfunction. Maybe there is a good case to be made that Casper did have a deliberative significant alternative available to him. ... [However, i]t is difficult to see what *theoretical* basis there could be for denying that no Frankfurt example could be constructed that closed off all and only the deliberatively significant alternatives while leaving open some of the insignificant ones. Thus, even if the example Brain Malfunction fails, *some* example should serve as an adequate counterexample to PSA [or the Principle of Morally Significant Alternatives for blame]."

⁴³ See Michael McKenna, "Frankfurt's Argument against Alternative Possibilities: Looking Beyond the Examples," *Nous* 42 (2008): 270-93. For another such consideration, see Harry Frankfurt, "Some Thoughts Concerning PAP," in *MRAP*, 339-48, especially, 339-40.

that “making an action unavoidable is not the same thing as bringing it about that the action is performed.” By considering all the latest and best Frankfurtian cases against PAP and distilling some of the very best insights that have come to surface from it, I will then make a case contesting their optimism, especially in connection with Helm’s evolving compatibilism that seems to have gone over to the side of source incompatibilism.⁴⁴

II. Statement of the Problem

Given the present status of the problem, this dissertation will attempt to answer the following questions concerning Helm’s Reformed perspective on divine providence and responsible human agency mostly unaddressed by current scholarship. In chapter 2, I will deal with, “What kind of metaphysical compatibilism does Helm endorse in *The Providence of God* in order to support his ‘no-risk’ view of providence? In other words, where can his readers place him squarely in the classical-new compatibilist spectrum? And on what basis?” In chapter 3, “How does the ‘no-risk’ perspective that we see in *The Providence of God* undergo important changes in the subsequent literature devoted to this topic?” In chapter 4, “How does Helm’s latest work on ‘Stoic-compatibilism’ in *Calvin at the Centre* (2010) shed new light on his increasing interest in ‘irreducible agency (despite the fixity of the future)’?” In chapter 5, “In what ways does Helm’s increasing emphasis on the ‘irreducible agency (despite the fixity of the future)’ depend on the work of Harry Frankfurt and those that spearhead the so-called ‘Frankfurtian thought-experiments’

⁴⁴ According to WorldCat dissertations record, there is only one doctoral thesis whose main topic involves Paul Helm’s view of providence. However, even this dissertation was written prior to 1995, much earlier than Helm’s supposed changes in perspective began to take shape. See Geoffrey Robinson, “A reexamination of the doctrine of providence in the light of two contrasting paradigms Jack Cottrell’s ‘relative independence’ model and Paul Helm’s ‘no-risk’ model” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995). For more on “source incompatibilism,” see chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation.

against PAP? What does the complete failure on their part in their latest and best attempts advise us of Helm’s cherished concept of ‘irreducible agency (despite the fixity of future)’?” In chapter 6, “How does Helm’s latest emphasis on ‘irreducible agency (despite the fixity of future)’ remind us of source incompatibilism? What does this teach us about my thesis? With further distinctions available within incompatibilism, how should we formulate a Reformed alternative to Helm’s compatibilist/narrow-source-incompatibilist model? For instance, what is at least one metaphysically libertarian way to uphold strong divine control of creaturely affairs while not relying solely on the source model of control? How does this fare against possible objections?”

III. Thesis Statement

Through thorough analysis of and critical engagement with Paul Helm’s works as well as the works of some of the best analytic philosophers in the field of contemporary metaphysics of free will, I will defend the thesis according to which, “although Helm’s “no-risk” view of divine providence started off with pretty straightforward classical compatibilism, it has since morphed into what is akin to source incompatibilism. At the heart of this transformation is Helm’s increasing interest in the feasibility of “*irreducible agency, despite the fixity of the future*” (or to use more technical lingo, “actual-sequence-*indeterminism, despite alternate-sequence-compulsion*”).⁴⁵ It is significant to note that since 1969 the feasibility of such “irreducibly voluntary, yet having *only one option for choosing*” has rigorously been pursued by many able Frankfurtian “new-compatibilists” as well as “source-incompatibilists.” The goal of this Frankfurtian project is to object to

⁴⁵ As mentioned in n21 of this chapter, I am indebted to John Martin Fischer for these terminologies. See Fischer, “Responsibility and Control,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 79, no. 1 (1982): 33-4.

the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP, for short) by showing that a certain inability to do otherwise need not interfere with one's meaningful production of morally relevant voluntary choice (i.e., "even choosing the inevitable could be done morally responsibly"). Yet, when we visit some of the most brilliant paradigmatic cases, it becomes clear that the trajectory of the Frankfurtian project is headed for complete failure and this is a strong indication that the relevant ability to do otherwise is ultimately indispensable for exercising our morally relevant freedom. To go back to the technical language, there is then no such thing as truly "actual-sequence-*only*-indeterminism," as genuine "alternate-sequence-compulsion" robs the individual of his or her ultimate sourcing capabilities. Given this state of scholarship, those with a similar aspiration for such "irreducible agency, despite being Reformed" should look for its Reformed alternative within more robustly libertarian bounds. In utilizing Helm's own distinction, we should consider, for instance, a flexible *type*-certainty model, according to which God is said to preordain everything, but "*everything*" hereby means "every *type* of thing that *God* would ever want to ensure (without necessarily determining their corresponding *action-tokens*)." This is recommended to allow more freedom at the *action-token* level (say, by eliminating at least their time-and-spatial indexing requirements) without actually becoming either Open-Theistic or Semi-Pelagian, for that would rob God of too much control to be the truly sovereign God of all (*types* of) things that matter." The topic of this dissertation is of perennial importance for the church and Christian theology as how we understand the relationship between divine sovereignty and our morally-relevant free willing has a huge ramification on whether we perceive ourselves as relevant

difference-makers within God's set parameters.⁴⁶ We start this project by taking a deep look into Helm's most representative early work on this topic, *The Providence of God*.

⁴⁶ As this is what seems to be reflected in the following passage from Apostle Paul: "The God who made the world and all things in it ... made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, *having determined* their appointed times and the *boundaries* of their habitation, that they would seek God, *if perhaps* they *might* grope for Him and find Him... for in Him we live and move and exist..." See Acts 17:24-28 [New American Standard Version]. Emphasis mine.

CHAPTER 2

HELM'S CLASSICAL COMPATIBILISM IN *TPOG* (1993)

From the introduction onward, it is clear that *The Providence of God* (or *TPOG*, for short) is written to promote Helm's own "no-risk" view of providence, rather than providing a neutral overview on the subject matter.¹ Now, at the heart of such open endorsement of his own "no-risk" view of providence is the topic of this chapter: namely, Helm's strong endorsement of the "two-way" (i.e., "hypothetically-more-than-one-way") *classical*² compatibilist notion of deterministic agency, as it is seen to aid his "no-risk" perspective as follows:

According to this view [of freedom that Helm endorses], people perform free acts when they do what they want to do, not when they have the power of self-causation, or some other version of indeterminism. That is, they are not constrained or compelled in their actions, but what they do flows unimpededly, from their wants, desires, preferences, goal and the like. The great advantage of such a view of human freedom is that, being compatible with determinism, it is also compatible with a full view of divine omniscience and omnipotence and thus with a 'no-risk' theory of providence.³

¹ Paul Helm, *The Providence of God*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 15. Helm outright shuns neutrality here as it is taken to encourage "blandness and obliqueness."

² This is admittedly a judgment call, as the bulk of what is discussed here can be embraced by new (or weak) compatibilists as well as classical (or strong) compatibilists. Two reasons that make the following block-quotation more of a classical compatibilist position than not are as follows: first, as it should become more obvious in the following sections, this portion talks about some of these conditions as if they are more or less jointly *sufficient* for freedom and responsibility (in a way that new compatibilists would not, as they would demand more). Second, the paragraph talks about *free-action* conditions only (in a way that new compatibilists would not, as the latter are expressly concerned with *free-willing* that goes much deeper than simply *acting* out one's already existing will or wish in an unimpeded fashion). The reason why I keep "two-way" in parentheses is that although most classical compatibilist (at least the more modern ones) are such "two-way" (i.e., "more-than-one-way") classical compatibilists to begin with, this "two-way" or alternative possibilities (AP) aspect of such classical compatibilism (involving the hypothetical analysis of freedom and its cherished "garden of forking paths model of control") does not appear until later in *TPOG*. For more on this issue in general, see n24 of the previous chapter.

³ *The Providence of God*, 67. We find similar statements in *TPOG*, 161, 174.

There is a lot to clarify here, especially on what Helm, along with other classical compatibilists, sees as the broadly sufficient conditions for freedom and moral responsibility. Before we go further, we should therefore unpack some of the most basic and pertinent tenets of such (“two-way” or “more-than-one-way”) classical compatibilism, as they are wholly embraced by Helm in *TPOG*.

In what follows, I will introduce these central tenets to better assess Helm’s early stance in *The Providence of God*. Along the way, we will also discuss Helm’s peculiar use of some of the *new* compatibilist material in *TPOG*, as such material adds some complexity to his view. Toward the end of this chapter, it should become obvious, however, that *while touching on certain aspects of new compatibilism, the early Helm* (i.e., “Helm of *TPOG*”) *is essentially a “two-way” classical compatibilist who adopts certain new compatibilist elements as they are seen to supplement the former and the former-based “no-risk” view of divine providence and human free will.*

I. Classical Compatibilism and its Main Tenets⁴

According to classical compatibilism, we may properly incur moral responsibility for our free actions so long as we possess the “surface freedom”⁵ (i.e., ordinary everyday freedom) to choose and act as we please (i.e., to do whatever we *want*); it would not matter if we live in a completely deterministic universe where only one set of predetermined choices are possible. As long as we can actualize whatever we want to do,

⁴ In what follows in this section, I will largely borrow from and reorganize the standard material put together by well-known specialists in this field, such as Robert Kane and John Martin Fischer. See Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Fischer, “Recent Work on Moral Responsibility,” *Ethics* 110 (1999): 93-139.

⁵ For “surface freedom,” I am hereby adopting Robert Kane’s favorite terminology. See, for instance, his *A Contemporary Introduction to Freedom*, 164.

we are free, according to these compatibilists. This is why we read from the earlier quote that “[a]ccording to this view, people perform free acts when they do what they *want* to do, not when they have the power of self-causation, or some other version of indeterminism.”⁶ As long as people are taken not to be (overtly) constrained or compelled in their actions (i.e., “what they do flows unimpededly, from their [ordinary ‘surface’] wants, desires, preferences, goal and the like”), people are deemed free according to this paradigm. In fact, some classical compatibilists would maintain that having such a *determined* choice is the only way to have genuine free will, as anything less would be less than fully attached to the agent.⁷ Either way, it would be helpful to go over these issues systematically in the following order.

[1] *Surface Freedom of Action*. For starters, according to classical compatibilism (traceable to Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Mill), freedom consists mainly in one’s “freedom to *do* as one pleases,”⁸ which in turn entails that there are no (insurmountable) constraints or impediments by way of physical restraint, (overt) coercion, lack of ability or opportunity, or compulsion, which stand in the way of fulfilling one’s wish to *do*

⁶ *The Providence of God*, 67. Emphasis added.

⁷ For example, as R. E. Hobart maintains this in “Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable Without It,” *Mind* 63 (1934): 1-27, cited by Kadri Vihvelin in “Classic Compatibilism, Romantic Compatibilism, and the Claims of Commonsense,” accessed May 3, 2011, <http://vihvelin.typepad.com/Papers/Classic%20Compatibilism%20Romantic%20Compatibilism%20and%20the%20Claims%20of%20Commonsense.pdf>. Alfred Mele, who is himself committed to neither compatibilism nor incompatibilism, shows similar sympathy to this concern raised against libertarianism in his *Free Will and Luck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). In *TPOG*, Helm does not capitalize on such an opportunity against the prevalent libertarian notion of freedom. See *The Providence of God*, 55, 189. For another classical compatibilist with a similar mitigated stance on this issue, see Bernard Berofsky, “Classical Compatibilism: Not Dead Yet,” in *MRAP*, 109-10. The issue will be dealt with more substantially in Section [2.I.3] below. Randolph Clarke delves into the issue pretty thoroughly in *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 39-47, 71-81.

⁸ E.g., see Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 14-5.

things as one pleases.⁹ A man would then be free according to this framework so long as “he finds no stop, in doing what he has the will, desire, or inclination to do,”¹⁰ as when he is, say, buying things that he wants, walking where he pleases, and marrying the woman that he loves.

Assuming that there was no inherent conflict between having such everyday wish-fulfillment and there being just one possible future, classical compatibilists could sketch their preferred notion of freedom along the determinist lines. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) explains it as follows:

Liberty, and Necessity are Consistent: As in the water, that hath not only *liberty*, but a *necessity* of descending by the Channel: so likewise in the Actions which men voluntarily doe; which, because they proceed from their will, proceed from *liberty*, and yet, because every act of mans will, and every desire, and inclination proceedeth from some cause, and that from another cause, in a continuall chaine, (whose first link in the hand of God the first of all causes,) proceed from *necessity*. So that to him that could see the connexion of those causes, the necessity of all mens voluntary actions, would appeare manifest.¹¹

Coupled with Helm’s first quoted passage in this chapter, the following is then the *classical* way of reconciling freedom with causal determinism: a person is free when her (i) action (ii) flows unimpededly (iii) from her will, desire, or inclination, (iv) even when it so happens that such will, desire, or inclination is itself fixed, determined, or necessitated (to want what it wants) by some earlier cause. Equating liberty or freedom with such *necessitated voluntariness*, classical compatibilism appeals to those that embrace both freedom and determinism.

⁹ Robert Kane, *Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 13.

¹⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: or, The Matter, Forme & Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civill*, ed. Alfred Rayney Waller (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 148, alluded to by Kane in *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 13.

¹¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 148.

[2] *Hypothetical Alternative Possibilities*. Now, the fact that classical compatibilists can embrace determinism with ease (with the aforementioned analysis of freedom in terms of ordinary wish-fulfillment or voluntariness in the absence of overt and insurmountable obstacles) does not entail that they must therefore disregard the importance of “alternative possibilities for choosing.” On the contrary, most “more modern”¹² *classical* compatibilists, unlike their even later counterparts (i.e., the so-called, “new compatibilists”), affirm the importance of alternative possibilities in having freedom and relevant agential control and make room for them through their “hypothetical analysis of freedom (to do otherwise),”¹³ which states that

“The freedom to do other than *X* (that I in fact happen to do determinedly in this deterministic world)” = “I have the power or ability to do other than *X*, because

¹² I explained in n24 of the previous chapter how classical compatibilism should more aptly be termed, “*modern* classical compatibilism.” This hypothetical analysis of freedom is even “more modern” in the sense that it was first introduced by G. E. Moore in 1912. See Moore’s *Ethics*. The Home University Library of Modern Knowledge, no. 54 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912).

¹³ Or if the reader would prefer, she could understand it as an “analysis of hypothetical freedom to do otherwise” as it is an analysis of freedom as the hypothetical capability of doing otherwise (i.e., it isn’t the analysis that is hypothetical). Richard Muller brought this valid point to my attention. Muller also questioned, “how can one distinguish between a hypothetical and an actual capability of doing otherwise, given that one cannot do otherwise when one is doing what one is doing? Is the hypothetical capability of doing otherwise just a matter of logical analysis that permits a denial of the actual capacity, or is it an application of the principle of bivalence – i.e., assuming an actual capacity to will and accomplish either *x* or not-*x*, given that *x* is what is willed and accomplished, it is a hypothetical necessity that there be *x*; *x*, then is not absolutely necessary, but is a necessity of the consequence; it must be what it is when it is, but on the hypothesis of willing not-*x* it could be otherwise – and if otherwise would then necessarily be otherwise when it is otherwise? In other words, does Helm deny that human beings, at any given moment, are vested with a genuine capacity to do otherwise, i.e., to sit or not sit, to run or not run – or does he just insist that, in the context of an overarching divine causality that wills a particular world into existence, including all of the acts and effect in that world, given both the divine and the human willing, only one of two possibilities is going to be actualized?” It seems to me that the necessity of the consequence that Muller speaks of here in terms of the principle of bivalence is the most *innocuous* kind. That is, the necessity of the consequence seems to hold here as a matter of tautology, like “I will see you when I see you.” The fact that I will see you is not absolutely necessary (i.e., it is not guaranteed to come true all by itself). But *given* that I will run into you, it is conditionally guaranteed that I will see you. Almost nobody – as far as I am aware – would contest that this sort of necessity has any bearing on our ability to do otherwise. On the other hand, the kind of necessity of the consequence that classical compatibilists are trying to overcome (through their hypothetical analysis of freedom) is the *causal* kind, such as “it is conditionally guaranteed most certainly that given the temptation that God decreed to present to me at *t1*, I will fall at *t2*.” This kind of conditional necessity should seem much more threatening to our freedom and moral responsibility, unless of course you are a classical compatibilist like the earlier Helm.

the constraints that would effectively prevent me from doing other than *X*, *if I wanted to do other than X (contrary to the fact)*, are absent.”

To put it another way, according to this analysis of freedom, even though I may actually do *X* in this deterministic world at T_0 , I have such hypothetical or counterfactual ability or power to do other-than-*X* at T_0 , just in case (thanks to the absence of insurmountable obstacles that would effectively keep me from pursuing such alternative) I would have done other-than-*X* at T_0 , *had* I desired to do other-than-*X* at T_0 (contrary to the fact).

So, while traditional¹⁴ libertarians maintain that “exactly the same prior deliberation, thought process, beliefs, desires, and other reasons and motives, that led one to choose *X*, could issue in one’s choosing differently,” classical compatibilists hold that “*Had* I had a different past (in terms of prior beliefs, desires, intention, deliberation, etc), then I would have chosen a different future.”¹⁵ With such a notion of *counterfactual* freedom to do otherwise, a classical compatibilist could then uphold both some freedom to do otherwise and determinism (despite their express thesis that only one particular future can exist per one particular past). Alternative possibilities and determinism are reconciled in this more elaborate fashion by the “more modern” classical compatibilists.

[2'] *Hypothetical Analysis of Free Action. A Meaningful Analysis?* Now, why is affirming such “hypothetical power to do otherwise” important at all for a classical compatibilist? What does it accomplish? To use Helm’s own explanation, in order to be truly responsible for an act, an agent must have some *control* over his or her choice, and

¹⁴ What I mean by “traditional” should become clearer by the time that we get to n22 of this chapter.

¹⁵ Kane, *Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 16.

be able to produce it at will.¹⁶ It is apparently in connection with such sought-after control (even within a deterministic world) that the hypothetical analysis of freedom is embraced by the earlier Helm of *TPOG* and other classical compatibilists:

A number of factors are involved in such power [to produce the outcome at will with meaningful classical compatibilist control]: the absence of compulsion..., knowledge of alternatives, and knowledge that, by past experience, more than one of the alternatives are within one's power. It is not possible for a normal human being to produce, at will, the outcome of jumping ten feet into the air, and this fact is widely known. Hence a person cannot be held responsible for not jumping to this height. The sort of power or control that is in view here is the power of the agents to do, or to have done, otherwise in a situation if they had chosen to do so; it is a hypothetical power.¹⁷

To clarify, such talk of hypothetical power allows even a compatibilist to somewhat intelligibly and non-arbitrarily differentiate between those alternatives that are supposedly within one's power (even within a fully deterministic world) and those that are not, while continuing to affirm that it is only the determined choices from long ago that could *in fact* be made. This does not then change the fact that for them only one "really possible" future truly exists, even though *when taken loosely* the preceding conditions of the past are taken to allow for multiple (hypothetically possible) effects.

¹⁶ *The Providence of God*, 188.

¹⁷ *The Providence of God*, 188-9. The first place where Helm seems to have in mind such a hypothetical sense of freedom is in his review of Robert Young's *Freedom, Responsibility, and God* (London: Macmillan, 1975), in *Mind* 86 (1977): 470-2, where he objects to Young as follows: "But it is not clear that essential omniscience is inconsistent with having the power to refrain from doing an action if you want to" (470). The second place where he seems to mention such hypothetical ability or power to do otherwise (even if we are causally sufficed to perform that very act) is from his "Theism and Freedom," *Neue Zeitschrift Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 21 (1979), 139-149: "The force of the compatibilist view, (and its weakness in the eyes of its critics), is that *A* can be completely free, *fully* responsible for an act for which there exists causally sufficient factors, though this is not to say that for every such act he is completely free or fully responsible. He is completely free when, for example, he is doing what he wants to do, when he had the power to do otherwise but chose not to. He has no freedom, or diminished freedom, when he is acting under duress or compulsion of some kind" (148). See also his *Eternal God* (1988), 158.

As such, classical compatibilism incorporates two senses of possible here: one is in the sense of “*really* possible (given the *actual* antecedent),” while the other is only in the sense of “nearly possible (when the actual antecedent is slightly altered to incorporate reasonable *counterfactuals*).” For example, suppose that I do in fact begin to walk eastward next to a wall, which is over ten-feet tall, at T_2 – say, soon after I come across it at T_1 with the desire to do just that (for this was determined from long ago), classical compatibilists would claim that *had* I wanted to go in the opposite direction, I could and would have gone in that direction instead at T_2 ; or for that matter, *had* I not wanted to take a step in either direction at T_1 , I would have just stayed still at T_2 , as both of these would have been *feasible* for me in terms of (a) the antecedents themselves and (b) the consequents as the rightful and fitting consequences of such antecedents. What is not true here is that had I wanted to, I would have jumped right over the wall at will at T_2 by simply wishing it, as this kind of feat is out of my reach (in terms of “(b)” here).

What is important here is that, given the plurality of such supposedly open (or “nearly-possible”) alternatives, even the classical compatibilist can maintain in some principled way that I could be free and held responsible for my free choice among such hypothetically feasible alternatives (as they are all perceived to be under my control either to be taken up or left behind as we tweak the antecedents appropriately). The same does not and cannot be held for the not even “nearly-possible” alternatives (like the “option” to simply jump over the wall at T_2 at will) that are indisputably beyond our reach. To reiterate, according to classical compatibilism, I was then, loosely speaking, *free* to, among other things, either walk eastward or westward along the wall, or to stand still at T_2 .

It is crucial that we understand this feature of classical compatibilism in order to accurately decipher and evaluate the “earlier Helm” because (1) in *TPOG* Helm does subscribe expressly to such classical-compatibilist power to do otherwise (as we just saw it) and (2) because of that, whenever he seems to affirm unqualifiedly in *TPOG* such power to do otherwise,¹⁸ Helm has in mind something much more restrictive than what we typically have in mind by such freedom to do otherwise; namely, for Helm, to say that “Jack is free to do other than *X* (that he in fact chooses to do in this world)” means that “*Had* the world leading up to Jack’s choice to do *X* been relevantly different, Jack would’ve done other than *X*.” Helm does not mean by such power or freedom that “Jack would’ve and could’ve chosen differently under the very same circumstances.”

[3] *Unconditional Libertarian Freedom. Incoherent?* This last comment about the more prevalent Libertarian understanding of “our power to do otherwise” (i.e., “we are really able to do otherwise, even under the very same circumstances”) provides a good segue to discuss how some compatibilists believe that their less common notion of freedom is actually the only proper way of affirming human freedom and responsibility. The rationale for such an exclusive claim is as follows: Imagine that someone named Steve is deliberating on his plans to go on a summer vacation. He wants to fly and he has two destinations in mind: Miami and Cancun. Suppose he has a really good but quite different set of reasons for each location. After reflecting on it for a while, the reasons for choosing Miami finally win out. So, with this state of mind, *M* (standing for “pro-

¹⁸ For example, as it is evident when Helm says the following in *The Providence of God*, 135-6: “a belief in such [‘no-risk’ view of] providence certainly affects the character of a life. For instance, ... not every possibility with which [Christians] are presented by divine providence represents an opportunity to be grasped. Just because one can do something does not mean one ought to do it... The fact that the providence of God presents Christians with opportunities does not mean that they ought to seize them, that they represent God’s will (in the sense of his command) for them... It is rare that circumstances are such that there is only one possible outcome, for it is usually possible to do nothing.”

Miami”), firmly in place, Steve *freely* purchases the tickets to Miami at T_1 according to his wish.

Now, there are roughly two ways to consider the sense of freedom in Steve’s case. One is along the (“two-way”) classical compatibilist line whereby Steve could have chosen to do something else (say, purchasing the tickets to Cancun or abandoning the decision-making process altogether), just in case his mental state (in terms of his beliefs, desires, intention-formation, etc.) had been appropriately contrary to M at T_1 (i.e., sufficiently different to warrant the change in the counterfactual sequence). Such would be the *classical-compatibilist* way of understanding Steve’s “hypothetical” freedom to do otherwise at T_1 . In this paradigm, (a) the reality of other viable alternatives are affirmed and sensibly accounted for, while (b) the intelligibility and the *integrity* of Steve’s actual choice is kept totally intact in light of M .

Another way of processing Steve’s freedom is to affirm it along what appears to be *the* libertarian line, according to which Steve could have positively chosen to go to *Cancun* at T_1 , even if he was in *exactly* the same mental state as M at T_1 . The contrast between the two perspectives, once explicated as such, may seem rather stark at first. For instance, it would not be all that surprising for most of us to have a strong gut-reaction against such a “radical-libertarian” requirement for freedom. Many of us would respond correctly that this kind of indeterministic freedom would only undermine control, rather than enhance it.

For instance, speaking on this very issue, Alfred Mele, a premier philosopher of agency (who happens to be an agnostic when it comes to the compatibilist-libertarian debate *per se*) objects to the likes of Randolph Clarke and Robert Kane who seemingly

endorse this kind of “all the way” indeterminacy for freedom.¹⁹ Mele objects that to embrace such indeterminacy is tantamount to stipulating free choice as essentially random, out of control, irrational, and merely a product of “luck.”²⁰ In this regard, Daniel Dennett goes so far as to say that it would be “insane to hope that after all rational deliberation had terminated with an assessment of the best available course of action, indeterminism would then intervene to flip the coin before action.”²¹

For our purposes, it is interesting to note that in *The Providence of God* Helm pursues for a while this line of otherwise very potent objection against traditional libertarianism²² only to quickly give it up. The two times that he brings up this objection,

¹⁹ I must clarify here, however, that while Clarke seems to cherish such indeterminacy in all free choices, Kane reserves such indeterminacy for a select group of choices that are supposedly character forming due to their natural ambivalence. For Kane, such choices are termed as the Self-Forming-Willings (or SFWs) or Self-Forming-Actions (or SFAs). See Kane’s *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), and Clarke’s *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁰ Hence the title of Mele’s book, *Free Will and Luck* (2006). See also Alfred Mele, “Review of Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*,” *Journal of Philosophy* 95 (1998): 581-4; Derk Pereboom in *Four Views on Free Will* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 85-125; and Peter van Inwagen’s “Rollback argument” in his *An Essay on Free Will*, 140-41. Incidentally, the famous Reformed scholastics of the 17th century, such as Gisbertus Voetius and Francis Turretin had similar interest in the issue. As Antonie Vos and Andreas Beck cites, according to Voetius, “the active faculty of man, that in virtue of itself and its intrinsic and peculiar nature not only is determined to one [component of a pair of contradictory propositions], but – all requirements for acting being settled – in virtue of itself is indifferent to operate this or that, or to operate and not operate.” Vos and Beck go on to clarify that “Voetius stresses that this freedom is an essential property of the human will and cannot be removed *per absolutam Dei potentiam*, but there is one important restriction: the requirements at stake include only those that are temporally prior to the act of will. These requirements in other words do not include the divine acting involved ‘that is so intimate to the act of the creature that it cannot be separated or excluded from it.’” See Andreas J. Beck and Antonie Vos, “Conceptual Patterns Related to Reformed Scholasticism,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 57, no. 3 (2003): 227. According to Beck and Vos, the relevant Voetius passage is from his *Dissertatio Epistolica de Termino Vitae*, 109 (printed with original pagination in Idem, *Selectae disputationes* V, Utrecht 1669).

²¹ Daniel Dennett, “On Giving Libertarians What They Say They Want,” in *Brainstorms* (Montgomery, VT: Bradford Books, 1978), 295.

²² By “traditional libertarians,” I mean the libertarians that believe in the feasibility of such “all the way” indeterminism. On the other side are those “modest libertarians” for whom one should postulate indeterminism only at a much earlier stage in deliberation as at the data-acquisition stage. Alfred Mele is an interesting philosopher who advocates modest libertarianism as the better alternative to traditional libertarianism without actually committing himself to libertarianism. See his *Free Will and Luck*.

Helm merely attributes it to “someone” or resorts to using a passive voice (e.g., “it has often been claimed that ...”). In one of the two places where he brings up the objection, Helm even states that he would not make this accusation of incoherence himself.²³ This is interesting because, Helm’s express effort to be cordial notwithstanding, *as it stands*, this objection probably comes closest to being Helm’s best weapon against libertarianism, perhaps even positively warranting him to readily prefer the classical-compatibilist notion of freedom over against its libertarian counterpart.²⁴

Given the potency of the objection *as it stands*, we will address the question here. The way I see it, the key to offsetting this most potent challenge against libertarianism lies in dismantling the objection “as it stands.” In fact, if we tweak it a little bit, we may even be able to gain a crucial insight into the very heart of “libertarian control.” That is,

²³ See, for instance, *The Providence of God*, 189, where he gives the following example in terms of ice cream and fruit salad as follows: “Suppose X chooses ice cream when he faced a choice between ice cream and fruit salad for dessert. There are basically only two ways of thinking about the answer to that question. One is to think that Jones could have chosen fruit salad had his preferences, desires or intentions been different from what they in fact were. Such a position is consistent both with compatibilism and with a ‘no-risk’ view of providence. The alternative is to think that Jones had, by his power, of free will, the ability to choose fruit salad in exactly (exactly!) the same circumstances as those that were obtained when he chose the ice cream. One may wonder about the rationality of such a choice... Some have held that [the ‘risk’ view of providence] does not only fail to preserve responsibility, but is actually incredible.” In regard to this last comment, Helm cites Harry Frankfurt’s *The Importance of What We Care About* (1987), 23. As already indicated, twice in this passage Helm merely puts the objection in somebody else’s mouth. On *TPOG*, 55, Helm states that while “it has often been claimed that such a view of freedom is incoherent,” he would not himself make that same claim. For Helm’s similarly ambiguous stance on the coherence of the libertarian freedom, see his “Theism and Freedom” (1979), 139. Earlier on, in his review of Robert Young’s *Freedom, Responsibility, and God* (1977), Helm seems more critical of the libertarian freedom as follows: “Although [Young] objects to contra-causal freedom, Young thinks that it is to be distinguished from randomness. ‘Indeterminism’ in the relevant sense means ‘self-causation,’ and self-causation is compatible with a universe in which there is a great deal of causation, though not universal causation (p. 121). It is claimed that in these circumstances the burden of proof rests on those who would prove the notion of contra-causal freedom to be incoherent. But if Young allows that ‘if one attempts to fill in the details of such an account of choice or decision, one either ends up assuming causal determination or pure chance to be the operative factor’ (p. 122) then surely the onus of proof is on the libertarian to show that self-causation is not equivalent to pure chance” (471).

²⁴ The fact that it is so potent is evidenced by the myriad of recent literature dedicated to this particular issue. Consider, for instance, Peter Van Inwagen, Alfred Mele, Robert Kane, Randolph Clarke, and Derk Pereboom’s works on this issue.

the way the problem is currently set up, libertarians would have to accept that for Steve to be free, he needs to be able to overturn his choice with a drastically different alternative choice; under exactly the same circumstances, a libertarian must postulate that Steve must be able to ask for the tickets to go to *Cancun* instead of to Miami. That sounds bizarre. In this context, it is difficult to overlook the fact that toward the end of his deliberative process, Steve's mind must have been pretty well made up to fly to Miami *in the place of* Cancun. Can anyone then posit that Steve could still choose Cancun in the place of Miami at T_1 when nothing else has changed about his mental state M ? What kind of unpredictable world would we live in then, if the kind of freedom that we exercised allowed for such randomness and unpredictability? Having to posit a contrary choice like this in the very same circumstance makes us rather suspicious of the kind of freedom demanded by libertarianism.

However, is such a radically unpredictable freedom inherently demanded by the traditional libertarianism *per se*? That is, why should anyone posit that the kind of all-the-way²⁵ indeterminacy that the traditional libertarians need and seek (for the sake of non-coercion and prolonged flexibility) have to be constituted by such “colorfully contrary” options, such as going to Miami vs. Cancun, as eating fruit salad vs. ice-cream, *as it stands* above? Why is it that the difference sought to allow for the kind of “long-lasting” control that traditional libertarians seek must be other than having to choose, say, between buying the tickets to Miami right now vs. a little later, or choosing to eat the

²⁵ Which incidentally even the well-known Reformed scholastic Gisbertus Voetius affirmed in connection with all *temporal* precedents (say, apart from the importantly subtle divine influence or decree). See n20 above.

vanilla ice-cream all by itself vs. eating the same ice-cream with a bit of the strawberry syrup that is already on it off to the side?

Once the options are thus delimited and more plausibly narrowed down, and are no longer all over the place as it was first set up, the objection's initial potency seems to dissipate. That is, if all that is required of such indeterminacy (that supposedly still persists even at the very final stages of a libertarian deliberative process) is that it is prompted by only *some* difference between the final options, rather than some huge contrary kind, then the posited indeterminacy (*throughout* the process until the very moment of an overt choice) no longer seems all that incoherent or inexplicable.

In conclusion, on the one hand, such "mere indeterminacy" does still appear to be indispensable for securing the kind of "all-the-way" contingency and flexibility that certain free-will theorists seek to have in genuine free-willing. On the other hand, we should no longer allow the range of alternative possibilities to be so widely open (so as to permit "radical indeterminacy"). The crucial insight on the possibility of well-controlled and intelligible libertarian openness or flexibility have then been discovered through critically engaging what seemed at first to be its fatal weakness.

[4] *Deeper Freedom of the Will for Classical Compatibilists*. Thus far, we have covered [1] that classical compatibilists speak of freedom mainly in terms of the ability to *act* or *do* as one pleases. That is, as acting in a way that fulfills one's prevailing and already existing "ordinary" desires without having to be restrained by overt constraints and obstacles that would get in the way; [2] that in order to preserve such a sense of freedom, power, ability and control, even classical compatibilists affirm the importance of alternative possibilities (for acting and choosing) and try to make room for them

through their “hypothetical analysis of freedom to do otherwise”; and [3] that when on the offensive some classical compatibilists would even assert that such hypothetical freedom and power is the only sensible way to properly articulate morally relevant and rational freedom, as its libertarian counterpart must aim at a radically unstable kind of indeterministic freedom that remains flippant at all times no matter what the circumstance holds. We saw in section [3], however, that things can be appropriately tweaked to ward off such concern.

What are then some of the serious questions or objections that classical compatibilists must face themselves? I can think of at least a couple of objections that are worth addressing here. Talking about them here should provide us with a good segue into discussing other forms of compatibilism later on. The objections are as follows. First, we may ask, “While classical compatibilists may do well in terms of the “surface freedom” of action, are they capable of capturing the “deeper freedom” of the *will*?”

The standard answer to this question from the classic-compatibilist side is to point out that the deeper freedom of the will is not all that different from the surface freedom of action.²⁶ For instance, according to this approach, you are free to choose or *will* to do *X* when (a) you have the power or ability to choose or will to do *X* because (b) no

²⁶ E.g., Harry Frankfurt, a new compatibilist himself, is following this very paradigm when he reflects as follows, “It seems to me both natural and useful to construe the question of whether a person’s will is free in close analogy to the question of whether an agent enjoys freedom of action. Now freedom of action is (roughly, at least) the freedom to do what one wants to do. Analogously, then, the statement that a person enjoys freedom of the will means (also roughly) that he is free to want what he wants to want. More precisely, it means that he is free to will what he wants to will, or to have the will he wants. Just as the question about the freedom of an agent’s action has to do with whether it is the action he wants to perform, so the question about the freedom of his will has to do with whether it is the will he wants to have,” in his “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 15. Moreover, as it will be made more explicit later in the next part pertaining to “new compatibilism,” where he differs from classical compatibilists as a new compatibilist is Frankfurt’s denial that (the hypothetical analysis of) the alternative possibilities are truly necessary for either kinds of freedom in terms of control, freedom, and responsibility. See, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 5-20.

constraints would effectively keep you from willing to do *X*, if you did want to will to do *X*, and (c) nothing would have prevented you from willing otherwise than *X*, *if* you had so wanted to will to do something else.²⁷ What is alleged here is that unless you are overtly coerced by factors such as brainwashing, hypnosis, a gun to your head, or even addiction (which would then effectively falsify “(c)”), you could have the meaningful freedom of the will, even in a deterministic world.

Consider, then, an example of a drug addict. When a question is raised within the classical compatibilist framework as to whether an addict could freely will to take some highly addictive drugs, it would be true on the one hand that (b) no constraint effectively prevents her from choosing or willing to abuse the drugs, while she wishes to do so. On the other hand, it would not be true that (c) nothing prevents her from choosing or willing something other than abusing the drugs, even if she had the appropriate contrary wish *not* to want to abuse the drugs. Instead, even if it were the case that she wanted to (from some higher level) opt out of the drug-abuse, given her dependence, her addiction (in the place of “nothing” in “(c)”) would have effectively prevented her from choosing not to abuse the drugs. In this way, we could know even from the classical compatibilist perspective that the willing addict is not willing to do drugs freely.

Insofar as this is true, some classical compatibilists (who do in fact get into free willing) could make the claim that from their own deeper classical-compatibilist perspective, this kind of strong addiction does ruin the freedom of will, in the way that mere determinism would not.²⁸ Freedom of the will is then reconciled with mere

²⁷ Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 14.

²⁸ E.g., compatibilists can claim that in the case of mere determinism and merely determined willing, a person could have willed otherwise, had she (contrary to the fact) wanted to choose otherwise

determinism in the way that freedom of action would be reconciled with mere determinism: namely, (i) by the absence of (overt) constraints in the way of either willing or not willing some course of action, (ii) by the presence of the appropriately corresponding higher-order wants and desires that wish to will the lower-order desire, and (iii) by the fact that *had* the higher-order will wanted to will something else, nothing would have gotten in the way of the lower-order will obliging to the higher-order will accordingly.²⁹ Free *will*, in other words, can be understood as the ability to choose, decide, or will *as one wishes* (from higher-up), and being able to wish differently, if the higher-order will wishes something for the lower-order will.

So, for example, according to this analysis, Jack would be free to *will* to show his affection for his wife, if this wish flows out unimpededly from his higher-up wish to will just that (say, out of his deep love and regard for her). If, however, there were other obstacles, such as brainwashing, hypnosis, or even some addiction that would have effectively blocked this top-down transitioning from happening, then, even from the hypothetical, classical-compatibilist perspective, Jack would lack the requisite freedom of the will to willingly show his wife his affection for her.³⁰ So, in this way, classical compatibilists can formulate their notion of the freedom of the will to discriminate

than she in fact does in the actual world with determinism in play. So, these compatibilists would maintain that even if Sarah is in fact determined in this wholly deterministic world to choose to eat spaghetti at *T2*, she could have willed or chosen to drink orange juice at *T2*, *had* she so wanted to do so differently at *T1*. On the contrary, this would not hold in the case of severe addiction. Regardless of how the person feels about the addiction, she will end up taking the drugs when the time comes.

²⁹ See Kane, *Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 15.

³⁰ In this regard, an excellent biblical illustration would be the following exclamation from Apostle Paul in Romans 7:19: “the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want” (NASB). For instance, if we understand “the good” here as “choosing or willing to do that which is good,” it could be understood that due to our persisting sinful human nature (say, even after our regeneration), even when we do *want* to will that which is good from deep down (through the “higher-order” volition), we are still unable finally to bring it to fruition.

against certain cases of constrained non-free-willing, all the while creating the necessary wiggle room for the merely determined (and so hypothetically open and not impaired) free *willings*.

[4'] *Objections*. So, I grant that classical compatibilists can meaningfully go deeper in their analysis of freedom to incorporate even free *willing*. Yet, when freedom of the will is stated so analogously to the earlier-mentioned freedom of *action*, classical compatibilists must face similar objections as follows: “While you may be able to capture the possibility of the surface freedom of action and even some deeper freedom of the will, do you not still take “our” already existing desires, inclinations, urges, or wants themselves (whatever level they may be at) to be just as much causally determined by factors over which we have absolutely no control (e.g., like the big bang and the laws of nature)?” Now, this would be the (ultimate) *source* question.

Moreover, “is it not true that given determinism, alternatives that are ordinarily taken by classical compatibilists as (hypothetically) available to us are in reality only hollow alternatives (i.e., no more “metaphysically accessible to us” than those “alternatives” that are clearly “off-limits” even from their own perspective)?” This would be the AP (or the alternative possibilities) question. With such objections, and in the absence of a definitive case against the libertarian counterpart (as we concluded toward the end of Section [2.I.3]), classical compatibilism then appears to be at a disadvantage as a theory.

For our purpose, it is important to note that in *The Providence of God*, Helm does not address the “deeper” sense of the freedom of the will (i.e., even the kind of freedom of the will that other “more modern” classical compatibilists would readily engage, as we

discussed it here in Section [2.I.4]).³¹ Instead, Helm mentions only some key aspects of free action that we discussed in Sections [2.I.1]-[2.I.3]. The result is that Helm ends up endorsing merely the “surface freedom” of *action* (as adequate for going toward grounding moral responsibility) while quickly dismissing what could have been his best shot at not having to look any deeper in his analysis of freedom: namely, the allegation that going substantially deeper in search of the freedom of the *will* would only undermine the sense of control one seeks to obtain through such analysis.

At the end of Section [2.I.3], it was forecasted that the irony in Helm’s refusal to delve into this allegation (against the traditional libertarian sense of the deeper freedom of the will) should become even clearer in this section. The irony is that Helm arbitrarily stops with the surface freedom of action, as though it should be obvious to the reader that he or she need not look any further for its better grounding, even though he makes no allegation that looking deeper would only lead to conceptual difficulties. With no better utilization of this allegation against deeper freedom of the will, Helm’s inexplicable contentment with just the surface freedom of action in *TPOG* strikes us as odd.

[5] *Other Classical Compatibilist Emphasis in TPOG*. [5.1] *Universal Causal Determinism*. What Helm does share with the rest of the classical compatibilists in *The Providence of God* is the basic compatibilist conviction that free and voluntary actions, while unconstrained, are never causally undetermined. According to this classical-compatibilist conviction, our actions are free and voluntary as long as they are caused

³¹ For example, in a crucial passage dealing with freedom and responsibility, Helm merely asks a very external or “action” oriented question, such as “Under what conditions does the causal link between *the movements of a person’s body* (or the absence of such movement, in the case of acts of omission) and *the action* justify the ascription of responsibility to that person?” See *The Providence of God*, 186. Emphasis mine.

reliably (i.e., deterministically) by relevant internal factors, such as our character, disposition, reasons, motives, and wants,³² (i.e., instead of having been produced either against our existing wants or randomly through certain inexplicable indeterminism. What is shared here is the conviction that determinism, rather than undermining our freedom and responsibility (by going against or “around” our wills) actually fortifies them and makes their robust existence intelligible.

Some of the other features by which the earlier Helm shows significant affinities with the rest of the classical compatibilists are as follows: [5.2] “*Mere Determinism Need Not Involve (Bad) Manipulation.*”³³ Determinism by itself is not about being controlled by other agents (rightfully or wrongfully). What is claimed here is important in that it is possible for our desires and wants to be psychologically conditioned and manufactured by dubious and *manipulative* means. A popular example can be enlisted from B. F.

³² Thus, Helm expresses the following without any hint of concern or remorse in “Theism and Freedom” (1979), 144, “while ... there is no *agent* in atheistic determinism to whom all changes are due, there are *factors* to which all changes are due. ... it follows from the thesis of General Determinism that every action, including every voluntary action of course, is produced by causally sufficient conditions. Among the immediate conditions may be the agent’s own wanting, but these wanting are themselves the effect of other causally sufficient conditions. ... While, under atheism, no *person* is ultimately responsible for the factors that are causally sufficient for a voluntary action, it does not follow that *nothing* is. For, plainly, what are responsible are just those causally sufficient factors, or their causally sufficient antecedents. If Flew’s distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions somehow overrides some of the implications of the General Determinism he favours, then, by parity of reasoning, it would appear to override God’s creative and sustaining activity.” Helm adds on the next page that “[t]he crucial fact for compatibilism to overcome is the charge that the causally sufficient conditions of a person’s action are extraneous to that person, not that the causes are perhaps the intended effects of someone else’s actions. ... [Flew] argues that even if General Determinism is true this does not preclude the possibility that a person has good reasons for what he is doing. That is, he claims that it is wrong to think of physical explanations as over-ruling explanations in terms of human rationality. This seems correct. If the fact that the plants are very dry because of a drought seems to someone to be a good reason for irrigating them, then this is a very good reason irrespective of how that idea comes into his head. This is because the relation between the growth of plants and water has nothing to do with the determination of human action. But then presumably the same consideration holds in the theistic case as well” (145).

³³ The first two places where Helm addresses such worry about manipulation is “Grace and Causation,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 32 (1979): 101-12, especially 105, 110-11; and “Theism and Freedom” (1979): 139-49, especially 142-4.

Skinner's utopian novel *Walden Two*,³⁴ in whose experimental community it is stipulated that all the members are psychologically manipulated to want what they want, while no further constraints exist to keep them from the ensuing (already-existing-)wish-fulfillment.

In such a scenario, without further qualifications, wouldn't classical compatibilists be forced to maintain – however implausibly – that such psychologically conditioned individuals are still exercising their wills freely, so long as the choices that they make are deemed to flow unimpededly from their presently-cherished wants and desires (even though these wants and desires have been manufactured by someone else to manipulate them)? In such a scenario, most of us would object that such a wish-fulfillment alone does not quite meet the standard of meaningful, moral-responsibility-accurring kind of freedom. In maintaining that mere determinism need not involve such manipulation, classical compatibilists then try to distance themselves from the kind of manipulation that clearly violates morally relevant human freedom.

It is worth noting here, however, that while a secular compatibilist would (in order to make the right qualification) highlight the fact that determinism need not entail being controlled by some other individual, Helm keys in on the difference between (i) being determined by just another person and (ii) being determined by another person for some questionable end (as this would certainly not follow from his own divine determinism). Against those that would draw the line separating the good and evil simply between (a) mere (i.e., impersonal or naturalistic) determinism and (b) all personal

³⁴ Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 3-4, 19, 65, 97, 101, 118, 130, 164.

determinism,³⁵ Helm then places his line between (c) harmless (both impersonal and personal) determinism (which would include “Christian divine determinism”) and (d) wrongful and dubious personal determinism (as we seem to have it in *Walden Two*, where all the respective controllers are fallible human scientists).

[5.3] “*Not Fatalism.*” Another area of significant collusion between the earlier Helm and most standard classical compatibilists is their mutual emphasis on the significant difference between (i) their respective brands of determinism and (ii) fatalism. According to both parties, fatalism is basically the view according to which whatever is going to happen, is going to happen, irrespective of what we do or want.³⁶ In this regard, we can, for instance, envisage the Greek tragic figure, Oedipus, who despite all his effort and wish to the contrary could not finally escape his disturbing fate to have an affair with his own mother. Classical compatibilists could point out that determinism *per se* need not entail either such tragic states of affairs or futility in one’s own effort to overcome them. That is, they could explain that even if determinism is true, what we decide and do could and does make an enormous difference on how things may pan out for us. For all we know, in most cases, our deliberations and reasons do meaningfully contribute to our future, even if they had been determined from long ago.³⁷

That such a difference between mere determinism and fatalism exists can be demonstrated when we consider which one of the two options we would rather have, if our choice was limited to just these two options. In other words, I trust that most people,

³⁵ For instance, Helm cites Anthony Flew in this regard in *The Providence of God*, 175-77. Flew’s works cited here are *The Presumption of Atheism* (London: Elek, 1976), 96 and “Compatibilism, Free Will and God,” *Philosophy* (1973): 231-44.

³⁶ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 21. Helm, *The Providence of God*, 138-9.

³⁷ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 21.

even those with strong libertarian proclivities, would rather live in (a) a finally deterministic world where their choices matter for the desired outcome and so life is intelligible and meaningful for them than in (b) a fatalistic world where they are constantly at the whim of fate, not knowing what to expect from moment to moment from their choices.

It is precisely such a difference between the two aforementioned options that seems to give Helm the reinforcement that he needs to endorse his particular brand of (theological) determinism and determinism in general. For instance, Helm enlists the help of this oft-cited distinction to repeatedly reassure his audience as follows:

If the events of life as they unfold inevitably lead to their conformity to Christ, what need they care? What possible responsibility do they have in this situation? But this would be to forget that Paul is writing ‘to those who love’ God. They are not passive or fatalistic in character. Their desire is to please God by keeping his commands, which is the test and measure of their love. In so far as they are consistent, they will wish to use each of the ‘all things’ which come their way to express their love and obedience to God ... The statement that Paul is making about all things working together for good is thus not an unconditional statement. It does not hold no matter what. In making it Paul assumes the fulfilling of certain other conditions. Notably, he makes the assumption that the lover of God will desire to please God by obeying him. All things therefore work together for good, not exclusively of any attitude that the believer might take up, but inclusive of his other obedience.³⁸

What Helm maintains here is that because whatever is ordained is not ordained apart from their means (i.e., unconditionally), we should not anticipate the promised conformity to Christ without the corresponding heart conformity as a prerequisite. Such heart requirement in turn allegedly rules out the threats of fatalism, such as passivity and apathy. Such a response admittedly does not answer all the questions, even for Helm.³⁹

³⁸ *The Providence of God*, 116.

³⁹ See, for example, *The Providence of God*, 128-9, 218-21, and 232-3.

However, it should suffice for now to point out that the earlier Helm of *TPOG* does celebrate such a distinction between determinism and fatalism along with other classical compatibilists.⁴⁰

[5.4] “*Not Mechanism.*” Lastly, before we discuss “new compatibilism” and its presence in the earlier Helm, it may be worth noting here that for Helm determinism does not necessarily entail “mechanism.” According to the mechanistic framework, “we are machines or automatons without consciousness and feelings – reacting instinctually and in automatic ways.”⁴¹ According to compatibilists, we reason, deliberate, question, reflect, make plans, and reform our character; determinism *per se* need not deprive us of these unique and valuable “non-mechanical” capabilities. Instead, compatibilists maintain that even in a deterministic universe these personal capacities allow us to be responsible moral agents in the way that machines, insects, and non-rational animals fail to be so. Without going too much into whether acknowledging such difference between mere (or even divine) determinism and “mechanism” would advance his compatibilist cause all that much, we will note here that the earlier Helm of *TPOG* does rely on such distinction to escape certain charges made against his earlier, more avowed kind of compatibilism, as follows:

When faced with the idea of divine compatibilism, the view that God’s determination of all events is nonetheless compatible both with human freedom and responsibility, many have been tempted to conclude that such determination turns God into a manipulator or puppeteer or hypnotist, who toys and plays with his creation for his own amusement. . . . Take, for example, the model of God as a puppeteer. This implies that his relation to his creatures is *mechanistic*; and though the divine puppeteer may be skillful, nonetheless the actions of his creatures are determined by pulling strings. They are *not the outcome of their own*

⁴⁰ This issue will be dealt with more thoroughly in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁴¹ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 21.

*reasoning processes, moral priorities and emotional responses.*⁴²

Now, it is hard to ignore that “mechanistic” is juxtaposed here with one’s “reasoning processes, moral priorities and emotional responses,” as “mechanism” was earlier defined as “non-deliberative,” “unconscious and unfeeling,” and “automatic.” What is important here is that it is only after defining “mechanistic” so narrowly that Helm is able to deflect the charge that determinism entails mechanism. For those of us that have a broader sense of it in mind (say, as implying “*ultimately* impersonal,” “*ultimately* beyond our control,” or “*ultimately* all fixed,” *despite* going through certain reasons-responsiveness and consciousness), the troubling “mechanistic” implications of determinism are yet to be addressed by such analysis of divine compatibilism.

II. New Compatibilism and Its Main Tenets, Specifically in Relation to Helm

In [2.I.5], we looked at some of the standard objections raised against compatibilism that were perhaps due to our misunderstanding as well. For instance, classical compatibilists and Helm would be mostly correct to point out that determinism *per se* need not imply [2.I.5.1] constraint (especially if that means *against* one’s everyday wish-fulfillment), [2.I.5.2] (wrongful) control by other personal beings, [2.I.5.3] fatalism (according to which no amount of effort on one’s part will help the individual escape the destiny that she does not want),⁴³ and [2.I.5.4] automatic and inflexible mechanism (that would bypass rational deliberation).

⁴² *The Providence of God*, 175. Emphasis added.

⁴³ As hinted at in the quote that I heard one time from a movie, *The International* (2009): “Sometimes in life a man can meet his destiny on the road he took to avoid it.”

In terms of this last “mechanical inflexibility” (that might be wrongly construed as determinism), besides its more superficial treatment in [2.I.5.4] (in terms of what mechanism is and how it disallows reflective human agency that would exist even in a deterministic universe), we saw earlier in Sections [2.I.2]–[2.I.4] how the more modern classical compatibilism could easily circumvent it through their unique hypothetical analysis of freedom of more-than-one-way (or “two-way,” for short) voluntarism. It was stressed in [2.I.2], for instance, that contrary to an ordinary person’s expectation, most modern classical compatibilists do cherish, as a typical libertarian would, the notion of alternative possibilities for the sake of control and *flexibility* that is needed for free and responsible agency. The main difference is that unlike traditional libertarians who posit our ability to choose and do otherwise under exactly the same circumstance, classical compatibilists make room for such freedom to do otherwise only in its hypothetical or counterfactual sense of having a different past (and/or laws of nature).

However, as alluded to earlier in Section [2.I.4], our initial response to such hypothetical power, control, and flexibility, is that in the face of determinism, they are no more truly realizable than those “options” that are clearly marked off as more naturally beyond our reach (e.g., jumping over a ten-foot wall at will). In fact, this was precisely what the famous Consequence Argument⁴⁴ attempted to show concerning determinism: namely, determinism (contrary to the classical compatibilists’ express counterclaim) rules out genuine power to do otherwise⁴⁵ and so it does away with relevant freedom and moral responsibility as well. Since its first appearance, the Consequence Argument has been

⁴⁴ Peter van Inwagen in *An Essay on Free Will*, 106-52. For more on the Consequence Argument, see n22 and n28 of the previous chapter, or n2 of chapter 6.

⁴⁵ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 81.

under a lot of scrutiny and the subject of much controversy,⁴⁶ but in the end it does hold a lot of sway among philosophers. Assuming that it works, the Consequence Argument would effectively obliterate the classical compatibilists' thesis that their deterministic outlook can coexist with the morally relevant "two-way" control.

What if, however, both traditional libertarians and classical compatibilists are mistaken in their shared assumption that such power to do otherwise (i.e., having "alternative possibilities") is crucial for having the morally relevant voluntary control? The Consequence Argument would pose a threat to compatibilism *per se* only if alternative possibilities are genuinely necessary for morally responsible agency. That is, if they are not truly essential for controlled moral agency in the first place, then even if the Consequence Argument can directly prove the incompatibility between (i) determinism and (ii) alternative possibilities for choosing, it would not thereby show that such incompatibility exists between (i) determinism and (iii) controlled moral agency, as "(iii)" would not depend on the presence of "(ii)." In this case, the Consequence Argument would not even get off the ground against compatibilism, as the lack of alternative possibilities inferred by the Consequence Argument would not make a dent against controlled moral agency and morally relevant freedom.

Now, this is precisely the strategy that certain "new compatibilists" adopt to get around the powerful charge made against compatibilism by the Consequence Argument. To its charge that determinism has no room for genuine alternative possibilities for

⁴⁶ E.g., see Eleonore Stump and John Martin Fischer, "Transfer Principles and Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 47-55. For a succinct summary of different strategies that have come up to challenge it, see Michael McKenna's "Compatibilism," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/compatibilism/index.html>. McKenna explains that the force of its argument, despite all the attacks it had to face, is to this day rather intact.

choosing, a new compatibilist can retort, “So what? How does that affect compatibilism *per se* (i.e., how does that necessarily threaten our ability to have relevant voluntary control in choosing the conditionally guaranteed option)?” If one can show (say, through a Frankfurt-style counterexample to PAP)⁴⁷ that two or more alternative possibilities are gratuitous in voluntarily producing a meaningfully controlled action for which the agent can be responsible, the Consequence Argument should not be a problem for compatibilism *per se*.⁴⁸ As the earlier Helm of *TPOG* shows a certain interest in this kind of new compatibilist possibility, in what follows, I will quickly sketch out new compatibilism’s main tenets insofar as these are relevant to the material that we find in *The Providence of God*.

By way of introduction, the basic new compatibilist strategy typically consists of coming up with a counterexample to PAP (about moral responsibility and its need for alternative possibilities), which could then be applied to AP⁴⁹ (concerning free will, which is the proper subject matter of the Consequence Argument), as free will (the subject matter of AP) is often defined as the kind of freedom that is necessary for

⁴⁷ According to which, “a person is morally responsible for what she has done *only if* she could have done otherwise (or at least could have avoided it).”

⁴⁸ To put it formally, consider the following traditional argument for (“leeway”) incompatibilism:

- (1) If an action is determined, then the agent could not have done otherwise.
- (2) If the agent could not have done otherwise, then she is not morally responsible for it.
- (3) If the agent is not morally responsible for it, then she could not have acted freely.
- (4) Therefore, if an action is determined, then the agent could not have acted freely.

If one could undermine Premise (2), Conclusion (4) would fail to follow from Premise (1), which is the conclusion of the Consequence Argument. While this leaves open the possibility that compatibilism is nevertheless false, if Premise (2) can be shown to be false, an incompatibilist will not be able to use this argument to show that a determined act cannot be done freely in a morally relevant way.

⁴⁹ According to which, “Free will requires the power to do otherwise, or, alternative possibilities.” See *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 81.

properly grounding moral-responsibility (the subject matter of PAP). As long as AP is taken to rest on PAP (through defining “free will” as morally relevant freedom), if the new compatibilists can show that PAP is false, they would also have shown that AP is mistaken. And this should show the ultimate pointlessness of the Consequence Argument against compatibilism *per se*, as the latter is meant to show the incompatibility of determinism and alternative possibilities only.⁵⁰ What follows are a few such attempts at coming up with counterexamples to PAP that could then be applied to the earlier Helm of *The Providence of God*.

[1] *Character Examples*. Like Daniel Dennett’s famous example of Martin Luther and his well-known proclamation, “Here I stand. I can do no other,”⁵¹ coming up with a character example that would counter PAP seems relatively easy at first. We can imagine, for instance, one egregiously heinous act that most of us would never be able to commit, no matter what the circumstance. We can then make its *denial* our action of interest, say, *X*. *X* could for instance stand for the *refusal* to maliciously devour all of our children’s flesh to shreds. Most of us would literally be incapable of doing anything besides *X* when faced with such “opportunity” to do other than *X*. The question then is whether we could still be held morally responsible for actively choosing *X*, when we have no other alternatives to choose from besides *X*.

The point is, despite the lack of genuine existential alternatives, most of us would hold that choosing and doing *X* could be done *responsibly* (and perhaps even freely). Is not PAP then false? Are alternative possibilities really essential to bestow on an

⁵⁰ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 80-1.

⁵¹ Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room* (MIT, 1984), 133, cited by Kane in *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 81-3.

individual his or her moral responsibility and deem them as relevantly free? PAP and AP (insofar as AP is built on PAP) are thus brought into question by such character-counterexamples to PAP.

When faced with this type of challenge to PAP, what are some of the ways in which incompatibilists⁵² as well as even compatibilists⁵³ could respond? Robert Kane, for one, takes the suggested lack of alternatives very seriously and acknowledges that when faced with this kind of (lack of) choice, people have literally no other alternative than to choose that very “character(istic) thing.” What Kane finds objectionable, however, is the follow-up suggestion that such a lack of alternatives can subsequently be expanded to encompass one’s entire life without affecting his moral agency. Speaking of Dennett’s Martin Luther case, Kane maintains, for instance, that it is only “by virtue of earlier choices and actions *for being the sort of person he had become at that time*”⁵⁴ that Martin Luther could be responsible for his one particular *alternative-less* character(istic)-choice.

So, despite granting that many of our free and responsible choices do flow deterministically from our pre-formed wills, Kane then takes a “*historicist*” approach to

⁵² This term is deliberately chosen over “libertarians,” as it is a broader term that includes the latter and happens to fit this case more comprehensively. If not already clear, libertarians are incompatibilists who, in addition to their incompatibilism, affirm positively that we *are* free because determinism happens to be false. Other incompatibilists would hold that while freedom and determinism are incompatible, because determinism is true freedom does not exist. They are called either hard incompatibilists or hard determinists, as the latter are more confident with the universal truth of determinism. See Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 70-1.

⁵³ See, for example, Joseph Kiem Campbell’s “A Compatibilist Theory of Alternative Possibilities,” *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 88 (1997): 319-30, and Michael McKenna, “Does Strong Compatibilism Survive Frankfurt Counter-Examples?,” *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 91 (1998): 259-64.

⁵⁴ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 82.

defend the indispensability of at least some significant alternative possibilities in an agent's lifetime as follows:

[S]ome of the choices or acts in our lifetimes must be such that we could have done otherwise or we would not be responsible for forming the wills from which we act. Our wills would not be "our own free wills." So if we take a broader view of an agent's life history, rather than focusing on individual acts like Luther's in isolation, it does not follow that free will and moral responsibility do not require alternative possibilities or the power to do otherwise *at all*, at any times in our lives.⁵⁵

As it should become clearer later,⁵⁶ I believe there are even better ways of responding to such character-examples against PAP. That is, with this kind of "historicist" approach, Kane may be making concessions where he need not.

What Kane's response does show, however, is that "character (counter)examples" to PAP that pertain to a certain action-*type* (i.e., of extreme cases whose denials are nearly impossible to conceive) are too parochial and exceptional to establish the general dispensability of all and every "ordinary" alternative possibilities for choosing (especially when this dispensability is supposed to encompass one's entire lifetime of making choices). For a stronger example with a possibly universal application, we must turn to Frankfurt-type (counter)examples.⁵⁷

[2] *Frankfurt-type Examples*: As mentioned in the previous introductory chapter, in his pioneering 1969 paper,⁵⁸ Harry Frankfurt challenges the "Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP, for short)" by putting together a scenario in which a certain set of

⁵⁵ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 83.

⁵⁶ Besides what has already been covered in [2.I.3], I will address this issue more thoroughly in the last chapter of this dissertation. See, for instance, Section [6.II.2].

⁵⁷ Kane makes this very suggestion in *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 83.

⁵⁸ Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 829-39.

circumstances make an action unavoidable without actually bringing it about.⁵⁹ What Frankfurt envisages here is the possibility of *volunteering* for an act (and so being responsible for it) without being able to do or choose differently because certain counterfactual intervener lurks in the background to ensure that the person does not make any other choice than the choice that he in fact makes (without being prompted to do so).

In Frankfurt's original article, such an "IRR"⁶⁰ (standing for "causally *irrelevant*, yet still ensuring") situation is envisioned by postulating the existence of a counterfactual intervener (CI, for short), Black, who is posited to wait in the background to see if Jones would make the choice that Black wants Jones to make *on Jones' own*, as Jones would be completely unaware of what is going on behind the scenes. Jones then supposedly chooses to kill Smith all on his own, independently of Black, so that Black need not get involved at all.⁶¹ With such a set-up, Frankfurt then rightly concludes that Jones *is* morally responsible for his decision to kill Smith, despite never having been able to avoid killing Smith. Frankfurt then challenges PAP by claiming to have come up with a successful IRR situation, whereby the supposedly ensuring conditions of an "alternate-sequence" never actually impinge upon the actual-causal-sequence for choosing (and are as such, causally-*irrelevant* for the actual production of the choice).

Now, from this, it takes only one more step to conceive of a "global" CI-scenario whereby the relevant ensuring conditions are expanded to encompass all voluntary

⁵⁹ Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," 830.

⁶⁰ According to Alfred R. Mele and David Robb, David Widerker (1995, 248) came up with this term "IRR" in quoting Frankfurt (1969), 830, 837, in his "Libertarianism and Frankfurt's Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities" in *Philosophical Review* 104, 247-61. See Mele and Robb's "Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws: The Metaphysics of Frankfurt-style Cases," in *MRAP*, 125, 137.

⁶¹ Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," 830.

choices while being largely, if not entirely, *irrelevant* for their actual-causal-production.⁶² For instance, imagine that God is such a global counterfactual intervener (or CI) who has a very specific and comprehensive blue-print for each and every individual's choices. The moment that he sees us deviating from the preapproved course, God could and would then intervene immediately and put us right back on that preconceived course. Imagine further that on almost every occasion, we happen to do exactly what God wants us to do, on our own, by our own initiative, so that God almost never has to get retroactively involved in our lifetime of choices.

Now, on the one hand, in this kind of global CI-scenario, we would presumably never have the power to do otherwise than what God has previously decreed. On the other hand, because we do most of our acts supposedly on our own, we would still be responsible for most of our acts and choices. What we have here is then contrary to the isolated character-counterexample that we considered earlier, for this kind of broader CI-case goes well beyond just one *act-type* (that would automatically leave us with just one choice because the other alternatives are extremely egregious). In this kind of global Frankfurt case, we have instead lots and lots of different types of genuinely interesting choices (despite our comprehensive inability to do otherwise). Here, the (felt-)constraints would definitely be largely absent, although, throughout world history, we would not have any other choices than what we are preordained to choose. Or, at least, so the argument would proceed.⁶³

⁶² *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 84.

⁶³ Many of these ideas were derived from Kane's *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 84.

[3] *The Sufficient Conditions for Moral Responsibility, According to Frankfurt.*

Let us grant for now that Frankfurt could indeed demonstrate with this kind of global CI-scenario that free will and moral responsibility do not require any actual power to do otherwise (and are therefore in principle totally compatible with determinism that rules out all alternative possibilities). If the power to do otherwise can thus be dispensed with, what are for Frankfurt the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for free and responsible agency?

Frankfurt's answers are explicated in his 1971 paper, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,"⁶⁴ where he makes the following observations. The ability to form "second-order desires" is a peculiarly human characteristic whereby we distinguish ourselves from the rest of the animal species.⁶⁵ Besides simply wanting and choosing to do this or that (of which other animals are just as capable), human beings are capable of evaluating our own existing ("i.e., lower-level") desires so as to either approve or disapprove of them.⁶⁶

Now, to get a better handle on this idea of different levels and senses of desires, we can postulate the following schema surrounding drug addiction: (1) a first-order desire to simply take the drug: "A wants to take the drug *D*"; (2) a second-order desire to *approve* that first-order desire to make it even more effectively translated into an action: "A (decisively) *wants* to want to take the drug *D*"; (3) a second-order desire to endorse (to a certain extent) the first-order desire (that is not even prominent in itself) for some other

⁶⁴ Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-20. Allusions to this paper were made earlier in sections [2.I.1] and [2.I.4].

⁶⁵ Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," 6.

⁶⁶ Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," 7.

noble cause: e.g., “A wants to want to take the drug *D*, so that *A* can relate better with her junkie patients”; (4) a second-order desire that opposes “(3),” as the risks of “(3)” may outweigh its benefits: “Because of the unforeseen dangers of “(3),” *A* also does *not* want to want to take the drug *D*, regardless of its potential benefits for empathy”; and (5) the first-order desire to take the drug *D* exists potentially, but the person does *not* want that first-order desire to win out because she hates that feeling of dependency: “*A* (decisively) does *not* want to want to take the drug *D*, although *A* is strongly addicted to *D*.”⁶⁷

In such a schema, “(1)” can apply even to animals; “(2)” can apply to a *willing* addict; “(3)” can apply to a willing *non*-addict; “(4)” can apply to an *unwilling non*-addict, or it can even apply to a non-effective second-order desire that can summon up a yet further up, third-order desire to adjudicate between itself and the conflicting second-order desire that one has by way of “(3)”; while “(5)” can apply to a straight-up, *unwilling* addict (who, in possessing the lower-level desires both to take and not to take the drug *D*, would eventually let the former lower-order desire to take the drug *D* to win out, *despite disdaining it from a “higher-level”*).

Having delineated the issue in this way, Frankfurt is then able to state his position even more clearly as follows. First, merely having a second-order desire (*about* some other lower-order desire) does not automatically make this person responsible for either level of desires. This is clear, for instance, in terms of “(3)” and “(4),” where the mere presence of some higher-order desire(s) entails neither that (i) its owner possesses the corresponding lower-order desire to a great degree (as we see that in the willing *non*-addict case of “(3)”) nor that (ii) she is thus settled on any one of the particular higher-

⁶⁷ Frankfurt introduces a similar schematic in his “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 9.

order desires (as we see that in terms of “(4)” existing side by side with “(3)”⁶⁸. At the least, it should then be added that in order for a person to be responsible for any of these desires, whoever has this kind of conflicting higher-order desires should want just one of them to be *effectively* hers. What Frankfurt demands minimally for moral responsibility (for free and responsible willing) is then to possess “higher-order *volitions* (with decisive commitment),” instead of just having some highly-order desires.⁶⁹

Second, even if someone does attain such a higher-order *volition* (as the willing and unwilling addicts do in “(2)” and “(5)”), if this person is still incapable of executing or consummating such a higher-order volition by bringing the corresponding lower-order desire to fall in line with it (as the unwilling addict in “(5)” seems unable to do), then such a person could not be said to wield her will freely. So, according to Frankfurt, in addition to having the higher-order desire that one effectively identifies with (and so have it *volitionally*), a genuinely freely-willing person must also effectively “secure the conformity of his [lower-order] will to his [higher]-order volitions.”⁷⁰

Third, according to Frankfurt, when second-order desires are in conflict, say, as “(3)” and “(4)” are with each other, “a person may have ... desires and volitions of a higher order than the second.”⁷¹ In his “hierarchical theory,” there is then no theoretical limit as to how far one could ascend in having “higher and higher orders” of desires and volitions with which to identify decisively. To generate such an unending series of higher and higher orders of desires would, however, lead to “the destruction of a person” and

⁶⁸ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 9.

⁶⁹ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 10.

⁷⁰ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 15.

⁷¹ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 16.

manifest “a case of humanization run wild,” as the person would then never be able to fully identify herself with any one of her desires.⁷² How could a new compatibilist then block such a problematic regress and do so non-arbitrarily?

Frankfurt’s well-known solution to this dilemma is that the “person identifies himself decisively” with one of his lower-order desires.⁷³ If this person really *approves of*, for instance, a first-order desire, then such second-order commitment to it is said to effectively curtail the need to form an additional array of higher-order desires.⁷⁴ So, for example, if the willing addict in “(2)” is altogether delighted with her condition and *decisively identifies herself with* the first-order craving to take the drug, she could take it “freely and of his own free will” for that very reason.⁷⁵

Now, to clarify, it is then Frankfurt’s express position here that as a first-order desire may be effective all on its own (due to, say, a physiological addiction that overpowers the agent and makes her unable to control it), it can also be maintained that this first-order desire is effective precisely *because* she identifies with it decisively from “higher up.”⁷⁶ What is important here is that in postulating the possibility of such *over-determination* at the level of lower-order desires, Frankfurt then positively maintains that a person, who may not even be solely responsible for her addiction, could still be *fully*

⁷² Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 16.

⁷³ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 16.

⁷⁴ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 16. This, in turn, is what allows Frankfurt to positively affirm the following a little later: “Suppose that a person has done what he wanted to do, that he did it because he wanted to do it, and that the will by which he was moved when he did it was his will because it was the will he wanted. Then he did it freely and of his own free will.” See “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 19.

⁷⁵ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 19.

⁷⁶ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 20.

responsible for something as entirely determinative and dictating as an addiction as follows: “It is possible that a person should be morally responsible for what he does of his own free will and that some other person should also be morally responsible for his having done it.”⁷⁷

Now, this is an expressly compatibilist position in that it not only postulates the possibility of determinism or fixation at the level of “lower-order” desires, it also postulates the same for the regress-stopping “higher-order” desires.⁷⁸ So, for Frankfurt, even if causal determinism does hold at all levels either by a deliberate personal design (for instance, by that of a drug-dealer or even God) or by some chancy natural causal process, which would then allow the agent to pick out ultimately just one causally determined choice at any given time (no matter how it may seem otherwise to the agent), so long as the above-mentioned Frankfurtian conditions hold for the individual so that (i) she has a higher-order volition with which she decisively identifies (via reflective self-evaluation) and (ii) her command of the lower-order desire is not compromised by constraints spilling out from her own lower-order desire(s) (as is the case with the unwilling addict who lacks control over her base desire to take the drug *D*), she can then be free and morally responsible for the exercise of her determined choice, even if this choice was determined from long ago by factors over which she had absolutely no control.

⁷⁷ Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 20n10.

⁷⁸ For instance, this latter possibility seems to be what Frankfurt has in mind in “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” 20: “My conception of the freedom of the will appears to be neutral with regard to the problem of determinism. It seems conceivable that it should be causally determined that a person is free to want what he wants to want. If this is conceivable, then it might be causally determined that a person enjoys a free will.” Notice here how Frankfurt entertains the possibility of *causally determined free will* (and causal determinism existing with “*freely wanting* what the person *wants to want*,” instead of just “*freely wanting* what the person *wants*”), the conditions of which involve higher-order volitions *about* desires and their effective execution. Frankfurt then assumes here that desires at more than one level are causally determinable.

Despite the ingenuity of Frankfurt's proposal and a certain progress that it seems to make, when spelled out like this, there are numerous areas of weaknesses that may be fatal to the theory. To see this, let us first revisit what Frankfurt says concerning over-determination and how it allegedly allows two very distinct sets of causes to be each *fully* responsible for whatever is thus (over-)determined. It was said there that as much as a first-order desire may be effective all on its own (due to, say, a physiological addiction), it may also be effective *because* the person wants to want it like that and makes the lower-order desire to be hers by that approval.⁷⁹ The *person's* responsibility for, say, wanting to take the drug is then blamed on this additional bit of second-order approval to want to want it like that.⁸⁰ But how could this be the case?

Granted that one may have a very strong second-order desire for a first-order desire that is virtually non-existent left to itself (as would be the case with the willing *non-addict* doctor who wants to want to take drugs so that she could identify with her patients), how about the case according to which a person may already possess a first-order desire that is supposedly irresistible all by itself? What could this person possibly contribute to such a strong desire by endorsing it also from "higher-up?" How would such an approval be really different than, say, just wanting to take the drug when the temptation gets overwhelming?

Maybe the responsibility for the will and the ensuing action arises from *positively* or *proactively* approving of the first-order craving *anew*. However, once put this way, the emphasis now falls squarely on the proactive or voluntary initiating of this *new* higher-

⁷⁹ Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," 20.

⁸⁰ Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," 20.

order will or attitude. The whole situation then takes on the texture of Frankfurt's "[2.II.2]" counterfactually over-determined cases designed to dismiss the importance of alternative possibilities in making responsible voluntary choices.

It was posited there too that an additional set of jointly sufficient conditions (albeit only counterfactually in play) would ensure from the beginning that this person makes only one particular choice. It was also posited that the person, who was expressly not causally determined to do so, would then *volunteer* to make the choice all *on her own*, rendering the counterfactual intervener totally irrelevant in the actual-causal-sequence of choosing. And it was only in such counterfactual (and "none-actual") sense that the choice was deemed *over*-determined there. So, on the one hand, it was supposed that with the second set of counterfactually over-determining conditions in place, the choice would come about no matter what (i.e., whether or not the person would make the choice voluntarily). On the other hand, the person was thought to be responsible for the guaranteed choice precisely because she was able to make the choice herself, without having to be forced. She was responsible for her voluntary choice because it was *her* new contribution to the world.

The case of overdetermination we see here in Section [2.II.3] is quite different. For one, in this "[2.II.3]" case, the "other" causal determination that guarantees the choice to take the drug is actually already at work, even apart from the person's corresponding voluntary choice to approve it from higher up. In other words, instead of staying by the sidelines to "step in" just in case, the first set of jointly sufficient conditions is already tugging at the person with irresistible force. To use the technical lingo, the causally sufficient first-order craving is already fully at work in the *actual*(-

causal)-sequence of events. The question then is this. If the willing addict is responsible for having the will that she has and the action that she is about to commit only because of the *new* volunteer contribution that she makes through this higher-order hearty-approval, how is such *new* contribution even possible if everything in the universe is comprehensively determined from the beginning?

In other words, what if her hearty approval is itself causally determined by earlier and current factors over which she has absolutely no control (such as the big bang and the laws of nature or even God's decree)? What *new* contribution would she make with such a causally determined hearty approval? For instance, nothing for the self seems to be left over once we postulate such a comprehensive causal determination of everything. How would, for instance, such a hearty approval bear a decisively special relation to the self when the other causally determined lower-order desire fails to do so, if all such desires are in like manner causally determined by factors over which one has absolutely no control?⁸¹ Unable to answer these objections, Frankfurt and his elaborate schema involving higher-order volitions fail to establish the ultimate feasibility of such *new* contribution derivable from the hearty approval of other causally determined desires and choices.

Related to this objection is the possibility that one's hearty approval is itself causally determined by an evil genius, brainwashing, severe conditioning, or some devious route that would rob anyone of his or her responsibility in this regard. That is, according to Frankfurt, it is through such hearty approval and its effectiveness *alone* that

⁸¹ Paul Helm actually raises a similar question without attempting to answer it in *The Providence of God*, 32, as follows: "How could God govern all his creatures and all their actions without governing their thoughts? If God governs and preserves his creatures through intermediaries, does he govern and preserve the intermediaries in precisely the same way?"

one could be sufficiently free and responsible for his or her choice and action. However, if the hearty approval (of some lower-order desire) is *itself* causally manufactured from without for some unseemly and inappropriate reason, how could the person be *personally* responsible for such hearty approval? Going back to the willing addict example, what if her wholehearted approval (of the first-order craving) is the result of some severe brainwashing? Would her wholehearted (second-order) commitment to the drug addiction and its effectiveness then guarantee all by themselves that she is addicted to the drugs freely? Robert Kane seems correct to point out that in any such situation, *history* (i.e., how one comes to have such wholehearted commitments) certainly matters to free will and responsible agency.⁸² Contrary to Frankfurt's claims, higher-order wholehearted commitment to some lower-order desire does not then guarantee freedom and moral responsibility for that (lower-order) will all by itself.

[4] *On Helm*. We are now ready to talk about how all these things concerning “new compatibilism” in this Part [II] of the chapter apply to Helm. To take a quick overview of what we have discussed so far in this chapter, we saw that the basic feature of classical compatibilism has primarily to do with the freedom of *action* in the absence of overt and blatant constraints or impediments. It is first and foremost about *doing* as one would like at the absence of overt obstacles that would make such a wish-fulfillment impossible (e.g., unlike in some countries, most of us are *free* to worship at churches *as we please* in the United States). Now, new compatibilists embrace these things as well.

⁸² Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 97. Another problem for Frankfurt's theory that Kane points out is as follows: “If free will is being wholeheartedly committed to one's desires or engagements and having no ambivalence about them, then it seems that persons can never get *from* ambivalence *to* wholeheartedness *of their own free will*. ... This is an odd consequence of Frankfurt's view.” See Kane's *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 98.

Being able to do as we please and not being effectively constrained against it has been an integral part of all three new-compatibilist strategies having to do with the alleged sufficiency of mere voluntarism for choosing responsibly.

What distinguishes “more modern classical compatibilists” from new compatibilists, however, is the former’s insistence on the importance of alternative possibilities in having the kind of *control* and *freedom* that one has so as not to be forced beyond “mere determination.” To preserve this important sense of control and freedom even within the compatibilist paradigm, these classical compatibilists postulate a range of alternative possibilities that are supposedly accessible even to an individual living in a fully deterministic universe, so long as it is assumed that no overt impediment stands in the way of the individual’s wish-fulfillment. In emphasizing the importance of the power to do *otherwise*, these more modern classical compatibilists are then in agreement with most incompatibilists.⁸³

Where these classical compatibilists differ from the incompatibilists is the former’s employment of the hypothetical analysis of freedom to make room for the relevant alternative possibilities for choosing. According to this analysis, people are able to do otherwise only insofar as slightly and relevantly different conditions could be postulated as their antecedent. By this analysis, only one particular choice can therefore result from one particular set of motives, reasons, beliefs, and desires. So, the self is allowed to make different free choices only insofar as we can posit for the self relevantly different antecedent conditions (that are also not overly constraining).

⁸³ An exception to this rule are source-incompatibilists, who, just like new compatibilists, do not find alternative possibilities all that crucial in making responsible choices.

Where the classical compatibilists face the greatest challenge – as can be anticipated – is in endorsing the feasibility of such (hypothetical) alternative possibilities within their own deterministic framework. It can be easily alleged that postulating any kind of alternative possibilities (whether just the hypothetical kind or not) within such a deterministic paradigm only amounts to wishful thinking. The Consequence Argument strongly suggests that determinism and the power to do otherwise are logically incompatible (in most relevant cases).⁸⁴ In facing this formidable challenge, the new compatibilist strategy is then to try to salvage compatibilist freedom by altogether denying the importance of relevant alternative possibilities for choosing.

As we saw earlier, this strategy involved a series of counterexamples to PAP and AP. In Section [2.II.1], we explored character examples as one type of such potential exceptions to PAP. They seemed promising at first, but then the character examples turned out to be too parochial and extreme to have a general application against all relevant alternatives for choosing. The most that it could show (if we let certain things slide) is that *some* exceptional choices could be freely and responsibly made even when we lack other alternatives for choosing; it does not demonstrate that in having morally responsible agency we can dispense with all meaningful alternative possibilities for action and choosing (in one's entire lifetime). In Section [2.II.2], we saw Frankfurtian counterexamples that could be (unlike the character counterexamples to PAP) *expanded* to include one's lifetime worth of choices by postulating a global counterfactual intervener (such as God), who could ensure that all of his own desired courses of action and choosing come about through his watchful presence throughout world history. In

⁸⁴ As Michael McKenna acknowledges it in his "Source Incompatibilism, Ultimacy, and the Transfer of Non-Responsibility," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 38 (2001): 37-51.

[2.II.3], we saw what Frankfurt himself considers from his own new-compatibilist perspective the positive conditions necessary to jointly secure genuine freedom of the will, action, and responsibility: namely, the condition of *identifying decisively from “higher up” with one particular lower-order desire (the inkling of which one already has) and making sure the latter becomes effective in action.*

When it comes to Helm, as we saw in Part [2.I], the fact that he embraces the “two-way” (or more modern) classical compatibilism in a paradigmatic way is pretty clear. To reiterate, in *The Providence of God*, Helm certainly acknowledges the importance of alternative possibilities for choosing and relies specifically on the hypothetical analysis of freedom (of *action* to do otherwise) to secure it. But then Helm goes further in *TPOG*. In an important passage where he is perhaps more specific on the metaphysics of agency than anywhere else in the book, Helm reflects as follows:

Both determinists and indeterminists agree that certain conditions are sufficient to remove responsibility. For example, each allows that if people are *compelled* to act as they do, then their responsibility is, at the very least, diminished. Each agrees that purely random occurrences, nervous spasms, twitches and the like, are also not actions for which an agent may be held responsible (though an agent may be responsible for getting into a situation in which the spasms occur). But even these conditions raise problems. For example, take the issue of compulsion. There is a distinction to be drawn between external compulsion (as when one person physically forces another to act) and internal compulsion (for example, the activity of the drug addict). Then there is the question how a person came to be compelled; was it voluntarily, or involuntarily? During the time of the person’s compulsion, whether external or internal, did he or she make any effort to fight it? If the compulsion is irresistible, does this exonerate the person if the irresistibility is one that the agent is unaware of, and that has never been tested?⁸⁵

In this passage, it is important to note on the one hand that Helm appears to be for the most part still operating from within the classical compatibilist perspective. For instance, at the end of this passage, in describing a causally sufficient condition that is neither

⁸⁵ *The Providence of God*, 186.

known to nor tested by the subject, Helm employs the term “compulsion.” This is interesting because such an unknown and untested ensuring conditions would never be considered by a new compatibilist as thus “compelling” (unless it is explicitly postulated that these conditions do end up getting “tested” or “bumped up against” and become “factual” in the actual causal sequence of choosing). The only reason to consider such subjectively latent yet objectively ensuring (counterfactual) conditions as in fact compelling is if the theorist places much value on objectively real alternative possibilities in general (however it is construed), and from the compatibilist side, only a “two-way” *classical* compatibilist would think this way.

On the other hand, in asking such questions, Helm seems to reveal some interest in certain new compatibilist ideas, even in *TPOG*. To be specific, in speaking of such irresistible or ensuring conditions that are supposedly neither known to nor bumped up against by the subject, Helm seems to have in mind Frankfurt-type counterexamples to PAP (and AP) (and since we discussed it in Section [2.II.2], from here on out I will refer to it as “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”), as the latter too makes special use of such hidden and untested counterfactually ensuring conditions.

For our purpose, the fact that Helm has some sympathy for “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” becomes apparent only after he first fully endorses Frankfurt’s “[2.II.3] new compatibilism.” For instance, shortly after the abovementioned passage, Helm argues (according to “[2.II.3] new compatibilism”) that “consent” or “overridingly wanting to do something” is sufficient to properly ground moral responsibility on the person who has it, and only then does he wonder about the feasibility of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism,” as follows:

A more fundamental reason for linking knowledge and responsibility brings us to a condition for responsibility which, it has been argued, *is* sufficient for responsibility, namely, *consent*. . . . Those who bring about some action, or fail to do so, must in order to be responsible for that action, *identify themselves* with it. They must make it their own in the sense that it is the action, and the sort of action, that in these circumstances they overridingly want to do. Take the contrasting situations in which we are unknowingly compelled (however this compulsion is to be understood) to do what we do *not* want to do, and one in which we are similarly compelled to do what we in fact want to do anyway. The causal story is the same in each case; the line of compulsion is identical. But the attitude of those compelled makes a significant moral difference. In the one case they disown the action as not being the action or the sort of action which they wish to be associated, and in the other case they identify with it. Addicts may be willing or unwilling in their addiction. They might, or might not, identify with their addiction, and this will affect their moral responsibility for acting out their addiction. . . . One may even, as Frankfurt has shown, be responsible for a state of affairs even if, had one not brought it about voluntarily, one would have been made to do it.⁸⁶

Now, this is a complex passage that is deserving of our full attention. There seems to be at least several points that are worth careful unpacking to better understand Helm's entire position in *TPOG*. First, the main topic here is undeniably what we discussed earlier in connection with "[2.II.3] new compatibilism." "Consent," "identifying oneself with an action," "identifying with one's addiction," and "overridingly wanting to do something" are all characteristic "[2.II.3] new compatibilist" expressions to depict a logically sufficient condition for properly ascribing moral responsibility on the agent who possesses such will, according to Harry Frankfurt. Although he does begin here with a third person passive voice (e.g., "it has been argued"), Helm seems to embrace it as his own by quickly switching to an active voice.

Second, while Helm's allusion to the contrasting situations of "*being unknowingly compelled*" may be puzzling at first, it is possible to make sense of the two situations as

⁸⁶ *The Providence of God*, 187-8. Helm is hereby citing Bernard Berofsky's *Freedom from Necessity: The Metaphysical Basis of Responsibility* (London: Routledge, 1987), 25 and the first chapter of Harry Frankfurt's *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

follows. To begin, the possible source of confusion may stem from Helm's description of the situations as being "*unknowingly* compelled." Given Helm's description of the "compulsion" as being unknown to the individual, Helm may seem to make a quick switch back to "[2.II.2] new compatibilism (that is mainly against the necessity of alternative possibilities for free willing)." After all, is not the notion of "unknown constraint" a trademark of "[2.II.2] new compatibilism?" Not necessarily. On the one hand, although it is true that all counterfactually ensuring conditions of the "[2.II.2] new compatibilist" cases must by nature be inconspicuous, this does not mean that such unknown constraints must be restricted only to "[2.II.2] new compatibilism." On the other hand, whether known or unknown, what is essential to "[2.II.3] new compatibilism" is that the individual in question decisively identifies with and overridingly wishes to have as hers the (ensured) will.

For example, we considered earlier how there could be two individuals with very different attitudes toward drugs and drug addiction: one may be overridingly in favor of it, although she has not yet experimented with any (e.g., think of the doctor we discussed under "(3)" in [2.II.3]), while the other is totally opposed to the idea. Let's suppose that while they were both *unaware*, someone introduces a powerful drug into their system. Both of them would then experience a major high and the *unfathomable* craving for more, in every sense of the word. In this scenario, let's also suppose that one is overridingly in favor of it, while the other one is terrified by it. So, while "the causal story is the same in each case" and "the line of [the "unknown"] compulsion is identical," the two could have a vastly different attitude toward the compulsion. In the spirit of "[2.II.3] new compatibilism," Helm would then maintain that the person with the higher-order approval

(for the lower-order compulsion) is for that reason genuinely responsible for the uncontrollable urge. The point is, this may very well be the sense with which Helm introduces “being (possibly) unknowingly compelled.”

Third, the fact that we should read “the two contrasting situations” above in terms of “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” (instead of in terms of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”) is further reinforced by the fact that Helm closes the last passage with the introduction of a new thought (pertaining to “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”) as follows: “One may even, as Frankfurt has shown, be responsible for a state of affairs even if, had one not brought it about voluntarily, one would have been made to do it.”⁸⁷ The fact is, Helm does not specify here how exactly the protagonist in a “[2.II.2] new compatibilist” situation “may even be” responsible for her choice. For all we know, Helm may be thinking that the “[2.II.2] new compatibilist” protagonist should first be *in agreement with* her voluntary choice in the way that “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” requires it. What’s important here is the fact that whether in conjunction with “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” or not, Helm does finally acknowledge the feasibility of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” as at least more-remotely (i.e. “*may even be*”) possible.⁸⁸

Having explored this, what is most striking here is that Helm gives his resounding approval to “[2.II.3] new compatibilism,” without doing the same for “[2.II.2] new compatibilism.” This is an interesting discovery. On the one hand, according to this

⁸⁷ *The Providence of God*, 188.

⁸⁸ To further clarify, in stating “*had* one not brought it about voluntarily,” Helm is assuming that the person in the above scenario does voluntarily bring about the choice herself in the actual-sequence of choosing. Whatever the compulsive structure that “would have made the person to do it” (*had* she not done so herself) is then only *counterfactually* ensuring. The compulsive structure is not in the actual-sequence of choosing. Explicated as such, it is then clearly “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” that is tentatively endorsed here *with* “may even be,” while “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” is more clearly endorsed here with no strings attached.

schema, even if someone is causally determined to have both (i) an irresistible lower-order desire that actively constrains the self to only one of the options *and* (ii) a wholehearted endorsement of that lower-order desire, this person is deemed both free and responsible for thus wholeheartedly (or even compulsively) choosing it (i.e., with no alternative possibilities whatsoever, even from the “*hypothetical-analytic*” standpoint). On the other hand, if someone were to do something on her own voluntarily (in the spirit of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”) as the ensuring conditions are only “counterfactually” present, Helm seems to surmise here that she “*may even* be responsible for it.”

Things get even more confusing when Helm’s less-than-wholehearted allowance for “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” is followed immediately by his unreserved endorsement of “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” as follows:

Further, one may be responsible for doing X though there is nothing that one can do to prevent oneself doing X.⁸⁹ This is responsibility based upon character – the character that is exemplified in being willing or otherwise to identify with a particular action, even if that action is not only caused deterministically but also compelled. So the absence of [the hypothetical] power to do otherwise is not an automatic ground of exemption from moral responsibility.⁹⁰

Now, why would Helm suddenly bring up this point at this juncture? How does this additional bit of explanation concerning *character* determinism contribute something new to his overall “[2.II.3] new compatibilism?” For instance, he had considered earlier a case of a willing addict who was stipulated to be responsible for her addiction, even though she could not avoid it, simply because she approved of that addiction wholeheartedly. So, why would he bring this up now, after having already approved of

⁸⁹ Here, Helm attributes this idea to Berofsky from *Freedom from Necessity: The Metaphysical Basis of Responsibility*, 31; *The Providence of God*, 188.

⁹⁰ For this idea, Helm gives credit to Berofsky, *Freedom from Necessity*, 69; *The Providence of God*, 188.

“[2.II.3] new compatibilism” through its important notion of consent?⁹¹ The move seems especially redundant given the fact that this “[2.II.1] new compatibilist” example is recast in terms of “[2.II.3] new compatibilism.”

Also, as we observed earlier, the real point of “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” is that *at times* we may still be responsible for an action for which we had really no other option, so long as the choice happens to flow unimpededly from our own (self-willed) character. As we saw in Section [2.II.1], the main problem with “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” as a counterexample to PAP was that at best it only establishes that *some* free and morally responsible choices may lack alternative possibilities, not all of them. The natural course of compatibilist argumentation is then to move from “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” to “[2.II.2]” and “[2.II.3]” new compatibilisms, whereby we deal with alternative

⁹¹ Incidentally, such interpretation of “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” through the eyes of “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” (and the latter’s emphasis on consent and identification) is a move that Harry Frankfurt himself makes in connection with Martin Luther as follows in “The Importance of What We Care About,” *Synthese* 53 (1982): 263-66: “There are occasions when a person realizes that what he cares about matters to him not merely so much, but in such a way, that it is impossible for him to forbear from a certain course of action. It was presumably on such an occasion, for example, that Luther made his famous declaration: ‘Here I stand; *I can do no other*’” (263). The fact that Frankfurt differs significantly from Helm, however, becomes quickly evident when the former contrasts such character examples of “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” from the *compulsive* cases of “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” as follows: “An encounter with necessity of this [character] sort characteristically affects a person less by impelling him into a certain course of action than by somehow making it apparent to him that every apparent alternative to that course is unthinkable. Such encounters differ from situations in which a person finds that he is unable to forbear, whether or not he wants to do so, because he is being driven to act by some desire or by some *compulsion* which is too powerful for him to overcome” (263, emphasis added). Given Frankfurt’s distinctions, only the kind of cases that involve willing or unwilling *addicts* would then be deemed truly compulsive by Frankfurt. To further clarify, the furthest that Frankfurt would go in assessing “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” is that it involves *some* involuntariness (without compulsion or coercion) as follows: “even if volitional necessity is self-imposed there must be some respect in which it is imposed or maintained involuntarily. The condition that it be self-imposed helps to account for the fact that it is liberating rather than coercive – i.e., the fact that it supports the person’s autonomy rather than being opposed to or independent of his will. It cannot be the case, however, that the person who requires of himself that he avoid guiding himself in a certain way accomplishes the self-imposition of this requirement merely by performing a voluntary act. It must be an essential feature of volitional necessity that it is imposed upon a person involuntarily. Otherwise it will be impossible to account for the fact that the person cannot extricate himself from it merely at will – i.e., the fact that it is genuinely a kind of necessity” (265-6). Being a new compatibilist, Frankfurt then sees that such involuntariness (where one lacks all alternative possibilities) is quite compatible with “being active” as follows: “involuntariness does not entail passivity. A person is active when it is by his own will that he does what he does, even when his will is not itself within the scope of his voluntary control” (266).

possibilities on a much larger scale. Helm, however, goes in the reverse order when he bypasses the baby-steps of “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” to take “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” for granted, “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” tentatively, and then to embrace “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” in connection with “[2.II.3] new compatibilism.”

In summary, we have seen that even the earlier Helm of *TPOG* utilizes all three types of new-compatibilist moves, though this was in an interesting order with varying degrees of confidence and emphasis. For instance, Helm seems to be pretty confident when it comes to “[2.II.3]” and “[2.II.1]” new compatibilisms, while not so much so with “[2.II.2] new compatibilism.” Besides noting this peculiar progression of thought, what do we find? Before we paint the overall picture, we may want to consider briefly one final important passage in this regard. The passage appears immediately after the last passage on “character-determinism:”

How relevant to our discussion are these claims about compulsion? It should be emphasized that it is not being argued that in ordaining whatever comes to pass in a ‘no-risk’ providential order, God compels everyone to act as in fact they do act. The distinction between acting voluntarily and acting under compulsion remains a valid one; and it is an important fact, about both freedom and providence, that the vast majority of human actions are performed in ignorance of what outcome God ordains for them. Rather, what these claims purport to show is that if responsibility is sometimes compatible with compulsion it is *a fortiori* compatible with divine ordination.⁹²

So, the overall picture that we receive is as follows: Paul Helm, in *The Providence of God*, is basically a classic compatibilist who flirts with certain aspects of new compatibilism insofar as the latter benefits the former. This is again evident from the fact that he considers all three new-compatibilist cases that he just reviewed as instances of *compulsion* simply because they would eliminate all relevant alternative possibilities for

⁹² *The Providence of God*, 188.

choosing (i.e., insofar as each would effectively eliminate even the hypothetical ability to do otherwise) due to various kinds of *ensuring* conditions that were expressly posited above (be it the merely counterfactual kind of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” or the actual kind of “compulsion” posited in “[2.II.3]” and “[2.II.1]” new compatibilisms). Here, “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” in particular should be considered thus “compulsive” and not really voluntary only from the “two-way” *classical*-compatibilist perspective.⁹³

This being the case, the distinction between “acting really voluntarily”⁹⁴ and “acting under compulsion” (understood expressly from the “two-way” or “more-than-one-way” classical compatibilist perspective) is still very much valid for Helm. For Helm and other “two-way” classical compatibilists, what really distinguishes “acting freely and voluntarily” from “acting under compulsion” is this hypothetical power or ability to do otherwise. If one has it, then one acts freely and voluntarily. If one does not have it, as was the case in all three new-compatibilist-type cases, the person of necessity acts under compulsion and not really voluntarily. Provided that Helm is correct in thinking that in the context of divine decree one’s hypothetical ability to do otherwise need not be eliminated (because for most of human choosing we need not postulate new-compatibilist like ensuring conditions, such as fixed character, addiction, and counterfactual

⁹³ Once again, see n91 above where it was explicitly pointed out that Frankfurt would not make the same claims in exactly the same context as a new compatibilist.

⁹⁴ I hereby add “really” to “acting voluntarily” because Helm is not exactly consistent in his usage of the word “voluntarily.” If the reader would recall, in the earlier passage quoted from the same page, Helm used the expression “voluntarily” in conjunction with a “[2.II.2] new compatibilist” act of (fixed) freedom. However, based on what he clarifies later, we know now that he could not have meant “*really* voluntarily,” in that he expressly juxtaposes “acting voluntarily” with “acting under compulsion.” If “acting voluntarily” truly entails having more than one (even hypothetical) option, then assuming that Helm is on board with the “[2.II.2] new compatibilist” thesis that in their CI cases, there is only one feasible option, the voluntary choice mentioned earlier in connection with the “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” could not have been a *really voluntary* act. And retrospectively, when Helm talks about “acting voluntarily” in contradistinction from “acting under compulsion,” I would choose to make it clearer by using the expression, “acting (really) voluntarily.”

intervener), it is then no surprise that Helm sees the vast majority of ordained human actions as *a fortiori* compatible with responsibility.

Therefore, in *TPOG*, on the one hand, Helm's criteria for responsible agency is largely that of the "two-way" classical compatibilism and its criteria for voluntarism (according to which free and voluntary actions allow for the *hypothetical* ability to do otherwise). On the other hand, Helm seems to be convinced that some of the new compatibilists' convoluted cases (involving a certain compulsion) may even be compatible with properly accruing moral responsibility. These two things being the case, Helm seems to be of the persuasion that the classical compatibilist's way of maintaining alternative possibilities is still the *ideal* way of preserving the kind of voluntarism pertinent to moral responsibility, although such "two-way" voluntarism may not even be absolutely necessary for properly grounding such responsibility.

As such, the sense of necessity that originally propelled the new compatibilists to move on with their project (away from the AP issue) does not yet seem to figure into Helm's *TPOG*. Instead of celebrating new compatibilism and what new grounds it may be able to break, Helm then appropriates certain tenets of new compatibilism only to support his own classical-compatibilism-based "no-risk" view of providence as follows: "what these claims purport to show is that if responsibility is sometimes compatible with compulsion [posited by new compatibilism] it is *a fortiori* compatible with divine ordination [that is in line with classical compatibilism]."⁹⁵

Furthermore, once we are clear on the earlier Helm's proclivity toward such "two-way" classical compatibilism, it helps us to understand why Helm would prefer "[2.II.3]

⁹⁵ *The Providence of God*, 188.

and [2.II.1] new compatibilisms” (which involve *actually* ensuring and therefore causally determining conditions) over “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” (which incorporates only *counterfactually* ensuring conditions). “[2.II.2] new compatibilism,” by deliberately incorporating counterfactually ensuring conditions in the place of actually ensuring conditions, leaves the issue of determinism untouched. However, without such specification, things are left in the air as to how such supposedly voluntary choices come about. Deliberately construed to share the borders of libertarianism, “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” then lies in a clearly different category than the other two, and this may have made it the least palatable for the earlier Helm of *The Providence of God*.

III. Overall Summary and Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we saw that Helm shows many signs of wholly embracing “two-way” or “more-than-one-way” classical compatibilism: [2.I.1] he always speaks of freedom as the ability to *act* or *do* as one pleases; [2.I.2] he affirms the importance of alternative possibilities (even in a deterministic universe) for having the kind of control that we want (and not be *compelled* in making the choices that we make), and he tries to make room for such freedom through the hypothetical analysis of freedom to do otherwise; and [2.I.3] Helm hints at the prospect that the indeterministic power to do otherwise under exactly the same circumstance may not even be desirable as it would be incoherent and irrational (unlike what is implied by the hypothetical analysis of freedom). It was also noted in [2.I.4] that for someone who does not truly capitalize on what was covered in [2.I.3], it is peculiar that the earlier Helm of *The Providence of God* is quite content to simply stop at the surface freedom of *action* covered in [2.I.1] and [2.I.2], and

shows no sign of interest in the deeper freedom of the *will* that may be available even to a classical compatibilist.

However, where he lacks in terms of the “two-way” classical compatibilist freedom of the *will* (where you are supposed to be able to *will otherwise*, positing that you have a relevantly different antecedent), [2.II.3] Helm more than makes up for it in its *new*-compatibilist counterpart, according to which – even if we do not possess the alternative choices of the will even in the hypothetical sense of the word – we can and do have such freedom of the will so long as we decisively identify with a lower-order desire we already possess (however minutely) and effectively let that desire move us into action, as we approve of it wholeheartedly from “higher-up.” Along with Frankfurt, Helm therefore maintains that a *willing* addict could indeed be relevantly free for her addiction and addictive behavior, so long as she approves of and identifies with her addiction wholeheartedly. It does seem to not matter to either that the person would lack even the hypothetical ability to do otherwise (as her no longer wanting to approve of it would not suddenly results in her ability to overcome the addiction). Moreover, like Frankfurt, Helm imposes “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” on “[2.II.1] new compatibilism” and makes the character (counter-)example to PAP primarily about one’s *consent* and decisive identification with one’s underlying surface desires.

We are then even more surprised to discover that Helm shows the least amount of commitment to “[2.II.2] new compatibilism.” That is, as “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” postulates merely counterfactually ensuring conditions, one may expect that it would be Helm’s first choice. Instead, Helm merely affirms that it “may even” work. It was therefore conjectured that Helm may feel this way precisely because he has such strong

ties to classical compatibilism at this stage of the game. Given his preference for an *actually determined (and so only hypothetically free)* action and choice for truly responsible agency, Helm may have found such merely counterfactually ensuring conditions of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” too loose and unseemly.⁹⁶

So, when we consider all the evidence, the picture that emerges in *The Providence of God* is that *the earlier Helm is essentially a classical compatibilist who is open to certain aspects of new compatibilism (and even some aspects of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”) insofar as the latter are seen to lend even greater credence to his own “two-way” classical-compatibilism-based “no-risk” view of divine providence and human free will (i.e., as these new compatibilist elements are supposed to highlight even more freedom and control in his ordained but allegedly uncompelled “two-way” classical compatibilist choices). In doing so, the earlier Helm even invites through the “back-door” the deeper freedom of the will that is in accordance with “[2.II.3] new compatibilism,” which would not have otherwise been available to his particularly surface-freedom oriented classical compatibilist perspective.*

Now, it remains a mystery how Helm, who, on the one hand, for the sake of his highly-sought-after control and freedom clearly embraces the centrality of “*contrary choice* (albeit merely of the hypothetical kind)” in the surface freedom of *action*, could, on the other hand, by his eager acceptance of “[2.II.3] new compatibilism”⁹⁷ (without

⁹⁶ Incidentally, his tentative *acceptance* of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” as “may even be” okay is quite consistent with his less than full endorsement (earlier in [2.I.3]) of the more zealous classical compatibilist claim that the libertarian notion of *indeterministic* freedom may be necessarily and inherently flawed.

⁹⁷ And its claim that when one fully identifies with a desire, he or she would not even seek any other alternatives as a matter of accident.

even first wholly embracing “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”⁹⁸), readily surrender it in the deeper freedom of the *will*.⁹⁹ Either way, in the next chapter, we will examine how Helm’s position undergoes some significant changes over the next few years.

⁹⁸ That gets to the heart of the matter, as it endeavors to show that alternative possibilities are *in principle* not needed at all for free and controlled agency.

⁹⁹ Unless, of course, we go back to the interpretation whereby “flexibility of contrary choice via hypothetical analysis of freedom” is ideal, while “the willing acceptance of certain compulsion” is only acceptable.

CHAPTER 3

HELM'S FLUCTUATING COMPATIBILISM (1993–2010)

The previous chapter maintained that in *The Providence of God* Paul Helm shows affinities to both classical compatibilism and new compatibilism. But it concluded that Helm clearly prefers the classical compatibilist notion of (i) “two-way” or “uncompelled” “more than-one-way” voluntary choice and (ii) its underlying causal determinism as the only means through which we can reliably bring about such uncompelled choices. For instance, of all the three new-compatibilist strands that he specifically alludes to and considers, Helm shows the least affinity toward what was labeled in the last chapter as “[II.2] new compatibilism,” the brand of compatibilism according to which one may freely bring about a *counterfactually* fixed outcome without *actually* being causally determined to do so. That is, by explicitly subscribing to the classical compatibilists’ hypothetical analysis of freedom to do otherwise (as a way of securing the coveted concept of control and freedom even in a determined choice) and positively affirming the merit of such otherwise causally necessitated free choices, Helm then leans clearly in *TPOG* toward classical compatibilism and its underlying universal causal determinism.

To illustrate what a big role that this hypothetical analysis of freedom plays in his otherwise fully deterministic system, it is important to remind ourselves that without further clarification, the following type of argument from William Lane Craig fails to make any dent in Helm’s “two-way” kind of classical compatibilism:

Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 10:13 implies that in such a situation, God had provided a way of escape that one could have taken but that one failed to do so. In other words, in precisely that situation, one had the power either to succumb or to take the way out—that is to say, one had libertarian freedom. It is precisely

because one failed to take the divinely provided way of escape that one is held accountable.¹

While Craig argues here that if, according to Scripture, both to sin and not to sin are genuinely open to us whenever we are tempted to sin, then Helm's compatibilist position which does not allow for such alternatives "in precisely that situation" must be clearly at odds with Scripture, the success of Craig's argument really depends on what Craig means here by "in precisely that situation."

For instance, if Craig intends to suggest that a person can literally do otherwise precisely at the moment when he or she is at the cusp of taking the plunge (to sin) after having had the chance to make up her mind,² being an avowed compatibilist, the earlier Helm would reject the possibility that she could choose a totally different option "in precisely that situation." If, however, by "in precisely that situation," one has in mind a small spectrum of hypothetically different situations with relevantly different outcomes (because the person is under no kind of duress (external or not) to keep her from ever slightly changing her mind), then Helm, being a "two-way" classical compatibilist, would gladly allow for more than one alternative to this uncompelled person.³ Therefore, as

¹ William Lane Craig, "A Middle-Knowledge Response," in *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*, eds. James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 202. Henceforth, *Four Views*, for short.

² That is, very much like what Helm says is expressly the libertarian position, which is unlike his own position as follows: "[According to libertarians, i]f we are free, then we have the powers to do some particular action, or to refrain from doing it, even though the entire history of the universe *up to the moment* of that choice is the same whichever choice is made. The entire history of the universe up to the point of our choice, is consistent either with our performing of that action or with our refraining from it... This is a sense of freedom which is incompatible with determinism" (emphasis added). See Helm, *The Providence of God*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 43. Henceforth, *TPOG*, for short.

³ To reiterate, this is why Helm readily makes observations like the following in *TPOG*, despite being a determinist: (1) "[P]art of the character of the ethical conflict experienced by Christians is formed when they recognize that not every possibility with which they are presented by divine providence represents an opportunity to be grasped. Just because one can do something does not mean one ought to do

Craig's objection stands, it is too broad and too imprecise to make the kind of definitive pronouncement against the earlier Helm and other "two-way" classical compatibilists on what they could not allow "in precisely that situation," especially when it is explicitly stipulated here that the temptation is not insurmountable.

Craig's argument on this particular point, in other words, is faulty insofar as the kind of moral freedom mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10:13 need not be taken in the technical and the most rigorous libertarian sense according to which one has the power to choose an act of total self-denial *precisely* when he has just convinced himself to take the horrible option of selfishness as not really hurting anyone. Instead, as long as it can be postulated that there is, in such a situation of self-justification, no overt coercion or compulsion that one would not be able to overcome (like addiction, so that whatever the choice that one makes need not be made compulsively positing the cause), a classical compatibilist could easily grant that the person could have done otherwise *in precisely that situation* with slight variations.

On the other hand, the fact that Helm affirms such hypothetically feasible alternatives *in precisely that situation* does not mean that he affirms the *actual* "wiggleroom" in precisely that situation the way that most of us would actually have it (i.e., as in the "really possible" sense of freedom, according to which one could have at least

it" (135); (2) "It is rare that circumstances are such that there is only one possible outcome, for it is usually possible to do nothing" (136); (3) "If the distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions still obtains in the case of determinism by impersonal force, it obtains in the case of personal, divine determinism" (177); and (4) "while there may be varied workings of divine grace, some of which are resistible [presumably from the classical compatibilists' hypothetic-analytic sense] and resisted, God's purpose of *saving* grace is not finally resistible" (191). Incidentally, this last point on the difference between resistible and irresistible grace and its intelligibility even within a compatibilist paradigm can be located also in Helm's *Four Views* as follows: "Those who successfully resist the grace of God do so because in such cases that grace is not efficacious... Some of God's actions are resistible and are resisted. What does this imply? Not that there are no irresistible gracious divine energies but simply that those which are resisted are not among them" (171-2).

refrained from the very choice that he makes in precisely that situation. As to how this could all be possible would be interesting to pursue at some point in this paper,⁴ but *TPOG* is relatively only the beginning of Helm’s work on this topic. We have yet to see if Helm would continue to endorse the meaningfulness of such hypothetical analysis of freedom even in a few years. Moreover, the material that we covered in the previous chapter is mostly on the issue of human freedom and responsibility in relation to general causal determinism. We have yet to discover how Helm would connect all this material with his particular view of divine providence.

In what follows, we will examine if Helm’s fuller perspective as it is laid out in *TPOG* undergoes any significant changes in the subsequent literature. Incidentally, for the better flow of this chapter, the rest of the material from *TPOG* will be brought in as needed, instead of placing them all at the beginning. Towards the end of this chapter, it should be clear that *with his repeated concessions, Helm begins to side with a certain irreducible agency (exemplified in the non-causal determinism of, say, “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”) over against the causally determined agency presumed in his once favored “two-way” classical compatibilism.*

I. On Helm’s Theological Framework

In *TPOG*, there are a couple of theological perspectives that Paul Helm keys in on to use as a foil against his own “no-risk” perspective. Examining Helm’s commentary on these theological frameworks should provide further insight into Helm’s nuanced perspective we began to analyze in chapter 2. In what follows, I will therefore examine

⁴ In fact, I will briefly address this issue in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

Helm's treatment of each of these perspectives in the order that they appear in *TPOG*: pantheism, deism, occasionalism, and the two-causal-level perspective.

[1] *On Pantheism*. Concerning pantheism, Helm observes that if it is true, whatever is attributable to the universe is also attributable to God. So, for example, "if in the universe Hitler sins, then in that respect at least God sins, or is at the very least imperfect."⁵ Such ramification, besides implicating God in evil, also flies in the face of the sacred doctrine of creation, according to which "God is not to be identified with his creation."⁶ It is not so difficult to overcome pantheism, however, as all that is needed for an object to be "ontologically distinct from God" (in contradistinction to pantheism) is "if there is at least one property which God has, but which the object lacks, or vice versa."⁷ From this, Helm concludes that "God is distinct from me" can easily be deduced from such mundane truths as "I am sitting at my wordprocessor but God is not."⁸

Let's grant for now that Helm might be right about this. The problem rises when Helm uses this principle of "ontological distinction" to positively conclude that it is not possible for God to be implicated in creaturely wrongdoing as follows:

This distinctiveness emerges most vividly, perhaps, in the case of responsibility for good and evil – particularly evil. Although Hitler was created and sustained by God, and his unholy career was under the superintendence of God, nevertheless, when Hitler sinned, God did not sin, and could not sin.⁹

⁵ *The Providence of God*, 72.

⁶ *The Providence of God*, 80-1.

⁷ *The Providence of God*, 72.

⁸ *The Providence of God*, 80-1.

⁹ *The Providence of God*, 72.

Given what has gone on prior to this passage, what Helm says here is that God could not possibly be implicated in Hitler's sin (even if he superintends it), if he is ontologically distinct from Hitler. However, notwithstanding Helm's express claim here, all that seems to follow from such a principle of "ontological distinction" is that when Hitler sins, God could not commit the very sin that Hitler himself commits. It does not follow from this that God could not possibly get his hands dirty in superintending Hitler's egregious wrongdoing. If Helm were right in this regard, it would not even be possible to become an "accessory to murder." Therefore, Helm seems to be clearly off-base when he exploits the standard difference between pantheism and biblical Christianity to so conveniently get God off the hook.

[2] *On Deism*. For Helm, deism is, from the Christian perspective, considerably better than pantheism, as it has no problem acknowledging the distinction between God and creation. In fact, the concern for deism is not "whether the deist insists on the distinctness between God and the creation, but whether he overstates it."¹⁰ This last concern is due to the deists' alleged claim that God need not superintend the universe after his first act of creation because from the start God has endowed it with powers that need no further augmentation.¹¹

Given such restriction that deism places on the scope of divine activity (as God is removed from the picture after first creating the world), Helm raises the following two objections against deism, although neither of them seem all that effective. Helm's first objection is that placing this sort of restriction on God's providential activity is

¹⁰ *The Providence of God*, 74.

¹¹ *The Providence of God*, 73-6.

unscriptural because it recognizes no place for *miracles* (whereby God acts directly on physical nature in new and unprecedented ways *after* the first moment of creation).¹² That is, while deists may grant that God in some abstract sense¹³ retains the power to intervene in creaturely affairs even after he has first set everything in motion, they must maintain that there is ultimately no room for miracles because having once created the universe perfectly, God no longer needs to add to it.¹⁴ Helm objects that such denial of miracles contradicts the divine revelation, which in fact cites many miracles.

There seem to be at least two things problematic with Helm's first objection against deistic providence. First, as Helm himself points out, deists supposedly do have a way out of this, as a deistic thinker like Leibniz allowed "a place for miracles provided that they are understood as part of God's pre-established harmony between the realms of nature and of grace."¹⁵ The basic idea here is that "miracle" is a subjective concept. The fact that it appears to be unique and out-of-the-ordinary does not automatically rule out the possibility that it was objectively pre-established by God's singular act of creation.

However, once put this way, we encounter our second problem with Helm's first objection against deism: Helm's own view does not seem all that different from Leibniz's *deistic* perspective. That is, with such emphasis on everything having already been preordained by God from the very start, Helm's earlier "no-risk" view stipulates that absolutely everything is causally entailed by the one unitary act of divine foreordination at the time of creation. In some sense, this looks pretty "deistic" (as far as the first causal

¹² *The Providence of God*, 76.

¹³ For this abstract sense, see the next paragraph that pertains to Leibniz.

¹⁴ *The Providence of God*, 75.

¹⁵ *The Providence of God*, 76.

efficacy is concerned), as God himself is said to have causally “pre-established” everything from the very beginning. Although he would maintain that God’s activity does not stop since the beginning of creation insofar as the upholding of it, as far as causal efficacy is concerned, it is hard to see how miracles would add anything more to Helm’s comprehensively decreed system.

Helm’s second and final objection to deism in *TPOG* is that deism cannot properly accommodate petitionary prayer. Helm’s basic premise is that while petitionary prayer is biblically encouraged, it presupposes a certain conditionality that cannot be incorporated into a deistic framework. More specifically, what underlies petitionary prayer is the belief that “certain things happen in the universe only because people ask God that they happen, and God is pleased to do what they ask.”¹⁶ Helm maintains that a deist – if she is consistent – will have no place for such conditionality because it supposes that God, in addition to his own good reasons, *needs* to be further prompted by creatures’ petitions.¹⁷ Helm concludes that as petitionary prayer and deism are thus incompatible, Christians should reject the deistic framework.

Helm’s second objection against deism from the petitionary prayer angle, again, seems fine as a general complaint against deism. What is problematic is that Helm’s own “no-risk” perspective seems equally vulnerable to the second objection against deism, as it too highlights the perfect and *settled* will of God. In fact, later on in *TPOG*, Helm offers a suggestion as to how best to unravel a challenge like this from his own decretal

¹⁶ *The Providence of God*, 78.

¹⁷ *The Providence of God*, 78.

perspective.¹⁸ Yet, if such a rebuttal works for Helm, should it not work for deism? While a meaningful distinction could still be drawn between the two perspectives,¹⁹ when it comes to the possible difficulty that petitionary prayer may pose on a fixed future,²⁰ the two views seem to be pretty much on par with one another. And insofar as it can be adequately accounted for by Helm, it seems that deists can do just the same through supposing a certain “pre-established harmony” between the prayers and their respectively better outcome. What this shows is that, in the end, the earlier Helm of *TPOG* fails to

¹⁸ For instance, in *TPOG*, we find the following: “The position that we start from, given our other assumptions – particularly the ‘no-risk’ view of divine providence – is that if anyone prays, then God has ordained the prayer. The praying is thus an action in the order of divine providence like any other action... It is easy to ask, ‘if A had not prayed, would God have done what he did?’ But to do so is in effect to prise apart the action of praying from the total matrix of events and actions of which it forms a part” (154). “God, who ordained certain ends, also ordained the means to accomplish those ends. Now in some cases, in God’s wisdom, the means include people warrantably asking him to do certain things. He has so ordered the total matrix that he does some things because people ask him to, and, if they had not asked, the conditions which are otherwise sufficient – apart, that is, from the request – for the production of what is asked for would not have been provided” (157). [I]n the words of Augustine, “So, too, prayers are useful in obtaining those favours which He foresaw He would bestow on those who should pray for them” (158).

¹⁹ For example, as Richard Muller brought it to my attention, whereas in the deistic perspective, the will of God is supposedly “perfect and settled in the establishment of an order that then runs on without any further divine involvement,” in Helm’s perspective “the will of God is perfect and settled in its ongoing maintenance of the order toward its end.”

²⁰ Notice, for instance, how from the very beginning, Helm is prone to argue for a certain “necessity of the consequence” (and the ensuing “fixity of the future”) that even just divine foreknowledge imposes on things. See Paul Helm’s “Divine Foreknowledge and Facts,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4 (1974), 305-15; “Fatalism Once More,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1975), 355-6; “Foreknowledge and Possibility,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 6 (1976), 731-4; and “God and Whatever Comes to Pass,” *Religious Studies* 14 (1978), 315-323. As an example, Helm states in the first article: “God’s true belief at t_1 is not made knowledge by what happens at t_2 for it is already knowledge at t_1 it is not possible for a creature to bring it about now that God knew yesterday the truth of p concerning E ” (308). Within such framework, I imagine that Helm would not allow any new things to be introduced into the world as a result of petitionary prayer, unless of course certain things are supposed to have been ordained *along with* their respective prayer requests by divine decree from the beginning. The fact that Helm is from beginning to end a strong believer in the strong enough logical implication of the necessity of the consequence (i.e., given divine foreknowledge or decree, a particular future of conditional necessity follows of necessity) is evident from the fact that he continues to hold it against various opponents in “Review of Ronald H. Nash. *The Concept of God*,” *Religious Studies* 21 (1985): 603; *Eternal God* (1988), 161; “Calvin (and Zwingli) on Divine Providence,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 388-405, especially 400; “Synchronic Contingency in Reformed Scholasticism: A Note of Caution,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 57 (2003): 207-22; “Synchronic Contingency Again,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 57 (2003): 234-28; “*Reformed Thought on Freedom: Some Further Thoughts*,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 4 (2010): 185-207; and “‘Structural Indifference’ and Compatibilism in Reformed Orthodoxy,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 5 (2011): 184-205.

substantially distance his view from “deism” because the two specific cases that he enlists against deism end up only highlighting their similarities.

[3] *On Occasionalism*. Helm begins his discussion of occasionalism by reflecting on what constitutes the special relation between God and creaturely things.²¹ He says that for creatures, the special relation to God is “that of *being continuously dependent upon*.” The problem that Helm has with deism then appears to be with the fact that however one tweaks it (so as to make it compatible with miracles and petitionary prayers), in the end a deistic system cannot allow creatures and creaturely affairs to be continuously dependent upon God:

It is important to preserve what might be termed the ‘vertical’ dimension of God’s relation to his creation, and indeed to stress this against the deistic view of God as the prime mover. Not only do the actions of my fingers cause words and phrases to appear on the screen of the wordprocessor, but also God upholds that whole process.²²

There is then a meaningful difference between a father who is actually around and the one for whom only his “spiritual presence” can be felt because of what he had previously established in the child’s life. Helm may have tried to delineate such a distinction between the two views.

But having done so, Helm goes on to point out that, in highlighting such a difference, one could go too far in stating, as in occasionalism, the vertical aspect of God’s relation to the world. Helm observes that occasionalism, “[b]y arguing that the divine sustaining of the universe through time is the only true *causal* relation in the entire

²¹ *The Providence of God*, 81.

²² *The Providence of God*, 82.

universe,”²³ falsely estimates that “the actions and events which we normally think of as causes and effects are something else.”²⁴ One of the ramifications is that responsibility is effectively removed from what are usually conceived of as creaturely causes, as they are deemed as no causes at all. Helm maintains against such occasionalism that creaturely causes are real and that they can be responsible for their own choosing.

However, whether he can maintain that consistently remains to be seen. Given such a strong view of unilaterally effective divine causation and foreordination, it is hard to see how Helm could avoid the problem of occasionalism himself. Despite his effort to steer clear from both deism and occasionalism, Helm then seems to end up with most of their problems. To recap, with deism, Helm’s no-risk view shares the problem of God effectuating everything in his first decree so that nothing else can then be added to it subsequently, as far as the causal efficacy is concerned. With occasionalism, it shares the slightly different problem of having God as the real all-sufficient cause of everything, bringing into question the true causal relevancy of all the rest.

[4] *The Two-Causal-Level Perspective to the Rescue*. In order to perhaps overcome the respective weaknesses of each of these last three perspectives, Helm finally turns to the two-causal-level perspective as follows:

There is a long and honourable tradition according to which there are both *primary* and *secondary* causes. The primary cause (or causes) is the divine upholding; the secondary causes are the causal powers of created things; the power of the seed to germinate, of a person to be angry or to walk down the street, and so on. This distinction is helpful provided that two points are borne in mind. The first is that these two sorts of cause are not in competition with each other. The primary cause is an enabling and sustaining cause, making possible secondary causes and setting bounds to them. The second point is that the primary

²³ *The Providence of God*, 83.

²⁴ *The Providence of God*, 82-3.

cause is not an event in time, as the secondary causes are, but is an eternal cause which has the whole of the creation as its effect... On this view, then, God works through secondary causes. They have no power independently of his working. Yet they are truly causal. God, considered as the primary cause, is not located within the created universe, but transcends it.²⁵

Now, when Helm puts the matter this way, we need to ask ourselves a few questions. For starters, when he describes the primary cause as “the divine upholding” (whereby a secondary cause is said to be “enabled” and “sustained”), does Helm have in mind God’s provision of only certain necessary conditions that would then merely make secondary causation possible (i.e., without actually dictating it to just one particular end)? It may seem that way at first. For instance, this way of understanding the primary cause and its function (as thus limited) seems to be what Helm has in mind when he says next that it “sets bounds to” secondary cause.

However, such reading of the divine primary causation as *merely enabling* does not seem consistent with Helm’s later claim that it is “an eternal cause which has the whole of the creation as its effect.” Whether it is an atemporally eternal cause or not, if we take seriously the last claim that it has the whole of the creation as its effect, the primary cause better be an “effectuating” or causally sufficient condition, and not just an “enabling” or “sustaining” cause (that makes an outcome merely possible).

We shall come back to this issue soon. What we need to point out at this juncture is that however we come down on this issue, the two-causal-level perspective seems just right in overcoming all the respective defects that we have just discussed in connection with the last three views. On the one hand, via its notion of primary causality, this theistic perspective, unlike deism, affirms quite clearly the *continual* divine upholding of the

²⁵ *The Providence of God*, 86-7. In this regard, Helm cites Calvin and the Westminster Confession as two proponents of this view.

universe. Unlike occasionalism and pantheism, it affirms, on the other hand, secondary causality that is supposedly distinctly creaturely and easily distinguishable from God's primary causality.

So, at least at first, this two-causal-level perspective seems apt to (i) preserve against occasionalism a distinct space for creaturely responsibility and accountability, (ii) eliminate the pantheistic implication that God is automatically implicated in creaturely wrongdoing, and (iii) render against deism that the universe is wholly dependent on God even past the first moment of its inception.²⁶ Given such allegedly overwhelming success against the earlier-cited counterparts, it is not surprising that Helm would then rest his preliminary discussion on the topic on such a "theistic"²⁷ perspective.

[5] Yet, *The Two-Causal-Level Perspective is Finally Inadequate*. Helm's discussion of this classical theistic perspective, however, does not end there in *TPOG*. Despite how he had stipulated earlier that it readily allows God and creatures to have different responsibilities for the very same outcome, Helm points out that once you dig deeper it runs stuck however you spin it.²⁸ For instance, one of the two ways of understanding this "issuing" relation between the primary and secondary causes is to see the primary cause as the provider of certain necessary conditions that make the operation of secondary causes possible within their limits. This sort of enablement, however, leaves the ball largely in the secondary cause's court, letting the latter do whatever it pleases

²⁶ *The Providence of God*, 87-8.

²⁷ *The Providence of God*, 80-9. The fact that this term "theism" has a special privileged meaning for Helm is made clear from the fact that Helm uses it only in conjunction with the two-causal-level perspective elucidated here, when in fact all the rest of the views (i.e., pantheism, deism, and occasionalism) have a legitimate claim to it.

²⁸ *The Providence of God*, 179.

within the realm of possibility the primary cause brings about. It fails to ensure that certain creaturely actions would most certainly follow from their antecedent conditions the way that causal determinism would guarantee it, as follows:

Clearly it is not adequate to understand such issuing in terms merely of God's provision of *necessary* conditions for my action. For while the provision of necessary conditions would permit or make possible my action, such conditions would not ensure that it took place. In order to ensure that the action took place, the divine conditions, conditions in the primary order, would have to be both necessary *and sufficient*.²⁹

As such, Helm wants God's primary causality to consist of both enablement *and insurance*, causal necessity as well as causal sufficiency, to make sure that whatever is to come about comes about with indubitable certainty.

One problem with such a remedy, however, is that we then end up overloading an event with two sets of necessary and sufficient conditions, so that "for the same event two chains of causal sufficiency and necessity are simultaneously present, and simultaneously required."³⁰ In thus overloading the one and the same event, we end up positing, for instance, that God has the same causal sufficiency over every creaturely act as the creatures themselves, and in approaching it first from the primary-causality angle, "we cannot say [as Calvin would] that *whatever* Judas intends is then placed by God in a wider framework of meaning." Instead, we must conclude that "in some sense God causes the specific intention of Judas, and indeed of every lower-level causal event."³¹ Approaching it from this primary-causality angle, nothing then gets left over for a creature to decide on its own, and we find ourselves wondering, "what part do a person's

²⁹ *The Providence of God*, 181.

³⁰ James Ross, *Philosophical Theology* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 253; cited by Helm in *The Providence of God*, 180.

³¹ *The Providence of God*, 182.

own desires and reasons (and whatever else we ordinarily think our actions issue from) play?”³² To go back to the earlier question, how does such divine causal determinism do any better than the creaturely-causality-eradicating “occasionalism?”

Now, to be fair, as much as the two-causal-level perspective affirms God’s causal sufficiency at the primary-causal level, the perspective affirms the same for the creaturely causality at the secondary level of causation. The problem is, as Helm himself points out, such response does not resolve anything because once we start with God and His primary causality (as any reverent Christian should) and maintain that his will and his decree are indeed both necessary and sufficient for some particular creaturely effect, it makes no sense to then add that some other causality is both necessary and sufficient for the very same effect.³³ For one, given that God’s causality is indeed *sufficient* for the desired effect all by itself, it makes no sense to assert that some other causality is also *necessary* for the very same effect. Therefore, as he recognizes it himself, Helm brings his final discussion on the two-causal-level perspective in *TPOG* to a fitting close as follows:

In summary, it is hard to see that there can be two separate sets of necessary and sufficient conditions for the same action, even if one of these sets is a set of primary conditions, and the other a set of secondary conditions. Calling certain conditions ‘primary’ and others ‘secondary,’ does not by itself solve anything.³⁴

³² *The Providence of God*, 182.

³³ *The Providence of God*, 182. If the reader is unfamiliar with this sort of view, according to which God is in his own right both necessary and sufficient for effects that involve secondary causality, I recommend that he or she check out not only the earlier quote attributed to James Ross (according to whom “for the same event two chains of causal sufficiency and necessity are simultaneously present, and simultaneously required” (182)), but even Herman Bavinck’s own take on this issue as follows: “[t]here is no division of labor between God and his creature, but the same effect is *totally* the effect of the primary cause as well as *totally* the effect of the proximate cause” (Emphasis added). See Herman Bavinck, *God and Creation*, vol. 2 of *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 614-15.

³⁴ *The Providence of God*, 182.

[6] *Summary*. What we have here is interesting. On the one hand, in *TPOG*, Helm avows repeatedly that a compatibilist account of human action is the best way to go, and among the available options, he leans clearly towards a “two-way” classical compatibilism. On the other hand, on the issue of its suitable theological framework (wherein his favored compatibilist account of freedom could properly be nested), Helm seems at first to prefer the two-causal-level perspective, but then he dismisses it on the ground that we would end up with a troubling ramification however we spin the view. If we take its primary divine causality to be only causally necessary for a secondary causal outcome, the primary causality would fail to guarantee or ensure the exact outcome of the secondary causality. If we take it to be causally sufficient for the operation of a secondary cause, the causal necessity of the secondary causality becomes suspect, against its own express thesis that the secondary causality is also causally essential for its desired outcome.

Now, how does Helm reconcile his criticism of such sufficient divine causality in the abovementioned two-causal-level perspective (that, by Helm’s own admission, militates against secondary causality) with his own espousal of classical-compatibilism-based divine *determinism*, according to which the causally sufficient conditions for literally everything also exist from the beginning just from the original decree alone. What could be going on here? How does this settle well in Helm’s mind?

To answer these questions, we should look beyond *TPOG* and examine *Four Views*. We should find in *Four Views* things that are, on the one hand, despite being more developed, in sufficient continuity with Helm’s earlier thought to further illuminate the latter. On the other hand, the points of clear discontinuity we discover in *Four Views*

should disclose to us a whole new direction in Helm's thought that we could not have otherwise anticipated. The fact that Helm's position goes through such marked change to develop a new trajectory in *Four Views* should make the next section very interesting. We turn now to this picture of continuity and discontinuity.

[7] *Continuity and Discontinuity in Four Views*. In *Four Views*, Helm states, on the one hand, that compatibilism is still his view of choice as follows: "A compatibilist account of human action is simpler than an account that invokes incompatibilism because it extends the idea of causal explanations of events, which all recognize is fundamental to natural science, into the realm of human action."³⁵ On the other hand, Helm states quite clearly that when it comes to particular evil actions God only permits them and does not positively cause them.³⁶ While still holding that all events may be knowingly governed and therefore intended by God,³⁷ Helm for instance emphatically *denies* that "for any event *E*, if *E* occurs, then God has caused it."³⁸ Instead, the Helm of *Four Views* holds that God sometimes merely permits certain acts willingly, and "to knowingly and willingly permit an action is *not* to cause that action; it is to provide a necessary but not sufficient causal condition for the action."³⁹ Considering Helm's earlier stance in *TPOG* that such provision of only necessary conditions is grossly inadequate for God's primary

³⁵ *Four Views*, 178. This statement is clearly in favor of compatibilism insofar as it is made in the context of Helm endorsing Occam's razor and the economy of explanation as a reliable guide to truth. For Helm, "the Christian faith does not need to posit incompatibilism; in fact it needs to posit compatibilism" (172).

³⁶ We see Helm stating the very same position when he debates William Hasker in "God Does Not Take Risks" in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion* (2004), 228-38.

³⁷ *Four Views*, 178-9.

³⁸ *Four Views*, 181.

³⁹ *Four Views*, 180.

causality because it fails to *ensure* the desired creaturely outcome,⁴⁰ it seems incredible that Helm is willing to stipulate here in *Four Views* that when it comes to evil creaturely actions, God makes them possible without making them actual.⁴¹

While surprising enough in its own right, in *Four Views*, things take yet another unexpected turn when this talk about “particular yet mere permission” gets somehow incorporated into the two-causal-level perspective as follows. When faced with the possibility that “while God is the primary cause of all events that occur, even of all evil acts, he is not and cannot be the secondary cause of any evil act because he is not the secondary cause of any act,” Helm retorts that such a requirement is “almost certainly too strong” as “it seems to have the *deistic* consequence that God cannot directly act in the world that he has created.”⁴² Helm’s counterproposal is then to avoid such “deism” by allowing that “God is the secondary cause of some acts, which is consistent with his being the secondary cause of morally indifferent acts and of morally good acts,” but not of morally evil acts.⁴³

⁴⁰ *The Providence of God*, 181. Notice how the only other time Helm mentions this weaker notion of causality in *TPOG* (and this, much more neutrally, unlike here) is when he attributes it to others, such as Augustine. See *TPOG*, 171-3.

⁴¹ In contrast to this, the earlier relative depreciation of such divine permission can also be found in Helm’s positive appraisal of William Mann’s chapter in *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988) in review of Mann in *The Philosophical Review* 101 (1992): 447-49, shortly before the publication of *TPOG*: “Mann’s is an able paper which seems to be on the right lines in arguing that the morality of God’s permitting an action is not significantly different from God’s perpetrating it” (448). It may be of some interest to us that Helm reports something similar on John Calvin’s take on this issue of divine willing permission as follows in “Calvin (and Zwingli) on Divine Providence,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 388-405: “Calvin is not happy with the idea of permission . . . Calvin opposes ‘the idea that the Fall occurred by the mere permission of God; for permission implies, in his view, that what is permitted is not fully in accord with the will of the one who permits it; and this cannot be true of God’ (394-5).

⁴² *Four Views*, 180-1. Emphasis added.

⁴³ *Four Views*, 181.

Helm's response here is unexpected on a number of levels. First, when facing a possible integration with such a classical theological framework (a version of which he expressly dismissed in *TPOG*), given Helm's newfound zeal for "divine willing permission" when it comes to all truly culpable creaturely acts, we would expect him to limit God's involvement with such acts even at the *primary* causal level. We would never expect him to further insert God into secondary causality, while making no concessions at the primary causal level. For one, even if Helm maintains (as he in fact does) that God is not the secondary cause of any of the morally culpable creaturely acts, if God is still supposedly the sufficient primary cause of all such evil creaturely acts, then (following his own logic from *TPOG*) God would still strictly imply each of them (and consequently be responsible for them), regardless of what he happens not do at the secondary causal level.

Second, in thus leaving God to be the causally sufficient condition of all creaturely affairs at the *primary* causal level, while further inserting God into the secondary causal level when it comes to at least morally indifferent acts, Helm then seems to betray a certain doubt about the functional relevance of God's *primary* causality. This is quite surprising in that in *TPOG* (as mentioned in Section [3.I.4]), Helm initially favored the two-causal-level perspective precisely because it allegedly overcomes the respective weaknesses of deism and occasionalism through its two-tier approach. It was postulated, for instance, that through its notion of secondary causality the two-causal-level perspective could highlight the importance of creaturely causality against occasionalism, while against deism, it can maintain the continual divine upholding of the universe through its notion of primary causality. Accordingly, what was assumed at the

time was that it takes the express affirmation of God's *primary* causality to adequately overcome the problematic ramifications of deism. In *Four Views*, Helm maintains that in order to avoid such deistic ramifications, instead of relying on God's primary causality, one must positively insert God into secondary causality as the causally sufficient condition of all morally indifferent and good creaturely acts. However, if the only way for God to be so active in the world (so as to avoid deism) is for him to be involved at the secondary causal level, what could possibly be the point of him being the *primary* cause of all such creaturely affairs? Even more importantly, if the only way for God to be directly involved in the creaturely affairs is through secondary causality, how could God be truly sovereign over all creaturely affairs if his direct involvement at this creaturely level is limited to the morally good and indifferent acts?

To summarize, in *TPOG*, Helm took a rather fortuitous road to provisionally advocate the two-causal-level perspective. One of the main reasons was to take care of the deistic lack of providence, while avoiding occasionalism. In *Four Views*, while not outright discarding this view, Helm seems much more interested in preserving just the secondary causality that supposedly exists between things and events themselves. What we are left with then is effectively a one-causal-level perspective. The problem now is the question of "the division of labor." That is, the way that Helm construes things anew here, (a) does God leave some things for the creatures to choose on their own? Or (b) does God still "hoard" everything? In *TPOG*, Helm seemed much more comfortable with the latter option. In *Four Views*, Helm seems to want to qualify that a bit. How Helm works towards that goal in *Four Views* is our next topic.

II. On Divine Willing Permission

[1] So, how does Helm repudiate in *Four Views* William Hasker's charge that "according to the central idea of Calvinism ... [e]verything that happens, with no exceptions, is efficaciously determined by God in accordance with his eternal decrees?"⁴⁴ Helm's response is that "the integrity of the divine righteousness in the case of human acts that are morally evil" can be preserved by "the idea that God willingly *permits* particular evil actions."⁴⁵ But how is such willing permission of *particular* evil actions even possible? That is, how could even God effectively guarantee that a very particular evil action will come about by merely deciding not to prevent it, should it occur (i.e., without providing the requisite causally sufficient conditions)?⁴⁶ Being well aware of the problem, Helm offers a few suggestions as follows.

First, Helm maintains that God may willingly permit an evil act by actualizing "that possible world in which he foreknows that Jones will do a particular evil act."⁴⁷ Now, this may at first sound like Molinism and its reliance on *scientia media* (that incidentally disdains and so expressly works around the compatibilist notion of

⁴⁴ *Four Views*, 181. Hasker was quoted from Clark H. Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 141.

⁴⁵ *Four Views*, 181. Emphasis added.

⁴⁶ This, for instance, is my way of summarizing Helm's following claim: "It is possible that God knowingly governs whatever comes to pass, and it is plausible (if God is omnipotent and omniscient) to suppose that he does so. If, for any event *E*, *E* occurs, then God knowingly governs *E* either by knowingly bringing it about or being knowingly willing for it to occur. Whatever occurs, occurs because God knowingly governs it in this sense; whatever is true in virtue of what occurs is true because God so governs it. So saying that all events are knowingly governed by God, while it entails that all events are intended by God, is not equivalent to asserting that, for any event *E*, if *E* occurs, then God has caused it." *Four Views*, 181.

⁴⁷ *Four Views*, 181-2.

freedom).⁴⁸ However, in the footnote, Helm expressly clarifies that “such foreknowledge cannot be a case of middle knowledge, since [he has] rejected the appeal to middle knowledge.”⁴⁹

But without resorting to middle knowledge, where could such foreknowledge come from – even for God? That is, if Jones’ particular free evil act is foreknown neither through his “natural” knowledge of the necessary and (necessarily) possible truths nor

⁴⁸ Middle knowledge is in the “middle” in that it is postulated to stand *between* God’s knowledge of necessary truths (that even he has no choice but knowing) and his knowledge of the “future” contingencies that depend upon his decretive will to exist. As they are supposed to be in the form of true subjunctive conditionals of freedom (i.e., “if the agent *A* were in circumstances *C*, *A* would freely do *D*”) for every conceivable creature and their volitional circumstances (even before they are born), with it God is said to be able to know the entire world history by simply knowing what circumstances he would decree to create. Robert Adams (1977, 1991), William Hasker (1989, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000), Jerry Walls (1990), Timothy O’Connor (1992), and Richard Gaskin (1993, 1998) have raised objections against it, while Alvin Plantinga (1973, 1974, 1977), Alfred Freddoso (1988), Edward Wierenga (1989, 2001), William Lane Craig (1990, 1994, 1998), Thomas Flint (1991, 1998), Linda Zagzebski (1991, 1993, 1994, 2002), and Eef Dekker (2000) defended it. See Robert Adams, “Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1977): 1-12 and “An Anti-Molinist Argument,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991): 343-54; William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); “Zagzebski on Power Entailment,” *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (1993): 250-5; “Middle Knowledge: A Refutation Revisited,” *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995): 223-36; “Explanatory Priority: Transitive and Unequivocal, a Reply to William Craig,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997): 389-93; and “Anti-Molinism is Undefeated!” *Faith and Philosophy* 17 (2000): 126-31; Jerry Walls, “Is Molinism as Bad as Calvinism?,” *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (1990): 85-98; Timothy O’Connor, “The Impossibility of Middle Knowledge,” *Philosophical Studies* 66 (1992): 139-166; Richard Gaskin, “Conditionals of Freedom and Middle Knowledge,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (1993): 412-30 and “Middle Knowledge, Fatalism and Comparative Similarity of Worlds,” *Religious Studies* 34 (1998): 189-203; Alvin Plantinga, “Which Worlds Could God Have Created?,” *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973): 539-55; *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); and *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977); Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, Part IV of *Concordia, Liberi Arbitrii cum Gratio Donis*. Originally published in 1588, trans. and ed. Alfred Freddoso (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Edward Wierenga, *The Nature of God: An Inquiry into Divine Attributes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); and “Providence, Middle Knowledge, and the Grounding Objection,” *Philosophia Christi* 3 (2001): 447-458; William Lane Craig, *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*. Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 19 (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1990); “Robert Adams’s New Anti-Molinist Argument,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54 (1994): 857-61; and “On Hasker’s Defense of Anti-Molinism,” *Faith and Philosophy* 15 (1998): 236-40; Thomas Flint, “In Defense of Theological Compatibilism,” *Faith and Philosophy* 8 (1991): 237-43 and *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); “Rejoinder to Hasker,” *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (1993): 256-60; and “Religious Luck,” *Faith and Philosophy* 11 (1994): 397-413; and “Recent Work on Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 55-7; Eef Dekker, *Middle Knowledge* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

⁴⁹ *Four Views*, 182n18.

through his middle knowledge of the contingently true – yet of necessity divinely unwilled or un-concurred – “subjunctive conditionals of creaturely freedom”⁵⁰ (of what each possible individual would in fact freely choose in every possible circumstance), the only way that something could be thus foreknown by God is through God’s *unilateral* decision to make the particular action(-token) come about in all of its particularities. But if this were the case, how would such certainty-producing divine preordination of the desired creaturely evil effect be compatible with God’s (merely) *permitting* it, totally willingly or not?

Helm appears to be sensitive to this concern himself. For instance, he goes on to try to explain how God’s goodness need not be compromised when he willingly permits *particular* evil actions by introducing the concept of *bilateral* decree as follows:

Within the one creative and providential will of God it is possible to distinguish those aspects that are unconditional or unilateral from those that are conditional and bilateral. Unconditional aspects are of the form “Let *X* be,” whereas conditional aspects are of the form “Given *W*, let *X* be” (where *W* is brought about by someone other than the one uttering the statement). An example of the first might be “Let the planet Earth be”; an example of the second “If *A* sins, let him be forgiven.”⁵¹

This distinction is relatively straightforward. We expect that Helm would then use this distinction to somehow forge a new way of making room for creaturely freedom not allowed by relying simply on the unilateral concept of decree.

However, instead of attempting to explain how the “*W*’s (in “Given *W*, let *X* be”) could somehow come about in a truly “bilateral” fashion, Helm simply reflects as follows:

⁵⁰ This is the technical notion adopted by Molinists for the rightful object of divine middle knowledge. For example, see Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, trans. and ed. Alfred Fredosso.

⁵¹ *Four Views*, 183.

We find an element of conditionality about God's willing permission of such evil, since necessarily he is not the author of it. Nonetheless as Creator he upholds the perpetrator of the evil and knowingly and willingly permits the occurrence of the evil. *So the way to understand such conditional aspects of God's overall willing is not as God's response to what he has merely foreseen will happen, but as his response to what he has both foreseen and been willing to permit: for instance, that A will sin.* That is, God wills to permit the evil and wills the consequence. He wills evil by willing to permit it, willing it in such a way that he is not himself the author of the evil, which he could not be, while he may will what is not evil by being the author of it, by bringing it about.⁵²

What emerges here is somewhat unexpected. By "conditional and bilateral decree," Helm seems not all that interested in forging a new and meaningful pathway for creaturely freedom and responsibility. His real interest appears instead to be in warding off the Molinist notion of divine foreknowledge, according to which the future conditionals of human freedom exists independently of (and logically *prior to*) divine providential *concurrence*. The troubling ramification that Helm sees here is that such divine concurrence would then be *conditional* divine willing.⁵³

That it is this kind of troubling ramification that Helm tries to avoid is confirmed by his follow-up statement, according to which such "bilateralness of conditionals" need not involve conditional knowing and conditional willing on God's part, as follows:

There is a crucial distinction between a willing of conditionals and a conditional will. God may infallibly know all truths, including all conditional truths, and he may know what his response to the antecedents of some of these conditional truths is. But it does not follow from this that his knowledge is conditional knowledge. God's knowledge that *C* will happen if *A* does *B* need not depend upon his first knowing the conditional "If *A* does *B*, then *C* will happen" and then deciding that because person *A* does *B*, God will bring about *C*.⁵⁴

⁵² *Four Views*, 183. Emphasis mine.

⁵³ As pointed out to me by Richard Muller. Much of what follows in the rest of this section is indebted to Professor Muller's helpful comments to an earlier draft of this dissertation.

⁵⁴ *Four Views*, 183. Compare this with the following almost identical statements from Helm's "God Does Not Take Risks," in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Michael J. Peterson and Raymond J. VanArragon (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 2004), 237, as follows: "There is a crucial distinction between a willing of conditionals and a conditional will. God may know all truths

Although it may not seem all that clear at first, Helm's main point here appears to be that for him, God wills the conditionals themselves to know them directly and unconditionally. That is to say, when it comes to "God's knowledge that *C* will happen if *A* does *B*," the occurrence of *C* need not depend upon God's willing *C* to occur as a consequence of his first *finding out* that *A* does *B* (independently of and prior to God's freely and directly decreeing it to happen). Instead, while the occurrence of *C* may depend immediately upon *A*'s doing *B*, in the end it really depends on God's unilateral decree to effect them all through actualizing a particular *possible world* in which *A* does *B* and *C* happens as its consequence. The definite eventuality of *C* could then ultimately depend directly on God and God alone.

To recap, for Helm, it appears that since God is in a remote sense the sovereign cause of everything (including the otherwise conditional truths), God's knowledge of *C* happening in the possible world of his choice need not depend on God's first ascertaining the occurrence of *A*'s doing *B* in that possible world (independently of God's contingent wish to bring about the world in which they all happen to be actual). While *C* itself, as the result of an intramundane transaction, may be effected by *A*'s realization of *B* (when seen from the creaturely causal level), God's knowledge of *C* here (even as the consequence of the conditional whose antecedent comes to be realized first) need not ultimately depend on the independent truth of *A*'s doing *B*. God is not knowing or willing conditionally (i.e., *in response to* foreknown conditions that are true independently of his will), as would be

infallibly, including all conditional truths, as well as know what his response to the antecedents of some of these conditional truth is. But it does not follow from this that his knowledge is conditional knowledge in a temporal sense. God's knowledge that *C* will happen if *A* does *B* does not depend upon him first knowing the conditional 'If *A* does *B*, then *C* will happen' and then deciding that because *A* does *B*, he will bring about *C*."

the case with Molinism. Instead, God is both knowing and willing the conditions and the “bilateral” conditionals themselves.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Without explicitly saying so, Helm may then be even at this point in *Four Views* heavily relying on the traditional Thomistic and Reformed patterns of argumentation according to which God (fore)knows through his *scientia necessaria (simplicis intelligentiae or naturalis) every* possibility, when this array of possibility is understood as belonging to different possible worlds consisting of (different sets of) compossible necessities, contingencies, and conditionals (including those of creaturely choices) in such a way that whichever God wills to actualize then becomes the actual world. This view is clearly reflected in Paul Helm and Terrance L. Tiessen, “Does Calvinism Have Room for Middle Knowledge? A Conversation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (2009): 437-54, where Helm critiques Tiessen’s earlier “Why Calvinists Should Believe in Divine Middle Knowledge, Although They Reject Molinism,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 69 (2007): 345-66, as follows: “[Tiessen] provides a clue to his thinking in the contrast that he draws between ‘the knowledge God has of things which are possible by virtue of their consistency with God’s own nature (his natural or necessary knowledge) and his knowledge of what creatures would do in particular circumstances’ (347). Here Tiessen appears to be thinking on the one hand of what *A* in *C* could do considered only in the light of God’s own nature, as being somewhat abstract or unspecific, and on the other hand what it is concretely possible for *A* to do in sets of circumstances such as *C*, what *A* would do. This is borne out of the later claim that by his natural knowledge God has the knowledge of logical relations, causal relationships, and so on, that ground ‘his more *particular knowledge* in the middle stage’ (365; emphasis added). But there are two things problematic about such a suggestion. One is the problem of what an account of this more abstract relation of *A* to God’s nature would look like, and the other is whether Tiessen is giving an accurate account of the natural knowledge of God as this has been understood in the tradition. Tiessen also appears to think that his view of God’s natural knowledge is prefigured by something Richard A. Muller says about the orthodox Reformed view, which he quotes. Muller refers to this account of natural knowledge as indefinite, ‘inasmuch as its objects are possibilities, not actualities’ (346n8). But this does not mean that all the objects of natural knowledge are abstract or that they in any respect lack the specificity of the objects of his free knowledge, actualities. Some of them certainly are abstract, including the hosts of necessary truths that God knows. For in addition to knowing all possibilities, God by his natural knowledge knows all necessities, propositions that are true across every different possible world he knows. In this sense the necessary truths God knows may be said to be more abstract than the possibilities God knows. But Professor Tiessen does not seem to have these in mind here. It is characteristic of the account of God’s natural knowledge, not that it concerns (merely) all possible beings, such as *A*, but that God by his natural knowledge knows with full specificity what *A* (in all possible states of his mind and body) would (or could) do in all possible circumstances. . . . It is in such terms that it is plausible to understand the traditional account of the natural knowledge of God. Turretin, for example, says, ‘Natural and free knowledge embrace all knowable things and entities.’ God by his natural knowledge knows all knowable possibilities, not merely sets of individuals and sets of circumstances in abstraction. And at one point Tiessen himself says that God ‘knows everything that *could* be, he knows all possible worlds’ (347). But if God’s natural knowledge includes all possible worlds, then he knows (in complete detail) all the possible worlds in which *A* exists, with all their differing circumstances from world to world. So it remains doubtful whether there is any distinct category of what *would* be as against what *could* be that could (or would) form the basis of a category of divine middle knowledge of a Calvinist kind. . . . Given such orthodox accounts of the natural knowledge of God, he does not have to contemplate, at some intermediate, middle stage, how his interventions might work out; he immediately and intuitively knows how they would work out, as part of his natural knowledge of all possibilities, which include possible worlds in which he does not intervene in any way and possible worlds in which he intervenes in some way or another. . . . Because, on Tiessen’s assumptions, the freedom of all God’s possible human beings is compatibilist in character, God’s knowledge of how such freedom could or would be exercised is straightforward and uncontroversial. He would know, intuitively and immediately, what *A* in *C* would do [as a possibility]. Thus God would not need to resort to middle knowledge. . . . For as part of his natural knowledge God has the idea of *A* in *C* as a possibility, along with his knowledge of *A* possessing innumerable different beliefs and desires in innumerable different sets of circumstances, and (given such

This may then be Helm's crude attempt to articulate and rely on the later Reformed notion of *scientia hypothetica* (adopted by the likes of Gomarus, Walaeus, and later, by Baxter), which critically appropriated Molina's *scientia media* as follows:

[These Reformed theologians] adapted the argument of Molina to refer, not to a *scientia media* between knowledge of the possible and knowledge of the actual, but to a *scientia hypothetica* prior to all of the divine determinations. In this view, God rests his *decretum* upon his knowledge of how the world order is to be constructed in its most minute hypothetical workings. The decree, therefore, establishes the freedom of secondary causes and allows for or permits the eventuality of sin and evil, though only in a hypothetical sense, namely, as events that will occur, given the actuality of the circumstances preceding. The point, in other words, is not that God learns from or reacts to a future possibility, but that God actualizes a particular concatenation of possibilities in which, given the particular set of directly willed, certain events will occur by reason of secondary causes, including the exercise of human free choice. The free choices belong, therefore, to the particular world order that God wills to actualize. As for God's "foreknowledge" of all such actual events, it is necessary, certain, and determinate as it follows the decree and rests on the certainty of the divine causality.⁵⁶

knowledge), in his wisdom God creates *A* in *C*, creates him down to the last atom and molecule, evil apart, and immediately sustains his life nanosecond by nanosecond, even as, while being sustained by his creator, *A* in *C* perpetrates evil. Such a state of affairs does not necessarily involve divine coercion or compulsion, not in the usual sense of these words, though it will if God in his wisdom decrees to create *A* as being in some circumstances not responsible for his actions. It is not that God in his wisdom permits possible persons such as *A* to exist, rather he brings it about that they exist by decreeing that they do, and (in his wisdom) he permits their perpetration of evil. The absence of coercion is part of what it means for the divine decree and human responsibility to be consistent or compatible. How this happens, how it happens that what someone is decreed to do he may nonetheless be responsible for doing, is somewhat mysterious, as are all points where the divine nature intersects with the creaturely. ... God's necessary knowledge is the idea that God necessarily has knowledge of all possibilities and of all necessities. But it does not follow from this that all that God knows has the status of necessary truths. The propositions in the mind of God of the form '*A* in *C* does *X*' are not necessary truths, but sets of possibilities which God necessarily knows. Put another way, when one of the possibilities that form God's natural knowledge is freely decreed, then what is decreed is logically contingent; it might not have been decreed. Of course among the possibilities that God necessarily knows, and may decree, are *causally* necessary propositions of the form, 'If *A* were to be in circumstances *C* he would (as a matter of causal necessity) do *X*.' So it is important to bear in mind the distinction between logical or metaphysical necessity on the one hand, and causal necessity on the other, as well as the distinction between 'God necessarily knows all possibilities' and 'All possibilities known by God are necessary' (442-7).

⁵⁶ Richard Muller, *The Divine Essence and Attributes*, vol. 3 of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 420; cited by Tiessen in Paul Helm and Terrance L. Tiessen, "Does Calvinism Have Room for Middle Knowledge? A Conversation," *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (2009): 451-2.

Now, this seems to be a much more sophisticated view than the one that we became familiar with in *The Providence of God*.⁵⁷ The question is how best to make sense of this additional bit in Helm's thinking. That is, how could even God guarantee to actualize a particular world that is merely possible *without* finally resorting to causal determinism? Or does he, according to Helm?

[2] In *Four Views*, Helm's ultimate answer to this question is essentially that while God cannot directly cause an evil act, he could still deliberately place certain conditions that are, if unimpeded, causally sufficient to guarantee the intended evil effect, as follows:

So for X willingly to permit an action A is at least this: for A to be the action of someone other than X; for X to foreknow the occurrence of A and to have been able to prevent A; and for A not to be against X's overall plan. So on this conception God foreknows everything and unconditionally governs everything, but he does not causally determine everything in the sense that he is the efficient cause of everything, though everything that happens has sets of efficient and deficient causes in a way consistent with compatibilist accounts of human actions.⁵⁸

To reiterate, concerning the question, "how does even God, if he merely means not to prevent something, foreknow that the anticipated event (in this case, A) would most certainly occur?" Helm's answer is that even if God did not causally determine everything immediately as "their efficient cause," he could actualize a possible world in

⁵⁷ For instance, in his 2010 response to Peter Byrne's "Helm's God and the Authorship of Sin," in *Reason, Faith and History: Essays for Paul Helm*, ed. M.W.F Stone (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), which is very critical of Helm's more straightforward compatibilist position in *Eternal God* (1988) and *The Providence of God* (1993), Helm acknowledges such subsequent shift in his own thinking as follows: "In the twenty or so years following the publication of *Eternal God* I have occasionally had the opportunity to develop this point of view, that Creatorly causation (or ordination) has a different sense from creaturely causation." Helm hereby cites *Four Views* (2001) and "God Does Not Take Risks" in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion* (2004) as showing such development. See his "God, Compatibilism, and the Authorship of Sin," *Religious Studies* 46 (2010): 117.

⁵⁸ *Four Views*, 176-7.

which *every* event that happens is ensured to happen through their own sets of efficient and deficient causes (in the way that is consistent with determinism).

Yet, how could such willing permission (supposedly consistent with compatibilism) prevent God from becoming the author of sin? Helm gives the following example as the antidote:

Suppose that my young daughter is learning to ride a bicycle and that in order to help her retain her balance I hold onto the bicycle seat from behind. Her action on the bicycle and my steadying are together causally sufficient for her to maintain her course. But suppose that, in a moment of inadvertence, I take my hand from the seat, and *as a result of this* she crashes into the wall. There is a *causally sufficient* story that can be told of the crash in terms of her action together with my omission. In the case of evil actions God may be said, in a similar fashion, to withhold his steadying hand. He does not do so inadvertently but for ends that are entirely consistent with his character but most of which are presently hidden from us. *Human nature being what it is, evil results.*⁵⁹

Now, it seems plausible that the girl's action on the bike together with the father's steadying hand are causally sufficient to keep her from crashing into the wall. However, what does it mean to say, "*as a result of* [the father's omission], she crashes into the wall?" In order to be consistent with compatibilism, the father's steadying hand better be understood as the causally necessary condition whose absence causally *suffices* for the crash. Otherwise, when the girl crashes, it would be due to her wrongdoing, and it would not be the *result of* the father's inadvertence. In the context of compatibilism, if it is the father who makes the real causal difference, his help should be understood as the causally necessary and sufficient condition to prevent the crash. In other words, if it is there, it entails no crash. If it is absent, it most certainly entails the crash with absolute causal certainty.

⁵⁹ *Four Views*, 177. Emphasis mine.

What this story demonstrates is that in such a causally deterministic context, the daughter cannot but crash when her father withdraws his helping hand. Helm is therefore not very compelling when he tries to argue that God need not be responsible in willingly “permitting” such an inevitable outcome. If human nature is such that evil results inevitably once God removes his assistance, then in withdrawing this causally necessary help, God is singlehandedly responsible for the fall. There seems no way to get around this logical implication. It is impossible to see how such a particularistic and effectual “permission” could keep God from being the author of sin.

To put it another way, despite Helm’s express claim that “the evil action occurs because it is caused by the natures and circumstances of those who perpetrate it, not by God,”⁶⁰ if the evil action is caused by the natures and circumstances that God himself “weakly actualizes” through choosing to actualize the particular world in which they are present, so that even all our evil actions would most certainly follow from these preceding causal conditions (unless God expressly interferes), then *God* would still be the sole and ultimate causal determiner of absolutely everything, even our sins.⁶¹

After all, even if we take for granted Helm’s claim that such an evil act is *not* directly caused by God, if the secondary causal circumstances in which the evil act occurs are themselves directly brought about by God, God must be just as fully responsible for it “as I am responsible for hitting the eight ball into the corner pocket when I strike the cue ball with the intention of hitting the eight ball into the corner

⁶⁰ *Four Views*, 179.

⁶¹ David Hunt agrees with this assessment when he argues against Helm in *Four Views*, 198.

pocket.”⁶² Such willing “permission” is then no more permissive (or “bilateral”) than the efficient causality of sheer compatibilism.⁶³

[3] Helm does not stop there, however. When faced with the charge that his new rendition of “willing permission” is still a case of straightforward theological determinism, Helm resorts finally to divine incomprehensibility as follows: “the relation between God and his universe is *sui generis*. This relation has a character that is basically incomprehensible, that our human models and analogies cannot fully capture.”⁶⁴ Most of us would have no problem acknowledging certain incomprehensibility about *God*. However, by “not being able to fully capture,” Helm seems to have in mind a certain logical contradiction as follows:

While it seems clear that intramundane causation is transitive—given events *A*, *B* and *C*, if *A* causes *B*, and *B* causes *C*, then *A* causes *C*—there is no necessary transitivity in the case of any causal aspects of features of the divine knowing and willing permission. It is thus not necessarily the case that if God governs by

⁶² William Lane Craig in *Four Views*, 205. In fact, given the fact that such human endeavor is always never totally certain (i.e., there is always room for error and therefore certain indeterminism at least from our perspective), I would maintain that such a compatibilistic God is necessarily *even more* responsible for such a transitive result than a fallible human agent could ever be. On this issue of responsibility despite certain levels of indeterminism and present improbability, see Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Kane argues against those who use such argument from luck (or indeterminism) to discredit the responsibility of those who commit them that the inherent indeterminism that characterizes their endeavors need not negate their responsibility as long as they produce it with, say, the intention to produce it and with high-enough probability.

⁶³ In addition to David Hunt and William Lane Craig’s objection to this claim, in response to Helm’s very similar essay, “God Does Not Take Risks,” in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion* (2004), 228-38, William Hasker voices a similar concern as follows: “What really surprises me about Helm’s essay is his reluctance to admit that, on his view, God is the cause of sinful human actions. . . . this talk of “permission” is somewhat evasive, in that it ignores a crucial aspect of the situation. . . . on the no-risk view, God himself is the sufficient cause of all events, including sinful human actions, in that he deliberately and without constraint establishes the causal conditions that of necessity lead to these events and actions. How can Helm deny this? *He clearly rejects the indeterministic, or libertarian, view of human free will that would interrupt the causal chain between God’s actions and human sinning. . . . we are back to a straightforward theological determinism. . . . the unavoidable implication that God is the ultimate cause of sinful actions*” (239, emphasis mine). See Hasker, “Reply to Helm,” in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion* (2004), 238-40.

⁶⁴ *Four Views*, 179.

knowingly and willingly permitting some event *B*, and *B* causes *C*, then God causes *C*; rather God may will by permitting that *B* causes *C* and so knowingly and willingly permit *C*. God's willing permission is thus not a straightforward case of intramundane causation, and those who seek to assimilate God's knowing and willing permission to evil to the actions of someone manipulating a puppet, or to hypnotism, or to brainwashing or programming, have not recognized the truly unique character of such permission.⁶⁵

Now, to follow Helm's own line of thinking here, we need to understand the present conception of "God's willing permission of the wicked act *C* by the willing permission of, say, a non-evil act *B* (that in turn infallibly guarantees *C*)," as equivalent to "*C*'s being guaranteed by its immediate intramundane-cause *B*, which is in turn guaranteed by (i) God's actualization of a possible world in which *B* exists as both (ii) the necessary causal consequence of yet another immediate intramundane causal precedent *and* (iii) the immediate causal precedent of *C*, as its guarantor." In this case, we could legitimately call the whole thing involving (i) "God's actualization of this possible world wherein *B* occurs as the necessary go-between (a) *C* and (b) *B*'s immediate intramundane causal precedent," as "event *A*." In this case of straightforward theological determinism, Helm then appeals to divine incomprehensibility to insist that "*A* (involving God's comprehensive causality) is still not the cause *C*." Such an appeal to incomprehensibility in denying the basic law of transitivity seems rather questionable.

[4] Summary: The overall picture that we get here is as follows. From *TPOG* onward, Helm shows a certain preference for the two-causal-level perspective. That is, while it is true that after citing all of its strengths Helm shows in *TPOG* some concern for one of its popular renditions (according to which there are, for example, two sets of both necessary and sufficient conditions for one and the same event, as one is said to be divine

⁶⁵ *Four Views*, 180.

and atemporal, while the other, creaturely and temporal), Helm expresses no such qualms with the overall perspective in *Four Views* (provided that the primary causality refers to God's *general* activity of keeping things in being, while the secondary causality is taken to be the real arena of "intramundane" causal determination. In *Four Views*, God remains the key player in all of this, as he proactively brings about at least all morally non-evil acts even at the secondary causal level.

Likewise, while Helm might have been in *TPOG* only slightly uneasy with God's being the sufficient cause of *all* particular creaturely choices (even if this was to be affected only from the primary causal level [2.I.6]), when he is clearly uneasy with the idea of comprehensive divine determinism in *Four Views*, Helm maintains that God provides only the *necessary* conditions for all willingly permitted particular evil creaturely choices. Now, this shift in language is a marked change from *TPOG*, where he had dismissed such provision of "necessary conditions only" as grossly inadequate for fully meticulous divine providence that causally guarantees absolutely everything [2.I.5].

We find out soon enough, however, that despite such explicit reference to merely necessary conditions, by such willing *permission* Helm still has in mind what most of us would reckon as a full-blown case of comprehensive theological determinism. That is, while he prohibits God from *directly* necessitating creaturely evil acts, Helm postulates that God can and does efficiently cause all other (morally good and neutral) events and acts that would then causally guarantee all of these particularly "permitted" creaturely evil choices.

Is there then really no major difference between Helm's stance in *TPOG* and *Four Views*? That is, are not both essentially relying on the paradigm according to which God

still causally determines everything anyhow? The truth is, while this may largely be the case, there are still some significant differences between the two works. Despite what he maintains here and there, Helm's final verdict in *Four Views* (as we saw in Section [3.II.3]) is that such efficacious willing permission is still, however incomprehensibly, *not* a case of divine determinism. The accent in *Four Views* is then to *move away from* the "reductionistic tendencies" of pure causal determinism (regardless of how this may affect our logical sensibilities), as follows:

Whereas physical determinism has a strong tendency to be reductionistic and has difficulty in finding a place for a range of objects having their own causal powers, the divine willing permission is most certainly not reductionist in this sense. Hence it is a serious mistake to suppose that classical Christian theism claims that God monopolizes power ... God is the source of all creaturely power, but the powers of creatures, even when efficaciously empowered by God are really their own and so are distinct from his.⁶⁶

With this in mind, the contrast of emphasis in *TPOG* is undeniable. While *Four Views* expressly tries to move away from such "divine monopolization of power," the earlier Helm of *TPOG* is blatantly comfortable with the idea of unconditional or direct divine causal determinism of all aspects of all actions as follows: (a) "'Permission' in the case of God is every bit as much an action as is 'performance'";⁶⁷ (b) "God does not, then, exercise providential control in a way that leaves two or more possible ways of achieving the same goal. *Nor does he will the end but leave the means to others....* Rather, the providence of God is fine-grained; it extends to the occurrence of individual actions and

⁶⁶ *Four Views*, 180. Incidentally, Helm does bring up the similar issue of reductionism in *TPOG*, where he tries to respond to the doubt concerning the supposed independent significance of one's desires and thoughts, even if they all were determined by God. His answer there, however, deals only with certain straw-man cases, instead of actually stipulating (as he does in *Four Views*) that God does *not* monopolize power despite how it may look to the contrary. See *The Providence of God*, 221-22.

⁶⁷ *The Providence of God*, 101.

to each aspect of each action”;⁶⁸ and (c) “Not only is every atom and molecule, every thought and desire, kept in being by God, but every twist and turn of each of these is under the direct control of God.”⁶⁹ Given such a strong emphasis on and ease with direct and unconditional divine causation of *all* things, it makes sense that the earlier Helm of *TPOG* would readily acknowledge divine responsibility even in our evil actions as follows:

For one thing that our study of providence has taught us is that this is God’s world. It is therefore folly to attempt to take the ultimate responsibility of it from him. When we have, by our lights, done our duty, then the consequences of our actions, for good or ill, must be left in his hands.⁷⁰

In other words, given the new trajectory in *Four Views*, we cannot expect to see this sort of universal blame on God in *Four Views*.

Besides this, we should note that Helm appeals to the notion of divine incomprehensibility in *TPOG* as well, but he does so not to mysteriously deny divine determination of and responsibility in all things (as he does that in *Four Views*). Instead, in *TPOG*, Helm’s point is that human responsibility need not (however cryptically)

⁶⁸ *The Providence of God*, 103-4.

⁶⁹ *The Providence of God*, 22.

⁷⁰ *The Providence of God*, 233. Compare that with what Helm says in *TPOG*, 176: “It is evident that God does bear *some* responsibility for what happens in the universe that he has created. We may even say that God bears *ultimate* responsibility for it, since everything that occurs is ultimately due to him. This is true on any orthodox theistic view of God’s relation as creator to the universe, whether deterministic or not.” Also, see what Helm says concerning *our* failure to pray hard for an Auschwitz-type of context in *TPOG*, 159: “Who is to blame for Auschwitz? If petitionary and intercessory prayer is commanded by God, then failure to pray is disobedience. But the culpability involved in failing to pray in a ‘risky’ providential order is much greater. For, on this view of petitionary prayer, the blame at least for the continuation of the atrocity (once it has come to the notice of a potential intercessor) falls not on Nazi Germany, or on God, but on the numerous potential intercessors who did not pray as hard or as sincerely as they might have done... Whatever its defect may be, petitionary prayer based upon a ‘no-risk’ view of divine providence does not have this problem. On this view, prayer is a God-ordained means of fulfilling what God wills... So the ‘burden of responsibility’ for the answering or not answering of intercessory prayers ... is placed firmly upon shoulders wide enough to bear it, the shoulders of God himself.” In all three passages from *The Providence of God*, Helm shifts the ultimate responsibility for all our failures squarely on God.

diminish when God causally determines all things.⁷¹ As such, we see in *Four Views* a definite shift toward the so-called “irreducible agency” (and creatures having their own causal powers), away from *TPOG*’s emphasis on comprehensive divine determination and God’s corresponding ultimate responsibility in absolutely everything, including creaturely wrongdoing.

III. Type Certainty’s Connection to Causal Determinism

[1] Despite this clear shift of emphasis when it comes to divine willing permission of *evil* acts, Helm stays consistent throughout *The Providence of God* and *Four Views* in his espousal of divine causal determination of all morally *non-evil* acts.⁷² This is especially the case when the latter pertains to the positively good acts of *salvation*, as God’s causal efficacy in this arena is deemed essential to safeguard God’s sovereignty in unilaterally securing salvation for his chosen individuals as follows:

It is hard to see how one can hold both (a) that God’s goodness is effective in the way that these verses describe (*i.e.* that it is causally sufficient for making a person a Christian) and (b) that people have indeterministic freedom to choose whether or not to be converted ... If, at the point of conversion, we have indeterministic power, then we have indeterministic power to reject the efforts of God’s goodness to bring about our conversion. It would then follow that in offering his goodness in these circumstances God was taking a risk.⁷³

⁷¹ See, for instance, *The Providence of God*, 33, where Helm maintains that “because the governor is not another creature, we can be sure that any attempts to explain this relationship in terms of one or other of the ways in which one creature may govern another will necessarily fail ... It may be that whenever one creature governs another, the one governed suffers a diminution of his personal responsibility. Even if this is true, it does not follow that when God governs his creatures they are not responsible for what they do.”

⁷² See again, for instance, *Four Views*, 178-9, where Helm states that “a God who is essentially strongly omniscient positively governs *all* acts that occur *except* those which are evil, and he negatively governs evil acts by knowingly and willingly permitting them” (emphasis mine).

⁷³ *The Providence of God*, 50.

Helm therefore takes the broader philosophical issue of “whether God (or anyone else) can causally ensure action-*tokens* without compromising our free will” and makes it to be about Semi-Pelagian-vs-Augustinian controversy as follows: “Historically, this question has been at the center of a controversy about divine saving grace. Is that grace merely enabling, or is it effective?”⁷⁴

In *Four Views*, Helm maintains once again that the theological issue of total depravity and irresistible (or unilaterally efficacious) grace motivates his *compatibilist* “no-risk” view of providence more than even all the philosophical and other biblical reasons combined as follows:

What motivates the Augustinian view at the most fundamental level ... is a particular understanding of God’s saving grace, an understanding that, this view holds, is the biblical view ... Basic to the difference of view between those who think that divine omniscience is consistent with human incompatibilism and those who think that it isn’t, is not principally a different understanding of the nature of God or of human freedom, nor even a difference of this or that passage of Scripture, but a profoundly different appreciation of the plight of humankind and the power of God.⁷⁵

Helm reiterates here that if an important salvific act (such as the personal appropriation of Christ) is genuinely free in the *incompatibilist* sense of freedom, God’s saving grace must at most be causally necessary (and therefore never causally sufficient) to save anybody.⁷⁶

In other words, Helm holds that when met by libertarian or incompatibilist human free will, God’s saving grace – “always resistible” – “can never ensure its intended effect.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *The Providence of God*, 50. Another place where Helm draws a similarly questionable link between the “risk” view of providence and (Semi-)Pelagianism is in *TPOG*, 39 as follows: “This is a difference of view between Christians which runs very deep; it is at the heart of the conflict between Augustine and Pelagius, and also at the heart of the Reformation conflict.”

⁷⁵ *Four Views*, 169.

⁷⁶ *Four Views*, 170.

⁷⁷ *Four Views*, 170.

For Helm, a Christian incompatibilist is then somebody who automatically denies God's sovereignty in saving who he desires.⁷⁸ As such, Helm espouses that a Christian incompatibilist must be a synergist of some sort.

[2] How does Helm arrive at this conclusion? His view seems to be based on the misunderstanding that just because causal indeterminism cannot secure *token*-certainty, it cannot secure *type*-certainty either.⁷⁹ To put it differently, Helm seems to believe that just because for a truly free choice causal indeterminism makes room for more than one action-token at any given time, it must also allow for more than one action-type at any given time (regardless of other broader and potentially binding conditions that would not let things slide that far). We saw this earlier in the last section [3.III.1], when Helm deduced the whole doctrine of “*resistible* grace” simply from metaphysical libertarianism, which entails indeterminism at the action-token level only.

What we see here is Helm's definite tendency to lump together token-(un)certainty with type-(un)certainty. This tendency in *TPOG* and *Four Views* is moreover further corroborated by Helm's statement against Vincent Brümmer on the real nature of personal relationship as follows. To Vincent Brümmer's complaint that personal

⁷⁸ *Four Views*, 171. Helm says something very similar in *TPOG*, 54 as the following: “Similarly, it will follow that the exercise of God's redeeming grace can never, on the ‘risk’ view of divine providence, be efficacious. His grace is always resistible by the person on whom it operates. If it were not resistible, the action which results from such grace could not be a free action in the sense of the concept of ‘freedom’ being defended. For nothing that has been ensured to happen by the power of divine grace can be indeterministically free.” Also see *TPOG*, 120, where he remarks as follows: “On a ‘risk’ view of providence of the sort sketched earlier, there is no way in which God can providentially ensure that any particular person becomes a Christian. Whether or not that happens would depend upon the free choice of the person in question. But on the view we have favoured and developed, the ‘no-risk’ view, God can so order the events of a person's life as to ensure that he or she becomes Christian... [T]he provision of such grace, far from making a person into a puppet, actually frees him, making a puppet into a person.”

⁷⁹ An example of an action-token description would be something like, “Picking a particular rose in garden X at t_1 in such and such a manner,” while an action-type would be something broader like, “Picking a rose in a garden (sometime during the day, in some general way).”

agency cannot be governed by causal necessity that characterizes the manipulation of impersonal objects (that, for instance, produces its desired effect automatically and inevitably through the provision of its causally sufficient conditions, instead of, say, by good persuasion or humble request that would produce its desired outcome without such certainty),⁸⁰ Helm comments, for instance, as follows:

[Once personal relations are considered in their particular examples], then the assumption that coercion or manipulation is logically incompatible with every personal relation becomes questionable ... genuine personal relationships need not be, and perhaps cannot be, influence-free and so genuinely free in the way that Brümmer is supposing ... it is surely not a necessary condition for any personal relation that no coercion between the parties can take place ... a relationship might survive and even thrive upon an appreciable amount of coercion or manipulation if such coercion were benevolently intended. A person A might strongly encourage his friend B to meet C, even making it practically impossible for B to avoid C, because A thinks that although B is reluctant to meet C, he would enjoy or benefit from meeting him. On any realistic appraisal of this situation, A is constraining B.⁸¹

What Helm argues here is that whenever there is a strong tie between individuals engaged in a personal relationship (which is almost always the case), there is some level of pressure upon the person who is asked to do something that makes her response predictable.⁸² According to Helm, such coercion, manipulation, or predictability (supposedly comparable to causal sufficiency) does not, however, necessarily nullify or threaten the *personal* character of the relationship, contrary to Brümmer's express claim.

In *Four Views*, by using an example of a comatose person, Helm goes so far as to say that a personal relationship need not have any reciprocity at all: "Someone in a coma

⁸⁰ *The Providence of God*, 148. Vincent Brümmer, *What Are We Doing When We Pray?* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 5-6.

⁸¹ *The Providence of God*, 149-50.

⁸² Helm mentions such predictability in a genuine personal relationship numerous times in *TPOG*, 151-2.

has to be brought back to consciousness and, essentially, to life; but this process is itself a case of exercising a personal relationship.”⁸³ As stated, Helm espouses that one need not have conscious collusion with another person to have a personal relationship with that individual. Now, if this were the case, imagine what kind of “predictability” and “unilaterality” could be made compatible with personal relationships in general.

This line of reasoning is ultimately unconvincing, however. First, albeit it makes sense why he would want to embrace such lack of reciprocity in “personal” relationships in general (as this could then make way for God’s *unilaterally effectual* work of salvation), it is rather questionable that such process of one-way resuscitation (be it spiritual or physical) could really be a genuine case of *personal* relationship, as Helm contends. Second, besides these totally implausible one-sided cases, the kind of “loose” coercion, manipulation, and predictability commonly present in ordinary personal interactions is a far-cry from yielding even type-certainty. And if so, how much more so with token-certainty? For one, the “coercion” in a typical personal relationship often fails completely (e.g., I may totally refuse to eat something, even though my wife begs me to try something right then and there. By refusing to try it *period*, I hereby not only block the action-*token* of trying it *right then and there*, I circumvent the action-*type* of trying it *in general*). In sum, Helm’s effort to appeal to such *moderate-level* relational pressure that fails to accomplish even the broader *type-certainty* to argue for the compatibility between causal determinism (that guarantees even *token-certainty*) and free *personal* relationships seems way out of line.

⁸³ *Four Views*, 172.

What is even more important is that in all this Helm seems to believe that we can deduce token-certainty (of causal determinism) from type-certainty, without committing a logical fallacy. This confusion is apparent in Helm's closing remarks in *Four Views*, as follows:

[O]nly such an account of [compatibilistic] human freedom is logically consistent with divine efficacious grace; causal indeterminism therefore has serious adverse theological consequence.⁸⁴

[3] Things start off similarly in *John Calvin's Ideas* (*JCI*, for short). Reflecting on Calvin's negative remarks on the philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle) who allegedly maintained that in the freedom of choice we possess the power either to do or not to do opposite *types* of things (say, good verses evil *types* of acts), Helm jumps to the conclusion that Calvin's negative remarks on such "type-alternativity" "provide fairly strong *prima facie* evidence that what Calvin was objecting to here was an indeterministic or libertarian view of human choice."⁸⁵ In another place, in response to Vincent Brümmer's alleged attempt to "libertarian-ize" Bernard and Calvin (while expressly preserving their intent to sustain human inability to avoid sin after the Fall at the action-*type* level), Helm remarks that Brümmer "has to provide an explanation of how such indeterminism and necessity can coexist in the same person."⁸⁶

As such, Helm assumes in the first instance that Calvin's "anti-*type*-uncertainty" (against the philosophers' "pro-*type*-uncertainty") necessarily entails even the "anti-token-uncertainty" of causal determinism, while in the second instance, he assumes that

⁸⁴ *Four Views*, 189.

⁸⁵ Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 148.

⁸⁶ *John Calvin's Ideas*, 152; Brümmer, "Calvin, Bernard and the Freedom of the Will," *Religious Studies* 30, no. 4 (Dec. 1994): 437-55.

type-certainty (that has to do with the necessity of not being able to avoid sin in general) necessarily dictates against the token-uncertainty of causal indeterminism. In both places, Helm therefore manifests a certain type-token confusion even in *John Calvin's Ideas*.⁸⁷

Things, however, start to take shape in *John Calvin's Ideas* when Helm considers for the first time that he might have been wrong on this issue all along, as follows:

[There is one] line of argument that, if it is convincing, would allow for Calvin being an incompatibilist. Suppose we distinguish between actions of a certain *type*, and particular occurrences of actions of that type, particular *tokens* of the type. A certain type of action would be an action of a certain description, say, giving to the poor for the glory of God. On Calvin's view, as we have seen, only the spirit, in liberation of the will and the production of a new *habitus* of the soul, can give to a person the capacity to perform actions of that type. So the Spirit's work is the causally sufficient condition for the production of certain action-types. But perhaps the Spirit is only a necessary condition of the production of tokens of that type.⁸⁸

The example that Helm provides in this regard (concerning the relevant action-type vs. action-token differentiation) consists of somebody who is walled-in in a rose garden. Helm's point is that for someone like that, action-types such as visiting the Eiffel Tower or rock-climbing in the Grand Canyon would for sure be off-limits. However, despite being quite limited in terms of available action-types, if this person possesses libertarian freedom, he could still easily choose between the action-tokens of, say, (a) picking this particular rose now and (b) picking it even a second later.⁸⁹ In the same way, we can

⁸⁷ Yet another example can be found in *JCI*, 165, where Helm holds that the *type*-certainty derivable from the language of causal sufficiency inferred from God's efficacious work of salvation "strongly suggests a *compatibilist* position" (emphasis added). It may be of interest to the reader that likewise in his "Synchronic Contingency Again" (2003), 235n1, Helm maintains something quite similar as follows: "Richard Muller's claim, cited by the authors, that predestination applies only to the issue of salvation, and therefore the Reformed view is not a form of necessitarianism, is on the face of things very puzzling. For is not predestination an aspect of providence, and if predestination has necessitarian implications then does not providence?"

⁸⁸ *John Calvin's Ideas*, 167.

⁸⁹ *John Calvin's Ideas*, 167.

envisage people who are thus confined to some action-type, such as “always having to fall short spiritually” or “having to always be effectually sustained in salvation” and yet have so many undetermined action-tokens to choose from within that one action-type.

It is important to clarify here, however, that in bringing up these possibilities in *JCI* Helm is not thereby necessarily committing himself to this distinction that could be useful in separating token-certainty (of compatibilism) from type-certainty (of, say, Reformed spirituality). The most that he does with it in *JCI* is simply to hypothesize that “if [this line of reasoning] is convincing,” it would allow Calvin to be a metaphysical- (token-)libertarian, without becoming a type-synergist (on the matters of salvation).

Helm’s final verdict in *JCI* is that even if such an argument from Calvin’s doctrine of *humanity* may permit this sort of type-token differentiation, given Calvin’s doctrine of meticulous *providence*, Calvin should finally be deemed as a metaphysical compatibilist, according to whom God’s decree is causally sufficient to guarantee all creaturely action-*tokens* as well as follows:

So, on balance, considering both Calvin’s explicit statements about the nature of human bondage and liberation together with his view of providence and predestination, we may say that his view favours a compatibilist view of human action, even if it does not entail it...⁹⁰

Given Helm’s present affirmation on Calvin’s stance on the doctrine of providence and predestination, the only thing that makes little sense here is why Helm would pull punches when it comes to Calvin’s compatibilist view of human action.

[4] In *Calvin at the Centre* (*CATC*, for short), on the one hand, Helm’s take on Calvin’s overall stance is basically the same as the one that we find in *John Calvin’s Ideas*: namely, given Calvin’s doctrine of providence and predestination, Calvin emerges

⁹⁰ *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 171-2.

ultimately as a metaphysical compatibilist. Helm articulates this point more positively in *CATC* as follows:

All this is on the side of Calvin's *anthropology*. In addition to this, Calvin has also to adopt a view of human choice which is consistent with his view of divine *providence* as meticulous, and with election and predestination: (*Inst.* I.16.8) God is the disposer and ruler of all things—that from the remotest eternity, according to his own wisdom, he decreed what he was to do, and now by his power executes what he decreed. Hence, we maintain that, by his providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined ... So it is reasonable to conclude that although Calvin does not avow determinism in so many words, he nevertheless adopts a broadly deterministic outlook.⁹¹

On the other hand, while Helm's final take on Calvin's position may not change in *CATC*, Helm does affirm in unmistakable terms the logical differentiability between type-certainty (having to do with, say, one's overall orientation in a fallen or redeemed state) and token-certainty (having to do with what an individual would most certainly do within such a state given her causally sufficient precedents) as follows:

Strangely enough, Calvin's doctrine of the bondage of the will to sin, which he shares with Augustine and with Martin Luther, for example, has no necessary connection with the issue of the metaphysics of agency. This is because the bondage in question is moral and spiritual inability, a view about action types and not action tokens. When Calvin and Luther deny free will, therefore, they chiefly have in mind not the metaphysical issues being discussed in this chapter, but a spiritual disposition stemming from sin which is, logically speaking, neutral on the question of determinism and libertarianism. At the very most its consequence for the issue of metaphysical free will is that for those whose will is bound to sin there are certain types of motivation that they are incapable of, in rather the way in which a consistently cowardly person cannot act from courage, or a miser out of generosity.⁹²

⁹¹ Paul Helm, *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 229-30.

⁹² *Calvin at the Centre*, 228-9.

To our surprise, Helm then does a complete turn around to admit that no genuine logical entailment truly exists between effective divine saving grace (having to do with *act-types*) and metaphysical compatibilism (having to do with *act-tokens*).

This admission is a pretty big deal considering how Helm had previously cited this alleged connection between the two notions as the primary motivating factor behind his “no-risk” compatibilist view of providence. What we have here is then the effectual removal of Helm’s single most important reason for preferring metaphysical compatibilism over against its rival when it comes to divine causality in providence.

What’s more, when combined with Helm’s overt move in *Four Views* toward irreducible agency (especially when it comes to creatures having their own causal powers to perform their own evil actions), we see Helm losing more and more grounds from unmitigated determinism. This could not have been anticipated at all prior to *Four Views*. By the time we get to *CATC*, Helm has all the more reason to abandon the ship of compatibilism as we will later find out.

[5] Before we move on to the next chapter, we should focus on one more important issue that merits our attention at this point: namely, Helm’s other explicit engagements with this idea of causal *reductionism*. While devoting substantially more space in the former, in both *TPOG* and *Four Views*, Helm shows a certain dislike for physical determinism and its so-called *reductionistic* tendencies.

In *TPOG*, Helm asks how *our* thoughts and *our* desires could have independent significance if these are in turn also determined by God as follows: “if my thoughts and their outcome in terms of my action or inaction are risklessly ordered by God, then is not my intuitive belief that my actions are predominantly the outcome of my thoughts, beliefs

and desires an illusion?”⁹³ Thus far in *TPOG*, Helm has maintained that if causal determinism is exercised *through* the matrix of one’s own desires and beliefs, then the fact that some choice results most certainly from these inner qualities does not automatically nullify its voluntary or personal nature.⁹⁴ Thus, the concern here is that according to causal determinism such choice-outcome is the result of desires and beliefs that are *themselves* also the causal outcome of factors over which one has absolutely no control. What’s entailed by this is that in a truly unqualifiedly deterministic universe, one’s choice is then *reducible* to those factors that one contributes nothing to nor have any control over to properly ground his or her personal responsibility for them.

Concerning this very serious and poignant objection, Helm however makes it about something entirely different as follows:

Suppose that the way in which providence worked was by physical, mechanical determination. Our beliefs and desires would then be a by-product of mechanics, and would not contribute in their own right to any results. Such a set-up is clearly incompatible with reasoning and the processes by which beliefs are intelligently acquired and changed. If I am physically determined to think as I do, if these physical conditions are sufficient for me to have a certain belief, then the relation between that belief and any evidence there may be for it is purely coincidental. I do not believe *upon* the evidence; instead, I believe, and there is evidence, but the two are not related, since my belief is caused in an evidence-less manner.

We are confused, for instance, why Helm would all of a sudden think that such physical determinism (especially in connection with reductionism⁹⁵) necessarily entails this sort of “incompatibility with reasoning” or “not [being] believed upon evidence,” while he says

⁹³ *The Providence of God*, 221.

⁹⁴ Compare with *The Providence of God*, 152. Also see chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁹⁵ Compare this with what Helm mentions in *Four Views*, 180 as follows: “Whereas physical determinism has a strong tendency to be reductionistic and has difficulty in finding a place for a range of objects having their own causal powers, the divine willing permission is most certainly not reductionist in this sense.”

nothing about the problem of “by-productivity” (that effectively robs one of his or her personal connection to the event as the latter can be explained away as the byproduct of the previous factors over which one had absolutely no control). That is, once we realize that the real problem with physical determinism is its implication according to which one’s supposedly *personal* beliefs and desires are just the byproduct of physical forces and processes over which one has had no personal claim, its alleged incompatibility with evidence seems off-topic and groundless.

At the end of the day, it does not really matter whether such universal causal determinism is physical, intellectual, mental,⁹⁶ or even divine. Given their total effectiveness and comprehensiveness, the special place once designated for one’s thoughts, beliefs, and desires (as uniquely or irreducibly personal) dissipates, as these can then be further broken down into (or reduced to) more ultimate causal factors over which one can do nothing meaningfully personal. The real problem, not just of physical determinism, but of any comprehensive causal determinism, is that its final efficacy lies beyond the self.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Incidentally, this possibility is gladly embraced by Helm in *TPOG*, 222 as follows: “But if my reasoning is an intellectual, mental activity, and not physical or mechanical in character, does this not imply that it somehow escapes the providential order. Such a difficulty arises only on one rather implausible assumption that reasoning, because it is intellectual or mental in character, is not causal. But why should not my belief, that some course of action is the correct one to take, be caused by my awareness (or lack of awareness) of evidence together with my desire to bring about certain changes, or to prevent changes, that a knowledge of the evidence, together with other factors, permits?”

⁹⁷ Incidentally, this is essentially the same objection that source incompatibilists have against compatibilists. Although the former too does not think all that highly of the importance of having alternative possibilities *per se* for free and responsible agency, the source incompatibilists object to compatibilists as the latter’s determinism allows the ultimate source of one’s actions and choices to be located in earlier and current factors over which the agent has absolutely no control. For more on this, see chapters 1, 5, and 6 of this dissertation.

Now, the fact that this problem of reducibility is a serious and persistent problem even for Helm is made apparent by the fact that he reverts to “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” as follows in *John Calvin’s Ideas*:

To get further, we need to distinguish between those matters that a person wishes to be identified with and those that he does not, as well as to distinguish between those states occurring in a person that he would reject and which thus become external to him and those that he would not reject and which thus remain internal to him ... Thus a person is free (although he may be necessitated) when, roughly speaking, he is exercising his choice in ways that he identifies with, even though such exercise may involve elements of psychological constraint ... To be free from compulsion is not for Calvin, to be indeterministically free, but to be acting in accordance with one’s preference. Such freedom is consistent with either metaphysical necessity or contingency ... It is grace alone that enables a person, in Frankfurt’s terminology, to want to want to be righteous.⁹⁸

Later, Helm even adds that in Calvin’s view “fallen men and women are born into the world already possessing a certain structure of desires that they then *own*, and that it is in their uncoerced and hence voluntary *ownership of and identification with* this structure that their responsibility before God, and their culpability, ultimately lie.”⁹⁹

The problem with Helm’s quick solution here is that while it postulates uncoerced *identification with* and *ownership of* some lower-order desire (by some higher-order desire that “wants to so want” it) as the logically sufficient condition for freely and responsibly owning the desire one finds herself with, this sort of “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” evidently overlooks the problem of reducibility (or regress) that we just discussed. That is, when not prefaced by the kind of stipulations made in “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” (which expressly posits its causally ensuring conditions as merely counterfactually ensuring conditions, so that the person makes the choice herself without

⁹⁸ *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 150-4.

⁹⁹ *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 175. Emphasis added.

being made to do so), Helm's "[2.II.3] new-compatibilist recommendation" fails to account for the ultimacy question. It fails to take into account the fact that with universal and unqualified causal determinism, all such higher-order desires (that supposedly allow the person to relevantly master the lower-order desires) must themselves be causally determined by yet further factors over which one has absolutely no control.

Now, concerning these yet earlier factors, there are only two ways to go about it. On the one hand, if someone like Helm insists that such earlier factors must themselves be personally determined by the individual in question, we end up with the problem of *regress*. According to this approach, the personal appropriation of one's desire is superseded by yet another personal appropriation, and so forth indefinitely, which seems downright hopeless. On the other hand, if we agree to let the further causes of such supposedly free lower-order-desire-appropriation to be themselves non-personal (i.e., in the sense that they are not up to the person's choice), we are left with the problem of reducibility: namely, the "personal" gets effectively reduced to its non-personal causal precedents. So, within the context of universal causal determinism, Helm's "[II.3] new-compatibilist solution" runs stuck either way. A better "[II.3] new compatibilism" would need the stipulations of "[II.2] new compatibilism" to avoid such undesirable causal reductionism or infinite regress.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we set out to investigate how Helm's perspective undergoes some significant metamorphosis over the years. We are at a point where we can now make some considerable remarks about this evolution and where it seems to be headed.

To summarize this chapter, in Part [3.I], we observed that in both *The Providence of God* and *Four Views*, Helm shows certain bias toward the two-causal-level perspective (as we see it however distortedly and unclearly in Sections [3.I.4] and [3.I.7]) over against other options mentioned in *TPOG*, such as [3.I.1] pantheism, [3.I.2] deism, and [3.I.3] occasionalism.

In section [3.1.5], we discussed how despite his general appreciation for this two-tier perspective Helm shows some serious reservations about this perspective in *TPOG*, as the stipulation of either (i) only necessary or (ii) both necessary and sufficient conditions (for the desired creaturely effect) from God's primary causality each leads to serious difficulties as follows. (i) On the one hand, with the provision of only necessary conditions from the divine order, the desired effect cannot be ensured.¹⁰⁰ (ii) On the other hand, with the provision of both necessary and sufficient conditions, the old problem of (the creaturely-or-secondary-causality-eliminating) "occasionalism" surfaces all over again.¹⁰¹ Yet, Helm mentions this concern only in passing in *TPOG*.

Helm's concern for such sufficient conditioning sees a new light in *Four Views*. In *Four Views*, Helm postulates explicitly that for creaturely evil acts God provides only their *necessary* (or non-preventing) conditions, as he is said not to cause them directly [3.I.7]. Although we find out in [3.II.2] that (a) such explicit statements *against* divine causal determination of *evil* acts are later offset by what seems to be his endorsement of just another instance of plain causal determination (as he states that the given evil acts are themselves causally determined by non-evil causal factors directly implemented by God)

¹⁰⁰ *The Providence of God*, 181.

¹⁰¹ *The Providence of God*, 181-2.

and that (b) this is precisely how Helm chooses to solve the problem of *particularity* in willing permission [3.II.1], Helm's final verdict in *Four Views* is to appeal to divine incomprehensibility to insist that such efficacious and particular willing "permission" (of specific evil acts) is still expressly *not* a case of divine causal determination [3.II.3]. Combined with yet other factors that we saw in [3.II.4], there is then, at least when it comes to truly culpable moral acts, a new and clear emphasis in *Four Views* on the idea of "irreducible agency" (and creatures having their own causal powers, in a way that is expressly incompatible with, say, physical determinism). This could not have been predicted at all prior to the major shift that we start to witness in *Four Views*. When it comes to morally *non-evil* acts, Helm is firm even in *Four Views* to unqualifiedly espouse that (in addition to God's possibly "weakly actualizing" them through choosing the particular possible world in which they all occur) God governs them positively through his efficient causality, which is consistent with the compatibilist account of human actions.

In *Four Views*, we find out soon enough that such an unwavering stance even in *Four Views* is motivated primarily by Helm's persistent misunderstanding that such causal determinism (of morally good and neutral acts) is logically necessary to uphold the Reformed doctrine of irresistible grace [3.III.1]. That this inference was drawn mistakenly by Helm as he confused type-certainty (having to do with, say, remaining in salvation) with token-certainty (having to do with causal determinism) was demonstrated in Section [3.III.2]. We discussed afterwards how Helm starts to question this assumption on his own in *John Calvin's Ideas* [3.III.3], only to finally disown it by the time he writes *Calvin at the Centre* [3.III.4]. We are then effectively left with Helm's final and full

disavowal of what has been for him the strongest reason for preferring the compatibilist perspective over against the libertarian perspective: namely, the mistaken assumption that the Reformed doctrine of “irresistible grace” presupposes the divine causal determination of all salvific action-tokens.

When confronted by such causal determinism’s problem with reducibility (over against ultimacy) [3.III.5], Helm is then essentially left with only strong reasons to give up on such unqualified causal determinism (even when this was just for morally *non*-evil acts). *With Helm’s concession after concession over the years, we are then for all intents and purposes left with Helm’s moving significantly toward the option of irreducible agency (which stipulates certain features of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”) for both good as well as evil creaturely acts, and so moving away from various forms of universal causal determinism that we have become accustomed to since The Providence of God and Four Views.*

Before we examine in chapter 5 “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” itself and its ultimate feasibility for Helm, we will make just one more stop in the next chapter to examine, albeit through his examination of certain Stoics and Calvin’s ideas, Helm’s most recent engagement with this concept of “irreducible agency.” This project will involve a closer look at Helm’s most recent work on John Calvin, *Calvin at the Centre* (2010).

CHAPTER 4

HELM'S FURTHER QUEST FOR "IRREDUCIBLE AGENCY"

Helm says in the introduction to *Calvin at the Centre* (2010; *CATC*, for short) that his express intent for this volume is to link different aspects of Calvin's thought with what could have been their intellectual source and heir (i.e., the ideas themselves as they lie in "coincidental" continuity with Calvin's own thought), rather than to establish their actual historical connection as follows: "It is enough for my purpose that Calvin's version of determinism is markedly similar to that of some stoics... What is of much interest to me is the place of Stoic-like ideas themselves that lie at the heart of his anthropology."¹ All that he wishes to accomplish in *CATC* is then to have Calvin "speak to us afresh" through "a modest amount of rational reconstruction,"² as Helm traces the semblance of irreducible agency from certain Stoics to Calvin.

In this dissertation, I pointed out in Section [3.III.5] that even in *TPOG* Helm expresses in passing a certain concern for physical determinism for its reductionistic tendencies. By the time that we get to *Four Views*, Helm's apprehension toward such "reducibility" becomes much more pronounced (e.g., see [3.II.4] and [3.III.5]). For instance, in connection with divine willing permission, Helm maintains as follows in *Four Views*:

Whereas physical determinism has a strong tendency to be reductionistic and has difficulty in finding a place for a range of objects having their own causal powers, the divine willing permission is most certainly not reductionist in this sense. Hence it is a serious mistake to suppose that classical Christian theism claims that God monopolizes power ... God is the source of all creaturely power, but the

¹ *Calvin at the Centre*, 1-2.

² *Calvin at the Centre*, 3.

powers of creatures, even when efficaciously empowered by God are really their own and so are distinct from his.³

As it is deemed of fundamental importance that creaturely causes possess integrity and causal powers of their own – even if they happen to somehow perpetually line up with “God’s efficacious empowerment,” the “difficulty in finding a place for a range of objects having their own causal powers” appears to be Helm’s main difficulty with the likes of physical determinism.

Helm’s negative assessment of such “reductionistic tendencies” gets only stronger when we finally arrive at his latest evaluation of what is supposed to be Calvin’s own compatibilism in *CATC* as follows:

Calvin’s determinism is *non-reductionist*. His determinism is not biological, economic, or of some other general and reductionist kind, but it is a determinism of people, angels, non-human animals, and other organisms. He thinks of human beings as *irreducible agents*. His pronounced body-mind dualism affords further protection against a reductionist determinism.⁴

Besides suggesting here that such a “reductionist determinism” is unfit for the determination of the multi-strata of beings that culminate in people and angels (and so against which Calvin should “afford further protection”), Helm goes so far as to maintain that “Calvin’s thought is resistant to the idea of a determinism that ‘flattens,’” as Calvin accepts “somewhat reluctantly” the Augustinian distinction between divine commission and permission.⁵ In light of what Helm has disavowed all along since *Four Views*

³ *Four Views*, 180.

⁴ *CATC*, 227-8. Italics mine.

⁵ *CATC*, 232. In a similar fashion, Helm makes the following pronouncement about the world of Jonathan Edwards later in the chapter: “So the created universe is a much flatter, more uniform place for Edwards than it was for Calvin. It is at all points subject to law, the law of universal causation, that in turn is subject to the divine decree.” See *CATC*, 268. For a view that disputes Helm’s claim that Calvin accepts the Augustinian distinction between divine commission and permission, see David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in the Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

concerning such “naturalistic” determinism and its inherent tendency to disallow distinctly human and agential causality, such a pronouncement concerning its “*flattening*” effect only confirms Helm’s latest distaste for such a reductionistic determinism.⁶ In addition, Helm seems truly concerned that not to block such a reductionism would only implicate God in human failings as follows: “Calvin’s reliance upon a hierarchy of distinct intentions, and the idea of divine permission, of non-intervention, *seem essential in order to shield* God from the charge that in ordaining the Fall he is the author of sin.”⁷

This being the case, as we documented in the previous chapter how Helm begins to move away from such a reductionistic and “flattening” determinism (that makes no special provisions for divine willing permission), we will examine in this chapter how this all pans out more fully in *CATC* as Helm engages Calvin’s allegedly “less-avowed”

⁶ For instance, in the latest article that he published on this issue of divine providence and human free will, “*Reformed Thought on Freedom: Some Further Thoughts*,” Helm merely repudiates certain Dutch authors’ claim that “Turretin’s acceptance of certain indifference in the faculty of the will (i.e., ‘indifference in the abstract and divided sense’ apart from divine decree and other requisite conditions that determine one’s choice in its actual operation) effectively renders him a metaphysical libertarian because such indifference entails ‘synchronic contingency’ according to which someone who, say, runs could have just as well sat down under the very same circumstances.” By pointing out that this mistake stems from confusing “indifference in the abstract and divided sense” with “indifference in the concrete and compound sense,” Helm points out that someone like Turretin who would gladly endorse the first sense of indifference (concerning the will’s abstract power apart from concrete circumstances under which it is said to operate) need not abandon (classical) compatibilism at all. Being a mere repudiation of such a logical mistake, this article then should have no bearing on Helm’s positive or actual stance on the issue of how best to be a compatibilist. See Paul Helm, “*Reformed Thought on Freedom: Some Further Thoughts*,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 4 (2010): 185-207.

⁷ *CATC*, 232. Emphasis mine. The fact that this is a relatively new concession and concern for Helm is clear from the fact that in both “Theism and Freedom” (1979) and *Eternal God* (1988), prior to the publication of *TPOG*, Helm is rather confident that God need not share any responsibility with creatures as long as compatibilism is true. See, for instance, how Helm speaks so plainly as follows in “Theism and Freedom,” 148-9: “If compatibilism and theism are both true, then A is responsible for a given morally evil act and not God... If, given the compatibility between creation and responsibility A does X voluntarily, because he wants to etc. then it does not follow either that A has not really done X (but God has) nor does it follow that God and A have performed X jointly.” Helm says the following in *Eternal God*, 158: “According to [compatibilism], A is not partly responsible and the causes of his action partly responsible. ... He is completely free when, for example, he is doing what he wants to do, when he has the power to do otherwise but chose not to. ... if compatibilism and theism are both true, then A is responsible for those of his actions which are immoral, and God is not responsible for them.”

compatibilism. Toward the end of this chapter, it should be apparent how, *in examining and linking “the Stoics’ Compatibilism” with that of Calvin, Helm shows much interest in securing for Calvin a plausible notion of “irreducible agency (despite the fixity of the future)” that would then be an improvement over its “flattening” counterpart.* As we see Helm’s detailed exposition of this matter, we should be able to distill the essence of what Helm so persistently seeks to preserve in genuinely meaningful creaturely agency.

I. Un-predeterminist Freedom of Stoic Determinism

[1] In Section [3.III.4] of the previous chapter, it was pointed out how in *CATC* Helm finally disavows the logical link between type-certainty (having to do with, say, being effectively saved *in general*) and token-certainty (having to do with the production of very particular act-tokens as the necessary consequence of causal determination), as he comes to see that one’s commitment to the former need not entail the commitment to the latter.

It was also pointed out, however, that despite his full acknowledgement of this particular logical point, Helm maintains (in fact plausibly) that it is still “reasonable to think that Calvin’s outlook was deterministic”⁸ because Calvin held that the *providence* of God is meticulous (and so extended certainty even to particular act-tokens).⁹ It is then in light of such observation that Helm talks about Calvin as follows:

In his *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* [Calvin] includes a short excursus, ‘Coercion Versus Necessity,’ that establishes the difference, and this is in line with his discussion in the *Institutes*. Distinguishing external coercion from inner determining factors of the will is one of the marks of compatibilistic determinism,

⁸ *CATC*, 228.

⁹ See Section [3.III.4] of this dissertation. The passage that was quoted in this regard was from *Calvin at the Centre*, 229-30.

for it is typically argued by such determinist that a person is free in so far as they do what they want to do, and unfree when they are externally coerced by physical or other pressure.¹⁰

By drawing our attention to how Calvin relies on such characteristically compatibilist distinctions, Helm then rightly points out that Calvin's overall compatibilist position need not be affected by this newly acknowledged distinction between type-and-token certainty (when it comes to the doctrine of man and salvation). And it is only as he is thus unconvinced of the change in Calvin's essential position that Helm seems interested in addressing this perennial issue of "reductionistic determinism" in Calvin's thought. After all, Helm has been acknowledging since *Four Views* that "acting as one wants to do (without being overtly impeded to do so)" is not quite by itself sufficient to ward off the troubling ramifications of causal reductionism.

Now, it is in this context that we see Helm's extensive treatment of "the Stoics' Compatibilism" and its "un-predeterminist freedom" to account for *Calvin's* supposedly non-reductionistic compatibilism.¹¹ For starters, Helm reminds us right away that he has maintained since *John Calvin's Ideas* that Calvin holds to what has been labeled as the "hierarchical determinism."¹² This is the view according to which there is a hierarchy of different orders of being that consists of, say, the inanimate world (non-organic and organic), non-human animals, and mankind and the angels that are respectively endowed with intelligence and "the will that is by definition non-coercible."¹³ As Calvin is then

¹⁰ *CATC*, 228. Helm cites here *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* (1543), ed. A. N. S. Lane, trans. G. I. Davies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 146-50 and *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), II.3.5.

¹¹ See, for example, *CATC*, 240.

¹² *CATC*, 227.

¹³ *CATC*, 227.

said to follow Aristotle in defining “forced” as that which “has its beginning elsewhere, something to which he who acts or is acted upon makes no contribution (*Ethics.Nic.3.1*),”¹⁴ Helm concludes that “Calvin attributes *intrinsic powers* to the various levels of agency, powers which agents at a higher level, even God at the supreme level, may employ and which in doing so they may occasionally override, but which they may not obliterate.”¹⁵

The stress is then placed on how according to Calvin God supposedly (as he *permits evil*) *takes up*,¹⁶ *finds*, and *uses* distinct intentional stances of these individuals that are intrinsically their own, rather than to directly cause or implant them:¹⁷

For Calvin mankind, even though fallen, still possesses reason and will which are essential features of human nature. The way in which the behaviour of plants and animals is determined is different from the way in which the human will is determined. Calvin stresses such differences as part of his hierarchism. The human will is determined ‘from the front,’ by the agent’s beliefs about what the world is like and is going to be like, as well as by his desires, and especially by his goals and the choice of the means to satisfy them. A person is not only acted upon, he acts.¹⁸

The trajectory here is therefore to find for Calvin a more detailed model of agency that would then make room for such *intrinsic* powers of freedom, without giving an inch to providential uncertainty.

[2] As Calvin’s view is deemed “remarkably coincident with important elements in the Stoics’ view of action,” Helm then turns to the Stoics. It is, for instance, Helm’s

¹⁴ *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, 150; cited by Helm in *CATC*, 228.

¹⁵ *CATC*, 231. Italics mine.

¹⁶ *CATC*, 232.

¹⁷ *CATC*, 231.

¹⁸ *CATC*, 230-1.

express thesis that “despite his virulent objection to ‘Stoic Fate’ Calvin appropriates the Stoic view of human agency, or something remarkably like it, as an important element in his view of providence.”¹⁹ Helm therefore proceeds to do a more thorough exposition of the Stoics’ view itself (or at least as it is reconstructed by the recent scholarship of Susanne Bobzien and Ricardo Salles),²⁰ as this is supposed to enhance our understanding of Calvin’s own compatibilism.

To be more specific, Helm seems to be most interested in the Stoics’ pursuit of what is akin to irreducible agency. The question is whether the Stoics can do so without compromising determinism. The point would be that if the Stoics can, then so could Calvin in his own Christian way. We turn then to Helm’s detailed exposition of “the Stoics’ Compatibilism.”

According to Helm’s appropriation of Bobzien and Salles, certain Stoicism, due to its inherent hierarchism, can be understood as a kind of “pluralistic materialism,” as opposed to “monistic” or “reductionist materialism” with which we are nowadays (thanks to modern science) accustomed.²¹ The idea is that in such hierarchism, objects and organisms supposedly possess different kinds of “active principle” (or *pneuma*) as they fall into different orders of being within this hierarchy of being. To be more specific, the Stoics apparently postulated that there are broadly three kinds of such *pneuma* across (a)

¹⁹ *CATC*, 233.

²⁰ The works cited by Helm in *CATC*, 233 are as follows: Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); and Ricardo Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

²¹ *CATC*, 235.

inorganic matter, (b) organic matter, and (c) individuals capable of sense perception and movement.²²

On the flipside, all these active principles, including those that supposedly make up human voluntary action reportedly fall within one organic, causal nexus of the universe, and are for that reason all a part of one expressly deterministic system. Yet, to go back to the qualification made earlier, the determining causes are still supposedly working differently on voluntary agents (and their “very special *pneumas*”) from the way that they operate, say, on rocks, plants, and non-human animals. That is, while some causes – the so-called “antecedent causes” – are postulated to work commonly throughout nature (i.e., regardless of their objects’ particular constitution), “perfect and principal causes” are expressly thought to operate just right in accordance with the *individual* natures of things at various levels of being, so as to preserve for them their own unique individual causality in line with their respective placement within the hierarchy of being. So, for example, in the case of human beings, such “perfect and principal causes” would consist of the supposedly “*internal*” causes of volitions and voluntary mental acts (and assents) that are expressive of the given agent’s general nature as well as his or her unique individual nature.²³

As the Stoics distinguish thus (along with Aristotle) determinations that are internal as well as external, the question is whether they can do so consistently within their explicitly deterministic system, and whether such internality and voluntariness would then sufficiently ground human responsibility, “[o]r must determinism, however nuanced,

²² CATC, 235-6.

²³ CATC, 236; Lloyd P. Gerson, *God and Greek Philosophy: Studies in the Early History and Natural Theology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 152.

in the end be reducible to ‘externalist determinism?’²⁴ To be more specific, what if, akin to our discussion in Section [3.III.5], these supposedly internal and voluntary determinations of the mind (that take place *through* the acts of assent) are themselves guaranteed solely by antecedent conditions over which one has absolutely no say?²⁵ That is, what if the Epicureans are right in pointing out that “all causal determination is ultimately external, even if the route of some such determination is through the mind, and in particular through the act of assent?”²⁶

According to Helm, the Stoics are receptive to the concern that if everything has an antecedent cause, the internal acts of assent too could ultimately be preceded and replaced by another set of antecedent causes that are by nature external to the self, as follows:²⁷

If one tracks back through a chain of causes of action, then it seems that sooner or later they will cease to be internal, acts of assent or judgment say, and will become external, causes from without the brain or mind, which form and produce the brain and its character and its products, and which continue to act upon it.²⁸

And so, if something external, as stipulated here, “causes from without” something internal, the Stoics would have to acknowledge that the “internal” no longer qualifies as relevantly personal in the way that would be conducive to moral responsibility as

²⁴ *CATC*, 236-7; Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism*, 40.

²⁵ *CATC*, 237; Salles, 40.

²⁶ *CATC*, 237.

²⁷ *CATC*, 237; Salles, 40.

²⁸ *CATC*, 237.

follows:²⁹ “We can’t (so the Stoics averred) be held responsible for an action whose cause is wholly external to us.”³⁰

How do the Stoics then, while holding on to their determinism, argue against the charge that all of these causal determinations eventually lead to sources that are beyond the self? For the answer, Helm initially relies on Salles’ claim that according to the premier Stoic Chrysippus, *something can be made certain by another while not being wholly determined by it*. Chrysippus is said to have held, for instance, that our voluntary acts of assent and impulses for which we can be responsible are determined only by a *combination* of external and internal causes as follows:³¹ “action for which a person is responsible is a combination of external causal factors and internal causal factors, each necessary, together sufficient, for the bringing to pass of a given responsible action.”³²

Now, in regards to this important idea of *combination*, we can imagine with Helm a cylinder that is pushed down a slope. The exact course of its descent would be decided by a combination of its “internal” qualities (such as its own shape, weight, density, elasticity) *and* the “external” circumstances which “surrounds” it (such as the force with which it is pushed down the slope, the initial angle, the latter’s degree of decline, shape, texture, hardness, etc.).³³ Chrysippus apparently argued that an act of assent is likewise

²⁹ *CATC*, 237; Salles, 41.

³⁰ *CATC*, 237.

³¹ *CATC*, 237; Salles, 41.

³² *CATC*, 237; Salles, 43.

³³ *CATC*, 238; Salles, 45.

“internal” (and so, irreducibly the agent’s own) as “the shape of the cylinder is internal to the object that is the cylinder.”³⁴

Despite the initial appeal of such a neat differentiability between the internal and external causal factors, I believe this illustration betrays the last solution’s weakness even more so than its strength. For one, this Chrysippian solution relies on “*partial* internality” to account for the feasibility of internality *in general*, when everything (including such general internality) is supposedly strictly implied by prior external conditions over which one has no control. If the reader would recall, this Epicurean concern was originally raised in response to the Stoics’ earlier claim that “the perfect and principal causes” of human actions can meaningfully preserve the latter’s internal or voluntary character so long as they go through the *internal* routing of assent. The Epicurean objection was that such an internal routing would not mean anything if it is also wholly determined by external factors over which one has no control (or to which one gives no voluntary assent).

To this plausible objection, the Chrysippian response that such internal and external distinctions can exist meaningfully (because the internal need not be swallowed up by the external) so long as we stipulate that an “action for which a person is responsible is a *combination* of external causal factors and internal causal factors, each necessary, together sufficient, for the bringing to pass of a given responsible action”³⁵ clearly begs the question. To the objection that “the supposedly self-determined internal act of assent is not voluntary, if it is strictly implied by yet further and earlier external

³⁴ *CATC*, 238.

³⁵ *CATC*, 237; Salles, 43.

factors over which one has absolutely no control or say (as would be the case if universal causal determinism were true),” the fitting response cannot be, “it is fine as long as the voluntary choice in question (for which one can be responsible) is *jointly* produced by internal and external causal factors.” As stated, what is unaccounted for is how this “internal *portion*” of the combination could still be irreducibly agential when the whole combination is itself strictly implied by prior factors over which one has absolutely no control. Another way to put this objection is to ask, “How is merely splitting the initial ‘internal’ act of assent (whose ultimate internality was suspect to begin with) into its respective external and internal portions supposed to procure for the latter the relevant *self-determination*?”

In the end, the fact that the Chrysippian answer is problematic is best illustrated by the inadequacy of the cylinder illustration itself. For instance, what were deemed as its expressly internal qualities (e.g. its own shape, weight, density, etc.) were “internal” only by way of a very arbitrary standard. That is, insofar as the cylinder did not create itself, such “internal” qualities were technically *just as* external (by way of having been *given*) to it as were the slope of the hill and the initial shove with which it was pushed. Likewise, the same can be said of the supposedly “new and purely internal portion” of the responsible act of assent. That is, without further clarification, the point of inquiry has merely been pushed one step back from where it originally started. However it is put, the problem is that if the genuine internality of the first was suspect because of the threat of universal causal determination, then the internality of the second cannot simply be pulled out of the hat without changing the rest of the picture.

[3] To give him due credit, Helm himself acknowledges the possible difficulty with the previously mentioned Stoic-solution as follows:

But of course for this argument for the distinction to be successful, and for it to be a convincing argument for compatibilism, it is necessary that the internal factor that Chrysippus cites in the case of human action is not itself solely a product of external factors.³⁶ Otherwise he is simply postponing the moment when his Epicurean (or other) opponent will play the externalist card. May not the mind and its powers themselves be formed by an earlier set of external factors?³⁷

What is more, in what follows Helm speaks negatively of Ricardo Salles' attempt to rescue such Chryssipian response. To Salles' suggestion that we should "hold that the internal nature of the mind is unique to the agent; it is not imparted to the agent externally, but is part of what it means to be that agent, 'temporally coextensive with the agent,'"³⁸ Helm protests that "[b]ut this looks weak as a protecting wall around compatibilism unless the progress of an externalist account of human individuality and uniqueness can be blocked."³⁹

Now, this is surprising because it seems that Salles may have been onto something here. For instance, by explicitly postulating that "the internal nature of the mind is not imparted to the agent externally, but is 'temporally coextensive with the agent,'" Salles seems to recognize that at some point one simply needs to bite the bullet and maintain, however mysteriously, that certain internality is just the way it is, with nothing to account for it except for itself. In order to truly maintain the final irreducibility of someone's agency or its supposedly purely internal part of it, it seems that one must

³⁶ Regarding this point, Helm cites Salles, 46.

³⁷ *CATC*, 238.

³⁸ *CATC*, 238; Salles, 47.

³⁹ *CATC*, 238.

eventually do something like this and simply put his or her foot down to postulate that the buck stops here, period.

To this potentially laudable attempt, Helm says instead (as mentioned above) that “this looks weak as a protecting wall around compatibilism unless the progress of an externalist account of human individuality and uniqueness can be blocked.”⁴⁰ Now, why would Helm say something like this unless he deems that such “irreducibly-internal agency” is actually incompatible with general compatibilism and the comprehensive determinism that it entails? Is Helm then finally giving up on such an internalist project?

In *CATC*, we find out that Helm is not yet finished with his quest to find for Calvin such irreducible internality (despite the fixity of the future). Next, Helm turns the discussion to various senses of *krisis*, the Stoics’ word for assent. Helm remarks that while this word can refer “either to unreflective acceptance or to reflective acceptance... [i]t seems that for the Stoics it is such critical rationality which is an expression of rationality proper.”⁴¹ With Helm’s additional remark that “being critical in this further sense one has to have reflected on whether whatever is ‘judged’ *is* the case,” his definition of *krisis* (as “rationality proper”) has the semblance of the higher-order volition that Helm had once advocated as the genuinely sufficient condition for responsible free *willing* (in connection with the so-called “[2.II.3] new compatibilism”). Helm explains it as follows:

[H]ere is something that is distinctively rational having to do with the use of judgement, to be contrasted with the instincts of non-human animals and with human impulse or reflex or unreflective judgement. Someone who acts with judgement governs himself internally, and without compulsion, even though that

⁴⁰ *CATC*, 238.

⁴¹ *CATC*, 239.

person lacks the power of alternative choice, either earlier or at the time of judgement, as to whether a course of action be chosen or not... This routing through the inner constitution, provided that it appropriately involves the critical judgement, is a *sufficient* condition for the possession of responsibility for the ensuing action, for praise or blame. So there is a faculty of assent which cannot be externally coerced. A person acts in accordance with his individual nature, expressed in his various assents, and so is responsible for the outcome. As the immediate and decisive cause of the action, responsibility is located in him.⁴²

There are a few points worth making here. For one, as stated, it is clear that Helm still wants such irreducibly internal governance of the self that could then rightly place the corresponding responsibility within the self. And Helm seems to have found a place for such internality (that can no longer be pushed back) within the Stoic's Compatibilism as the latter is said to rely on critical *higher-order* judgments that allow the self to decide for oneself whether whatever she has "judged" to be the case is indeed the case. Helm seems to think that such "higher-reflectiveness" is what is needed to set the necessary buffer against having to be "rushed" by our external(-to-the-self) circumstances. In the end, we come full circle to Helm's advocacy of "[2.II.3] new compatibilism."

But what can be said for this? For one, it still remains the case that even such higher-level acts of assent could just as well be finally and solely determined by other impersonal and external factors over which one has absolutely no control. Therefore, it seems doubtful that Helm can sufficiently block the threat of externalism simply by throwing into the equation such higher-order reflectiveness, when in such a universe only one set of "higher-order judgments" can ever result from the particular external initial conditions.

Despite all this, it is then with his own optimistic trajectory that Helm wraps up his discussion as follows: "Such voluntariness [grounded finally on such *critical*, higher-

⁴² *CATC*, 239.

order reflectiveness in one's *krisis*],⁴³ which is obviously more than the mere feeling of being unconstrained, is thus the source of the Stoics' compatibilism."⁴⁴ As he attributes to a modern classical compatibilist like Hume the view according to which such "mere psychological freedom" is the sufficient condition for human freedom,⁴⁵ Helm then suggests that the addition of the Stoics' higher-order judgments can provide the necessary buffer against the former's flattening or reductionistic tendencies.

However, such observation fails to advance Helm's case when, as we talked it about earlier, the very possibility of such higher-order *internality* seems suspect in the context of comprehensive determinism. To put it differently, merely *postulating* the truth of "[2.II.3]-new-compatibilism" (about the supposed sufficiency of higher-order volitions and judgments for appropriately grounding moral responsibility) does not seem helpful unless we first assume "[2.II.2]-new-compatibilism," according to which truly internal, voluntary, and responsible agency is possible, even when we lack all the relevant alternative possibilities for choosing. Therefore, despite Helm's explicit claim according to which "[s]omeone who acts with [such] judgment governs himself internally, and without compulsion, even though that person lacks the power of alternative choice," without first establishing the plausibility of "[2.II.2]-new-compatibilism," Helm's "[2.II.3]-new-compatibilist" claim remains unsubstantiated.

[4] While his particularly "[2.II.3] new-compatibilist" take on this issue may fall short, Helm adds a few important remarks on the Stoics' concept of irreducible agency in

⁴³ Defined in Salles, 33-4.

⁴⁴ *CATC*, 239.

⁴⁵ See *CATC*, 240, where Helm explains as follows: "But nor is Stoic freedom, acting in accordance with one's own nature, the mere psychological freedom of later compatibilists such as Hume."

CATC as follows. He explains that such a stress on individual *nature* having an irreducible internality (despite everything being inevitable and fixed) is a feature that cannot be found in modern outlook that tends to reduce such individuality to “sets of external causes such as the environment, genetic endowment, microphysical particles, or the like.”⁴⁶ Helm explains that for the Stoics, the external circumstances, unless they are really extreme, may instead only develop and fine-tune our character, never supplying or replacing it as follows:⁴⁷ “[Fate] does not produce the characters *ab initio*, but works with them.”⁴⁸ What is clear in all of this is Helm’s express attempt to distance the Stoics’ compatibilism from this kind of modern determinism (that traces all choices back to external causal factors over which one has no control), however this may be possible, as follows:

The question ‘In these circumstances at this time, could I have done otherwise than I did?’ which is so characteristic of [the more] modern [classical compatibilist] discussions of determinism and freedom, does not engage them. Instead they operate with a concept which Bobzien calls ‘un-predeterminist freedom;’ that is, freedom such that it is not fully determined whether or not I perform a certain course of action, ‘but in the same circumstances, if I have the same desires and beliefs, I would *always* do/choose the same thing.’⁴⁹

So, according to what Helm says here by such “un-predeterminist” Stoic freedom, we have a unique scenario whereby while whatever one wills to do is not fully decided *by* the external factors, it is so “uniformly” and reliably determined to just one effect by the irreducible self (and her higher judgments) that both (i) external determinism *and* (ii) the uncertainty of the result can effectively be blocked. So, to recap, Helm says on the one

⁴⁶ *CATC*, 239.

⁴⁷ *CATC*, 239-40.

⁴⁸ *CATC*, 240.

⁴⁹ *CATC*, 240; Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, 277.

hand that “Stoic determinism is not developed in terms of uniform laws of nature, and of event causation, but through this combination of external causal factors *and* individual natures.”⁵⁰ But on the other hand whatever is thus “non-universally” *self*-determined is supposedly so characteristically determined by the irreducible self to just one effect that the choice cannot be deemed indeterministic in the libertarian sense of the word.

According to such “un-predeterminist freedom,” only one particular outcome could ever be expected from one particular context.

And it is apparently in this latter connection that such un-predeterminist freedom, while expressly not externally determinable (at least in a law-like fashion), can be said to be fully compatible with other kinds of determinism whereby (as long as the antecedents are postulated to remain the same) its subjects are said to lack the requisite freedom to do otherwise. It is then as though the *certainty* (or the fixity) of the future has mysteriously shifted from the explicably certain connection that should exist between the cause-and-effect tokens (say, due to the sufficient strength of the *cause*-tokens) to the inexplicable certainty that is somehow present *despite* the absence of such connectivity between the cause-and-effect tokens. In other words, if there was a truly mysterious freedom-and-certainty combination, this would be it. It is perhaps no accident that Helm calls it “the doctrine of the irreducibility of life *chances*.”⁵¹ The mysterious certainty that supposedly exists between such cause and effect (despite not being held so tightly by the cause itself) is hereby spoken of as a matter of chance, even by Helm himself.

⁵⁰ *CATC*, 240. Emphasis mine.

⁵¹ *CATC*, 240. Emphasis mine.

II. Helm's View of Calvin's Broader Appropriation of Stoic Compatibilism

[1] How is all this connected with Calvin (besides what has already been covered in the beginning of Part I)? In the first place, Helm is quite clear on the aspects of Stoicism that Calvin did not approve. As the Stoics conceived of the universe as the product of an immanent principle of reason whereby fate binds even the gods through its "reasonable" inferior causes,⁵² Calvin surely did not want anything to do with such Stoic immanentism (as it would keep the supernatural enclosed within a 'natural influx')⁵³ or for that matter, its resulting "deistic" implication (as it renders God's personal supervision superfluous).⁵⁴ But it is Helm's express thesis that such blatant disapproval of some of its features did not impact Calvin's covert but glad acceptance of other elements, especially the former's hierarchism and its ensuing idea of irreducible agency in the upper level as follows: "I will argue that Calvin, possibly through borrowing partly at least from Augustine, reckoned that a hierarchical compatibilism of the Stoic kind can be a component within his account of providence in theistic terms."⁵⁵

So, how did this "theistic contextualization" supposedly take place? Helm suggests that the place to begin is the Stoics' concept of "co-fatedness." According to this innovative concept, "a person is fated to enjoy or suffer something not irrespective of

⁵² *CATC*, 241-2; Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* (1552), trans. with an intro. J. K. S. Reid (London: Clarke, 1961), 170.

⁵³ *CATC*, 242; Calvin, *Inst.* I.16.3.

⁵⁴ *CATC*, 242; *Inst.* I.16.4. In addition, Helm explains that "'Stoic fate' is objectionable to Calvin ... because ... God's power shines 'not less in the perpetual condition of the world than in its first creation.'" See *CATC*, 241, with reference to *Inst.* I.16.1.

⁵⁵ *CATC*, 242.

their desires and intentions, but *through* their operation.”⁵⁶ As to how most events could in this way be “co-fated in a causal and in some cases a teleological sequence,” Helm mentions events that are relevantly *causally* necessary for others as follows:⁵⁷ “[i]f Laius is fated to have a [biological] son, then he is fated to have intercourse with the son’s mother-to-be.”⁵⁸ What’s more, an event may even be *logically* necessary for another as follows: “[i]f Milo is fated to wrestle, then he is fated to have an opponent to wrestle with, since it is logically impossible to wrestle without having someone to wrestle.” As Laius cannot “simply” have a son, or Milo wrestle by himself, the lesson here is that according to the Stoics being fated to one end is really no license to be idle in regards to its means. To put it succinctly, according to the Stoics, if you want the fated ends, you had better apply yourself to achieving the right means.

Having thus introduced the subject matter, Helm then goes on to clarify that the relation between such “co-fated” elements, in order for it to be functional, need not be quite as strong as the kinds that he just mentioned. That is, even if there were only a “*generally* necessary” connection between, say, being careful and crossing the road safely (in the way that “I may on some occasions be careless and [yet] still make it safely to the other side”⁵⁹), such a probable connection between the two relevant events is still a good enough reason for me to take care as I cross the road. Such a weaker connection

⁵⁶ *CATC*, 242. Italics mine.

⁵⁷ *CATC*, 242.

⁵⁸ *CATC*, 242; Bobzien, 201.

⁵⁹ *CATC*, 243.

between the two events, in other words, would not give me the license to disregard that which is *generally* needed to achieve one's goal.⁶⁰

When transposed onto Calvin's context, it has the following application for Helm: while Joe's climbing the ladder may be eternally ordained by God, the divine decree is in some sense not (all by itself) sufficient for this particular event to occur, in that in ordaining it, God, being reasonable and well-meaning, would *also* have to ordain Joe's having an objective for which this particular ladder-climbing is (as mentioned above) at least probabilistically necessary, desirable, and so forth, so as to make it a rational choice (as opposed to, say, (a) Joe's being completely idle right up to the event or (a') coming to the event some other random way (b) so as to undercut the integrity of secondary causality altogether).

With the postulation that such causal factors then must be co-ordained in a manner that could circumvent "simple providence (akin to simple fatalism)," Helm reflects that, for Calvin, *my* thus having the reasons to do something *is* a legitimate explanation of my action,⁶¹ even as all along the divine decree entails and fixes the future as follows:

This connection of means and ends, or, more precisely, this general though not universal connection of means with ends has, for Calvin, a consequence that may

⁶⁰ *CATC*, 243; Bobzien, 225-6.

⁶¹ *CATC*, 244. In regards to the importance of secondary causation due to such "co-fatedness" in Calvin's thought, Helm cites *Inst.* I.17.4 in *CATC*, 245 as follows: "For he who has fixed the boundaries of our life, has at the same time entrusted us with the care of it, provided us with the *means* of preserving it, forewarned us of the dangers to which we are exposed, and supplied cautions and remedies, that we may not be overwhelmed unawares. . . . you infer that danger is not to be guarded against, because, if it is not fatal, you shall escape without precaution; whereas the Lord enjoins you to guard against it just because he wills it not to be fatal."

seem surprising. There is an element of ‘as if’ in Calvin’s practical approach to providence. While the future is fixed we approach the future as if it were open.⁶²

What we have here is an accent on the subjective uncertainty (and the need or room for approaching the future *as if* it were open, which comes from what is less-than-certain connections between the means and the ends) while this subjective uncertainty is qualified by the equally important objective fixity of the future, which is strictly implied by the eternal divine decree of both the ends and the means.

[2] The way things stand, anyone that holds this sort of position must therefore still square oneself with the objectively fixed nature of the future (due to the divine decree) and its strict implication on human agency. When it comes to this objective fixity of the future, on the one hand, Helm clearly prefaces that, for Calvin, “God’s determination confers necessity on what otherwise would not be so.” Yet, he spends much more time, on the other hand, clarifying and emphasizing how, for Calvin, “that which God has determined, though it must come to pass, is [mostly] not, however, precisely, or in its own nature, necessary.”⁶³ Helm explains, for instance, that such divine determination, only as a case of the “necessity of the consequence,” does not have its causal sufficiency in the immanent forces that can be, say, quantified into universal laws of nature.⁶⁴ With the decreed event’s supposedly non-derivability from the regular workings of natural or immanent forces, it is then Helm’s express conclusion that for Calvin, “God necessitates all that happens, but in a way that is consistent with the varied

⁶² *CATC*, 245. In regards to this, Helm cites Calvin’s *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* (1552), 171, and invites us to check out *Inst.* I.16.8 as well.

⁶³ *CATC*, 246; *Inst.* I.16.9.

⁶⁴ *CATC*, 248.

natures of things.”⁶⁵ What we get here as the result is a picture of divine providence that is allegedly compatible with both (a) irreducibly voluntary and responsible human agency *and* (b) “the divine attention that is paid to the governing of each particular” (that is, for instance, in contradistinction from the Stoics’ “deism” or “immanentism”),⁶⁶ as Helm

⁶⁵ *CATC*, 248. Now, to clarify, his statement here is not necessarily in conflict with the much more blatant-sounding stance Helm took in “Synchronic Contingency Again (2003),” 235-6, as follows: “Not surprisingly I do not accept [Antonie Vos and Andreas Beck’s] construction of my claim that if God has eternally willed that I have breakfast today I do not seem to be synchronously free not to have it. In particular, I resist the formulation (1) [Necessarily, if God eternally willed that *p*, then *p*] and prefer (1a) Necessarily, if God eternally willed that *p*, then necessarily *p*. But this is not because God’s decree could not be otherwise, nor (I hope) because I am guilty of an unwarranted modal shift, but because God decreeing that *p*, *p* is fixed. (But God could have eternally decreed that not-*p*, so the distinction between the necessity of the consequence and the necessity of the consequent is preserved, despite the authors’ fears to the contrary.) God could have eternally willed that I not have breakfast. There are possible worlds in which I do not have breakfast. My having breakfast is thus not necessary [*per se*]. But if God eternally decrees that I have breakfast, then I am not free (in what our authors call the material sense of indifference) not to have breakfast, even though I retain the power to choose not to have breakfast in those worlds in which God eternally decreed that I not have breakfast. . . . Thus the necessity of consequent is affirmed, though the sense of necessity here is not of course logical necessity, simply whatever sense of necessity is incompatible with the exercise of acts of material indifference.” While not necessarily inconsistent with Helm’s statement here in *CATC* (2010), these words confirm Helm’s past penchant for rushing into affirming the “material fixity” of things that are logically entailed by divine decree. Notwithstanding the stark contrast he has with his theoretical opponents [i.e., Beck and Vos], who are arduously trying to downplay the fixity side of things in the same context of divine decree, what Helm says here in “Synchronic Contingency Again (2003)” is rather problematic if we take it at its face value as follows. Helm says that he “preserves” the distinction between the necessity of the consequence (i.e., “Necessarily, if God eternally willed that *I have breakfast*, then *I have breakfast*”) and the necessity of the consequent (i.e., “Necessarily, if God eternally willed that *I have breakfast*, then *I have to have breakfast*”) because technically, “God could have eternally decreed that *I not have breakfast*.” In other words, Helm seems to maintain that as long as “my having breakfast” is not necessary in every possible world *because* God’s decreeing it is not true in every possible world, then even “my having to have breakfast (even as “the necessity of the consequent” that is necessary in and of itself)” does not the necessity of the consequent that is truly detrimental to freedom. However, despite his contention to the contrary, *if* Helm’s next claim is right (i.e., “if God eternally decrees that I have breakfast, then I am *not* free not to have breakfast” because I would *have* to have it), then in those worlds in which God eternally decrees that I *not* have breakfast, I am *not* free not to have breakfast either, since I would *have* to avoid breakfast). How could I then in those worlds in which God eternally decreed that I not have breakfast “retain *the power to choose* not to have breakfast,” as Helm claims? In case our puzzlement is due to the fact that the phrase “though I retain the power to choose not to have breakfast in those worlds in which God eternally decreed that I not have breakfast” is ambiguous, we can consider them as follows: (a) *in this world* I have the power to choose not to have breakfast *in another world* where God eternally decreed that I not have breakfast; or (b) *in another world* (where God eternally decreed that I not have breakfast) I have the power to choose not to have breakfast there? But then, both still seem problematic, for (b) is not available to Helm, since the other world is one in which God *decrees* that I *not* have breakfast (so I would *have* to avoid breakfast there), whereas (a) seems plainly wrong, as I do not *in this world* have the power to do anything in any *other* world. I am grateful to Edward Wierenga for this insight from May 2, 2013.

⁶⁶ *CATC*, 247-8.

expressly postulates here just a good enough connection between the ends and the means (i.e., “co-fatedness”) to promote both (i) intelligible and responsible human agency and (ii) perpetual providential attention on God’s part.

With such benefits, this may then come across as a beautiful rendition of divine providence. Despite its initial appeal, Helm still needs to show, however, if such “non-natural” determinism (with, for instance, no (a) ties to universal laws of nature at all or (b) “reliance on such naturally necessitating factors”) can adequately confer responsibility on those (with supposedly very unique individual natures) who are in the end still fully determined by God to only one set of action-tokens. That is, granted that “[i]t is a mistake to refer evil to ‘*simple providence*’” (as the latter happens to overlook all *subjectively* meaningful connections between the ordinary ends and the means),⁶⁷ is the fact that there is usually some subjectively intelligible connection between the ends and the means (and this without the law-like total uniformity between them) really sufficient to put the requisite responsibility in, say, evil-willing, without reducing it to external factors over which one has no control?

To go a little deeper, it is Helm’s express position here that in adopting the Stoics’ ideal for such “co-fatedness,” Calvin can consequently locate a place for human responsibility in “following [one’s] own malignant desires”⁶⁸ or being “wholly absorbed in [one’s] evil,”⁶⁹ as neither of these would translate *into* a responsible action (or for that matter follow sensibly *from* some earlier agential state) unless we lived in a world where

⁶⁷ *CATC*, 250. Italics added.

⁶⁸ *CATC*, 250; *Inst.* I.17.5.

⁶⁹ *CATC*, 251; *Inst.* I.17.3. Immediately following this passage, Helm also comments that “[t]he evil action is to be explained in terms of an evil *intention* for which the agent is responsible” (italics mine).

the connections between the decreed means and ends are *generally* intelligible. Yet, as expected, the question is whether such (a) general “co-fatedness” and (b) the ensuing *general* intelligibility of the connectivity between the ordinary ends and the means can all *by themselves* plausibly bestow blame or praise on those who have all along been ordained to have just one very particular willful state of mind and higher-order judgments.

Similarly, let us grant for now that “like the Stoics, Calvin develops his account of providence not from a view of causal regularity, but, like them, he appeals to the irreducibility of agency and of life chances” (although in Calvin’s case these “chances” are attributed to God, rather than fate).⁷⁰ By simply avoiding the kind of causal determinism that is characteristically based on some universal laws of nature, is Helm’s Calvin then genuinely warranted to maintain that “[t]he agent is thus a cause in his own right, and his action is not merely the outcome of sets of external causes?”⁷¹ This seems hardly the case, so long as such malignant desires and one’s wholehearted identification with them are themselves chosen singlehandedly by God before the founding of the world to infallibly follow from such a decree.

That is, such a divine decree may very well fail to manifest some law-like pattern, but this *alone* does not seem to change the fact that it is still God and his decree that is all by itself logically and causally sufficient to effectuate all that is decreed, including all such willful states of mind (insofar as they are all strictly implied solely by his divine decision to effect them even before the foundation of the world). In other words, as much as Helm may postulate that the mind itself and its responses are not wholly explicable (or

⁷⁰ *CATC*, 250.

⁷¹ *CATC*, 251; *Inst.* I.18.4.

predictable) by their immediately preceding and concurrently external *natural* causes, if God through some other means ultimately and infallibly predetermines what each individual nature would be like and how exactly they would all pan out each and every time they are faced with a temptation, then the human agency does not look all that irreducibly *internal* to the self.⁷² In fact, the only thing that would be so internal and voluntary would be *God's* own freedom to unilaterally and unconditionally actualize a particular concatenation of such realizable possibilities.

Given comprehensive *divine* determination, the chanciness in such “irreducibility of life chances” would then still be very much beyond our control, as every “external” chancy thing would simply be happening *to* us (without our consent). Therefore, notwithstanding Helm’s express claim that we are in the end culpable for “rushing headlong” into disobedience because such strong enthusiasm in thus willing it is not itself coerced, if we take Calvin’s words seriously (that “if [God] did not will [our disobedience to the law], we could not do it.”⁷³), then as long as Helm postulates that our willings as well as doings are all just as equally “co-fated” by God, he should have to admit that even such “rushing headlong” and our “uncoercible and strongly evil nature [that supposedly] renders us culpable”⁷⁴ are all in the end wholly imposed on us *from without*. But in that case, how could such externally imposed willfulness truly be our own responsibility?

⁷² *CATC*, 251. To give him credit, Helm seems to acknowledge just as much when he adds the following: “But this is not very convincing as a qualification or nuance in determinism that will provide a justification for compatibilism not otherwise available. For while in a sense it is not my mind that is predetermined by God, since I did not have a mind to be predetermined, yet what my mind was to be was predetermined by God.”

⁷³ *CATC*, 256; *Inst.* I.17.5.

⁷⁴ *CATC*, 256.

[3] *Excursus*: There are other important observations that Helm makes in regards to Calvin's compatibilism and the compatibilism of those that come after him, namely, that of John Gill and Jonathan Edwards. I quickly summarize them here to do more justice to Helm's treatise on "*Calvin's compatibilism*."

According to Helm, besides all that has been said, Calvin is a compatibilist (i.e., a "soft-determinist") only when it comes to morally *culpable* acts. The way Helm sees it, for Calvin, we humans have "an inherent liability to fall" and so what we do when we do not fall is (for that reason) "not meritorious but is down to God's power and goodness who prevents us from falling."⁷⁵ Helm therefore likens Calvin to a "hard-determinist"⁷⁶ (who denies our freedom and responsibility in our deterministic context), when it comes to otherwise good and praiseworthy acts, as follows:

For the fact that such actions are carried out voluntarily provides a necessary and perhaps sufficient condition of blameworthiness in the case of evil actions, though not of praiseworthiness in the case of the agent performing a good action. For in the case of good, praiseworthy actions the praise is due to God's grace alone... [F]or an action to be a good creaturely action it is not sufficient that it be unconstrained, voluntary, and so forth, in typical compatibilist fashion, but that it have a certain causal history, a history that has its origin and its sustaining cause in God's efficacious grace.⁷⁷

According to Helm, there is therefore for Calvin an interesting asymmetry between good and evil creaturely actions. On the one hand, when the good actions are causally determined and effectuated by God's grace, then even if they come by way of supposedly voluntary and "internal" routes, *all* the praise and responsibility can be traced straight back to God. On the other hand, when we perform in the same fashion that which is evil

⁷⁵ *CATC*, 257.

⁷⁶ *CATC*, 261.

⁷⁷ *CATC*, 259.

and sinful, then because we do so (voluntarily without being constrained) according to our very nature, we and only ourselves are to blame.⁷⁸

The mysterious lack of parity in these two types of acts (according to Helm's depiction of Calvin) is undeniably present here, but it gets even more pronounced in a passage like this:

So here's the asymmetry. In the case of responsibility before God Calvin's compatibilism gives rise to blame but never to praise. According to Calvin what a person does from a wrong/bad motive and intention the person is *inalienably* responsible for, and so deserves to be blamed for it. Whereas if a person is to be morally praised for what he does that is good the praise is *alienable* praise; that is, the source or origin of what is praiseworthy does not lie in the person, in the moral character of his desires or intentions, but in the one who is the source of these, namely God himself.⁷⁹

As explicated here, since we do not create our own selves, we must wonder from where such inalienable or "inherent liability to fall" can originate and why it is that *we*, and not God, who must be ultimately responsible for it. With this kind of inexplicably lopsided picture, we must even wonder if this is genuinely Calvin's own position on the matter. But since it is not the topic of this dissertation, we won't pursue it here. I do find it interesting, however, that Helm is rather silent on such seemingly bizarre asymmetry.

[4] When it comes to John Gill, Helm maintains that he "holds a straightforward compatibilist position."⁸⁰ That is, as Gill shows certain points of agreement and disagreement with the Stoics (e.g., in openly embracing their notion of co-fatedness and its usefulness toward the idle argument,⁸¹ while clearly disapproving of their concept of

⁷⁸ *CATC*, 261.

⁷⁹ *CATC*, 261.

⁸⁰ *CATC*, 264.

⁸¹ *CATC*, 265.

astrological fate that would bind even God⁸²), he apparently dismisses, unlike Salles, the Chrysippian-reliance on *perfectae et principales* and *adjuvantes et proximae* to escape necessity without giving up on fate.⁸³ For instance, while Salles maintains that “this Chrysippean power to do otherwise is consistent with everything factual being causally necessary [and thus fated],”⁸⁴ Gill holds both that such refinement fails to escape necessity and that such a project is not even necessary in the first place.⁸⁵ Instead, Gill maintains straightforwardly that both Stoic fate and Christian providence entail causal necessity (and even the total lack of all real alternatives) and that all that such Chrysippian-refinements do is to identify different kinds of such causal necessity.⁸⁶ In embracing causal necessity (and its implication against the real power to do otherwise), Gill then supposedly endorses “straightforward compatibilism” that indiscriminately acknowledges necessity in all choices, unlike the Stoics and Calvin.⁸⁷

According to Helm, Jonathan Edwards has a definitely more non-scholastic character than even John Gill, as the former hardly appeals to (a) the distinction between primary and secondary causation, (b) divine willing permission, or (c) the hierarchy of distinctly created natures, as follows:⁸⁸

Instead he is concerned with logic of causation, especially of its universality, utilizing the basic principle that every event has a cause... So the created universe

⁸² *CATC*, 265; John Gill, *The Cause of God and Truth* (London: Tegg, 1838), 357.

⁸³ *CATC*, 265-6; *The Cause of God and Truth*, 353.

⁸⁴ Salles, 88.

⁸⁵ *CATC*, 266.

⁸⁶ *CATC*, 266; *The Cause of God and Truth*, 353-4.

⁸⁷ *CATC*, 266; *The Cause of God and Truth*, 345-6.

⁸⁸ *CATC*, 267.

is a much flatter, more uniform place for Edwards than it was for Calvin. It is at all points subject to law, the law of universal causation, that in turn is subject to the divine decree.⁸⁹

As he thought of even human desires and volitions as just another set of products of universal causation, Edwards's compatibilism is, according to Helm, "much more developed and avowed than that of Calvin or even of Calvin's Reformed Orthodox successors such as Gill."⁹⁰ Helm subsequently backs this up by bringing up Edwards' lack of interest in Stoic or Aristotelian agency and its implied hierarchism.⁹¹ On the flipside, Helm concludes that Calvin's perspective is then much less avowed than such a modern rendition of compatibilism.

III. Summary and Conclusion

In this dissertation, we have been tracking Helm's own transformation over these years. To use Helm's own evaluative criteria for the Stoics, Calvin, Gill, and Edwards, in *The Providence of God* (and what led up to it), Helm's compatibilism (like Edwards's) was clearly much more avowed than that of the Stoics and Calvin himself (see chapter 2). In chapter 3, we saw how Helm's own "avowed compatibilism" undergoes significant metamorphosis to make it closer to the "much-less-avowed compatibilism" of the Stoics and Calvin.

⁸⁹ *CATC*, 267-8.

⁹⁰ *CATC*, 268. Incidentally, in regards to Gill's Reformed Orthodox status, Helm explicitly notes that he is following Richard Muller's judgment in *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* and "John Gill and the Reformed Tradition: A Study in the Reception of Protestant Orthodoxy in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771)*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Leiden: Brill, 1997). See *CATC*, 264n109.

⁹¹ *CATC*, 269.

In this chapter, we looked at how exactly and to what extent Helm goes to capture for Calvin and for himself this notion of “irreducible agency (despite the fixity of the future)” in and through the Stoics’ compatibilism. In Part I, we saw for instance how Helm goes through three different steps to finally get at this sense of irreducible *internality* that was more-or-less satisfactory to Helm himself. The final step here involved the critical notion of *krisis* (or assent) that was incidentally reminiscent of the higher-order volitions of “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” that are allegedly sufficient for free and responsible *willing* all by itself (see Section [4.I.3]).

What presents itself is then the challenge of ascertaining how much of a simple “[2.II.3] new compatibilist” Helm is today. In all appearances, Helm still seems to be quite comfortable with this perspective in his evaluative comments. Yet, it was pointed out in Section [4.I.4] that as it stands before comprehensive causal determinism (be it through scientific or Christian worldview), “[2.II.3] new compatibilism” is quite unconvincing apart from the separate plausibility of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism,” which expressly tries to make room for such irreducible internality *despite the fixity of the future* (i.e., despite the lack of any relevant alternative possibilities).

What stands between Helm and a truly plausible account of “non-reductive human agency (despite his “no-risk” view of providence)” is then the independent plausibility of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism.” In recent years, a slew of Frankurtian scholarship has been produced to ascertain whether such “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” is feasible. In the next chapter, we will therefore see what some of its landmark arguments are and how the latest and the best of them fare in their respective quest for this

determined yet free and responsible agency, which can then be applied to Helm's "no-risk" view of providence.

CHAPTER 5

THE FRANKFURTIAN IMPASSE ON “IRREDUCIBLE AGENCY”

“Must an agent be able to do otherwise (at will) in order for her to be morally responsible for what she does?” That is the main focus of inquiry for this chapter. We saw in chapter 4 that what stands between Helm and a truly viable account of “non-reductive human agency (despite a “no-risk” view of providence)” is the independent plausibility of the so-called, “[2.II.2] new compatibilism.” In recent years, a slew of sophisticated Frankfurtian scholarship has been produced to ascertain whether such “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” is in fact feasible. Therefore, we will see in this chapter what some of its landmark arguments are and how the latest and the best of them fare in their respective quest for this determined yet free and responsible agency. Analyzing them carefully should give us a window into where Helm’s evolving “no-risk” project might need to head next. My thesis for this chapter is that *the latest and the best of the Frankfurtians all fail in their respectively ingenious attempts to capture this notion of “irreducible agency despite the total lack of relevantly significant voluntary alternatives,” which suggests that the difficulty is deep-seated and conceptual, and that those who are truly invested in its first half (i.e., “irreducible agency”) may have to give up some portion of the second half (i.e., “the fixity of the future”) to retain the former.*

I. Preliminaries on the Current Status of the Frankfurtian Scholarship

[1] In his 1969 paper, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” Harry Frankfurt observes that the standard illustrations in favor of PAP¹ whereby the agent is

¹ According to which, “a person is morally responsible for what she has done *only* if she could have done otherwise (or at least could have avoided it).”

deemed not responsible for her action (due to, say, serious coercion, compulsion, or manipulation) are all cases in which “*the same circumstances* bring it about *both* that a person does something, and make it impossible for her to avoid doing it.”² Frankfurt points out however that “there may be circumstances that in no way bring it about that a person performs an action,” while “those very circumstances make it impossible for her to avoid performing that action.”³ In this type of case, as the person performs her actions voluntarily (i.e., without having such alternatives-eliminating circumstances positively prompting her to make the choice), she may still be responsible for her choice, even if she could not have done otherwise. Accordingly, “Frankfurt argues that the sort of freedom pertinent to moral responsibility should . . . not be identified with the freedom to do otherwise or the freedom to avoid acting as one did.”⁴

To illustrate, Harry Frankfurt’s seminal example can go like this: Due to his expertise on Jones’ brain, Black, a gifted neurosurgeon, knows in advance that should Jones’s brain exhibit a certain neurological pattern, *NP*, at (or by) time *t1*, Jones will decide on his own at *t2* to shoot Smith, the person against whom Black seeks *revenge*⁵ as well. Should Jones fail to exhibit *NP* at (or by) *t1*, the prior-sign of its absence would reliably indicate that Jones is not going to decide on his own to shoot Smith at *t2*, giving Black a reason to hijack Jones’ brain-process (sometime prior to *t2*) to make sure that the desired choice from Jones comes about at *t2*. So, either way, in this scenario, Jones has

² David Widerker and Michael McKenna, eds., *Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities: Essays on the Importance of Alternative Possibilities* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 3. Henceforth, *MRAP*, for short.

³ *MRAP*, 3.

⁴ *MRAP*, 3-4.

⁵ David Widerker and Michael McKenna thus call this example, “Revenge,” in *MRAP*, 4.

no choice but to decide to shoot Smith at t_2 . As it happens, Jones, who has no idea about this “fateful” predicament, exhibits *NP* at t_1 on her own and so decides independently at t_2 to shoot Smith (without ever being prompted by Black’s reactive intervention).⁶

In this purported counterexample to PAP, despite not being able to do anything but finally deciding to shoot Smith at t_2 , Jones then seems wholly responsible for reaching that decision on her own, as Black’s counterfactually ensuring presence in no way “factually” figures into the decision-forming process. After all, solely based on her own reasons and preferences, Jones would have decided to shoot Smith even if Black were nowhere to be found. She could not then legitimately resort to the excuse that “were those [only potentially binding] conditions absent, I would have done differently.”⁷ With no *excuses* of (a) this kind or (b) those that come from delusion, hypnotism, being held at gunpoint, knocked unconscious, and so forth, the agent in a Frankfurtian scenario cannot then appeal to such (a) “non-active” and/or (b) “otherwise-ominous” factors as the reasons for having acted as she did. Being the sole initiator of her own acts and decisions through her own set of reasons and motives, she alone would be morally responsible for the acts and the choices that she makes. Frankfurt would have then shown that Jones’ inability to do otherwise need not nullify her moral responsibility in making that causally determined choice. PAP would then fall short as a universally valid principle despite its initial appeal.

To summarize, according to Frankfurt, when one acts from her own will (so that she is without an excuse for thus acting, as she would be if (i) she had no other option

⁶ Compare this with Harry Frankfurt’s “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 836-8.

⁷ *MRAP*, 5.

and (ii) this first fact functions as the overriding reason why she does what she does), then even if what she does is finally the only option available to her, she could still be responsible for her inevitable choice.

[2] If Frankfurt were correct on this matter, its implication would be huge. For one, it would effectively undermine the libertarian assumption that in a deterministic universe, no agent can be morally responsible for her action when she lacks all meaningful alternative possibilities. Also, once PAP is abandoned, the compatibilist no longer has the onerous task of having to explain how determinism can be made compatible with certain esoteric alternative possibilities (since alternative possibilities *per se* would no longer be relevant to moral freedom at all), and this would finally tip the scale towards compatibilism. For instance, without PAP, a compatibilist can gladly grant that “if determinism is true, no agent can do otherwise,” without thereby conceding that the determined agent must therefore be excused for her act. Semi-compatibilism (espoused by John Martin Fischer) holds, for example, that while determinism may be incompatible with freedom (to do otherwise), it is still compatible with *voluntariness* (or spontaneously choosing *on one’s own*) and so with *moral responsibility*.⁸

⁸ See, for instance, John Martin Fischer’s “Frankfurt-type Examples and Semi-Compatibilism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane, 281-308, especially 306 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). So, how is the outcome of this debate relevant to Helm and his pursuit of irreducible agency despite the fixity of the future? As mentioned earlier in n23 of chapter 1, showing that “someone could be morally responsible for an action without being able to act otherwise” can show that “someone could act freely without being able to do otherwise,” if one can recast the traditional argument for “leeway” incompatibilism as follows:

- (1) If an action is determined, then the agent could not have done otherwise.
- (2) If the agent could not have done otherwise, then she is not morally responsible for it.
- (3) If the agent is not morally responsible for it, then she could not have acted freely.
- (4) Therefore, if an action is determined, then the agent could not have acted freely.

In this argument, Premise (2) is equivalent to PAP, and Conclusion (4) is a denial of determinism. So giving an objection to PAP provides a reason to reject Premise (2). Thus, objecting to PAP is a way to undermine an argument for leeway incompatibilism. While this leaves open that compatibilism is

[3] However, when we revisit the salient features of the Revenge example, it fails to eliminate every meaningful alternative possibility. For instance, prior to t_2 , Jones could either exhibit or not exhibit at t_1 the desired neurological pattern, *NP*, on her own. These (mental) action-alternatives are admittedly within an unusually small range of freedom and are therefore aptly called “flickers of freedom,”⁹ as they do not permit Jones to finally avoid deciding at t_2 to shoot Smith. Yet, it is still the kind of freedom that allows Jones (when she makes the choice) to decide it *on her own*, instead of having to be forced to do so by a counterfactual intervener (or *CI*), like Black.

Now, such “significant” flickers of freedom seem to be more than merely an accidental feature in such prior-sign cases. For instance, in deliberately constructing the example with only the hypothetically binding circumstances (so that in the end it is not the circumstances but the people themselves that bring about the postulated choice), “it seems that no Frankfurt example can avoid some small flicker.”¹⁰ Highlighting this discrepancy in most (earlier) Frankfurtian cases on behalf of PAP (or some derivative of it) is known as the *flicker(-of-freedom) defense*. And as we just witnessed, it works rather well on the original Revenge-type of cases devised by the likes of Frankfurt.

[4] Frankfurtian new-compatibilists are not without a reply at this point. If the libertarian flicker-defense keys in on the fact that these Frankfurtian examples (meant to

nevertheless false, if Premise (2) can be shown to be false, an incompatibilist will not be able to use this argument to show that a determined act cannot be done freely (in a morally relevant way). In other words, rejection of Premise (2) would lend support to compatibilism and the prospect of attaining “irreducible agency despite the fixity of the future,” which is what Helm wants. I thank Edward Wierenga for his suggestion that I make this connection between Frankfurtian scholarship against PAP and Helm’s pursuit of “irreducible agency, despite the fixity of the future” explicit.

⁹ John Martin Fischer coined the phrase in *Metaphysics of Free Will: An Essay on Control* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1994), 137-47.

¹⁰ *MRAP*, 7.

counter PAP) allow too much freedom and agential control *in* the prior-signs that they posit, the Frankfurtians can easily reconfigure their examples to consist only of even smaller flickers that explicitly preclude all such voluntary control. One can revamp them, for instance, so that the respective prior signs consist only of “behaviors” or “signals” that are by their very nature involuntary (like a blush or a furrowed brow¹¹). That is, while these (as prior-signs, should one of them occur or never do so by a certain time) may reliably indicate to the CI what the agent would certainly do (if she was left to herself), these signs, pushed so far back in the action-acquisition sequence, would no longer consist of any voluntary acts on the agent’s part. The Frankfurtian upshot here would then be that if the person, after exhibiting the right involuntary prior-sign, makes *on her own* the desired-decision with no input from elsewhere, she would still be morally responsible for that choice, even if she could not have done anything else from the moment that she had exhibited that involuntary prior-sign. With this kind of adjustment that supposedly removes from the picture all alternatives under one’s *voluntary* control, a Frankfurtian can then perhaps try to repudiate the principle according to which “one must have the ability to choose or do otherwise *voluntarily* if he or she is to choose anything responsibly.”

The truth is this new move only highlights the fact that the kind of alternatives that actually matter in this debate over PAP’s general plausibility is the *voluntary* kind, for all parties would agree that those alternative possibilities that should matter to the defenders of PAP “cannot merely be occurrences like neurological patterns or blushes over which the agent has no voluntary control whatsoever. How much free will would we

¹¹ Examples cited by John Martin Fischer himself as “too thin a reed on which to rest moral responsibility.” See John Martin Fischer, “Frankfurt-type Examples and Semi-Compatibilism,” 288-9.

have if the only way we can do otherwise is involuntarily, by accident or mistake, rather than voluntarily or on purpose?”¹² To rightly repudiate a Frankfurtian, one must in other words show in his or her flicker-defense that the subtly untouched alternatives in a given Frankfurtian case are the illegitimately robust and voluntary type (that would then properly ground moral responsibility all by itself). However, as we just saw, to every flicker-of-freedom defense, a Frankfurtian can push back the moment of prior-signs to the point where it precludes all voluntariness. Is the flicker-defense then so easily defused?

[5] Once we get to this stage of the debate whereby a Frankfurtian is forced to construct his or her example (a) to consist *at most* of alternative possibilities that are clearly beyond one’s voluntary control and (b) yet totally indicative of a particular ensuing choice (as the latter follows determinedly from these involuntary signs), we can anticipate the following problem for the Frankfurtians. It has to do with the supposed determinate connection between the prior-*involuntary*-sign and its ensuing “*voluntary*” choice. That is, how could such an involuntary sign indicate so certainly what the agent would “voluntarily” choose, unless there is actually a *determinative* connection between the two? In other words, if there is such a determinate connection between an involuntary sign and the ensuing “voluntary” action, in what sense could the latter be genuinely voluntary? To put it yet another way, how could that which is so personal and agential be guaranteed by that which is totally impersonal and involuntary in nature? Unless one already presupposes compatibilism, this idea that a *voluntary* action can be so certainly

¹² Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 87.

guaranteed by such an impersonal and involuntary change within the agent would not gain any traction.

Another way to approach the subject is to point out how such a Frankfurtian response fails to capture an IRR¹³ situation that Frankfurt originally set out to establish (in order to dismiss the importance of voluntary alternatives, *without* assuming as above that compatibilism is true). To reiterate, an IRR situation consists of circumstances that “in no way bring it about that a person performs the action, but at the same time make it impossible for her to avoid performing the action.” When the possible moment of flicker-of-freedom is pushed so far back in the possible action-sequence so that a determinative link must now exist between such an involuntary sign and the supposed free action, the hypothesized situation of the prior (impersonal) circumstance most definitely fails to “in no way bring it about that [the] person performs the action.” In other words, it fails to capture the relevant IRR situation.

Strategically pointing out this potential delinquency (in the abovementioned Frankfurtian response to the earlier flicker defense) is known as the *prior-sign dilemma defense* (or *dilemma defense*, for short).¹⁴ So, again, if the flickers in the prior signs are

¹³ According to Alfred R. Mele and David Robb, David Widerker came up with this term “IRR” in quoting Frankfurt (1969, 830; 837) in Widerker, “Libertarianism and Frankfurt’s Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities,” *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995): 248. See “Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws: The Metaphysics of Frankfurt-style Cases,” in *MRAP*, 125, 137. Incidentally, “IRR” stands for the fact that “the readiness of the intervener to prevent other possibilities is *irrelevant* to decision.” See also Widerker in <http://www.informationphilosopher.com/solutions/philosophers/widerker/>.

¹⁴ Widerker and McKenna employ this title in *MRAP*, 8. The advocates of such *dilemma defense* include Robert Kane, James Lamb, David Widerker, Carl Ginet, and Keith Wyma. See Kane, “The Dual Regress of Free Will and the Role of Alternative Possibilities,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 57-80; Lamb, “Evaluative Compatibilism and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” *Journal of Philosophy* 90 (1993): 517-27; Widerker, “Blameworthiness and Frankfurt’s Argument Against the Principle of Alternative Possibilities,” in *MRAP*, 53-74; Ginet, “In Defense of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities: Why I Don’t Find Frankfurt’s Argument Convincing,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 10 (1996): 403-17; and Wyma, “Moral Responsibility and the Leeway for Action,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1997): 57-70.

rendered robust enough (to consist of certain voluntary choosing), the first part of the IRR situation (about the agent herself bringing about the choice) is well-preserved, but *not* the second half (about the circumstances *not* allowing the agent to avoid the given choice). On the other hand, if the flickers are pushed so far back in the scenario so as to rule out all possible voluntariness in these alternative action indicators, then while “the no-AP (or the second)” condition of the IRR situation may well be preserved, the first condition concerning how these prior involuntary signs or non-agential happenings “in no way bring it about that a person performs the action” fails to hold.¹⁵ So, either way, the desired Frankfurtian IRR situation does not occur. In other words, at each time, a Frankfurtian must face a dilemma between (1) (ii) having no meaningful voluntary

¹⁵ For earlier versions of such a dilemma-defense, consider the following by David Widerker and Robert Kane, as they do differ from each other in the following way: On the one hand, Widerker maintains his version as follows in “Libertarianism and Frankfurt’s Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities” (1995): “Either the truth of (1) [i.e., “If Jones is blushing at t1, then, provided no one intervenes, Jones will decide at t2 to kill Smith”] is grounded in some fact that is causally sufficient (in the circumstances) for Jones’s decision at t2 to kill Smith, or it is not. If it is, then the situation described by Frankfurt is not an IRR-situation, since the factor that makes it impossible for Jones to avoid his decision to kill Smith *does* bring about that decision. On the other hand, if the truth of (1) is not thus grounded, it is hard to see how Jones’s decision is unavoidable.” On the other hand, Kane’s formulation, at least the way he originally states it (in *Free Will and Values* (1985), 51, n. 25 and *The Significance of Free Will* (1996), 142), has more to do with the fact that without presuming determinism, Black has no way of knowing in advance what Jones will decide for sure to do at the desired time. Kane summarizes this nicely in *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (2005) on 87-8, as follows: “Suppose Jones’s choice is undetermined up to the moment when it occurs, as many incompatibilists and libertarians require of a *free* choice. Then a Frankfurt controller, such as Black, would face a problem in attempting to control Jones’s choice. For if it is undetermined up to the moment when he chooses whether Jones will choose A or B, then the controller Black cannot know *before* Jones actually chooses what Jones is going to do. Black may wait until Jones actually chooses in order to see what Jones is going to do. But then it will be too late for Black to intervene. Jones will be responsible for the choice in that case, since Black stayed out of it. But Jones will also have had [“voluntary”] *alternative possibilities*, since Jones’s choice of A or B was undetermined and therefore it could have gone either way. Suppose, by contrast, Black wants to *ensure* that Jones will make the choice Black wants (choice A). Then Black cannot stay out of it until Jones chooses. He must instead act *in advance* to bring it about that Jones chooses A. In that case, Jones will indeed have no alternative possibilities, but neither will Jones be responsible for the outcome. Black will be responsible since Black will have intervened in order to bring it about that Jones would choose as Black wanted.” In short, the crux of the dilemma for Widerker revolves around the supposed reliability or non-reliability of *the prior-sign* itself, whereas for Kane, it revolves around what supposedly follows from whether Black gets involved or not, as we positively assume the *non-reliability* of such signs. This being the case, the formulation that I have just adopted is essentially Widerkerian, as it is primarily about the nature of the prior-sign itself, not what supposedly follows from Black’s action or inaction.

alternatives whatsoever and so giving up on (i) no causal determinism and (2) having voluntary alternatives in the flickers of freedom to circumvent causal determinism, but in doing so letting go of (ii) having no meaningful voluntary APs in choosing.

[6] The current state of the Frankfurtian scholarship is then to see if “it is possible to get around [this] powerful point made by the dilemma-defender[s of PAP].”¹⁶ At least four major strands of such strategy exist today. Each tries to show that “moral responsibility does not require alternative possibilities, *even if* choices are undetermined right up to the moment they occur”¹⁷ (i.e., each tries to show (ii) no AP condition, (i) *without* begging the question on causal determinism). In other words, they all try to construct a counterexample to PAP whereby their respective ensuring or AP-eliminating conditions (i) do not produce the outcomes themselves (ii) in their uniquely fixing the future. In pursuit of this ideal, these Frankfurtians are then essentially engaged in the same project as Helm, as they too are in their respective trials attempting to come up with a plausible notion of “(i) irreducible agency, (ii) despite the fixity of the future.” The question is whether any of the major approaches could do this successfully in their concentrated attempt, and what its overall outcome would entail for us and Helm. We turn now to the investigation of each of these major strategies.

II. David Hunt and Pure-Blockage Strategy

[1] To briefly introduce the terrain of this debate, two of the four major schools of Frankfurtian scholarship (in creating their (ii) only-one-outcome-ensuring conditions) deliberately try not to rely on any prior signs at all, as such signs must consist of either

¹⁶ *MRAP*, 9.

¹⁷ Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction*, 88.

(1) the involuntary kind that unwittingly postulates a sure causal relation between itself (i.e., an *impersonal* circumstance) and the supposedly ensuing *personal* action or (2) the voluntary kind whose manifestation is in itself a significant voluntary act of the will that could have been avoided at will (and so lends itself to the denial of (ii) the fixity of the future). Instead of relying on such prior signs that would be troublesome either way, these two schools of Frankfurtian strategy resort to a blockage.

[2] First, the simple-blockage example employed by David Hunt posit the actual blockage of *any* neural path other than the one leading to the desired decisional-outcome, and the blockage here is supposed to persist during the entire interval of the agent's action.¹⁸ For instance, consider the following description:

Suppose Jones is deliberating about whether to vote for presidential candidate A or presidential candidate B. Since Black wants Jones to choose A, he places a barrier at the end of the neural pathway in Jones's brain leading to choice B, so that Jones could not choose B if he were about to [do] so. But Jones can still choose A on his own anyway. So the barrier need not come into play. Here is a simple example that helps to clarify this blockage idea. Imagine Jones is walking down a dark corridor in a castle. He comes to a fork, where there is a door on the left (A) and [a] door on the right (B). He goes through door A. But, unknown to Jones, door B was locked (by Black). So Jones could not have gone through door B. Nonetheless, Jones did go through door A on his own, not knowing door B was blocked. Black did not interfere with the deliberation process that led to Jones going through door A, even though Jones could not have done otherwise.¹⁹

Note that blockage cases like this do not rely on prior-signs or a merely *counterfactual* intervener as the earlier "Revenge" example does.²⁰ Instead, here, Black *actually*

¹⁸ MRAP, 10.

¹⁹ See Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 89.

²⁰ Although it is pretty similar to the "forefather" of all Frankfurt-type counterexamples: namely, John Locke's "sealed house" case, whereby the protagonist is supposed to choose to stay inside of the house thinking that it is because he loves to do so and not because he could not leave the house. Not testing the doorknob, the protagonist in Locke's scenario would then decide *on his own* to remain in the house (not unlike David Hunt's Jones who chooses to enter through door A, not knowing that door B is securely locked).

intervenes in advance to block one of the two alternatives and have it remain that way for the rest of the duration.

Has not Black then eliminated all the relevant (voluntary) alternative possibilities for Jones? When we look below the surface, it does not appear to be the case. For instance, there seems to be for Jones more options than simply (A) choosing A or (B) choosing B. Jones might for instance be able to decide (C) never to vote for either candidate or (D) to postpone to make the choice for now. Suppose Black blocked choice B, but not the others. Jones would then still have significant alternate possibilities C and D, besides A. To block *all* of Jones's alternative possibilities besides option A, Black would then have to take away options C and D as well as option B. However, if he did that, it would be as though Black had determined the outcome all by himself. In other words, this sort of essentially complete blockage case looks a lot like the illicit *predetermination* kind that fails to meet the first half of the IRR situation having to do with the agent (and not the external circumstance) bringing about the action.²¹

III. Alfred Mele and David Robb's Modified-Blockage Case

[1] The second, more-complex-blockage²² example (suggested by Alfred Mele and David Robb), besides also deliberately passing up on the prior signs of action, incorporates two distinct decision-making processes that are allegedly operating

²¹ For this section, I am indebted to Robert Kane for his insight. See, for example, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 89-90.

²² Robert Kane calls it a "modified-blockage case" of the "pure-blockage" kind advocated by, say, David Hunt. See, for instance, "Responsibility, Indeterminism and Frankfurt-style Cases," in *MRAP*, 95. David Widerker and Michael McKenna call it "no-prior-sign example," instead. See *MRAP*, 9-11. I prefer Kane's terminology as it is more specific and even foreshadows Kane's strategy to unravel it through analyzing the pure kind first as follows: "I believe that in criticizing modified blockage cases like theirs, one must first see what is wrong with the pure blockage cases. One can then use what one has learned about pure blockage cases when dealing with the modified cases." See *MRAP*, 96.

independently of each other until the very end of the process to expressly avoid such a charge of illicit predetermination of the outcome as follows:

At $t1$, Black initiates a certain deterministic process P in Bob's brain with the intention of thereby causing Bob to decide at $t2$ (an hour later, say) to steal Ann's car. The process, which is screened off from Bob's consciousness, will deterministically culminate in Bob's deciding at $t2$ to steal Ann's car unless he decides on his own at $t2$ to steal it or is incapable at $t2$ of making a decision (because, for example, he is dead by $t2$) ... As it happens, at $t2$ Bob decides on his own to steal the car, on the basis of his own indeterministic deliberation about whether to steal it, and his decision has no deterministic cause. But if he had not just then decided on his own to steal it, P would have deterministically issued, at $t2$, in his deciding to steal it. Rest assured that P in no way influences the indeterministic decision-making process that actually issues in Bob's decision.²³

Later in the essay, Mele and Robb label this *indeterministic* deliberative process that issues in Bob's own decision, "process x ."²⁴

What is particularly important here is that the provision of this x (and its being indeterministic) is meant to allow the particular decision (that supposedly issues spontaneously from Bob) to be unequivocally Bob's, all the while the *other* independently deterministic process P (supposedly set in motion at $t1$) is to guarantee that Bob chooses to steal Ann's car at $t2$ for sure (provided that he is not incapacitated through, say, death). With these two processes in place, this modified blockage perspective then appears to effectively secure the IRR situation without (a) spuriously relying on some prior sign which would be either (i) some *voluntary* choice (that could have then been by definition avoided by the agent *at will*) or (ii) some involuntary and impersonal circumstance (that would then for some mysterious reason causally ensure the ensuing "personal" action), or (b) postulating a complete blockage that would then

²³ Alfred Mele and David Robb, "Rescuing Frankfurt-Style Cases," *Philosophical Review* 107 (1998): 101-2. Henceforth, "RFSC."

²⁴ Mele and Robb, "RFSC," 104.

(without involving any prior-sign) entail the illicit predetermination of the outcome from the start. Does not this modified-blockage model then effectively establish the falsity of PAP without suffering from the deficits of its predecessor?

The answer to this depends on whether Mele and Robb's scenario is ultimately coherent. To recap, their scenario consists of the independently deterministic process P that allegedly does not predetermine how x turns out at t_2 , because each process supposedly proceeds independently of each other until t_2 . It is for instance this very feature of not having to be impacted by P until the very moment of decision by x that Bob's own decision proceeding from x could be deemed Bob's own. Yet, for this to occur in the context of (i) two independently operating chains of deliberative processes that supposedly preempt each other just right (ii) so that Bob's decision at t_2 to steal Ann's car would be guaranteed however x pans out at t_2 , one must postulate two things as follows: on the one hand, if Bob's own process x ends in the desired choice at t_2 (as it is supposed to in the actual sequence of this scenario), then x must preempt or override P by making P inoperative *just then*. On the other hand, if x happens to fail at t_2 , P should preempt or override this voluntary process and cause in its place Bob's decision *at* t_2 to steal Ann's car. PAP is then assumed to be false because despite "[g]iven the details of the case, *any* future open to Bob after the initiation of P in which he is capable at t_2 of making a decision includes his deciding at t_2 to steal the car,"²⁵ Bob *could* still be morally responsible for his decision to steal the car (as long as it happens through x).

[2] Yet, given this particular set up, coherence seems to be at stake. First, given the presence of P and its determinedness, how could x preempt P *right at* t_2 ? That is, to

²⁵ Mele and Robb, "RFSC," 103. Emphasis mine.

use Mele and Robb's own words, "how can it happen that Bob decides on his own at t_2 to steal the car, and that P does not produce the decision, given what we said about P ?"²⁶

There is a dual concern here. On the one hand, P is supposed to be effective only if x fails to materialize at t_2 , not before, which seems then to indicate that P must *wait* until x fails to materialize at t_2 , to only *then* become effective. However, at face value, if P has to wait this long, the earliest time that P could legitimately cause a decision (or "light up the right decision-node") in the counterfactual scenario or "alternate-sequence" appears to be *shortly after t_2* .²⁷ On the other hand, if x does not and cannot culminate in the desired decision *until t_2* , how could x prevent P from being effective *at t_2* in the actual scenario?²⁸

To this first objection, Mele and Robb have an ingenious answer in the form of a special widget-making machine that comes close to demonstrating the conceptual plausibility of their model as follows:

The machine, designed by a specialist in machine art, produces artistic widgets of different shapes and colors. The colors of the widgets produced are determined by the color of a ball bearing (bb) that hits the machine's receptor at a relevant time. The machine, M , is surrounded by several automatic bb guns, each containing bbs of various colors. The relevant aspect of M 's mechanical design, for our purposes,

²⁶ Mele and Robb, "RFSC," 103.

²⁷ Mele and Robb credit this particular objection to Carl Ginet in their "Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws: The Metaphysics of Frankfurt-style Cases," in *MRAP*, 133-4. Ginet's objection is found in his "Libertarianism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, eds. Dean W. Zimmerman and Michael J. Loux (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 587-611.

²⁸ Mele and Robb credit this version of the timing objection (or "efficacy problem") to David Widerker and Timothy O'Connor in their "Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws," *MRAP*, 133. See in particular David Widerker's "Frankfurt's Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities: A Further Look," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 183-4; and Timothy O'Connor's *Persons and Causes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 83-4. Mele and Robb point out the subtle distinction between Widerker and O'Connor's objection, on the one hand, and Ginet's, on the other hand, as follows in *MRAP*, 133: "while Widerker and O'Connor say that by t_2 it is too late for x to prevent P from causing the decision in the actual scenario, Ginet says that at t_2 it is too early for P to cause the decision in the counterfactual scenario [as x fails to cause the decision *right at t_2*]."

is relatively simple. First, with one qualification, if a bb of color x hits M 's receptor, and M is not already in the process of making a widget, M at once starts a process designed to result in the production of an x -colored widget. Second, because two or more bbs sometimes hit the receptor simultaneously, the artist has designed his machine in such a way that whenever this happens (while M is not busy making a widget) M at once starts a process designed to result in the production of a widget the color of the right-most bb. No other striking of M 's receptor at the same time plays a role in triggering M .²⁹

So, supposedly, “[t]he right-most bb (call it right-bb) preempts the other one (call it left-bb) in the sense that only right-bb causes M to begin making a widget at t .”³⁰ Now, this is importantly analogous to Bob’s situation in that, on the one hand, “if an unconscious deterministic process in his brain and an indeterministic decision-making process of his were to ‘coincide’ at the moment of decision, he would indeterministically decide on his own and the deterministic process would have no effect on his decision.”³¹ If, on the other hand, the two processes fail to coincide at the moment of decision (due to the non-culmination of x , say, at brain node NI , which would in this case be analogous to the receptor of M) so that the deterministic process P does not get preempted by x at t_2 , then P would *directly* cause Bob’s decision at t_2 , just as a left-bb would directly cause M to begin making its corresponding widget as soon as it strikes the receptor in the absence of a right-bb.³²

²⁹ Mele and Robb, “RFSC,” 103, cited in their “Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws,” in *MRAP*, 134. In “RFSC,” 103n13, Mele and Robb further postulate that “[t]he rectangular receptor is too small for two bbs simultaneously to tie for the right-most position.”

³⁰ Mele and Robb, *MRAP*, 135.

³¹ Mele and Robb, “RFSC,” 103-4.

³² Mele and Robb, *MRAP*, 135.

Now, concerning the first objection just raised, this idea of a special widget-making machine (with its explicit provision for “occurrent” or direct preemption³³) seems to do the trick. To remind ourselves, the first worry was about this timing issue: how could x , if it cannot light up node NI (or produce the decision) *until* t_2 , prevent P from actually producing the decision in its place *at* t_2 ? To approach it from the other way, if P (in the counterfactual situation) is indeed not allowed to light up NI unless x first fails to do so *at* t_2 , how could P light up NI *by* t_2 (without x 's confirmed absence *at* t_2)? For these particular timing worries, Mele and Robb's new model seems to definitely work.

[3] This new model, however, does not solve everything. Granted that, in Mele and Robb's modified blockage case, especially equipped with the new widget-production analogy, we are now certain that there is nothing wrong conceptually with (a) x 's successfully preempting P *at* t_2 (in case x and P *converge*, as in the supposed actual case), or (b) P 's culminating in the decision *at* t_2 (as in the supposed counterfactual case), as x fails to materialize in the decision to steal the car *at* t_2 . The new question is, how would Mele and Robb, or anyone else, ensure further that within such a set-up, x does not supplant P prior to t_2 , or for that matter, it does not culminate in a decision that actually *conflicts with* and *undermines* P *at* t_2 ?

That is, how would anyone make sure to keep x and P from actually *diverging* from each other either *prior* to or *at* t_2 ? Now, this is the second challenge Mele and Robb must face. To respond to this and other potential follow-up questions, Mele and Robb extend their model to include two “decision nodes” in Bob's brain as follows:

³³ Mele and Robb trace this idea of “occurrent” or direct preemption (that supposedly effects its preemption without undergoing intermediate steps) to Douglas Ehring's *Causation and Persistence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 47-9. See, “RFSC,” 104n14. Mele and Robb talk about it some more in their “Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws,” in *MRAP*, 134.

The ‘lighting up’ of node *N1* represents his deciding to steal the car, and the ‘lighting up’ of node *N2* represents his deciding *not* to steal the car. Under normal circumstances and in the absence of preemption, a process’s ‘hitting’ a decision node in Bob ‘lights up’ that node. If it were to be the case both that *P* hits *N1* at *t2* and that *x* does not hit *N1* at *t2*, then *P* would light up *N1*. If both processes were to hit *N1* at *t2*, Bob’s indeterministic deliberative process, *x*, would light up *N1* and *P* would not ... [I]f, at *t2*, *P* were to hit *N1* and *x* were to hit *N2*, *P* would prevail ... *P* would light up *N1* and the indeterministic process would not light up *N2*.³⁴

Now, this account of how things must pan out sounds fine all the way up to the point where the authors talk about the possible convergence of different bbs at *N1*. After all, their illustration of the widget-making machine was supposed to cover that. The problem emerges as they talk about what should happen when the bbs *diverge* in such a way that while *P* hits *N1* at *t2*, *x* hits *N2* at *t2*. The authors explain that in that case *P* should preempt *x* and so prevail. But how would they be able to guarantee that?

According to Mele and Robb, this last scenario would work if “without affecting what goes on in *x* ... by *t2*, *P* has *neutralized all* of the nodes in Bob for decisions that are contrary to the decision at *t2* to steal Ann’s car (for example, the decision at *t2* not to steal anyone’s car and the decision at *t2* never to steal anything) ... by *t2* *P* has *neutralized N2 and all* its ‘cognate decision nodes.’”³⁵ Now that there is such an explicit suggestion here, we have a few things to address. For instance, as it stands, “by *t2*” is too ambiguous. That is, as the authors themselves acknowledge in their own footnote to this passage, there are at least two very different ways of reading such neutralization *by t2*.³⁶ One possible reading is to take it as “at *t2*.” With the first reading, *x*’s “full divergence”

³⁴ See Mele and Robb, “RFSC,” 104-5. See also *MRAP*, 129, where they revisit the whole story.

³⁵ Mele and Robb, “RFSC,” 105. Emphasis mine. By “*N2*’s cognate decision nodes,” Mele and Robb mean to include all those decision nodes that are equivalent to *N2* *in its being inconsistent with N1*.

³⁶ See Mele and Robb, “RFSC,” 105n16.

from P would be quite possible anytime *prior* to $t2$. For instance, should x light up $N2$ (or “its cognate node”) at $t1$ (*prior* to $t2$), Bob would decide at $t1$ not to steal Ann’s car, only to change his mind and decide to steal it *at* $t2$, as P finally hits $N1$ as scheduled. Another way to read it – the way the authors themselves prefer it (“owing to its relative simplicity”) – would be to think of “by $t2$ ” as “*having been the case since* $t1$,” whereby P neutralizes $N2$ as soon as Black initiates P at $t1$.³⁷ However, according to this second reading, divergence between x and P would not be possible at all since $t1$.

Once delineated in these two divergent ways, we are now in a good place to address the second set of questions with which we began this section: namely, “How could Mele and Robb, or for that matter, anyone else, keep x and P from truly *diverging* from each other *prior* to and *at* $t2$? And what does this tell us about its ultimate success and coherence?” When it comes to “*at* $t2$,” according to *both* readings, thanks to Mele and Robb’s explicit stipulation (according to which, “by $t2$, P has neutralized all of the nodes in Bob for decisions that are contrary to a decision at $t2$ to steal Ann’s car”), the problem of divergence has been effectively squashed. So far, so good.

When it comes to “*prior* to $t2$,” according to the first reading, there is plenty of room for Bob to be in a state of mind or volition that is in contrast to the decisional state to steal Ann’s car at $t2$. In this case, Bob would be obviously free *prior* to $t2$, but he would also have plenty of alternatives to choose from prior to $t2$. In other words, this would not qualify as a successful “IRR-situation” that would be of use to Mele and Robb’s case against PAP.

³⁷ See Mele and Robb, “RFSC,” 105n16.

According to the second reading (i.e., “their preferred reading”), whereby Mele and Robb explicitly stipulate that “*P* has neutralized all of the nodes in Bob for decisions that are contrary to a decision to steal Ann’s car ... *as soon as Black initiates P*,”³⁸ the authors observe as follows concerning “*prior to t2*”:

Imagine that each of the decision nodes in Bob’s head is a bb-receptor, and that *NI* in particular is a right-biased seesaw receptor. A node ‘lights up’ (Bob makes a decision) when a bb strikes it (color is unimportant). As Bob deliberates, a bb is bouncing around in his head, subject to the indeterministic influences of Bob’s beliefs, desires, and reasoning – by way of indeterministic magnets, say ... Not until the moment of decision, *t2*, does the bb finally strike a receptor. Now, in the present case, Bob is deliberating about whether to steal Ann’s car. While Bob slept at *t1*, Black surgically placed a ‘smart bb’ in Bob’s head programmed to do the following. First, it will damage *N2* and all its cognate nodes so that they cannot be lit by a bb-hit. Second, Black’s bb will, at *t2*, strike the left cup of *NI*. Black’s bb otherwise does not interfere with the goings-on in Bob’s head. As things actually turn out, of course, at *t2* Bob’s own bb strikes the right cup of *NI*. Black’s bb strikes *NI*’s left cup, as programmed, but given the right-bias of the seesaw reception, Bob’s own bb preempts Black’s and causes Bob to decide at *t2* to steal Ann’s car. In so deciding, Bob forms an intention to steal Ann’s car – makes a psychological commitment to stealing it. This happens at *t2*, when the cups are struck ... Bob’s deciding to steal Ann’s car was inevitable, but he made his decision entirely on his own. Other things being equal – for example, Bob is sane – he is morally responsible for deciding to steal the car.³⁹

Stated as such, the claims that seem to merit further attention are as follows: (1) “Imagine that each of the decision nodes in Bob’s head is a bb-receptor”; (2) “Not until the moment of decision, *t2*, does the bb finally strike a receptor”; (3) “First, [Black’s “smart bb” in Bob’s head] will damage *N2* and all its cognate nodes so that they cannot be lit by a bb-hit”; (4) “Second, Black’s bb will, at *t2*, strike the left cup of *NI*”; (5) “*Black’s bb otherwise does not interfere with the goings-on in Bob’s head*”; (4’) “Bob’s deciding [at *t2*] to steal Ann’s car was inevitable”; but (5’) “he made his decision entirely on his

³⁸ Mele and Robb, “RFSC,” 105. Emphasis added.

³⁹ Mele and Robb, “Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws,” in *MRAP*, 136.

own.”⁴⁰ In the next two sections, we will see how these claims stand up to further scrutiny.

[4] For Robert Kane and Derk Pereboom, Mele and Robb’s “modified blockage” case eventually turns into a “pure blockage” case that is no better than determinism.⁴¹

Kane explains as follows:

[W]hat would have happened if Black had never implanted his additional deterministic process in Jones’s brain? If Black had never implanted anything in Jones’ brain, Jones[’s] own deliberation process, which was supposed to be indeterministic, might have had different outcomes. For example, Jones might have made choice A or B or C or D [whereby, say, A stands for ‘choosing to steal Ann’s car;’ B stands for ‘choosing to steal Beth’s car;’ C stands for ‘deciding not to steal either car;’ and D stands for ‘deciding to postpone his decision’]. But with Black’s deterministic process implanted things are different. Jones can still make choice A as a result of his own deliberative process. But he can no longer make alternative choices B or C or D as a result of his own deliberative process, for if Jones does not make choice A on his own, Black’s implanted deterministic process will “preempt” Jones’s deliberation and determine that Jones will make choice A. Could Jones still make choice B (or C or D) as a result of his own deliberation process *at the same time* that Black’s deterministic process was making him to choose A? The answer is no. For then Jones would be making contradictory choices; and Mele and Robb do not allow that. They cannot allow Jones to choose B or C or D by his own deliberation process at the same time that Black’s process is making him choose A for another reason as well: for then Jones would have some alternative possible choices that he could make on his own after all, which is just what Black’s implanted process is supposed to prevent. So the mere presence of Black’s implanted process does seem to “make a difference” to Jones’s deliberation. It looks as if, by merely implanting his process, Black has in effect *blocked* all other possible outcomes (B or C or D) of Jones’s own deliberation process but A. Indeed it seems that, as a result of Black’s implanted process, Jones’s own deliberation process is no longer even indeterministic, since

⁴⁰ Mele and Robb, *MRAP*, 136.

⁴¹ Robert Kane, “Responses to Bernard Berofsky, John Martin Fischer and Galen Strawson,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (2000): 162, cited by Pereboom in *Living Without Free Will* (2001), 16, only to be cited again by Mele and Robb in “Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws,” in *MRAP* (2003), 129-30, as follows: “In [a case in which every other alternative is blocked except the agent’s choosing A at *t*], of course, there are no alternative possibilities left to the agent; every one is blocked except the agent’s choosing A at *t*. But now we seem to have determinism pure and simple. By implanting the mechanism in this fashion, a controller would have predetermined exactly what the agent would do (and when); and, as a consequence, the controller, not the agent, would be ultimately responsible for the outcome.”

it can have only one outcome. So this looks like another case of complete blockage.⁴²

The point that Kane makes here is compelling. How could anyone (while remaining in a truly deliberative or voluntary state of being) still withhold herself from choosing A, if choices B, C, and D (and whatever other alternative that she may have) are somehow all effectively removed from the picture? For instance, what other choice would she have, *if* (while being able to do A) she could *no longer* “(D) avoid or postpone her decision making,” “(C) decide positively *not* to steal either car,” and “(B) choose to steal Beth’s car instead?” This would be indisputably true, if we worked with the paradigm according to which one must *remain* in some decisional mode *while* finalizing the decision.

[5] One complicating factor here is that Mele and Robb’s framework significantly deviates from this “continually-being-in-a-decisional-mode” framework that Kane seems to assume. According to Mele and Robb’s paradigm, there is supposedly no decision whatsoever until one of these bbs ends up hitting some “decision node.” And it is precisely because of this that it would be possible to maintain that even with *N2* and all its cognate nodes *gone*, Bob’s own bb need *not* prompt the decision to steal Ann’s car. Within this particular framework, Mele and Robb would still then be entitled to maintain the conceptual coherence of such unfazed indeterminism despite the elimination of all realizable alternatives.

Yet, such a framework seems quite problematic after all. In constructing a model with the goal of creating the conceptual space needed to postulate an intelligent and *voluntary* agent still making a deliberate and responsible choice despite having no other alternative choices, it spuriously relies on the idea of a *freely-roaming-about* “*self-bb*”

⁴² Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction*, 90-1.

that remains non-decisional until the very moment of relevant “decision-making” (as the bb comes into contact with the relevant decisional-node). Such a random and impersonal procedure, however, seems of necessity to jeopardize the very *personal* and *voluntary* fabric of such a decision-making process. How could such a supposedly “*intentional* decision-making process” be devoid of any decisional control or even content until the very moment of the actual decision-trigger? This seems to be the place where Mele and Robb’s model really seems to run stuck, not the place where Kane and Pereboom raised their objection separately.⁴³

For instance, let us grant for now that the “self-bb” somehow does end up hitting *NI* at *t2* just right, this decision-production by the lighting of *NI* (at the absence of any prior contact with a decisional-node) still appears to be a product of *impersonal chance*, rather than that of a deliberate and controlled *personal* process involving some decisional state along the way. That is, in Mele and Robb’s paradigm, although – thanks to this gap that supposedly exists between (i) a particular decisional state (say, “[A, B, C, D] – [B, C, D] = [A]”) and (ii) *x* itself (as an “*independently(-merely)-decision-finalizing*” process) – some indeterminacy for *x* can still be posited even after Black’s smart bb supposedly takes out all the other “*decisional nodes*” besides *NI*, what *personal* good does such indeterminacy preserve, if this indeterministic process, by its very design, cannot involve any decisional control until some bb randomly happens to “bump into” a particular decisional-node (in this case, *NI*) and lights it up out of the blue? How would such an

⁴³ See, for instance, Derk Pereboom’s *Living Without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 15; cited by Mele and Robb in their “Bbs, Magnets and Seesaws,” in *MRAP*, 129.

“undirected” indeterminacy, in other words, contribute or reflect anything cogent about personal and responsible agency?⁴⁴

[6] Having taken all these things into account, we can now fill out Kane’s abovementioned objection as follows: If Black had not initiated at $t1$ his deterministic process P (by implanting his “smart bb” in Bob’s brain), Bob’s own indeterministic deliberative process x (involving the “self-bb”) could have had any one of the outcomes, such as A , B , C , or D (whereby, say, A stands for “choosing to steal Ann’s car;” B stands for “choosing to steal Beth’s car”; C stands for “deciding *not* to steal either car”; and D stands for “deciding to postpone his decision having to do with A , B , or C ”) *at, prior to, or even after $t2$.*

But with Black’s deterministic process P squarely in place, things look rather different. Even if we grant for now that with this P Bob could make choice A on his own *at $t2$* (say, as a result of his own deliberative process), his own process could no longer “reach” alternative choices B , C , or D (or, for that matter, another conceivable “in-between” choice like E that would stand for, “*not positively deciding* (a) to steal or (b) not to steal (either car), or (c) to postpone a decision”)⁴⁵ as soon as the smart bb gets inserted into the brain at $t1$, for since then all the “decisional nodes” that are incompatible

⁴⁴ Incidentally, Derk Pereboom seems to have this sort of random and uncontrollable process in mind when he comments that our fundamental intuition about the importance of agential *control* (in properly grounding moral responsibility) is what is behind our reaction against both determinism *and* the random and uncaused decision-producing process as follows: “It explains not only why one might think that determinism and moral responsibility are incompatible, but also why one might believe that an agent cannot be morally responsible for a decision if it occurs without any cause whatsoever.” See Pereboom, “Source Incompatibilism and Alternative Possibilities,” in *MRAP*, 186.

⁴⁵ Due to, say, “semi-consciously” ignoring it, as something of great value suddenly appears to the self in the scene. I place this addition here to further strengthen Kane’s case. Incidentally, in the case of (c) under E , Bob would “end up” postponing his decision without positively deciding to do so. So, technically, “E(c)” might still be regarded as a species of D . Yet, I leave E(c) in the picture just in case E(c) does not get considered under D due to its ambiguity.

with *NI* (i.e., *N2* and its “cognates”) would be damaged and put out of commission until at least t_2 , while *NI*, to ensure that it is not responsive to x 's bb *prior* to t_2 , would be temporarily out of commission until just a moment prior to t_2 .

What is truly germane to our purpose is that for the process x not to be immediately and necessarily affected by the damage that Black incurs at t_1 on *N2* (and all its cognates that are incompatible with the *decisional-node I*), this process x (at least prior to t_2) better be a *non*-decisional process itself. If it was already a decisional process (so as to be “impregnated with all the decisional options,” as it was presumed to be by Kane), the moment that the decisional options having to do with B, C, and D (and even E) get terminated, it would then inevitably proceed with A. In other words, it is only because we presume that there is some *gap* between the process x itself and all the other decisional options that the process x is not immediately impacted by their wholesale demise. That is, only given this built-in gap between the process x itself and the “*decisional-nodes*” that the elimination of all the nodes besides *NI* does not automatically leave x with just one *automatic* “decision.” Instead, the process x , as it is spearheaded by its own particular indeterministic bb, is presumed to be *free* to “roam around” until t_2 (when it can then either (i) get preempted and so be terminated by P or (ii) by “scoring” *NI* just right, preempt P that was determined to hit the “left receptor” of *NI* no matter what) precisely because it was assumed to be an *impersonal* process devoid of decisional content.

[7] On the other hand, if we presume that it is still the self that allegedly controls the process at and prior to t_2 , whatever that transpires from the process x at t_2 would have been a product of *multiple self-directive options*, not something that is made genuinely

inevitable by the elimination of *all* the other nodes besides *NI*. Besides, if it did not come with these multiple options for the self (e.g., as Kane construes it to be by taking out all the options besides A), we would not be so inclined to say that wherever *x* ends up is really *up to* the self in a way that is conducive to grounding moral responsibility.

[8] Therefore, as a way of summary, in any way that we spin it, with enough specificity, we can always decipher whether “Bob’s” decision at *t2* is either really Bob’s or not, and that all seems to depend on whether the most proximate process that actually produces the final decision happens to occur *automatically* in the absence of the alternatives controllable by the self. So, in the end, Mele and Robb’s case fails to vindicate “irreducible agency (despite the fixity of the future),” as it fails to refute the importance of all actional alternatives within one’s meaningful voluntary choice.

IV. Eleonore Stump and Internal-Sign Case

[1] *Internal-sign examples* do incorporate and depend on a *sign* of a purportedly free act of will to make sure that things do not get out of hand, but unlike prior-sign examples, its sign allegedly corresponds with *the initial stages within* the given act’s temporal interval to make sure that the act itself is not causally determined by that sign. So, either the sign signals the initial stages *of* the desired choice, or some other sign would signal its denial. If the latter happens, then the intervener steps in, otherwise she does not. Eleonore Stump then presents her version of a Frankfurt-style *Internal-sign* counterexample to PAP along these lines as follows:⁴⁶

⁴⁶ This rendition is a revised version of the one that was originally presented by John Martin Fischer in his “Responsibility and Control,” *Journal of Philosophy* 89 (1982): 26. This paper was then reprinted in *Moral Responsibility*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 174-90. See Eleonore Stump, “Moral Responsibility without Alternative Possibilities,” in *Moral*

Suppose that a neurosurgeon Grey wants his patient Jones to vote for Republicans in the upcoming election. Grey has a neuroscope which lets him both observe and bring about neural firings which correlate with acts of will on Jones's part. Through his neuroscope, Grey ascertains that every time Jones wills to vote for Republican candidates, that act of his will correlates with the completion of a sequence of neural firings in Jones's brain that always includes, near its beginning, the firing of neurons a, b, c (call this neural sequence 'R'). On the other hand, Jones's willing to vote for Democratic candidates is correlated with the completion of a different neural sequence that always includes, near its beginning, the firing of neurons x, y, z, none of which is the same as those in neural sequence R (call this neural sequence 'D'). For simplicity's sake, suppose that neither neural sequence R nor neural sequence D is also correlated with any further set of mental acts. Again, for simplicity's sake, suppose that Jones's only relevant options are an act of will to vote for Republicans or an act of will to vote for Democrats. Then Grey can tune his neuroscope accordingly. Whenever the neuroscope detects the firing of x, y, and z, the initial neurons of neural sequence D, the neuroscope immediately disrupts the neural sequence, so that it isn't brought to completion. The neuroscope then activates the coercive neurological mechanism which fires the neurons of neural sequence R, thereby bringing about that Jones wills to vote for Republicans. But if the neuroscope detects the firing of a, b, and c, the initial neurons in neural sequence R which is correlated with the act of will to vote for Republicans, then the neuroscope does not interrupt that neural sequence.⁴⁷

Suppose that the latter happens, so that neural sequence R is allowed to carry on uninterruptedly (i.e., without any input from Grey) until it actually culminates in Jones's decision to vote for Republicans. In that case, a couple of things seem to follow, according to Stump. First, it seems that (as Stump would have it) "Jones is morally responsible for his act of will to vote for Republicans, although it ... was not possible for Jones to do anything other than willing to vote for Republicans."⁴⁸ Second, this is all true thankfully without having to posit (as in prior-sign examples) that a deterministic relation exists between some non-agential *prior-sign* and the ensuing act of the will. By explicitly

Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities, eds. David Widerker and Michael McKenna (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 140.

⁴⁷ Stump, "Moral Responsibility without Alternative Possibilities," in *MRAP*, 140.

⁴⁸ Stump, *MRAP*, 140.

stipulating that the intervener's mechanism is sensitive only to something that is already a part of the indeterministic act itself, Stump's "internal-sign" case then deliberately avoids the pitfall of importing a questionable determinism into the case the way that a typical prior-sign case does. And in thus avoiding the Widerkerian objection that the victim in a typical Frankfurtian story cannot act indeterministically, it secures freedom and responsibility for the agent.⁴⁹

[2] Or at least that is how Stump would try to convince us at first. However, there are a couple of obstacles that Stump must overcome before she can properly secure her objective. According to Stump, one of the objections to the abovementioned scenario comes from Widerker himself, which goes like this: "Despite having such features, in the current set-up, Jones's *act* of will, contrary to Stump's claim, is not completely indeterministic insofar as its correlate (i.e., the *completion* of the neural firing sequence) is in fact causally necessitated by whatever initial condition that launches it indeterministically." Notwithstanding Widerker's own suggested solution that such a dilemma be fixed by correlating one's act of will with the *entire* sequence of choosing, Stump responds that the way things stand, the initial stages of the sequence as well as the *completion* of the sequence can both be understood as indeterministic insofar as "[i]n a quantum mechanical device in which a quantum event randomly generates an electrical signal, we commonly consider the signal as well as its generating cause indeterministic, even though in the device the quantum event *causes* the signal."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Stump, *MRAP*, 141.

⁵⁰ Stump, *MRAP*, 142. Emphasis mine.

In other words, she maintains here (against Widerker's first objection⁵¹) that even if the mental act is correlated with the actual *completion* of a neural sequence (that proceeds *deterministically*, once it gets started), as long as such a neural sequence is *initiated* indeterministically, there is a legitimate sense in which its completion and whatever corresponds to the latter (in this case, "the mental act of the will") are all indeterministic as well.⁵² For instance, "if the only indeterministic events in material objects are microphysical quantum-indeterministic events," then by Widerker's way of reasoning, all indeterministic mental acts could in no way have any material correspondence in the universe, and this would effectively commit all libertarians to Cartesian dualism.⁵³ Her personal dislike for such dualism notwithstanding, Stump seems fully warranted in finding such a suggestion wholly objectionable. Besides, as Stump points out, if Widerker was right, then all bodily acts that we typically count as free and indeterministic would fail to be so, as their indeterministic initiating conditions would not be preserved in the subsequent chain of bodily causation. So, Stump concludes plausibly that "[i]f a bodily act can count as free in the libertarian sense in virtue of having an indeterministic act of will as the first in a series of causes, then the mental act correlated

⁵¹ Widerker is reported to have maintained against Stump as follows in his "Frankfurt's Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities: A Further Look," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 198n11: "the neural sequence *must* be simultaneous with W(R) [the mental act of willing to vote Republican]. Otherwise, if R [the neural sequence correlated with that mental act] begins before the occurrence of W(R), then W(R) is causally determined by [the firing of neurons] a, b, c ..." See Stump, "Moral Responsibility without Alternative Possibilities," in *MRAP*, 143.

⁵² Stump, *MRAP*, 143-4.

⁵³ Stump, *MRAP*, 143.

with the completion of a neural sequence should also count as free in the same sense, in virtue of the sequence's completion having an indeterministic first cause."⁵⁴

[3] Granted that she is right in this regard, Stump has a long way to go before she could positively establish her case. For instance, according to Widerker's second and more potent objection, in the Scenario (G)⁵⁵ from Section [5.IV.1] above, Jones, contrary to Stump's contention, "still maintains the power to refrain from his decision to vote for a Republican candidate and also has the power to act otherwise."⁵⁶ Widerker starts off that objection with yet another hypothetical scenario, whereby Jones decides how to vote on his own (i.e., with his own libertarian freedom) *while* Grey the CI is missing from the picture as follows:

In that scenario, there would be no reason to think that Jones could not have decided otherwise. Now recall that, on Stump's view of decisions, once the neural firings a, b, c occur, Jones is bound to make W(R) ... This means that the only way in which Jones could have decided [even] in the above scenario [where Grey is expressly missing], is by having the power to bring about the non-occurrence of a, b, c; a power that he would have *before* the occurrence of a, b, c and *not* after that.⁵⁷

The main point that Widerker wants to make here is that such "libertarian power" (i.e., to do otherwise *before* the occurrence of a, b, c) better be granted to Jones even in the scenario that expressly incorporates Grey (and his potentially coercive neuroscope). That is, the only way in which Grey could prevent Jones from finally or actually developing W(D), should things go wrong, would be for him to use his neuroscope *just after* Jones

⁵⁴ Stump, *MRAP*, 144.

⁵⁵ "G" here incidentally stands for "Grey, the evil neurosurgeon."

⁵⁶ David Widerker, "Frankfurt's Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities: A Further Look," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 186. Cited by Stump in *MRAP*, 145.

⁵⁷ Widerker, "Frankfurt's Attack," 186; Cited by Stump in *MRAP*, 145. Emphasis added.

has already initiated the neural firings x, y, and z *on his own*, in the place of the desired a, b, and c sequence. Therefore, Widerker objects plausibly here that Grey's counterfactual power of coercion, even while it is in full operation, does not and cannot impinge on Jones's *libertarian* "power to bring about the non-occurrence of a, b, c."⁵⁸

[4] So, how would Stump respond to this type of objection from Widerker? First, Stump interprets Widerker's objection as follows:

Widerker supposes that Jones's bringing about the firing of neurons a, b, and c is an act of Jones's and that it is an act antecedent to (and therefore different from) the act correlated with the completed neural sequence initiated by the firing of neurons a, b, and c. Because Jones has the power to do or to refrain from doing *this* act, Widerker argues, Jones retains the power to act otherwise in (G).⁵⁹

Frankly, I am not quite sure why Stump makes such claims in her analysis of Widerker's objection.⁶⁰ For instance, in making his objection, must Widerker really posit (as Stump claims) that "Jones's bringing about the firing of neurons a, b, and c" is *different from* "the act correlated with the completed neural sequence initiated by the firing of neurons a, b, and c?" It does not seem to be the case. The answer seems to really depend on one's supposed anatomy of how a person's free willing comes about. If the locus of human freedom lies indeed at the indeterministic *initiation* stage of these neural firing sequences, then whatever overt mental act that supposedly "correlates with the *completed* neural sequence" should be understood as the merely natural outworking or the concretization of

⁵⁸ Widerker, "Frankfurt's Attack," 186; Cited by Stump in *MRAP*, 145.

⁵⁹ Stump, *MRAP*, 145-6.

⁶⁰ Although to be fair, Stump goes through a rather elaborate means to defend her preference. For example, she suggests that going with Widerker's preference would result in either Cartesian dualism or infinite regress. See, for example, Stump's "Moral Responsibility without Alternative Possibilities," in *MRAP*, 146-8. These are both important and interesting considerations, but that does not change the fact that Stump's case is ridden with serious conceptual difficulties. I discuss these difficulties in the rest of this section.

the one free act that already indeterministically initiated at the early stages of such a will-forming process.

[5] Perhaps Stump does not like that picture because it clearly conflicts with her explicit stipulation in the example that *the act of will* does not take place *until* the very end of such a sequence. She wants to then relocate the loci of free will from the beginning of such a sequence to its very end. With that supposition, the following reply to Widerker can, for instance, make some sense: “I think it is a mistake to take Jones as bringing about a neural firing. What Jones has in his power to do in the absence of the counterfactual intervener is *to will* or *to refrain from willing* to vote Republican.”⁶¹

[6] However, if it is really not *Jones* who brings about the indeterministic beginning of such neural firing sequences, then who or what does? Stump ought to answer that question. For one thing, if it is really not Jones himself who brings about the indeterministic beginnings of such neural firing sequences, then how is Stump’s case really any better than a *prior-sign* case that illicitly posits a deterministic connection between the *impersonal* prior-sign and the supposedly ensuing free and *personal* act of the will? In other words, the postulated indeterminism in Stump’s case should help her case *only if* it is the *agent* in the example who brings about that indeterministic launching of events in him or herself with his or her libertarian will. Without such stipulation, all that we have are then random indeterministic beginnings of certain neural firing sequences that are clearly beyond one’s voluntary control.

To put it differently, the main intuition underlying the alternative possibility condition is that if an agent is to be, say, blameworthy for an action, she should have been

⁶¹ Stump, *MRAP*, 156n31. Emphasis added.

able to do something *else* to avoid that blame, or for that matter, something worse *instead*, if she is to be praiseworthy for her choice. So, in order for us to agree with Stump that Jones is indeed responsible for the act of will to vote Republican, Jones should then have been able to do something that is *robustly opposed* to doing that. However, if initiating (and therefore also delaying) whatever sequence of decision is not itself (as Stump stipulates) Jones's own doing, then that involuntary alternative cannot go toward grounding either Jones's actual act of the will to vote Republican *or* putting that off (if that is what she chooses to do among other things). So, by typical libertarian intuition, a legitimate alternative possibility would at least have to consist of the agent's voluntarily *willing* to act in a way that would have kept him from accruing the responsibility that she does in the actual scenario.⁶²

However, whether libertarian or not, stripping the initiation (part of the process that supposedly *determines* the rest of its course) of being under one's voluntary control, Stump effectively strips her indeterminism of its important *personal sourcing* character. On that point of weakness, I could not have said it better than Michael McKenna, who happens to be a Frankfurtian himself. Therefore, I leave Stump's "internal-sign" case with the following observation made by McKenna:

Whatever the particular locus of freely willed action is in any case, if it is to be an indeterministic break that allows the libertarian to show that a free agent's control is *enhanced* by indeterminism, the break must occur at the point that is *within* the agent's control. If the only indeterministic breaks in the etiology of action were to occur at some point in the neurological causes of action at stages *prior* to such moments as belief acquisition, reflection, deliberation, intention formation, judgment to act, and so on, then the indeterminacy would only inject uncontrollable chance or luck into the causal history of human action. Hence it would undermine claims of freedom, not bolster them ... The crucial point is that

⁶² I am indebted to Derk Pereboom for this insight. See Pereboom's "Source Incompatibilism and Alternative Possibilities," in *MRAP*, 187.

the example is designed to rule out alternative possibilities *at* the locus of [one]’s freely willed action.⁶³

V. Derk Pereboom and Necessary-Condition Strategy

[1] Derk Pereboom readily acknowledges the fact that in order to keep the agent’s control rightly in place in the causal history of the action, it is important to locate the “indeterministic breaks in the etiology of action” *at* the loci of freedom, and not prior to it (the way that Stump does above). The fact is, while it is true that Pereboom is by no means a traditional incompatibilist who would maintain the importance of alternative possibilities in each morally responsible action (i.e., the so-called “leeway incompatibilist”),⁶⁴ he does defend a version of incompatibilism, the one known as “source incompatibilism,” “in which the pivotal explanatory role is assigned to features of the causal history of the action” (instead of the availability of alternative possibilities).⁶⁵ Moreover, as this “causal-history-of-the-action” condition (that he calls “the most fundamental and plausible incompatibilist intuition”) is construed to express the thesis according to which “[a]n action is free in the sense required for moral responsibility only if it is not produced by a deterministic process that traces back to causal factors beyond the agent’s control,”⁶⁶ the notion of ultimate sourcing or controlled *origination* takes the center stage for Pereboom as follows:

⁶³ Michael McKenna, “Oodles and Oodles of Alternatives,” in *MRAP*, 203.

⁶⁴ Derk Pereboom, *MRAP*, 185-6. According to the author, this paper derives from his “Alternative Possibilities and Causal Histories,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 119-37 and his *Living Without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-22.

⁶⁵ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 185.

⁶⁶ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 186.

O: If an agent is morally responsible for her deciding to perform an action, then the production [or the origination] of this decision must be something over which the agent has control and an agent is not morally responsible for the decision if it is produced by a source over which the agent has no control.⁶⁷

That is, provided that determinism is true, Pereboom would maintain that no ordinary agent could ever be morally responsible for her actions, as the “source” conditions sufficient for such actions would have been in place long before she could do anything about it.⁶⁸ Moreover, the same “source” spirit compels Pereboom to conclude that “an agent cannot be morally responsible for a decision if it occurs without any cause whatsoever,”⁶⁹ as this would have to follow “[i]f the only indeterministic breaks in the etiology of action were to occur at some point” *prior* to the locus of “self-controlled” and freely willed decision making. Given the importance that he places on such self-controlled *origination* of one’s own decisions, we can then rest assured that for Pereboom,

⁶⁷ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 186.

⁶⁸ For more on this source model of control, the importance of “ultimate sourcing,” and its incompatibility with determinism, I direct the reader to the following explanation from Michael McKenna, “compatibilism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/compatibilism/#2.2>: “Fixing just upon the Source model, how might determinism pose a threat to free will? If determinism is true, then for any person, there are facts of the past prior to her birth that, when combined with the laws of nature, provide causally sufficient conditions for the production of her actions. But if this is so, then, while it might be true that an agent herself provides a source of her action, that source, the one provided by her, itself has a further source that *originates* outside of her. Hence, she, as an agent, is not the *ultimate source* of her actions. What is meant here by an ultimate source, and not just a source? When an agent is an ultimate source of her action, some condition necessary for her action originates with the agent herself. It cannot be located in places and times prior to the agent’s freely willing her action. If an agent is not the ultimate source of her actions, then her actions do not originate in her, and if her actions are the outcomes of conditions guaranteeing them, how can she be said to control them? The conditions sufficient for their occurrence were already in place long before she even existed!” See also Sections [6.I-III] in this dissertation.

⁶⁹ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 186.

a good Frankfurtian scenario would expressly place its indeterministic breaks *at*, and not prior to, “the loci of free will.”⁷⁰

[2] So, how does Pereboom go about validating his source incompatibilism and its general *disregard* for the alternative possibilities while still maintaining that there are (if the act is committed responsibly) indeterministic breaks *at* the loci of free will?

Pereboom tries to do this through first reconstructing the notion of *robustness* (as in “*robust* or morally significant voluntary alternative”) as follows:

For an alternative possibility to be relevant *per se* to explaining an agent’s moral responsibility for an action it must satisfy the following characterization: she could have willed something other than what she actually willed such that she understood that by willing it she would thereby have been precluded from the moral responsibility she actually has for the action.⁷¹

Now, as stated it addresses two important conditions. The first one is the standard *voluntary* alternative condition. This condition has to do with the fact that “a robust sort of alternative possibility would at least involve the agent’s *willing* to act in such a manner that would have precluded the action for which he is in fact morally responsible.”⁷² This “minimal” condition, for instance, effectively puts a fence around the prospect of having only involuntary alternatives (e.g., inadvertently getting killed in a car accident or involuntarily falling into a mysterious coma, etc.). As such involuntary “choices” are totally out of one’s control, they do not and cannot make any moral difference to a person who has them; and as such, it is important that they get fenced off as above to usher in certain voluntariness to the picture.

⁷⁰ The phrase “the loci of free will” actually comes from Michael McKenna. See, for instance, his “Robustness, Control, and the Demand for Morally Significant Alternatives: Frankfurt Examples with Oodles and Oodles of Alternatives,” in *MRAP*, 205. For more on this idea, see Section [5.VI.1].

⁷¹ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 188.

⁷² Pereboom, *MRAP*, 187. Emphasis added.

The second condition that Pereboom mentions is an epistemic one. In order to count as a morally relevant or *robust* alternative *in itself* (i.e., a legitimate “game-changer”), Pereboom maintains that besides being able to will the alternative *at will* (i.e., the first condition) the agent must also *understand* that by willing such an alternative “she would thereby have been precluded from the moral responsibility she actually has for the action [that she chooses in the scenario].”⁷³ Now it is on this additional or second condition of robustness that Pereboom’s account seems to either stand or fall, but what exactly does Pereboom have in mind with such an epistemic condition?

If we may talk about it in two stages, the first stage is simply concerning how for an alternative to be morally relevant *as* an actional alternative, the agent who could willingly choose it must be able to choose it *as* a morally significant alternative, being *fully aware of* its moral ramification *in contradistinction from* the actual choice that she is supposed to make in the given scenario. For instance, Pereboom invites his readers to think about it along these lines as follows:

Imagine that the only way in which Jones could have voluntarily avoided deciding to kill Smith is by taking a sip from his coffee cup prior to making this decision, and this is only because it was poisoned so that taking a sip would have killed him instantly. Suppose that Jones does not understand that this action would preclude his deciding to kill, because he has no idea that the coffee is poisoned. In this situation, Jones could have voluntarily behaved in such a manner that would have precluded the action for which he was in fact blameworthy, as a result of which he would have avoided the moral responsibility he actually has. But whether he could have voluntarily taken the sip from the coffee cup, not understanding that it would render him blameless in this way, is irrelevant *qua* alternative possibility to explaining why he is morally responsible for deciding to kill.⁷⁴

⁷³ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 188.

⁷⁴ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 187-8.

In other words, if the agent possesses no clear awareness of the alternative's moral significance to the actual action, then even if willable, it could only have an *accidental* connection to the first as an alternative. For instance, as much as drinking from the coffee cup would have been a voluntary alternative insofar as it could have been chosen at will and so for a reason, if such a reason consists only of something as mundane as, say, (a) simply to wet one's lips or (b) to enjoy its taste, then this alternative could not have any genuine moral bearing on the choice to kill Smith. As such, Pereboom seems fully justified in concluding that such an alternative, even if it would have effectively prevented Jones from making the decision to kill Smith, seems insufficiently robust to go toward grounding Jones's *moral* responsibility in deliberately deciding to kill Smith.⁷⁵

[3] Having thus set the new epistemic condition for robustness as above, the next question that Pereboom raises is whether, given the legitimacy of Kane and Widerker's dilemma-objection, it is possible to construct a Frankfurt-style case that successfully avoids (a) determinism in the actual sequence (b) without thereby allowing the agent a *robust* alternative possibility (or "alternate sequence," to use Fischer's terminology⁷⁶). Given the fact that "whenever a Frankfurt-style case relies on a prior sign that is too early in the sequence (so as to preclude all voluntarism from it), the case of necessity falls short as a counterexample to PAP," would it be possible to construct a successful Frankfurtian case whereby the agent causes the action herself (i.e., without being determined to do so by some earlier sign over which she has had no control) all the while lacking any *robust*

⁷⁵ Concerning this epistemic condition for a morally relevant alternative possibility *per se*, I will come back to it later in Section [5.V.7].

⁷⁶ See Section [6.II.1].

alternative to that “indeterministic actual-actional-sequence” that she in fact produces?⁷⁷
This is Pereboom’s new objective.

[4] So, first, by way of addressing this question, what is really wrong with determinism in the actual sequence? Why should people like Pereboom want to avoid it in the first place? For instance, he is well aware of John Martin Fischer’s earlier contention that determinism is not the real problem here. Fischer maintains, for instance, that in the earlier Frankfurt-style cases that involve such determinism (whereby, say, an involuntary *blush* serves as the causally determinative sign to the ensuing overt action), it is not simply because the agent could not have done otherwise that she appears to be morally off the hook, but because *whatever* that supposedly gave rise to the action (in this deterministic way) did not seem all that compatible with the *agent*’s being the ultimate causal origin of her own action as follows:

I think that the examples make highly plausible the preliminary conclusion that if Jones is not morally responsible for his choice and action, this is not simply because he lacks alternative possibilities. After all, everything that has causal (or any other kind of) influence on Jones would be exactly the same, if we ‘subtracted’ Black entirely from the scene. And Jones’s moral responsibility would seem to be supervenient on what has an influence or impact on him in some way. So the relevant (preliminary) conclusion is, if Jones is not morally responsible for his choice and action, this is not simply because he lacks alternative possibilities. And it does not appear to beg the question to come to this conclusion, even if causal determinism obtains.⁷⁸

To this suggestion that the real problem with certain Frankfurtian cases must be the flimsiness of the actual-sequence itself, and not the determinism *per se*, Pereboom, however, aptly responds that while earlier Frankfurt-style arguments may substantially

⁷⁷ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 190.

⁷⁸ John Martin Fischer, “Recent Work on Moral Responsibility,” 113. Cited by Pereboom in *MRAP*, 190.

“enliven that *possibility*,”⁷⁹ it comes nowhere near proving it. So, to Fischer’s suggestion that the leeway incompatibilists who are unfazed by Fischer’s claim here may be so because they are being unreasonable, Pereboom dismisses it by saying, “I doubt that we are in a position to make this assessment with any confidence.”⁸⁰

Besides that, Pereboom has no problem admitting that there is a problem with “prior-sign” cases that feature *determinism* in the actual sequence “that should concern anyone, not only the leeway incompatibilist.”⁸¹ He explains, for instance, “whenever a choice has a deterministic causal explanation in virtue of a sign that occurs prior to the resolution of agent’s deliberative process, where the absence of that sign is a non-robust flicker of freedom,” by the very nature of its non-robustness, the absence of the right sign will not be relevant to explaining the agent’s moral responsibility in the actual choice, while “the sign itself will not be a factor in which the agent’s moral responsibility can be grounded.”⁸²

So, to go back to Fischer’s case, if failing to blush (or “the absence of the right prior sign”) is not under Jones’s voluntary control to begin with, it would not be relevant at all toward grounding Jones’s moral responsibility in the actual-sequence of choosing. However, if this is the case with the *failing* to blush, then so will it of necessity be with its counterpart (i.e., the blushing, which is the prior-sign of the actual-actional-sequence), as the latter would automatically fail to be under the person’s voluntary control, if he or she cannot elect its denial at will. Given the moral inconsequence of such non-robust

⁷⁹ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 191. Italics mine.

⁸⁰ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 191.

⁸¹ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 192.

⁸² Pereboom, *MRAP*, 192.

flickers of freedom (i.e., the sign in the actual sequence as well as its denial in the counterfactual sequence), Pereboom observes that the postulation of there being “a deterministic explanation of the action *in virtue of* the prior sign” would then certainly threaten the very “intuition of responsibility” for anyone, and not just for the leeway incompatibilists.⁸³

Nevertheless, according to Pereboom, such a deterministic explanation of the action (in virtue of too early a prior-sign that would in no way ground the agent’s moral responsibility in performing the relevant action) is not the only way that a Frankfurtian can be in trouble. For instance, unlike the above, if one were to incorporate a prior sign that does ground the agent’s moral responsibility, then the flicker of freedom that would trigger the intervention – that is, the absence of that sign (or the lack of the intention to kill) – would also be a robust kind that is expressly not allowed in a successful Frankfurtian IRR counterexample to PAP. Therefore, it is Pereboom’s express contention that “any proponent of the Frankfurt-style strategy, no matter what her philosophical predilections,” better develop cases that clearly do not suppose a deterministic link of *any* kind between the action and its prior sign.⁸⁴ Again, so far, so good. Understandably, the dream project for Pereboom would be then to come up with, as mentioned above, a Frankfurt-style counterexample to PAP that successfully incorporates both (a) an actual causal history that is *not* deterministic and (b) a non-robust flicker of freedom.

⁸³ Derk Pereboom, “Source Incompatibilism and Alternative Possibilities” in *MRAP*, 192. Italics mine. Pereboom then goes on to add that “[w]hether one initially has a compatibilist or libertarian sympathies, the availability of such a deterministic causal explanation should make one question whether the action’s causal history is responsibility-sustaining. For example, if the blush itself or something associated with the blush – perhaps Jones’s having eaten a twinkie – deterministically explains his decision to kill, then anyone should be concerned that his action is being produced by something other than a normal deliberative process, which in turn raises the possibility that Jones is not morally responsible after all.”

⁸⁴ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 192.

[5] The question is whether Pereboom can come up with a successful example of this kind. In order to get there, the “necessary-condition” example that Pereboom develops starts off with the key ingredients as follows:

[T]he cue for intervention – the flicker of freedom – must be a *necessary* rather than a sufficient condition, *not* for the action that the agent actually performs, but *for the agent’s availing herself of any robust alternative possibility* (without the intervener’s device in place), while the cue for intervention itself cannot be a robust alternative possibility, and the prior sign – the absence of the cue – clearly in no sense causally determines the action the agent actually performs.⁸⁵

So, to summarize, the picture that Pereboom paints here seems at least on the surface to require an alternative possibility that is both (a) not very robust (*and so, lacks at least its epistemic component*) and (b) while necessary for the next available robust alternative action, not causally sufficient for it. From this, it automatically follows that (c) the respective *prior sign* – that is, the absence of the flicker – will be a non-robust kind (*that lacks at least its epistemic component*). To this, Pereboom then adds (as we would expect) that such a non-robust prior sign (d) should in no way causally determine the act that the agent is supposed to perform in the actual-sequence (and entail the action all by itself before it actually happens).

[6] With these “distinguishing features” in place, Pereboom then proceeds to tell his concrete Frankfurtian “*Tax Evasion (2)*” story like this: Joe is considering whether to illegally claim a tax deduction that he could probably get away with. Suppose that he has a very powerful but not always prevailing desire to do something like this for selfish reasons. So, the only way that he could have even a fighting chance against following through with such a temptation is to mull over certain moral reasons by voluntarily becoming more attentive to them. As already suggested, the fact that he attains this level

⁸⁵ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 193.

of attentiveness is, however, no guarantee that Joe would actually withstand the temptation to evade his taxes. Once he attains this level of attentiveness in *ordinary* circumstances, Joe could, in other words, with his libertarian free will, either choose to evade taxes or refrain from doing just that.⁸⁶ However, to ensure that he give in to the temptation, a device is implanted in Joe's brain to causally necessitate the tax evasion, should it sense the requisite level of attentiveness to his good moral reasons. In the "actual-sequence," (a) Joe voluntarily fails to attain this level of attentiveness, and so the device never gets triggered. While the device stays thus dormant, (b) Joe, however, voluntarily chooses to evade taxes all on his own, and is therefore, according to Pereboom, "morally responsible for choosing to evade taxes *despite the fact that he could not have chosen otherwise.*"⁸⁷

Everything that Pereboom says in the last paragraph sounds great, except the very last part about Joe's not having any other alternatives besides volunteering to evade taxes. What could Pereboom mean by that? After all, in the place of (b) voluntarily choosing to evade taxes, could not Joe (a) voluntarily opt to attain the requisite level of attentiveness (so as to force the device's hand *instead*) at any time prior to arriving at the actual decision?⁸⁸ So, why would Pereboom make such a claim? The answer is as follows. According to Pereboom, although there may be in the above scenario numerous *voluntary* alternative possibilities that are available to Joe (in, say, achieving different and varied

⁸⁶ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 193.

⁸⁷ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 193. Italics mine.

⁸⁸ Pereboom himself raises this possibility in *MRAP*, 194. See also Michael Otsuka's "Incompatibilism and the Avoidability of Blame," *Ethics* 108 (1998): 685-701 and Keith Wyma's "Moral Responsibility and Leeway for Action," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1997): 57-70; cited by Pereboom in connection with this issue in *MRAP*, 198n22.

levels of attentiveness to moral reasons), these alternatives are still not quite robust enough. Pereboom's warrant for saying this goes back in turn to his final characterization of robustness we discussed earlier. According to Pereboom, such a robust alternative is (i) within her voluntary control *and* (ii) the agent *understands* that by willing such an alternative, "she would thereby have been precluded from the moral responsibility" that she would accrue from her actual choice.

Given these stipulations, what Pereboom tries to finally maintain is this: there is no way in which Joe could have fulfilled condition "(ii)" of the prescribed robustness because not knowing what he would do for certain *had* he voluntarily achieved the requisite level of attentiveness, Joe cannot possibly "even believe that if he had achieved the requisite level [or any other level] of attentiveness he would have thereby been precluded from responsibility for deciding to evade taxes."⁸⁹

[7] Now, this is a very interesting proposal. To better evaluate it, let us first revisit why Pereboom argued for the importance of this *epistemic* criterion for the right notion of robustness in the first place. He thought that it would make the genuine and more proper moral differentiation between the alternatives possible as follows. If the reader would recall, the example that Pereboom elicited earlier consisted of Jones whose only voluntary alternative (to deciding on his own to kill Smith) was to deliberately take a sip of his coffee (prior to making that decision), in which case its powerful poison (totally *unknownst* to Jones) would have effectively killed him instantly to keep him from voluntarily reaching the decision to kill Smith on his own. From this illustration, Pereboom had then concluded that this voluntary alternative to drink from his cup was

⁸⁹ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 194.

insufficiently robust to properly ground Jones's moral responsibility for deciding to kill Smith on his own in the actual-actional-sequence because even if he had taken the alternative voluntarily, he would have had *no idea* that by willing the alternative, he would have thereby effectively opted out of the decision to kill Smith. In such a case, this sort of "opting out of the actual decision" (only to quench one's thirst for the moment and then end up dying) would have only been accidental and non-intentional. So, it makes sense that in such a case the person would not deserve the credit that would be due him *had* he voluntarily and *knowingly* opted out of the decision to kill somebody.

Now, if you would recall, I had mentioned (in Section [5.V.2]) that if I may, I would like to talk about this epistemic criterion in two stages. What we have just reviewed would be the uncontestable *first* stage. But then, what about what Pereboom says in connection with this later "Tax Evasion" case? Do these features of "total disconnectivity" (implicitly present in Pereboom's earlier coffee example) that gave the epistemic criterion its initial plausibility also present in the second stage of the discussion pertaining to the tax-evasion case? I do not think so. Unlike the coffee case with its *accidentally*-premature-death as the only relevant alternative to a morally terrible decision, in the tax evasion case, not only are there a multiplicity of different *voluntary* alternatives to choose from, these voluntary options having to do with achieving different levels of attentiveness to moral reasons are all variously connected to *deliberately resisting* the bad decision to evade taxes.

So, granted, had Joe achieved the requisite level of attentiveness, he would not necessarily have been precluded from being responsible for choosing to evade taxes (for we do not know whether such an endeavor would have most definitely resulted in its

avoidance). However, this does not mean that Joe would have therefore (as in the poisoned coffee case) been totally clueless as to how such an effort to *deliberately resist* the actual decision (even to a slight degree) would have had some moral significance insofar as it represents a laudable struggle against a much worse moral decision. The fact is, for all we know, Joe might even be aware of the fact that putting *any* level of resistance positively precludes him from being responsible for choosing to evade his taxes with no qualms at all.

Therefore, the analogy between the two abovementioned cases seems to clearly break down. This only goes to show that the poisoned-coffee case is an unusually extreme case that makes us wary of the very unlikely circumstance whereby more than one voluntary choice still fails to get the person off the hook when she volunteers for the “non-evil” alternative. But this happens to be the case precisely because the person in the example is explicitly stipulated *not* to opt for the “non-evil” choice *to* resist the evil choice; the avoidance of the evil option happens to be a mere accidental byproduct of a morally *uninteresting* choice. However, in the tax evasion case, given the person’s natural propensity to make the selfish and immoral choice to evade his taxes without much resistance, all the other better choices that he makes *against* the flow (in achieving *some* considerable level of attentiveness to good moral reasons) would qualify as a morally significant choice. Therefore, in such a case, even if the person would not deserve the credit for *fully* resisting the actual choice (or even reaching the necessary critical threshold to make it possible), he could deserve some praise for putting up even a little bit of fight *in the place of* the stipulated actual choice whereby he places no such resistance at all. And as much as all such alternatives have their voluntary as well as the

requisite *epistemic* component so as to manifest some respective *moral* difference from one another, they all appear to be legitimately *robust* moral willings.

[8] In summary, despite Pereboom's brilliant attempt, at the end of the day, he fails to establish his thesis according to which,

[I]f the neuroscientist does not intervene, even though the indeterminacy remains in place until the choice is made, it is not the case, contrary to Kane's supposition, that the agent could have decided otherwise ... [f]or in order to decide otherwise, the right level of attentiveness would have been achieved, and then the device would have been activated.⁹⁰

Contrary to his contention, Pereboom ultimately fails to construct a Frankfurt-style counterexample to PAP that "does not feature determinism in the actual sequence and in which the agent has no robust alternative possibilities but is nevertheless morally responsible." It is true that Pereboom's example does not feature determinism in the actual sequence. It is also true that the person is morally responsible for choosing to evade taxes without putting up a fight. What is not true is that Pereboom's example features no robust alternative possibilities whatsoever. On the contrary, it actually features "oodles and oodles" of *robust* alternative possibilities, as there exist all these varying degrees of attentiveness with which the person could have voluntarily and intentionally engaged himself with good moral reasons to get him respectively closer to the *necessary* condition which would then have made the right choice truly attainable.

VI. Michael McKenna and the New Limited Blockage Strategy

[1] As the prior-signs in a Frankfurtian example can always be pushed further and further back in their respective placement within a decision-making process (so as to preclude them from being voluntary in a morally significant way), we have already seen

⁹⁰ Pereboom, *MRAP*, 196.

how the flicker-of-freedom defense (that tries to find some hidden robust voluntary alternatives from a Frankfurtian scenario) is inherently limited in its usage against the Frankfurtian project. However, we also saw that without postulating an alternative possibility (that is supposedly still under one's meaningful voluntary control), whatever the one and only option the person has turns out to be not all that within the person's voluntary control. The strategy that Pereboom employed above therefore involved a certain tweaking of the notion of robustness (or morally significant voluntary alternatives) to make room for important *voluntary* control in one's actual choice as well as in other relevant alternative possibilities, without thereby allowing these alternatives to become truly robust or morally significant in themselves.

The strategy that Michael McKenna adopts is very similar. Defining "locus of free will" as "an initiating, indeterministic moment from whence freely willed, undetermined action arises in free and morally responsible agents,"⁹¹ McKenna too acknowledges the potency of the intuitions that support the *incompatibilists'* "loci (of-free-will) protection strategy" as follows:

By protecting the loci of free will, the incompatibilist believes that the agent will retain some robust alternative possibility: If Frankfurt cannot make use of reliable indicators of freely willed action at moments *prior* to any loci of free will, then any attempt to construct such examples must wait until the very moment of a basic mental action that is freely willed. But then it will be too late for Frankfurt to work his magic! The agent will have retained an open possibility to do otherwise, a possibility within the agent's control.⁹²

⁹¹ Michael McKenna, "Robustness, Control, and the Demand for Morally Significant Alternatives: Frankfurt Examples with Oodles and Oodles of Alternatives," in *MRAP* (2003), 203.

⁹² McKenna, *MRAP*, 205.

McKenna thus acknowledges that it is improper for a Frankfurtian (who tries to win a *libertarian* to the compatibilist side) to assume from the beginning a *deterministic* relationship between a freely-willed action and its involuntary prior-sign.

[2] While acknowledging that, McKenna then proceeds to see if a Frankfurtian like himself can get around this “excellent point” made by such loci-protecting incompatibilists.⁹³ McKenna reflects, for instance, that in order to get around this loci-protection strategy, Frankfurtians would have to avoid the two features that always get them in trouble as follows: (1) presupposing an illicit *deterministic* relation between the involuntary indicator and the ensuing action that is supposed to be free and morally relevant and (2) leaving “within an agent’s control a *morally significant alternative* [actually] sufficient to aid in the grounding of a judgment of moral responsibility [all by itself].”⁹⁴

The issue, to approach it from another direction, is again whether it is possible *to pollute all robust alternatives without thereby entailing determinism*. Is it after all not true that “effectively polluting *all* alternative actional pathways within an agent’s control comes dangerously close to making that problematic deterministic assumption,” while “loosening the restraints so as to avoid this problem seems to invite sufficient slippage that the incompatibilist will be able to locate some robust alternative?”⁹⁵ That is the question that Pereboom faced head on earlier, and it is what confronts McKenna now.

⁹³ McKenna, *MRAP*, 205.

⁹⁴ McKenna, *MRAP*, 205. Italics mine.

⁹⁵ McKenna, *MRAP*, 206.

[3] So, what is McKenna's own solution? He suggests that "the Frankfurt-defender attempt to close off all morally significant alternatives *without* attempting to pollute all alternative actional pathways within an agent's control."⁹⁶ Incidentally, this much is not unlike Pereboom's strategy we considered earlier. Like Pereboom, McKenna's strategy is to tweak the notion of robustness to clearly ward off just one particular type of voluntary alternative so that the one singled-out choice (from the same type) need not proceed automatically from the absence of all other voluntary alternatives. This would then guarantee the requisite indeterminism within the "actual actional pathway," without thereby inviting the illicit type of alternatives that would then help ground moral responsibility in the actual choice by being less preferred.⁹⁷

McKenna calls this a "limited blockage strategy," and in order to develop the necessary notion of a morally *insignificant* alternative, he provides the following "Tax Deadline" example as follows:

Suppose Betty deliberates over the option of cheating on her taxes. She considers the options of following or violating the tax law. She might further deliberate about advantages of one or the other, such as what she might buy with the extra money or whether she would have to do jail time if she were caught. But, granting Betty libertarian freedom, surely there is a range of alternative courses of action to deliberately cheating or deliberately complying with the law that are simply not relevant to Betty's deliberative circumstances. Suppose there is some time deadline and that Betty must make this decision quite soon (it is early afternoon and Betty must have her tax returns at the post office by 5:00 in the afternoon). Betty might simply stop all this nonsense, cease deliberating (that is, *not* decide) and head for the gym, or instead, roast a chicken. But these alternatives are not morally significant given Betty's deliberative perspective. As it turns out, Betty does cheat on her taxes.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ McKenna, *MRAP*, 206. Incidentally, McKenna developed this strategy with David Widerker, who is not a Frankfurtian himself. See *MRAP*, 215n14.

⁹⁷ McKenna, *MRAP*, 206.

⁹⁸ McKenna, *MRAP*, 206-7.

How should we respond to McKenna's suggestion in this example? For him, an efficient way of separating out "merely voluntary choices" from "robust or morally significant voluntary choices" is to talk about a specific *deliberative* context. So, again, this suggestion is not all that different from that of Pereboom's. But as such, it seems subject to the same kind of weaknesses that plagued Pereboom's case earlier. For instance, despite McKenna's claim here that "roasting the chicken" or "going to the gym (instead)" are not morally significant alternatives, "if one course of action is morally significant (because it is morally bad)," is it not the case that "*any* other course of action (presumably of a differing moral weight) is morally significant *in relation to* ... Betty's cheating on her taxes?"⁹⁹

[4] How does McKenna respond to that? On the one hand, unlike Pereboom, McKenna readily acknowledges that there *is* some validity to this objection as follows:

[O]ther things being equal, if a state of affairs has some moral weight, then any other state of affairs that does not share the same moral weight as the original will, *by virtue of the original*, be significant by being morally better or morally worse. Agreed.¹⁰⁰

Calling this "a basic point about moral value," McKenna then proceeds to distinguish it from "a point about moral deliberation and agency." His point is that despite the fact that the two points often go together in our minds, they need not. He says for instance that within the very wide spectrum of actions that are available to us with differing moral weights and values, only some are relevant to "*competent moral deliberation and agency*" as follows:

⁹⁹ McKenna, *MRAP*, 207. The objection that is attributed to Carl Ginet in their "Oodles and Oodles of Alternatives," in *MRAP*, 216n17. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁰ McKenna, *MRAP*, 207. Emphasis added.

Imagine how it would appear if things were otherwise. There is Betty in court, under interrogation. The prosecuting attorney says to Betty, ‘Betty, did you at least consider not cheating on your taxes before sending them in?’ Betty replies, ‘Well, no, but I was thinking that I might roast a chicken.’¹⁰¹

McKenna’s point is that while roasting a chicken might have a better moral value in comparison to cheating on her taxes, because it is not relevant to her competent moral deliberation and agency *within her particular deliberative context* (having to do with whether or not to cheat on her taxes), her choice to roast a chicken “would not help to reinforce Betty’s competency as a morally and legally responsible agent.”¹⁰²

While McKenna makes a sharp distinction here between “merely morally significant alternatives” and “morally *and* deliberatively significant alternatives” (or “*deliberatively* significant alternatives,” for short), one must ask if this is still too neat of a dichotomy. For instance, despite McKenna’s express claim that in the above example roasting a chicken is a “merely morally significant alternative” to cheating on her taxes, the truth of that claim still seems to turn on whether in Betty’s mind roasting the chicken has truly nothing to do with her deliberat(iv)ely cheating on her taxes. If there is in her deliberation and agency, some *purposeful* connection between the two courses of action (so that when she chooses to roast the chicken, she does that *in order to* somehow resist her urge to cheat on her taxes), then Betty’s decision to roast the chicken would have some bearing on her *competent moral deliberation and agency* having to do with observing the tax law.¹⁰³ If, on the other hand, by some fortuitous chance, the decision to

¹⁰¹ McKenna, *MRAP*, 207.

¹⁰² McKenna, *MRAP*, 207.

¹⁰³ That is, beyond some generic *relative* moral value that “(simply) choosing to roast the chicken” would have *in contradistinction from* some morally egregious choice, such as “choosing to cheat on one’s own taxes.”

cook her meal has nothing to do with her decision to cheat on the taxes, Betty's decision to roast the chicken would at most be a "*merely* morally significant voluntary alternative." However, in thus having just such morally and deliberatively *insignificant* voluntary alternatives, Betty would then have decided to cheat on her taxes *not* as a deliberatively significant choice. For instance, not having any other *deliberatively* significant alternatives to choose from, the agent's capacity for *deliberatively* choosing to cheat on her taxes would have to have been compromised. Once again, there seems to be no way around that.

[5] To quickly recap, Pereboom employed a similar strategy to separate out morally insignificant voluntary alternatives from morally significant ones earlier. Where Pereboom's case finally faltered, however, was in giving the *wrong* (dismissive) designation to what were in the end still somewhat morally significant alternatives. Compared to Pereboom, McKenna's case is better in that he is careful to designate for himself an inferior class of morally *significant* alternatives, instead of flat-out denying their moral significance. In thus granting *some* moral weight to what are for him ultimately not very significant (deliberative) options, McKenna then delays the moment of "*truly* morally significant alternatives status" by one step, so to speak. However, taking him at his word leads to the result whereby although mere voluntariness may not be at stake, true deliberativeness must be compromised, as all such morally *and* deliberatively significant alternatives are said to be eradicated from the picture. At least this is my preliminary diagnosis of where McKenna stands in his argument. The question is if McKenna can finally overcome this preliminary prognosis. We turn now to that question and to the rest of his material.

[6] Given his set-up, McKenna wants to close off from his scenarios only the *deliberatively* significant alternatives, such as “actually considering *not* to cheat on one’s taxes,” while leaving the rest of voluntary alternatives wide open. Accordingly, his next move is to challenge the plausibility of the standard PAP. For McKenna, PAP is implausible insofar as it can be satisfied even if the only alternatives available to the agent are morally and deliberatively *insignificant* ones (i.e., those that need not even be *deliberated* on). So, he offers a principle of alternative possibilities (for blameworthiness only, for convenience sake) “that incorporates plausible deliberative constraints”¹⁰⁴ as follows:

PSA [or the Principle of (truly) morally Significant Alternatives for blame]: An agent *S* is morally blameworthy for performing action *A* at *t* only if she had within her control at *t* performing an alternative action *B* such that (1) performing *B* at *t* was morally less bad than performing *A* at *t*, and (2) it would have been reasonable for *S* to have considered performing *B* at *t* as an alternative to performing *A* at *t* given *S*’s agent-relative deliberative circumstances.¹⁰⁵

With this revised target, McKenna then sets out his own Frankfurtian example called “Brain Malfunction,” as follows:

The mild-mannered philosophy professor Casper comes upon a completely unexpected and highly unusual opportunity. He has just entered a room and is standing in front of a technologically state of the art ‘Make-it-the-Case Device.’ Assume that Casper is justified in his true belief that the Make-it-the-Case Device is reliable and not merely a hoax. On a large television screen at the top of the Make-it-the-Case Device appears a man dressed as a genie. The genie speaks: Casper, just beneath this screen are two buttons, one marked ‘The Morally Good Thing to Do’ and another marked ‘The Morally Bad Thing to Do.’ Let us abbreviate them as ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ respectively. If you press the Bad button you will immediately make it the case that one million dollars are deposited into

¹⁰⁴ McKenna, *MRAP*, 209.

¹⁰⁵ McKenna, *MRAP*, 209. Just in case he might be misunderstood, McKenna qualifies that by “reasonableness given agent-relative deliberative circumstances,” he does not mean “agent-relative perspectives [that] are not subject to objective criteria of rationality and truth,” as would be the case if the notion turned on some peculiar individual, such as a white supremacist and his unique *subjective* standards of what constitutes reasonable and morally less evil.

your bank account. The money will be drawn, in one-dollar increments, from the savings accounts of one million college professors. The transaction will be untraceable. If you press the Good button you will immediately make it the case that an entire village of people in the Amazon is cured of an otherwise fatal disease. Saving the villagers will not involve any money and by doing so you will not be stealing from your peers. You cannot select both buttons and this opportunity will not present itself again. You have ten seconds to select your option. A timer appears on the screen and begins to count down from ten. Casper pauses to consider these two options, quickly assessing the import of each. He considers the article he read in last Sunday's *New York Times* on the villagers' plight. He is fully aware of the urgency of their condition. He also considers his sparse salary as a philosophy professor and he squirms at the thought of stealing from his peers. Imagining that shiny red Mercedes convertible roadster in the window, as the counter ticks away from 3 seconds to 2 greedily he takes the plunge and presses the Bad button. 'Ah, dinner out tonight!' Casper thinks to himself. As it turns out, although Casper was unaware of this difficulty, and although there is no reason Casper should have been aware of this difficulty, at the time at which Casper greedily decided to press the Bad button, Casper had a small lesion on his brain that blocked the neural pathway constitutive of (or correlates with) a decision to push the Good button during that ten second interval. [So,] Casper could not have decided to press the Good button.¹⁰⁶

To this basic set-up, McKenna adds further that (a) "the presence of the lesion in no way figures into the reasons which led Casper to press the Bad button," as "Casper would have acted for the very same reasons even if the lesion were not present," and so (b) "[i]n Brain Malfunction, Casper was supposedly free during the crucial interval of time *not* to decide to press the Bad button" by *voluntarily* opting for one of myriads of *other* non-robust, non-deliberative alternatives to pressing the Good button (for instance, one of them could have been to "just up and decide to comb his hair slow and cool like James Dean"), although none of these would have been "regarded by Casper to be deliberately significant."¹⁰⁷ I could comment on each of these claims separately, but it seems even more effective to address them together as follows.

¹⁰⁶ McKenna, *MRAP*, 209-10.

¹⁰⁷ McKenna, *MRAP*, 210.

[7] The truth is, given “(b),” “(a)” sounds rather implausible, and vice versa. That is, if we take McKenna at his word and take for granted that “(b)” in fact holds, so that the only alternatives to pressing the Bad button for Casper are indeed deliberately *insignificant* ones (as the only other deliberately significant alternative – the alternative to press the Good button – is already ruled out by the brain lesion), then “(a)” about the lesion’s *not figuring into* Casper’s reasons to push the Bad button makes no sense as the “(b)” plus the lesion effectively leave Casper with only one deliberately significant option to choose from (i.e., automatically without any leeway or indeterminism). In other words, this appears to be just another case of complete blockage.

If McKenna retorts that I am missing the point because in his case, although it will eventually be blocked, Casper could have at least *initiated* the pressing of the Good button sequence if he so desired, then once again, we are back to the question that confronted Mele, Robb, and Stump earlier, which is, “is such an act of *initiating* an actional sequence a (robustly) voluntary act that is *at* the locus of Casper’s free will or is it not?” If it is, then despite the later blockage in the corresponding neural pathway, there did exist for Casper at the time of voluntarily choosing *another* deliberately and morally significant alternative to deliberately choose from. On the other hand, if it is not a (robustly) voluntary act in the sense of being *at* the locus of his free will (as I suspect McKenna would actually answer), then such an initiation of a decision-making process would lie beyond Casper’s (robust) voluntary control. In the latter case, we have once again a case of a complete blockage (in terms of (robust) voluntary control), leaving Casper with effectively only one viable (deliberative) option to choose from right away, unless of course by some fluke he gets stalled by something else totally unintended and

beyond (i) his voluntary control and (ii) his reasonable deliberative purview. Either way, in the latter case, McKenna could not get around the libertarian's "loci-protection" strategy, as any relevant indeterminism that could correspond with voluntary and deliberative control could not exist in a such a restrictive environment.¹⁰⁸

[8] As a way of summary, I asked in [5.VI.5] whether McKenna would give us some further reason to change our preliminary diagnosis over his case. He has failed to provide us with such reasons to change our mind in the rest of the material. That is the case because at the end of the day, with all the minute details set aside, there are only a few ways that this can go. On the one hand, we can go back to the strategy that we employed earlier against Pereboom and challenge McKenna's contention that all of his "merely morally significant alternatives" are simply not the "deliberatively and morally significant" kind. If we can point out how this thesis can easily be dismantled, we would have then undermined his case. On the other hand, if we take for granted his word on how these concrete alternatives are utterly devoid of deliberative significance, we could then press him on what it is about such insignificant alternatives that they can contribute anything of use to the much-desired "actual-sequence *indeterminism*." So, either way, McKenna's case runs stuck.

¹⁰⁸ There are other objections that one could raise quite forcefully against McKenna's case. For instance, according to McKenna himself, Carl Ginet, Alfred Mele, John Martin Fischer and Randy Clarke have each confronted McKenna on his suggestion that "simply deciding not to press the Bad button" (in the above scenario) is very clearly not a deliberatively significant choice for Casper. McKenna gives his own reasons to get around their objection, which I believe could be circumvented, but I will not pursue the matter here as I believe that what I have written so far sufficiently undermines McKenna's case. On this particular objection raised by the abovementioned philosophers and McKenna's response to them, see McKenna, "Oodles and Oodles of Alternatives," in *MRAP*, 211.

[9] Towards the end of his paper, to his readers' surprise, McKenna entertains the possibility that with all that he has done he may still not have come up with a successful Frankfurtian case against PSA.¹⁰⁹ But then he turns around to ruminate as follows:

But, granting this, suppose also that there *is* reasonable sense to be made of the differences between the class of deliberately significant and deliberately insignificant alternatives. Suppose, further, that a principle of alternative possibilities ought to be restricted to the deliberately significant alternatives. It is difficult to see what *theoretical* basis there could be for denying that no Frankfurt example could be constructed that closed off all and only the deliberately significant alternatives while leaving open some of the insignificant ones. Thus, even if the example Brain Malfunction fails, *some* example should serve as an adequate counterexample to PSA.¹¹⁰

This tentative conclusion on his part seems to be ridden with problems. First, I believe that we do not have to *suppose* anything concerning whether “there *is* reasonable sense to be made of the differences between the class of deliberately significant and deliberately insignificant alternatives.” The way that McKenna explains it, the difference between the two classes of alternatives is quite clear, and it would be rather easy to fill either of these categories. Second, the way that McKenna delineates it, there is also no doubt that we should adopt PSA in the place PAP, if we want to be most accurate. Once again, there is not much to suppose here.

Third, and most importantly, while McKenna is quite right in pronouncing that there should be no *theoretical* basis for denying the possibility of closing off all and only the *deliberatively* significant alternatives (after all, could we not place a brain lesion on each and every conceivable one of such deliberately significant alternatives?), when

¹⁰⁹ McKenna, *MRAP*, 212. He says, for instance, “[m]aybe there is some weakness in the example Brain Malfunction. Maybe there is a good case to be made that Casper did have a deliberately significant alternative available to him.”

¹¹⁰ McKenna, *MRAP*, 212.

one succeeds in doing precisely that, the desired indeterminism (that is still under one's voluntary and deliberatively-significant control) gets effectively compromised in the actual sequence, as the agent is then left with only one deliberatively viable option. Such a scenario would be, for instance, a case of intellectual determinism *par excellence*.

Therefore, as things stand, McKenna's concluding remarks are wrongly directed and misleading. Solving the problems that he points out will get us nowhere near solving the problem that he originally set out to fix. Coming up with an example that meets McKenna's criteria, in other words, will only entail a failed attempt at coming up with a successful Frankfurtian counterexample to PSA. Therefore, contrary to the impression that McKenna gives off above, this failure on his part does not seem to be some *accidental* feature that McKenna could overcome someday. There seems to be a much deeper conceptual problem than that.

We are not convinced by the Frankfurtians in general and McKenna in particular because the problem seems much more systematic and permanent than it first seemed. For instance, one may, like McKenna, delay the moment of reckoning by a step or two, but eventually one must face the inescapable reality that without any morally and deliberatively significant voluntary alternatives under one's agential control, all that we are left with are at most *non-robust* options that are beyond our relevant control (whether it be voluntary, moral, or deliberative). And that alone entails a kind of illicit determinism in the actual sequence, in a way that effectively eliminates all relevant control, while determinism *per se* (which is even wider in its scope than the more limited kinds that we just considered) effectively takes out *all* possible (i.e., involuntary as well as morally and

deliberatively significant) alternatives. If this is not a non-accidental, necessary logical entailment, I do not know what is.

VII. Conclusion

In this chapter, we embarked on a journey to see if any of the most sophisticated Frankfurtians can succeed in their attempt to find room for responsible moral agency, despite lacking all (significant) alternative possibilities. We were interested in this question because earlier we saw how Helm’s evolving compatibilism has possibly led him to something that is akin to source incompatibilism. In this final stage of his possible evolution, Helm wanted to maintain for instance certain “*irreducible* agency despite the fixity of the future.”

What we gather from the repeated failures of these very best Frankfurtians is the unshakable sense that once we “fix the future (even in only certain significant aspects),” there is really no such thing as “irreducible agency.” In such a case of the fixity of the future, the agency is certainly reduced to a total lack of relevant control. Given the trajectory of where Helm had been and where he was headed, the only logical place that he and those with similar proclivities should try next – that is, in order to still maintain the jewel of “irreducible agency” – is to deny some aspect(s) of “the fixity of the future.” As we have witnessed it in this chapter, there seems simply no way around it. We turn next to what all of this means for us with our otherwise strong Reformed convictions.

CHAPTER 6

THE CONCLUSION WITH FINAL SYNTHESIS

I. Helm the Source Incompatibilist?

[1] This dissertation maintains the thesis, the beginning of which states that “although Helm’s “no-risk” view of divine providence started off as pretty straightforwardly classical compatibilist, it has since morphed into what is akin to *source incompatibilism*.”¹ Having gone through chapters 2 to 5, I believe that we are now ready to evaluate this claim. Now, why make this conclusion? To be clear on this, it seems necessary to review the following.

Chapter 1 introduced the “Traditional Incompatibilist Argument,” according to which incompatibility between determinism and one’s ability to perform a morally responsible act can be maintained as follows:

- (1) If an action is determined, then the agent could not have done otherwise.
- (2) If the agent could not have done otherwise, then she is not morally responsible for it.
- (3) Therefore, if an action is determined, then an agent is not morally responsible for it.

It was explained that the famous Consequence Argument² attempts to defend Premise (1) here against “two-way” (or “more-than-one-way”) classical compatibilists, who maintain

¹ Emphasis new.

² A rough, informal sketch of the Consequence Argument can go like this: “If determinism is true, then all our acts are the *consequences* of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. It is not up to us what went on before we were born; and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Given the above truths, all our (even present) acts – as the *consequence* of these things – are therefore beyond our control and not up to us.” Or it can be stated more formally as follows:

1. Let X be some event that actually occurs in agent S ’s life (e.g. missing a putt). Also let P be a comprehensive description of the universe’s state at some time in the remote past, and let L be a statement of the laws of nature.

(as we saw in [2.1.2]) that even if determinism is true, the agent still could have done otherwise (i.e., at least in their hypothetical or “*nearly-possible*” sense, whereby an

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2. Then assuming determinism, $((L + P) \text{ entails } X)$ applies in every possible world. Equivalently, $(\text{not-}X \text{ entail not-}(L + P))$.
 3. From this it follows by propositional logic that $(P \text{ entails } (L \text{ entails } X))$ in every possible world.
 4. If $(P \text{ entails } (L \text{ entails } X))$ obtains in every possible world, then no one has or ever had any choice about whether $(P \text{ entails } (L \text{ entails } X))$ [This is according to Rule *Alpha*, which states that “if A obtains in every possible world, then no one has or ever had any choice about whether A ” – or, “there is nothing anyone can do to change what is *necessarily* the case.”]
 5. No one has or ever had any choice about whether P [premise].
 6. No one has or ever had any choice about whether $(L \text{ entails } X)$. [4, 5, and according to Rule *Beta*, which states that “if no one has or ever had any choice about whether A and if no one has or ever had any choice about whether $(A \text{ entails } B)$, then no one has or ever had any choice about whether B ” – now, this is the so-called, “Transfer of Powerlessness Principle.”]
 7. No one has or ever had any choice about whether L [premise]
 8. Therefore, no one has or ever had any choice about whether X .

See, for example, Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (1983), 16, 106-52. For a concise but decent introduction to the issues pertaining to the Consequence Argument, see Robert Kane’s *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 23-31. For those who are critical of the Consequence Argument, see n4 of this chapter, and Kadri Vihvelin’s “How to Think about the Free Will/Determinism Problem,” in *Carving Nature at Its Joints: Natural Kinds in Metaphysics and Science*, eds. Joseph Kiem Campbell, Michael O’Rourke, and Matthew H. Slater (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 314-40. In this stimulating article, Vihvelin relies heavily on the following works of David Lewis: “Are We Free to Break the Laws?,” *Theoria* 47 (1981): 113-21; “Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow,” *Nous* 13 (1979): 455-476; *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); and “Finkish Dispositions,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (1997): 143-58. Now, according to van Inwagen’s “Freedom to Break the Laws,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 28 (2004): 344n16, Lewis’s “Are We Free to Break Laws? (1981)” was a critical reply to van Inwagen’s earlier rendition of the Consequence Argument found in “The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism,” *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975): 185-99. In “Freedom to Break the Laws (2004),” van Inwagen responds to Lewis (1981) that despite not being “a knock-down argument” against compatibilism (for it would not “force the compatibilist to become an incompatibilist on pain of irrationality or cognitive dissonance”), his Consequence Argument works very well in favor of incompatibilism, as it demonstrates that in order to be a compatibilist, one must accept that “in all [deterministic] worlds, all free agents are able to perform miracles [and that] freedom is freedom to break the laws.” Van Inwagen then concludes, “a very large part of the explanation of [the] fact” that “the majority of analytical philosophers who had actually worked on the free-will problem [are] incompatibilists” today (whereas “the majority of analytical philosophers (full stop) [are] compatibilists”) “lies in the influence of the various versions of the ‘standard’ argument for the incompatibility of free will and determinism on philosophers who were graduate students in the seventies and eighties... They are not simply ‘feel good’ arguments for incompatibilists...” See, van Inwagen, “Freedom to Break the Laws,” 350, 350n21.

alternative choice is deemed possible provided that we have “slightly-different” antecedent conditions).

To be clear on this point, as we discussed it in [2.I.2’], there may be some merit to such hypothetical analysis of freedom, as it allows “even a compatibilist to somewhat intelligibly and non-arbitrarily differentiate between those alternatives that *are* supposedly within one’s reach (even within a fully deterministic world) and those that are not” (as some of these alternatives – like “jumping over a 10-foot wall at will” – would fall outside one’s compatibilist control and the person would not be able to do them, even if she wanted to). Despite such merit, the “two-way” classical compatibilists’ hypothetical analysis of freedom is in the end decisively defective insofar as it allows certain unacceptable results (e.g., in the case of arachnophobia, it yields the result whereby the agent who suffers from it ends up being able to suppress it at will).³ Therefore, while not totally devoid of merit, such a hypothetical analysis of freedom does not finally give the “two-way” classical compatibilists the “two-way” control they seek.

To go back to the Consequence Argument, since its first appearance, it has not gone uncontested from those that are willing to resort to a rather elaborate means of discrediting it (e.g., by challenging (A) our inability to change (i) the past or (ii) the laws of nature, or (B) the validity of inferring “such universal inability to change things” from a set of selective samples that may not then be universalized).⁴ However, the success of

³ See Michael McKenna, “compatibilism,” accessed February 1, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/compatibilism/index.html>, under section 3.3. Among others, McKenna cites Peter van Inwagen in this regard; see van Inwagen’s *An Essay on Free Will* (1983), 114-9.

⁴ For more, see, for instance, McKenna, who gives us a pretty nice summary of these attempts against the Consequence Argument in his “compatibilism.” Some of the objectors that McKenna cites are: John Turk Saunders, “The Temptation of Powerlessness,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1968): 100–8; David Lewis, “Are We Free to Break the Laws?,” *Theoria* 47 (1981): 113–21; Michael Slote, “Selective Necessity and the Free-Will Problem,” *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1982): 5–24; and Daniel

these attempts at countering the Consequence Argument is suspect and the general sway of the Consequence Argument seems to be intact for most people. For example, reflecting on the state of scholarship in this regard, Michael McKenna, a premier defender of the “one-way” or “(merely) *source* model of control” (as opposed to the other “two-way” or “Garden of Forking Paths model of control”) affirms the sustaining power of the Consequence Argument as follows:

The Consequence Argument shook compatibilism, and rightly so. The classical compatibilists’ failure to analyze statements of an agent’s abilities in terms of counterfactual conditionals left the compatibilists with no perspicuous retort to the crucial [first] premise of the Classical Incompatibilist Argument: If determinism is true, no one can do otherwise. The Consequence Argument, on the other hand, offered the incompatibilists powerful support of this second premise . . . It is fair to say that the Consequence Argument earned the incompatibilists the dialectical advantage. The burden of proof was placed upon the compatibilists, at least to show what was wrong with the Consequence Argument, and better yet, to provide some positive account of the ability to do otherwise. Seemingly, the compatibilists’ only way around this burden was to defend compatibilism without relying upon the freedom to do otherwise.⁵

For our purpose, this issue that highlights the difference between the two models of control seems to be at the heart of correctly evaluating Helm’s past developments. To resume the explanation, with Premise (1) of the Traditional Incompatibilist Argument, if one holds that there is a lot at stake with this premise and so tries to either undermine it or

Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984). See also Hilary Bok, *Freedom and Responsibility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁵ See Section 4.1 of Michael McKenna’s “Compatibilism.” Consider also John Martin Fischer, one of today’s premier Frankfurtians, who argues for his *Semi*-compatibilism (according to which only our *moral responsibility*, instead of our freedom to do otherwise, is compatible with determinism) precisely because he finds the Consequence Argument’s case against such freedom’s compatibility with determinism just too compelling.

defend it, this person is implicitly operating with and relying on the “two-way” or “lee-way” model of control, regardless of her compatibilist or incompatibilist persuasion.⁶

New compatibilists as well as source incompatibilists, on the other hand, operate with a totally different model of control: namely, the “one-way” or “(merely) *source*” model of control.⁷ As both new compatibilists and source incompatibilists consider such sourcing, originating, or even “*guidance control*”⁸ as *the* means of wielding the morally relevant control, these theorists, in their attempt to block the Traditional Incompatibilist Argument (against determinism’s alleged compatibility with moral responsibility and morally relevant freedom and control) can easily bypass Premise (1) to solely focus on challenging Premise (2) of the Traditional Incompatibilist Argument, according to which, “if the agent could not have done otherwise, then she is not morally responsible for it.”

The only real difference between the latter two groups is that while source incompatibilists add that it is also important for the agent to be the *ultimate source* of her action (so that the full explanation of *her* action cannot be *reduced* to external factors over which she has had no control), according to the new compatibilists, “so long as one’s action arises from one’s unencumbered desires, she is a genuine [albeit only mediated] source of her action.”⁹ This additional ideal of ultimacy or “irreducibility” is then at the heart of what distinguishes source incompatibilists from new compatibilists, as

⁶ I owe this insight to Michael McKenna, who also calls it, “a Garden of Forking Paths model of control.”

⁷ I will explain later in Section [6.III] why I add “merely” to this description.

⁸ See, for instance, John Fischer, “Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities,” in *MRAP*, 29, 40.

⁹ See Michael McKenna, “Compatilism,” accessed February 1, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/compatibilism/index.html>.

they both have basically no regard for “two-way” or “regulative”¹⁰ control. As we put the matter this way, the incumbent reality is that the latest Paul Helm might best be described as a source incompatibilist. This is an unexpected outcome as it is hard to imagine the once premier defender of the “two-way” *classical-compatibilism*-based “no-risk” (Reformed) view of providence eventually turning out to be a source *incompatibilist*. With his special emphasis on irreducibility along with his various reliance on and advocacy of even the “one-way” or “(merely) source” model of control, Helm’s newest stance then seems most clearly source incompatibilist at heart.

[2] A couple of issues remain. First, what is genuine source incompatibilism and its connection with the Frankfurtian scholarship (or what I have been calling up to this point as “[2.II.2] new *compatibilism*”)? For instance, how is source incompatibilism genuinely different from new compatibilism? Second, what is leeway (or “two-way”) incompatibilism’s relation to “source incompatibilism?” For instance, are they mutually exclusive? If not, could there be any dependence relation between the two? If there is such dependence, what is the best way to describe it? And lastly, what does all this mean for Helm’s “source-incompatibilism-based ‘no-risk’ view of divine providence?” We address these pertinent issues next.

II. Source Incompatibilism vs. New Compatibilism

In his ground-breaking work on libertarianism, *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will*, Randolph Clarke describes source incompatibilism as follows:

[There is a] group of writers who accept Frankfurt’s argument [but] nevertheless maintain that responsibility is incompatible with determinism.

¹⁰ Again, a term coined by John Martin Fischer. See Fischer, “Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities,” in *MRAP*, 29.

What is required for responsibility, some in this group hold, is that one's actions not be determined by causal factors over which one has never had any control. This requirement may be satisfied in Frankfurt scenarios because the conditions that preclude the agent's doing otherwise do not actually produce her action. But the requirement is violated if determinism is true. Hence, it is said, even though the ability to do otherwise is not required for responsibility, determinism is incompatible with responsibility. A nontraditional incompatibilist of this sort may note that an important core of free will is retained in Frankfurt scenarios.... These agents actually determine, themselves, what they do; they are ultimate sources of their actions; they initiate or originate their behavior.¹¹

According to this description, [1] there are things that are true of *all* such source compatibilists, while [2] certain things are true of only *some* of them. And then [3] there are yet other points of ambiguity that require further inquiry. Let me explain.

[1] One general thing that is relatively clear about *all* source incompatibilists is that on the one hand, along with leeway incompatibilists, they do not approve of determinism's compatibility with moral responsibility. After all they *are* incompatibilists. As such, they value (as mentioned in connection with Derk Pereboom in [5.V.1]) the importance of *self-determination* or *origination* (as in, “[t]hese agents actually determine, themselves, what they do; they are ultimate sources of their actions; they initiate or originate their behavior”) as opposed to being “determined by causal factors over which one has never had any control” (i.e., by the truths of the world before one is even born in conjunction with the laws of nature). On the other hand, the source incompatibilists who are opposed to determinism are nonetheless inclined to approve of Frankfurt-style counterexamples to PAP (or its variants) insofar as in these “new-compatibilist” scenarios “the conditions that preclude the agent's doing otherwise do not actually

¹¹ Randolph Clarke, *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11; cited by Kevin Timpe in “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (2007): 143.

produce her action” or, to use John Martin Fischer’s expression, they do not involve “actual-sequence compulsion” as follows:

There are two ways in which it might be true that one couldn’t have done otherwise. In the first way, the actual sequence compels the agent to do what he does, so he couldn’t have initiated an alternate sequence; in the second way, there is no actual-sequence compulsion, but the alternate sequence would prevent the agent from doing other than he actually does. Frankfurt’s examples involve alternate-sequence compulsion; the incompatibilist about determinism and responsibility can agree with Frankfurt that in such cases an agent can be responsible even while lacking control [of the regulative kind between different alternatives], but he will insist that, since determinism involves *actual-sequence* compulsion, Frankfurt’s examples do not establish that responsibility is compatible with determinism.¹²

Frankfurtian scholarship, as it stipulates “*alternate-sequence* compulsion” only, readily appeals to source incompatibilists for whom the *actual-sequence self-determination* is of sole concern. For them, “ultimacy” or “origination” is preserved if the “*actual-sequence* compulsion” of causal determinism can be avoided. To reiterate the point made earlier, as long as the source incompatibilists rely merely on their *source* (i.e., “one-way” or “actual-sequence-only”) model of control, they can acknowledge that “an important core of free will is retained in Frankfurt scenarios,” as Frankfurt’s “[2.II.2] new compatibilism” tries to argue for such a source model of moral responsibility (*without* at the same time trying to appeal to the crucial importance of ultimacy or origination).

The truth is, as we saw in chapter 5, some of these source incompatibilists (like David Hunt, Eleonore Stump, Derk Pereboom, and Michael McKenna [5.III-5.VI]) proactively engage in the Frankfurtian project to defend their *source* or “one-way” model

¹² John Martin Fischer, “Responsibility and Control,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 79, no. 1 (1982): 33-4. Incidentally, this passage from 1982, although not actually using the term “source incompatibilism,” is apparently the first explicit mention of this kind of nontraditional incompatibilism and its viability against the standard leeway incompatibilism. See Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 147.

of control. The clear working assumption for them has been that “actual sequence *non-compulsion*” is possible even if we take away all relevant “alternate sequences.” This assumption, however, has been highly contested throughout this dissertation, especially in chapter 5.

To summarize, from what we read in Randolph Clarke’s explanation (and perhaps with some help from John Martin Fischer’s seminal 1982 suggestion) the following seems to apply to *all* source incompatibilists: (a) source incompatibilists do not tolerate comprehensive actual-sequence determinism or “compulsion,” and (b) they approve of the Frankfurtian project insofar as the latter is useful in highlighting their conviction that the causal history of the actual-sequence (as being ultimately and uniquely self-determined) has more importance in explaining the agent’s moral responsibility than the sheer presence of alternative possibilities.¹³

[2] Besides talking about what is thus true of *all* source incompatibilists, Clarke also mentions the following in the abovementioned passage: “What is required for responsibility, *some* in this group hold, is that one’s actions not be determined by causal factors over which one has never had any control.” Now, it seems clear from this statement that Clarke is hereby isolating a select group of source incompatibilists for whom an agent can be morally responsible for a fully determined choice so long as she has had some control over her choices in the past.

As far as I can tell, given the above description, this special group of source incompatibilists refers to those who, like Robert Kane, endorse a certain “*historicist*” approach to the final indispensability of (certain morally and even otherwise significant)

¹³ Pereboom, “Source Incompatibilism and Alternative Possibilities,” in *MRAP*, 186.

alternative possibilities. As mentioned in [2.II.1], when faced with the “character-example” (or “[2.II.1] new-compatibilist”) challenge from Dennett (that Luther seems free and responsible for his “character(istic)” choice despite its seeming unavoidability), Kane responded that despite this temporary inability on Luther’s part, the reason why he could still be responsible for such a *characteristically self-necessitated* choice is “by virtue of earlier choices and actions for being the sort of person he had become at that time.”¹⁴ So, instead of challenging the actual literalness of “Here I stand, and I can do no other” (as I myself would), Kane preferred the explanation according to which in such instances of literal inability, we can trace our moral responsibility to earlier “source-forming” choices with which we could have done otherwise as follows:

[S]ome of the choices or acts in our lifetimes must be such that we could have done otherwise or we would not be responsible for forming the wills from which we act. Our wills would not be “our own free wills.” So if we take a broader view of an agent’s life history, rather than focusing on individual acts like Luther’s in isolation, it does not follow that free will and moral responsibility do not require alternative possibilities or the power to do otherwise *at all*, at *any* times in our lives.¹⁵

For this group of source incompatibilists, the sort of characteristically self-imposed instances of determinism are then merely “isolated” incidents that are a far-cry from comprehensive universal causal determinism. This select group of source incompatibilists then “requires indeterminism in the construction of the self, such that [what subsequently serves as causally necessitating] reasons for acting and desiring that one adopts as one’s

¹⁴ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 82.

¹⁵ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 83.

own are [previously] independently acquired,” and “not acquired of necessity in a way that is fully explicable by reference to the laws of nature and events in one’s past.”¹⁶

According to this special subset of source incompatibilists, the ability to do otherwise is then clearly not required for every single morally responsible act, as one could be a legitimate *source* of her own choosing without having for the moment the relevant alternatives for choosing. However, in talking about the importance of sourcing, origination, and ultimacy, they would indeed acknowledge the importance of *some* meaningful alternative possibilities within one’s lifetime of making choices, in the way that a standard source incompatibilist would not. So, for example, while this select group of source incompatibilists may find most Frankfurt-type scenarios tolerable (insofar as the latter argue for or stipulate actual-sequence-*indeterminism* and *self*-origination), they would not appeal to such Frankfurtian stories to (a) positively dismiss the importance of *all* (meaningful) alternative possibilities nor (b) posit actual-sequence-*indeterminism* in the face of *comprehensive* “alternate-sequence-compulsion.” If it was any different, they would have joined the standard source incompatibilists in no time. In this scheme of things, the later-Helm then seems to fit best the description of a standard (i.e., “totally-alternate-sequence-disparaging”) source incompatibilist who would be in *full* support of the Frankfurtian project.

Having said this, what should we call this select group of source incompatibilists, according to whom certain alternative possibilities from within one’s lifetime are indeed essential to making the relevant sourcing or origination possible? Is it still best to consider them as source incompatibilists? Or are they disguised leeway incompatibilists?

¹⁶ Laura Waddell Ekstrom, *Free Will: A Philosophical Study* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 190; cited by Timpe, 150.

Or, do we even have to choose between the two? Is it possible, in other words, to just place them in the middle of both groups? What would be at stake with such a move? What criteria should we use in this regard? Or should we go the other way, and divide a certain group into further divisions? On what basis? We turn to these issues now.

III. Wide Source Incompatibilism vs. Narrow Source Incompatibilism?

In his recent paper, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” Kevin Timpe introduces the distinction between “wide” and “narrow source incompatibilism”¹⁷ to challenge the standard “taxonomy” in the current literature (whereby source incompatibilism and leeway incompatibilism are “starkly dichotomized”¹⁸) as follows:

Insofar as the heart of the Source Incompatibilist’s position is some sort of ultimacy condition, she must also embrace an alternative possibilities condition. Thus, while incompatibilism perhaps does not require Frankfurt’s principle of alternative possibilities, it does require *an* alternative possibilities condition since that is entailed by the ultimacy condition that underlies moral responsibility. In other words, Wide Source Incompatibilism is preferable to either Narrow Source Incompatibilism or Leeway Incompatibilism. However if Wide Source Incompatibilism is, as here argued, the most plausible approach to incompatibilism, then the commonly accepted distinction between Source Incompatibilism and Leeway Incompatibilism—that is, the Taxonomy Claim with which this paper began—should be rejected because ultimacy and alternative possibilities are intrinsically related.¹⁹

As we see, Timpe divides incompatibilism into three groups: Wide Source Incompatibilism, Narrow Source Incompatibilism, and Leeway Incompatibilism. Of the three, he says that wide source incompatibilism is “the most plausible approach to

¹⁷ For these terms, “narrow and wide source incompatibilism,” Timpe gives credit to Robert Kane. See Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 153n28.

¹⁸ Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 147.

¹⁹ Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 151-2.

incompatibilism,” in such a way that both leeway incompatibilism and the standard or narrow source incompatibilism can be discarded. We will evaluate that claim here.

Leeway incompatibilism is the standard or traditional expression of incompatibilism according to which we must have some robust alternative possibilities at the time of our choosing in order for us to have the requisite (“a Garden of the Forking Paths”) type of control, which is then necessary to go toward grounding moral responsibility. Source incompatibilism, on the other hand, has been described primarily as the view according to which one can have the requisite power of origination or ultimacy so long as the actual-sequence originates in the agent, instead of its being traceable to external factors over which she has never had any control. In the last section, we also talked about the select group of “source incompatibilists,” according to whom an agent can be morally responsible for her even “presently-determined” choice, so long as this presently determined choice is shaped by her earlier choices over which she has had many relevantly robust alternatives. While these source incompatibilists insist on the indispensability of some alternative possibilities in the agent’s *lifetime* of choosing, what makes them source incompatibilists is the fact that they consider the ultimate source condition as more fundamental to moral responsibility than even the alternative possibilities condition.²⁰

Into this “standard taxonomy” that is more or less neatly divided into leeway incompatibilism and source incompatibilism, Timpe then throws one more category into the mix. I say only “one” more because what he labels here as “Narrow Source Incompatibilism” is essentially the same as the standard source incompatibilism (whose

²⁰ Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 147.

sole interest lies in the ultimacy condition, with no regard for the alternative possibilities condition). It is “narrow” in the sense that the alternative possibilities condition does not figure into the equation at all.²¹ The new view that Timpe introduces here as “Wide Source Incompatibilism (or WSI, for short)” is not like that. It is “wide” in the sense that it takes the alternative possibilities condition seriously, insofar as it makes the more fundamental ultimate sourcing condition possible. So far, as stated, Timpe’s WSI is not all that different from the “minority” source incompatibilist position introduced earlier in connection with Kane and Pereboom. However, Timpe has much more in mind for WSI.

According to Timpe, “the most compelling forms of Source Incompatibilism will be of the Wide variety because the most plausible understanding of the ultimacy condition will involve alternative possibilities of some sort.”²² So, what sort of alternative possibilities could he have in mind? On the one hand, Timpe acknowledges that “in order for alternatives to be relevant to an agent’s moral responsibility, the resolution of the indeterminacy involved in the act must be under the control of the agent herself.”²³ On the other hand, he cites Timothy O’Connor to maintain that “the significance of such alternatives (whether they are robust or mere “buds”) lies in their being indicators of the self-determination manifested by one’s actions, which is necessary for responsibility.”²⁴ What Timpe means to say is that “an alternative possibility is explanatorily relevant to moral responsibility even if it isn’t a robust alternative” because from “the presence of

²¹ Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 148.

²² Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 148.

²³ Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 149.

²⁴ Timothy O’Connor, “Freedom with a Human Face,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29 (2005): 209-10; Cited by Timpe in “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 149.

even a weak or non-robust alternative, ‘we can conclude ... that the action was not determined by external factors.’”²⁵ In other words, as what plays the real role in grounding moral responsibility is ultimacy alone, “it may be the case that the remaining alternatives are even irrelevant *per se* to moral responsibility.”²⁶

What we have here then is the thesis according to which, on the one hand, contrary to the narrow source incompatibilism, the alternative possibilities are indispensable even to a source incompatibilist insofar as these are essential for his truly crucial ultimacy condition. On the other hand, because their function is only to stem the tide of causal determinism (so that the ultimacy condition can be preserved), the pertinent alternative possibilities need not be the robust kind, which is under the direct control of the agent, as follows:

Wide Source Incompatibilism does not claim that an agent is morally responsible for an action *because* he has these flimsy or non-robust alternative possibilities open to him. After all, not all alternative possibilities are morally significant. What is doing the explanatory work for the agent’s moral responsibility, so to speak, is not the alternative possibilities, but rather the agent’s satisfying the ultimacy condition. But if an agent satisfies the ultimacy condition with respect to a particular action, then she will also satisfy an alternative possibilities condition with regard to that action, though it may admittedly be a weak alternative possibilities condition.²⁷

Kevin Timpe severs, therefore, the connection between (a) ultimate sourcing or origination and (b) having the relevant *robust* alternative possibilities supposedly under one’s direct control. However, is Timpe really justified to make a jump from the presence

²⁵ Michael Della Rocca, “Frankfurt, Fischer and Flickers,” *Nous* 32 (1998): 102; Cited by Timpe in “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 149.

²⁶ Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 149.

²⁷ Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 151.

of even “flimsy or non-robust alternative possibilities” to the conclusion that “the action was not determined by external factors?”

Timpe seems to be incorrect in that regard. We saw in Pereboom’s poisoned coffee drinker case that having simply one more even *voluntary* option (for Jones to drink the coffee *at will* so that he ends up inadvertently poisoning himself to death) in the place of positively deciding to kill Smith is finally not *intentional* enough for Jones to be morally responsible for either choice, as whichever of the two options that Jones takes is to be chosen without the appropriate “deliberative contextual content.” For example, if the person ends up taking the drink-the-coffee option, the person ends up doing so not *as* an alternative to deciding to kill Smith. If Jones ends up with the decision to kill Smith, it would not take place in the context of having other morally and deliberatively relevant alternatives. Therefore, merely “being able to do otherwise (even) at will” did not turn out to be quite as relevant as we first thought.

Now, the reason why Timpe makes the kind of claim that he does here (against Kane and Fischer²⁸) about the sufficiency of even non-robust alternatives for “ultimate sourcing” is not too hard to imagine. He could be reasoning along the following line: “Even when someone like Jones (in Pereboom’s “possibly-drinking-coffee-and-inadvertently-killing-oneself” example) has only one *non*-robust alternative to killing Smith (i.e., drinking the coffee instead, without having any clue as to its actional and moral significance), if Jones decides to do the killing *on his own without actually being made to do so* (i.e., so long as there is no “actual-sequence compulsion”), he could still be responsible for that spontaneous choice.”

²⁸ Timpe, “Source Incompatibilism and Its Alternatives,” 151.

However, we have seen repeatedly by now that the problem with this way of thinking is that it is ultimately untenable. That is, if Jones was indeed provided with *just* these two options (one of which, by the way, could not come even close to competing with the other option morally and deliberately), then provided that Jones takes the option of deciding to kill Smith (simply because he does not crave the coffee for the moment), to conclude from this that he therefore chooses this option (for what it really is) “*on his own without being made to do so*” seems rather implausible. After all, morally and deliberately speaking, what we have here is essentially a case of *complete blockage*, and as such, it seems to presuppose “causal determinism” of a morally and intellectually overwhelming kind.

To sum it up, source incompatibilists’ treasured notions of “self-determination,” “origination,” “ultimacy,” “actual-sequence indeterminism,” “guidance-control,” or even “irreducibility” (that are for them of fundamental importance for properly grounding moral responsibility) do not seem ultimately tenable when there is the complete lack of morally and deliberately significant alternative possibilities for choosing, for without them we are still left with a serious (albeit technically not universal and comprehensive) kind of causal determinism that militates against irreducibly *self-generated* agency. In other words, in order for the ultimacy condition itself to be met, the agent better not always be left with only one morally and deliberately significant option. For the agent to be a legitimate difference-maker in the “actual-sequence,” there ought to be more than just one significant choice open to her when she makes her choice. Without that (i.e., with essentially the complete blockage of all other viable options and so *with* “alternate

sequence-*compulsion*”), we simply cannot be “unreduced” to external factors over which we have never had any control.

IV. Paul Helm

In *TPOG*, Helm started off as a pretty straightforward “two-way” classical compatibilist, especially when it comes to the freedom of *action*. Where he lacked the freedom of the *will* (in the “two-way” classical compatibilist sense), Helm made up for it by embracing its clearly new-compatibilist counterpart, according to which even if you do not possess the alternative choices of the will in any sense of the word (i.e., not even in the two-way classical compatibilists’ hypothetical or “nearly-possible” sense [2.I.2]), you can and do have such freedom of the will so long as you decisively *identify* with the lower-order desire or will that you already possess (however minutely) and in doing so let it effectively move you to action, as you approve of it wholeheartedly from “higher-up” [2.II.3]. Along with Frankfurt, Helm therefore maintained that a *willing* addict could be free and be responsible for her addiction and addictive behavior, even though the unwilling addict could not be, just so long as the former, while lacking all (i.e. even the hypothetical or “more distant”) alternative possibilities, *identifies with* it wholeheartedly as her own will. On the other hand, given his preference for the *actually determined* (*but hypothetically free*) action for truly responsible agency, it made sense how Helm would then show the least amount of support for the merely *counterfactually ensured* choices of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism.”

What started off as a pretty straightforward case of “pro-actual-sequence-compulsion” then went through some major changes in *Four Views*, as Helm made a deliberate effort to render creaturely *evil* acts (strictly implied by God’s unilateral decree)

as nevertheless not really having been causally necessitated by God [3.II.3]. The new accent in *Four Views* was to then somehow move away from divine universal causal determinism and its possible *reductionistic* implications for creaturely evil acts, as such reductionism would eliminate the creatures' own causal powers and responsibility for such evil as "physical determinism [3.II.4]" would, as follows:

Whereas physical determinism has a strong tendency to be reductionistic and has difficulty in finding a place for a range of objects having their own causal powers, the divine willing permission is most certainly not reductionist in this sense. Hence it is a serious mistake to suppose that classical Christian theism claims that God monopolizes power ... God is the source of all creaturely power, but the powers of creatures, even when efficaciously empowered by God are really their own and so are distinct from his.²⁹

Now, despite this shift of emphasis when it comes to divine willing permission of *evil* acts, where Helm stayed consistent in both *The Providence of God* and *Four Views* was his espousal of God's straightforward causal determination of all morally *non-evil* acts, especially as the latter pertains to positively *good* acts having to do with one's effectual *salvation*, as God's causal efficacy in this area (in terms of even act-*tokens*) was taken to be essential for God's grace to be efficacious and irresistible [3.III.1]. How did Helm arrive at this conclusion? We know by now that the underlying conviction for this was due to his mistaken idea that if causal indeterminism cannot secure token-certainty, it of necessity cannot secure type-certainty (having to do with God's irresistible grace in salvation) [3.III.2].

In [3.III.3], we witnessed, however, how he himself begins to question that very assumption in *John Calvin's Ideas*, as Helm considers for the very first time the prospect of logically separating out "type-certainty (having to do with the Reformed doctrine of

²⁹ *Four Views*, 180.

predestination)” from “token-certainty (having to do with determinism).” Yet, the most that he does there is to merely hypothesize that “*if* this line of argument is convincing, it *would* allow Calvin to be a metaphysical-token-*incompatibilist*, while remaining a ‘type(ly certain)-monergist.’” In *Calvin at the Centre*, Helm finally concedes unequivocally that such differentiability between type-certainty (having to do with, say, man’s spiritual inability after the Fall) and token-certainty (having to do with the metaphysics of agency) is tenable as follows:

Strangely enough, Calvin’s doctrine of the bondage of the will to sin, which he shares with Augustine and with Martin Luther, for example, has no necessary connection with the issue of the metaphysics of agency. This is because the bondage in question is moral and spiritual inability, a view about action types and not action tokens. When Calvin and Luther deny free will, therefore, they chiefly have in mind not the metaphysical issues being discussed in this chapter, but a spiritual disposition stemming from sin which is, logically speaking, neutral on the question of determinism and libertarianism. At the very most its consequence for the issue of metaphysical free will is that for those whose will is bound to sin there are certain types of motivation that they are incapable of, in rather the way in which a consistently cowardly person cannot act from courage, or a miser out of generosity.³⁰

Thus, on the one hand, we see how Helm dismisses what has been for him the single most important reason for advocating the straightforward divine determination of all morally non-culpable act(-token)s. On the other hand, the issue of reductionism (when it comes to such morally non-evil acts) still looms large for Helm, as he finds the likes of “physical determinism” objectionable insofar as the latter reduces the *personal* causal factors (such as beliefs and desires) into impersonal physical processes over which one has never had any control or say [3.III.5]. With his problem with normal causal determinism’s reductionistic tendencies in a source-incompatibilist-like fashion [5.V.1],

³⁰ *Calvin at the Centre*, 228-9.

it makes sense that Helm would then wish to move away from his earlier-preferred straightforward kind of divine causal determinism to a more nuanced perspective.

Sure enough, in *CATC*, as he is still not convinced of the essential change in Calvin's metaphysics of agency (in terms of the "fixity of the future," due to Calvin's doctrine of providence), Helm works hard to secure for Calvin some sort of irreducible agency despite the fixity of the future [4.I.1]. It is then in this context that we see Helm's extensive treatment of "Stoic-compatibilism" and its "un-predeterminist freedom" to account for *Calvin's* supposedly "non-reductionist compatibilism."³¹ We see, for instance, how Helm takes elaborate means to find certain *internality* (in Stoic-Compatibilism) that supposedly would not have to be reduced to merely external factors [4.I.1-4.I.3]: namely, critical or reflective *higher-order* judgment that can decide for oneself whether what one has preliminarily "judged" to be the case *is* the case. Helm seems to think that once we get to this level of "higher-reflectiveness," we are then by this measure guaranteed to self-perpetuate or volunteer in a way that is *not* "rushed headlong" by simply external factors. So, in the end we come full circle to Helm's love for the "[2.II.3] new compatibilism."

But "[2.II.3] new compatibilism" is not a very compelling stance. First, it still remains the case that even such higher-level acts of assent could just as well have been finally and solely determined by other impersonal and external factors over which one has no control whatsoever. Therefore, it seems doubtful that by simply throwing such

³¹ See, for example, *CATC*, 240. For his express emphasis on "irreducible agency" itself (albeit this comes through Calvin), see *CATC*, 227-8, where Helm reflects as follows: "Calvin's determinism is *non-reductionist*. His determinism is not biological, economic, or of some other general and reductionist kind, but it is a determinism of people, angels, non-human animals, and other organisms. He thinks of human beings as *irreducible agents*."

higher-order reflectiveness into the mix, Helm could sufficiently stem the tide of externalist reductionism.³² In order to counter it, Helm would have to establish the independent plausibility of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism,” according to which “actual-sequence *indeterminism*” is possible, even when we eliminate all (relevantly significant) alternative possibilities to initiate “alternate-sequence compulsion.” Therefore, in chapter 5, we embarked on a journey to see if any of the most sophisticated Frankfurtians can finally succeed in coming up with a legitimate case of responsible moral agency despite the absence of all (relevantly significant) alternative possibilities. What we gathered from the repeated failures of these best Frankfurtians, however, was that once we “fix the future (even in only certain *significant* aspects – as, say, Pereboom did in terms of his *epistemic* condition in Section [5.V.2]),” there remains no such thing as “irreducible agency.” Whenever we get rid of all relevantly significant “alternate-sequences,” the agency in the “actual sequence” is also unmistakably compromised in its integrity. Given the trajectory of where Helm was headed as the Reformed defender of the “no-risk” perspective, the best place that he and others like him should look next is to deny some *significant* aspects of the “fixity of the future” to truly maintain “irreducible agency.” We will consider this prospect next.

V. “An Alternative Possibility” for the Reformed

According to the schematics introduced earlier in this chapter, Helm basically comes out as a “narrow source incompatibilist.” For instance, while talking about the importance of “irreducible agency,” he never entertains the possible benefits of having

³² As this is what he seems to have in mind when Helm speaks favorably of the Stoics’s view over against that of Hume as follows in *CATC*, 240: “But nor is Stoic freedom, acting in accordance with one’s own nature, the mere psychological freedom of later compatibilists such as Hume.”

even the most trivial kinds of (morally relevant) alternative possibilities. The reason appears to be that as a Reformed theologian who expressly subscribes to his “*no-risk*” view of providence and predestination (whereby “no risk” entails comprehensive token-certainty), the prospect of allowing even the most miniscule uncertainty at the token-level seems unacceptable to him. According to his “no-risk” paradigm, not only would God be determining the token-certainty of every major decision in a person’s life, he would be personally guaranteeing every neural firing sequence in one’s brain in all of its finest detail. We saw, however, that once we “fix the future” this expansively, agency is of necessity unrecognizably reduced to the automatic and non-agential. We saw, in fact, how even certain “wider source incompatibilism” (of, for instance, Kevin Timpe) did not seem quite adequate to preserve morally and deliberatively significant control [6.III.4].

So, as someone who essentially believes in leeway incompatibilism and the indispensability of certain alternative possibilities’ moral and deliberative significance (and so advocating at most only certain “even-wider source incompatibilism” of, say, Pereboom and Kane), I suggest that we cautiously consider the following option as a viable Reformed alternative. My suggestion is that in describing divine providence, we aim at mostly “type-certainties,” without doing the same with “token-certainties.” While this may sound radical to some, one consolation (if there is any) is that depending on what is acceptable to each person, this basic paradigm could be stretched or condensed however we would like, so long as it is understood that we do not go so far as to embrace the token-certainty of everything (or the type-*uncertainty* of everything as an Open-Theist would).

Let me explain. In [2.II.2], we considered, for instance, a “global” CI-scenario whereby the ensuring conditions are largely, if not entirely, *irrelevant* to the actual-causal-sequence of every conceivable event that involves certain voluntarism.³³ For instance, we imagined that God is such a counterfactual intervener *who has in mind a very specific and comprehensive blue-print of each individual’s acts and choices*. The moment that he sees us deviating from the pre-approved courses of action, God would then intervene immediately and put us right back on the preferred track of meticulous design. We imagined then that on almost every occasion, we would do exactly as God would want us to do, on our own, by our own initiative, so that God would almost never have to get retroactively involved. It is worth noting here that insofar as God’s “ensuring conditions are [presumed to be] *irrelevant* to the actual-causal-sequence of” all such voluntary choices, even this kind of tightly-knit “*global*” CI-scenario incorporates much more *leeway* than Helm would ever allow as a narrow (or mere) source incompatibilist.

Now, if this kind of *global* CI-scenario seems too stifling, one can perhaps loosen it a bit and lower the incidents of even its “type-certainties.” We can imagine, for instance, God being invested in only a much smaller set of such “type-certainties” in his created world. For those of us who are of the Reformed persuasion, we should perhaps include our definite salvation into such a downsized set of type-certainties. We can then add other important decisions into this mix, like our decision to get married, whom to marry, how many children we would have, what kind of occupation we would have and in what fashion, what kind of serious sufferings we would encounter in life, what kinds of temptations we would have to face and even overcome, and when and how we are to die.

³³ *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 84.

Along this line, we can even imagine God having different degrees of concern and priorities among these types of events and decisions. For instance, maybe, what school we would attend may not be as important as what kind of Christian friends that we would meet at such institutions, especially given God's set decision to save his elect through his covenant community. Maybe all of this can even be interfaced in such a way that there is a further set of contingency plans for every single important decision that we would ever make along the way (to keep all these priorities intact). What is important is that all these contingency plans seem compatible with God's ensuring certain "type-certainties," like "Jamie will have a pretty good life as a Christian, despite all the hardships that she would have to endure as a spiritual-warrior working in the midst of many callous cops."

Now, the two scenarios that I just suggested are more or less at the opposite ends of the spectrum. The point is that God's sovereign work of salvation could be anywhere within this spectrum *without* compromising what God would really want to accomplish insofar as the important *type*-certainties are concerned. Notice, for instance, how this view in no way needs to entail either Semi-Pelagianism or Open-Theism (at least insofar as how certain action-*types* having to do with effectual salvation need not be compromised by many token-*uncertainties* that are allowed by these action-*types*).

Having said that though, I can anticipate a few objections. First, somebody might ask as to how even God could guarantee such action-*types* without at the same time micromanaging every single action-*token*. My answer is as follows. For all we know, maybe in his act of providence, God does proactively *bring about* many action-*tokens*. However, insofar as his bringing them about himself, these action-*tokens* then would have to lie outside the realm of our freedom and moral responsibility. Of such action-

tokens (or even action-types) that may go beyond the bounds of our freedom, control, and responsibility, I am for instance thinking of the Pharaoh, whose heart was deliberately hardened by God (Exodus 9:12).

However, if the objection is about the general feasibility of action-*type*-certainty without action-*token*-certainty, I would answer that the objector is making the same error that the earlier Helm was making prior to *John Calvin's Ideas*. One thing that this study of free will reveals is that *various human choice-tokens can easily be contained within a certain choice-type*, much more so than we would normally think as a typical libertarian. We saw in [2.I.3], for instance, that we have to posit a lot of irrationality and craziness to be able to posit that someone who is about to buy tickets to go to Cancun would all of a sudden buy tickets to go to Miami. Our “free” choice-tokens just do not work that way³⁴ (or at least they do not have to work that way, as long as they are truly in good working order and as such under our intelligible control).³⁵

³⁴ On the empirical scientific end, Benjamin Libet's study that was designed to show that conscious free will is not really in charge of initiating the decisional process of “act now,” but that it is actually the unconscious brain that determines it about 400-350 milliseconds prior to us even becoming aware of it, may ironically support such “type-limitedness” in our daily choosing. For instance, on the one hand, as Alfred Mele points out, this project might be flawed insofar as it cannot preclude the possibility that the self might *more* proximately initiate that which is only less proximately prompted by an unconscious *urge*; on the other hand, the very fact that in each circumstance, the unconscious brain, rather than the conscious free will, seems to have the job of producing the contextually appropriate urge (which the conscious will could then take up or turn down) suggests that the “conscious free will” may not be in *total* control of the self and its decisional-processes as most laymen would think. For more on this fascinating research and discussion, see the following works by Alfred Mele, “Free Will and Neuroscience” in *Free Will and Luck*, 30-48, especially, 41-2, 44-5; Benjamin Libet, C. Gleason, E. Wright, and D. Pearl, “Time of Unconscious Intention to Act in Relation to Onset of Cerebral Activity (Readiness-Potential),” *Brain* 106 (1983): 623-42; Benjamin Libet, Anthony Freeman, and Keith Sutherland, eds., *The Volitional Brain: Towards a Neuroscience of Free Will* (Thorverton, UK: Imprint Academic, 1999); Benjamin Libet, “Unconscious Cerebral Initiative and the Role of Conscious Will in Voluntary Action,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 8 (1985): 529-66; “Consciousness, Free Action and the Brain,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6 (2001): 47-57; “Do We Have Free Will?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 551-64; and Libet's *Mind Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

³⁵ The idea here is that God could “manipulate” our surroundings in such a way that while we totally retain our libertarian freedom (i.e., having to do with very particular action-*tokens*), God can ensure that all the possible action-tokens given that context occur within the reasonable bounds of certain action-

The follow-up question would then be, “What about the Fall? Was it then totally preventable by God?” My guess would be “Yes.” At the time of the Fall, if God had given us significantly more fortitude and understanding, I believe that we could not have even fallen, or if not, it would have been at least so much more difficult to fall. In this regard, I am incidentally in full agreement with Helm, as he maintains (against the “free will defense”) that “[h]ad God willed to prevent the Fall, it would have been prevented by giving Adam fortitude and constancy to preserve.”³⁶ For another example, maybe something like this is in play when the Lord teaches us to pray, “lead us not into temptation” (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4). Notice here, for instance, that given the libertarian freedom, this kind of request seems to make sense only if God is capable of warding off certain *types-of-choices* and so keep certain temptations at bay. If that were not the case, it would make no sense to pray such a prayer.³⁷

types. Two common “everyday” illustrations come to mind. One is the analogy of thinking of our lives as going down a supermarket aisle. While in “Aisle 1,” we may have ample libertarian freedom as to what and how much fruit to put in our shopping cart, and when, and in what fashion; however, it would not be within our power to pick out a certain ice cream, let’s say. Same thing with a hamster that is placed within a secure “hamster ball.” While in the hamster ball, we could suppose that the hamster has a certain libertarian freedom, as there is more than one thing that the hamster could meaningfully control *within* the ball (e.g., how fast the hamsters moves it around in the living room, in what direction and pattern, etc.). But there are also certain things that would be clearly off-limits for the hamster while the hamster remains within the ball, such as to freely roam around under the couch, to bump into the wall directly, etc. Given the rationality of our will, we can then easily conceive how certain things would never cross our mind as an action-type to choose from, while we may have many action-tokens to choose from within a certain action-type that seems sensible to us, such as putting our family first, eating dinner within the next hour in a particular context of hunger, and so on.

³⁶ *John Calvin’s Ideas*, 111n46.

³⁷ Again, pay attention to the subjunctive mood that Apostle Paul uses in Acts 17:24-28 [New American Standard Version]: “The God who made the world and all things in it . . . made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, *if perhaps they might* grope for Him and find Him. . . for in Him we live and move and exist. . .” Given the compatibilist or even narrow source incompatibilist understanding of divine causation, such a merely subjunctive outcome in the context of concrete divine wish makes no sense to me. First cited in n46 of chapter 1.

Having heard of all my answers, one may then finally object that my view of free will and providence is still not truly compatible with the notion of radical evil (that would, for instance, deserve eternal damnation in hell). That is, if all our action-tokens are so “bound” within certain action-types (i.e., so “circumstantial”), then an “out-of-the-(type-) character” choice does not seem even possible. If our sins are, in other words, so “(type-) circumstantial,” how do we account for God’s anger against sin? To put it differently, if we put so much fortitude (or divine assistance) into the picture to make certain *types* of actions very unlikely (if not impossible), then while in the case of having fallen into sin our willful culpability may make sense, the actually-falling-into-the-sin part would make very little sense; but if we take out enough support, then while our falling-into-the-sin may make sense, our willfulness or culpability (in falling) would not. So either way, we seem to be left with a conundrum.³⁸

Admittedly, given my suggestions, this last question may potentially be the most difficult one to answer. I think I understand the objection, and I even feel its force. However, as far as I am concerned, the current paradigm is not without a plausible response. For instance, radical evil may be understood in many different ways. It can be

³⁸ A related issue is that of “tipping the scale.” When faced with a couple of different feasible options, some must appeal to us more than others. Even if we grant that the two options that stand out the most are equally attractive to us, how do we then decide on which one to choose? Do we just roll the dice in our head? Incidentally, this equal distribution of favor or attraction is what is typically referred to by the historic Reformed theologians as the Jesuit’s freedom of *indifference*. One of the objections to it is that our mind just does not work that way and that if the options were thus indifference-producing, they would debilitate us more than empower us (as the Buridan’s ass would starve to death as it cannot make up its mind on which equidistant fodder to approach). How much more, then, when we actually have an option that stands out as clearly better than all the rest? What would be the point of having an alternative choice then? What would it mean to counter that natural inclination? Does that even make sense? This is admittedly another of one of those difficult issues that stands in the way of a cogent account of libertarianism. I will not answer that here except to refer the reader to the best attempts made by Randolph Clarke (2003) and Robert Kane (1998). However we answer that question, it is still a part of my thesis that without ever having such freedom to do otherwise, we could never be ultimately responsible for any of our decisions and choices, as all our “future” decisions would follow impeccably from all the earlier impersonal factors and circumstances over which we could have never had any control.

understood as above as a gratuitous evil action that is “out-of-character” or “out-of-type-certainty.” Otherwise, or even in combination with it, it can be understood in terms of intentionality (including knowledge and awareness), the worth of the object that has been harmed, the worth of the offender, among other things. All that my type-certainty paradigm requires is that with enough assistance certain types of actions are either preventable or guaranteed. For instance, as postulated above, with enough help God could have perhaps prevented us from ever falling. But that does not mean that when he does permit us to fall and we do fall, our culpability can only be so trivial as a result. That is, the fact that all our truly willful and responsible actions must happen within certain reasonable bounds (from actional-*type* perspective) does not mean that the blameworthiness in choosing a very bad option within such confines could so easily be discarded.

VI. Closing Remarks

What is central for my thesis is that given the systemic difficulty that Frankfurtians have come across in their concerted effort to come up with a plausible case for “irreducible agency, despite the fixity of the future” (whereby “alternate-sequence-compulsion” does not spill over “actual-sequence-compulsion”), the only available option in preserving “irreducible agency” seems to be in giving up some “fixity of the future.”

There may be other ways to do this very thing. For instance, I can think of someone using Eleonore Stump’s one-many relation (between a decision and the number of neural-firings) to make room for certain irreducible agency, without giving up too much on the “fixity of the future” side. However, the model that I suggested here is much

more flexible in its application, while not giving up any grounds to either Open-Theism or Arminianism. As such, I believe it is a very good Reformed alternative.

If someone objects to it for letting in too many token and type-uncertainties for the sovereign God, I would share the following story. As Reformed Christians, we all want to and should believe that “God is in charge of *everything*.” Yet, to quote my friend who is neither a professional theologian nor a philosopher, “just what exactly *is everything?*” She made that comment to me while we were discussing this topic of divine providence. When I told her that as Reformed Christians, we should perhaps believe that God ordains everything, she rejoined, “Do you really believe that God preordained the NY Giants to win the Super Bowl this year?” At that time, I was inclined to answer with an affirmative because it seemed like the 2011 Super Bowl was a big enough deal to merit God’s preordination from before the beginning of the world. However, to go back to her question, if by “*everything*” we understand “every *type* of thing (including certain action-tokens) that God would ever want to actualize with certainty,” would the Reformed people really have to commit to the belief that God must have ordained the outcome of every Super Bowl? I am much less certain on my response today, but that seems okay now that we have had a chance to think it through, thanks to Paul Helm.

APPENDIX A

A POSITIVE ACCOUNT OF LIBERTARIAN FREE WILL

One major objection that may still be raised against my thesis, especially by those who are familiar with the literature, has to do with the *positive* feasibility or intelligibility of the libertarian free will itself.¹ This is a controversial issue that can have some implication on my thesis insofar as without first explaining the issue, it can readily be objected that I am out of turn to suggest that we go further in our libertarian spectrum. Fair enough.

Besides what has already been mentioned in chapters 2 and 6 (in terms of “the problem of luck” and “the tipping of the scale” issues), to give a brief primer on this issue, according to Randolph Clarke’s “Incompatibilist (Nondeterministic) Theories of Free Will,”² there are broadly three schools of incompatibilist perspectives on free will that espouse different kinds of undetermined exercise of free will as follows: (1) “noncausal theories” take this indeterminism to consist of *uncaused* events that have certain *appearance* of relatedness to each other, while (2) “event causal theories” take it to consist of *nondeterministically caused events*, and (3) “agent-causal theories” take it to consist of *agent* (or substance) *caused* events.

¹ For example, as hinted at in n38 of chapter 6.

² See Randolph Clarke, “Incompatibilist (Nondeterministic) Theories of Free Will,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, first published in 2000 to be substantively revised in 2008, accessed March 15, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/incompatibilism-theories/>.

To explicate this further, (1) according to Carl Ginet,³ a non-causalist, each basic action of free willing, if it is indeed undetermined, has only an “actish phenomenal quality,” whereby the agent feels *as if* she directly causes the action(-event) in question, without actually either (2) having the *events* involving her (for instance, with its appropriate time-index) bring it about or (3) the *agent* herself causing it (apart from such events or event-states involving the agent). Hugh McCann, while maintaining that such basic actions have “a certain *sui generis* character”⁴ about them (that would then resist reducibility to things other than the self), suggests that a certain (subjective) reason would adequately explain the decision so long as the agent forms the intention whose *content* reflects the goals present in the reason (while being aware of this reason and “intrinsically intending” to bring it about), *even if* this reason fails to actually play a causal role in bringing about the decision.⁵

While the initial appeal of thus equating the undetermined with the uncaused is understandable, this school of thought is bound to run into problems when it postulates that one’s desire that plays no actual causal role in the decision-making process could then still serve as *the* reason behind one’s decision simply because there is an *apparent*

³ See Carl Ginet, “Reasons Explanations of Action: An Incompatibilist Account,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 3 (1989): 17-46; *On Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); “Reasons Explanations of Action: Causalist versus Noncausalist Accounts,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 386-405; “An Action Can Be Both Uncaused and Up to the Agent,” in *Intentionality, Deliberation and Autonomy: The Action-Theoretic Basis of Practical Philosophy*, eds. Christoph Lumer and Sandro Nannini (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 243-55. The first and the last references were cited by Clarke in “Incompatibilist (Nondeterministic) Theories of Free Will.”

⁴ Hugh J. McCann, *The Works of Agency: On Human Action, Will, and Freedom* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 185.

⁵ See chapter 8 of McCann’s *The Works of Agency*.

connection between the contents of one's desire and the decision itself. For this reason, I think that compared to this Option (1), Options (2) and (3) clearly have an upper edge.

Between Options (2) and (3), Randolph Clarke himself leans toward Option (3) while preferring to have a certain hybrid of the two that makes an explicit provision for both. His main problem with Option (2) (in its better and more conventional expression) is that left to itself it is supposedly more susceptible to "the problem of luck." As Option (2) requires that at least some free actions be *nondeterministically caused* by their immediate causal antecedents (consisting of certain agent-involving *events* that account for the *reasons* for the act), Clarke complains that

[T]here is [then] a possible world that is exactly the same as the actual world up until the time of the decision, but in which the agent makes the alternative decision then. There is, then, nothing about the agent prior to the decision—indeed, there is nothing about the *world* prior to that time—that accounts for the difference between her making one decision and her making the other. This difference, then, is just a matter of luck. And if the difference between the agent's making one decision and her instead making another is just a matter of luck, she cannot be responsible for the decision that she makes.

The solution that Clarke suggests is to add the (irreducible) agent-causal aspect to the standard event-causal account in order to account for such a variability in the face of the very same *event*-circumstance.

However, what exactly is for an *agent* to make a difference in addition to such an event? For instance, to use his own words,

When something is caused, it is caused to occur at a certain time. There must then be something about the cause that 'enters into the moment' from which the effect issues. A cause, then, must be something to which the notion of date, or time, applies; and such a notion has application only to events.⁶

⁶ C. D. Broad, *Ethics and the History of Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), 215; cited by Clarke in Section 3.3.

So, how could adding the event-less *agent*-causation make any difference to the picture in terms of accounting for the problem of variability or “luck” in an undetermined exercise of free will? Other than merely postulating that “[u]nlike what we have with any event-causal view, with an agent-causal account, the agent is quite literally an ultimate source or origin of her action” (3.2), Clarke has no further explanation in this regard.

On the other hand, Robert Kane’s more sophisticated “centered” or standard event-causal account that centers indeterminism on the production of free actions themselves seems to accrue for itself more harm than good in its increasing sophistication (2.2). For example, by requiring the doubling of efforts (of will) to two obviously incompatible directions to account for the meaningful control in successfully making either choice willfully (i.e., *despite* or against the indeterminism that lies in either direction), it postulates something that is highly counterintuitive, for what exactly is to try to decide to A *and* not-A at the same time?

Therefore, I believe that it is best to go with a *simpler* “centered” *event*-causal account and hold that as a basic, irreducible relation (that for instance needs no such “doubling of efforts” to avoid luck), causation or free willing need not be any luckier in its exercise than the exercise of the will that is supposed to be irreducible to its preexisting conditions. As long as we maintain this, we could simply ward off, for instance, the following kind of assumption made by Clarke:

[a]n event-causal incompatibilist theory requires no causes of a type that cannot also be required by a compatibilist account, and hence the former appears to yield nothing new with respect to the agent’s power to determine what she does ... If Frankfurt is right, and the openness provided by such an account is not required for responsibility, then whether the account secures responsibility would appear to depend just on what positive powers of control it offers. Hence, if responsibility is

not compatible with the truth of determinism, it might not be compatible with the truth of an event-causal incompatibilist account, either.⁷

For one, according to what I have shown in this dissertation, Frankfurt's contention does not seem right at all. Second, therefore, the positive powers of control that it offers seems unique to itself. Moreover, while we may lack the empirical evidence to positively posit the existence of such irreducible and independent "mental events from physical, chemical, and biological events," this gives Clarke no warrant to conclude that we are therefore unjustified in treating one another as irreducibly and uniquely morally responsible beings. To infer the latter from such empirical evidence would only reveal Clarke's "evidentialist" prejudice, more than a universal truth that we should all abide by. Therefore, after considering all three options for an incompatibilist account of freedom, I conclude that a simpler centered or standard event-causal perspective is the best of all such options and as Christians who believe in moral responsibility stemming from such God-given freedom, we are warranted to believe in such incompatibilist freedom until or unless we have a real reason (i.e., an undermining defeater) not to do so.⁸

⁷ Clarke, "Incompatibilist (Nondeterministic) Theories of Free Will," Section 2.5.

⁸ I am hereby applying well-respected epistemic principles laid out by Alvin Plantinga in his *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a good primer on Reformed epistemology, see *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, eds. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). On the issues pertaining to this appendix, I recommend the following literature: C. D. Broad, *Ethics and the History of Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952); Randolph Clarke, "Incompatibilist (Nondeterministic) Theories of Free Will," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/incompatibilism-theories/>; "Libertarian Views: Critical Survey of Noncausal and Event-Causal Accounts of Free Agency," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 356-85; and *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Carl Ginet, "Reasons Explanations of Action: An Incompatibilist Account," *Philosophical Perspectives* 3 (1989): 17-46; *On Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); "Freedom, Responsibility, and Agency," *Journal of Ethics* 1 (1997): 85-98; "Reasons Explanations of Action: Causalist versus Noncausalist Accounts," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 386-405; "An Action Can Be Both Uncaused and Up to the Agent," in *Intentionality, Deliberation and Autonomy: The Action-Theoretic Basis of Practical Philosophy*, eds. Christoph Lumer and Sandro Nannini (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 243-55; Hugh J. McCann, *The Works of Agency: On Human Action, Will, and Freedom* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Alfred R.

Mele, *Autonomous Agents: From Self-Control to Autonomy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Free Will and Luck* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Robert Kane *Free Will and Values* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985); "Two Kinds of Incompatibilism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50 (1989): 219–54; "The Dual Regress of Free Will and the Role of Alternative Possibilities," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 57–79; "Some Neglected Pathways in the Free Will Labyrinth," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 406–37; "Libertarianism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 5–43; "Free Will and Responsibility: Ancient Dispute, New Themes," *Journal of Ethics* 4 (2000): 315–22; Peter van Inwagen, "Free Will Remains a Mystery," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 1–19; Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Derk Pereboom, *Living Without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); "Is Our Conception of Agent-Causation Coherent?," *Philosophical Topics* 32 (2004): 275–86; "Hard Incompatibilism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 85–125; and Richard Taylor, *Metaphysics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1992).

APPENDIX B

THEOLOGICAL THESES FOR PUBLIC DEFENSE

Theses Pertaining to the Dissertation

I.

While touching on certain aspects of new compatibilism, the earlier Helm (of *The Providence of God*) is essentially a “two-way” (or “more-than-one-hypothetically-available-alternative-affirming”) classical compatibilist who adopts certain new compatibilist elements insofar as the latter bolsters the main sentiments of the former and the former-based “no-risk” view of divine providence and free human will (that should not otherwise be available to his particularly shallow “two-way” classical compatibilist perspective, which addresses, for instance, the freedom of *action* without making similar provisions for the deeper freedom of the will).

II.

With his repeated concessions over the years, Helm is, for all morally significant actions, moving clearly toward the option of irreducible agency (which is akin to the kind of agency promoted in the context of “[2.II.2] new compatibilism”’s “alternate-sequence-only-determinism”) that stays away from the blatant universal causal determinism of all the actual-sequence of choosing that we were familiar with in *The Providence of God* for his essentially “two-way” classical compatibilist perspective.

III.

In examining and linking “Stoic Compatibilism” to Calvin in *Calvin at the Centre* (2010), Helm tenaciously keys in on the prospect of attaining for Calvin a plausible notion of “irreducible agency (despite the fixity of the future)” that would then allow Calvin’s allegedly less-avowed compatibilism to have legitimate moral freedom, but Helm does this without success.

IV.

The latest and the best of the Frankfurtians all fail in their respective attempts to capture “irreducible agency despite the total lack of relevantly significant voluntary alternatives,” which then suggests that this comprehensive failure is due to some deep-seated conceptual difficulty that may not be overcome, and so whoever desires “irreducible agency” better give up some portion of the “the fixity of the future” to retain the former.

V.

Any source incompatibilists' treasured notion of "self-determination," "origination," "ultimacy," "actual-sequence(-only)-indeterminism," "guidance-control" or even "irreducibility" (that are for them of fundamental importance for moral responsibility), once again, does not seem ultimately tenable at the complete absence of morally and deliberately significant alternative possibilities for choosing. For the agent to be a relevant difference maker in the "actual-sequence" of her choosing, there better be more than one significantly possible future open to her at the time of her making the choice. Without it (i.e., with essentially the complete blockage of all other such viable options), it is impossible for us not to be reduced down to such externally constraining factors over which we have no control.

VI.

In one of the latest articles that he published on the issue of divine providence and human free will, "*Reformed Thought on Freedom: Some Further Thoughts*" (2010), Helm repudiates certain Dutch authors' claim that Turretin's acceptance of indifference in the faculty of the will in the abstract and divided sense (i.e., "synchronic contingency" *apart from* divine decree and other requisite conditions that would determine the choice) makes Turretin a metaphysical libertarian. On the one hand, Helm is completely right about that. On the other hand, such mere repudiation of a logical error does not make Helm a classical compatibilist in the tradition of Turretin.

Theses Pertaining to Ph.D. Course Work

I.

Given G. C. Berkouwer's correlative method, anti-metaphysical stance, and repeated avoidance of the causal language in *Divine Election* (i.e., given his "existential" opposition to the admission of causal efficacy in divine decree), he seems clearly opposed to the orthodox attribution of the reality of sin to the divine decree (whether that be understood as decretive or permissive) even in his *Divine Election*.

II.

Robert Adams' divine command theory, as we see it in his masterpiece, *Finite and Infinite Goods*, is not so much about the nature of moral obligation and ethical wrongness *per se*, as it is about those that are contingently so. As a result, with a little bit of charity and some minor clarifications, Adams' otherwise divine command system can be taken as a great articulation in line with, but not confined to, Francis Turretin's rather balanced and plausible two-tier natural law perspective.

III.

Radical Orthodoxy's generally negative sentiment against Scotus' voluntarism in particular and voluntarism in general seems wrongly founded. Contrary to its claims, voluntarism need not stand in the way of RO's aspiration to uphold both God's transcendence and our utter dependence on Him, for not all voluntarists desire freedom at the expense of norm and truth. The Scotist voluntarism, for instance, in no way postulates the will's total autonomy from God, world, and the good. God, as the absolute good without whom there can be no inherent value, is moreover explicitly stipulated as the *potentia absoluta et ordinata* (when the latter is understood as having *order*), and not as the arbitrary *ex lex* or chaotic *potentia absoluta*.

IV.

The *Congregatio de auxiliis* was commissioned in 1598 by Pope Clement VIII to closely investigate the Dominican allegation that the Jesuit adherents of Molinism are Pelagians. It was dissolved in 1607 with Pope Paul V's injunction that the opposing sides should no longer call each other heretics (as the Jesuits retaliated by calling the Dominicans Calvinists). The opinion on the issue of Molinism entailing at least Semi-Pelagianism varies today among the contemporary Catholics. Some affirm that diagnosis, while others deny it. When it comes to the Reformed circle, the opinion in this regard has historically been almost unanimously negative (with the exception of Gomarus, Walaeus, and Crocius). Given that middle knowledge was indispensable for Arminius to build his own Semi-Pelagian system, was Molina *himself* then a Semi-Pelagian? If the term "Semi-Pelagian" referred to God's conditional election resting on his foreknowledge of (logically) preexisting human acts and choices, the answer would be a yes.

Miscellaneous Theses

I.

The real difference between Christianity and Islam seems to come down to this. The Bible portrays a God who (a) expects much out of humanity and (b) is also quite interested in maintaining a rather intense relationship with his people. Correspondingly, contrary to the common Muslim assessment, Christian anthropology holds a much higher view of human persons: We are essentially free creatures who are truly capable of making meaningful choices toward God as our Father and friend and we are deeply responsible for all such choices. We are then also capable of great evil, such as deliberately turning away from or even against God. With the grievous fall, we have then collectively become so corrupted by sin that we cannot deliver ourselves. In our dire circumstance, God however chooses to come to our rescue with love that costs him dearly and affects a new change in us. This is a picture of God who is wholly holy and also wholly loving. Such an account of humanity and salvation seems much more compelling than the Islamic perspective according to which humanity is prone to make

mistakes and is therefore easy for Allah to forgive and award with mostly this-worldly rewards.

II.

“Reformed epistemology” (developed by Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, *et al*) has much to offer to those who are in favor of the emerging and the emergent church movement. Much of the latter’s emphasis on epistemic uncertainty, “tentative faith,” and/or “simply embarking on a faith journey,” while it may nicely offset certain fundamentalist tendencies, goes too far in its rejection of the “*assurance* of the things hoped for” (Hebrews 11:1). This emphasis on having only very tentative faith could benefit much from the *modest* foundationalism of Reformed epistemology, which nicely holds faith and reason in balance in its perspectival realism.

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