

# The Mystery of the Freedom of God

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*But our God is in heaven;  
He does whatever He pleases  
Psalm 115:3*

## Introduction

Traditionally, theistic philosophers have concerned themselves with cogently and coherently defending belief in God. The charge of the incoherence of theism is a perennial objection that any theistic philosopher will inevitably encounter. I aim to address the claim that the conjunction of God's perfect goodness, power, and knowledge with divine freedom is incoherent. I will develop the incoherence objection in the form of a *reductio* and then offer various theistic attempts at resolving the problem of incoherence.

Before proceeding into the thick of this essay it is necessary that I establish the force of the objection against theism. Why, after all, should the theist be at all bothered by the claim that God cannot be perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent as well as free? Where would the absurdity lie in believing God to not be free? I take it as obvious that traditional theism cannot regard God as lacking moral perfection, omniscience, and omnipotence. But is divine freedom really on par with these essential properties of God? Is it necessary to the nature of God that he be free?

In response, historic Christian belief has held that at least creation was a free act of God. It is not as though an external force compelled God to create against his will, and some have even said that God was free to either create or not create. Moreover, God conceived of in the classical Anselmian sense, as the most perfect being conceivable, seems to intimate divine freedom. After all, many would regard freedom as a property of most perfect persons, and

therefore a property of God. I take these two commitments (God's freedom in creation and God's freedom as an implied fact of his perfection) to be beliefs shared by most Christians. For those theists not committed to both or either of these beliefs, the relevance of this essay will be diminished. Given the large tradition of Christian thinking committed to God's freedom, however, the relevance of this inquiry is hardly threatened.

### **The Problem Stated**

A famous contemporary proponent of the incoherence of God's traditional attributes and God's freedom is William Rowe. Rowe argues that if there is a best of all possible worlds, God, as a perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent being, is not free to fail to create that world. He goes on to argue that if for every possible world a better world exists, God's existence is rendered impossible (Rowe, 405). Either way, God's freedom conjoined with his traditional attributes is impossible. I have summarized the problem as follows, in the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*, beginning with the assumption to be refuted:

1. ASM: God is necessarily perfectly good, omniscient, omnipotent, as well as free with respect to the world he creates.
2. If God is necessarily perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent, then God must create the best of all possible worlds.
3. If God must create the best of all possible worlds, then God is not free with respect to the world he creates.
4. God is not free with respect to the world he creates. (from 1, 2, 3)
5. God is free with respect to the world he creates. (from 1; contradicts 4)

6. Therefore, it is false that God is necessarily perfectly good, omniscient, omnipotent, as well as free with respect to the world which he creates. (from 1, 4, 5)

The theist is unlikely to give up easily the assumption to be refuted in this reductio, but it is not immediately obvious where she can escape. In fact, theists have disagreed about what exactly is wrong with the above argument. Some have doubted premise two, arguing that it does not follow from the nature of God that he must create the best of all possible worlds. Others have sought to undermine premise three, believing it possible for God to be free despite the fact that he is guaranteed to create the best of all possible worlds. In order to appreciate the force of the above argument, it is necessary to define a few terms and offer reasons why someone would believe the reductio succeeds.

When philosophers speak of ‘possible worlds,’ they are usually not speaking of what most mean by alternate universes. Possible worlds are not actual places somewhere outside or inside of our universe, but are rather a complete way things might have been (Loux, 153). Most of us believe, or at least speak as though, things might have gone differently. Though in the actual world Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492, it could have been the case that Columbus pursued teaching fencing as a career and never sailed. In philosophical language, though in the actual world Columbus sailed to America, there is a possible world where Columbus spent his time teaching fencing to the neglect of sailing. Other examples abound—though in the actual world the United States invades Iraq in 2003, there is a possible world where it is not the case that the United States invades Iraq in 2003. Propositions like these are called *possible* propositions. And though certain propositions (such as those just proposed) are true in some possible worlds and not others, there are propositions which are true in every possible world,

which are called *necessary* propositions. For example, it is true in all possible worlds that either God exists or God does not exist. It is also the case in all possible worlds that bachelors are unmarried men. These propositions not only are in fact true, but *must* be true. It simply cannot be the case that these propositions could ever be false. A possible world, then, is a complete or maximal state of affairs. It is a description of the way things could have gone which includes or excludes every detail. Formally, a state of affairs S is maximal if for every state of affairs S\*, S includes S\* or precludes S\* (Plantinga, 45). A possible world, then, is simply a maximal state of affairs.

What, then, does it mean for one possible world to be better than another possible world? It means only that one possible world contains more good than another. Most would agree that a state of affairs where all innocent people were punished for crimes they had never committed is a worse state of affairs than a world in which all innocent people are not punished for crimes they had never committed. But some states of affairs that are intrinsically bad can nevertheless be part of a state of affairs which is good. For example, it is intrinsically good that people be happy and intrinsically bad that people be unhappy. But consider the following propositions—“Charlie is happy upon seeing children murdered” and “Charlie is unhappy upon seeing children murdered.” Though the first state of affairs contains an intrinsically good state (Charlie being happy), and though the second state of affairs contains a state that is intrinsically bad (Charlie being unhappy), it is still true that the second state of affairs is better than the first. This is because the intrinsic value of the whole may not equal the intrinsic value of each part. For a possible world to be better than another possible world, then, it means for that world as a whole to be better than another world as a whole. Given that possible worlds are maximal states of

affairs, this can be restated to say ‘A possible world X is better than a possible world Y if the maximal state of affairs in X is better than the maximal state of affairs in Y.’

We may now offer reasons why someone would believe the premises of the reductio to be true. The second premise states, “If God is necessarily perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent, then God must create the best of all possible worlds.” The most famous endorsement of the truth of this proposition comes from Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. Leibniz conceived of God as “an absolutely perfect being,” a being possessing every kind of perfection to the highest degree (Leibniz, 250). Perfect action would no doubt be included under Leibniz’s notion of God. But Leibniz also held that “one acts imperfectly if he acts with less perfection than he is capable of” (Leibniz, 251). For God, then, to act less perfectly or with less good than he is capable of is to render God imperfect, a contradictory notion given Leibniz’s definition of God as an absolutely perfect being. It follows, then, that God could not have made things better than he in fact has. Since the actual world is the world God has created, the actual world must be the best of all possible worlds, or so Leibniz argued.

The intuitions behind Leibniz’s reasoning are strong. It does seem unlikely that a supremely good, rational, and powerful being would bring about less good than he is capable. We can hardly imagine why God would act with less goodness than he could have. We may have trouble imagining the goods for which God acts, but surely the idea of God creating a world when he could have created a better world is a difficult if not impossible idea.

Because of the difficulty involved in denying the second premise, some theists have sought to deny the third. The third premise states, “If God must create the best of all possible worlds, then God is not free with respect to the world he creates.” But surely this premise also has the appearance of truth. After all, is anything more antithetical to freedom than necessity?

When we say God is free to create, do we not mean that he could have not created, or that he could have actualized a different possible world? But if he had to create the world he in fact created, if he could not have failed to create or create a different world, then how in any meaningful sense is he free with respect to creation? It appears, then, that the third premise is plausible.

The theist is now forced to do what few enjoy doing, namely choosing which among a variety of apparently reasonable premises he is going to reject for the sake of maintaining his theism. In what follows I will catalogue various responses theists have made to the reductio above, commenting on and critiquing the responses throughout.

### **Theistic Solutions to the Problem**

Theistic responses to the problem of divine freedom are varied, each endorsing and rejecting different parts of the above argument. I will catalogue theistic solutions according to which premise in the reductio they reject, beginning first with the third premise and moving next to the second.

#### **Rejecting Premise Three**

##### *Traditional Compatibilism*

Premise three states that if God must create the best of all possible worlds, then God is not free with respect to the world he creates. The strength of the premise rests in the fact that freedom seems to be incompatible with necessity. If a person cannot fail but to act the way the person in fact acts, then surely the person is not free. Certainly if antecedent causes compel one to act, one is not free with respect to that action. Immanuel Kant endorsed such notions, writing, “freedom would be that property of this causality that makes it effective independent of any determination by alien causes...What else, then, can freedom of the will be but autonomy , i.e.,

the property that the will has of being a law to itself?” (Kant, 49). He regarded the notion that the will can remain free while being determined by antecedent causes as a ‘wretched subterfuge,’ a prevarication meant to escape or conceal the problem rather than confront it.

However, historically, many philosophers, whether theists or not, have not believed that freedom is inconsistent with necessity. In fact, some have gone so far as to say that freedom demands necessity! David Hume regarded freedom as fully consistent with necessity. Hume even argued that unless the will is necessitated, human responsibility is illusory—“According to the principle, therefore, which denies necessity and, consequently, causes, a man is as pure and untainted, after having committed the most horrid crime, as at the first moment of his birth, nor is his character anywise concerned in his actions, since they are not derived from it” (Hume, 166). Hume argues that it is precisely because the will is necessitated by the character of the agent that agents are responsible. If the agent’s character did not determine the agent’s actions, in what sense would they still be the agent’s actions? And if the will is not caused, then how are we responsible for what we choose? But, according to a strong tradition in philosophy, the will is caused, and causality implies necessity. Consider the words of Thomas Hobbes—“because every act of man’s will, and every desire, and inclination proceeds from some cause, and that from another cause, in a continual chain (whose first link is in the hand of God the first of all causes) they proceed from necessity” (Hobbes, 561). Among those who regard freedom (or at least responsibility) as fully consistent with necessity are the Stoics, Augustine, Calvin, Hobbes, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, and Jonathan Edwards.

Assuming that freedom is consistent with necessity, the third premise of the argument loses its force. Consider the following definition of freedom, one which (with perhaps some qualification), most compatibilists would endorse—Person S is free with respect to choice A if

1.) A is caused in the right way by relevant features of S (like S's character, beliefs, desires, intentions, etc.) and, 2.) nothing external to S keeps S from acting in accordance with A. If freedom can be understood in this sense, then it is fully consistent with determinism and necessity. Under this definition, so long as one can act in accordance with one's choices, even if those choices are the result of a causal chain reaching deep into the past, one is free. Necessity simply does not threaten freedom.

Some compatibilists have made a point to state that under the compatibilist paradigm, *free will* is actually rejected in favor of *free agents*. Jonathan Edwards argues that the idea of 'free will,' strictly speaking, is absurd:

And therefore to talk of Liberty, or the contrary, as belonging to the *very will itself*, is not to speak good sense; if we judge of sense, and nonsense, by the original and proper signification of words.—  
For the *will itself* is not an Agent that *has a will*: the power of choosing, itself, has not a power of choosing... To be free is the property of an agent... these qualities are the properties of persons; and not the properties of properties (Edwards, 220).

With this distinction in hand, we can understand compatibilists to define God's freedom as the freedom of the person of God, not the freedom of his will. Moreover, the freedom of God consists in the fact that God's choices are caused by the relevant features of God (what other than God can cause God's choices, after all?) and nothing external to God prevents him from acting. All of these facts remain the case despite the fact that even God's choices are necessary, given facts about his nature and causality.

One of the greatest strengths of this response is that, if it succeeds, it supplies a simple and fatal blow to the argument for the incoherence of God's freedom. By denying that freedom and necessity are inconsistent, it removes the strength of the third premise of the reductio. Moreover, this compatibilist response offers what many regard as a common-sense understanding of freedom, namely the ability to act in accordance with one's choices. As stated, freedom is not incompatible with necessity.

Despite its strong tradition, many have come to suspect compatibilism of being an inadequate understanding of freedom. Recall that the compatibilist endorses the following definition of freedom—Person S is free with respect to choice A if 1.) A is caused in the right way by relevant features of S (like S's character, beliefs, desires, intentions, etc.) and, 2.) nothing external to S keeps S from acting in accordance with A. But there are some very persuasive arguments that this understanding fails to defend against.

First, the fact that according to compatibilism one's choices (at least human choices) are caused ultimately by events antecedent to one's existence, events over which one had no control, has made it difficult to believe compatibilists can account for freedom in any robust sense. After all, the past is unalterable, and, according to determinism, given the past and all causal laws, only one future is possible (in the narrower sense of factual or metaphysical possibility, not the broader sense of logical possibility). But surely at least some control over one's actions is necessary in order for them to be one's own free actions. But this personal control is precisely what determinism denies. In its reduction of the whole of reality to causal laws and chains, it asserts that *all* of one's actions are guaranteed given facts and causal laws preceding one's existence. No wonder Immanuel Kant regarded compatibilism as a wretched subterfuge.

Second, some have argued that the fact of deliberation is evidence that we humans believe we have the power of contrary choice. When we stop to consider what course of action we will take, whether we will play softball or go fishing, we are tacitly assenting to the notion that we can do either. In other words, given the past and all the causal laws up to this point of deliberation, we believe we are still capable of choosing one way or another. We believe that more than one future is physically possible. But again, compatibilism denies this. The determinism accepted by compatibilists commits them to regarding only one future as physically possible. But deliberation is evidence that we believe more than one future is physically possible. Does it make sense for a man to continue to deliberate about whether he will leave a room when he discovers it is locked and he has no way of escape? Hardly. Therefore, the fact of deliberation counts as evidence against compatibilism.

Finally, Richard Taylor has offered an argument against compatibilism that is very interesting. His thought experiment runs as follows:

...we can suppose that an ingenious physiologist can induce in me any volition he pleases simply by pushing various buttons on an instrument to which, let us suppose, I am attached by numerous wires. All the volitions I have in that situation are, accordingly, precisely the ones he gives me. By pushing one button, he evokes in me the volition to raise my hand; and my hand, being unimpeded, rises in response to that volition. By pushing another, he induces the volition in me to kick, and my foot, being unimpeded, kicks in response to that volition. We can ever suppose that the physiologist puts a rifle in my hands, aims it at

some passerby, and then, by pushing the proper button, evokes in me the volition to squeeze my finger against the trigger, whereupon the passerby falls dead of a bullet wound (Taylor, 188).

Though this agent enjoys freedom from external constraint, it is clear that this is not a free and responsible agent. But, according to the compatibilist, it is hard to see why this agent is not free and responsible. “The agent *is* constrained by an external cause,” a compatibilist objector may remonstrate. “The physiologist is the external impediment.” But is it still not the case that nothing impedes the agent from acting in accordance with his choices? The physiologist is only the source of the agent’s volitions. He never interferes with the agent’s actions. In the same way, compatibilists believe the unalterable past determines all of our volitions, and we simply act accordingly. One can see why, according to compatibilism, freedom of the person really reduces to freedom of bodily motion, a freedom quite insufficient to establish the genuine freedom most people endorse.

The compatibilist, however, may still object that these thought experiments only show that human freedom is incompatible with determinism, but not that divine freedom is incompatible with determinism. Determinism may wrest all control from a human person, because it asserts human actions are necessitated by facts in the past and causal laws over which the human has no power. But for God this is not the case. It is only God’s nature that determines his actions, and this is compatible with his freedom.

In response to this, it should be said that, barring the assumption that God created his own nature, God is not in control of his nature. God’s nature does not supervene on his will, and so his nature is not the proper object of his control. But if this is the case, and if God’s actions are determined by his nature, then it seems to follow that God is not in control of his actions.

For these reasons among others, many theists have concluded that freedom really is inconsistent with determinism, and have abandoned compatibilism as an adequate account of free action. But if compatibilism fails, if freedom really is not consistent with causal determinism, then it's hard to see how the third premise of the reductio can be anything but true. There remains, however, one other way of escape from the third premise which even an incompatibilist can adopt, and to this I now turn.

*Multiple-Best-Worlds Hypothesis*

We have surveyed one possible response to premise three, which states that if God must create the best of all possible worlds, then God is not free with respect to the world he creates. We saw that compatibilists argue that freedom and necessity are not inconsistent, and therefore the third premise need not be true. However, despite the virtues of this response, it carries with it problems which many have grown unable to accept. Furthermore, the rejection of compatibilism has acquired renewed strength, especially due to the work of Timothy O'Connor and William Rowe in agent causation theory, as well as the apologetic for incompatibilism given in Peter van Inwagen's "An Essay on Free Will." Christian philosophers which reject compatibilism include Timothy O'Connor, Peter van Inwagen, Michael Bergmann, J.P. Moreland, and William Lane Craig. It should therefore be of great interest how incompatibilists might respond to premise three.

A response some have considered is that there may be no single best possible world, but that there may be many equally good possible worlds, all of which are the best possible worlds. If it this is the case, then though God is not free to choose to create a world than which a greater world could be created, he is still free to choose among the options of equally best worlds. There are a couple of problems with this reply, however.

To illustrate the first problem, imagine a person forced into a store containing five guitars and then compelled to choose one to buy. The person has not freely chosen to enter the store, neither has the person freely chosen to buy a guitar. Nevertheless, the person is given the choice of which individual guitar to buy. Though it does appear there is some sort of freedom in this decision, it does not seem that there is *significant* freedom. This narrow and restricted freedom strikes us as rather cheap and superficial. When applied to God, then, surely it would appear even cheaper and more restricted. However, given this response, this is the only sort of freedom God can have. According to this reply, God's decision among equally possible worlds is restricted to only those worlds which are the best worlds. But because possible worlds are not the sort of things God has created (they exist necessarily), they are not the sort of thing God can control. He can control what world is actualized, but the existence of possible worlds does not depend upon his will. God's freedom, then, is cheapened by the fact that he is forced to choose among possible worlds he has no control over anyway. But surely God's freedom is not so cheap.

A second reason the hypothesis of equally best possible worlds has proven problematic is that it appears to make God's choice arbitrary. If there are many possible worlds equal in value, in virtue of what will God choose? This concern was expressed by Leibniz when he wrote, "...let us suppose that God chooses between A and B, and that he takes A without any reason for preferring it to B. I say that this action on the part of God is at least not praiseworthy, for all praise ought to be founded upon reason, which *ex hypothesi* is not present here" (Leibniz, 252).

Because of the problems with the compatibilist response and the multiple best possible worlds hypothesis, many have accepted the third premise as true. We must now consider the truth of the second premise to evaluate the merits of the reductio.

**Rejecting Premise Two**

*No-Best World Hypothesis*

The second premise of the reductio says that if God is necessarily perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent, then God must create the best of all possible worlds. For those Christian philosophers committed to a libertarian view of free will, it will be this premise, rather than the third, that will likely be rejected. On what grounds, then, can the theist reject premise two?

One possible response was put forth by St. Thomas Aquinas, who said that it may be that for any possible world God could create, there will always be a better possible world he might have created (Rowe, 411). If such is the case, then it is logically impossible for God to create the best of all possible worlds. But surely we cannot impugn God's goodness for failing to do what is logically impossible.

Philosophers have responded in different ways to this response. Many theists have endorsed just the sort of response given in the previous paragraph. They have argued that if it is the case that it is logically impossible to create the best of all possible worlds, then there seems to be no problem for the perfect goodness of God. For surely the perfect goodness of God requires only that he act within the realm of logical possibility.

Some atheists, however, have argued that the idea of God creating a world when a better world could have been created is incoherent. They have reasoned as follows:

1. ASM: God creates a world when there is a better world that could have been created.

2. If God creates a world when there is a better world that could have been created, it is possible that there exists a being who could create a world better than that created by God.
3. If it is possible that there exists a being who could create a world better than that created by God, then it is possible that there exists a being morally better than God.
4. It is not possible that there exists a being morally better than God.
5. It is possible that there exists a being morally better than God.  
(from 1, 2, 3; contradicts 4)
6. Therefore, it is not the case that God creates a world when there is a better world that could have been created. (from 1, 4, 5)

The assumption to be refuted in this second reductio is what the theist has said in response to the first reductio, namely that it is possible that for every possible world God could have created, there exists a better possible world that he might have created instead. This would make it impossible for God to create the best of all possible worlds, and, so some theists think, would therefore serve to render the second premise of the first reductio false.

The second premise appears to be a very natural thing to believe once one accepts that there are possible worlds which are better than the actual world. As such, we will accept the truth of this premise.

The fourth premise also seems to be something most theists would be committed to. In the Anselmian sense, God simply is that being greater than which nothing can be conceived. For traditional theists, then, commitment to this premise is very important.

What is left for the theist, then, is to reject premise three. In order to reject this premise, the theist must assert that it does not follow from the nature of a perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent being that he not create a world than which a better exists. The theist may argue that when imagining the most perfect being, it is consistent with this that we also imagine him doing less good than he could have. But at this point the discussion has been reduced to an intuitive impasse. While the theist appeals to the intuition that the most perfectly good being possible might do less good than he is capable of, the atheist need only appeal to the intuition that the most perfectly good being possible must never do less good than he is capable of. Aside from arguments offered in behalf of both parties, it appears this route has ended in a deadlock.

*Summarizing the Issues Thus Far*

When considering God's traditional attributes, namely his perfect goodness, omniscience, omnipotence, and freedom, we have found an apparent tension between the first three attributes and his freedom. The problem has been stated as follows:

1. ASM: God is necessarily perfectly good, omniscient, omnipotent, as well as free with respect to the world in which he creates.
2. If God is necessarily perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent, then God must create the best of all possible worlds.
3. If God must create the best of all possible worlds, then God is not free with respect to the world he creates.
4. God is not free with respect to the world he creates. (from 1, 2, 3)
5. God is free with respect to the world he creates. (from 1; contradicts 4)

6. Therefore, it is false that God is necessarily perfectly good,  
omniscient, omnipotent, as well as free. (from 1, 4, 5)

In response to this reductio, some theists have rejected premise three. They have argued that freedom is not inconsistent with necessity, and some have gone so far as to argue that responsibility requires causal determinism. But because of difficulties involved in affirming the conjunction of causal determinism with freedom, an increased interest in incompatibilism has emerged in philosophy. Many theists find themselves unable to accept compatibilism, and have therefore been forced to look for other ways of making sense of God's freedom.

One such way is to assert that there exist many equally best possible worlds, and that though God's nature compels him to choose among these, he is still free with respect to which world he creates. But because this sort of freedom seems inappropriate for God, as well as problems with the apparent arbitrariness of God's choice, this option has not been accepted by all.

Another response available to incompatibilists is to assert that for every possible world God could create, there exists a world that is better that he might have created instead. In this case, it is logically impossible for God to create the best of all possible worlds, and therefore the second premise of the reductio fails. In response to this move, however, some have argued that this only makes matters worse, for, upon the no-best-world hypothesis, it is conceivable that God could have created a better world than he in fact did. But many believe this to entail the possibility of their being a being morally better than God, a clear absurdity. Theist's may deny that the fact that God could have created a better world implies the possibility of a being morally better than God, but it seems that at that point the discussion has reached a dead-end.

Despite the difficulties involved in each of these responses, it nevertheless remains the case that the theist may appeal to any one of these responses in order to make sense of God's freedom. Compatibilism, the equally-best-worlds hypothesis, and the no-best-world hypothesis are all available to the theist. Before ending our survey of possible theistic solutions to the problem of God's freedom, however, I will consider one final response which I believe has much going for it.

*A Modified Compatibilism Reconsidered*

The traditional compatibilist response already discussed faced objections that I regard as fatal. There is, however, a way to modify compatibilism that many incompatibilists can accept without fatally compromising their incompatibilism. This response hinges on a distinction between God's freedom and human freedom, and appeals to divine simplicity to account for the difference. A version of this response has been put forth by Robert T. Lehe in "God's Perfection and Freedom: A Reply to Morrision." The idea here is that human freedom requires libertarian freedom, for if a person's choices are determined by facts ultimately out of that person's control, then that person cannot be free. Divine freedom, however, does not require the power of contrary choice. This is made possible by an appeal to divine simplicity. For if God and his nature are not distinct, if he is identical with his nature, to say that God's nature determines his actions is simply to say that God determines his actions. But surely this is no threat to divine freedom, even on the supposition that God cannot choose otherwise. If nothing other than God himself determines his choices, the fact that those choices are determined does not negate the fact that those choices are free. It would no longer be the case that God's nature stands beneath or prior to God, compelling him to act. Rather, once the distinction between God and his nature is not made, one is simply left with the person of God determining all of his choices.

This option is still available to those sympathetic with incompatibilism with respect to human freedom. It merely requires a sort of compatibilism with respect to divine freedom. But in light of divine simplicity, this distinction between human freedom and divine freedom is not artificial or *ad hoc*. All the former objections to compatibilism fail when cast against this last position, for all of those objections only go to show human freedom requires libertarian free will (and some would even doubt that they do that much). The theist may accept the force of those objections regarding human freedom, but nevertheless remain completely firm in her belief that God's actions are determined and yet free.

### **Conclusion**

The problem of divine freedom consists in understanding how it is coherent to believe on the one hand that God is perfectly good, omniscient, and omnipotent, while also believing he is free. An argument that these attributes are incompatible has been considered, and various theistic responses have been catalogued. In summary, the theist may appeal to traditional compatibilism and reject the third premise. For those theists who are incompatibilists, they may appeal to the multiple-best-worlds hypothesis or the no-best-world hypothesis and reject premise two. All of these options face several difficulties, and I have argued that the best solution is a solution available to both compatibilists and incompatibilists. This solution appeals to divine simplicity in order to distinguish divine freedom from human freedom. It is argued, on this account, that because God is identical with his nature, to say God's nature determines his choices is only to say that God himself determines them. But if God himself is the sole determiner of his actions, it is surely no problem for his freedom that his actions be determined. This may or may not be a problem for human freedom, but for divine freedom it is hard to see how determinism is

problematic. God's freedom, then, consists only in him being the sole determiner of his choices, an understanding of divine freedom available to both compatibilists and incompatibilists.

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