

3 Human providence and indeterminism

A libertarian approach

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Goals and parameters

My task in this chapter is to describe the operation of human providence under causally indeterministic conditions, in hopes of illuminating how divine providence might function under similar conditions. Given the task as described, I shall assume a *libertarian* stance on the nature of free will, a stance that subsumes the following three metaphysical theses:

- *Incompatibilism*: Human freedom of a sort that confers moral responsibility for actions, choices and intentions, is not compatible with any variety of determinism (whether physical or psychological or theological, etc.).¹
- *Indeterminism*: Many instances of human agency are genuinely indeterministic – human agency cannot in general be subsumed under deterministic law and cannot in general be contrastively explained by reference to deterministic laws and antecedent conditions.²
- *Realism*: The necessary and sufficient conditions for indeterministic, responsibility-conferring freedom are met in the actual world – there is such a thing as (human) free will.³

I will, as I say, *assume* these theses as parameters for discussion, but I shall address the difficulties besetting them in the following.

Now a word about providence. Unalloyed the term denotes divine activity – the enactment of God’s purposes, plans, and goals as exhibited in and through the trajectory of world history.⁴ If we are to speak of ‘human providence’ we require a broader characterisation, one that encompasses the traditional theological notion as well as the mundane phenomena of human deliberation, foresight, planning, and the prudential adjustment of means to ends. As a working definition let us say that

- *Providence* is the purposive and effectual orchestration of events, designed to bring about states of affairs represented within the providential agent’s intentions.

An outcome is providential just in case it is the result of such a process, and an agent exercises providence just in case she initiates and guides the process to completion. The process must be purposive (designed, guided) and intentional because accidental or unforeseen or unintentional outcomes are matters of luck, and a significant measure of agential control must be present to keep the luck at bay. For similar reasons, providence must be efficacious. That is, ‘providence’ is a success term: a person does not exercise providence when she fails to bring about the state(s) of affairs intended – though she may of course have *tried* to execute her designs.

To allay potential misgivings, two clarificatory remarks are in order. First, by insisting upon the *efficacy* of providence, I do not thereby gainsay the possibility of contingency plans (Plans A and B and C. . .) that agents might enact depending upon the cooperativeness of the mediating events they have orchestrated pursuant to their ends. Intentions and plans can be (and usually are) complex and conditional. The point is that providence, when viewed through its ancestral theological lens, is just as inimical to failure of outcome as it is to luck in execution; indeed, it is for this reason that faith in divine providence – the theistic antidote to *fortuna* – has effectively served as a balm to anxious souls in times of uncertainty and fear.⁵ ‘Providence’ in general should therefore retain the connotation of effectualness and success, even if it must ultimately relax its specificity (in other respects) so as to accommodate the reality of human weakness. Second, and relatedly, in this chapter I consider providence under the species of (divine and human) power, as opposed to care or beneficence or love.⁶ This emphasis might be thought to result in an overly stringent theory of providence, according to which (for example) a loving parent conscientiously attending to her child’s needs does not count as a ‘providential agent’ merely because she cannot *guarantee* desired outcomes for every attempt to ‘provide’ she makes. Alternatively, the focus on power may be thought to generate a lopsided portrait of providence – if too much detached from its classical theological moorings, it could encourage a distorted vision of God as sovereign despot as opposed to loving Father. But I do not think my approach renders either of these consequences inevitable. The love of God does not decrease His power; it only signals ‘constraints’ regarding the manner in which that power can or cannot be exercised. A partial characterisation of providence therefore need not incorporate normative or moral strictures, so long as reasonable strictures are consistent with it. As to the concern that providence thus construed is excessively demanding, I reiterate that providence implicates control, and that control is at variance with luck. The degree of control commanded by the caretaking mother does not, indeed, rival that of God’s, inasmuch as she does not exercise the same degree of governance over mediating events as God exercises over secondary causes.⁷ But neither *must* she attain to such a degree of control in order to achieve her goals without relying excessively on fortuitous coincidences, unplanned happenstance, or the

like. The locus of providence lies somewhere in the union of omnipotence (on the divine side) and conscientious orchestration (on the human), which I assume is non-empty.

So far, perhaps, so good. But what does it mean to say that providence may be ‘indeterministic’ – or, more accurately, that providence may operate within a causally indeterministic framework?

Here understood, indeterminism is a thesis according to which not all actual event patterns are subsumable under deterministic law. What laws there may be covering such patterns are irreducibly probabilistic, and explanations of undetermined events fail the test of contrastive explicability – they do not (e.g.) satisfy canonical formulations of the principle of sufficient reason. This is not to say there are any uncaused or *sui generis* events in nature – that is a different thesis entirely, and the denial of determinism does not commit one to the existence of such things. It is rather to affirm the reality of events the causes of which are consistent with alternative effects while holding all relevant antecedent conditions and laws ‘fixed.’⁸ Thus, indeterminism is a metaphysical thesis with epistemological and explanatory implications, not an epistemological or explanatory theory primarily.

In the next section I present the most pressing challenges to indeterministic human providence (or to libertarian theories of human agency) and how I believe these challenges are best approached. In the remaining sections I consider the degree to which indeterministic human providence parallels indeterministic divine providence (or providence in an indeterministic world), and explore the problems and possibilities attending each.

Human providence, indeterminism, and luck

Libertarianism conjoins the thesis that freedom and determinism are incompatible with an affirmation of free will. It entails that free agency is indeterministic and that the conditions required for the exercise of free agency are actually met. In my estimation, libertarians are at their strongest when defending the incompatibilist element of the theory. Demonstrating the conceptual coherence or the real possibility of libertarian agency is, however, a harder task.

As I see it, the main obstacles in this connection are these:⁹

- (i) Libertarianism entails the falsity of (broadly) naturalistic theories of the human person – it commits us to a mysterious, anti-scientific anthropology.
- (ii) Indeterminism conflicts with free agency because it undermines the rational, voluntary control of agents over their actions.
- (iii) If indeterminism does not vitiate agential control, neither does it ‘enhance’ agential control – it contributes nothing of appreciable value to human freedom.

It would be a mistake to view the concern expressed in (i) as bound up with atheism in any interesting way. It is quite consistent to adopt a theistic metaphysics and also to endorse a naturalistic anthropology – or at any rate, one that eschews such things as Noumenal Selves or Cartesian Egos or even irreducible Agent-Causes. A theist may rather wish to understand how we fit within the natural realm as human animals, whose powers and proclivities (though unique!) are continuous with and analogous to those we discover throughout the rest of natural biosphere. Such a stance is not equivalent to (closet) atheism.¹⁰

Throughout I shall confine myself to a broadly naturalistic portrait of human beings – more exactly, I shall not avail myself of ontological entities that compatibilists who are *realists* about human agency/providence do not also require to make sense of it.¹¹ That *divine* agency/providence does not operate entirely similarly to ours is to be expected, and nothing relating to traditional ideas about God’s impassability or immutability (or any other divine attribute) is implied by my conditionally naturalistic anthropological stance.

The challenges expressed in (ii) and (iii) can be addressed stepwise. Taking (ii) first, we may note that intentional actions (‘free’ or not) must satisfy certain minimal constraints relating to the cognitive and conative states of the agents who perform them. Agents will in such cases *have* reasons for what they do, do what they do *for* those reasons, and *willingly guide* their behaviour so as to realise the state(s) of affairs represented within their intentions. But there is a problem. Indeterminism – more precisely, undetermined events – may upset the delicate sequence beginning with deliberation and terminating in action. Suppose for example that an archer aims for the bull’s eye, has skill sufficient to hit it, but misses by an inch owing to a twitch in her arm. We may suppose this ‘twitch’ results from an undetermined event, somehow amplified within her neural pathways, and supposing this we can see how indeterminism compromises her control. Or take this scenario: she hits the bull’s eye, alright, but that same undetermined twitch occurs before she releases the arrow. What then?

In both cases I should say that she (intentionally and freely) *did* something, but that she did not do it providentially because the undetermined event was not ‘orchestrated,’ and the outcome was (so to say) out of her hands.¹² Please note I do not call this an instance of causal deviance – I do not think undetermined events, falling between intentions and matching behaviour, necessarily introduce deviancy into the causal chain. Still, it is true that indeterminism located between choice and act would just be a nuisance, rather a liability than an asset.

Some have claimed that this liability undermines control to such a degree that undetermined actions cannot be considered rational or voluntary: since they cannot be *contrastively* explained via the agent’s reasons (desires and beliefs), they cannot be given a veridical reasons-explanation at all. But this is to overreach. Such actions may still count as intentional and indeed as

‘coming from’ the agent who performs them in the right way; they may as well satisfy standards for moral responsibility.

A brief word of justification for this assessment: the most plausible conditions set forth for intentional action are *a*-deterministic conditions, ones meant to cohere with deterministic and with probabilistic event sequences alike. Here I have in mind proposals going back to Donald Davidson,¹³ and more recently to causal theorists like John Bishop and Alfred Mele among others,¹⁴ who provide (causal) reasons-explanations designed to block the threat of deviance and to preserve the intentionality of the actions they explain. Naturally, no one of these theories is without its detractors, but the point is that the preponderance of them do not enjoin *deterministic* causal constraints on intentional action, and this suggests we are within rights (cautiously) to assume that such deterministic constraints are not required for it.

Yet something is awry, and it is plausible to say that the degree of luck or chance present in these cases entails that agents do not exercise *providence* over the outcomes or over the causal sequences eventuating in them: the patterns comprising those sequences that inspire the challenge in (ii) are insufficiently controlled throughout from the perspective of providence.

The concern in (iii)¹⁵ arises when libertarians attempt to secure agential control by (1) introducing undetermined events farther ‘upstream’ and (2) adding supplemental entities or capacities meant to ensure the rationality and voluntariness of free agency, with the aim of showing how indeterminism (wedged in the right spots!) can indeed *enhance* agential control and safeguard human providence. I have already voiced doubt that supplemental entities and capacities are necessary (or particularly useful), at least as a reply to (iii). But the impulse to identify the locus of indeterminism earlier on in the behavioural sequence (say, within the deliberative or reasons-weighting process prior to choice) is understandable, and libertarians attracted to event-causal theories of action have provided models of agency along those lines.

Robert Kane’s work stands out in this regard.¹⁶ On his approach, what is missing in cases like the archer one above is ‘dual’ control; the archer intends to hit her target but misses (or not) as a matter of luck, and when she misses she does not mean to. We can of course explain ‘what happened’ either way – she *tried* – yet only one outcome satisfies her intention, only one was done on purpose. But now suppose she is deliberating between hitting the bull’s eye and shooting for a mark an inch to the right. Perhaps she is playing a game of ‘horse’ with other archers and is unsure whether she should go for the bull’s eye or for the other mark, and suppose her deliberative process is indeterministic *up to the point* she makes her choice and her shot. Kane argues that either way she chooses, the choice (and the action and outcome) are ‘teleologically intelligible’ because a reasons-explanation can be provided both ways: she had reason to hit the bull’s eye and to go to the right, and she decided on the one rather than the other. But either way her reasons *explain* – either way the result is intentional, voluntary, and

indeed ‘providential’ (if not contrastively explicable). This is what Kane calls the ‘dual-regress’ of free will, which is alone responsible for terminating an impossible infinite regress of (potential) responsibility conferring choices by requiring that specific choices in the series be indeterminate. It is also, according to Kane, just what is needed to ward off the allegation that indeterminacy in action merely introduces randomness, chance, a lack of control.

We still have to consider the residual problem of luck: *it still* seems as though agents do not exercise sufficient control to underwrite attributions of ultimate responsibility for what they do and who they are (or what their moral characters are like). Granted that undetermined acts are teleologically intelligible, in Kane’s sense, we wish to be sure that agents’ choices or intention-formations are *themselves* somehow under their control – that people do not *decide* as they do as a matter of happenstance or capriciousness. Otherwise we have succeeded only in pushing the ‘luck’ problem back a step, as opposed to establishing that agents may indeed be, as Kane puts it, the “ultimate creators and sustainers of their own ends or purposes.”¹⁷

It is at this point that many theorists have turned to irreducible Agent-Causation in order to mitigate the residue of luck located upstream of choice on teleological intelligibility theories, and have indeed accused Kane of merely developing a compatibilist sort of freedom in an indeterministic world.¹⁸ But I do not think irreducible Agent-Causation successfully addresses the luck problem in question, nor that it offers any more tools for reply than Kane already has at his disposal. To the extent that Agent-Causation is needed at all, I claim, it is needed to satisfy more fundamental requirements of human agency *tout court* – specifically, it is intended to justify the contention that actions differ essentially from mere ‘happenings,’ in that the agent *brings them about* or *originates* them.¹⁹

This is a powerful intuition that ought to be respected. But it does not follow (in my view) that Agent-Causation ‘enhances control’ or eliminates luck, as proponents of that view allege. In the last analysis, on the proposed view *it is just the cost* – or one significant cost – of indeterministic metaphysics that there will remain unavoidably brute contingencies which do not sit well with our impulse to see human behaviour (and the world in general) as rationally intelligible, through-and-through.²⁰

Parallels between human and divine providence

I see parallels between indeterministic human providence and divine providence, corresponding to the currently most popular accounts of (indeterministic) divine providence – viz., Open Theism and Molinism.²¹ These are indeterministic accounts because they allow for libertarian (human) agency, and also because they attribute to God something like libertarian free will in His providential endeavours.²² But their distinct views of divine foreknowledge and providence issue in different challenges, stated respectively (*mutatis*

mutandis) in (ii) and (iii) – namely that an indeterministic creation would compromise divine providential control, or at the least, would contribute no value to divine agency within creation.

According to Open Theism, God's foreknowledge (and thus His providence) is less than precise because God created a world the future of which is unknowable and therefore unguided in its details. This is so because future contingent propositions – such as those reporting future actions human beings will freely perform – have no truth value until the time of action and are therefore subject only to educated probability assignments at best.²³ According to Molinism, by contrast, God's foreknowledge is exact, and His providence is precise, owing to His middle knowledge. Such knowledge lies between God's knowledge of that which is possible (that which could be) and that which is actual (that which will be), and it is what allows Him to know in minute detail everything that would come about under any set of possible circumstances – even if those circumstances include indeterministic variables, such as libertarian-free choices and acts. In this way, the Molinist aims to provide quite as much creaturely freedom as Open Theism, but without the attendant diminution of God's sovereignty or providential control.

The worry about Open Theism is that it makes divine providence unacceptably risky, a matter of mere luck in *outcome*. The worry about Molinism is that it makes God's choices in large part dependent upon contingent '*prior*' factors (the contents of His middle knowledge), over which He has no control. In both cases the charge is that indeterminism (or contingency) undermines divine providence, at least as a source of grounded confidence in the ability of God to fashion the world in accordance with what He unqualifiedly wills, as opposed to that which He wills given conditions and constraints beyond His control.

I have misgivings about Open Theism's account of providence, which mirror (ii)-type concerns about libertarianism when undetermined events occur '*downstream*' – between choice and act. In particular, as I note later, the extent to which outcomes are attributable to God's agency remains problematically opaque on accounts that reject '*meticulous*' providence in favour of '*general*' providence, where the latter is frequently understood negatively, as a denial of the thesis that God controls world history in all its details. Open Theists are not without reply to this concern, but the replies in question expose significant costs to classical theistic accounts of divinity and seem not to address satisfactorily the objection that Open Theism weakens divine providence to unacceptable levels.

Molinism ameliorates this concern, to a degree, because it locates the relevant indeterminism (or contingency) '*prior*' to divine creative choice, within those propositions constituting the objects of divine middle knowledge, which makes way for the teleological intelligibility of divine decision and action analogously to Kane's account of free will. But the problems attending Kane's account also afflict Molinism's theory of divine providence.

Just as Kane's theory cannot satisfy the demands of contrastive explicability (even while, let us agree, it preserves teleological intelligibility), Molinism cannot satisfy the principle of sufficient reason or rid itself of some measure of 'just because-ness.' In other words, there is on Molinism a sense in which God's providential agency remains objectionably subject to luck.

I think the second problem (afflicting Molinism) is more manageable than the first (afflicting Open Theism). They are both real problems in the anthropological case, and both real problems in their theological forms. But they are not on all fours, and it may be that the theories of divine providence on offer are better equipped to block the threat indeterminism poses. Later I discuss both of these problems in turn.

Consider Open Theism and problem (ii) first. Here there is no temptation (similar to the one we encountered in the human case) to view God's governance of the world as somehow 'causally deviant.' We have seen this is a clumsy take on problem (ii) as applied to us as well, but it is instructive to note why it was tempting in that application: we are supposed to have control over what we do purposefully and voluntarily, and indeterminism compromises control in ways that look quite similar to how deviantly caused actions fail the standard of agential control. But Open Theism gives no reason to think God is less than perfectly in control of what He wills or intends or does, precisely because causal indeterminism does not emerge between God's volitions and God's acts themselves. (Maybe there is no distinction between these things – no distinction between God's volitions and God's acts; but if there *is*, indeterminism does not emerge between them in any event.) So, the (ii)-type problem of indeterminism for divine providence is not exactly parallel to the one for our providence. The analogous problem arises only when God *incorporates* the actions of human agents as constituents of His own providential designs.²⁴ And if we take the liberty of conceiving divine providence as one big, long, extended divine action, we do discover something akin to the threat indeterminism poses to libertarian agency: the ultimate outcome (whatever it turns out to be) sure seems a matter of luck, and the mediating events do not appear sufficiently orchestrated or coordinated for the act to count as providential.

Open Theists rejoin that God is 'omnicompetent': He is rather like a master chess player who does not have to foresee every move his opponent will make in order to ensure victory, nor (to mix metaphors) does He need to stack the deck of history in order to achieve His aims. Thus, while God's providence is (as they say) 'general' rather than 'meticulous,' it is real and effective providence for all that.²⁵

It is difficult to know how to evaluate this and like claims without a more detailed articulation of 'general' providence than Open Theists tend to provide. Open Theists are in the main quite exact about what 'meticulous' providence is – God exercises meticulous providence just in case He either (1) sufficiently causes every worldly event or (2) 'ordains' every event, by way of divine decree as informed by His middle knowledge. In effect, this

definition subsumes theological determinism (plus Thomism) and Molinism, grouping them together as so many versions of the same providential vision. So, what is 'general' providence, by contrast? One philosopher suggests that God's providence is 'general' just in case it is not 'meticulous' (!).²⁶ But this *via negativa* approach to general providence creates an asymmetry that makes it hard to adjudicate the competing claims or to hold Open Theists to standards of philosophical consistency, when compared against its relatively tightly defined rival.²⁷

Turn now to Molinism as it relates to problem (iii) for libertarianism. Earlier I stated that, under Molinist assumptions, the 'relevant' indeterminism (or contingency) is located logically 'prior' to God's creative decrees. To be sure, Molinism also insists that indeterminism and contingency are shot through the created realm and suffuse human behaviour specifically – indeed, securing this result was a primary motive behind the theory's creation. Nevertheless, this 'downstream' indeterminacy is not relevant to the sense in which Molinism may fail to enhance or add something valuable to divine control. The reason is that when God elects to actualise a world, He does so in full knowledge of all that will occur in it and He takes that knowledge into account before electing to actualise it. So, there is no risk or luck attending the *trajectory* or the *outcome* of any world God decides to actualise. Therefore, in this minimal sense, Molinism does enhance divine control beyond that which Open Theism can do.

But this is not to say that introducing contingency enhances God's freedom or creative control beyond what it would have been, had there been no contingencies to deal with at all. That is because the relevant contingency comes prior to all historical contingencies, prior to the creative decree, in the form of those counterfactuals that constitute divine middle knowledge (or what Marilyn McCord-Adams playfully calls, 'the fates'). And the question for Molinism, here, is whether contingency placed in *that* spot secures a stronger variety of providence than what deterministic theories of divine providence can give us.

I think the answer to this question is a qualified 'No.' Remember that theorists like Kane wish to inject indeterminacy prior to choice or intention-formation so that human agents can play a role in shaping their characters, ultimate values, and so forth. The guiding idea is that causal indeterminism is required for self-formation, or for allowing human beings to decide for themselves what sorts of persons they should become, the conditions for which generate a vicious infinite regress if determinism obtains. But Molinists are classical theists enough to regard God's character as immutably and necessarily *fixed*: God simply is not in the business of indeterministic self-creation, as we are. So, there is no *parallel* benefit to inserting contingency into the scheme in the case of God, irrespective of whether Kane has successfully secured it for us. Rather, the payoff of Molinism is supposed to come in the form of allowing God precise foreknowledge and meticulous providence over the activities of libertarian free creatures (and over an indeterministic

world-order generally) by explaining how He can incorporate even those events into His overall plans for the world.

It is safe to say the jury is still out on whether Molinism (or some Molinist-inspired theory) can accomplish this feat. If it can, perhaps the theory does augment divine providence: it does so by showing in detail how God exercises control over precisely those things that critics have alleged must *compromise* His providence, namely indeterministic events and libertarian-free creatures. (That is why the ‘No’ earlier was qualified: in showing how God can do this, Molinism grants God a power the critical determinists deny Him.) Still, Molinism cannot deliver a model of divine providence in which God exercises unqualified sovereignty over ‘all things visible and invisible’ because the ‘fates’ that determine which worlds He can actualise are strictly out of His hands. The worry, then, is that God does not have *ultimate* control over how the world goes, owing to the contingencies that limit His creative choices. As William Hasker correctly notes:

to the extent that God does depend on ‘luck’ for the fulfillment of his plan, it needs to be pointed out that *the God of (non-Congruist) Molinism*²⁸ *is also dependent on ‘luck.’* Here, to be sure, the ‘luck’ confronts God at an earlier point, not in the actual making of a choice by the human being . . . but rather *in the counterfactuals of freedom God is confronted with in the creation situation.* These counterfactuals are contingent truths, but their truth is not controlled by God; rather, they are just ‘there’ and God must make the best of what he finds.²⁹

It is however crucial to disambiguate two ways in which this claim may be understood. Taking Molinism on its own terms, God has complete control over His decision about which world He ought to actualise, from among the set of ‘feasible’ worlds – that is, from among the set of all possible worlds that remain candidates for creation after having been filtered through God’s middle knowledge. In that sense, the choice of which world to make actual is entirely up to *Him*, and no troubling guesswork or randomness enters into the divine choice or decree. But it does not follow from this that God exercises meticulous control over everything human beings do *within* any indeterministic world He elects to make actual. Indeed, according to Molinism those choices are entirely up to *us*. Put another way, from the perspective of direct divine control, those events are unavoidably matters of luck.

For the reasons given earlier, it is not quite right to allege that Molinism leaves us with a luck problem that is precisely analogous to the one that confronts libertarians in regard to human action: there is no question of God’s being responsible for His character, His values, or His ultimate ends and purposes. Perhaps it is better to say that Molinism leaves us with a problem of inexplicability, or of unaccounted ‘bruteness,’ in the final analysis. And to the extent such bruteness presses against the ultimate intelligibility of what

happens in the world, to that extent indeterminism presents similar obstacles for the understanding of providence itself, whether human or divine.

Concluding remarks

Providence is a thick concept. In this chapter I have considered the nature of providence under the aspect of power or (more precisely) of agential control. There are no doubt fruitful approaches to providence that give priority to its normative dimensions, seeking to formulate them in such a way as to shed light on the motives of beneficence traditionally associated with the notion of providential care-giving. Though more or less silent about normative facets of the concept, I have sought to tease out some of the salient conditions on providential agency that are implicitly operative in theological as well as commonplace discourse on the topic, in a way that remains designedly consistent with the addition of reasonable normative constraints.

Indeterministic metaphysics holds forth the tantalising prospect of a kind of freedom of will uncompromised by deterministic qualification, one that would (in the case of humans) underwrite ultimate responsibility for conduct and character and would (in the case of God) secure the theistic intuition that this world results from a gratuitous act of love. The difficulty is to understand how such goods could be vouched safe while simultaneously avoiding the pitfalls and liabilities an indeterministic metaphysics brings in its wake, particularly as regards the shape of providential action.

As I see it, the conceptual relation between human and divine providence is reciprocally influential: the core concept takes its rise and footing from the long history of Abrahamic philosophico-theological reflection, an intellectual tradition that itself encourages conscientious analogising from the creaturely to the divine, from that which is first in the order of knowledge to that which is first in the order of reality. Thus, despite the clear disanalogies between divine and human action, it is reasonable to hope for enhanced illumination of the theology of divine providence from the philosophy of (human) action, considered as a species of providence itself.

Notes

- 1 For canonical explications of and arguments for incompatibilism, see Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); John Martin Fischer, *The Metaphysics of Free Will: An Essay on Control* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995); and Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). For a presentation of parallel incompatibilist arguments set within the secular and theological contexts, see Neal Judisch, "Theological Determinism and the Problem of Evil," *Religious Studies* (2008): 165–84, and Neal Judisch, "Divine Conservation and Creaturely Freedom," in *Free Will and Theism: Connections, Contingencies, and Concerns*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Daniel Speak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 234–57.
- 2 Strictly, indeterminism is a general thesis about how the world functions and not about human behavior in particular, but here I wish simply to cut to the chase.

- By ‘genuinely indeterministic’ I mean to exclude Kantian or Davidsonian theories, which may deny the possibility of contrastive explicability while affirming the possibility (or the reality) of causally determined (free) agency. I will have more to say about indeterminism as a general thesis in a moment.
- 3 Libertarianism not only requires the falsity of causal determinism but demands as well that further ‘positive’ conditions on the existence of free agency be satisfied. What these positive conditions are differs from one libertarian theory to the next, but the mere absence of causal determination is not enough to secure freedom according to any of them.
 - 4 This working definition comports with the sentiments put forth in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nn. 302–14), as well as historic Protestant authoritative documents such as the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (chap. V). Here we find basic agreement on the shape of divine providence despite confessional difference elsewhere.
 - 5 Such theistic confidence is expressed with poignancy in Boethius’ celebrated *Consolation of Philosophy*, the entirety of which is a stirring testament to the ultimate efficacy of God’s providence. See Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).
 - 6 But see Craig A. Boyd in this volume for accounts of providence nuanced by the virtue of prudence and divine loving-care.
 - 7 On this point, note that Thomas Aquinas specifies governance of secondary causes as a definitive feature of (divine) providence, in *Summa Theologiae* I.22.3 resp.:

Two things belong to providence – namely the type of the order of things foreordained towards an end; and the execution of this order, which is called government. As regards the first of these, God has immediate providence over everything, because He has in His intellect the types of everything, even the smallest; and whatsoever causes He assigns to certain effects, He gives them the power to produce those effects. Whence it must be that He has beforehand the type of those effects in His mind. As to the second, there are certain intermediaries of God’s providence; for He governs things inferior by superior, not on account of any defect in His power, but by reason of the abundance of His goodness; so that the dignity of causality is imparted even to creatures.

And with regard to the efficacy of that power over mediating events, Aquinas argues in *Summa Theologiae* I.19.6 resp., that

[t]he will of God must needs always be fulfilled. . . . [I]f any particular cause fails of its effect, this is because of the hindrance of some other particular cause, which is included in the order of the universal cause [that is, the cause as relates to God’s volition]. Therefore an effect cannot possibly escape the order of the universal cause. . . . Since, then, the will of God is the universal cause of all things, it is impossible that the divine will should not produce its effect.”

The translation is taken from the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, available at www.newadvent.org/summa/1019.htm and www.newadvent.org/summa/1022.htm. With respect to human agents, whose powers do not carry the guarantees of omnipotence, it remains the case that ‘particular causes’ falling within the series of events initiated in any act of providence do not always hinder the agent’s intentions, but frequently enough contribute their part to agents’ designs (as planned). This degree of cooperativeness, though not itself under the direct control of human agents, nevertheless suffices for the purposes of providence on my reckoning.

- 8 And let us interpret 'law' liberally enough to cover the various means by which singular events might be determined. For example, if an event *e* is determined by divine decree or sovereign fiat there is no present harm in saying *e* is a result of 'law' in a courtesy sense, since we may take it as law that whatever God decrees invariably comes to pass.
- 9 For an illuminating overview of the central challenges to contemporary libertarianism, together with an assessment of their dialectical significance, see Robert Kane, "Rethinking Free Will: New Perspectives on an Ancient Problem," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 381–406.
- 10 There may of course be a *tendency* or *temptation* to equate materialism about the human person with a physicalist and atheistic worldview, and it must be admitted the views are natural allies. (I thank Andrew Pinsent for pressing me on this point.) Yet, despite the potential for conflation and confusion, these views do not stand in an entailment relationship with one another. In fact, there may be sound reasons justifying the historically unusual combination of theistic metaphysics and naturalistic anthropology that we find, for one example, in the work of Peter van Inwagen; see e.g., Peter van Inwagen, "A Materialist Ontology of the Human Person," in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 199–215. For present purposes, however, I simply wish to maintain this minimalist view as a respectable position in logical space and do my theorising under the strictures imposed by it.
- 11 Note well that it may turn out that naturalistic anthropologies fail for reasons independent of the requirements for libertarian free will – it may turn out that action *itself* requires an Agent-Causal power, or that mental causation requires the causal efficacy of nonphysical mental states, etc. But in that case the critique of libertarianism expressed in (i) is redirected toward action theorists or philosophers of mind *per se* and does not constitute a problem for libertarianism uniquely. In *this* case, a problem for everyone is a problem for no one. For further discussion on this point, see Neal Judisch, "Bringing Things About," in *New Waves in Metaphysics*, ed. Allan Hazlett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 91–110.
- 12 This analysis differs somewhat from the one J.L. Austin provides in his well-known paper, "Ifs and Cans," *Proceedings from the British Academy* 42 (1956): 109–32, from which the previous example draws inspiration. On Austin's approach, the point is simply that the agent does indeed intentionally perform an action (over which he exercises control sufficient for moral responsibility), despite the absence of a contrastive-explanation-conferring deterministic link between choice, intention, effort, and act. As Robert Kane remarks, such Austin-style examples show that indeterminism is consistent at least with 'one-way' control, as evidenced by those scenarios in which agents overcome the hindrance of indeterminism and achieve their aims despite it. But they also disclose why the availability of 'alternative possibilities,' together with an affirmation of indeterminism in action, could never suffice for free will of a libertarian sort. This is because the latter requires satisfaction of a deeper condition on freedom, which itself entails that at least some actions in the life history of a person are more than 'one-way' controlled (as in the Austin-style cases), but are rather 'dual-voluntary' and 'dual-rational,' or such as to satisfy the criteria of rational-voluntary control regardless of which (alternative) choice the agent makes and intends to pursue. See Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, 52–6, 71–8, and 105–23 for extended discussion.
- 13 See Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *The Journal of Philosophy* 60 (1963): 685–700.

- 14 See John Bishop, *Natural Agency: An Essay on the Causal Theory of Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Alfred R. Mele, *Motivation and Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- 15 And indeed in (i).
- 16 See his aforementioned modern classic, Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*.
- 17 Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, 5. For a forceful presentation of this criticism, see Michael Almeida and Mark Bernstein, “Lucky Libertarianism,” *Philosophical Studies* 113 (2003): 93–119; and compare Robert Kane, “Responsibility, Luck, and Chance: Reflections on Free Will and Indeterminism,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999): 217–40.
- 18 For a classic defence of this approach, see Timothy O’Connor, *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a more recent treatment, see Randolph Clarke, “Free Will, Agent Causation, and Disappearing Agents,” *Noûs* 53 (2019): 76–96.
- 19 See Judisch, “Bringing Things About.”
- 20 Here I find myself in agreement with Peter van Inwagen, “The Mystery of Metaphysical Freedom,” in *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 365–73.
- 21 Some people think Thomism provides an account of divine providence consistent with indeterminism; others disagree. Here (in this chapter) I am going to ignore the question of Thomism’s relation to compatibilism and incompatibilism.
- 22 Typically, however, Open Theists and Molinists have very different things to say about God’s attributes and the nature of divine freedom. More on this later.
- 23 Here I describe mainstream Open Theism, but it should be noted that there are variations on the theme that differ from one another with respect to the motivations and commitments that function so as to ‘limit’ divine foreknowledge in ways that classical approaches would not countenance. For discussion of the sorts of Open Theism available, see Alan Rhoda, “Generic Open Theism and Some Varieties Thereof,” *Religious Studies* 44 (2008): 225–34.
- 24 Do we ever do this? Perhaps. But when we do, except in remarkable cases of manipulation, we do not as much control as attempt to persuade or form the object of our providence. God may do the same with us, but (typically) I do not think we ‘incorporate their actions into our own’ in the way divine providence suggests God is able to do.
- 25 And a lot more complimentary to the divine Person! For standard bearers of arguments in this tradition, see William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); William Hasker, *The Triumph of Good over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008); and John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007).
- 26 See Alan Rhoda, “Gratuitous Evil and Divine Providence,” *Religious Studies* 46 (2010): 281–302.
- 27 For further discussion on the comparison between Molinism and Open Theism in the context of the problem of evil, see Neal Judisch, “Meticulous Providence and Gratuitous Evil,” in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 4, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 63–83.
- 28 Non-congruist Molinism (or mainstream Molinism) insists that (1) the ‘counterfactuals of freedom’ reporting what any possible creature would freely do in any possible circumstance are (if true) contingently true, and that (2) God does not decide, by any act of will or divine determination, which of these counterfactual or subjunctive propositions are true and which are false. A variation of the theory (called ‘congruist Molinism’) introduces the notion that God Himself determines the truth value of such propositions, in order to secure a greater

degree of sovereignty than non-congruist Molinism provides and to bring the theory into closer alignment with the Thomistic insistence that all contingent facts are ultimately settled by the divine will. For an illuminating discussion on these points, see Thomas Flint, "Two Accounts of Providence," in *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 147–81.

- 29 William Hasker, "Providence and Evil: Three Theories," *Religious Studies* 28 (1992): 103, original emphasis.

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