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Towards a Renewed Theology of Personal Agency: Origen's Theological Vision and the Challenges of Fatalism and Determinism

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**TOWARDS A RENEWED THEOLOGY OF PERSONAL AGENCY:
ORIGEN'S THEOLOGICAL VISION AND THE CHALLENGES OF
FATALISM AND DETERMINISM.**

A thesis by

Rev. Bernard B. Poggi

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The Faculty of the

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Abstract

TOWARDS A RENEWED THEOLOGY OF PERSONAL AGENCY: ORIGEN'S THEOLOGICAL VISION AND THE CHALLENGES OF FATALISM AND DETERMINISM

Rev. Bernard B. Poggi

In our own contemporary context, there seems to be nothing more important than for a person to be able to speak about their achievements as being specifically their own. Yet it seems that due to two trends found in theology and science, it is increasingly difficult to talk about individual agency. The first trend which undercuts human agency is found in *theological fatalism*.¹ We will look at the case of theological fatalism found in Islamic thought in the idea of *qadar*, the power of God by which everything is commanded.² The second trend comes to us on account of science where there is an ideological claim³ being made called *scientism*. This ideology asserts that “science is the only way of knowing”⁴ and results in the rejection of all non-material categories; human actions are seen to be brought about (*determined*) simply as functions of their antecedent conditions in the material world and thusly become “*incompatible* with human freedom.”⁵

In this paper, I seek to develop a renewed theology of personal agency in the face of theological fatalism and scientific determinism by drawing upon the work of Origen of Alexandria. This second-third century Father of the Church, offers a number of insights which are very pertinent in our contemporary context; in an age where individuality and self-realization are considered fundamental to the human experience. His assertions on human agency found in the first chapter of the third book of his *De Principiis*, summons its hearers “to live a good life and by every means avoid sin, for it assumes that they

¹ Theological fatalism is a system of thought rooted in how the divine attributes are operative in the created world due to the absolute potency found in God. Like fatalism in general, where every event or state of affairs that occurs, must occur, while the nonoccurrence of every event and state of affairs is likewise necessitated, theological fatalism asserts that the cause of God is operative at every moment in a way that impinges upon human freedom.

² Cf. Wan Fariza Alyati Wan Zakaria, "Qadar in Classical and Modern Islamic Discourses: Commending a Futuristic Perspective," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 7 (2015): 40, accessed August 01, 2018, http://www.ukm.my/ijit/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/IJIT-Vol-7-June-2015_4_39-48.pdf.

³ “Whenever one comes across the concept of ‘science,’ in the singular, being used...to support sweeping assertions to the effect that here, and here alone, is truth to be obtained, then one is in the presence neither of science, not of history, but of ideology.” Nicholas Lash, "Where Does The God Delusion Come From?" *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1017 (2007): 517, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1111/j.1741-2005.2007.00172.x.

⁴ Michael J. Dodds, O.P, *Unlocking Divine Action: Contemporary Science and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 51 foot note 26.

⁵ Paul Russell and Oisín Deery, eds., *The Philosophy of Free Will: Essential Readings from the Contemporary Debates* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

acknowledge that deeds worthy of praise or blame lie within our own power.”⁶ We will also draw on the vast work of St. Thomas Aquinas who helps situate a philosophical anthropology and an understanding of causality where humans are free in a world where God exists and is operative. He will assert and uphold the Catholic principle of cooperation between the human will and the divine will in defense of human freedom. To this end Aquinas states “that nothing which involves contradiction falls under the omnipotence of God.”⁷

Prof. Thomas Cattoi, Ph.D. (Director)

Date

⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*, 3.1.1.

⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 25, a.4.

Dedication

*What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem.
(Psalm 116:12-14,19)*

To begin my dedication, I return to the verses which have been the subject of much contemplation throughout my discernment and ordination to the priesthood; I am grateful to God for the gift of being able to serve his people from in the heart of his beloved Jerusalem. This gratitude is something which I seek to renew each day in my life not only to God, but also to the people who make it possible. I would like to offer my gratitude to my family both extended and immediate: my mother Georgette for her shining example of care, endurance and determination, my sister Veronique for her loving support, for her witty character and for her constant willingness to help, to my nieces Melania and Angelina in hopes that they too will discover the goodness of God, their greatest potential and the beauty of truth in education. I am grateful to my beloved faith community, the Arab American Catholics of Northern California, whom I have been honored to serve for the past 4 years as their priest and for 11 years before going to the seminary alongside with Msgr. Labib Kobti. They have been and will always be my friends, my supporters and my inspiration. I offer this work to them, that they may discover in it the beauty of the Christian understanding of personal agency in light of this great Father of the Church, Origen who comes from our own context. I pray that they might remain true to the faith and traditions of the Holy Land for generations to come.

I am grateful to the bishops, priests and faithful of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, my beloved diocese to which I am honored to belong and with whom I hope to work for the salvation of souls and the maintenance of the Christian witness in the Middle East. I offer this work also to the Latin Patriarchate Seminary where I was formed in my priesthood; to my rectors, Fr. Adib Zumot, Fr. Jamal Khader, to my spiritual director Fr. Rafik Houry, to all the seminary formators and to my professors. In a special way I offer my gratitude to Father Ala Alamat, my teacher, my friend and my cooperator for the last two years. I am indebted to the Eastern Churches of the Bay Area and all of my friends in the Orthodox Churches; to my brother priests who have always welcomed me and to the faithful for whom I have great admiration.

I offer my gratitude to the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology where I discovered a great love for the Philosophical underpinnings of Theological discourse, and where I began my work towards this degree. I found great inspiration in the work of Fr. Michael Dodds in the courses I took with him and in his literature. To Sister Marianne Farina, CSC who served as my academic advisor while at DSPT and who later accepted to serve as a reader in this project, I find great inspiration in her love for Aquinas and her dedication to dialogue. In the place of prominence, I offer my gratitude to the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University and in a special way to my professor and academic advisor Thomas Cattoi, Ph.D. I am grateful that he had the foresight to see me through this Theological project and the masterful knowledge on the fathers of the Church which has allowed me to bring this project to completion. Like him, I aspire to be an educator who is able to speak with such great fluency and accuracy on the topics of faith and how they are operative in our lives.

Lastly, in the experience of my own successes and failures, I have become aware of the freedom that is operative in me and how it is that I am called to a life of grace, despite my shortcomings. I hope that this work, insignificant though it may be, may help us to realize that there is nothing more precious to God in humanity, than the fact that we are truly free.

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Introduction

In our own contemporary context, there seems to be nothing more important than for a person to be able to speak about their achievements as being specifically their own. Yet it seems that due to two main trends found in theology and science, it is increasingly difficult to talk about personal agency. In theology the trend is *theological fatalism*, a system of thought rooted in how the divine attributes are operative in the created world due to the absolute potency found in God.¹ In juxtaposition to *fatalism* in general, “a thesis that whatever happens must happen; every event or state of affairs that occurs, must occur, while the nonoccurrence of every event and state of affairs is likewise necessitated,”² theological fatalism looks at causality of God in a way that leaves no room for human freedom. We will look at the case of theological fatalism found in Islamic thought in the idea of *qadar*, the power of God by which everything is commanded.³ As the sixth article of belief in Islam, the ascent to fate in *qadar* is operative through another related term called *qada’*. While *qada’* expresses the “perfect commanding, decreeing, ruling, accomplishing”⁴ ability of God, *qadar* is not only the power which predestines all that is, but it also determines the nature of things created “the

¹ My definition is derived from the explanation which Linda Zagzebski offers in “Recent work on Divine Foreknowledge and Freewill,” where she says: “Two important doctrines of traditional monotheistic theology threaten to lead to fatalism. One is the doctrine of infallible divine foreknowledge; the other is the doctrine of divine providence.” Linda Zagzebski, “Recent work on Divine Foreknowledge and Freewill,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45.

² Mark Bernstein, “Fatalism” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 65.

³ Cf. Wan Fariza Alyati wan Zakaria, “Qadar in Classical and Modern Islamic Discourses: Commending a Futuristic Perspective” *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 7 (2015): 40.

⁴ Zakaria, “Qadar in Classical and Modern Islamic Discourses,” 40.

inward reach of things, their latent potentialities or possibilities.”⁵ For Muslims, understanding fate correctly stems from believing in the oneness of God, and that God determines all things; for the determination of one’s destiny is unequivocally and theologically the domain of God.⁶

In the context of serving Catholics from the Middle East, I have often encountered this way of thinking. These ideas and the terminology of *qada’* and *qadar* have found their way into their everyday understanding of how the world works. I often hear at a funeral that it was “*qadar*” for an accident to have happened. Initially, ascribing something to God may possibly bring some comfort to those who have been stuck by such a ‘poor fate’, but in the long run, it makes it very hard for these people to seek and develop a profound personal relationship with a God who seemingly has brought about such tragedy into their lives. That is why it is necessary for us to rediscover a Christian sense of what human freedom means in the light of divine causality.

The second trend which makes human causality exceedingly difficult to discuss in our current context comes from realm of science. For though there are wonderful advancements in modern science, our understanding of both human and divine causality

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Verses from the Qur’an that Muslims have drawn from in interpreting *qadar* are: “They said: Do we have any say in the matter? Muhammad, tell them: All matters belong to Allah. They try to bide within themselves what they do not reveal to you, saying: Had we had the matter in our hands, we would not have been slain there. Say: Even though you had been in your houses, those appointed to be slain would have been slain by your sworn enemies while you were in your beds.” (3:154) “We hold the store of everything and we send it down in an appointed measure.” (15:21) “Allah has set a measure for all things.” (65:2) “Surely We created everything by measure.” (54:49) “Then it is for Allah to have in error whom He will and to guide whom He pleases. He is the Mighty, the Wise”. (14:4) “Say: Allah! Owner of Sovereignty! You bestow sovereignty on whomever you will and you withdraw from whomever you will. In your Hand is all that is good. No doubt you have power to do everything”. (3:26)

seems to be shrinking because of the insistence in science on the acceptance of solely empirical quantities to explain all that is. In a sense, science makes an ideological claim⁷ called *scientism* which asserts that “science is the only way of knowing.”⁸ As a result of this ideology, the world is seen solely in view of its material and measurable qualities, expressed in the term *materialism*. Any quality which is not measurable is “ignored methodologically but (also) denied metaphysically. The assumptions that science had used for studying the world became the ontological assertions about its nature.”⁹ The method by which science looks at the material world is through the process of *reductionism*, a practice of reducing things to their most basic parts, asserting that the “most basic parts of the world are also the most real.”¹⁰

With things reduced down to purely material quantities, scientists look at the patterns in the world as a mathematical set of laws, or the laws of nature, that “are prescriptive of the present state of the universe.”¹¹ This *determinism* renders the present state of the universe “as the effect of its anterior state and the cause of the one which is to follow.”¹² Material causality was made possible by the work of Sir Isaac Newton who,

⁷ “Whenever one comes across the concept of ‘science,’ in the singular, being used...to support sweeping assertions to the effect that here, and here alone, is truth to be obtained, then one is in the presence neither of science, not of history, but of ideology.” Nicholas Lash, “Where Does The God Delusion Come From?” *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1017 (2007): 517, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1111/j.1741-2005.2007.00172.x.

⁸ Michael J. Dodds, O.P, *Unlocking Divine Action: Contemporary Science and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 51 foot note 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹² Pierre Simon Laplace, *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*, trans. F. W. Truscott and F. L. Emory, ed. E. T. Bell (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1902), 4.

though himself included categories outside of the material world,¹³ offered an explanation, a physics, of causality showing how the world worked. “By the latter part of the eighteenth century, the explanatory success of Isaac Newton's physics in the natural world of material substances had discredited Descartes' concept¹⁴ of a non-material mind substance.”¹⁵ With the resulting rejection of all non-material categories, human actions were seen to be brought about simply as functions of their antecedent conditions in the material world and thusly became “*incompatible* with human freedom.”¹⁶ This tension between free will and scientific determinism is felt by those of us who live in a secular, enlightened, and science-oriented world.¹⁷

In this paper, we will focus on two sources of that tension. The first portion looks at the work of Charles Darwin and the resulting biological determinism professed in Neo-

¹³ In Isaac Newton's *Mathematical Principles* he explains that the material world is not all that exists, rather his application of Divine causality and the role of God in the universe is quite inspirational and thought provoking. “This most beautiful system of the sun, plants, and comes, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. And if the fixed stars are the centers of other like systems, these, being formed by the like wise counsel, must all be subject to the dominion of the One;...and lest the systems of the fixed stars should, by their gravity, fall on each other, he hath placed those systems at immense distances from one another. This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as the Lord over all... We know him only by his most wise and excellent contrivances of things, and final causes; we admire him for his perfections; but we reverence him and adore him on account of his dominion: for we adore him as his servants; and god without dominion, providence, and final causes, is nothing else but Fate and Nature. Blind metaphysical necessity, which is certainly the same always and everywhere, could produce no variety of things. All that diversity of natural things which we find suited to different times and places could arise from nothing but the will of a Being necessarily existing.” Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 54 foot note 40.

¹⁴ The 17th Century French Philosopher, Rene Descartes proposed a Platonic structure of the to explain the human person in which human beings are comprised of two distinct substances. The first, *res extensa*, is the substance of the body which is comprised of material elements and is thereby subject to determinism. The other, *res cogitans*, he proposed to be the substance of the mind, a non-material substance which is not subject to determinism and from which we derive our free will and the responsibility for our actions. Cf. Gunther S. Stent, "Paradoxes of Free Will," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series* 92, no. 6 (2002): 14, accessed August 01, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4144913>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Paul Russell and Oisín Deery, eds., *The Philosophy of Free Will: Essential Readings from the Contemporary Debates* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁷ Cf. Stent, “Paradoxes of Free Will,” 110.

Darwinism. Darwin explained that through a process of living, called *Natural Selection*,¹⁸ over a period of generations, a species of animal or plant would preserve favorable individual differences and variations while destroying those which are injurious to its existence. He not only spoke of the dynamic of natural selection, but of evolution of species as a function of natural selection. "This, then, is Darwinism - that the controlling factor or process in evolution is selective: the survival, in the struggle for existence, of those individuals which are best fitted to survive."¹⁹

Darwin asserted that variation and modification were induced within species through external sources, namely "by the environment...(such as) excess of food supply, although climate, and other impinging circumstances, are (also) potent causes of modification."²⁰ Regarding internal sources of continuity within generations, Darwin was unsure, but he went out on the proverbial limb stating "(h)ypotheses may often be of service to science, when they involve a certain portion of incompleteness, and even of error.' Under this point of view, I venture to advance the hypothesis of

¹⁸ "Darwin... saw that all forms of life vary; he perceived that there must be a fierce struggle for place or existence amongst the individuals of the rapidly succeeding generations. This variation and struggle are particularly apparent in cultivated plants; and Darwin saw that the gardener selects the best, and thereby "improves" the breed. "Can it, then, be thought improbable," says Darwin, "seeing that variations useful to man have undoubtedly occurred, that other variations useful in some way to each being in the great and complex battle of life, should occur in the course of many successive generations? If such do occur, can we doubt (remembering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and of procreating their kind?" "This preservation of favorable individual differences and variations, and the destruction of those which are injurious, I have called Natural Selection, or the Survival of the Fittest." Liberty Hyde Bailey, "Neo-Lamarckism and Neo-Darwinism," *The American Naturalist* 28, no. 332 (1894): 662, accessed August 01, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2452518>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 662-663.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Pangensis.”²¹ Pangensis built on the work of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck in one of the popular theories of the time called "blending inheritance" which proposed that offspring were “merely an average between the two different characteristics of their parents.”²²

In the early 20th Century, the rediscovery of Father Gregor Mendel’s work and the beginnings of genetics appeared to deal a blow to the theory of Darwin. “Mendelian traits seemed to be inherited as discrete units, which would imply the impossibility of gradual evolutionary change.”²³ Rather than rejecting the theory of Darwin, scientists went to remove the Lamarkian influence of “blending inheritance” from Darwin’s theory eventually incorporating Mendilian genetics.²⁴ The physiologist George Romanes called this new theory neo-Darwinism (later termed, modern synthesis), which despite having such directly religious origins,²⁵ developed into a way of explaining the living world without any reference to a supernatural creator, moreover without any real reference to causality (except that of chance), purpose, or intentionality at all.²⁶ Charles De Konick notes that “(e)ver since Darwin, the opinion remains prevalent that the notion of purpose

²¹ Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, vol. 2 (London, England: John R. Murray, 1868), 357.

²² Massimo Pigliucci and Gerd B. Müller, “Elements of an Extended Evolutionary Synthesis,” 4, accessed August 01, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258235989_Elements_of_an_extended_evolutionary_synthesis.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²⁵ Cf. Richard England, "Natural Selection, Teleology, and the Logos: From Darwin to the Oxford Neo-Darwinists, 1859-1909," *Osiris* 16 (2001), accessed August 01, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/301989>.

²⁶ According to neo-Darwinism: “spontaneous variations occur through genetic change, and new traits are passed on through genetic inheritance. Contrary to Darwin’s instincts, spontaneous changes are now usually attributed to chance, while the preservation of characteristics both through individual inheritance and through the process of natural selection is seen as part of the lawful and stable structure of nature.” Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 79.

in nature in unscientific and unnecessary.”²⁷ Specifically speaking, human freedom is trumped by the determinism presented in these biological and evolutionary systems; our current state of being is a consequence of the past, our decisions and choices are necessitated by our genetic makeup, and on the evolutionary scale of things, the choices I make today don’t make much of a difference at all.²⁸ Our actions “are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But 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. Therefore, the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us.”²⁹

The second portion looks at the recent developments in the field of neuroscience, “a multidisciplinary branch of biology that combines physiology, anatomy, molecular biology, developmental biology, cytology, mathematical modeling and psychology to understand the fundamental and emergent properties of neurons and neural circuits.”³⁰ This study seeks to look at the complex process of learning, memory, behavior, perception and consciousness as a function of the activity of the brain. However, scientists in this realm of study also largely ascribe to the ideal of scientism which we described earlier and so for them “mental phenomena, including willing, (are) nothing other than ordinary bodily functions...(and thereby are) governed by determinism.”³¹

²⁷ Charles De Koninck, *The Hollow Universe* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1960), 97.

²⁸ Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 85.

²⁹ Robin Attfield, "Darwins Doubt, Non-deterministic Darwinism and the Cognitive Science of Religion," *Philosophy* 85, no. 334 (2010): 470, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1017/s0031819110000422.

³⁰ Wikipedia, "Neuroscience," Wikimedia, 2018, accessed August 01, 2018, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neuroscience>.

³¹ Stent, "Paradoxes of Free Will," 12.

In 1990, advancements in the field brought about the 'Decade of the Brain'³² as there were considerable studies done on “our understanding the biological bases of thoughts and feelings.”³³ Probably the most influential among these studies was one done by the neuroscientist Benjamin Libet, who in 1983 published his research³⁴ which looked at brain wave patterns, after having removed constraints on freedom of action, where subjects performed a simple flick of the wrist at any time they felt an urge to do so. The study concluded that the effect of conscious (willful) action is not then on initiation of cerebral activity (i.e. the thought process which goes into an action) but rather on what Libet called “veto possibility”³⁵ or the ability of the human person to stop him/her self from doing something. To this end, he noted that there was only room for a so called “free won’t”³⁶ where subjects were able to exert a veto of an action which had already been prepared in the brain within the interval of 100 to 200 milliseconds before the moment of action. The resulting formulation of this research was that “for the *control* of movements we have free will but for the *initiation* of movements or actions we do not have free will.”³⁷

As a result, experts in the field of neuroscience have proclaimed ““free will” is not the defining feature of humanness, modern neuroscience implies, but is rather an

³² Library of Congress, "Decade of the Brain Home Page," Library of Congress, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://www.loc.gov/loc/brain/>.

³³ Stent, “Paradoxes of Free Will,” 12.

³⁴ Cf. Benjamin Libet, “Time of Conscious intention to act in relation to onset of cerebral activity (readiness-protentional): the unconscious initiation of a freely voluntary act” in *Brain* 106 (1983): 623-642.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 641.

³⁶ Andrea Lavazza, “Advances in Pediatrics,” 2016, accessed August 28, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4887467/>.

³⁷ Libet, “Time of Conscious intention to act,” 560.

illusion that endures only because biochemical complexity conceals the mechanisms of decision making.”³⁸ These implications would go to undermine how intentionality was understood. In a sense, the brain becomes its own boss and the human person simply a conduit to the functions of cerebral processes.

In this paper, I seek to develop a renewed theology of personal agency in the face of theological fatalism and scientific determinism by drawing upon the work of Origen of Alexandria. This second-third century Father of the Church offers a number of insights which are very pertinent in our contemporary context; in an age when individuality and self-realization are considered fundamental to the human experience. His assertions on human agency, found in the first chapter of the third book of his *De Principiis*, summons its hearers “to live a good life and by every means avoid sin, for it assumes that they acknowledge that deeds worthy of praise or blame lie within our own power.”³⁹ We will also draw on the vast work of Aquinas on philosophical anthropology and causality in order for us to understand how it is that humans are free in a world where God exists and is operative. He will assert and uphold the Catholic principle of cooperation between the human will and the divine will in defense of human freedom. To this end Aquinas asserts “that nothing which involves contradiction falls under the omnipotence of God.”⁴⁰ In this work, it is not my intent to venture into the very related topic of moral responsibility, as that would be the domain of moral theologians, rather I seek to look at this topic from a

³⁸ Tom Siegfried, “The Decider” in *Science News* 174 (2008): 28.

³⁹ Origen, *On First Principles*, 3.1.1.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 25, a.4.

dogmatic point of view; answering the question, why is it necessary for us to believe that a person is fundamentally free?

Chapter 1: The Philosophical Basis of Freedom of Will

To be able to shed some light on the issue, we have to understand what it means to will something. “Willing is essentially, causality though intention.”⁴¹ When God wills, his potency as cause (described as omnipotence) and his potency of intentionality or knowing (described in the term omniscience) are absolute.⁴² To speak of human free will, we consider whether or not a person has the capacity to choose their own course of action. Robert Kane, the distinguished American philosopher, defines free will as “the power of agents to be the ultimate creators (or originators) and sustainers of their own ends and purposes.”⁴³ Kane notes that it is important also to distinguish between free will

⁴¹ Keith Ward, *Divine Action: Examining God's Role in an Open and Emergent Universe* (Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007), 250.

⁴² This definition of omnipotence and omniscience is derived from Storrs McCall’s analysis in his essay “The supervenience of truth: freewill and omniscience” where he states: “Augustine’s and Aquinas’ conception of God is that he stands outside time rather than within it, and cognizes the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, not in a successive manner from one instant to another. The atemporal omniscience of God accords with the tenseless, temporally definite propositions that are the object of that knowledge. Thus if God is omniscient God knows, not the truth of the future-tense proposition ‘The sun will rise in 1000 years’, but (assuming it is true) ‘The sun rises (tenselessly) on Oct 28, 3010’. To say that God is omniscient is to say that God knows of every true proposition that it is true, and of every false proposition that it is false.” Storrs McCall, “The Supervenience of Truth: Freewill and Omniscience,” *Analysis* 71, no. 3 (2011): 503, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1093/analys/anr051. However, there are alternative views on what the omnipotence and omniscience mean. According to Donald H. Wacome in his essay “Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom” he states that “the doctrine of divine omniscience does not imply that God knows absolutely everything, but that God’s omniscience is a matter of his knowing what it is possible for him to know, prompts us to ask whether the kinds of knowledge traditionally attributed to God are kinds of knowledge it is possible for him to have.” Donald H. Wacome, “Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom,” *Divine Omniscience & Free Will*, , accessed August 01, 2018, <http://www.tyler.net/triddorus/omniscience.html>. For more detailed analysis, see the conclusion.

⁴³ Robert Kane, “Free Will and Responsibility: Ancient Dispute, New Themes,” *The Journal of Ethics* 4, no. 4 (2000): 315, accessed August 01, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25115654>.

and free actions, where as freedom in the will has to do with the being the source of ones own purposes, to “act freely is be unhindered in the pursuit of your purposes”⁴⁴

Historical Survey on Freedom of Will

The idea of human freedom is something that has been grappled with for some time. Despite not overtly discussing freedom of will, Plato in *The Republic* says we are free to choose in this life and in our next also in all of its details,⁴⁵ yet he never explains the dynamic of how that is possible nor what is involved in a free choice. Aristotle, his student, on the other hand offers an analysis of causality and its interaction with human action. In Book II of the *Physics*, he divides causality into three groups:⁴⁶ those which are rooted in *necessity* and always happen in the same way, the second which occur *for the most part* “whether intended by nature or by human free will, are normally realized, but sometimes fail to occur”⁴⁷ and the third group which is rooted in the causality of *chance*. He will explain chance events as events where the “incidental cause is indeterminable”⁴⁸ and to distinguish the second group from the third, events which occur ‘for the most part’ are events which stem from deliberate intentionality which are attributable to some cause

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Plato, *Myth of Er*: “You are free to choose and will be held responsible for your choice. Let not the first choose carelessly, nor the last give up hope. Even the last soul to pick a cosmic contract will find a tolerable life lying here, if he chooses with intelligence.” Elizabeth Carman, "Plato's Myth of Er," Cosmic Cradle, July 04, 2014, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://cosmiccradle.com/plato/>.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.2: “First then we observe that some things always come to pass in the same way, and others for the most part. It is clearly of neither of these that chance is said to be the cause, nor can the 'effect of chance' be identified with any of the things that come to pass by necessity and always, or for the most part. But as there is a third class of events besides these two-events which all say are 'by chance'-it is plain that there is such a thing as chance and spontaneity.” "The Internet Classics Archive | Physics by Aristotle," accessed August 01, 2018, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.2.ii.html>.

⁴⁷ Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 35.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.5

such as nature or choice.⁴⁹ This second class of causality is of significant importance to our work here.

Aristotle speaks about moral responsibility and appropriates praise or blame to an agent for an action which he/she has undertaken.⁵⁰ He notes that the extent to which the agent becomes blameworthy is not a matter of science but rather a matter of perception,⁵¹ for there are certain criteria which must be met in order for a person to ascribe responsibility to their own actions. The *deliberative* power is one of those necessary criteria; where the agent deliberates “about things that are in our power and can be done,”⁵² “not about ends but about means”⁵³ and then the agent chooses that which he/she has deliberated about. He will say “it is that which has been decided upon as a result of deliberation that is the object of choice.”⁵⁴ In chapter 4 of the same book, Aristotle goes to show that in an agent's choice one is able to discern the agent's conception of what is good.

⁴⁹ On a technical note, while Dodds in *Unlocking Divine Action* applies the notion of human free will to Aristotle's second cause, Michael Frede in his book *A Free Will: Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought* notes that Aristotle never fully develops this ‘second class of causality’ in terms of freedom of will and rather simply speaks of choice. I think the point is valid and thereby I will hold to the terminology of choice when dealing with Aristotle's work, the main point for us is that we are able to apply the constituent parts of his analysis to what goes into a deliberate choice, later to be developed as willful human action. Cf. Michael Frede and A. A. Long, *Free Will - Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.9 “The man, however, who deviates little from goodness is not blamed, whether he do so in the direction of the more or of the less, but only the man who deviates more widely; for he does not fail to be noticed. But up to what point and to what extent a man must deviate before he becomes blameworthy it is not easy to determine by reasoning, any more than anything else that is perceived by the senses; such things depend on particular facts, and the decision rests with perception.”

⁵¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 3.3.17.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3.3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

He also explains that another necessary constituent of an action, in order to have moral value, is that it must be *voluntary*. In that, a voluntary action must have two distinctive features, the first is *control*: “we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts, but though we control the beginning of our states of character the gradual progress is not obvious any more than it is in illnesses; because it was in our power, however, to act in this way or not in this way, therefore the states are voluntary.”⁵⁵ Here it is interesting that Aristotle makes the distinction between being in control at the outset of an action and losing control along the way. As in many of our human actions, it seems Aristotle acknowledges that so long as the first move was the product of our choice, the resulting effects of our actions are tied to the causality of our first move, even if the end was not intended. Perfect knowledge then does not define a lack of control; rather Aristotle focuses more on the factors which compel an agent by external forces. We will discuss these factors of compulsion at greater length when we discuss fatalism. However, for us to discount knowledge completely in its role on choice would be misguided, for the second feature of voluntary action is Aristotle's proposition of an epistemic condition, that of *awareness*. To this end, he states: “(s)ince that which is done under compulsion or by reason of ignorance is involuntary, the voluntary would seem to be that of which the moving principle is in the agent himself, he being aware of the particular circumstances of the action.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.5.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.1.

To recount then, for an action to be considered as stemming from the causality of choice there are two constituents which must be present: the first is that the choice to act must be rooted in deliberation. The deliberation must consist of things which are in our power and of the means by which they will take place. The second is that the action must be voluntary, stemming from things which are within our control (not compulsory) and of which we have an awareness of the circumstances which surround the action. We began our discussion on the work of Aristotle by speaking about causality where he classifies actions caused by choice as normally realized but sometimes failing to occur. These actions can be classified as contingent upon the choice of the actor and thereby according to his worldview, these actions fail to fulfill the definition of “antecedent conditions” necessary for them to be considered deterministic in the strict sense. We also have seen that when we deliberate about actions which are in our power and about how (or the means by which) they will come to be, we can attribute causality to the intentionality of the actor. We have further established that for an action to be voluntary, it must be a function of the control of the actor and within his/her awareness. All these elements are necessary for an action to be attributed to the willful and free action of the agent, yet at the same time, "Aristotle describes deliberation as the origin of choice; and choice as the origin of deliberate action; and deliberate action as the origin of events. So although initially we might be tempted to think of an origin as something that operates outside of any preceding causal sequence, Aristotle himself does not conceive of something's origin

as coming to be or existing in this way.”⁵⁷ This would then classify Aristotle’s worldview as deterministic.

Aristotle also analyzes fatalistic systems of thought in his work *On Interpretation* 9 where he appeals to reason in showing why future things cannot be determined in a way that fulfills fatalism. He provides us with the following analogy:

A sea-fight must either take place to-morrow or not, but it is not necessary that it should take place to-morrow, neither is it necessary that it should not take place, yet it is necessary that it either should or should not take place to-morrow. Since propositions correspond with facts, it is evident that when in future events there is a real alternative, and a potentiality in contrary directions, the corresponding affirmation and denial have the same character.⁵⁸

In this analogy, he is explicit in rejecting the fate of things which have not yet come to pass. By its determination of things which have not yet come into being, fate renders “our deliberations and decisions to be causally *ineffective* and make no difference to the course of events.”⁵⁹ We have seen how it is that Aristotle applies the concepts of deliberation, control, and choice as antecedent causes to deliberate human action, therein we are certain that he rejected the proposition of fate.

It will be in later stoic literature where we encounter the most radical systems of fatalism found in philosophical thought. Sophie Botros comments that “the early stoics

⁵⁷ Jennifer Daigle, "Aristotle, Determinism, and Moral Responsibility," (M.A. thesis, Georgia State University, 2015), 5, accessed August 01, 2018, https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/philosophy_theses/176.

⁵⁸ Aristotle will continue his analysis in *On Interpretation* 9 of the sea battle by rejecting the proposition that future events are necessary determined: “This is the case with regard to that which is not always existent or not always nonexistent. One of the two propositions in such instances must be true and the other false, but we cannot say determinately that this or that is false, but must leave the alternative undecided. One may indeed be more likely to be true than the other, but it cannot be either actually true or actually false.” Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 9.

⁵⁹ Paul Russell, “Compatibilist-Fatalism: Finitude, Pessimism and the Limits of Free Will” in *The Philosophy of Free Will*, Paul Russell and Oisín Deery, eds., 451.

were... extreme determinists"⁶⁰ who applied the presuppositions of the necessity of the causality of every event,⁶¹ and of the regularity of outcomes to the same antecedent causes.⁶² The stoics will also consider that when the cause of things is a divine one, the outcomes of future events can be known, not as in predictability, but rather in “the genesis of early stoic fatalism.”⁶³ By doing so, the stoics reject the Aristotelian idea that future events are undetermined.⁶⁴ Let us take a look at some of those stoic thinkers.

Zeno offers the proposition that the “material world is itself the result produced from the operation of two principles. The active principle is God, and the passive is matter.”⁶⁵ In usual Stoic fashion Zeno asserts god as a force which permeates the entirety of the universe⁶⁶ and that the entire cosmos is one.⁶⁷ From those two assertions we arrive to the stoic idea of pantheism where everything is god. The repercussion of this gnostic

⁶⁰ Sophie Botros, “Causality, Fatalism and Early Stoic Philosophy” *Phronesis* 30, no. 3 (1985): 276.

⁶¹ Here Botros paraphrases from Alexander of Aphrodisias’ *On Fate* 22 where he states: “there is an impossibility in things turning out in a certain manner at one moment and not so at another, in as much as all the same contingencies arise concerning the cause and that of which it is the cause... If (things could turn out in different ways in different circumstances) ... then there (would be) motion without cause.” Botros, “Causality, Fatalism and Early Stoic Philosophy,” 276.

⁶² Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁶⁴ For us to claim that all stoic thinkers were radical determinists would be a fallacy. Epicurius who introduces the idea of atomic swerve “as a random, uncaused event, (and in doing so) he offers a solution to the problem of freewill. Unlike Aristotle, he fully appreciated that there was a problem. He believed in free will, because it seemed to him manifestly clear that men could originate action, but he could not, like Aristotle, regard this as the end of the matter.” Pamela Huby, “The First Discovery of the Freewill Problem” in *Philosophy* 42, no. 162 (1967): 358. We will see another example with Lucretius in the section on Indeterminism.

⁶⁵ Alfred Pearson, *The Fragments of Zeno & Cleanthes with Introduction & Explanatory Notes* (London, England: C.J. Clay & Sons, 1891), 10-11.

⁶⁶ Cf. Pearson, *The Fragments of Zeno & Cleanthes*, 11.

⁶⁷ A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 111.

worldview meant that knowledge and goodness went hand in hand to say that "the good man is wise and the bad is ignorant; from knowledge right action follows necessarily."⁶⁸

In the work of Chrysippus (280-204 B.C.), we again see that the Stoic idea of pantheism, but this time with the clear assertion of fate regarding future events. According to Cicero, Chrysippus "calls the world itself a god, and also the all-pervading world-soul, and again the guiding principle of that soul, which operates in the intellect and reason, and the common and all-embracing nature of things; beside this, the fire that I previously termed aether; and also the power of Fate, and the Necessity that governs future events."⁶⁹ Chrysippus defined fate "as a natural ordering of all things so that one follows another eternally and decays in its turn in an unalterable concatenation of events."⁷⁰

Seneca will later add that the causal chain set into motion at once by the creator, will always be set and will always be obeyed.⁷¹ With this then we can say that everything had become subject to the laws of fate, it becomes the cause which governs the universe and all its actions each according to its nature. As we will see with Origen, he has the hard work of overcoming these fatalistic implications in his application of these philosophical principles to the Christian faith in light of scripture.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 1.39

⁷⁰ Huby, "The First Discovery of the Freewill Problem," 360.

⁷¹ Seneca, *On Providence* 5.8: "One unchangeable course bears along the affairs of men and gods alike. Although the great creator and ruler of the universe himself wrote the decrees of Fate, yet he follows them. He obeys forever, he decreed but once."

A later Philosopher, Lucretius who was an epicurean atomist of the first century wrote about causality in his work *De Rerum Natura*. In contrast to determinism and the chain of causality, he offers an explanation on how atomic collisions can occur in the first place, not due to causal forces as seen in determinacy, but in an *indeterminant* way, brought about by the unpredictable ‘swerve’ in atomic motion.⁷² These unpredictable movements in atoms not only bring about actions which are caused in an undetermined manner but they also the fundament of freedom in the human person, beginning in the will and passing through the rest of the body. It is important to note that “indeterminism is a technical term that merely precludes *deterministic* causation, not causation altogether.”⁷³

Seeing that the philosophical definitions of determinism and indeterminism are not set in stone, depending on how one defines the terms, one is able to situate the philosopher’s work in different categories. Sarah Broadie’s work is one such example, for she defines determinism as the “absolute claim that everything is necessary or necessitated.”⁷⁴ In this light, she considers Aristotle not in the camp of determinism, but rather indeterminism. Broadie points out that in *Metaphysics* 6, Aristotle accounts for why the coincidental fails to be a proper object of scientific inquiry. She notes that the philosopher answers that the coincidental has no explanation. This should not be

⁷² Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, 73-74: “Once again, if every motion is always linked on, and the new always arises from the old in order determined, nor by swerving do the first-beginnings make a certain start of movement to break through the decrees of fate, that cause may not follow cause from infinite time; whence comes this free will for living things all over the earth...without doubt it is his own will which gives to each one a start for this movement, and from the will the motions pass flooding through the limbs.”

⁷³ Robert Kane, “Some Neglected Pathways in the Free Will Labyrinth” in *The Oxford Handbook*, 421.

⁷⁴ Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 158.

understood as being that the coincidental lacks a cause, but that its occurrence lacks an explanation. This would be commensurate with indeterminacy.

Returning to Aristotle's analysis, we must recall that the causality of chance is not applicable to moral action for it does not fulfill the constituent of deliberation or knowledge. It is hard to discuss freedom considering indeterminacy because the causality is not as clear, although Lucretius posits freedom of the agent in the undetermined system. Others will say that "if free will is not compatible with determinism, it does not seem to be compatible with indeterminism either. An event that is undetermined might occur or not occur, given the entire past. So whether or not it actually occurs...would seem to be a matter of chance. But chance events are not under the control of anything, hence not under the control of an agent."⁷⁵

Chapter 2: The Christian Understanding of Freedom of Will

Seeing that we will begin our formulation of the Christian understanding of human freedom from Origen, it is necessary that we take a moment to describe the world of thought which he was operating in. The main idea which Gnosticism is known for, has to do with a static dualism between the spiritual and the material worlds. Jonas calls this the "cardinal feature of Gnostic thought."⁷⁶ The divine realm is separated from the material realm in that the divine is not the source of the material, rather there is an antithetical relation between the two realms.

⁷⁵ Robert Kane, "Some Neglected Pathways in the Free Will Labyrinth" in *The Oxford Handbook*, 414-415.

⁷⁶ Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), 42.

We can see an example of this in the gnostic *Hymn of the Great Pearl* where Egypt is “a symbol for the material world...the world of matter, the world of ignorance and of perverse religion.”⁷⁷ In the text, the stranger goes out from the home of his family and removes his royal robes to put on the garment of the Egyptians. In order for him to be accepted by the people of this material world he must “clothe himself in the affliction of the worlds in order to exhaust the powers of the world.”⁷⁸ Though he has put on these garments, the Egyptians realize that there is still something different about the stranger and so they make every attempt to incorporate him in their ways. To this end, the narrative offers that the Egyptians “succeed precisely for the reason that his concealment succeeded: namely, his having a body.”⁷⁹ Seemingly, the power of the material world is a great threat to the spiritual world.

The cosmological and anthropological implications of this worldview are interesting. Jonas notes that Gnostics transposed the names for the one and supreme God found in Judaism into the proper names of the Archons (inferior demonic beings) who collectively rule over the world in what he calls a “pejorative revaluation”⁸⁰ of the Jewish belief. These Archons rule over the world with the tyranny of “universal Fate”⁸¹ which is applied in the law of nature and which aims at the enslavement of man. The goal of each Archon is to prevent residents of their spheres from escaping the world and returning to God. This is done through bodily control, for through the body and the soul humanity is

⁷⁷ Ibid.,118.

⁷⁸ Ibid.,119.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁸¹ Ibid.

part of the world and subjected to the same universal Fate. “Enclosed in the soul is the spirit...a portion of the divine substance from beyond which has fallen into the world; and the Archons created man for the express purpose of keeping it captive there.”⁸²

According to this view, in order for humanity to attain salvation, or the release of the inner person from the bonds of the world, a person is to return to his/her native realm of light. Humanity must know “about the transmudane God and about himself, that is, about his divine origin as well as his present situation and accordingly also the natural of the world which determines this situation.”⁸³ The pneumatics, who are the possessors of knowledge, are illuminated not only in mind but in action. The quagmire to human freedom rests in the fact that the illumination (or the lack thereof) is a product of the nature of the person and not something that the person can control.

The classification of a group of people as pneumatics is indicative of the prevailing idea of classes of people which was present in Gnostic thought; in this humanity is born with a pre-determined or “invariable nature.”⁸⁴ This doctrine, found in many of the different gnostic schools, has been preserved in the writings of the early fathers of the Church, like Irenaeus and Origen. Irenaeus remarks that in this doctrine, the Gnostics “declare that it is not because of their works but rather because they are spiritual by nature that they are absolutely and, in every way, saved.”⁸⁵ In this kind of a world view a complete ascent to the determination of one’s nature, brought about a *natural*

⁸² Ibid., 44.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 271.

⁸⁵ Winrich Alfried Löhr, “Gnostic Determinism Reconsidered,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 46, no. 4 (1992): 382, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1163/157007292x00188.

reaction: one was to take full advantage of the incorruptible nature which they had received though given through a life of excess (libertinism) and the other was to try as much as possible to avoid encountering the material world by living a life of strict temperance (ascetism). Hans Jonas explains that the two reactions have a common root; for libertinism “repudiates allegiance to nature through excess, the other (asceticism) through abstention.”⁸⁶

Ascetism here should not be understood as a product of virtue⁸⁷ as we understand it today. Virtue is tied to human freedom. Still, we find this notion of ascetism in many of various gnostic schools and the founders who posited their ideals including, Mani, Valentinus and Marcion.

Marcion shows with abundant clarity: his moral argument...is based entirely on the theme of contempt and enmity toward the world and does not entrust to the abstention from its works the task of perfecting the subject. The abstention is essentially a matter of rejection and thus is as much an expression of the revolt against the creator as is the libertine indulgence.⁸⁸

The categories which we have discussed earlier regarding fatalism have helped us to gain an understanding of the various ideas which we will discuss in this next section, the Christian idea of free will. What I would like to underline is the fact that early Christianity saw itself a product of all we have considered. In fact, it was not until the sixth century when there was the definitive closure and condemnation of the philosophical schools by the Emperor Justinian in 529 AD. It would be vitally necessary

⁸⁶ Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 274.

⁸⁷ Jonas explains that “Plotinus’ critique implied moral indifference in the Gnostics, that is not only the absence of a doctrine of virtue but also the disregard of moral restraints in real life.” *Ibid.*, 270.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 275.

for Christianity to develop a method of explaining how to maintain human freedom in light of these elements and how to do so in a manner that was true to scripture and to the common faith of the Church. The incarnation would be the key feature in this all, for in overcoming the static dualism presented in Gnostic thought, between the spiritual world and the material world, the early Church would need to consider how it is that God has come into our realm.

Origen of Alexandria

Origen's view on philosophy was positive, for him "being a Christian philosopher, both fully Christian and fully philosopher, ...is perfectly possible and consistent."⁸⁹ To this end, Origen knew philosophy and to a large extent he worked to formulate a consistent Christian philosophical belief. He was born in the late second century (185/186), to a father who was reportedly decapitated in martyrdom for professing the Christian faith. This tragedy had a profound impact on his entire family not only emotionally but also financially as "the whole patrimony of those executed was confiscated to the treasury."⁹⁰ As the eldest of seven children, he had the duty of working to provide in place of his father, yet he seemed to have a profound desire to follow in his father's footsteps, in gaining the crown of martyrdom. "Despite his eagerness for the honor of martyrdom, he was denied it by the very law that put his students of the higher

⁸⁹ Ilaria Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism Re-Thinking the Christianization of Hellenism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63, no. 3 (2009): 220, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1163/157007208x377292.

⁹⁰ John Anthony McGuckin, ed., *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 3.

classes to death.”⁹¹ Assuredly, this would be one of the reasons why he held such a staunch criticism of the Gnostic doctrine of natures and the predestination of man, which will be developed later in this chapter. Having been tortured later in life, he never was martyred; he was technically a confessor, yet both titles of sanctity remain missing from his memory, even into our current day for his teaching was the object of numerous condemnations during his life⁹² and well after.⁹³

He is a controversial figure in history because he is known for a tendency to allow too much autonomy to the human person and the choices which he/she makes because the person’s choices appear to transcend the boundaries of nature (because the notion of human nature is not yet really developed).⁹⁴ Amongst those who would state that

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² In Cyril C. Richardson’s *Condemnation of Origen* he states that some of the reasons Origen faces condemnation during his life is not only the fact that he had himself castrated, but also that he had extensive philosophical pursuits which had been condemned, to this end he writes: “The truth of the situation seems to be that the rapid expansion of Christianity had stimulated the Graeco-Roman world to its last great effort to dominate the religious life of cultivated society with a refined Neo-Platonism. The effect of this upon the Christian church was a deep and unyielding aversion from all heathen philosophy. Tertullian, the older contemporary of Origen, represents this school: the philosophers to him are the arch-heretics...Origen, on the other hand, attempted a compromise. He grasped the fact that Christianity and philosophy can never be isolated, and the surest way to win the heather world...was to se the Christian faith upon the firm basis of Platonic philosophy. The natural result was a tirade from the philosophers, because he was not philosophic enough and a similar cry of antagonism from the fundamentalists” Cyril C. Richardson, "The Condemnation of Origen," *Church History* 6, no. 1 (1937): 52, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.2307/3160060.

⁹³ Two particular aspects of Origen’s teachings were singled out as heretical and condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553 having to do with the preexistence of the human soul and the concept of the *apokatastasis* which holds that at the end of time the absolute power of God necessitates the eternal return of all creation to God. Many commentators are not convinced that Origen taught universal salvation as it was condemned in the council, for it is none more than him who highlights the importance of human agency. To this end, Frederick Norris writes: “(i)n scattered places Origen says quite clearly that he things all created intelligence will be restored to God at the end of time. In other places he says, equally clearly, that only souls who make the choice for God and practice the virtues God demands will come to rest in heaven. Those who do not live for God shall suffer enterally in hell or perhaps be annihilated there.” McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, 59.

⁹⁴ In the article by B. Darrell Jackson entitled “Sources of Origen’s Doctrine of Freedom” he highlights the sources of Origen’s formulation of human freedom noting that the transcendental notion of human freedom

Origen's application of personal agency comes at the cost of the necessity of grace is "Augustine (who) harshly criticizes what he considers to be Origen's protology and eschatology, i.e. his doctrine of the "beginning" (creation, fall and so on) and the "end": end of the world, the other world and final universal restoration (apokatastasis)."⁹⁵ Jerome, while making considerable use of Origen's exegesis of scripture, calls him the "father of Pelagianism."⁹⁶ This kind of love/hate relationship pervades⁹⁷ the atmosphere surrounding Origen. In fact, the first portion of DeLubac's work on Origen⁹⁸ is dedicated to the series of anathemas facing this father of the church, most notably the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553. He also offers an extensive analysis of the old quarrels which he had with the main thinkers of his time and beyond. I will try to stay out of the quarrels here, focusing rather on the great contribution which he makes to our understanding of how personal agency works in the Christian context.

is not necessarily one based on scripture but rather, one rooted in Platonic philosophy: "Origen's doctrine of freedom is more dependent upon philosophical theories than upon Scripture. On the one hand, Scripture furnishes data in the form of commandments and promises of divine judgement from which the existence of freedom is inferred. It is inferred both as a necessary condition for true obedience and as a sufficient explanation of the righteousness of God's judgment. Scripture also furnishes material for allegory. On the other hand, the content of Origen's doctrine of freedom has a very considerable basis in Platonic and Stoic theory. He combines the Platonic transcendental viewpoint with the stoic analysis of the internal structure of freedom." B. Darrell Jackson, "Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom," *Church History* 35, no. 01 (1966): 21, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.2307/3162669.

⁹⁵ Ilaria Ramelli, "Origen in Augustine: A Paradoxical Reception," *Numen* 60 (2013), 283.

⁹⁶ Richardson, *Condemnation of Origen*, 115.

⁹⁷ The author offers this well-known metaphor introduced by H.U. von Balthasar, of the work of Origen as a "broken flask whose perfume has subcutaneously pervaded nearly all traditions of Christian theology." Anders Christian Jacobsen, *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2016), 3 foot note 1.

⁹⁸ Cf. Henri De Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture According to Origen* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2007).

We find in the preface⁹⁹ of his seminal work *De Principiis*, Origen includes a doctrine of freewill because he understands it to be a tenet of the Christian faith; “one of the doctrines set forth by the apostles as essential.”¹⁰⁰ He will lay down what he calls the teaching of the Church by asserting “the doctrine of the righteous judgment of God, a doctrine which, if believed to be true, summons its hearers to live a good life and by every means to avoid sin –for it assumes that they acknowledge the deeds worthy of praise or of blame lie within (their) own power.”¹⁰¹ In following then, let us look at how he exposes this doctrine of the Church.

The Righteous Judgement of God: A Scriptural Approach

In beginning his analysis, Origen seeks to assert the freedom of the human person by virtue of the righteous judgment of God. “God’s judgement, to be righteous, must be exercised on responsible creatures. Responsibility in turn requires freedom.”¹⁰² Seeing that Origen was first and foremost a scriptural commentator, he was a trailblazer when it came to the allegorical method of reading scripture, beyond the literal. In citing scripture, he applies many citations to back his claim that free will is a doctrine set forth by the apostles. In fact, he so strongly depends on the word of God, that he states there are in the “scriptures ten thousand passages which with the utmost clearness prove the existence of

⁹⁹ Origen, *De Principiis*, Preface 5: “This also is clearly defined in the teaching of the Church, that every rational soul is possessed of free-will and volition; that it has a struggle to maintain with the devil and his angels, and opposing influences, because they strive to burden it with sins; but if we live rightly and wisely, we should endeavour to shake ourselves free of a burden of that kind.”

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, “Sources of Origen’s Doctrine of Freedom,” 13.

¹⁰¹ Origen, Paul Koetschau, G. W. Butterworth. *Origen on First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis* (London, England: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), 157.

¹⁰² Jackson, “Sources of Origen’s Doctrine of Freedom,” 13-14.

free will.”¹⁰³ Here, I will take a moment to list the passages which he draws from in *De Principiis* book III, chapter I, in formulating his doctrine of freedom. In pulling from these biblical citations, he provides a solid basis for his argument that human freedom is fundamental to our experience and in this we find the crux of his Biblical analysis:

Micah 6:8 “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Deuteronomy 30:19 “This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”

Isaiah 1:19-20 “If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.”

Psalms 81:13-14 “If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways, how quickly I would subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes!”

Citing from the New Testament he chooses two passages from the fifth, seventh and twenty fifth chapters of St. Matthew (5:39 and 22, 7:24 and 26, and 25:34-35 and 41) where Christ highlights the grievances of sin and their resulting judgement.

Romans 2:4-10 “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”

The above scriptural selections show that the directive of God is for humanity to make a conscious choice between the various options which we are faced with. They are explicit in asserting the importance of human volition as a divine decree and also are helpful for us to see how freedom is operative in divine justice. Origen is seemingly in a

¹⁰³ Origen, Paul Koetschau, G. W. Butterworth. *Origen on First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis* (London, England: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), 166.

constant dialogue with Scripture where he offers biblical assertions explaining that it is God who shows man what is good and then it remains up to humanity to choose it. He asserts that man has the ability to do good in that he is the creation of the good God and as an extension through the righteous judgement of God, each person will be judged in accord with the actions they have chosen.

As an overarching theme in *De Principiis*, Origen responds not only to the Marcionites but also to the Gnostics who say the law of God is missing the component of being good and is merely just.¹⁰⁴ As we have seen, these systems of belief where static dualism is applied, the transcendence of God is maintained by dissociating God from the material realm of creation. This type of world view will help to provide an plausible explanation as to existence evil in the world, but it also would stand as an obstacle to looking at the incarnation. With the rejection of this static dualism, Origen is left with the task of offering an explanation for evil in the world in the light of the good and just God and in light of human volition.

Origen also does not shy away from addressing the passages which portray human weakness and how evil in the world is utilized to “assert that a wicked being, namely the

¹⁰⁴ The idea of a good and just God is repeated several times in *De Principiis*, namely in book 2.9.5 where he names the schools which reject the goodness of God as “Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides” and where in book 3.1.9 he makes a distinction between those who say that God is not good, but only just: “For let them observe the conception of a God who is in reality just and good; but if they will not allow this, let it be conceded to them for the present that He is just; and let them show how the good and just God, or the just God only, appears to be just, in hardening the heart of him who perishes because of his being hardened: and how the just God becomes the cause of destruction and disobedience, when men are chastened by Him on account of their hardness and disobedience.” Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.9.5 & 3.1.9.

devil, is the Creator of the world.”¹⁰⁵ He looks first and foremost at the passage which has and continues to trouble many; the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart referred to in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 4:21 “The Lord said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.”

Exodus 7:3 “But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt.” In these passages, Origen notes that Pharaoh appears not to have free will. He realizes that this will be asserted as an example that “all others who perish do not find cause of their loss in their own free will.”¹⁰⁶

Ezekiel 9: 19-20 “And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart, so they will obey my decrees and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God.”

Mark 4:12 “So that 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”

Galatians 5:8 “That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

Philippians 2:13 “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” In these passages, the mercy of God is that which is operative and not so much human volition but in the divine will.

Romans 9:18-19 “Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?”

Utilizing these passages Origen responds not only to those who presume that actions flow forth from “lost” or “earthly natures” to which they attribute their misgivings and which they conceivably can do nothing about,¹⁰⁷ but also to those who imply that the omniscience necessitates the actions of Pharaoh in that God wanted to use

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 3.1.9.

¹⁰⁶ Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, 167.

¹⁰⁷ “Origen challenges the argument put forth by some groups that claim man cannot act other than by his nature. If natures are ruined, there can be neither “the power of willing” nor “the power of movement”; “thus, those who apply this logic to Pharaoh imply that God is the author of evil.” Lisa Holliday, "Will Satan Be Saved? Reconsidering Origen’s Theory of Volition in Peri Archon," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63, no. 1 (2009): 13-14, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1163/157007208x312725.

him as a sign.¹⁰⁸ To the former idea Origen asks “if this disobedience was implanted in him (Pharaoh) by nature, what further need was there for his heart to be hardened by God?”¹⁰⁹ In this first portion of his response, Origen offers that the hypothesis of a “lost nature” should be overthrown. To use the philosophical terms which we have already introduced, being fallen is not a substantial quality and is rather an accidental one. “The truth is...that it was possible for the men in question to be lost, and the reason why they obtain mercy is that they may not be lost, but may come to salvation and possess the realms of the holy.”¹¹⁰

Rather, Origen spends the majority of his time explaining the second objection where he sees the allegory in scripture “about Egypt, Tyre, Babylon, Israel, etc. references to the heavenly places which are the dwelling places of the soul in the various stages of the fall and return.”¹¹¹ By reading the scriptures in this way, he suggests that the disobedience was not arbitrarily added to our nature but rather that humanity would have been able to be amazed by the signs and works of God, had it been open to conversion.¹¹² He posits that the salvation of many is contingent upon this idea of the resistance of many

¹⁰⁸ Origen, *De Principiis*, 3.1.7: “God wanted him still more disobedient for the sake of showing forth mighty deeds to the saving of the many, and *therefore* hardened his heart.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Jackson, “Sources of Origen’s Doctrine of Freedom,” 15.

¹¹² “Origen suggests that men who have fallen so far are on a continuous progress towards wickedness, being possessed by the desire for wickedness, which is an inability to learn and use reason. This does not, however, preclude hope of a return. Just as powers regressed to a state of wickedness, so too can they return to a state of blessedness.” Holliday, “Will Satan Be Saved?,” 16.

against the will of God. It is precisely on this point which he concludes “it is on this account that his heart is said to be hardened.”¹¹³

By positing the Christian understanding of a good and just God (as opposed to one that is simply just), Origen offers in response the words of the letter to the Hebrews¹¹⁴ where in one part of the land the rain falls producing bountiful crops as a blessing from God and another part of the land produces thorns and thistles that are only for the burning. We can summarize that the ground which has the potency to produce good things, finds its source in God.¹¹⁵ The fact that the ground also brings forth “noxious weeds”¹¹⁶ is not due to such a character in the nature of the soil, but rather in the misuse of human freedom; for when humanity neglects to till the soil he “will accordingly reap briars and thorns, the most appropriate fruit of their sloth.”¹¹⁷ For him the operation of God is one and the same, where on one hand it brings about signs and wonders in the life of Moses, and on the other hand it reveals Pharaoh’s hardness of heart and the wickedness of his actions. It is pertinent that we distinguish between the grace of God revealing the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart and the grace of God which evokes the

¹¹³ Ibid.,170.

¹¹⁴ Hebrews 6:7-8: Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

¹¹⁵ In Ramelli’s work on “Origen in Augustin: A Paradoxical Reception” she notes that the basis of Origen’s notion of the Apokatastasis is the fact that the source of all creation is the good God. Where she notes: “for Origen this succession will eventually come to an end at apokatastasis, when the devil also will be saved, not as devil, but as a creature of God, and that, after their purification and instruction, all rational creatures will be untied in love and will be unable to fall again, because, in Paul’s word, which Origen takes up as the basis for his argument, “love never falls out.” Ramelli, “Origen in Augustin: A Paradoxical Reception,” 289.

¹¹⁶ Origen, *De Principiis*, 3.1.10.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

hardness of Pharaoh's heart.¹¹⁸ Utilizing the same passage, Origen makes another important point; the wrath of God was not immediate against Pharaoh offering him an ample amount of time for his repentance.

According to Origen, the foreknowledge of God does not stand as an obstacle to God's goodness, in that his foreknowledge does not compel one to do bad, rather it urges man towards to the good: "nor does the knowledge of God compel us to do so unless we ourselves contribute something towards the good result."¹¹⁹ In the commentary of *De Principiis*, the editor suggests that Origen's solution to these difficult passages "lies in the thought that God, like a good physician, works for the salvation of all, though sometimes by painful remedies."¹²⁰ His application of the divine will of the good and just God, will also address the idea of stoic necessity and also determinism which comes about from a wrong understanding of divine omniscience and divine providence.

In the *Philokalia of Origen* he notes that there are people of the faith who "are distracted at the thought that human affairs may be governed by necessity, and cannot possibly be otherwise than is ruled by the stars."¹²¹ This is problematic to Origen not only

¹¹⁸ "Faustus differed from Origen in that for Faustus the divine action was understood not simply to have revealed but also to have evoked the hardening or the softening of the heart. In other words, Faustus spoke of a more direct interaction between the divine agent and the human agent than had Origen." Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, 170.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²⁰ Origen, Paul Koetschau, G. W. Butterworth. *Origen on First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), 176 foot note 2.

¹²¹ Origen, Basil, and Gregory. *The Philokalia of Origen: A Compilation of Selected Passages from Origen's Works Made by St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Basil of Caesarea* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1911): 23.1, accessed August 01, 2018, [http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h8h&bquery=\(HJ+5XBO\)&type=1&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h8h&bquery=(HJ+5XBO)&type=1&site=ehost-live).

because this brings about the “complete destruction of Free Will”¹²² but furthermore, because it turns God into an unjust judge who places blame or praise upon people who did not choose to do the good or bad they have done. If the human person is fundamentally not free, “the distinction between acceptable conduct and conduct deserving of blame is lost.”¹²³ As an extension to that idea, Origen continues to explain that the two ideas of blessedness or punishment are undermined by such a cosmology where freedom is not operative.

While his presentation of human freedom seems limitless, due to his understanding of nature (something that will cause his condemnation in later years) what we wish to assert is Origen’s understanding that in order for God to be just and good, human freedom must be operative. In the end, Origen does not present a God who is a tyrant, but a ruler and divine physician. “He does not coerce but encourages and he wishes that those under him yield themselves willingly to his direction so that the good of someone may not be by compulsion, but according to his own choice.”¹²⁴ For Origen that God is both good and just is not simply a matter of responding to the heresies of his time, it is necessary for the presupposition of salvation and the divine decree that God desires the salvation of all people.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Cf. John Clark Smith, *The Ancient Wisdom of Origen* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1992), 47. There is a similar idea presented in Origen’s *Oratio* 29.15 where “God does not wish that the good should come to someone by necessity but willingly.” Origen, *Oratio*, 29.15.

The Internal Structure of Freedom: A Philosophical Approach

Yet Origen's understanding of human freedom is not solely extrapolated from scriptural sources, for as we noted in the beginning of this section, he was also a man of philosophy. When dealing with the idea of salvation, Origen's authorship points us not exclusively to our first point on the goodness of God, but moreover, on the ability of humanity to cooperate with the divine will to attain salvation through a synergy of wills.¹²⁵ When speaking on human agency, he distinguishes humanity from lower beings by putting them in a separate category; those which have "the causes of their movements from within themselves, while others receive them from without."¹²⁶ In making this the first division of the internal structure of freedom, Origen, follows the Platonic analysis of soul in terms of motion.¹²⁷ Beyond that, he explains that rational animals have the faculty of reason, by which they can judge and discern between the natural movement: disapproving of and rejecting some, approving of and accepting others.¹²⁸ This is described as a "faculty of distinguishing between good and evil, and when man has done this he possesses also the power of choosing that which he has approved of, he is rightly deemed worthy of praise when he chooses what is good, and of blame when he follows what is base and evil."¹²⁹

¹²⁵ "the human will alone is not sufficient to obtain salvation." Origen, *De Principiis*, 3.1.18.

¹²⁶ Origen, Paul Koetschau, G. W. Butterworth. *Origen on First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), 157-158.

¹²⁷ Cf. Jackson, "Sources of Origen's Doctrine of Freedom," 17.

¹²⁸ Cf. Origen, *De Principiis*, 3.1.1.

¹²⁹ Origen, Paul Koetschau, G. W. Butterworth. *Origen on First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), 160.

He also makes the point that there are certain things which we encounter that are not subject to human action but rather those which illicit reason, calling them motions from without.¹³⁰ “Origen may have learned the Stoic scheme (of the class of things moved) from Clement, in (his) *Stromata*”.¹³¹ Here there is a whole genealogy of philosophical appropriation where he notes that it remains within our own ability as to how one encounters and receives these motions through the use of “the faculty of reason”.¹³² He clarifies that those who claim movements from without are impossible to resist, causing us to do certain things, is simple cop out, “invented for the sole purpose of denying the freedom of the will.”¹³³

Yet Origen’s most complete philosophical treatment on human agency is found in *Contra Celsus*, namely in book III where he responds to Celsus’ claim that a person is unable to repent due to the habit of sinning and due to a fallen nature. Celsus says “it is manifest to everyone that no one by chastisement, much less by merciful treatment, could effect a complete change in those who are sinners both by nature and custom, for to change nature is an exceedingly difficult thing. But they who are without sin are partaken of a better life.”¹³⁴ Celsus is without a doubt is influenced by the stoic notions which we mentioned previously, namely here the pressures of fate and the lack of choice.

¹³⁰ Origen, *De Principiis*, 3.1.2.

¹³¹ Jackson, “Sources of Origen’s Doctrine of Freedom,” 20.

¹³² Origen, *De Principiis*, 3.1.3.

¹³³ Origen, Paul Koetschau, G. W. Butterworth. *Origen on First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), 162.

¹³⁴ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.65.

Origen refutes the claim of Celsus stating that he “committed a great error, in refusing to those who are sinners by nature, and also by habit, the possibility of a complete transformation”¹³⁵ by showing how it is that an entire transformation was possible in the lives of figures in salvation history but also figures from the philosophical world such as Hercules, Ulysses, Socrates and Musonius.¹³⁶ Origen not only takes issue with Celsus’ claim because of the ability of humanity to repent, but he also takes issue with the idea that such a fatalistic state is one which is given by nature. For him, the recovery of virtue is not only a possible thing for humanity; moreover it is possible through the power of reason because sin is against reason, an idea he derives from Gnosticism.¹³⁷ Even more so, Origen proclaims, for those who are followers of Jesus, given the word of God and “accredited by the Spirit.”¹³⁸ In the realm of faith he professes that “the word of God through their (own) instrumentality, transformed numbers of persons who had been sinners both by nature and habit, whom no one could have reformed by punishment, but who were changed by the word, which moulded and transformed them according to its pleasure.”¹³⁹ While maintaining the efficacy of the word of God is operative in the life of the disciple, each through their own instrumentality, he concedes to Celsus that such an endeavor of changing “a nature entirely is exceedingly difficult.”¹⁴⁰ Here, we must remember that Christian theology did not really elaborate a notion of ‘nature’ until the Christological disputes forced such a

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Cf. Ibid., 3.66.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 3.67.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.69.

development. However, he argues that in every rational soul, which the Author of all things has made good, out of His own goodness, may have become “wicked through education, and perverse example, and surrounding influences, so that wickedness has been naturalized in some individuals.”¹⁴¹ When the word of God working in conjunction with human agency, it is possible for a person to change his/her own nature “if a man only believe that he must entrust himself to the God of all things, and **do everything** with a view to please Him.”¹⁴² He continues that for God, it cannot be that “both good and bad are in the same honor, Or that the idle man and he who labored much Perish alike.”¹⁴³ Paradoxically, this is actually not very different from what St. Jerome would say in attacking *apokatastasis*.¹⁴⁴

The cause of such repentance and conversion must lie in a person’s own will, where deliberate choices and actions “avail much towards the accomplishment of things which appear to be very difficult, and...almost impossible.”¹⁴⁵ He will conclude by saying that when one holds such views about the inability of the human person to repent, it does not reflect upon the nature of God, but rather on the nature of the person, whom God has formed with powers for the attainment of things of such difficulty.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid. Emphasis Added.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ “Jerome denounces “the restitution of all things” because the concept implies that “it will be the same for Gabriel as for the devil, for Paul as for Caiaphas, for virgins as for whores.” Elizabeth A. Clark, “The Place of Jerome’s Commentary on Ephesians in the Origenist Controversy” *Vigiliae Christianae* 41, no. 2 (1987): 155.

¹⁴⁵ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.69.

He will further address human agency in the same chapter by again quoting Celsus, saying "they who are without sin are partakers of a better life."¹⁴⁶ For Origen, it is not clear whether Celsus means those who are without sin from the beginning of their lives (i.e. as a product of nature), or those who have become so by transformation. The former theory is a sort of application of the gnostic idea of the natures all over again, predestining some for a life of sanctity and others for a life of sin. Origen will reject the first premise on account that there is no human cooperation.¹⁴⁷ If, on the other hand, he is referring to those who are blessed after a transformation and repentance through submission to the saving word God, then we can consider the role of personal agency as being operative in that person's ability to become free from sin.¹⁴⁸

For Origen the word of God, is operative in the lives of those who believe and is continually passing from one generation to the next permeating the souls of those who seek its contents. While the word is operative and can make from a person what he calls "a friend of God and the prophets,"¹⁴⁹ it remains by virtue of what he calls "the doctrine of Christianity,"¹⁵⁰ not operative in the lives of those who are "unwilling, but those who have chosen the better life, and that which is pleasing to God."¹⁵¹ The divine will is operative in the lives of those who seek it, but it does not happen through a passive process, instead rather, through co-operation. Continuing on this, he notes that Celsus objects to this kind of cooperation with divine grace, maintaining instead that what is

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ "there cannot possibly be any." Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 4.3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

operative is not cooperation with the divine grace, but that it is divine power itself though which God makes humanity better. To this he will ask: “where, then, is our free will? And what credit is there in assenting to the truth? Or how is the rejection of what is false praiseworthy?”¹⁵² By posing these questions he juxtaposes the rationality of cooperation with that of passive operation. He will also assert that it would have been easy for God to “to create men who needed no improvement, but who were of themselves virtuous and perfect, evil being altogether non-existent.”¹⁵³ He will conclude with the brilliant axiom which helps us to look into the nature of human cooperation: “if you take away the spontaneity of virtue, you destroy its essence.”¹⁵⁴

In summation, Origen’s doctrine of human freedom goes to accomplish two very important tasks: on the one hand, it upholds what scripture teaches on the necessity of human freedom “inferred both as a necessary condition for true obedience and as a sufficient explanation of the righteousness of God’s judgment,”¹⁵⁵ while providing necessary explanation and context to the difficult passages, which seemingly make the person passive in front of the divine will and omniscience. On the other hand, Origen presents a philosophical argument based on the causes of movement in the person combining “the Platonic transcendental viewpoint with the Stoic analysis of the internal structure of freedom”¹⁵⁶ to counter the claims made by Celsus and others who assert the impossibility of repentance and conversion. The hallmark of Origen’s downfall in

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Jackson, “Sources of Origen’s Doctrine of Freedom,” 21.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

doctrine of *Apokatastasis*, was nothing more than such a double assertion of scripture and philosophy; for the doctrine “stemmed from Origen’s criticism of Gnostic determinism against the backdrop of the theodicy problem (presented in scripture).”¹⁵⁷

St. Thomas Aquinas

The monk John Cassian builds on the spiritual tradition of Origen.¹⁵⁸ We find that in one of his great works, the *Collationes*, John asserts that “God works all things in us and yet everything can be ascribed to free will.”¹⁵⁹ In this assertion, he aims to maintain two seemingly contradictory assertions: the first having to do with the necessity of grace which is so operative in Christianity and the second having to do with the responsibility of personal actions in the struggle towards perfection. In this double assertion, both human integrity and necessity of divine assistance are necessary for all to be saved, again the notion of cooperation.

Cassian seems to be the perfect segue into our look at Aquinas and his understanding of freedom operative through secondary causality. To begin this undertaking, it is necessary to outline the meaning of free will utilizing classical

¹⁵⁷ Ramelli, “Origen in Augustine: A Paradoxical Reception,” 287.

¹⁵⁸ In order to provide an introit into the work of Aquinas, we speak about the work of the monk John Cassian who offers an axiom close to Aquinas’ idea of primary and secondary causality. The link between Origen and Cassian is seen in the following citation: “(a)ppropriate to Cassian’s own interest, his connection with Origen came through Evagrius Ponticus, the leader of a monastic community in Nitria.” Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, 82.

¹⁵⁹ John Cassian, “The Conferences of John Cassian” (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2003), chapter 8, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/cassian/conferences.html>.

(scholastic) philosophical anthropology to which Aquinas is a major contributor.¹⁶⁰ In this endeavor what Aquinas “set out to prove was the compatibility of Aristotelian materialism with Christian idealist dogma and to construct a unified view of nature, mankind, and God.”¹⁶¹

According to this tradition, every act of knowing, whether through the senses or in the intellect, is chronologically prior to a produced response. This response, which is called an appetite, and its existence can be discovered either by introspection (having to do with the inclinations we have because of our knowledge) or through the external experiential “sensible” world. Appetites have a tendency towards something or away from it depending on the value of the good sensed.¹⁶²

In that form flows from being, each substantial form of an object is the source of its natural inclinations. This idea is expressed by Aquinas in part one of the *Summa* where he says an “inclination follows every form: for example, fire, by its form, is inclined to rise, and to generate its like.”¹⁶³ These inclinations, which arise from the form of objects are called natural appetites. Natural appetites are generally not subject to change and are largely predictable, since they flow simply from form. There is, however, another class of appetites which are distinct from natural appetites and which do change: elicited appetites or appetites of the soul. There are two types of appetites of the soul: intellectual appetites,

¹⁶⁰ I will use Michael J. Dodds, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Oakland, CA: Western Dominican Province, 2014), 50 ff as a guide to hit the major moments in the classical understanding of human agency and freedom of will.

¹⁶¹ Stent, “Paradoxes of Free Will,” 72.

¹⁶² Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.80, a.1.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

which is otherwise known as the “will” and the sense appetites, which is known as “passions”. Aquinas considers the appetites which stem in the intellect as superior to those which stem in the sensory or “animal” domains for we choose them not passively but by an act of intellect.¹⁶⁴

The power of the will is distinct from the power of the intellect in that their objects are different. “Truth is the object of the intellect and the good is the object of the will”¹⁶⁵ yet for the most part the agency of the will and intellect interact; something which is deemed as true is also good. The distinction then between the will and intellect is in the way that each is related to their specific object. Aquinas points out that while “knowledge comes about insofar as the object known is within the knower... the will goes out to what is outside it.”¹⁶⁶ The will is said to be moved then not by universal or general reasons, but by a particular or practical reason.

Yet acts of the will do not necessarily end in a movement but rather in an intention to move. Commanded acts will necessarily move something, yet elicited acts are those which have decided to move but have not yet done any moving.¹⁶⁷ This then brings us to the core idea of the freedom of the will. “Aquinas argues that humans must have free will since ‘otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would be in vain.’”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., I-II, q.22.

¹⁶⁵ Dodds, *Philosophical Anthropology*, 53.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.10, a.1, co.; ad 3.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Dodds, *Philosophical Anthropology*, 54.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 55.

For him, freedom is something we can contemplate introspectively, we realize that when we have more than one option, we can choose one over another. Part of our experience is that when we choose well, the resulting outcome of our choice brings us some attainment of the good, we have received a reward or recompense for that act of the will or choice. But this experience of being able to be rewarded or inversely punished, means that I am in control over my own actions and that I have made a decision between at least two options. Without the ability to control my own actions, I cannot say that I am free for I would be acting out of “chance or by necessity. Since we find purpose in our actions, it does not seem we act by chance.”¹⁶⁹ Considering necessity, Aquinas describes three types of necessity: natural and absolute necessity, necessity of end or utility and necessity of coercion. According to Aquinas, necessity of end does not remove the ability for an act of the will for an end can be reached in many ways. “Where there are several proximate ends, or several means to the last end, there can be freedom of choice.”¹⁷⁰ In the end, we must understand freedom of will not as an act of autonomy, but rather an ability to obtain what we most deeply understand as good. In order for us to connect our starting point and end point conscious freedom which include acts of the will lead us to the good which we desire to do.

Aquinas also does the hard work of explaining how to ascribe something completely to God and also to the will of the human actor, through secondary

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 57.

causality.¹⁷¹ When considering divine causality, Aquinas considers the Aristotelian modes of creaturely causality which we have already discussed at length: necessary, contingent, free and chance. “If Aquinas were asked to which of these categories divine action belongs, he would answer, “None of the above.” God’s causality transcends all these categories of creaturely action, just as God’s being transcends the whole order of creaturely existence.”¹⁷²

The work of Etienne Gilson helps us to understand the dynamic of secondary causality more clearly: “God does whatever creatures do; and yet creatures themselves do whatever they do. It is a question of understating how one and the same effect can proceed simultaneously from two different causes: God and the natural agent which produces it. At first sight this seems incomprehensible.”¹⁷³ The beautiful thing about this system is that even though God does whatever creatures do, he seemingly does not do it until creatures themselves decide to do it and so if “we affirm divine transcendence, we

¹⁷¹ Aquinas upheld that human free will not only exists but also is compatible with God's foreknowledge of our actions. In *Summa Theologiae* I, q22.3 he states “that the dignity of causality is imparted even to creatures” this causality is to be seen at a different level (transcendentally) than the causality imparted to creatures. This notion is made clear in *Summa Theologiae* I, q.105.5 where he states: “God work in every worker, according to these three things. First as an end. For since every operation is for the sake of some good, real or apparent; and nothing is good either really or apparently, except in as far as it participates in a likeness to the Supreme Good, which is God; it follows that God Himself is the cause of every operation as its end. Again it is to be observed that where there are several agents in order, the second always acts in virtue of the first; for the first agent moves the second to act. And thus all agents act in virtue of God Himself: and therefore He is the cause of action in every agent.” In this way the idea of secondary causality helps us to understand that the divine cause is not on the same level as the human cause, or else God would not have imparted causality to creatures.

¹⁷² Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 206.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 208.

can see that secondary causality neither diminishes the power of God nor distorts that of creatures.”¹⁷⁴

In the words of Aquinas himself:

God wills whatever is required for a thing that he wills...But it befits certain things according to the mode of their nature, that they be contingent and not necessary. Therefore, God wills that somethings be contingent. Now the efficacy of the divine will requires not only that something be that God wills to be, but also that it be as he wills it to be. For, among, natural agents as well, when the acting power is strong it assimilates its effect into itself not only as to species but also as to the accidents, which are certain modes of that thing. Therefore, the efficacy of the divine will does not remove contingency.¹⁷⁵

Aquinas’ view on free will and his efforts to bring understanding to creaturely causality in a world where God acts will be fundamental to our later understanding of ethical theory. To see how this understanding developed we will look at the work of another great Dominican of our contemporary period, Servais-Théodore Pinckaers in his *Sources of Christian Ethics*. In that Aquinas’ moral theory is based on both the human function of cognition and the natural inclinations of appetitive powers, it is precisely in the exercise of free will that “St. Thomas perceives the true image of God within us, for it is in our mastery over our actions that we show forth his image”.¹⁷⁶ Pinckaers characterizes the freedom presented in the moral theory developed from this patristic and scholastic tradition as a “freedom for excellence”¹⁷⁷ as opposed to the later tradition developed in

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 210.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 85, no. 2.

¹⁷⁶ Servais Pinckaers, *Sources of Christian Ethics* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing, 2014), 350, accessed August 28, 2018, https://lib.tcu.edu/staff/bellinger/65013/Sources_of_Christian_Ethics_327_to_378.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 352.

the modern era by William of Ockham which he calls a “freedom of indifference”.¹⁷⁸ While in the system of ‘freedom for excellence’ the human person seen to be naturally drawn to truth, goodness and happiness as an end and in that freedom is a faculty which proceeds from “reason and will, which unite to make the act of choice. This act of choice is thus formed by practical judgments and willing.”¹⁷⁹ On the other hand in systems of ethical theory which maintain a ‘freedom of indifference’ free will precedes “reason and will in such a way as to move them to their acts. “For I can freely choose,” (Ockham) said “to know or not to know, to will or not to will.” For him, free will was the prime faculty, anterior to intelligence and will as well as to their acts.”¹⁸⁰ By making free will anterior to intelligence and will the focus of freedom became centered not so much on the end result, “an attraction towards the good exercised in love and desire”¹⁸¹ rather on the choice of the act; “freedom lay entirely in the power of the will to choose between contraries, and this power resided in the will alone.”¹⁸²

Pinckaers explains that the seeming subtlety of the locus of freedom has important repercussions, many of which are seen in our contemporary misunderstanding of what freedom is and even what we would consider as the denial of human freedom. First, he explains that our modern understanding of will is one repercussion where the will is seen as “a conscious pressure of self upon self”¹⁸³ which “no longer (is) characterized by love

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 354.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 355.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

but by the relationship of command and obedience.”¹⁸⁴ In this a person seeks to choose freely rather than to choose what is good for them. As a result, the breach between freedom and the natural inclinations has caused us at times to reject our own happiness in order to fulfill our desire for freedom.

Moreover, Pinckaers explains that for Aquinas the natural inclinations which humans exhibit are an expression of the divine respect for the natural order of the world. This is expressed in the term “*sequi naturam*, or conformity with nature”¹⁸⁵ which coupled along with “the primal longing for happiness”¹⁸⁶ is the basis for how human actions were linked together to form “an organic, permanent, whole, where the present flowed from the past and opened into the future.”¹⁸⁷ The entire view of time, accomplishment, cooperation and the ability to do good in the eyes of God which we have discussed at length previously. This had its root not solely in the knowledge of divine ordinances but were moreover a natural procession of inclinations in the human person. This organic unity between human actions and the natural order of the created world had also been disrupted by the reordering found in a ‘freedom of indifference’ a “fully deliberate result of placing humanity in a central position...impregnated with a secret passion for self-affirmation, deeper than any of its manifestations and expressions.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 357.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 360.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 361-362.

In this light, we can see that when one does not understand freedom and will in their appropriate and natural contexts the results are tragic. Pinckaers helps us to realize that the ‘freedom of indifference’ brought about “a breaking away from natural inclinations and sensibility, *habitus* and virtues, finality, continuity and loyalty. All these ruptures meet in the final break between free will and reason.”¹⁸⁹ With Aquinas’ understanding moreover, freedom and will remain united to form free choice. In a ‘freedom for excellence,’ the ability to live a life which is fulfilling remains within reach and the internal struggles between nature and will are overcome. In the concept of *sequi naturam*, maintained by this tradition, nature “does not restrain human freedom; it is essentially liberating. It produces a spontaneity in the spiritual order that is very different, in its relationship to freedom, from the spontaneity of the senses”.¹⁹⁰ Likewise, freedom is not limited by the will, rather through its healthy application the human person develops into the image of God. The external world does not pose a threat; instead it remains the locus for “fruitful exchange”¹⁹¹ of humanity in virtue and charity.

Chapter 3: The Islamic Understanding of Free Will

Moving from the Christian conception of freedom of will to the Islamic concept, one must realize that there is quite a bit of similarity in background; they both emerged in the same geographical location, with the same fatalistic roots received from Gnostic and Stoic ideas presented earlier. More importantly though seeing that both Islam and

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 363.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 381.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 390.

Christianity like Judaism professed a monotheistic faith, the ideas of divine omnipotence and omniscience were once again necessarily operative. Much like Judaism and Christianity, the fact that there was a definitive and united revelatory text did not result in a unified understanding concerning human freedom. Unlike Judaism and Christianity, the revealed text of Islam presents not only an idea of human destiny but also a term for it (*qadar*) which is found in the Quran.

How that term is explained and understood in light of the divine attributes will bring about a multiplicity of interpretations and meanings and for us to imply that all Muslims ascribe to fatalism would be a fallacy. Montgomery Watt in his book *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* offers that the notion of fatalism lies not so much on the concept of *qadar* but rather in the pre-Islamic conception of time; where “time is conceived as an impersonal force identified with ‘fate’ or ‘destiny’.”¹⁹² This notion of time is critical to how one views the causality of God within the world. As noted briefly in the introduction and also in the chapter 1, if one holds to a view of God in time, then it is difficult for us to overcome fatalism in systems of belief. As regards the problem of freedom of the will, two mutually opposed schools – Mutazilites and Asharites – came into existence, one upholding complete freedom of will and the other one asserting radical pre-determinism.

¹⁹² Zakaria, “Qadar in Classical and Modern Islamic Discourses,” 40.

The Question of Qadar in Islam

The sixth article of belief in Islam is the ascent to fate, called *qadar*. As we explained briefly in the introduction, the word expresses the power of God which is operative in the created world. The classical Sunni understanding the concept of destiny in Islam, stands on four pillars: the first is the knowledge of God, the second, is that all things are written in a preserved tablet, third, that only the will of God is operative and fourth, creation can will only secondarily to the will of God.¹⁹³

Foreknowledge is to believe that God knows all things: general and specific, at all times and places, both in hypothesis and in fact. With God are the keys to the unseen, for he knows all that is in land and sea, there is not a leaf that falls without him knowing about it, there is not a seed in the dark recesses of earth which is not known to him. There is nothing dry, nothing wet that is not written in a book¹⁹⁴ and already predestined. In another passage, God knows all that is before humanity and all that is hidden from their view.¹⁹⁵ In this way, the knowledge of God is on a different level than the knowledge given to creation, for it is never the fact that God does not know and then comes into

¹⁹³ Herein the doctrine of *qadar* in Sunni Islam is being paraphrased from the article by Shaykh Faraz Rabbani, "Moral Responsibility and Divine Will," Sunni Path, accessed August 01, 2018, http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD 1&ID=131&CATE=24.

¹⁹⁴ This is a paraphrase from Quran 6: 59: God "knows whatever there is in the land and in the sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but is written in a Clear Record." In the commentary by Yusuf Ali he helps us to understand that *qadar* can only be understood by those who are of belief in his nuanced addition that the record is clear "to those who can read." USC, "The Qur'an," Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, 006.059, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://cmje.usc.edu/religious-texts/quran/>.

¹⁹⁵ Quran 20:110; Yusuf Ali helps us to understand that the knowledge of God encompasses all dimensions of "what appears to His creatures as before or after or behind them" also expressing that these dimensions are outside of the limits of human discovery, saying: "but they shall not compass it with their knowledge." USC, "The Qur'an," Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, 020.110, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://cmje.usc.edu/religious-texts/quran/>.

knowing. Nor is God's knowledge followed by forgetfulness. In this manner, Islam holds that God knows in a manner different than us, in that all things are written in a book and all things in that book are known to God. Yet, they posit not just one book (The Preserved Tablet) but four.

- a. The Preserved Tablet: According to the majority of Islamic religious scholarship, before the creation of the universe, God created a Preserved Tablet or Record containing everything that has happened or will happen during the course of the existence of all creation. The tablet was said to have been written some 50,000 years before God created heaven and the earth.¹⁹⁶
- b. Lifetime records: At the moment that a fetus gets through the first stages of development in the womb, God determines all things that are written down in the book of life. An angel is sent to blow the soul into the fetus and the newly formed human is given four commands: his livelihood, his death, his deeds, his fortune and misfortune.¹⁹⁷
- c. The annual record: On the night of *qadr*,¹⁹⁸ God sends forth his decree on everything that will happen in a given year. The decree is written in the

¹⁹⁶ "Allah has decreed the destiny of all the creatures 50,000 years before He created the heavens and the earth" Sahih Muslim, Vol. 4, 1397 "Salafi Publications | The Four Levels of the Belief in Al-Qadr," Salafi Publications | The Khawarij Are the Murji'ah, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://www.salafipublications.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=AQD09&articleID=AQD090001&pfriend=>.

¹⁹⁷ Book 33, Number 6390 of Abdallah bin Masud.

¹⁹⁸ "We have indeed revealed the Quran on the Night of Qadr: And what will explain to you what the Night of Qadr is? The Night of Qadr is better than a thousand months. Therein comes down the Angel and the Spirit by Allah's permission, with every decreed command. Peace it is until the rise of Dawn!" (Quran 97:

annual record. On that night when God sends down his decree for the year, every wise matter is decided by God and begun to be made known to man. On this night, Muslims are called to keep vigil, praying that good things would come to them in the new year.

- d. The daily record: Each day has a daily record by which the day progresses. In this, things come to pass in day the affairs which God has destined. Some will be given life, some will have their lives taken away.¹⁹⁹

The literature in the Quran which introduced and upheld the conception of *qadar* as a dogma of the faith are the following:

Surah 57:14 “They will cry out to them: Were we not with you? They shall say: Yes! but you caused yourselves to fall into temptation, and you waited and doubted, and vain desires deceived you till the threatened punishment of Allah came, while the archdeceiver deceived you about Allah.”

Surah 8:23 “And if Allah had known any good in them He would have made them hear, and if He makes them hear they would turn back while they withdraw.”

Surah 11:119 “Nor would thy Lord be the One to destroy communities for a single wrong-doing, if its members were likely to mend. If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute. Except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them: and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: "I will fill Hell with jinns and men all together.””

Surah 57:22 “No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but is inscribed in the Prescribed Tablet, before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah.”

In these scriptural texts, the following points must be highlighted. First, the idea of Divine Omniscience requires that God has knowledge of human actions. The idea that

1-5); In the *tafsir* of Yusuf Ali the night of *Qadar* is expressed as the “Night of Power” in which he nuances not only one angel, but rather “the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand.” USC, “The Qur'an,” Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, 097.001-004, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://cmje.usc.edu/religious-texts/quran/>.

¹⁹⁹ Paraphrased from Quran 5:32.

these actions are brought about by what is written is a rejected precept, for though God knows the actions of man before they are to take place, the actions of humanity are subject to punishment or reward according to their nature. To this end, certain acts can affect destiny for in one of the hadeeth, it is attributed to Muhammad that “a person may be deprived of provision because of sins that he commits, and the decree is not warded off by anything but prayer, and nothing increases one’s lifespan except righteousness.”²⁰⁰ It is interesting to look at the following hadith from Sahih Muslim which speaks of how the prophet of Islam understood the concept of *qadar* as not being cause for passivity in the life of the Muslim:

Ali narrated that one day the Messenger of Allah was sitting with a wooden stick in his hand with which he was scratching the ground. He raised his head and said, “There is none of you, but has his place assigned either in the Fire or in Paradise.” They (the Companions) inquired, “O Allah’s Messenger! Why should we carry on doing good deeds, shall we depend (upon Qadar) and give up work?” Muhammad said: “No, carry on doing good deeds, for everyone will find it easy (to do) such deeds that will lead him towards that for which he has been created.” Then he recited the verse: “As for him who gives (in charity) and keeps his duty to Allah and fears Him, and believes in al-Husna, We will make smooth for him the path of Ease (goodness) (Surah 92:5-7).”²⁰¹

While everything on the preserved tablet is determined, but the things which take place on the lower books may be changed. These changes would be reflected in the preserved tablet, but already determined there. Through prayer and righteous actions, a person can cooperate in some way, seeing that the things handed down are still changeable so long as they have not been written in the lower books. Inherently some

²⁰⁰ Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah (1/195).

²⁰¹ Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, "Salafi Publications | The Four Levels of the Belief in Al-Qadr," Salafi Publications | The Khawarij Are the Murji'ah, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://www.salafipublications.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=AQD09&articleID=AQD090001&pfriend=>.

philosophers see a problem with this view.²⁰² The problem lies in the fact that if the four books are connected, and the first is determined, then following reason, the things written in the lower books will reflect only that which is determined. There is no room for change in this system, but as Alfred Guillaume notes: “Prophets are not theologians!”²⁰³

In understanding *qadar* we have to speak about the will. The will of God holds in it the belief that everything came into existence, from non-existence, through the will of God. Human actions are not withheld from those things which come into existence. God does whatever He wills and God decided that we should have a will, so our will is a product to His will and is secondary it. In that God's will takes precedence in all things. God's will is tied to justice, so His will, will not wrong anyone. Everything that is willed for you is tied to divine wisdom. In Islam, both paradise and hellfire are tied to the necessity of human agency. The presence of human will mean God does not punish someone for something that wasn't in his hands, nor are you are rewarding him for what he did not have the will do. This view will be held by a school of thought which

²⁰² “It has long been notorious that he (Muhammad) made no attempt to grapple with the difficulty his self-contradictory revelations on this subject caused to subsequent thinkers; indeed, it may be confidently asserted that the intellectual problem and the moral issues involved were not apparent to him. "All men would believe did God so will and none believes but by God's permission " (Sura 10:99). Over and over again we read that God leads man either in the way of salvation or of perdition - no reason for His action being assigned in either case, lie it is who opens man's heart to the Quranic message or renders him blind and deaf to its revelation. It would seem from Sura 6:140, that the obvious retort was made by the unbelievers that they were what God had made them, and His was the responsibility, not theirs.” Alfred Guillaume, “Some Remarks on Free Will and Predestination in Islam, Together with a Translation of the Kitabu-l Qadar from the Sahih of al-Bukhari,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1924): 43.

²⁰³ Guillaume, “Some Remarks on Free Will,” 44.

maintained the principle of human agency by explaining “moral and ethical truth (in a unique manner) in the whole course of Muslim theology.”²⁰⁴

Mutazilites

Between the time of the redaction of the Quran (30 Hijri or 650 AD) and the publication of the first authoritative collection of traditions (245 Hijri or 859 AD) we find the emergence of the work and school founded by Wasil bin Ata,²⁰⁵ a pupil of the mosque at Basra and the founder of the Mutazalite view, literally meaning “those set apart”.²⁰⁶ The Mutazilites held that “all men of sound mind know in an immediate and irreducible intuition that certain acts...are morally obligatory”.²⁰⁷ These human actions hold with them an ethical value “what is good or best, or right or wrong, to do in any situation.”²⁰⁸ In regards to human knowledge, the Mutazilites viewed ethical culpability as being limited due to our “incomplete knowledge of present circumstances and of future contingents... (while in juxtaposition) God’s knowledge of the circumstances and of the

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 45.

²⁰⁵ The history of Wasil bin Ata and how he came to found the Mutazalite school is described in the brief narrative by Merina Islam in her paper “The Development of Early Muslim Philosophy”, June 24, 2014: “Imam Hasan (d. 110 Hijri) was a great scholar of Islam at Basra. One day, while lecturing in the mosque at Basra, he was asked his opinion on the flues whether those who commit great sin are to be regarded as Muslims or non-Muslims. Before he could say anything, one of his pupils, Wasil bin Ata (d. 131 Hijri) said that such persons were neither believers nor un-believers. Thus, he came to differ from his teacher and began to expound his own views separately. Since he seceded from his teacher’s class, he was called a Mutazalite (one who secedes) and his school as called Mutazilitism.” Merina Islam, “The Development of Early Muslim Philosophy,” Second Online Session of Society of Positive Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies (SPPIS) Haryana, June 24, 2014, 2-3, accessed August 01, 2018, <https://sppish2session.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/the-development-of-early-muslim-philosophy.pdf>.

²⁰⁶ David Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 52.

²⁰⁷ Richard Frank, “Moral Obligation in Classical Muslim Theology,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 11, no. 2 (1983): 205.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

consequences of His acts (and of ours) is eternal and exhaustive.”²⁰⁹ Yet the knowledge of God is not one which obtrusive for “neither God’s acts nor our voluntary acts are causally predetermined.”²¹⁰

Much like Origen, the Mutazilites spoke of the importance of moral actions and the resulting blame or praise²¹¹ while also asserting the justice of God. “God’s justice obliges him to act in accordance with the moral law. For instance, he is thus bound to stand by his promise to reward the righteous with paradise and his threat to punish the wicked with hellfire.”²¹² Moreover, not only will God “reward good and punish evil, as the Qur’an everywhere attests, but the divine perfection makes it impossible that God “perform, whether directly or indirectly..., any act which is not ethically good.”²¹³ Also like Origen, it seems that they adopted an allegorical reading of the Quran, applying it to the numerical unity of the God (Divine Oneness) and also to the various anthropomorphisms which appear in the Quran regarding God.²¹⁴

As a result of this view, the “human individual has an ability to act which is a capacity of performance that is sufficient for the performance of an act but not sufficient

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 206.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 207.

²¹¹ “Every individual of sound mind ought to do what is morally right and abstain from what is morally wrong. He deserves punishment for wrongdoing. And furthermore, since consistently to do what is right and avoid what is wrong inevitably involve some hardship, he deserves compensation, if not reward for so doing.” Ibid., 206.

²¹² Neal Robinson, "Ash'ariyya and Mu'tazila," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig, vol. 1 (London, England: Routledge, 1989), 519.

²¹³ Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions*, 77.

²¹⁴ The Mutazilites emphatically rejected the notion that God is numerically one, but rather “that his is a simple essence. This led them to deny that he has a body or any of the characteristics of bodies such as color, form, movement and localization in space...The Mu'tazila therefore interpreted the Qur'anic anthropomorphisms as metaphors”. Robinson, "Ash'ariyya and Mu'tazila," 520.

for the creating or initiating absolutely.”²¹⁵ In this a person can be seen as being responsible for their own actions and ascribing blame or reward for such actions would be fitting with “the basic conception of God as just and impartial”.²¹⁶ In upholding divine justice, this school finds scriptural support for human freedom from two main verses of the Quran, namely “(w)hoever acts virtuously does so for himself”²¹⁷ and “(n)othing belongs to man save what he strives for”.²¹⁸

Beyond divine justice and the moral reading of the scriptures, the Mutazilites also focus on the importance of reason. This is based on the precept that “(r)evelation only confirms what reason dictates.”²¹⁹ With this precept the Mutazilite school will reject notions which make the actions of God seem irrational. This idea is expressed by the Caliph Umar who was asked by a man caught in the imprudence of drinking alcohol, why he was being punished if it was God's will for him to be caught. In this hadith, the man is asserting his lack of will. Umar responds emphatically: “and it is God's will that I punish

²¹⁵ Abu l-Qasim al-Qushayri, “First Part: Editions and Translations of Luma’ fi l-I’tiqad” *Melanges de l’institut Domiicain d’Etudes Orientales du Caire* 15 (1982) : 61.

²¹⁶ Abdur Rab, *Divine Will and Human Freedom Part I. Divine Predestination: How Far Real?* Academia, January 08, 2010, accessed August 01, 2018, https://www.academia.edu/2762806/Divine_Will_and_Human_Freedom_-_Part_1._Divine_Predestination_How_Far_Real.

²¹⁷ Quran 41:46; Yusuf Ali goes to offer the appropriate ideas of blame or reward for the goodness of our own actions by overtly expressing the justice of God. “Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul: nor is thy Lord ever unjust (in the least) to His Servants.” USC, “The Qur’an,” Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, 041.046, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://cmje.usc.edu/religious-texts/quran/>

²¹⁸ Quran 41:40; In the *tafsir* of Yusuf Ali he adds additional commentary to clarify that the divine justice is based upon what God sees as flowing from human action: “Those who pervert the Truth in Our Signs are not hidden from Us. Which is better?- he that is cast into the Fire, or he that comes safe through, on the Day of Judgment? Do what ye will: verily He seeth (clearly) all that ye do.” USC, “The Qur’an,” Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, 041.040, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://cmje.usc.edu/religious-texts/quran/>

²¹⁹ M. Islam, “The Development of Early Muslim Philosophy,” 3.

you for your imprudence”.²²⁰ In this method of responding to the man who attempts to blame *qadar* for the negative things that he has done, the notion of rationality is undermined. For the man who seeks to blame God for his transgression would never to ascribe the good things he has done to destiny, rather he would attribute them more proximately to his own agency, and so it would remain irrational for him to ascribe his transgressions to God. Yet, the rational claims which the Mutalizes would make on human causality would be countered by a later school known as the Asharites.

Asharites

The Asharite school, founded by an Iraqi Arab theologian al-Ashari of the 9th Century offered that “God preordains everything that happens on earth, including what man wills and does, and what befalls man, good or bad.”²²¹ Al-Ashari was a student of the Hanbalite tradition; one of the four main schools of interpretation in Islam which asserts that the contents of the Quran are “the uncreated speech of God...(and) that the descriptions to the found in the Quran, even the anthropomorphic ones, were to be taken at face value...without questioning its true meaning.”²²² A return to the literal interpretation of scripture would become emblematic to this school of thought, as would the application

²²⁰ ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar and Man’s Consent. This is a popular story from the Hadith which offers an explanation of the life of Muhammad and the first of his Caliphs. Cf. "Salafi Publications | The Four Levels of the Belief in Al-Qadr," Salafi Publications | The Khawarij Are the Murji'ah, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://www.salafipublications.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=AQD09&articleID=AQD090001&pfriend=>.

²²¹ Abdur Rab, *Divine Will and Human Freedom Part I. Divine Predestination: How Far Real?* Academia, January 08, 2010, accessed August 01, 2018, https://www.academia.edu/2762806/Divine_Will_and_Human_Freedom_-_Part_1._Divine_Predestination_How_Far_Real.

²²² Catarina Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 121, 2007, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://0-booksandjournals.brillonline.com.grace.gtu.edu/content/books/9789047419150>.

of the divine attributes of God as “real entities subsisting independently of God. (This school) claimed that God is powerful by virtue of a power residing in him and wise by virtue of wisdom residing in him.”²²³ In that, the divine attributes are seen as being eternal and as a result, should be asserted as efficacious in the world, not simply as descriptive of God.²²⁴

Human actions, as a result, are grounded simply in the dictates of God and can find no causality at the level of the person. “The ethical valuations of actions are grounded neither in the acts themselves nor in their properties; they are grounded simply in what God says.”²²⁵ The concepts of good actions or bad actions are not grounded in the moral value of the action itself, but rather must be seen in view of what God has dictated.²²⁶ By asserting the last and fourth pillar in *qadar* as creation. This school of thought asserted that God who is the creator of all things, creates all things by decree, from celestial things to people. People’s actions are not withheld from the list of created things. As we have seen above, God also decrees whether an action is good or bad in order for there to be objectivity in the actions of humans.²²⁷

²²³ Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes*, 121.

²²⁴ “The attributes of God are neither included nor excluded from God’s essence, they are co-eternal with God. So far as their conception is concerned; the attributes are outside of God and so far as their application is concerned; they are included in God’s essence. Thus to them, there is no contraction in their doctrine of attributes.” M. Islam, “The Development of Early Muslim Philosophy,” 4.

²²⁵ Frank, “Moral Obligation in Classical Muslim Theology,” 207.

²²⁶ The Asharite theologian Abu l-Qasim al-Ansari notes to this effect that “to be good and to be bad are not attributes of what is good or is bad, nor are they modes in which they occur; good and bad have no meaning other than the very promulgation of God’s command and prohibition.” Frank, “Moral Obligation in Classical Muslim Theology,” 207.

²²⁷ The fact that ethical values of actions cannot be rationalized (lest objectivity be lost) was something argued by the Asharite thinker al-Kiya who states: “we refuse to say that its being good or being bad is grounded in any essential property of the act. Good and bad are grounded in the very giving of the law

In regard to human freedom, the Asharites “assert a theory of acquisition which implies that although God has pre-destined human actions, yet man has been given some power of actualizing those actions.”²²⁸ In acquisition “God not only creates and determines the human act but is also the act’s sole Agent. If humans may be said to act, it is only in a metaphorical sense. There is no difference between human acts and the movements of inanimate bodies or between voluntary and involuntary acts. God creates all of them equally.”²²⁹

The principle of actualization lies in intentionality for “man’s intention to complete any action holds him responsible for his deeds.”²³⁰ The resulting blame or merit which a person gains from that intentionality does not undermine God’s justice in this system, for divine justice is seen as a matter of faith.²³¹ The ability to know good and evil are a function of divine revelation and so the believer is one who has access to that knowledge. “Al-Ashari argues that by approving of these latter (voluntary) actions, which God created in us, we ‘acquire’ them and are thus held responsible for them.”²³²

Ibn Sina offers some insight on this idea of intentionality for he explains that human beings “perceive themselves to be choosing freely for their own purposes even

itself, for what is good is that which the agent may legitimately do, and what is bad is that which the agent may not legitimately do, and this is grounded in the (Divine) command and the (Divine) prohibition.” Frank, “Moral Obligation in Classical Muslim Theology,” 209.

²²⁸ M. Islam, "The Development of Early Muslim Philosophy," 4.

²²⁹ Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden, Belgium: Brill, 2007), 138, 2007, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://0-booksandjournals.brillonline.com.grace.gtu.edu/content/books/9789047420194>.

²³⁰ M. Islam, "The Development of Early Muslim Philosophy," 4.

²³¹ Robinson, "Ash'ariyya and Mu'tazila," 520.

²³² Ibid.

though they are fully determined by external causes.”²³³ To this end he sees that the soul is necessitated in the form of one who chooses freely stating that “its movements are also subject to subjection like natural movement. It depends on purposes and motives, and it is subjected to them, except that the difference between it and natural [movements] is that it perceives its purposes, and nature does not perceive its purposes.”²³⁴ It is interesting that this notion of the perception of freedom will also come up again in the following section on science where humans attribute freedom to their actions even if they are not intentional.

Some commentators on the Asharite school, like Al-Ghazali, assert that secondary causality is possible in this system of divine causes.²³⁵ He writes that the human being is compelled to choose freely: “his being compelled is that all [of his acts] occur in him from outside of him, not from him . . . [and] his freely choosing is that he is a substrate for a will which originates in him.”²³⁶ Yet, as we have seen in the Thomistic notion of secondary causality, the divine causes are not on the same level as the human cause; the divine cause must be considered on a transcendent level and does not diminish the free actions of people. In that way, it would be difficult to comprehend an application of secondary causality, as we understand it, to be coherent in this system; for God puts actions into existence in each particular person and the person acquires those actions as a

²³³ Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*, 139.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ “Human agents are agents of their voluntary actions in a secondary sense, for if God does not create the act and the ability to act, there is not human action. Terminologically, then, one makes a distinction: God’s action is creation, while the voluntary act of a human being is a performance.” Frank, “Moral Obligation in Classical Muslim Theology,” 210.

²³⁶ Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*, 139.

function of the creative power of God. Seemingly, in that way human volition is undermined because the creative power of God is no longer held to a transcendent level and rather seemingly, the Divine cause takes in place in and through human subjects replacing their own volition.

But to end there would be a disservice to the work of Al-Ghazali and a misunderstanding of the Asharite doctrine, for Burrell notes that the metaphysical background which Al-Ghazali was operative in was the *hadith* asserting “that God creates humanity in God’s own image. That assertion introduces an implicit metaphysics of participation, as we have seen and so removes him from the camp of those for whom “God can do whatever God wants.””²³⁷ In that, Al-Ghazali is operating in the same cosmology as Aquinas, Burrell terms this as the “metaphysics of Love”²³⁸ So to understand the nuance between secondary causality in Aquinas and that of Al-Ghazali, Burrell notes that we should consider the notion of *kasb* or the appropriation of “human contribution”²³⁹ to action. Burrell notes that term helps us to differentiate “between the human contribution and God’s: “God creates the act, man acquires it;” in other words, “the act is the act of God insofar as God creates it and the is the act of man insofar as one acquires it.””²⁴⁰ In this manner Burrell offers the nuance of the Ashari doctrine “God is an agent unlike any we know in that God alone can create an act which is not God’s act

²³⁷ David Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Nortre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 65.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., 79.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

but belongs to another. Only the power to *create* can give that “distance” to an agent.”²⁴¹ In this way then we can acknowledge the similarity between what Aquinas is attempting to do in secondary causality and what the Asharari school is attempting to accomplish in *kasb* so that there is an “agency proper to humans whose free actions are *ipso facto* their own and an agency proper to God, who can also create actions which properly belong to God’s creatures, since creating is the act which is the source of all activity.”²⁴²

Moreover, for Al-Ghazali is not possible for one to discover the possibilities of their own freedom without drawing close to God in what Burrell terms as “the program of *Ihya*”²⁴³ or the living of the faith. In this way, through a pious recitation of the name of God, *thikr* and an active life of virtue, a person not only discovers their own potentialities and true freedom, more over one also develops “*dhawq* or taste of things divine, which is self-authenticating because it implies the presence of the real world of the *malakut* (or kingdom of God).”²⁴⁴ In this manner we have come to see that Al-Ghazali understands human freedom not as something which is extrinsic to the interior life and practice of faith, but rather fundamental to it. Here are once again we see the striking similarities and overtones to the Christian understanding of spirituality and the life of grace which we have seen at length.

The question remains, why did this Ashari system become so prevalent in the Sunni world? Abdul Hafeez Fazali in his essay *Islamic view of Omniscience and Human*

²⁴¹ Ibid., 82.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ David Burrell, “The Unknowability of God in Al-Ghazali” *Religious Studies* 23, No. 2 (1987): 178, accessed August 28, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20019207>.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Freedom offers that during the Umayyad rule (661-750) the ruling family suffered the brutal murder of their leader Hazrat Hussein and his companions in the year 680. The murder of their leader would seemingly cause the downfall of the dynasty, and so, they looked for a way of interpreting the death of Hussein in terms of the divine accord. “They were in dire need of some sort of a doctrine that could work as defense for them.”²⁴⁵ The doctrine of pre-destination was the answer to their prayers; while finding meaning for the death of Hussein in the divine cause, it also meant that God had desired for the Umayyads to remain in power. The political motivation, Fazali suggests became the driving force which caused the Asharite doctrine to be adopted and as a result, a severe rejection of the Mutazilite conception as heretical throughout the entire dynasty.

It remains undeniable that the way the Asharite model was understood remained fatalistic. Between the assertion of the divine attributes, the literal reading of the Quranic scripture and the lack of freewill of humanity; the model as it was understood left no room for any cause in the world other than God. In our contemporary context, the Muslim scholar Mohammad Shahrur is one who has sought to bring back human causality to a healthy understanding, away from the Asharite view of causality. We began our discussion on *qadar* by explaining the related term *qada'* and while more and more the two terms became regarded as synonymous in expressing the notion of ‘predestination’ which humanity must accept submissively. Shahrur desires to revise the conflation between the two terms allowing *qada'* to “refer to decisions that are taken, or

²⁴⁵ Abdul Hafeez Fazli, “Islamic View of Omniscience and Human Freedom” *Al-Hikmat* 26 (2006), 22.

‘determined’, by human beings.”²⁴⁶ In this *qadar* characterizes God’s laws in the objective reality of the universe while *qada’* symbolizes the existence of free will in human activities in this world. This concept finds its scriptural root in the passage: “Thy Lord has decreed [qada] that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.”²⁴⁷ Here the decree of God is not one which is causal in the sense of undermining human agency, and rather instructive on how to behave.

He notes that the conflation between *qadar* and *qada’* can be attributed to “the big error that we find in Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Fusus Al-Hikam* where the author announced a ‘unity of worship’, implying that since God had decreed (*qada’*) to ‘worship none but Him’, humans are predestined to do exactly that in whatever manner and regardless of their individual intentions.”²⁴⁸ By asserting the decree of God as *qada’* and not *qadar* human free will is undermined. As a result, Shahrur concludes:

(t)he rules of Islam became an inescapable fate—heedless of what someone actually intended to believe or practice—a determined destiny that releases people from being responsible and in charge of their religious and ethical deeds. Because of Ibn ‘Arabi’s huge influence the verb *qada’* was seen as synonymous with *qadara*, and this has had a disastrous effect on the Arab-Muslim mind.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Muhammad Shahrur and Andreas Christmann, ed. & tr., *The Qur’an, Morality and Critical Reason: The Essential Muhammad Shahrur*, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2009), 169-170.

²⁴⁷ Quran 17:23; Yusuf Ali in his *tafsir* would agree adding nothing materially to what has already been cited. Cf. USC, "The Qur'an," Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, 006.059, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://cmje.usc.edu/religious-texts/quran/>.

²⁴⁸ Shahrur and Christmann, *The Qur’an, Morality and Critical Reason*, 172.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 4: Scientific Determinism

While for centuries the spotlight had been on questions surrounding human freedom in the religious context, namely explaining human freedom considering the divine attributes and divine causality; contemporary concerns have been dealing with similar issues in light of the categories of natural science and the dilemma of material reductionism as we explained in the introduction. Through the influence of a Newtonian worldview, human actions are seen as having been brought about antecedent causes “in such a way that the action *must* follow, given the antecedent conditions. These assumptions are, according to some philosophers, *incompatible* with human freedom.”²⁵⁰ In this section, we will analyze two such trends which have led to the conundrum of determinism in the scientific realm. The first portion looks at this trend found in the work of Charles Darwin and the resulting genetic determinism which is professed by neo-Darwinism and the second in the realm of neuroscience, with the work of Benjamin Libet. In the end, I will try to look at why these considerations of causality in the scientific realm are so difficult to conclude by looking at the work of Alicia Juarrero.

Materialism and the Dilemma of Determinism

John Searle, one of the great philosophical thinkers of our time offered that "there is a sense in which materialism is the religion of our time."²⁵¹ By this assertion, Searle

²⁵⁰ Paul Russell and Oisín Deery, eds., *The Philosophy of Free Will: Essential Readings from the Contemporary Debates* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

²⁵¹ Conor Cunningham, "Trying My Very Best to Believe Darwin, Or, The Supernaturalistic Fallacy: From Is to Nought," *Revista De Estudos Da Religião*, September 2007, 1, accessed August 01, 2018, https://www.pucsp.br/rever/rv3_2007/t_cunningham.pdf.

warns that materialism and the philosophical implications of such a worldview lead us to the proverbial bottom line that all there is moving molecules. We will also see how it is that when an action comes about due to the movement of its constituent parts in the natural world, one cannot truly attribute an action to the self, instead only to antecedent conditions. In this way, many materialists not only dabble with the dilemma of determinism but also, they fiddle with the factor of fatalism where "our deliberations and decisions are causally *ineffective* and make no difference to the course of events."²⁵²

While considering the topic of fatalism in the theological realm, we consider the idea of determinism in the scientific realm. The fundamental difference between the two is a matter of time essentially. As we differentiated earlier on, determinism speaks about causation up until the current moment or action; while fatalism speaks about both past and future things as being determined. The philosopher Richard Holton writes that "people tend to move from a belief in determinism to a belief in fatalism and to an attitude of resignation; for they may be conflating determinism with predictability."²⁵³ These ideas of predictability and repeatability are very important to the scientific enterprise. Yet, Holton warns that the conflation between the two should not be such a nonchalant action, rather he holds "the right response is to distinguish more clearly between determinism and predictability."²⁵⁴

²⁵² Paul Russell "Compatibilist-Fatalism: Finitude, Pessimism, and the Limits of Free Will" in *The Philosophy of Free Will*, Russell and Deery, eds., 451.

²⁵³ Richard Holton, *From Determinism to Resignation and How to Stop It*, Mit, 4, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://web.mit.edu/holton/www/pubs/determinism&fatalism.pdf>.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

Daniel Dennett is one such philosopher who looks at the world and reinterprets traditional philosophical categories in terms of materialism. He offers that "the prevailing wisdom, variously expressed and argued for, is materialism: there is only one sort of stuff, namely matter — the physical stuff of physics, chemistry, and physiology — and the mind is somehow nothing but a physical phenomenon."²⁵⁵ By looking at the natural world as being devoid of all metaphysical properties, the materialist seeks to account for every phenomenon by using the same physical principles, laws, and raw materials in a manner which is always predictable (within a certain amount of error) and always accountable.

Further, materialists view everything else not pertaining to the material world, including our spiritual, mental and conscious life, as illusory. The whole discipline of neuroscience attempts to link or associate the activity of nerve cells with consciousness, as we will see later in this chapter. To this end, materialists like Dennett reinterpret the work of classical philosophers who account for immaterial qualities in the world; offering similar axioms and conclusions they translate classical works into categories which are in line with materialism. The classical work of Descartes on the body and the soul, for example, is reinvented by Dennett and others to rid the system of the immaterial. For Descartes, the soul's seat is located in the pineal gland in the brain,²⁵⁶ the locus where sensory information comes together and where we derive our sense of consciousness.

²⁵⁵ Daniel C. Dennett, "Why Dualism Is Forlorn," in *Consciousness Explained* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and, 1991), 33, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/robert.tierney/phil1301-1/readings/unit-iii/dennett-on-dualism-materialism-and-the-conservation-of-energy-argument>.

²⁵⁶ This idea is found in Descartes' work on *The Passions of the Soul* (1649) where he offers the gland as the principal seat of the soul and the place in which all our thoughts are formed. He also speaks the body/soul makeup of the human person in his work the *Treatise of Man* (1662).

Seeing that Dennett and other materialists would reject ideas such as the soul and consciousness, they hold on to the portions of theory which speak of the material. Here, we return to the Cartesian division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* which had already started paving the way to contemporary determinism. Now, they are simply able to exclude the non-material category of *res cogitans*. In his book *Consciousness Explained*, Dennett offers the following reorganization of the Cartesian ideas: "(l)et's call the idea of such a centered locus in the brain Cartesian materialism, since it is the view you arrive at when you discard Descartes' dualism but fail to discard the imagery of a central (but material) Theater where it "all comes together."²⁵⁷

Accepting material portions of classical philosophy, while rejecting their related metaphysical counterparts ends up causing significant problems not only philosophically but also scientifically. There has been a barrage of issues which have come up due to the insistence on a materialist worldview in our contemporary context. Some of the main issues include the question of mind/body,²⁵⁸ the field of quantum mechanics and the

²⁵⁷ Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 107.

²⁵⁸ The mind-body problem can be framed in the following manner: "It poses the question whether there is not some basic difference between the human body-the target of nature's forces of determinism-and the human mind-the seat of an autonomous free will. The Greeks noted that the physicalist statements we make about peoples' bodies are different in kind from the mentalist statements we make about their thoughts and feelings. But that difference does not necessarily imply that mentalist statements do not refer to some special kind of bodily functions. If mental phenomena, including willing, were nothing other than ordinary bodily functions, a view that came to be known as monism, they would be governed by determinism, and the Paradox of Moral Responsibility could not be resolved. But if mental phenomena were more than, or basically different from ordinary bodily functions, a view that came to be known as dualism, some mental phenomena, especially willing, might not be governed by determinism. In that case, the will could enjoy the freedom, or autonomy of choice, required for the resolution of the Paradox of Moral Responsibility." Stent, "Paradoxes of Free Will," 12.

uncertainty principle of Heisenberg,²⁵⁹ and the field of cosmology with the idea of the Big Bang Theory.²⁶⁰ Clearly, as a result of the ideology of scientism, scientists find it exceedingly difficult to address causality and the existence of non-material categories such as ideas, imagination, purpose, teleology and the established laws of the universe and maybe the biggest of all human freedom.

Determinism resulting from a materialist reduction has seemingly become the standard in empirical world. Science claims, that my sticking to these material categories, it keeps mystery out of living systems and keeps scientists on track in their methodology by avoiding these non-quantifiable categories. This success has led many scientists and philosophers to regard deviations away from determinism as “without base and undermining the entire scientific enterprise.”²⁶¹ In the following chapter, we will see how relevant materialism is to the field of Darwinian evolution and how we ended up getting to where we got. To this end, Tom Bethell will claim that “if materialism is true, then

²⁵⁹ The uncertainty principle formulated by Werner Heisenberg “asserts that there is a certain limit on the accuracy with which position and momentum can be known simultaneously...(As a result of this principle Heisenberg declared) the invalidity of the law of causality is definitively proven by quantum mechanics.” Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 63-65. For further literature see: John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); John C. Polkinghorne, *Quantum World*, (London: Penguin Books, 1986); and Nick Herbert, *Quantum Reality: Beyond the New Physics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987).

²⁶⁰ Contemporary physical cosmology sprang forth from Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. The presence of such a marvelously life sustaining multiverse coming forth from the probability of chance is what most scientists today assert. “It is not surprising that the apparent peculiarities of our universe (famously in terms of the apparent fine tuning of the physical constraints sharpen the desire to find an ‘escape clause’ from the ominous scene of a world designed for our habitation and understanding. It is hardly surprising, therefore, I many scientists believe the best course of action is to appeal to multiverses endlessly generated, with no ultimate beginning and without a conceivable end.” Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 73 foot note 119. For additional literature on Cosmology and Big Bang Theory see: Ian C. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1997), 124-129; George Ellis, *Before the Beginning: Cosmology Explained* (New York, NY: Boyars/Bowerdean, 1993); and William Drees, *Beyond the Big Bang: Quantum Cosmologies and God* (LaSalle, PA: Open Court, 1990).

²⁶¹ Robert Kane, “Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free Will Debates” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Kane, ed., 6.

something very much like Darwinism must be true.”²⁶² In many ways, these ideas of cause and effect, beginning with Darwin, have become the creed to which materialist ascribe.

Darwin & Genetic Determinism

The fundamental question which Darwin deals with in *The Origin of Species* has to do with whether it was possible or not for one species to have descended from another. He points to the considerable variation there is amongst the different species which inhabit the earth and the even more significant amount of similarity. He speaks about two terms - modification and coadaptation - as the method by which a species becomes naturally selected. Natural selection then is the idea that there are "many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence."²⁶³ In the process of modification, those species that have been modified in a way that allows them to survive in a better manner than the others, have been naturally selected. Though not having understood much in the way of heredity, Darwin offers that those modified characteristics within a species would be passed from one generation to the next, through progeny, bringing about an adaptation in the species via propagation.

²⁶² Tom Bethell, ""What Is the World Really Like?" Darwinism, Materialism, and How They Relate," *Evolution News*, 2013, accessed August 01, 2018, https://evolutionnews.org/2013/09/what_is_the_wor/.

²⁶³ Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 78.

These ideas are found and professed in neo-Darwinians,²⁶⁴ but also in the broader realm of evolutionary biology, which rejects the notion that what an individual chooses can overcome a genetic determinism and the trends of evolution which will end up taking species where "it wills."²⁶⁵ The link between biological determinism and Darwin himself is not inherently clear at first glance; for in his view of systems there is a large margin for the causality of chance²⁶⁶ and randomness in his writings. Yet, this is not to be understood in terms which are contradictory to determinism, for he seems to be acknowledging that they appear to have no assignable cause, so he speaks of these variations in terms of randomness. Asa Gray addresses this idea in his essay entitled *Natural Selection not inconsistent with Natural Theology*, where he offers how Darwin's notion of chance variation is not only understood as ignorance of the true cause but more so that variations are due to chance in the sense of the absence of design. To this end he states those who interpret Darwin's findings rend them "incompatible with the idea of any manifestation of design in the universe (in) that it denies final causes."²⁶⁷

If we return to the historical time period when Darwin wrote *On the Origin of the Species*, we will find a related work written by his half-cousin, Francis Galton, entitled

²⁶⁴ We defined neo-Darwinism in the introduction of this paper as a hybrid theory which incorporates Darwin's notion of Natural Selection with Mendel's theory of genetics. All changes or adaptations in this new system are attributed to the causality of chance and seen as a part of the stable structure of nature within evolutionary biology.

²⁶⁵ Kelly C. Smith, "Neo-rationalism versus Neo-Darwinism: Integrating Development and Evolution," *Biology & Philosophy* 7, no. 4 (1992): 431, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1007/bf00130061.

²⁶⁶ "I have hitherto sometimes spoken as if the variations—so common and multiform in organic beings under domestication, and in a lesser degree in those in a state of nature—had been due to chance. This, of course, is a wholly incorrect expression, but it serves to acknowledge plainly our ignorance of the cause of each particular variation." Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 6th ed. (London, England: John R. Murray, 1888), 131.

²⁶⁷ Asa Gray, "Natural Selection not Inconsistent with Natural Theology," *Atlantic Monthly*, July, August, and October (1860): 32.

English men of Science, their nature and their nurture. In it, Galton argued that energetic, smart, successful and even aesthetically inclined people were so gifted as a matter of their biological makeup.²⁶⁸ This later would be used to develop the dangerous science of eugenics where these characteristics would be chosen in people, so as to breed better, more superior human beings. What is pertinent about the work of Galton here, is his underlying conviction that natural selection was determined exclusively by biological heredity. Darwin at a later time seemingly agreed when with these deterministic presuppositions when he writes in *The Descent of Man* “we now know, through the admirable labours of Mr. Galton, that genius...tends to be inherited.”²⁶⁹

It would become exceedingly difficult to separate the work of Darwin from this trend of biological determinism, for based on his work, genetic material is seen as exerting control over the process of evolution and would thereby lead the physical world, directing it into channels of its own choosing. Galton is overtly explicit about the cause for his great reverence for the work of Darwin, which stems not only from the scientific insight which it provides but moreover because of the "freedom Darwin gives us from theological bondage"²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ “The intent of this book is to supply what may be termed a Natural History of the English Men of Science of the present day. It will describe their earliest antecedents, including the hereditary influences, the inborn qualities of their mind and body, the causes that first induced them to pursue science, the education they received and their opinions on its merits.” Francis Galton, *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1874), 1.

²⁶⁹ Charles Darwin, *On the Descent of Man* (New York, NY: D. Appleton &, 1889), 28, accessed August 01, 2018, http://darwin-online.org.uk/converted/pdf/1889_Descent_F969.pdf.

²⁷⁰ Karl Pearson, *The Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton* (London, England: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 201.

When considering classical Darwinism or neo-Darwinism, “scientific explanation(s) had come more and more to mean mechanical explanation(s), so much so that even reference to ‘naturalistic’ explanation(s) could be intended to connote the exclusion of final cause.”²⁷¹ According to David Griffen in his article *Neo-Darwinism and its Religious Implications*, he holds: “Darwin’s acceptance of this ideal meant that no exception could be made for human beings, which implied that “free will. . . fell under his ban” because it would introduce “an element of caprice.”²⁷²

When one ascribes to a system which holds to strict determinism, one cannot escape the premise that the only possibilities found in a system are those which are predictable in nature, or those which stem from chance. Alternative possible courses of action simply do not exist, and the evolutionary process cannot produce beings that genuinely make free choices. In so many ways, the work of Galton and other geneticists seems to take us from one bondage to another, this time, one of biological determinism.

In the work of Timothy Goldsmith, entitled *The Biological Roots of Human Nature*, he poses the hypothetical question: what sort of an effect would freedom of will have on the process of evolution?²⁷³ By doing so, he suggests free will as a purely

²⁷¹ Frederick Gregory, “The Impact of Darwinian Evolution on Protestant Theology,” in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science* David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 370.

²⁷² David Griffen, “Neo-Darwinism and its Religious Implications” in *Back to Darwin: A Richer Account of Evolution*, John Cobb, Jr., ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), accessed August 01, 2018, <http://cornea.berkeley.edu/duality/pubs/drg-neodarw&relig-rev3.pdf>.

²⁷³ “A second impediment to understanding the role of evolution in human behavior is associated with this notion of free will. Evolution, like secular, humanistic philosophies, also calls attention to the emotional as well as the rational side of human nature. For some people, evolution raises the specter of that bugaboo genetic determinism, and determinism is by definition the antithesis of free will. At the risk of evoking a physiologically deterministic metaphor, the association of evolution and human behavior therefore has the

biological trait, one that would impose a competitive disadvantage on those that have it. The characteristic of free will, if it ever arose, would have soon died out, he argues, because being determined or rule-bound would always lead to the same subsequent combination of circumstances.²⁷⁴

Much like a function in mathematical equations, the numbers put in will always produce the same results as an output - without variation. In a behavioral context, this kind of system is the exact antithesis of behavior controlled by free will. Actions resulting from rule-bound systems would be uncaused. Instead, they would be inevitable results of prior causes and effects. This is the position determinists hold. However, by contrast, maintaining a free will means that a person remains capable of transitioning from one state to the next according to actions of the will. Maintaining a free will offers that various possibilities may follow whenever there is an act of the will and that there is technically no rule that allows one to know what to expect.

There is, however, a very practical problem with having free will, from an evolutionary standpoint. The idea of adaptation presented in natural selection means that survival depends on detecting and adapting to the regularities or irregularities of nature. Nature seems to be a random phenomenon to us, despite any predictability in it. At the same time, things manifest themselves in nature according to rules. When we wake up each morning, we do not find that the things of the world have been recombined or

capacity to raise hackles. How is it that we can speak of the evolution of human behavior without denying the existence of free will?" Timothy Goldsmith, *The Biological Roots of Human Nature: Forging Links Between Evolution and Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 94.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Goldsmith, *The Biological Roots of Human Nature*, 95.

rearranged, so that yesterday's learning has become obsolete. Nature at all levels, despite its vast complexity, is replete with patterns and we detect these patterns to anticipate the future by observing how nature acts. With the passing of time, we become better and better at detecting the recurrent patterns in nature to anticipate what happens next. This would be precisely the adaptation which would cause naturally selective advantage by responding to the world around us.

The limitations of what we find when we consider the system of neo-Darwinism and genetic biology are numerous. The first is a problem of predictability; to return back to the work of Richard Holton which we mentioned earlier, we should note that the patterns in nature can be deceptive seeing that nature does not present itself in an entirely predictable manner.²⁷⁵ Secondly, according to this system, the causality of chance not only becomes operative, rather it becomes the hallmark of what is professed: “(p)ure chance, absolutely free but blind, at the very root of the stupendous edifice of evolution: this central concept of modern biology is no longer one among other possible or even conceivable hypotheses. It is today the sole conceivable hypothesis, the only one compatible with observed and tested fact.”²⁷⁶ There is such an emphasis placed on chance because with chance events you don’t speak about the final cause or teleology towards which something is going. Yet Francisco Ayala notes that chance is just one part of the evolutionary process:

²⁷⁵ “We should not just reject predictability because it gives a plausible route to resignation. There is a more direct argument for thinking that, in a world containing reflective beings like ourselves, predictability must be false.” Richard Holton, *From Determinism to Resignation and How to Stop It*, MIT, 5, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://web.mit.edu/holton/www/pubs/determinism&fatalism.pdf>.

²⁷⁶ Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1971), 112-113.

(c)hance is nevertheless, an integral part of the evolutionary process. The mutations that yield the hereditary variations available to natural selection arise at random, independently of whether they are beneficial or harmful to their carriers. But this random process is counteracted by natural selection, which preserved what is useful and eliminates the harmful. Without hereditary mutation, evolution could not happen because there would be no variations that could be differentially conveyed from one to another generation.²⁷⁷

The concept of natural selection in effect does not undermine the category of teleology, rather it necessitates it. To that end considering evolutionary models solely in light of chance would be deficient. Lastly, using these theories which have gone to offer explanations as to the great diversity found in nature, this science tells what is happening at a microscopic level and how it is seen in the world around us. Yet as we have seen, it is exceedingly difficult for us to consider concepts such as human freedom which can only be seen at the level of the human person and not at the microscopic level. Attempts to consider freedom in this kind of a worldview have been very deceptive: for while the laws of nature are seen as prescriptive, a human person with free will is like a system which is not bound by rules living in a system (nature) bound by rules.

Determinism in Neuroscience

In the current field of Neuroscience,²⁷⁸ there is a trend which rejects intentionality by claiming it as a phenomenon which does not go into deliberation prior to an action, rather retrospection after the action has taken place and the seeming feeling that the said action can be attributed to the self. In the spring of 1964 Hans Helmut

²⁷⁷ Francisco Ayala, "Intelligent Design: The Original Version," in *Theology and Science*, 1 (2003): 23-24.

²⁷⁸ Defined in the introduction as a multidisciplinary branch of biology that combines physiology, anatomy, molecular biology, developmental biology, cytology, mathematical modeling and psychology to understand the fundamental and emergent properties of neurons and neural circuits. This study seeks to look at the complex process of learning, memory, behavior, perception and consciousness as a function of the activity of the brain.

Kornhuber, a well-acclaimed physician at a research hospital in Freiburg and Lüder Deecke, his doctoral student “discussed (their) frustration with the passive brain research prevailing worldwide and (their) desire to investigate self-initiated action of the brain and the will.”²⁷⁹ Knowing that through electrical impulses the brain sends signals to the body bringing about a physical response, they decided to look for movement in brain activity in the human subject, related to volitional acts and to take voluntary movement as their research paradigm.

The possibility of studying electrical brain potentials preceding voluntary movements became possible with the advent of the electroencephalogram (EEG). Kornhuber and Deecke discovered a particular pattern of brain activity preceding actual movement by up to 1 second or more. They coined the term Readiness Potential (RP) as the measurement of electric signals in the brain working as precursors to movement. In the 1980's Benjamin Libet went to study pre-motor potential, after having removed constraints on freedom of action where subjects performed a simple flick of the wrist at any time they felt an urge to do so.

In 1983, research was published by a group of scientists headed by Libet who was working at our local institution UCSF. Their research published in *Brain: A Journal of Neurology* entitled “Time of Conscious intention to act in relation to onset of cerebral activity (readiness-potential): the unconscious initiation of a freely voluntary act” measured recordable cerebral activity which precedes a volitional action. They compared

²⁷⁹ Helmut Kornhuber and Luder Deecke, “Readiness for movement – The Bereitschaftspotential-Story” *Current Contents Life Sciences* 33 (1990): 14.

the recordable time of cerebral activity with the reportable time of intending to act. By taking three measurements from each of the subjects, at each initiated event: the time of action, the time of preparation for that action in the brain as measured by EEG and third, the awareness of that action as reported by the subjects themselves.

At first, they obtained data through 6 experimental sessions each session having five subjects. In these sessions, the command to action was one which was exterior to the subject. In the second series of sessions, the command to act was self-initiated involving what we would consider pre-planning. Subjects were asked to flex their wrists at will while noting their urge to move by observing a specially adapted clock. While subjects were flexing their wrists and noting their urges, Libet and his team used an EEG to record the brain activity, especially that in the pre-frontal motor cortex. Test subjects were able to distinguish between awareness in wanting to move from awareness of actually moving. As predicted, awareness from wanting to move was consistently in advance of awareness of actually moving. However, what was surprising was that data showed that the reported time of conscious intention to act did not precede the onset of cerebral activity. Instead, a readiness potential was measured some 350 milliseconds before participants became aware of their intention to act.

These results, which indicated that intentionality was something that came after the beginning of unconscious preparation by the brain, highlighted the point that cerebral initiation of voluntary actions begins unconsciously, before having a subjective awareness of any decision which had been made. Libet and others touted these results as shedding a shadow of doubt upon previously conceived notions regarding the dynamic of

free will. While Libet himself did not ascribe to the complete negation of freedom of will, he noted that the conscious will appears some 150 milliseconds before the activation of muscles, allowing “enough time in which the conscious function might affect the final outcome of the volitional process.”²⁸⁰ Libet would continue to say that the effect of a conscious action is not then on initiation of cerebral activity but instead on what he called “veto possibility” or the ability of the human person to stop him/her self from doing something. To this end, he noted that there was only room for a so-called “free won’t” where subjects were able to exert a veto of an action which had already been prepared in the brain within the interval of 100 to 200 milliseconds before the moment of action.

These results have brought about a huge number of responses questioning the long-standing notions of intentionality and agency. They formulate conclusions about how goal pursuit and voluntary action take place in the human mind; without conscious awareness and that conscious actions have unconscious origins. “Although people may have the feeling that their behavior is the result of their conscious decisions, their goal pursuits too are often directed by external sources of which they are not conscious.”²⁸¹

Classically, the idea in science was that there was some flexibility on the level of the human person to set goals and develop intentionality in specific areas; on the mind's ability to build and store mental representations of goals. These goal representations would then function as beacons for behavior, motivating action and guiding its course.

²⁸⁰ Benjamin Libet “Neuroscience and Free Will” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Kane, ed., 556.

²⁸¹ Ruud Custers and Henk Aarts, “The Unconscious Will: How the Pursuit of Goals Operates Outside of Conscious Awareness” *Science* 329, no. 5987 (2010): 47.

Due to this study and others in the field, the classical ideas of intentionality, human agency and consciousness have been brought into question so that the processes involved in goal pursuit have been reduced down to a few electrochemical actions in the brain with input from the perceptual, sensory and motor activities of the body where "the mere activation of the idea of a behavior act or outcomes moves and programs the human body without a conscious decision to act."²⁸² In that the idea of intentionality is seemingly undermined; conscious deliberation and the basis of human freedom, as we discussed it in chapter one, has seemingly become a notion that can be applied only after the initiation of an action has taken place and seemingly allows us to do no more than to veto an action in act of "free won't". To this end, Guenther Stent notes:

(While) it ought to be feasible to ascertain by neurobiological studies of the human brain whether peoples' will is subject to the natural laws of causal determination, or whether, by any chance, it happens to be independent of them. Thus far, neurobiological studies of the brain leave no doubt that its overall function, just as the overall function of the rest of the human body, is governed by the laws of physics and chemistry. But these studies have not yet managed to fathom in detail the mechanisms of many important mental phenomena (including willing).²⁸³

The question we must now ask is, are we coming to the right conclusion when we reduce the volitional process in this way? Can we safely say that goals are initiated unconsciously and that free will as we know it (as the process of contemplation and intentionality which leads to a deliberate action) is undermined? Can we discount human agency at the flick of a wrist?

²⁸² Custers and Aarts, "The Unconscious Will," 49.

²⁸³ Stent, "Paradoxes of Free Will," 12.

Juarrero's Blink and Wink Argument

To address some of the questions posed above, and to help us correlate some of the scientific and theological categories, we will turn to the work of Alicia Juarrero who in the introduction to her work *Dynamics in Action*, addresses the question of intentionality by posing the question: was it a blink or a wink? By doing so, she helps to shed some light on the underlying question of intentionality where she notes that while “we are not responsible and cannot be held accountable for blinking...winking on the other hand, is something we “do”.”²⁸⁴ By distinguishing between intentional and unintentional actions, she looks at the person as an agent who initiates activities within one's self and which in turn is subject to being qualified as moral or immoral. While reflexes are amoral she notes, it is necessary for us to know the difference between action and non-action, a topic found in the philosophical realm of action theory. This study takes into consideration not only responsibility as stated above, but also awareness of that responsibility. This is the aspect of her work in which we find particular interest.

She points out the how convoluted the problems of intentionality and causality are because whether in the realm of science or philosophy "the same body and the same neurological system are involved whether I wink or blink."²⁸⁵ To this end, not only does she take time to highlight Aristotle's four causes: final cause (the goal or purpose toward which something aims), formal cause (that which makes anything that sort of thing and no other), material cause (the stuff out of which it is made), and efficient

²⁸⁴ Alicia Juarrero, *Dynamics in Action: Intentional Behavior as a Complex System* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 1.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

cause (the force that brings the thing into being) but she also focuses on the immanent premise that nothing, can move, cause, or act on itself in the same respect.²⁸⁶ She further notes that contemporary causal theories of action have consistently adhered to Aristotle's axiom and to this end, "intentions, volitions, and other alleged causes of action are supposed to be other than the behavior they cause."²⁸⁷ Going beyond Aristotle, she notes that the Newtonian understanding of the efficient cause, somewhat haphazardly assumes that intentions, volitions, or agents cause actions to flow in linear fashions, or as she puts it, the way that pool cue causes a cue ball to move.

With the passage of time, the manner in which Philosophy has considered causality has not gotten any more mature. She notes that even in a modern philosophical understanding of causality:

there is no reason to continue to subscribe to (an) atemporal and acontextual approach. The conceptual framework of the theory of complex adaptive systems can serve as a "theory-constitutive metaphor" that permits a reconceptualization of cause, and in consequence a rethinking of action. A different logic of explanation—one more suitable to all historical, contextually embedded processes, including action—arises from of this radical revision.²⁸⁸

In this, she proposes that action theories take a dynamic approach by considering intentional behavior as a complex system. When we cannot easily point out the difference between a wink and a blink, we should consider that there is a lot more to it than we make it out to be. In that light, Juarrero calls us to be cautious of the interpretations and

²⁸⁶ "So it is clear that in all these cases the thing does not move itself, but it contains within itself the source of motion—not of moving something or of causing motion, but of suffering it." Aristotle, *Physics*, 8.4; 255b 29-31.

²⁸⁷ Alicia Juarrero, "Dynamics in Action: Intentional Behavior as a Complex System" *Emergence* 2, no. 2 (2002): 25.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

considerations which are made resulting from scientific inquiry without any context.

According to her understanding of scientific interpretation, not only must we take into consideration the complexity of the system, the singularity of the organs producing the same effect but also the intentionality behind it all:

Narrative, interpretive, and historical explanations of action thus require an expanded appreciation of what counts as “reason” and “explanation,” for they explain, not by subsuming an explanation under a generalization and thereby predicting it, as modern philosophy would require, but rather by providing insight into and understanding of what actually happened. They do so by supplying a rich description of the precise, detailed path that the agent took, including the temporal and spatial dynamics (both physical and cultural) in which the agent was embedded and in which the action occurred.²⁸⁹

While not offering to us an understanding of human subjectivity, Juarrero seems to be doing the important work of reminding us that when we speak about the world and the living processes in it, we cannot adopt reductionist models and still come to a complete understanding. Rather, we must adapt theories where "the meaning of a complete text is constructed from the relationships among the individual passages"²⁹⁰ and where results are interpreted, "not by subsuming an explanation under a generalization and thereby predicting it... but rather by providing insight into an understanding of what actually happened."²⁹¹ Rather than adopting the reductionist model which according to Juarrero is not sufficient to explain the complexities of what happens in the living systems, she notes that the human person remains free by virtue of the sheer number of the nexus of dimensions of action and operations at work. “In humans, there emerges both the

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 28.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

remarkable capacity for self-awareness and the sophisticated ability to think of, describe, judge, and act in terms of the meaningfulness of our choices... (t)he astounding number of dimensions provides a second sense in which human beings are free.”²⁹²

Conclusion

The assertions which Origen and Aquinas have made in regards to personal agency are very pertinent to help us rediscover not only a healthy conception of divine causality but also offer a response to many of the obstacles which we have seen in this paper which come from modern science. The ideas of the justice of God which we have highlighted help us to understand that as creatures endowed with an ability to act in a certain way we are not only responsible for our actions but more importantly that our actions are rooted in an ability to cooperate with the divine will. This concept of cooperation helps us to regain an understanding that the divine cause is not one which works against us; rather it enlightens our mind, it strengthens our resolve to do good and it allows us to work towards perfection. To bring the ideas of how the divine attributes are operative in the world, allow us to offer some conclusions on omniscience and omnipotence.

Divine Omniscience

Of all the divine attributes, we have seen how it is that omniscience presented a threat to human freedom in that “if God knows the entire future in a way that cannot be mistaken, then it looks as if nothing can happen differently that it does. If so, and if

²⁹² Ibid., 47.

human freedom requires the ability to do otherwise, it appears that we are not free.”²⁹³

Aquinas will build upon the work of Origen to note that we cannot consider the

knowledge of God without considering the divine will.²⁹⁴ was going to explain

omniscience. In this light, a good and thorough definition of divine omniscience is found

here:

God is omniscient or possesses the most perfect knowledge of all things, (which) follows from His infinite perfection. In the first place He knows and comprehends Himself fully and adequately, and in the next place He knows all created objects and comprehends their finite and contingent mode of being. Hence, He knows them individually or singularly in their finite multiplicity, knows everything possible as well as actual; knows what is bad as well as what is good. Everything, in a word, which to our finite minds signifies perfection and completeness of knowledge may be predicated of Divine omniscience, and it is further to be observed that it is on Himself alone that God depends for His knowledge. To make Him in any way dependent on creatures for knowledge of created objects would destroy His infinite perfection and supremacy.²⁹⁵

We have seen that in looking back from the current moment and considering the foreknowledge of God, it is seemingly difficult for us to get away from the idea of how it is that anything can happen differently than how God had already known it to be. This prior knowledge makes it seem that because God already knew *that* something would happen and presumably *how* it would come to be, it would be exceedingly difficult for us to claim that we are truly free in our own actions. At face value, if we consider that the

²⁹³ Linda Zagzebski, “Recent work on Divine Foreknowledge and Freewill” in *The Oxford Handbook*, Kane, ed., 45.

²⁹⁴ “Aquinas cites Origen, who had claimed that God knows future events because they are future and not that they are future because he foreknows them. In response to this, Aquinas says: ‘Origen spoke in reference to that aspect of knowledge to which the idea of causality does not belong unless the will is joined to it.’ And this last admission is crucial, for if there are such things as free acts (as defined earlier), God’s will is not joined to his knowledge in these cases. It may or may not be true, as Aquinas would claim, that God’s foreknowledge causes certain sorts of future events to occur - viz. those that are also predetermined or caused by God’s will.” Stephen Davis, “Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom” *Religious Studies* 15, no. 3 (1979): 314.

²⁹⁵ Dave Armstrong, "God Is Immutable & Outside of Time (De Fide Dogma)," Patheos, January 04, 2017, accessed August 01, 2018, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/davearmstrong/2017/01/god-immutable-outside-time-de-fide-dogma.html#>.

knowledge of God is perfect, which is the prerequisite difference between our knowledge and God's knowledge, "humans never have the ability to act other than they do"²⁹⁶ because God is seemingly always one step ahead by having this prior knowledge. Both Aquinas and the Mutazilites will assert the atemporal nature of God's knowledge²⁹⁷ as a solution to this and in this light the knowledge of God no longer stands in the way of personal agency.

Divine Omnipotence

While the attribute of omnipotence²⁹⁸ in God is the power: which goes to bring about all things in the created and uncreated realms, is eternal and universal, and is unlimited and absolute in nature requiring that "nothing happens contrary to the Divine will."²⁹⁹ Regarding the Catholic understanding of omnipotence, it is necessary for us to ascribe to belief in God who has the power to do anything and everything, short of evil. "Of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed...(w)e believe that his might is universal, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything."³⁰⁰ Considering divine omnipotence we look at how it is that everything came into being from nothing³⁰¹ and how it is that it all is sustained. These

²⁹⁶ Kane, *The Oxford Handbook*, 76.

²⁹⁷ See footnotes 42 and 196 above.

²⁹⁸ Regarding the omnipotence of God, the terms providence of God and will of God are also used interchangeably in various scholarship. While there is a distinction in the terms, Aquinas asserts that providence, pertains primarily to the intellect of God, though it implies also will. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.22, a.1, ad.3 urn.

²⁹⁹ Ward, *Divine Action: Examining God's Role in an Open and Emergent Universe*, 22.

³⁰⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd. Ed. (Washington, D.C: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 268.

³⁰¹ Lateran IV Professed a God: "who by His own omnipotent power at once from the beginning of time created each creature from nothing, spiritual, and corporal, namely, angelic and mundane, and finally the

ideas are very well developed in Scripture and later scholastic Catholic theology will apply reason³⁰² to defend them.

We have seen a series of difficulties which we encounter when we consider divine omnipotence. The issue which holds the place of prevalence is the question of evil and suffering in the world, known as theodicy. The question arises: if God is all powerful, why does evil exist? By making omnipotence and the existence of evil mutually exclusive, you end in a quagmire that goes something like this: “God's omnipotence together with His perfect goodness jointly entail that evil does not exist: for if God is omnipotent He is able to eliminate all evil, and if He is perfectly good He eliminates as much evil as is within His power to eliminate; yet evil exists, so God does not.”³⁰³

While the theodicy question is not something which we will grapple with here, G. W. Leibniz in his book³⁰⁴ not only deals with the issue of evil but also with the

human, constituted as it were, alike of the spirit and the body.” Heinrich Denzinger and Roy Deferrari, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (1957), 428.

³⁰² St Thomas Aquinas will argue for the Omnipotence of God from reason: “Since every agent produces an effect similar to itself, to every active power there must correspond as proper object, a category of possibilities proportioned to the cause possessing that power, e.g. the power of heating has for its proper object that which can be heated. Now Divine Being, which is the basis of Divine power, is infinite, not being limited to any category of being but containing within itself the perfection of all being. Consequently, all that can be considered as being is contained among the absolute possibilities with respect to which God is omnipotent.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.25, a.3.

From the Documents of Vatican 1 on the Content of our Faith in a section entitled a faith consonant with reason: “God has willed that to the internal aids of the Holy Spirit there should be joined external proofs of His revelation, namely: divine facts, especially miracles and prophecies which, because they clearly show forth the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain signs of a divine revelation, and are suited to the intelligence of all.” Heinrich Denzinger and Roy Deferrari, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (1957), 1790.

³⁰³ Neal Judisch, "Theological Determinism and the Problem of Evil," *Religious Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008): 165, accessed August 01, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27749947>.

³⁰⁴ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Austin Farrer, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985), 58, 2005, accessed August 01, 2018, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17147/17147-h/17147-h.htm>.

fundamental difficulties that arise in the notion of an omnipotent God, when considering humanity endowed with a free will. He states that at times, we have ascribed to God actions which on the one hand maintained his divine power, while on the other “renounced the dogma which recognizes God's justice and goodness.”³⁰⁵ As we have seen, both Origen and the Mutazilites are adamant about asserting the justice of God as a solution.

It is no easy feat to speak about the dynamic of our own abilities (being that they are temporal, limited, sinful) and at the same time still acknowledging the qualities of an omnipotent God. St. Thomas Aquinas acknowledges this difficulty of attributing a cause to a human agent while regarding omnipotence and omniscience of God in the *Commentary on Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias*, where he states the problem:

if Divine Providence is the per se cause of everything that happens in this world, at least of good things, it would look as though everything takes place of necessity: first on the part of His knowledge, for His knowledge cannot be fallible, and so it would seem that what He knows happens necessarily; secondly, on the part of the will, for the will of God cannot be inefficacious; it would seem, therefore, that everything He wills happens of necessity.³⁰⁶

Through the mechanism of secondary causality, we have seen how Aquinas offers a solution to the conundrum where the divine power of God does not undermine personal agency and where the actions of man are attributable completely to God and completely to human agent. In this manner Aquinas offers that human volition and divine will are compatible with each other.

³⁰⁵ Leibniz and Farrer, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God*, 58.

³⁰⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Peri Hermeneias*, I, 14.17.

The compatibility or incompatibility of freedom of will and the type of causality in each of these worldviews discussed in chapter 1 (fatalism, determinism, and indeterminism) in light of scientific discovery is something which has gained a great amount of attention in our contemporary context. While regarding fatalism, it is rather easy for us to see that there is no relative freedom in the human agent. Regarding indeterminism, the causality of chance makes the categories outside of our deliberative choice. However, the real analysis lies in the question of determinism and how it can interact with freedom of will. In following, we will go over the main points of compatibilism and incompatibilism for our understanding of the free will debate to be concluded properly in this paper.

Compatibilism

In many ways, determinism is a lot like fatalism where we can say “whatever happens *must* happen”³⁰⁷ due to the necessity of the causes which bring actions into being, however, we have seen that the *must* in fatalism is different from the *must* in determinism. Determinism takes into consideration the ways in which systems work, like the laws of nature and like mathematical equations. In determinism those laws are operative, and it is accepted that humans do not have the ability to violate those laws. However, there are those actions in human volition which do not violate to the laws of nature and which still substantiate a change in the natural world. In such cases free will

³⁰⁷ The discussion on Determinism, and its distinction from fatalism is being paraphrased from Mark Bernstein, "Fatalism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Kane, ed., 101.

could conceptually be compatible with determinism, this is the view called *compatibilism*.³⁰⁸

According to this thought, if one ascribes to determinism to say that things are not “up to us” when we can choose from an array of various possibilities, even if only one alternative would be possible, it means that determinism does not preclude free will. Secondly, the origin or source of our choices and actions is in the agent as such, the choice of the agent serves as the antecedent cause of the choice which fulfills the requirement for something to be determined. The Scottish philosopher David Hume is one of the best-known compatibilists,³⁰⁹ his work can offer us some insight into this thought.

By liberty, then, we can only mean a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will; this is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may. Now, this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to everyone who is not a prisoner and in chains.³¹⁰

Hume maintains the liberty of a person who chooses to act or not. He explains that those choices are caused by the agent's will. For an action to be considered free, the agent should consider the question: could I have done otherwise, had I wanted to? In the quote, Hume also shows that the lack of an action is the suggestion of freedom in the agent. An example of an action which would be considered lacking freedom, for Hume, is in the case of the agent who is restrained against his/her own will (i.e., a prisoner in

³⁰⁸ Bernard Berofsky, “Ifs, Cans and Free Will: The Issues” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Kane, ed., 181.

³⁰⁹ Other well-known compatibilists include Thomas Hobbes, John Stuart Mill, and St. Thomas Aquinas.

³¹⁰ David Hume and David Hume, “Of Liberty and Necessity,” in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Adelaide, Australia: P.F. Collier & Son, 2015), accessed August 01, 2018, <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/h/hume/david/h92e/chapter8.html>.

chains). This compatibilism is rather practical for in the real world, we are held responsible for our actions, and we can determine the causes of the things we have done as being proper to ourselves. In short, by explaining the importance of human action, a compatibilist makes room for freedom in a world of causes. There is, therefore, no incompatibility between an action being causally necessitated and it being a free action for which the agent is responsible.³¹¹

Harry Frankfurt is a compatibilist who holds that an agent could be morally responsible for things he/she does even when he could not have done otherwise.³¹² This idea takes into consideration not only end result actions, but our intentionality going into that action. In this light, Frankfurt holds that a subject is responsible for things they do if it was originally in their *intention* to do the same thing that they actually did. For him, our intentionality stems from "the capacity for reflective self-evaluation that is manifested in the formation of second-order desires."³¹³ This ability of second-order desire found in the human intellect, means that we go beyond "doing" or "not doing" as in Hume, to ask the fundamental question which has to do with the internal forum of the person: was what I did what I wanted to do or not? He continues: "it is only because a person has volitions of the second order that he is capable both of enjoying and of lacking freedom of the

³¹¹ Bernard Berofsky, "Ifs, Cans and Free Will: The Issues" *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Kane, ed., 181.

³¹² Cf. Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 1 (1971), accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.2307/2024717.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

will.”³¹⁴ Responsibility then stems from the intentionality that one has and only secondarily to the act chosen.

Some compatibilists hold that in cases where we are unable to differentiate between internal and external causes, rather it is merely necessary for us to say that our actions are, more or less free. Just how free we are, depends on a complex matrix of internal factors (as we saw with Frankfurt) and how they are influencing us, external factors (as we saw with Hume) and how much control they exert on us. In the end, it is too tangled a web for us to follow causality to one single point; hence, they would posit that we are more or less free. This position, held by the modern philosopher Patricia Churchland³¹⁵ amongst others,³¹⁶ and is called *hypothetical liberty*. For her, the “nature of self-control and the ways it can be compromised may be a more fruitful avenue”³¹⁷ than looking at internal or external forces on the will. By changing the categories, she opens up the possibility of freedom in a natural world and underscores the importance of human responsibility.³¹⁸

She held that posing the question, "am I free?" is wrong. Rather she posits asking the question, "how much control do I have?". The more control we have, the more responsibility we have. This view allows us to incorporate what we know in the

³¹⁴ Ibid., 14.

³¹⁵ Cf. Patricia Churchland, "Do We Have Free Will?" *New Scientist* 192, no. 2578 (2006): 42-45, accessed August 01, 2018, doi:10.1016/s0262-4079(06)61107-x.

³¹⁶ Most notably is the philosopher David Hume who is recognized having had provided some of the most influential arguments for the compatibilist position in the free will debate. Like, Churchland, Hume holds the view that freedom and moral responsibility can be reconciled with determinism.

³¹⁷ Churchland, "Do We Have Free Will?," 43.

³¹⁸ "I suggest that free will, as traditionally understood, needs modification. Because of its importance in society, any description of free will updated to fit what we know about the nervous system must also reflect our social need for a working concept of responsibility." Churchland, "Do We Have Free Will?," 43.

deterministic nature of the universe and the subjective experience of freedom which we all live. The key to acting freely is then, control.

Essentially in a Catholic understanding of intentionality, we do not have to reject neither the principles of evolution, as we saw in Darwinism, nor the unconscious initiation of conscious actions, as we saw in Neuroscience, in order for us to maintain freedom of will. Rather, as we have seen throughout this project, Divine causality and created causality differ not only in kind but also in degree. Aquinas calls God “the cause hidden from every human being”³¹⁹ as he both transcends all of creation and is immanently present in it. In this way, we can say that humanity’s actions reach their summit when they are directed towards God. “The effect of divine providence is not only that things should happen somehow, but that they should happen either by necessity or by contingency. Therefore, whatsoever divine providence ordains to happen infallibly and of necessity happens infallibly and of necessity; and that happens from contingency, which the divine providence conceives to happen from contingency.”³²⁰

By applying a reductionist system, scientists and the philosophers which base their conclusions on them, deviate from what can empirically be demonstrated by science. Aquinas and other theologians help us to understand the true context of intentionality and human action as being active in both contingent and guided systems. In the end, a divine causality must not exclude contingency and emergence. As Aquinas

³¹⁹ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, 101.1.

³²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.22,a.4, ad1.

offers, the causality of God,³²¹ the first cause, gives to humanity a participation in existence and in turn humanity must likewise be subject to divine providence for him to find fulfillment in all that is.

To speak of Divine action, we need not discount the advancement which science brings us, rather we must embrace it. However, we must be careful to accept the results of the scientific endeavor so long as they too are not pinned within the ideological system which discounts God. To this end, Keith Ward offers that “Divine action is, thus, not occasional interference in the laws of nature. It is continuous with natural processes, present throughout the whole cosmos and entirely compatible with our mathematical descriptions of physical behavior – which, accordingly, must be rather looser and more flexible than some Newtonian physicists thought.”³²²

Origen points to progress in society as being one of the main indications to the presence of human agency and the necessity of freedom of will. In our contemporary context we seemingly see no contention to this point, for even the staunchest of determinists point to what they term as the need for the attribution of “some originitive value”³²³ to the unique accomplishments which each person makes to the world. At the most fundamental level, both scientists and theologians realize that without any ability to attribute actions to the one who accomplished them, not only is progress impossible, our existence is in vain. “All that we require is the knowledge that without our presence, the

³²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.22, a.2.

³²² Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action*, 157.

³²³ Kane, ed., *Oxford handbook of Free Will*, 273.

universe would have turned out significantly different.”³²⁴ This is something we can mutually agree on.

Incompatibilism

While trying to make the seeming dichotomy of causal determinism and free will compatible continues to be a challenging feat, it seems that the notion of their incompatibility will be much easier to show. Summarizing³²⁵ the issue of the incompatibility of determinism and freedom of will, we must return to the two operative assertions regarding willful choice. The first is that for an agent to choose he/she must have more than one possibility to choose from. The second is that the origin or source of an action resulting from a choice must be located in the agent and not something outside of him/her. Most of the arguments for the incompatibility of free will and determinism are rooted in the first assertion. The *consequence argument* says that since determinism necessitates the presence of antecedent causes, as a consequence it seemingly “is not compatible with alternative possibilities.”³²⁶

Peter van Inwagen is a champion of this position, for he holds:

If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But 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. Therefore, the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us.³²⁷

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ I am following the logic of Robert Kane found in the Introduction to the *Oxford handbook of Free Will*, Kane, ed., 10.

³²⁶ Robert Kane, “Introduction” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, Kane, ed., 11.

³²⁷ Peter Van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 2000), 16.

The consequence argument distinguishes between the past and the present as in cause and effect; it can be considered the direction of causation. Unlike in fatalism, the future is open whereas the past is fixed and unalterable. However, the difficulty remains in what an agent receives as possible choices, for returning to the first assertion, a choice is only considered to be free if there are alternative possibilities and causal determinism remains as a tricky proposition to be reconciled with. The incompatibilist will then assert “that the truth of determinism entails the non-existence of free will: that there is no possible world where determinism is true, and someone has free will.”³²⁸

Closing remarks

Returning to Origen. I would like to conclude by asserting his notion of progress which is the result of cooperation with the divine will. As we have seen, Origen often critiqued the Greek notion surrounding the nature similitude between God and men. “When God created humanity, he did not create him the same, rather he gives him the existence of being different and calls them to live with his divinity.”³²⁹ The ontological difference between the man and his creator not only allows for the divinization of man, but moreover it allows humanity to encounter one another in a way that is truly human. Origen tells us according to the tradition of Rufinius (in his First Homily on Samuel) that humanity by virtue of having a created nature “God calls man into his communion.”³³⁰

Communion is established not only in the divine accord, but in the human discovery that God desires a humanity which resemble him. “By keeping his commandments (humanity)

³²⁸ Kadri Vihvelin, “Compatibilism, Incompatibilism and Impossibilism” in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, Theodore Seder, et. al., eds. (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 303.

³²⁹ Georgios Lekkas, *Liberté Et Progrès Chez Origène* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002), 59.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

participates in the same intelligible and common light which is God”³³¹ and in that, they find fulfillment in their own actions. As was said previously, Origen held that primitive man was created neither totally perfect nor totally imperfect.³³² The role of God then was brought about “in some way because of his (humanity’s) transgression, and was in need of one to perfect him from his imperfection.”³³³ The work of Jesus then is to perfect the imperfection in humanity by persuading them through reason to live a life that is upright and to seek the ultimate good.

Origen will continue on this theme of the development of goodness and progress in the spiritual life where he asserts that rational creatures “were endowed with the power of free-will, this freedom of will incited each one either to progress by imitation of God or reduced him to failure through negligence. And this, as we have already stated, is the cause of the diversity among rational creatures, deriving its origin not from the will or judgment of the Creator, but from the freedom of the individual will.”³³⁴ Freedom of will is not then something which brought about the fall, rather it is the gift given to humanity into order for them to progress in their participation with God. A person realizes the potential that lies in themselves not only in how they were created but rather and more importantly in how they end up. The possibility of perfection which was given at the outset of creation is also the goal towards which we strive in our efforts towards God. This signifies that the development of the person according to the image of God, is not just a natural property which we have passively received, it is rather the goal towards which we ought to strive.

³³¹ Ibid., 62.

³³² This is found in Origen’s commentary on St. John where he says “the rational creature was not altogether imperfect at the time he was placed in paradise” Origen, *Commentary on St. John*, XIII.239.

³³³ Origen, *Commentary on St. John*, XIII.241.

³³⁴ Origen, *De Principiis*, 2.9.6.

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