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# CAN GOD CHANGE HIS MIND?

Theodore Guleserian

A temporal perfect being is best conceived of as having essentially *the power* to change his mind—even from doing a morally right act to doing one that is morally wrong. For, this power allows him to increase his moral worth by *constantly refraining* from changing his intentions to do the right thing. Such a being could not possess the power to form an *unalterable* intention to do the right thing. Could an omnipotent, omniscient being have this power to change his mind and yet know what his future intentions will be? Four arguments that imply a negative answer are considered and rebutted.

Freedom comes in two kinds or grades. The first grade is the freedom, i.e., the ability or the power, to choose effectively between doing an act and not doing it. The second grade is the power to change one's mind about doing an act; having already formed an intention to perform (or refrain from performing) a certain act, the possessor of freedom of the second grade has the power to form an effective contrary intention. *Moral* freedom perforce also comes in two grades. The first is the power to choose between right and wrong, and includes the power to do an act when it is morally obligatory and the power to refrain from doing that act when it is morally obligatory. The second grade of moral freedom is the power to change one's mind about doing a moral act, i.e., a change from right to wrong or wrong to right.

I have argued elsewhere that the conception of God that best captures the assumptions made by the ordinary western religious person in the act of worship is a conception according to which, like ourselves, God has moral freedom of the first grade: he has the power to choose effectively between right and wrong, and hence the power to perform a morally wrong act.<sup>1</sup> Here, my intent is to defend the unusual (and, perhaps to some religious philosophers, the repugnant) view that, like human moral agents, a divine moral agent may plausibly be conceived also to have essentially the second grade of moral freedom: God can change his mind about doing a moral act.

Let us say that a theist who denies that God has any grade of moral freedom has an amoral conception of divinity. One who affirms that God has either or both grades of moral freedom has a moral conception. Actually, each position bifurcates into two versions—one that states that



God exists atemporally and another that has God existing in time. We shall direct our attention to the two rival temporal versions, since any atemporal view automatically rules out freedom of the second grade. What we shall hereafter call the 'Anselmian' position, then, states that in addition to lacking the power to perform a morally wrong act, God, though he exists in time, cannot change his mind. He does not have the power to form an intention and thereafter form a contrary intention. Such powers, which may be viewed as valuable in humans, would be viewed as defects in a divine being. The nonAnselmian position bifurcates into two versions on this point. One asserts that although God has the first grade of freedom, which includes the power to perform morally wrong acts, he does not have the second grade of freedom—the power to change his mind. The other version has God being not only essentially free with respect to all his acts and morally perfect but also in possession of the power to change his mind. According to this view, it is better to conceive of God as a being who never actually changes his mind, and surely never *needs* to, but who does have *the power* to change his mind; and this power is an excellence and a prerequisite for an excellence—it is part of his omnipotence or almightiness. Hereafter, I shall use the term 'nonAnselmian' to refer exclusively to this last position, which attributes both grades of freedom, including both grades of moral freedom, to God. I introduce the term 'nonAnselmian' with the caveat that both the Anselmian *and* the nonAnselmian conceptions are offered as conceptions of the most perfect (or greatest) being possible. And both positions agree in taking some sort of omniscience and some sort of omnipotence to be essential attributes of God.

In this paper I am interested in exploring a specific version of the nonAnselmian position, namely, one that allows that God's omniscience includes knowledge of all events in God's future, including both human and divine acts of free will. The basic thesis—that God is best conceived of as having the power to change his mind because having that power is an excellence and a prerequisite for an excellence—certainly does not *require* this unrestricted view of omniscience, but I am interested in defending both the basic thesis and its compatibility with this view of divine omniscience. Unrestricted omniscience has been under attack in recent years, and I have no hope of defending it here from all of the extant arguments against it.<sup>2</sup> Nor am I certain that in the end it is defensible. I want to argue, however, that even unrestricted omniscience is compatible with the basic thesis. (Restricting omniscience so as to exclude knowledge of future free acts makes it easier to argue for the compatibility.) I have chosen to rebut in section II three recently published arguments, and one unpublished argument, all of which assume the unrestricted view of omniscience—as a way of elucidating my secondary thesis of compatibility. Section III contains my argument for the basic thesis just stated. But first, I want to draw attention to certain facets of the second grade of moral freedom, including the logical relationships between the second grade and the first.

## I

Suppose that I am free at time  $t_1$  with respect to doing a particular act, say, taking a bribe from a certain student at time  $t_5$ . What follows from that? One thing that follows is that at some time from  $t_1$  through  $t_5$  I can form the intention to take the bribe at  $t_5$  *regardless of whatever intentions I have formed in the past*. Suppose, then, that I have formed an intention at time  $t_0$  *never* to take a bribe from a student or anyone else. Since I can still freely take a bribe at  $t_5$ , no such intention never to take a bribe, formed at  $t_0$  or any prior time, can prevent me from freely taking the bribe at  $t_5$ . In short, I can *change my mind*.

Suppose, then, that at  $t_0$  I freely formed the intention never to take a bribe, at  $t_1$  I freely formed the intention to take the student's bribe at  $t_5$ , and at  $t_5$  I freely took the bribe. Are these suppositions somehow incompatible with each other? In supposing that at  $t_0$  I freely formed the intention never to take a bribe and that it would be morally wrong of me ever to take a student's bribe, we are assuming that at  $t_0$  I had *the power* never to take such a bribe. I *apparently* exercised that power at  $t_0$  by forming the intention never to take a bribe. Yet I took the bribe at  $t_5$ . Does my taking the bribe show that at  $t_0$  I really did not have the power never to take a bribe? Certainly not. What it shows is that the power to do act A is not simply a power such that if I should intend to do A I would do A. The power to do act A is not something which necessarily makes the performance of act A inevitable, even when the relevant intention has been formed. Rather, the power to do act A is (putting it very crudely<sup>3</sup>) the power such that if one should intend to do A *and not form an effective contrary intention prior to the time of the intended act*, then one would do A. Exercising the power to do act A requires not only that the agent form the intention to do A but also that he abstain from forming a subsequent effective contravening intention prior to the time of the act.

Again, suppose that I freely formed the intention at  $t_0$  never to take a bribe but that at  $t_1$  I still have *the power* to change my mind by forming an intention to take the bribe at  $t_5$ . We can conceive of a nonhuman power that is a kind of opposite of the power I have at  $t_1$  to change my mind about taking a bribe. A person has an *unalterable* intention to do an act just in case he does not have the power to form a subsequent intention that would result in the nonperformance of the act. Now we can state a connection between freedom of the first grade and the power to form an unalterable intention. If I am now free with respect to doing act A at some future time—so that I now have both the power to do A at that time and the power to refrain from doing A at that time—then I must not have already formed an unalterable intention to do A at that time. For if I have already formed an unalterable intention yesterday to do A tomorrow, there is nothing I can now do to refrain from doing A; I am *no longer free* with respect to doing A tomorrow.<sup>4</sup> There is obviously an exactly similar connection between freedom of the second grade and the power to form an unalterable intention. Having the power at  $t$  to change one's mind with respect to doing A is incompatible with a prior *exercise* of the power to form an unalterable intention to do A.

Notice that the two grades of freedom are not incompatible with the *power* to form unalterable intentions. We can conceive of a possible being that now has, e.g., the power to change his mind with respect to a future act A and also now has the power to form an unalterable intention to do act A. He *has* both powers; the incompatibility lies in this: if he exercises the power to form the unalterable intention, he *loses* the power to change his mind. But we can also conceive of another sort of possible being—one who possesses both the attribute of having freedom of the first grade *essentially* and the attribute of having freedom of the second grade *essentially* with respect to every act he can perform. In this case it is impossible that the individual also has even the *power* to form an unalterable intention to do an act. The essential possession of freedom of the first grade does not rule out having the power to form an unalterable intention, but the essential possession of freedom of the second grade does rule out having this power.

## II

Both Thomas V. Morris and Tomis Kapitan have offered arguments which logically imply that God cannot change his mind about a moral act. Both assume an unrestricted view of omniscience. Let us start with the arguments of Morris, presented in "Properties, Modalities, and God." The principal portion of the first argument runs as follows:

Let us suppose for *reductio* that there is a possible world *Ws* in which an individual who in that world is God, say Yahweh, sins at some time *t* and thereby loses the status of deity which he has enjoyed up until *t*.... Consider first Yahweh's omniscience, and his position in *Ws* at some time *t-1*, a moment just before *t*. At *t-1* Yahweh must know that in *Ws* he will sin at *t*.... And at that prior time, Yahweh either lacks or has the power to see to it that he does not sink into sin at *t*. This is merely the power to maintain an intention not to sin at *t* as well as the power to see to it that this intention is not thwarted. If he lacks the power, then Yahweh is not omnipotent and thus not God at *t-1*, contrary to our assumption. No adequate definition of divine omnipotence will allow a being to lack the power to maintain his own intentions and still qualify as maximally powerful. Nor will a being count as omnipotent who cannot see to it that his own intended acts are performed. If on the other hand Yahweh has the power, then by stipulation of *Ws* he chooses not to use it and so is not sinless, and thus not God, at *t-1*, again contrary to our assumption.<sup>5</sup>

Morris concludes, "Thus no possible world is coherently describable in which a divine being is God for a while and then lapses into sin, thereby ceasing to be God."<sup>6</sup>

If this argument is to succeed it must do so even if we assume (for *reductio*) that God has *both* grades of freedom essentially. That is, in the premise of the *reductio* we must fully countenance the nonAnselmian con-

ception of God according to which God has essentially both the power to choose between doing what is right and doing what is wrong and the power to change his mind. On this conception, it is impossible to have moral perfection as an *essential* attribute but both the power to choose between right and wrong and the power to change one's mind are excellences or perfections. Morris' argument implies that if some individual  $x$  has both grades of freedom essentially,  $x$  could not be God because  $x$  would not be *omnipotent*. Individual  $x$  would lack omnipotence because "No adequate definition of divine omnipotence will allow a being to lack the power to maintain his own intentions and still qualify as maximally powerful." And, as I would fully agree, if  $x$  has the second grade of freedom essentially he *does* lack (as Morris puts it) "the power to maintain his own intentions" since something can happen to prevent his original intention from being carried out, namely,  $x$  himself can subsequently form an effective contravening intention, i.e.,  $x$  can change his mind.

Is Morris correct in assuming that someone who is unable to form an unalterable intention—one not alterable even by the person himself—cannot be omnipotent? Must an omnipotent being be able to form intentions that even he himself cannot alter? Morris takes the answer to these questions to be obviously affirmative. But I believe that this assumption can be seriously questioned. Part of the problem with Morris' argument here is that no consensus concerning the correct analysis of omnipotence has been reached. Peter Geach, in his fascinating book, *Providence and Evil*,<sup>7</sup> has forcefully argued that four salient conceptions of omnipotence fail and that we ought to give up the notion of omnipotence in favor of a property he calls 'almightiness.' The point I want to make is that it has long been noticed—at least since the era of Thomas Aquinas—that there are certain types of acts that can and sometimes are performed that God does not have the power to perform, e.g., God cannot deliberately forget something that he knows to be true. Traditional theists have often employed the following strategy to defend their belief in God's omnipotence. The fact that God lacks the power to do an act (of type)  $A$  which others can do does not render God less than omnipotent because in such cases performing act  $A$  would be logically incompatible with one or more of God's essential properties that are perfections or excellences. Omnipotence is to be understood, so say these theists, as the power that God has to perform acts that are consistent with his other perfections. Since omniscience, for example, is inconsistent with deliberately forgetting, God can lack this power to forget and still be omnipotent *in the intended sense*. This strategy, however, works just as well for the nonAnselmian. Recall that according to the nonAnselmian, the first grade of moral freedom is both a prerequisite for God's moral perfection and an excellence in its own right. And the second grade of freedom—God's power to change his mind—is also an excellence and a prerequisite for an excellence. I shall outline in section III a justification the nonAnselmian can offer for holding that God's having this power contributes to his greatness. The point that is immediately relevant to assessing Morris' argument, however, is that the nonAnselmian simply *does* regard God's power to change his mind as both an excellence and a

prerequisite for an excellence. From the nonAnselmian point of view, the act of forming an unalterable intention to do a moral act is in a very significant respect a *defect* rather than a perfection, and the power to unalterably maintain one's intentions is a power that is incompatible with God's essentially having the power to change his mind. Hence, to lack this power to unalterably maintain his intentions does not entail a lack of omnipotence in the intended sense. Thus Morris' *reductio* fails, because on the correct construal of the premise required for the *reductio* God can still be omnipotent in the sense that he has all those powers which are consistent with his other essential attributes, including both grades of moral freedom.

Morris offers a second argument which he considers to be another version of the first argument, but which seems to me to contain considerations that are more difficult to deal with than anything in the first argument. The second argument begins with the same assumptions made for a *reductio*. He then sets up a dilemma, one horn of which results in another dilemma:

At some time  $t-1$ , just prior to  $t$ , either Yahweh intends to sin at  $t$ , or he does not so intend. If he does, then in having such an intention he sins at  $t-1$  and is thus not then God, contrary to our assumption. If on the contrary, he does not intend at  $t-1$  to sin at  $t$ , it is either because he intends at  $t-1$  not to sin at  $t$ , or because he has at  $t-1$  no intention concerning whether he will sin at  $t$ .<sup>8</sup>

Morris argues that the first horn of this last dilemma is false because, again, its truth implies that God lacks omnipotence. He then proceeds to argue against the second horn as follows:

If on the other hand Yahweh at  $t-1$  has no intention at all concerning whether he will sin at  $t$ , then at that prior time he fails to exemplify at least one requisite of deity and so fails then to be God. Either he lacks sinlessness, or he lacks omniscience, or both. In at least the case of an individual such as God, being sinless entails intending never to sin. Thus, in order to be sinless at  $t-1$ , Yahweh would have to intend then never to sin, and thus not to sin at  $t$ . His lacking any such intention would entail his not being sinless and so not God at  $t-1$ , contrary to our initial assumption. In addition, it can be argued that if Yahweh were omniscient at  $t-1$ , then he would know at that time that he was about to sin at  $t$ . But God cannot know he is about to act in a certain way without intending so to act.... So if Yahweh did not intend at  $t-1$  to sin at  $t$ , it would follow that he did not know at  $t-1$  that he was about to commit this act. But in that case, he would not be omniscient and so not God at  $t-1$ , again contrary to our assumption. Once more our *reductio* is complete.<sup>9</sup>

This last portion of the argument relates God's intentions to his omniscience, rather than to his omnipotence, which raises a new issue. We

can identify the issue best by focusing on a crucial premise in this passage, namely, his statement that

- (a) God cannot know he is about to act in a certain way without intending so to act.

I take statement (a) to mean:

- (b) It is impossible that God both knows at  $t-n$  that he will do act A at  $t$  and yet does not have an intention at  $t-n$  to do A at  $t$ .

Is it obvious that this premise is true? I believe it to be false. Although it is about God, its truth depends solely upon the relationship of foreknowledge to intention. We can equally ask about ourselves whether it is impossible that we both know now that we will do act A at a later time and yet not have an intention now to do A at that later time. I think the answer is no, it is not impossible.

Suppose that I found a drug that rendered me a *reliable dreamer*, i.e., that caused in me vivid dreams about the future that proved to be 100% accurate even after many years of use and many thousands of trials. Suppose that I have become *completely confident* that whatever I experience in one of these dreams will happen, so that the effect on me of the knowledge thus acquired is just the same as if the knowledge were of present events directly observed by me. Suppose I had experienced myself in the dreams forming intentions many, many times, and that for each such intention formed in the dream, it eventually came to pass that I formed just that intention and performed just those acts which I had experienced myself intending to perform. And finally suppose that one day I take the drug and dream both that I *freely* form the intention to commit a murder and that I succeed in *freely* performing it. Does my knowledge that I will freely form the intention to commit a murder and succeed in performing it render me powerless to *now* intend never to commit murder?

To answer this question, let us answer another: Does this knowledge relieve me of the moral responsibility of *now* intending not to commit this murder and of *now* intending to do whatever I can to prevent its occurrence? I think that the answer to this question is clear: no. The only way in which my present knowledge of the future could render me not responsible for that future act is by making that act inevitable—somehow outside of my power. But the act of murder which I know I shall perform I know I shall *freely* perform; and just as God's foreknowledge does not render our acts inevitable and hence blameless, *my* foreknowledge does not make my act inevitable and blameless.<sup>10</sup> Nor am I somehow, now that I know how I shall act, responsible only for intending not-to-commit-any-murder-until-this-future-intention-to-commit-murder-takes-place. My present moral responsibilities are *not* qualified by any future intentions and acts, if these will be freely formed. I still have the moral responsibility now to avoid murder (wrongful killing)

*always* and to *always* intend to avoid murder, because it is now *in my power* to *always* so do even though I know that I shall freely choose in the future not to fulfill these moral responsibilities.

Yet there is a related power that I do *not* possess. Since I am free to murder and to avoid murder, and will remain so, it is not now in my power to bring about an *unalterable* intention that will result in my avoiding the murder. This would be true even if it were true that I will not perform the murder. But it *is* now in my power to avoid the murder. For, by our previous analysis, I have this power (roughly) just in case it is true that should I intend to avoid the murder *and not form a subsequent effective contrary intention*, then I would avoid the murder. And this condition is satisfied. So, it is my moral responsibility to form this intention now. Suppose I fulfill my responsibility by now forming this intention. Then, assuming that I now have a consistent set of intentions, I do *not now* have an intention to commit any murder. Hence I do not *now* have an intention to commit the murder I know I am going to commit sometime in the future. It follows that it is *not* impossible that I both know at t-n that I will do an act A at t and yet do not have an intention at t-n to do A at t.<sup>11</sup>

The logical relations between God's foreknowledge and intentions are not different from those between the reliable dreamer's foreknowledge and intentions. On the nonAnselmian view, which was to be assumed for Morris' *reductio* if his argument is to be persuasive to his opposition, God can intend to refrain always from doing an immoral act, right up to the time he freely changes his mind and intends to do it. His foreknowledge of his performing the wrongful act does not prevent him from having a contrary intention at some time prior to that act. The strangeness of this conclusion arises mainly from the fact that this kind of foreknowledge is so foreign to our ordinary human lives. The life of one, divine or otherwise, who has complete knowledge of his future intentions and actions is almost unimaginable to us, and the *attitudes* of such a being toward temporal existence must be very different from our own. Still, if the logical relations between foreknowledge and intention are as I have described them, Morris' *reductio* fails.

Perhaps, however, a defense of proposition (b) above, and thereby a defense of Morris' argument, can be made along the following lines.<sup>12</sup> What the case of the reliable dreamer shows at best is that it is possible for a *human being* both to know that he will someday do a heinous act and to not have at present an intention to do it. There are significant differences between God and any human which cast doubt on the analogy regarding this point. First, unlike the dreamer, God would know that he will do act A only if he has *always* known that he will do A. Second, God has power *infinitely* greater than the dreamer. These two differences suggest an argument that runs something like this:

Suppose that A is a wicked action which God knows that he will perform. Then, he must know even at the moment of creation that he will do A. Since we are to assume that he is morally perfect at that moment, he must also at that moment intend not to

do A. If there is a morally acceptable course of action he has the power to initiate at that moment which would result in his not doing A, he would initiate that course of action. So, if he knows that he will do A, this can be only because there is no course of action which he has the power to initiate at that moment which would result in his not doing A. But of course there are courses of action which he has the power to initiate at that moment which would result in his not doing A. Some of these might result in his setting up a situation in which he knows he would freely refrain from doing A. Others would result in there being no decision to make at that time, e.g., if A is God's acting wickedly toward Job, God could preclude this act by simply not creating Job. Therefore, it is not coherent to think that God (if he is morally perfect earlier) could know that he will perform some morally wrong act in the future. Hence, the reliable dreamer does not refute proposition (b).

If this argument—which I shall call the Defense of (b)—is sound, then (b) is true; according to it, in *every* possible world in which God starts out being morally perfect, God would avoid doing a morally wrong act by virtue of his masterly knowledge and his overwhelming power. Like a master chess player, he would have the power to so chose and maneuver as to avoid any wrongdoing on his part.

In assessing this argument, we must keep in mind the fact that this is not only a defense of proposition (b) but is also an argument against the nonAnselmian conception of God, which allows that God has moral freedom of the second grade, i.e., that a previously morally perfect God has the power to change his mind and do a morally wrong act. The Defense of (b) must not, then, *assume or presuppose* that God has the power to form *unalterable* intentions; that would be to beg the question.

My reply involves a direct appeal to our intuitions about what states of affairs would be in God's power to actualize. Let us suppose (as does the Defense, for *reductio*,) that God knows that he will perform a wicked act A. Let's say A will occur at some future time  $t_3$ . Since A might be any wicked act, let's suppose it is an act of bringing a particular individual into existence who unbearably suffers needlessly. Now, *what* does God have it in his power to do *now*, at  $t_1$ , to *prevent himself* from doing A at  $t_3$ ? He can certainly form an intention at  $t_1$  not to bring this hapless chap into being at  $t_3$ ; and he can form the intention at  $t_1$  not to do A at  $t_3$ . But it is possible to hold (as does the nonAnselmian) that neither of *these* acts prevents God from doing A at  $t_3$  or from *forming the intention* at  $t_3$  to do A at  $t_3$ . Is God free at  $t_3$  to intend to do A at  $t_3$ , or isn't he? If he is free at  $t_1$  to intend at  $t_1$  to do A at  $t_1$ , why isn't he free at  $t_3$  to intend at  $t_3$  to do A at  $t_3$ ? The only reason the Defense could offer here for the hypothesis that God isn't free at  $t_3$  to intend at  $t_3$  to do A at  $t_3$  is that *God has the power at  $t_1$  to prevent his own act of free will at  $t_3$  to do A at  $t_3$ , by intending at  $t_1$  not to intend at  $t_3$  to do A at  $t_3$ , and that, being morally perfect at  $t_1$ , he would exercise that power. For there is no possible situation that it is logically possible for God to bring about, external to God himself,*

that would deprive him of the power to perform in that situation such an act of free will as bringing a sufferer into existence. No matter what external situations he had brought about up to  $t_3$ , such as there being no space or matter or created spirit, he could always bring those things into existence at  $t_3$ —*unless he has the power to block his future acts of free will and has exercised it*. So, the Defense must assume that God has such powers. But this assumption begs the question. The power to form an intention that cannot be thwarted by a future contrary intention is just the power to form *an unalterable intention*.

So far, in my view, none of these arguments proves categorically that God has the power to form unalterable intentions. Nor do my replies prove that God does not have this power—that God has the power to change his mind. My replies to these arguments have not been attempts to do that. What I have tried to do is to show that the arguments *against* the view that God can change his mind have not succeeded; they have not shown that God does not have moral freedom of the second grade. The business of this section is to examine such arguments; it will be the business of section III to offer a positive reason for accepting the nonAnselmian conception, which attributes this freedom to divinity. Before turning to that task, however, there is one more argument that must be examined.

More recently, in “Agency and Omniscience,”<sup>13</sup> Tomis Kapitan presents an argument for the thesis that no omniscient being can be an agent because no such being can form an intention. In the sequel, “Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action: A Reply to David P. Hunt,”<sup>14</sup> he presents a revised version which contains several enumerated assumptions which logically imply the following principle, where  $x$  is any ideally rational agent<sup>15</sup> and  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  are times such that  $t_1$  is the same as or earlier than  $t_2$ :

- (P) If at  $t_1$   $x$  acquires an intention to do  $A$  at  $t_2$ , then there is a time  $t_3$  which is the same as or earlier than  $t_1$  during which  $x$  presumes both that he does not yet believe that he will intend at  $t_1$  to do  $A$  at  $t_2$  and that he does not yet believe that he will not intend at  $t_1$  to do  $A$  at  $t_2$ .<sup>16</sup>

If (P) is true, then clearly an omniscient being could not form an intention;<sup>17</sup> in that case my position is mistaken. But what reason do we have for accepting (P)?

In “Agency and Omniscience” Kapitan motivates us to accept the basic idea embodied in (P). He prepares the way by first noting what he takes to be the uncertainty presupposed by *deliberation*.

Is it possible for an agent to be omniscient? We think of agents as capable of intentional behaviour and, thus, able to prefer, select and undertake courses of action, abilities typically joined to a capacity for weighing reasons, determining means, evaluating ends, namely deliberation. While deliberating, however, one’s mind is not yet made up, one is in a state of indecision

and, as such, there is a sense of uncertainty about what one will eventually do, otherwise there would be no point in deliberating about whether to do it. It follows that a being with complete foreknowledge of the future, specifically, its own future, cannot deliberate, and seemingly, cannot 'make up its mind' or decide among options.<sup>18</sup>

He then goes on to argue that *intention* has the same sort of presupposition; this argument, then, would be the one to motivate us to accept such principles as (P).

Can an omniscient being nonetheless intend to do actions? If intending consists in the mind's being settled upon, or committed to, a particular course of action, must it not be previously unsettled, not only practically but epistemically as well? What could motivate someone to undertake an action unless he or she sensed both a need for the required effort and a chance that it might succeed, and how could this happen if the agent already knew what is to take place? If it is going to occur, no need, and if slated not to occur, no chance. Hence, future-directed uncertainty seems essential to intention, but then, how can an omniscient being will or act intentionally?<sup>19</sup>

I want to separate out one consequence of this argument:

- (C) *x* is motivated to undertake an action only if *x* senses (i.e., believes there is) a need for the required effort; if *x* already knows that the action is going to occur then *x* knows that there is no need for the required effort, including the formation of the intention.

(C) alone, if true, would go a long way toward ruling out the existence of an omniscient agent. But I think that reflection on (C) shows that there is good reason to think that it is false. For suppose that *x* is an omniscient agent who knows that he will perform an act at some future time *t* such that his intention at the same or earlier time *t'* is *causally or metaphysically necessary* to the occurrence of the act. As one would expect, the act would not occur unless *x* intended it, and *x* knows this before *t'*. Surely, then, *x* will intend at *t'* to do *A* at *t* precisely *in order to bring it about* that he performs act *A* at *t*. In short, the assumption in (C)—that if *x* already knew that the action is going to occur then *x* would know that there is *no need* for the required intention—is simply false. Hence, the argument fails. And (P) has a similar flaw in that it has a logical consequence that is false for similar reasons:

- (CP) If at *t*<sub>1</sub> *x* acquires an intention to do *A* at *t*<sub>2</sub>, then there is a time *t*<sub>3</sub> which is the same as or earlier than *t*<sub>1</sub> during which *x* presumes that he does not yet believe that he will intend at *t*<sub>1</sub> to do *A* at *t*<sub>2</sub>.

Again, if  $x$  is omniscient and is going to do  $A$  at  $t_2$ , then he not only knows at  $t_3$  that he is going to do  $A$  at  $t_2$ , he knows at  $t_3$  that he is going to intend at  $t_1$  to do  $A$  at  $t_2$  because (as he knows at  $t_3$ , and knows that he knows,) if he were not to intend at  $t_1$  to do  $A$  at  $t_2$  he would not succeed in doing  $A$  at  $t_2$ . (CP) and hence (P) are motivated by the false assumption that if  $x$  already knows that he is going to do  $A$ , he need not bring about the states of affairs that are causally or metaphysically necessary to his doing  $A$ —as if  $x$  would do  $A$  *independently* of what else happens beforehand.<sup>20</sup>

There is, however, a parallel consequence of the original motivating argument quoted above that might be regarded as giving us good reason to reject the counterexample of the reliable dreamer I presented to Morris' second argument:

- (C')  $x$  is motivated to undertake an action only if  $x$  believes that there is a chance that he might succeed; if  $x$  already knows that his action will not occur, then  $x$  knows that there is no chance that he will succeed.<sup>21</sup>

Presumably, undertaking an ordinary overt action requires forming an intention to do it, and if one is not motivated to undertake an action then one is not motivated to form an intention to do it. From this and (C') it logically follows that:

- (C'') If  $x$  already knows that his action will not occur then  $x$  is not motivated to form an intention to do it.

So, presumably, if I learn that I am going to commit murder at some future time  $t$ , then I know that my act of *refraining* from committing this murder at  $t$  will not occur. Hence, if (C'') is true, I have no motivation now to form an intention to refrain from committing murder at  $t$ . And presumably, if I have no motivation to form an intention, I will not do it. How, then, can I claim as I have in my counterexample of the reliable dreamer that I *can* form the intention to refrain from this murder and have the *responsibility* to form this intention—indeed, to form the general intention *never* to commit any murder? For if (C'') is true, I will have no motivation to form such intentions.

My primary contention here is that (C'') is false. I can only give a sketch here of what a full response would require.

1. Intentions that aim at moral actions (i.e., have moral acts or act-types as their intentional objects) are states for which we are also morally responsible. Intentions can be morally commendable or morally reprehensible, just as overt physical acts can be morally right or morally wrong.

2. The moral evaluation of an intention depends on the moral quality of the act at which the intention aims, not on the quality of the act that it happens to actually cause.

3. A person could conceivably have extremely bad "moral luck" in that her good intentions might on the whole cause bad actions, due to

unusual circumstances that are no fault of her own; e.g., when she intends to help people, she usually ends up hurting them due to unforeseeable circumstances. Our moral evaluation of this person ought not to differ from the evaluation of one whose intentions are exactly the same but who through no greater skill or commitment just happens to succeed. And our evaluation of her ought to be much greater than that of a person whose intentions usually *aim* at bad results but by good "moral luck" just happen to cause good actions due to unforeseeable circumstances, e.g., in an attempt to poison his wife the doctor injects her with a substance that cures her of a disease (unknown to him) that would have been fatal.

4. Therefore, of these two ingredients of moral life, intention and overt action, intention is the crucial element, the primary determinant of the moral value of a person.

5. The reliable dreamer (in my counterexample to Morris' second argument), upon learning that he will freely commit murder at some future time, can be *motivated* to now intend not to commit this murder, and to now intend never to commit any murder just because he wishes *to add to his moral value*, to remain a morally good person right up to the time at which he now knows he will freely form the intention to commit murder and then freely commit it. His good intentions have moral value because they aim at morally right acts in spite of the fact that he knows that these intentions will not succeed. "At least I can have the right intentions *now*, even though I know that I will eventually *change my mind*." This is why (C") is false.

This is a crucial point to understanding the situation. It is not that by intending to refrain from the murder the reliable dreamer intends to do an act (of refraining) which he knows he *cannot* do and is, like Romeo, defying the stars. He is not forming an intention to refrain from doing something that is inevitable. He realizes that his act of murder is *not* inevitable, will be freely performed, and even that he now has *the power* not to commit the murder. But he also knows that he does not now have the power to form an *unalterable* intention to refrain from committing the murder, thereby preventing it from happening *by putting it beyond his power* to freely bring it about in the future.

What Kapitan has done, I believe, is to mistake a contingent feature of intentions for an essential feature. It is a (possibly universal but) *contingent* feature of *even human* intentions that before we form them we do not know what we are going to do. If we had a reliable source of knowledge of our future acts, we would not deliberate (in the ordinary sense) but we would still form intentions and perform actions. I am assuming that it is possible for there to be such a source. An omniscient or very knowledgeable individual could inform us; at least Kapitan is willing to grant this much.<sup>22</sup>

It seems to me that it is metaphysically possible for there to be an omniscient, omnipotent agent who has both grades of moral freedom essentially, and who knows that his future includes morally wrong acts from which at present he would freely choose to refrain. Such an individual, like us, could not form an unalterable intention to refrain from

doing a future wrong act. In *this* respect, like us, he has no more power to *guarantee* the occurrence of *his own* future free acts than he has to guarantee the future free acts of *other* persons. He and we have all this in common. We might someday commit a terrible act. (The difference is that if he will he knows he will, and we don't.) Since, in a sense, our future free acts are *independent* of our present, our future may now be *alien* to us. No one is *safe* from his own future. This is the price of having as an essential feature freedom of the second grade.

In the light of these considerations, the question now is this: What justification could there possibly be for conceiving of God (the perfect being) as having freedom of the second grade? Why should we say that a perfect being possesses essentially the power to change his mind, even about doing a moral act?

### III

For the Anselmian position, the power to do what is morally wrong and the power to change one's mind about doing a morally right act (to doing a morally wrong act) would both be defects in God. Obviously, the exercise of the power to do what is morally wrong would result in God's doing an immoral act, which is a defect in anyone. And God's exercise of the power to change his mind about doing a moral act entails that either God intended to do a wrong act before or he intends to do a wrong act after the change of mind—in either case, he intended to perform a wrong act, which, again, is a defect. If, on the other hand, God has these powers but never uses them precisely because using them would produce a defect, they are utterly useless to him. So, what justification can the nonAnselmian possibly offer for insisting that these powers be included in God's nature?

The nonAnselmian answers that, even if the exercise of a power would produce a defect, we can be justified in attributing that power to God if the power is a prerequisite for an attribute that is clearly an excellence. The possession of such a power adds to the greatness of God by making possible the possession of the excellence. First, consider the power to do what is wrong. This is a prerequisite for the power to choose effectively between right and wrong—moral freedom of the first grade. And this power in turn is a prerequisite for *moral* perfection, i.e., the *free* and perfect conformance to the moral law. The nonAnselmian regards this attribute as a greater excellence than the nonfree or necessary conformance to the moral law; in his eyes, a being who *must* conform to the moral law is not a *moral* being. It is better to be a moral being than not. I have argued this elsewhere and will not repeat the argument here.<sup>23</sup>

Instead, I want to argue here that the possession of a power to do great evil can be a prerequisite for a moral virtue, in the ordinary sense of 'moral.' Consider a man who is in a situation in which he has the power to cause great suffering to millions of people without causing any substantial counterbalancing good. And suppose that even though he himself would stand to gain greatly by causing it, he chooses to refrain from

doing so. Manifestly, the man has exhibited a moral virtue; he did the morally right thing by choosing *not* to exercise his power to do great evil. But he could not have exhibited this virtue unless he had the power to bring about the evil. Even if he never exercises this power, his possession of it contributes to his moral greatness, which would be considerably less without it. The possession of a power to do evil, then, can surely contribute to the greatness of a being who never exercises it, by allowing him to freely choose *not* to exercise it. Having a power the exercise of which would always produce a defect is not necessarily itself a defect. The power to do what is morally wrong is itself just such a power.

Next, consider the second grade of moral freedom—the power to change one’s mind about doing a moral act. Let us imagine two individuals, Smith and Jones, who both hold high positions in large corporations. Both have just discovered hard proof that their respective bosses have broken corporation rules, which proof, if disclosed, would result in their bosses losing their positions—which in turn would be filled by Smith and Jones. The difference between Smith’s situation and that of Jones is that Smith’s corporation has a statute of limitations on the violation—which will run out at day’s end—whereas Jones’ corporation has no such statute. Both know that while the indiscrete act was wrong, it does not deserve the suffering and wasted potential that disclosure would bring about. So, they both decide to do the right thing: not to expose. Both Smith and Jones form intentions not to expose their bosses, but because of the difference in their situations, Smith can only form an *unalterable* effective intention—later intentions will have no effect—whereas Jones can change her mind on many future occasions for years and still destroy her boss.

Suppose, however, that Jones never does change her mind. I contend that while both Jones and Smith have made laudable moral achievements, the achievement of Jones outdistances that of Smith by far. Both Smith and Jones *refrained* from exposing their bosses. Jones, however, refrained for many years. How shall we understand this? In some circumstances it is natural to speak of a person performing an *act* of refraining while in others it is more natural to say that the person is simply in a *state* of refraining; I am inclined to believe that the underlying conditions are the same.<sup>24</sup> Person *x* performs an act of refraining or is in a state of refraining from doing act *A* at *t* just in case: there is a time *t'* earlier than or the same as *t* such that (i) *x* forms an intention at *t'* not to do *A* at *t*, (ii) *x* has the power at *t'* not to do *A* at *t*, and (iii) *x*'s forming the intention at *t'* has the result that *x* does not do *A* at *t*.<sup>25</sup> If *x* refrains *freely* from doing *A* at *t*, it must at least be true that *x* also has the power at *t'* to do *A* at *t*.<sup>26</sup>

Now, unlike Smith, Jones continued to have many opportunities during which she could have gotten her boss fired—she continued to have this power every work day for years. It is natural to suppose that Jones thought about this fact from time to time: “I could get him fired and have his job; but no, I’m not going to do it.” On these occasions Jones would be performing the *act of reaffirming* her intention not to do the act she regards as morally wrong. If she had thoughts like these, each reaf-

fimation could be regarded as a moral act to her credit that Smith did not have the opportunity to perform. That fact would make Jones' moral achievement superior to that of Smith.<sup>27</sup>

Suppose, however, that as a matter of fact Jones, once having formed her intention, never thinks about it again—never has these conscious occurrent thoughts and never makes reaffirmations of the sort just mentioned. Does this reduce Jones' moral achievement to equality with Smith's? I think not. Let us say that a person  $x$  is *freely* in a state  $S$  at  $t$  only if there is a time  $t'$  earlier than or the same as  $t$  such that (i)  $x$  is in  $S$  at  $t$ , (ii)  $x$  forms the intention at  $t'$  to be in  $S$  at  $t$ , (iii)  $x$  has the power at  $t'$  to bring it about that  $x$  is in  $S$  at  $t$ , (iv)  $x$  has the power at  $t'$  to bring it about that  $x$  is not in  $S$  at  $t$ , and (v)  $x$ 's forming the intention at  $t'$  to be in  $S$  at  $t$  has the result that  $x$  is in  $S$  at  $t$ . Then, a person  $x$  *freely remains* in a state  $S$  at  $t$  just in case there is a time  $t'$  longer than  $t$  such that  $t'$  includes  $t$ ,  $t$  concludes  $t'$ , and  $x$  is *freely* in  $S$  throughout  $t'$ . On every occasion during the years in which she has the power to expose her boss before he retires, Jones *freely* retains her intention (i.e., *freely remains* in the same state of intending) not to expose him. But this is precisely the attribute of *moral resolve*: doing the right thing by retaining one's intentions to do the right thing, *while having the power to change one's mind*. Moral resolve is a moral excellence of the highest order—and it requires the power to change one's mind. Jones is able to exhibit her moral resolve only because she has the power to change her mind; Smith is not in a position to exhibit this virtue precisely because he does not have the (effective) power to change his mind about exposing his boss.

For purposes of comparison we can conceive of two omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect individuals that have moral freedom of the first grade essentially, only one of which has moral freedom of the second grade. The first person can form only unalterable intentions, but the second person can change his mind. Now, there are two ways in which we can conceive of the mental life of these two omnipotent individuals. First way: they maximize the realization of their mental dispositions, i.e., assuming that knowledge and intentions are dispositions, at every moment they *occurrently* think everything that they know; and at every moment they (occurrently) *reaffirm* every intention that they have formed in the past, as in the performative use of "I *now* intend to do  $A$  at  $t$ , just as I have intended to in the past." Second way: all knowledge and intentions that can remain dispositional remain dispositional in them; so that as much as is possible in a temporal life, their past thoughts and decisions, and their knowledge and intentions, are not occurrently reviewed or renewed.

Suppose that our two morally perfect beings would, being omnipotent, actualize their mental lives in the first way.<sup>28</sup> Then we can see why the second morally perfect person in our pair—the one that can change his mind—is morally superior to the first morally perfect person. Both will be occurrently reaffirming their intentions at every moment; but the second person will be the only one who is doing so *freely* because only he has the power to change his mind—to do something else by intending to do something else. This means that while the original formations

of moral intentions of the first person were moral acts, none of his *reaffirmations* are moral acts because none of them are freely performed. Not so with the second person; *both* his original formations of moral intentions *and* all of his reaffirmations are moral acts. So, the second person is morally superior because he exhibits his moral excellence throughout a greater range of acts. Having decided on a given occasion to do the right thing, he exhibits his excellence by continuously performing acts of refraining from changing his mind.<sup>29</sup> Changing his mind in this case would be a defect because it would produce a wrong act. But each act of refraining from changing his mind will be a morally obligatory act that will add to his moral excellence. The first person, whose intentions are unalterable, simply lacks this dimension of moral possibilities; he cannot freely perform any acts of reaffirmation.

There is another reason why the second person is morally superior: in addition to performing a *greater range* of moral acts that are obligatory, the second person exhibits *moral resolve*. Make no mistake: the first person, who has the power to form only unalterable intentions, *cannot* exhibit moral resolve. Merely remaining constant with respect to reaffirming one's good moral intentions is not sufficient to exhibit moral resolve. This person *can't help* reaffirming his former intentions. These acts of reaffirmation must be *freely* performed in order to count as moral acts; regarding a sequence of *acts*, only a sequence of *moral* acts can exhibit the moral resolve of the agent. Hence, he lacks the virtue of *freely remaining* in conformance with the moral law with respect to the intended act.

Alternatively, suppose that the second (dispositional) way of conceiving the mental life of our omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect pair is correct. In this case, there are no *acts* of reaffirmation; their past intentions remain dispositional. And just for simplicity let us suppose that refraining is to be considered a state and not an act. Then, if one of these persons is morally superior to the other, it is not due to any moral *acts* performed by one but not the other. The second person, however, is (in my judgment) still morally superior. The reasons are essentially the same, except that they deal with *moral states* instead of moral acts. First, the second person is morally superior because, like Jones, he exhibits his moral excellence through a *greater range of moral states*, i.e., a greater range of states in which he freely remains. And the second reason is that, like Jones, the second person exhibits his *moral resolve* by freely remaining in the same *state*; whereas, like Smith, the first person is unable to achieve that trait.

I am sure that the majority of those who are Anselmians remain unmoved by the above reasoning for the nonAnselmian position. Many would not view the power to change one's mind as an excellence, regardless of whether or not it is necessary to a kind of freedom that *human beings* have. Perhaps the following comments represent their point of view.

The power to change one's mind is the sort of attribute one normally associates with finite and defective beings. Humans are fickle and often have a hard time making up their minds. They

change their minds because they become aware of facts they did not know before, they evaluate the same evidence differently at different times, their desires change, or for a host of other reasons—none of which reflect well on their powers. Moreover, it is doubtful that a moral agent gets additional moral worth from the fact that she does not change her mind once she decides to do a morally obligatory act; in other words, the moral achievement of Jones is really not greater than that of Smith. At most we might think so if her circumstances change to such an extent that she undergoes a special temptation but still does not change her mind. But if she just goes on without thinking about it, it is hard to see how there could be any addition to her moral worth arising just from the fact that she does not change her mind.<sup>30</sup>

I'll begin my concluding remarks by first noting a point of *agreement* between the above representation of the Anselmian perspective and my nonAnselmian view. Changing one's mind *is* a defect, fickleness *is* a defect, having a hard time making up one's mind, change in one's desires, and change in one's epistemic circumstances *are* defects. I am not arguing that it is good to undergo these changes; I have assumed all along that a *perfect* being would *not* in fact undergo them. But, on my view, the fact that we *can* undergo them is not what makes us imperfect; it is the fact that we *do* undergo them that makes us imperfect. It is *logically* possible that even a human being be morally perfect. The power to change one's mind in order to do a wrong act is an example of a power, the exercise of which is a defect, but the possession of which is a prerequisite for an excellence—in Jones' case, freely remaining in conformance with the moral law. (This moral resolve can be properly referred to as *fixity of will*; but it is not to be confused with the *impossibility of change of will*.) Such a power, then, is a *good* in a human being. Why should this good not be found in a divine, temporal, morally perfect being as well?

Finally, there is the ultimate disagreement about the *value* of not changing one's mind. According to the above Anselmian remarks, the fact that Jones does not change her mind, if she had no special new temptations, does not make her moral achievement better than Smith's. In my judgment, this plainly belies human experience. We can imagine (as we have) that Jones has no special temptations; and that at his retirement party Jones' boss takes her aside: "I want to thank you," he says, "for keeping my secret *for all these years*." There is a *point* to his last phrase: we *do* think that one who has exhibited moral resolve *over a long period of time* has achieved something more than one who exhibits it for a short period, or one who does not display it at all. This is true even in the absence of special temptations; in fact, to the extent to which it is a voluntary state, the lack of being tempted would be an additional moral virtue possessed by Jones.

Moral freedom of both the first and second grade is valued by the nonAnselmian because it is necessary to maximal moral excellence. But it could be misleading to end the justification here. Moral freedom is really just an application of freedom *simpliciter*—which is the power to

choose effectively between rival acts of any kind—to the realm of moral action. And freedom *simpliciter* is something that the nonAnselmian values for its own sake. It is not just a prerequisite of other excellences; it is itself an excellence. One finds it difficult to persuade others that some power or attribute is intrinsically valuable. It is easier to argue about a given attribute that it is valuable on the grounds that it has certain relations to other attributes that are already accepted as valuable. Things that are *intrinsically* valuable may have to be just *recognized* as being intrinsically valuable. But often that a thing is intrinsically valuable can be appreciated by noticing the effects it has on a person. Freedom (or at least the perception of freedom) is responsible for the joy of being an agent in the world, the joy of being to some extent the master of one's destiny, the joy of creating, of making things happen, the simple joy of choosing between two alternative objects, activities, or results. It is in a young child that one can most easily notice that often the joy of choosing is greater than the joy brought by the object or activity chosen. The child insists that *he* wants to choose, that it is up to *him* what is to be done, and relishes the choosing. Needless to say, the freedom is not valued for the joy; rather the joy is a kind of appreciation of the freedom. As different as the child is from a divine being, if both child and God have the same type of freedom, the *intrinsic* value of the freedom in God is the same as that of the freedom in the child. If freedom makes the child better than he would otherwise be, why would it not make a divine being better than he would otherwise be?

The fact is that the Anselmian just does not value freedom *simpliciter* nearly as much as the nonAnselmian. It is interesting that *some* Anselmians regard it as an excellence of God that he has the freedom to choose between acts of different value when doing either act would be *supererogatory*. Why allow him this freedom as an excellence but not moral freedom of the first and second grades? There is a fundamental disagreement about the relative worth of freedom in relation to the *essentiality* of certain other attributes. It is a disagreement purely about the evaluative priority of certain attributes. It is not as though there is some general metaphysical/evaluative principle that divides the Anselmian from the nonAnselmian, such as that if God has a power it must be logically possible for him to use it to bring about some good without doing something morally wrong. At any rate, so far I have found no such principle. Rather, there seems to be a purely evaluative disagreement which is likely to resist elimination. And if a metaphysical principle were to be found that divides the two camps, I believe that the division over that principle would stem from the division over the evaluative disagreement, over the relative value of freedom.

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#### NOTES

1. "Can Moral Perfection be an Essential Attribute?," *Philosophy and*

*Phenomenological Research*, Vol. XLVI, No. 2 (December, 1985).

2. Footnotes 1, 2, and the list of References, in Tomis Kapitan, "Agency and Omniscience," *Religious Studies*, 27 (March, 1991), pp. 105-120, provide an excellent bibliography of recent writings on this subject. See also his list of References in "The Incompatibility of Omniscience and Intentional Action: A Reply to David P. Hunt," *Religious Studies*, 30 (March, 1994), pp. 55-66. Not included in these lists are certain important works that argue for the restriction of omniscience due to the nature of subjunctive conditional statements about uncaused events, e.g., in Robert M. Adams, "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 14 (1977), pp. 109-117. See also Richard M. Gale, *On the Nature and Existence of God*, Cambridge University Press (1991), for a philosophically interesting and entertaining discussion of the relevant views of Adams and Alvin Plantinga, pp. 110-178.

3. I have discussed some of the conditions necessary to the conception of the power to do an act in section II of the article cited in note 1 above, e.g, it must be *possible* to will (or intend) to do the act. There may be other conditions as well, such as that the agent must not *forget* that he intended to do the act; I wish to thank Stewart Cohen for this point and for his very helpful discussions of this paper. In this work I intend to oversimplify by ignoring the distinction between doing an act intentionally without forming an intention and doing an act intentionally *by* forming an intention. I shall speak as if performing an act requires forming an intention to do it, just because this assumption allows me to present the points I wish to make with relative clarity and simplicity.

4. This is not to say that I am not morally responsible for doing A tomorrow or that when I finally do A the act is not freely performed. In order to be morally responsible for doing A tomorrow and in order for the act to be freely performed, I need only have *freely* formed my intention to do A. The unalterability of the intention does not deprive me of responsibility for my act. Any human intention to do a specific act at a specific time becomes unalterable at some point in time as we approach the time of the intended act, viz., when there is no longer time to form an effective contravening intention.

5. Thomas V. Morris, "Properties, Modalities, and God," *Philosophical Review*, 93 (January, 1984), pp. 51-52.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

7. Peter Geach, *Providence and Evil* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Ch. 1.

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

9. *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-54; italics mine.

10. A full defense of this position would require an answer to the arguments of William Hasker in his *God, Time, and Knowledge*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), according to which God's omniscience does not include knowledge of future free acts.

11. The Anselmian may argue that while (1) [I know at t-n that I will do A at t] is compatible with both (2) [I have the power at t-n not to do A at t] and (3) [I have the power at t-n to intend at t-n not to do A at t], (1) is incompatible with (4) [I do not intend at t-n to do A at t]. I wish to thank Stewart Cohen for remarks that led me to recognize this point. While I would agree that it is possible to reject the counterexample of the reliable dreamer by simply sticking to the proposition that (1) is incompatible with (4), it seems to me that the proposition is false. I find it extremely implausible to suppose that if all of a sudden I learned that at some time in the future I am

going to commit murder, I would, if rational, immediately *lose* my present intention never to commit such a crime. Moreover, there are acts somewhat analogous to the forming of intentions which one can do while knowing that one will not succeed. Formations of intentions are a lot like tryings. It is very clear that it is possible to *try* to do an act even if one knows that one won't succeed. E.g., you might try to break a gate lock precisely in order to prove to another that you *can't* do it—and hence that your young child probably can't do it either. Thus, deliberately forming an intention would not be the only sort of act which one can perform with the knowledge that the act will fail to accomplish its intrinsic aim, i.e., its intentional object. But, more importantly, even if the example of the reliable dreamer should fail to establish the proposition that it is possible to know at t-n that one will do A at t and yet not intend at t-n to do A at t, it is open to the nonAnselmian to espouse that proposition. Certainly Morris' arguments do not prove its denial; rather, they *assume* its denial for the case of God.

12. I wish to thank the referee of this paper who offered an argument very much along the lines of the argument about to be presented; my version is just a verbal variant of this referee's.

13. Op cit., *vide* note 2 above.

14. Op cit., *vide* note 2 above.

15. In his original argument Kapitan in effect lets *x* be "a minimally rational agent" and in his revised argument he lets *x* be "an ideally rational agent." Since an omniscient being will be both, and since the real issue is unaffected by the exact nature of the required restriction, I am omitting reference to this restriction in stating the principles that follow. It could be supplied for each principle if needed.

16. Op cit., note 2, see p. 65, propositions (g), (h), and (i). I have taken the liberty to use 'A' as a variable ranging over actions rather than as a schematic letter for action verbs, as Kapitan prefers.

17. Kapitan presents an argument in "The Incompatibility," etc., p. 60, for the proposition that in order to act an agent must *acquire* an intention. He takes the position that every specific intention (i.e., one about space-time particulars) must be acquired, thus ruling out the possibility that an omniscient being could have specific intentions eternally into the past. I believe that this argument can be questioned; it does not take into account the possibility that such a being may eternally have specific intentions about the haecceities of such particulars—and through them about the particulars themselves—without ever *acquiring* the intentions. But we have no need to examine this argument here.

18. Op. cit., p. 105.

19. Op. cit., p.105. I believe that the analogy between deliberation and intention is not a good one. A successful piece of deliberation must result in a *discovery*, e.g., the new knowledge of a true proposition regarding an option as to why that option is at least as *justified* as any alternative contemplated—relative to a set of goals and beliefs. Deliberations aim at such discoveries. (That is why a being that is unrestrictedly omniscient cannot deliberate—in the ordinary sense. Such a being, however, could rehearse his reasons for choosing or intending the actions he performs.) Intentions aim simply at acts; no discoveries are necessarily included in their aim. That is why the analogy between the two is weak.

20. With this conclusion I am denying premise (4) of Kapitan's original argument (in "Agency and Omniscience," op. cit., p.112) and premises (4\*) and (5\*) of his revised argument (in "The Incompatibility," etc., op.cit., p. 60 and p. 64).

21. (C') receives its expression in premise (1) of Kapitan's original argument (in "Agency and Omnipotence," op. cit., p.110) and in premise (4\*), taken to have his (O1) as a consequence of the openness mentioned in (4\*), in "The Incompatibility," etc., op. cit., p. 60.

22. Kapitan makes it quite clear that nothing in his position precludes the possibility that I come to know that I will intend to do A even though I do not now have that intention. He grants that God could inform me. All that he requires is that if I do have this explicit knowledge now, I must *lose it* at some point before I acquire the future intention. This is where we disagree. See "Agency and Omniscience," op. cit., p. 117 and also "The Incompatibility," etc., op. cit., p. 64.

23. *Vide* note 1.

24. A *refraining* is a state of *not* performing an act *when that state has certain properties*. Those properties are specified by conditions (i)-(iii) in the text just below, and include the property of forming the appropriate intention. But the intention so formed is not itself a *constituent* of the refraining, although it is a necessary condition for it. If a person refrains from doing A at  $t_2$  by forming an intention at  $t_1$  to not do A at  $t_2$ , the refraining itself takes place *at  $t_2$*  and does not begin at  $t_1$ —assuming that  $t_1$  and  $t_2$  are nonoverlapping times. We tend to refer to such a state as an *act* when the state is of relatively short duration (and perhaps especially when, in addition, the timespan between the formation of the relevant intention and the state is relatively short); but we think of it as a *state* and not an act when the state is of relatively long duration (especially if the timespan just mentioned is relatively long)—as when we say of a Catholic priest that because of his vows he refrained from getting married all of his life.

25. The phrase 'has the result' is to be taken here and hereafter in its minimal sense, i.e., S has the result T just in case S and T both obtain and had S not obtained then T would not have obtained. Thus, S need not *cause* T in order for T to be a result of S.

26. This is a necessary condition for refraining freely. It need not be the case that this condition together with (i)-(iv) provide a sufficient condition. E.g., incompatibilists (such as myself) would add other conditions to freedom. Similar remarks apply to the set of conditions given below for the notion that a person is freely in a state at a time.

27. If Jones repeatedly suspends (withdraws) her intention, reexamines the issue, then (each time) forms a new intention to refrain from getting her boss fired, one might justifiably regard the repeated *suspensions* as some form of defect. But we are to take it that she does not do this. Rather, whenever she is involuntarily reminded of her power, she simply reaffirms her standing intention.

28. I believe that there are some good reasons for accepting the view that a perfect temporal being would have a mental life of the first sort. Perhaps, when it comes to good things, actuality is better than potentiality. Perhaps a divine being ought to realize (activate) every disposition of his which aims at a good if it can be realized while increasing the overall value of the world. Perhaps it is better to have *occurrent* thoughts that are knowledge and *occurrent* mental episodes that are intentions than not. My argument, however, does not depend on the acceptance of this position.

29. Each act of reaffirmation constitutes a new act or state of refraining from changing one's mind; to change one's mind about doing an act is, of course, to change one's intention to do that act. Refraining from doing A at  $t_3$  by reaffirming an intention at  $t_1$  never to do A would, of course, be distinct from refraining from doing A at  $t_2$  by reaffirming an intention at  $t_1$

never to do A, even if it should be true that refraining from doing A at  $t_3$  by reaffirming an intention at  $t_1$  never to do A is the same refraining as refraining from doing A at  $t_3$  by reaffirming an intention at  $t_2$  never to do A.

30. I wish to thank the referee who offered some comments very much along these lines; the difference between my presentation and this referee's comments is mainly verbal.