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# A COUNTEREXAMPLE TO PLANTINGA'S FREE WILL DEFENSE

Alexander R. Pruss

Plantinga's Free Will Defense is an argument that, possibly, God cannot actualize a world containing significant creaturely free will and no wrongdoings. I will argue that if standard Molinism is true, there is a pair of worlds  $w_1$  and  $w_2$  each of which contains a significantly free creature who never chooses wrongly, and that are such that, necessarily, at least one of these worlds is a world that God can actualize.

## 1. Introduction

Plantinga's Free Will Defense (FWD) is an argument that possibly the truth values of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (CCFs) are such that God cannot actualize a morally perfect world. A "morally perfect world" is a world where at least one created agent has a libertarian-free choice between something wrong and something not wrong ("is significantly free") and where no created agent does anything wrong. If God cannot create a morally perfect world but can instead actualize a very good, but morally imperfect, world containing created significantly free agents, he will be justified in actualizing some such world. Therefore, if Plantinga's FWD succeeds, possibly God actualizes a world containing a moral evil, and so the existence of God is logically compatible with the existence of evil, which refutes the deductive argument from evil.

According to standard Molinism, which Plantinga's FWD in the *Nature of Necessity*<sup>1</sup> does assume, CCFs have non-trivial, and at least typically contingent, truth values. I shall assume standard Molinism, and argue that there is a pair of possible worlds,  $w_1$  and  $w_2$ , each of which is morally perfect and which are such that, necessarily, God can actualize  $w_1$  or God can actualize  $w_2$  (or both). Consequently, the claim in Plantinga's FWD that, possibly, God

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<sup>1</sup>Alvin Plantinga, *Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford, 1974). In Alvin Plantinga, "Self-Profile," in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. J. E. Tomberlin and P. van Inwagen (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985), 49–52, Plantinga seems to attempt to give a version of the FWD that will be acceptable to non-Molinists. However, as Richard M. Gale, *On the Nature and The Existence of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 136ff. has argued, this attempt fails. For instance, if all the relevant CCFs are necessarily false, then Plantinga's account in "Self-Profile" implies that God cannot weakly actualize any world containing free agents. For, to do that, God would have to cause something that counterfactually implies that the agents act as they do, and that would require a true CCF.



cannot actualize a morally perfect world is false, if standard Molinism is true. Plantinga's FWD is based on the possibility of transworld depravity. Roughly speaking, transworld depravity says that every possible person is such that were she created in any context that God could create her in, either she would never have significant freedom or she would do wrong at some time. The argument I shall give directly shows that transworld depravity is impossible.

In the next section, I will give some crucial preliminaries, including arguing for a controversial counterfactual Domination Principle inspired by an example of Plantinga's. In the subsequent section, I will construct the pair  $w_1$  and  $w_2$  and argue on the basis of the Domination Principle that God can actualize at least one of them, assuming standard Molinism. I will then consider some objections. Finally, I will discuss some options for free will defenses that are not affected by the objections. I am inclined to think the problem lies not so much with free will defenses as such, but with Molinism.

## 2. Crucial Preliminaries

### 2.1 CCFs

By stipulation, a CCF is a subjunctive conditional of the form  $C \rightarrow F$  where  $C$  is an "appropriate antecedent for  $F$ " and  $F$  reports that a created agent did or did not freely choose something at a given time.<sup>2</sup> Oddly enough, although it is traditional to use the word "counterfactual" for  $C \rightarrow F$ , no assumption that  $C$  is false is made. It is somewhat difficult to characterize what an "appropriate antecedent for  $F$ " is. Plantinga's characterization is that  $C$  is the conjunction of all the states of affairs that God "strongly actualizes," where God strongly actualizes  $S$  provided that God causes  $S$  and every contingent state of affairs that is "included in" (entailed?) by  $S$ .<sup>3</sup> Another characterization is that  $C$  reports all the events in the temporal sequence of a world right up to the choice that  $F$  describes, including the fact that a free choice takes place, but not including any information on what the agent in fact did choose, or anything that follows from that.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the appropriate antecedents will include all the considerations operative for the agent in the choice and all the causal factors affecting the choice. I shall also assume that only propositions that are possibly true are appropriate antecedents, and whether an antecedent is appropriate to  $F$  is not a contingent matter.

Standard Molinism then says that CCFs have truth values independently of God's activity, and God knows these truth values and can make use of

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<sup>2</sup>To reduce verbiage, I shall assume that if  $C \rightarrow F$  is a CCF, so is  $C \rightarrow \sim F$ . This means that a double, triple, etc. negation of a proposition reporting what someone did or did not freely choose also counts as a proposition reporting what someone did or did not freely choose.

<sup>3</sup>Plantinga, "Self-Profile," 49.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. for instance Thomas Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) and Richard Otte, "Transworld Depravity and Unobtainable Worlds," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 78 (2009), 165–177.

them in deciding which antecedents to actualize.<sup>5</sup> But just to say this much is not enough to be a standard Molinist. For instance, Robert M. Adams,<sup>6</sup> a paradigmatic anti-Molinist, thinks that CCFs have truth value independently of God's will, because, possibly with some exceptions (one of which will actually be central to the argument for the Domination Principle), they are simply *false*. I shall characterize standard Molinism by saying that (a) God knows the truth values of CCFs, (b) God can act on these truth values, and (c) the Conditional Law of Excluded Middle (CLEM) holds as restricted to CCFs.

Unrestricted CLEM is the claim that, necessarily,  $p \rightarrow q$  or  $p \rightarrow \sim q$ , for all  $p$  and  $q$  (to be distinguished, of course, from the claim that  $p \rightarrow (q$  or  $\sim q)$ , which is trivial at least if  $p$  is possible). While one might argue for standard Molinism on the basis of CLEM, unrestricted CLEM is usually taken to be implausible. Surely it is neither the case that were aliens to have inscribed a giant six digit integer on the far side of moon, then that integer would be even, nor that if they were to do that, then the integer would be odd. However, the standard Molinist accepts CLEM in the special case of conditionals of the form  $C \rightarrow F$  where  $F$  reports what a created person does or does not freely choose and  $C$  is sufficiently determinate—and all the “appropriate” antecedents will count as sufficiently determinate.

## 2.2 Dominance

Plantinga has offered the following interesting argument against those who deny truth values to CCFs. Suppose that Mayor Curley Smith has accepted a bribe of \$35,000 to drop his opposition to a bill. Plantinga writes:

Let us ask . . . whether he would have accepted a bribe of \$36,000, everything else being as much as possible like the actual world. Here the answer seems fairly clear: indeed he would have.<sup>7</sup>

Thus:

- (1) Smith is offered \$36,000  $\rightarrow$  Smith (still) freely accepts the bribe.

And so at least one conditional of free will (though perhaps not a CCF in our present terminology as the antecedent may not be sufficiently determinate) is true. Interestingly, even Adams, though generally opposed to Molinism, accepts this example, albeit holding that (1) is made true by the facts of Smith's actual choice.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>I will use the assumption that God knows these conditionals only in one place in the argument. Even without the assumption, the conclusion follows that, necessarily, there is a state of affairs that God could actualize that is such that were God to actualize it, there would be a morally perfect world. However, the assumption is needed to yield the claim that God knows how to identify that state of affairs—for what that state of affairs is will depend on the actual truth values of CCFs.

<sup>6</sup>Robert M. Adams, “Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1977), 109–117.

<sup>7</sup>Plantinga, *Nature of Necessity*, 177.

<sup>8</sup>Adams, “Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil,” 115.

Now, notice that we would not accept (1) in every case in which Smith has accepted a \$35K bribe—Plantinga rightly needs to assume that the larger bribe is offered in circumstances as much as possible like the ones with the smaller bribe. For instance, if state law has a higher penalty for accepting a bribe over \$35K, it might well be the case that although Smith accepted \$35K, he wouldn't have risked accepting \$36K. Likewise, it could be that Smith has found a way of laundering \$35K which wouldn't work for \$36K, or Smith has a special liking for numbers that are divisible by seven. Of course, when we are pulled to say that (1) is true, we are assuming none of these situations occur. Thus, what we are really committed to is this:

- (2) If any consideration in favor of taking the smaller bribe would apply at least as well to the larger and any consideration there would be against taking the larger bribe also in fact applied at least as well to the smaller, and if Smith prefers more money to less money, then: Smith is offered a larger bribe  $\rightarrow$  Smith (still) freely accepts the bribe.

Now, (2) is a consequence of a Categorical Domination Principle, which I submit we should accept as explaining (1) and (2). To introduce this principle, we need a notion of one set of circumstances dominating another in respect of a choice. One way to define it is as follows.  $C^*$  dominates  $C$  for  $x$  choosing  $A$  if and only if: (a)  $C^*$  counts as an *alternative* to  $C$ , so that the choice it describes  $x$  as having before her is spatiotemporally located just as in  $C$ , between the same options as in  $C$ , and both  $C$  and  $C^*$  include the same laws of nature (more conditions may need to be added here), (b) every consideration included in  $C$  in favor of  $x$  choosing  $A$  is present in  $C^*$  with at least as great a force in favor of  $x$  choosing  $A$ , (c) every consideration in  $C^*$  against  $x$  choosing  $A$  is present in  $C$  with at least as great a force against  $x$  choosing  $A$ , and (d) either (i) some consideration is present in  $C^*$  in favor of choosing  $A$  that either isn't present in  $C$  or does not favor  $A$  in  $C$  or favors  $A$  less in  $C$  than it does in  $C^*$  or (ii) some consideration is present in  $C$  against choosing  $A$  that either isn't present in  $C^*$  or does not count against  $A$  in  $C^*$  or opposes  $A$  less in  $C^*$  than it does in  $C$ . If we like, we might add the condition that the agent has no inclination to act unreasonably for the sake of acting unreasonably.

I shall only use the notion of domination for "appropriate" antecedents  $C$  and  $C^*$ , and I shall take it that appropriate antecedents are sufficiently determinate that whether  $C^*$  does or does not dominate  $C$  is not a contingent matter. Our principle now is:

- (CDP) Necessarily: If (a)  $C$  and  $C^*$  are antecedents appropriate to  $\langle x$  freely chooses  $A \rangle$ , (b)  $C^*$  dominates  $C$  for  $x$  choosing  $A$ , (c)  $C$  obtains, and (d)  $x$  freely chooses  $A$ , then  $C^* \rightarrow (x$  freely chooses  $A)$ .

Here,  $\langle . . \rangle$  is shorthand for "the proposition that . . .". I call this principle "categorical," because condition (d) talks of what  $x$  freely chooses, rather than what  $x$  would freely choose.

The “considerations” mentioned in the definition of domination are subjective in nature. What exactly they are depends on one’s theory of action, but they are meant to be all the subjective factors that influence the action. Candidates include one or more of: motives, desires, choice-relevant beliefs, subjective reasons, inclinations, etc.

The randomness objection to libertarian views of freedom holds that insofar as our choices are not determined by the considerations, they are random in a way that is incompatible with our responsibility. The most promising approach to responding to the randomness objection appears to be to hold that choices are always made *because of* considerations, even when the choices are not *determined* by these considerations.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to see how something can be a *choice* when it does not come from considerations. Moreover, there is a long-standing philosophical tradition that we choose under the guise of the good, a tradition that is common ground for many libertarians and compatibilists. But a part of what it is to choose under the guise of the good is to be moved in one’s choice by the apparent goodness of the options. And hence those who accept the guise of the good thesis are apt to also agree that our choices are made because of considerations. Granted, there is also a tradition, of which William James is perhaps the most famous exponent, on which free choices are ultimately reasonless. I shall simply assume that this tradition is mistaken.

But if choices are made because of considerations, libertarians, whether Molinist or not, should accept CDP. For, plausibly, a part of what one is saying when one says that an action was chosen *because of* the considerations in favor of the action is that the strength of the considerations in favor of the action and the weakness of the considerations against the action *explain* the action. But an explanation should have some robustness to it. This robustness is plausibly provided by the idea that if the considerations in favor of the action had been stronger and/or the considerations against the action had been weaker, and otherwise the circumstances remained relevantly the same, the agent would *a fortiori* have performed the action. There is significant dialectical benefit to the libertarian’s accepting such a principle, in that it gives a counterfactual robustness to reasons-based explanations that helps answer the randomness objection.

Compare this case. A rope is rated for 800 pounds. If you attach a load greater than 800, but less than 2000, pounds, it may or may not break—the outcome is indeterministic, with the probability of breakage steadily increasing with load. You hang 1000 pounds on the rope and it breaks. It would be very odd to say: “If you had hung more, maybe it wouldn’t have broken.” The intuition, surely, is that it would *a fortiori* have broken.

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<sup>9</sup>For libertarian accounts that proceed in this way, see, for instance, Randolph Clarke, “Indeterminism and Control,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1995), 125–138, or Robert H. Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (New York: Oxford, 1996). For a defense of a competing approach, not compatible with what I am defending here, see for instance Stewart C. Goetz, “A Noncausal Theory of Agency,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 49 (1988), 303–316.

Or consider this line of thought. Just before watching the game on television, Sally lays a wager of \$100 on the Steelers to win. The Steelers lose. Sally says: "Had I wagered on the other team, I would have won the wager." Now, the outcome of a football game depends on many free choices, and on typical accounts of appropriate antecedents for CCFs, Sally's wager will be a part of the circumstances of these choices, even though it is clearly causally irrelevant (of course one can rig the case so it becomes relevant). The case supports the idea that changing a causally irrelevant aspect of the circumstances should not affect the truth value of a CCF. This idea is intuitively quite plausible. But if changing causally irrelevant circumstances should not affect the CCF, then, *a fortiori*, changing the circumstances in a way that strictly promotes the consequent of the CCF should not turn a true CCF into a false one. Admittedly, there are Molinists who think you can have "bizarre" combinations of CCFs,<sup>10</sup> but it seems quite implausible that one could affect outcomes by doing things that are causally irrelevant to the outcomes.

The above line of thought is compatible with the idea that if you knew the considerations ahead of time, you would have predicted that the agent would probably have acted differently. The agent may make an objectively *unlikely* choice, acting on the basis of what is objectively a minor consideration. But even when the agent acts in an unlikely way on the basis of a minor consideration, her action is still explained by that consideration, and the explanation can still have counterfactual robustness: if that minor consideration were stronger, the agent would still have acted on it.

It's worth noting that CDP is particularly plausible given the Lewis-Stalnaker account of counterfactuals, since a world where one makes the same decision on account of the same considerations appears closer than a world where one not only makes a different decision but one acts against the very considerations that had moved one in the actual world. Thus the *non-Molinist* libertarian who accepts Lewis-Stalnaker semantics seems, in fact, to be *committed* to CDP by this line of thought. The Molinist will not be impressed by this argument, because either she rejects Lewis-Stalnaker semantics or takes the truth values of counterfactuals to be prior to similarity relations, but the argument is sufficient to at least show that CDP is compatible with libertarianism—that it does not, for instance, presuppose that actions are determined by reasons.

And of course, it is possible that in the dominating circumstances  $C^*$ ,  $x$  chooses otherwise than  $A$ , just as it is possible that in the original circumstances  $C$ ,  $x$  chooses otherwise than  $A$ . CDP is compatible with these claims. But *given* that  $x$  in fact chooses  $A$  in  $C$ , CDP claims that  $x$  would have chosen  $A$  in  $C^*$  as well as in  $C$ .

Now, consider the following modified principle which I will call simply the "Domination Principle":

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<sup>10</sup>E.g., see Flint, *Divine Providence*, 208.

(DP) Necessarily: If (a)  $C$  and  $C^*$  are antecedents appropriate to  $\langle x$  freely chooses  $A \rangle$ , (b)  $C^*$  dominates  $C$  for  $x$  choosing  $A$ , and (c)  $C \rightarrow (x$  freely chooses  $A)$ , then  $C^* \rightarrow (x$  freely chooses  $A)$ .

The reasons for accepting CDP are, I think, reasons for accepting DP as well. However, I can also give an explicit argument for DP from CDP under the simplifying assumption that it is within God's power to make  $C$  obtain and it is within God's power to make  $C$  not obtain. It is very plausible that if DP holds with this simplifying assumption, it also holds without it, but in any case in the anti-FWD application we will need DP for, this simplifying assumption will be satisfied. (The simplifying assumption may fail in cases where  $C$  itself involves prior creaturely free choices.)

Suppose that conditions (a)–(c) of DP are satisfied at a world  $w$ , and assume CDP, and suppose that both  $C$  and its denial are within God's power. Let  $F$  be  $\langle x$  freely chooses  $A \rangle$ . For a *reductio*, suppose that it is not true at  $w$  that  $C^* \rightarrow F$ . For the sake of brevity, assume that  $w$  is the actual world. So, we have  $(C \rightarrow F) \ \& \ \sim(C^* \rightarrow F)$ . Now, were  $C$  to hold, then  $(C \rightarrow F) \ \& \ \sim(C^* \rightarrow F)$  would *still* hold. For it is within God's power to make  $C$  hold, but according to standard Molinism it is not within God's power to affect the truth values of CCFs with appropriate antecedents, and if the truth values of  $C \rightarrow F$  or of  $C^* \rightarrow F$  would have been different had  $C$  held, then God would have had the power to affect the truth values of CCFs, namely by making or not making  $C$  hold. Therefore:

$$(3) \ C \rightarrow ((C \rightarrow F) \ \& \ \sim(C^* \rightarrow F)).$$

Now, I will make use of three axioms about counterfactuals with possibly true antecedents (recall that all "appropriate" antecedents are possibly true):

$$(4) \ \text{If } p \rightarrow q, \text{ then } p \rightarrow (p \ \& \ q).$$

$$(5) \ \text{If } p \rightarrow q \text{ and necessarily } (q \text{ if and only if } r), \text{ then } p \rightarrow r.$$

$$(6) \ \text{Necessarily: If } p \text{ and } p \rightarrow q, \text{ then } q.$$

It is a very easy exercise to see that from (3)–(6) we can derive:

$$(7) \ C \rightarrow (C \ \& \ F \ \& \ (C \rightarrow F) \ \& \ \sim(C^* \rightarrow F)).^{11}$$

Now, neither domination nor appropriateness of antecedents are contingent matters. Therefore, conditions (a) and (b) in CDP hold necessarily if they hold at  $w$  (which we assumed was the actual world), and so CDP tells us that:

$$(8) \ \text{Necessarily: If } C \ \& \ F, \text{ then } C^* \rightarrow F.$$

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<sup>11</sup>By (3) and (4), we have  $C \rightarrow (C \ \& \ (C \rightarrow F) \ \& \ \sim(C^* \rightarrow F))$ . By (6), we have necessarily:  $C \ \& \ (C \rightarrow F)$  if and only if  $C \ \& \ F \ \& \ (C \rightarrow F)$ . Applying (5) and the fact that  $C \rightarrow (C \ \& \ (C \rightarrow F) \ \& \ \sim(C^* \rightarrow F))$ , we obtain (7).

Therefore:

(9) Necessarily:  $C \ \& \ F$  if and only if  $C \ \& \ F \ \& \ (C^* \rightarrow F)$ .

By (5), (7) and (9) we get:

(10)  $C \rightarrow (C \ \& \ F \ \& \ (C^* \rightarrow F)) \ \& \ (C \rightarrow F) \ \& \ \sim(C^* \rightarrow F)$ .

But the consequent of (10) is contradictory, and plausibly a counterfactual with possible antecedent and impossible consequent is always false. Hence, we have an absurdity, and so the assumption that  $C^* \rightarrow F$  is not true at  $w$  (which for convenience we took to be the actual world) must be rejected. And, thus, DP is true.

### 3. The Construction

Consider a family  $W$  of worlds at each of which God creates Eve, an apple and a dancing jig. At  $t_1$ , Eve must freely choose between either eating the apple or dancing a jig. She cannot do both and she cannot fail to choose one of these two options.<sup>12</sup> These facts are going to be all a part of all the relevant appropriate antecedents. Let  $A = \langle \text{At } t_1 \text{ Eve chooses to eat the apple} \rangle$ , and  $J = \langle \text{At } t_1 \text{ Eve chooses to dance the jig} \rangle$ . Moreover, in the worlds in  $W$ , this is the only free choice any creature ever gets, and the laws of nature are deterministic except for that choice. In all the worlds in  $W$ , Eve wants to eat the apple on account of its yumminess and to dance the jig on account of merriness. In none of the worlds in  $W$  is Eve in any way motivated by a desire to act contrary to the will of God *as such* or inclined to act unreasonably, but Eve does have a motivation, though not an overwhelming one, to obey God. There are no other relevant desires (in some subsequent discussions, this condition will be relaxed).

Now, consider a world  $w_j$  in  $W$ . In  $w_j$ , God forbade Eve to eat the apple (I stipulate that whenever I talk of prohibitions, the agent under the prohibition is aware of the prohibition), and Eve chose to dance the jig. Let  $C$  be the antecedent appropriate to  $J$  in  $w_j$ . This will presumably include God's forbidding Eve from eating the apple, the apple's looking yummy to Eve, and Eve's enjoying jigs, as well as other relevant facts. Moreover, there is a world  $w_A$  at which  $C$  also holds, but where, alas, Eve chooses to eat the apple.

Next, let  $w_j^*$  be a world just like  $w_j$ , except that in  $w_j^*$ , God forbade Eve to dance the jig instead of forbidding eating the apple, but Eve still chose to dance the jig just as in  $w_j$ . Let  $C^*$  be the antecedent appropriate to  $J$  in  $w_j^*$ . This will be very much like  $C$ , except that instead of including God's forbidding Eve from eating the apple, it includes God's forbidding her

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Flint notes that some libertarians will say that it is always possible simply to *refrain* from acting. If so, then modify the example. Eve has a choice whether to eat the apple or not. If she chooses not to eat the apple, a law of nature will *determine* her to dance a jig. She is no longer choosing between eating the apple and dancing a jig, but between eating the apple or acting in a way (viz., refraining from eating the apple) that necessitates her dancing a jig. The rest of the argument can adapt to this.

from dancing the jig. Finally, let  $w_A^*$  be a world just like  $w_J^*$ , with the same divine prohibition on dancing a jig, except that Eve eats the apple there.

I shall assume that Eve has a moral obligation—perhaps in virtue of benefits received or her relationship with God—to obey God. Thus, in  $w_J$  and  $w_A$ , Eve is prohibited from eating the apple, whereas in  $w_J^*$  and  $w_A^*$ , Eve is instead prohibited from dancing the jig.

Observe that both  $w_J$  and  $w_A^*$  are morally perfect worlds: there is significant creaturely freedom, and nobody does wrong. I will now show that if standard Molinism holds, then God can actualize  $w_J$  or God can actualize  $w_A^*$ . All my premises will be necessary truths, and so the argument will establish (assuming standard Molinism) that, necessarily, God can actualize a morally perfect world, which is all I need to show to refute Plantinga's FWD.

To see this, observe that if  $C \rightarrow J$ , then God can actualize  $w_J$  by making  $C$  hold. And if  $C^* \rightarrow A$ , then God can actualize  $w_A^*$  by making  $C^*$  hold. Hence, it suffices to show that  $C \rightarrow J$  or  $C^* \rightarrow A$ . Moreover, if I can show this using only necessary truths as premises, then it will follow that transworld depravity is necessarily false, since Eve would either be significantly free and sinless were  $C$  to hold and were she to have no further opportunities for significantly free action, or else she would be significantly free and sinless were  $C^*$  to hold and were she to have no further opportunities for significantly free action.

I will now show that  $C \rightarrow J$  or  $C^* \rightarrow A$  by showing that if  $\sim(C \rightarrow J)$ , then  $C^* \rightarrow A$ . To that end, suppose  $\sim(C \rightarrow J)$ . Then, by CLEM as restricted to CCFs,  $C \rightarrow \sim J$  is true. Moreover, because according to  $C$ , Eve must choose between the jig and the apple, it follows that  $C \rightarrow A$  is true. But  $C^*$  dominates  $C$  in respect of Eve choosing to eat the apple. For, all the considerations present in  $C$  in favor of Eve's eating the apple are also present in  $C^*$  with equal strength: the apple is just as yummy in  $C^*$  as in  $C$ , and Eve has no motivation to disobey God *as such*, so the fact that in  $C^*$  Eve is not forbidden to eat the apple does not constitute a reason against eating the apple. Similarly, all the considerations present in  $C^*$  against eating the apple are also present in  $C$  with equal strength: the jig is just as merry in  $C$  as in  $C^*$ , and Eve has no desire to disobey God *as such*. On the other hand, there is a consideration in  $C$  against eating the apple that is not present in  $C^*$ : according to  $C$ , God has prohibited eating the apple, and Eve has a motivation to obey God. Hence, indeed, we have domination. Since  $C \rightarrow A$ , it follows by DP that  $C^* \rightarrow A$ . Hence, we have shown that if  $\sim(C \rightarrow J)$ , then  $C^* \rightarrow A$ .

Thus, we have shown that God can actualize  $w_J$  or God can actualize  $w_A^*$ . Since both are morally perfect, it follows that God can actualize a morally perfect world. Moreover, all the premises in the argument were necessary truths. Hence, necessarily, God can actualize a morally perfect world.

It is pretty intuitive that if Eve would eat the apple given  $C$  despite the prohibition, she would *a fortiori* eat the apple given  $C^*$ . Granted, sometimes, the fact that something is prohibited may motivate one—think of

the use of "sinful" in advertising—but we have assumed that Eve does not suffer from that perversity.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. Objections

*Objection 1:* The construction supposes that it is wrong for Eve to disobey God. But, as Mark Murphy has argued at length,<sup>14</sup> there is no duty for  $x$  to obey God absent a special relationship between God and  $x$ , and without Eve having earlier been free, there is no way to ensure there is such a special relationship.

*Response:* Rather than refuting Murphy's argument, the simplest response is just to modify the case to evade the objection. Instead of letting  $w_A$  and  $w_J$  be worlds where God has forbidden eating the apple, let them be worlds where Eve knows that eating the apple causes (through some odd causal law) a severe harm to some non-consenting third party who does not deserve the harm (e.g., an Adam who is not significantly free). Then let  $w_A^*$  and  $w_J^*$  be just like that, except this time it is the dancing of the jig that is known to cause the harm. It's wrong to eat an apple or dance a jig simply on account of yumminess or merriment at the cost of severe harm to a third party, and the rest of the argument goes through. Similar cases can be multiplied.

*Objection 2:* Surely God has good reason to create a world with more than one significantly free creature. But the example in this paper only shows that God could create a world with one significantly free creature that never goes wrong.

*Response:* The example generalizes. I will leave the details to the interested reader, but sketch the idea. Consider worlds with  $n$  persons,  $E_1, \dots, E_n$ . Each is facing a simultaneous and independent (maybe they are doing this in far-separated parts of Eden) choice whether to eat an apple or dance a jig, and each is either forbidden the apple or forbidden the jig. Now, there are  $2^n$  possible combinations of relevant divine prohibitions: maybe  $E_1$  is forbidden the apple,  $E_2$  the jig, and so on. We also assume that the prohibitions are individually and independently communicated to each person, so that what each person does is, plausibly (see also the discussion of CRP, below), counterfactually independent of any combination of others' actions and of divine commands to others. DP then ensures that God can choose what to command  $E_i$  such that  $E_i$  would obey. If  $E_i$  is such that she would eat the apple were she forbidden it, then by DP,  $E_i$  would also eat the apple were she forbidden the jig instead, so God need only forbid the jig to  $E_i$ . And if  $E_i$  is not such that she would eat the apple were she forbidden it, and hence (by restricted CLEM) she is such that she would *not* eat the apple were she forbidden the apple, then God can safely forbid her to eat the apple. And, so, God can ensure that everybody makes the right significantly free choice.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Otte, "Transworld Depravity and Unobtainable Worlds."

<sup>14</sup>Mark Murphy, *An Essay on Divine Authority* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2002).

*Objection 3:* Libertarians with whom I've discussed principles like CDP and DP have tended to deny them. One intuitive reason for the denial appears to be the Counterfactual Repeat Intuition:

(CRI) If an agent freely chooses *A* in circumstances *C*, then it is possible that if the memories of her choice and of its consequences were deleted and she were put for a second time in circumstances just like *C*, she would or at least might choose differently from how she did the first time.

*Response:* I am happy to endorse CRI. But I do not know of a good argument from CRI to the denial of CDP. CDP does not talk of a *repeat* of *C*. It talks of the agent having *instead* been in *C\**.

Consider again the case of Sally who has wagered \$100 on the Steelers and lost. I think we should affirm *both* of the following two claims:

- (11) The Steelers would still have lost had Sally wagered on the other team.
- (12) It is possible that had the memories of all the participants in the game been erased, and had they all been put in the same circumstances, the Steelers would or at least might have won.

We should affirm (11) because Sally's wager was causally irrelevant. But we should also affirm (12) because the players could make different choices next time around. Thus it is quite possible to affirm instances of the CRI, while holding that in other but very similar circumstances, the agents would have acted the same way. Likewise it should be possible to hold that in dominating circumstances, the agents would have acted in the same way.

*Objection 4:* DP (and (1), CDP and CRP) involve a different kind of subjunctive conditional from that involved in DI and in Plantinga's Molinist CCFs. For instance, perhaps, the conditionals in DP are Lewis-Stalnaker similarity-based conditionals or maybe Edgington-style conditional-probability conditionals,<sup>15</sup> while the Molinist CCFs that God is guided by are *sui generis*, and this difference in the kinds of conditionals explains the clash in intuitions between those behind DI and those behind DP.

*Response:* I think this objection is plausible, but fatal to Molinism if correct. The reason it is fatal to Molinism is that it leaves the Molinist conditionals without a sufficiently robust connection to ordinary language. For instance, (1) is a paradigm example of the sort of conditional of free will that comes up in ordinary language. Indeed, I submit that in ordinary language, when we talk about what people *would* have done, we either are making probabilistic claims on the basis of similar circumstances they were in (conditional-probability conditionals) or else we are making claims, informed by principles like CDP, about what people would have done, while keeping fixed as much as possible of their actual decision-making (this

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<sup>15</sup>Dorothy Edgington, "On Conditionals," *Mind* 104 (1995), 235–329.

might be rather like Lewis-Stalnaker conditionals). Plantinga's (1) is one of these last ones: we keep fixed as much as possible of Smith's motivations for his choice when we move to the counterfactual scenario. If Molinist CCFs are completely different from these ordinary language subjunctive conditional claims about free choices, then, I submit, we really have no idea what the Molinist CCFs mean and why they would be relevant to divine decisions. If this is right, then the Molinist cannot deny CDP (and hence DP) without undercutting Molinism.

*Objection 5:* CDP is implausible in the case of patently unreasonable choices. For instance, suppose Jim chooses a searing pain of magnitude 9 (on a 10 point scale) in place of a burning pain of magnitude 5, even though he prefers a smaller pain to a greater and has no belief that pain will make him stronger or the like. He just chooses that which he dis-prefers. Let  $C$  be the actual appropriate antecedent. Let  $C^*$  be a modified antecedent in a case where the searing pain has only magnitude 4, and the burning pain still has magnitude 5. Given Jim's weirdness, it is far from clear that in  $C^*$ , Jim would have chosen the searing pain, even though  $C^*$  dominates  $C$  in respect of choosing the searing pain.

*Response:* It is not clear whether Jim's case is possible. In the case described, Jim does not act on account of any considerations. In this regard, he differs from the masochist for whom the magnitude of pain may be a consideration in favor of the pain. Thus, if we take acting on considerations to be a necessary condition for making a choice, we need to dismiss Jim's case as impossible. And if we modify the case to that of the masochist, then it becomes false that  $C^*$  dominates  $C$  in respect of choosing the searing pain. If, on the other hand, we attribute to Jim an inclination to act patently unreasonably, then either the same response as in the case of the masochist works or else, as I suggested earlier, in the definition of domination we need only add the condition that the agent has no inclination to act unreasonably for its own sake.

*Objection 6:* It is possible, *pace* everything that has been said about the randomness objection to libertarianism, to make reasonless choices—choices that do not come from any consideration.

*Response:* I can grant this and still run a variant of the argument. Simply add an extra condition to the antecedents in the necessary conditional in DP that  $x$  is unable to make a reasonless choice. Maybe  $x$  is psychologically incapable of that, or maybe God makes it impossible for  $x$ . And then stipulate in the construction of my counterexample worlds that Eve is unable to make a reasonless choice. Granted, if normally people can make reasonless choices, this will restrict Eve's freedom. But since she has two non-reasonless options available to her, and one of them is wrong and the other isn't, she is still significantly free. Our freedom typically *is* restricted in various ways. A choice between punching someone who insulted me and ignoring the insult can be significantly free even if I am psychologically incapable of smiling gently in response to the insult. What is needed is that the choice not be so restricted that there be no significant freedom left.

The only real danger to the argument would be from a claim that not only are reasonless choices *sometimes* possible, but that they are *always* possible when an agent is facing a choice. This seems implausible. All sorts of restrictions on our freedom are possible. It is possible, for instance, that one be psychologically incapable of choosing on the basis of aesthetic reasons. Why couldn't one, then, be psychologically incapable of choosing reasonlessly?

Moreover, reasonless choices appear to be subject to the randomness objection against libertarianism. But if they are subject to the randomness objection, then reasonless choices are not something the agent is morally responsible for and are not *free* choices.

*Objection 7:* God may want more than a world where everybody is significantly free and always does what is right: he may want a world where some creature makes a significantly free choice *out of duty*. In my examples of "morally perfect worlds," Eve dances the jig or eats the apple because of the jig's merriness or the apple's yumminess. Granted, she is obligated to choose as she does, because the other choice is forbidden, but it does not seem that she chooses *because* of the obligation. It may still be that, given the contingent values of CCFs, God's only way of getting a world where a creature acts significantly freely out of duty is to actualize a world where some (other or same) creature does wrong. (This suggestion was basically made by Michael Bergmann in correspondence.)

*Response:* This objection amounts to a new Molinist FWD, not based on the possibility of transworld depravity but on the possibility that the CCFs preclude God from actualizing a world where both nobody does wrong and yet some creature acts significantly freely *out of duty*. A fuller evaluation of this FWD may well require a deeper analysis of the logic of CCFs as well as of the nature of motivation. After all, the counterexample to Plantinga's FWD has shown that not all *prima facie* possible combinations of truth values of CCFs are in fact possible: DP places a significant constraint on the combinatorics. There may be other such constraints, and if one wishes to give a fully satisfactory Plantinga-style defense, the onus of proof is now on one to show that the given combination of truth values of CCFs that one posits the possibility of is in fact possible.

However, a further response can be made. We can imagine an agent who has the property of *motivational maximalism* in respect of a decision: necessarily, when she chooses an action *A*, she acts on *all* the undefeated considerations that favor *A* (or disfavor non-*A*—I shall neglect this disjunct below). Her rationality is such that she is simply unable to ignore any considerations that she neither is choosing against nor has a defeater for. One might even think that *all* agents have motivational maximalism in their choices, but there is no need for that controversial, and probably false, assumption.

What I need here is that motivational maximalism is compatible with significant freedom, and this appears quite plausible. Now, then, simply add to my stories about Eve the assumption that she has motivational

maximalism and that she has a consideration in favor of doing her duty. Then, in these refined versions of  $w_j$  and  $w_A^*$ , Eve acts from all her considerations in favor of the jig and the apple, respectively, and duty is among these considerations.

Now, maybe, this does not satisfy. For, maybe, God would want an agent not only to choose significantly freely, but to choose it *solely* out of duty. But it is not clear that this is all that desirable. It may well be the case that, necessarily, whenever one has a duty to do something, there is some other reason for the action which a virtuous agent will also be moved by. It is one's duty to visit a sick friend, and virtuous agents act on their duties. But the virtuous agent will visit her friend not *just* out of duty, but *also* out of a desire to be with her friend. If this kind of a choice with mixed motives is the best kind of choice, then there will be no special value in choosing something *solely* out of duty, and so God will have no special reason to prefer a world where somebody does that. And Eve's motives of yumminess and merriness may well in fact be motives that a virtuous person would have: a virtuous person appreciates perceptual goods and rejoices in good circumstances—we may even, if we so wish, add a theological significance to the yumminess and merriness (enjoying and rejoicing in God's creation, respectively).

Or maybe the case I gave where Eve has motivational maximalism is unsatisfactory because the motivational maximalism is imposed on her by God, rather than a result of her formation of her own character. But further wielding of DP could, perhaps, ensure that Eve *earlier* achieved motivational maximalism through free choices. For instance, maybe prior to her apple/jig choice, she had a choice between a pear and a waltz, in which choice she had a consideration in favor of gaining motivational maximalism and none to the contrary, and the situation was set up so that she knew which one of her potential choices would lead to her character changing in a way that would make her have motivational maximalism. By choosing whether the causal connection to motivational maximalism is tied to the pear or to the waltz, God could ensure that Eve chose motivational maximalism and did so freely, at least if standard Molinism is compatible with freedom. And then God inserts the apple/jig choice, as in my original case.

The point of this response is not the rejection of all possible Molinist defenses along the lines of the "out of duty" suggestion. The point is simply to highlight that finding an alternative along these lines is not easy and requires significant additional effort going beyond Plantinga's FWD.

*Objection 8.* Whenever one engages in a significantly free choice, one *always* has available to one the possibility of engaging in the wrong choice for the sake of rebelliously asserting one's autonomy against God or the moral law. But it was crucial to the domination condition in the story about Eve that Eve had no reason to do wrong just because it was wrong.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>This objection is due to Thomas Flint.

*Response:* While it is certainly *possible* to make such a demonic decision, it does not seem psychologically plausible that *every* significantly free choice has to include this possibility. A significantly free choice needs to include one option that is wrong and one option that is not wrong—nothing more. But while the theist can say *in* every wrongdoing one is at least implicitly rebelling against God, it is not plausible that in every wrongdoing one is acting as one does *because* the action is a rebellion against God. A person could cheat on her taxes to get money to buy a yacht or commit adultery to avoid loneliness or continue sinning out of a perversion of the desire to experience God's grace (cf. Romans 6:1). Thus the notion of a significantly free choice does not require the possibility of such a demonic decision. And just as a significantly free individual can be blind to aesthetic reasons, she can also be blind to demonic reasons.

### 5. Closing Remarks

A FWD is an argument that possibly an omniscient, omnipotent and perfectly good being could create a world containing evil. If DP is true, then the most famous version of the FWD, Plantinga's Molinist FWD, does not work. However, non-Molinist FWDs continue to have a chance of working. It was essential to the argument that God be in a position to choose between actualizing  $w_1$  and actualizing  $w_A^*$  on the basis of his knowledge of CCFs, and that required Molinism. If, for instance, CCFs have no truth values, or they are all false, or God only knows the truth values of a few CCFs and his knowledge is explanatorily posterior to his decision of which world to actualize, then the argument will fail to establish that God had the power to knowingly actualize a morally perfect world. Indeed, Adams has offered a defense based on such assumptions<sup>17</sup> and Plantinga himself thought that it is easier to offer a FWD in the absence of Molinism.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, FWDs that are not based on God's possible inability to actualize a morally perfect world are unaffected.<sup>19</sup>

Plantinga's thesis of the possibility of transworld depravity required an appropriate independence thesis for CCFs, such as that when  $C$  and  $C^*$  are logically incompatible and appropriate, then  $C \rightarrow F$  and  $C^* \rightarrow G$  are going to be logically independent. DP questions such independence assumptions. An interesting question would be to map out more of the logical structure of the space of CCFs. Is it, for instance, the case that *all* combinatorial combinations of truth-values of CCFs consistent with DP and some logical axioms about counterfactuals are possible? Or are there other substantive axioms that need to be added? The question is interesting in itself, and important to FWDs. It will, for instance, be relevant to a fuller evaluation

<sup>17</sup>Adams, "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil," 90–91.

<sup>18</sup>Alvin Plantinga, "Reply to Adams," in Tomberlin van Inwagen, *Alvin Plantinga*.

<sup>19</sup>For instance, Alexander R. Pruss, "A New Free-Will Defense," *Religious Studies* 39 (2003), 211–223.

of Molinist defenses like the one discussed in the seventh objection in the preceding section.

The Molinist defender of Plantinga's FWD should probably deny CDP and DP. In justification of this denial, she may very well be forced to accept a version of libertarianism on which free choices need not be explained, even indeterministically, by any considerations. This would allow the Molinist to hold that CCFs enjoy a logical independence from one another, so that, for instance, if  $C$  and  $C^*$  are logically incompatible and appropriate, then  $C \rightarrow F$  and  $C^* \rightarrow G$  are logically independent. It appears that Plantinga's FWD requires some such logical independence thesis in order to ensure the possibility of the scenario where all the CCFs come out in a way that precludes God from actualizing a morally perfect world.<sup>20</sup>

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