

## CHAPTER FOUR

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# THREE CRITICAL CONCEPTS

Three important concepts need clarification before I can proceed with my case for divine determinism. In this chapter I discuss divine transcendence, common sense, free will, and other important related concepts.

## **Transcendence**

What does it mean for God to be transcendent? In many respects, the doctrine of divine determinism hinges on whether God transcends reality. More specifically, it hinges on the exact nature of his transcendence. A clear grasp of divine transcendence and its implications is critical to the defense of divine determinism.

My contention is that to be transcendent is to exist in complete independence from that which is transcended. To say that God transcends the cosmos is to say that God's existence is completely independent of cosmic existence. His being does not depend upon the existence of the universe in any way. He did not begin with the universe; he will not end with the universe. The Bible teaches, in effect, "Before the beginning of anything at all, God was there."

God exists on an entirely higher level than created reality. Created reality depends upon God for its existence. If he does not will and cause it to exist, it will not exist. But divine existence does not depend upon created reality in the same way. He exists whether there is a created order or not. He is self-existent—that is, he contains the explanation for why he exists within the very nature of the sort of being that he is. While we can affirm the statement "the universe exists" just as validly as "God exists," we must not be deceived. They do not mean the same thing. The universe was created; God is self-existent.

Humans exist on the same level of reality as the created cosmos. We are simply a part of created reality. Accordingly, we do not live on the same level as God. If you took an Acme Super-Deluxe Metaphysical Eraser and erased the whole of created reality, we would be gone, but God would still exist.

A more typical conception of divine transcendence exists: namely, that

God transcends not the created realm, but the *physical* realm. It is conceived as a synonym for spiritual. Under this typical conception, transcendence means that God exists in the same realm as angels, Satan, and demons. It means that God's existence is not dependent upon material reality, that he exists without material substance. Under this conception, God is no more transcendent than other spiritual beings—angels, Satan, or demons—for they all transcend the material realm. God is more powerful, in possession of greater authority, but—under this conception—he exists on the same level of reality as they.

The biblical conception of transcendence is more radical than this. Specifically, God transcends the spiritual—the heavenly—realm just as surely as he does the physical realm. God is not made of the same spiritual stuff as angels. He is not made at all! He is the creator, not the created. He is the creator of both realms—the physical and the spiritual. Both exist only because God—who existed before either of them—willed them into existence.

Understanding this biblical conception of transcendence is critical to understanding my defense of divine determinism. Divine transcendence refers to God's existing behind, beyond, above, and below everything in all of reality, including heaven and the spiritual realm. (See Diagram 4.1) God does not live at the top of the hierarchy of created being. He exists outside the hierarchy altogether. He lives outside as its maker, not inside as its king.

As so defined, transcendence is something that will never describe me. No human will ever transcend created reality. I will always be a creature. I could never be otherwise. No matter what different sort of existence God might grant me in the age to come, it will necessarily be a created existence, derived from and dependent upon him, the creator. God is unique in his transcendence. He is the one and only author of all things. He alone exists above and beyond created reality. Only he is “outside the box.”

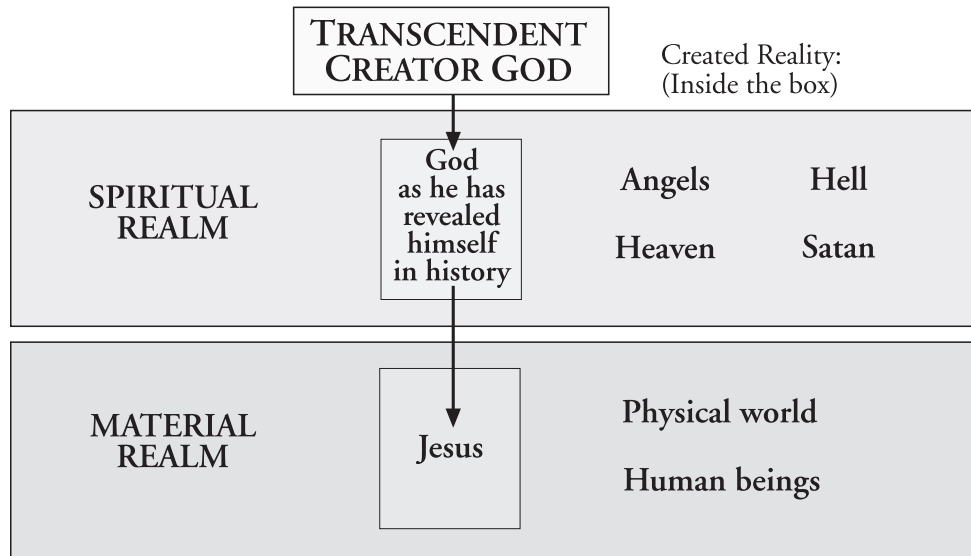


Diagram 4.1 The Concept of Transcendence

## THE AUTHOR METAPHOR: UNDERSTANDING TRANSCENDENCE

I claimed above that we humans will never transcend created reality. Can we, therefore, never understand what it means to be transcendent? Must transcendence remain an empty, abstract concept for us? No! As a matter of fact we can experience transcendence. Granted, we can never transcend the created cosmos. But we can transcend something.

Consider, for example, the relationship that would exist between you and the imaginary world of a novel you were writing. You, the author, are its transcendent creator. You are not a part of that world; you exist above and outside it. Every fictional character in that novel “moves, and lives, and has his being” in you. (See Acts 17:28) Everything that exists and everything that happens does so only at the determination of your will. To the extent that you understand the power, the absolute control, the absolute distance, and the complete otherness that defines your relationship to that fictional world, you understand transcendence.

God’s transcendence of our reality is exactly analogous to this relationship between an author and the work of his imagination.<sup>40</sup> God is the

40. As will become clear in part 4, the power of this author analogy to explicate the nature of divine transcendence is an extremely important tenet of this book.

author of our reality; we are characters in the story he is telling. In his fundamental essence, he is not a part of this reality; he is the one who lies behind it as its creator. Only when we understand God in this light—as the author of all reality—do we understand his transcendence.

## THE TRANSCENDENT GOD AND THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

As noted earlier, God is transcendent, not because he sits atop the hierarchy of beings, but because he exists outside and apart from the hierarchy of beings altogether. God lives outside that hierarchy as its maker, not inside as its king. He is not merely God, the Most Powerful. He is God, the Wholly Other.

Yet the Bible clearly and unabashedly presents God as the almighty king ruling over his creation. If he is the completely transcendent author we have been describing, how can the Bible describe him as the almighty king *within* reality?

The answer lies in an understanding of God's prerogatives as author of all reality. The author of a novel can always write himself into his own story in two ways: (1) he can give himself a distinct identity with a part to play within the story of the novel, or (2) he can create an actual being within the fictional reality of his novel that he, the author, identifies as himself. God, the author of our reality, has done both.

## TRANSCENDENCE AND YAHWEH

Suppose I am writing a mystery. I want to play the role of secret informant within my story. I do not want to create a fictional character to be the informant. Rather, from my position outside that fictional reality, I want to *be* the informant myself. How could I do that? Simply by revealing myself to the relevant characters within my novel and disclosing what I want them to know.

I could make myself manifest to them however and whenever I wanted. There is no limit to how I might reveal myself. I could speak out of a bunch of flowers, a lamp, or an ashtray. I could whisper secrets to them from out of a curtain. I could broadcast what I know in a loud, deafening voice from the sky. Any means whatsoever is at my disposal.

Nor is there any limit to what I would know. I would know every word of every secret conversation that each of my characters have had. I would know their every hidden thought. Hence, there would be no limit to the

knowledge I would have to disclose.

The first sense in which God has written himself into our reality is exactly analogous to this. God has given himself a role to play within cosmic history, and he has given himself a distinct identity to make known to us. As the transcendent author of all created reality, he could easily have remained invisible in the background—creator of everything, explicitly manifest in nothing. But God has not chosen to remain invisible. He has chosen to make himself known as a distinct, identifiable being, and to play a part in the history of the cosmos. He has acted and he has spoken. In the form of a burning bush, as a deafening voice emanating from a quaking mountain, and as a still small voice, he has spoken. In many different shapes, in many different voices, and in many different situations, he has spoken. He exists nowhere in the reality we inhabit; yet he can manifest himself anywhere within it, at any time, and in any form.

The transcendent God has given himself a name—Yahweh. And as Yahweh, he has given himself a part to play. As Yahweh, he has revealed to us who he is, what he expects, and what role he plays in our lives and our destiny. As Yahweh, he is the almighty king over all. He is the lawgiver. He is the judge. He is the one who has adopted Israel to be his people. He is the one who controls the course of history. He expects us to fear him, to love him, and to obey him. He has warned us: how we relate to him defines the nature of our destiny. In brief, God (Yahweh) has given himself a definable character with a set of definable roles within the drama of cosmic history, and he has spoken and acted within history to make that character known to us.

We must not lose sight of a vital distinction between Yahweh insofar as he plays a role in cosmic history and Yahweh the transcendent author. Yahweh-the-God-of-Israel commands Israel to obey, expects them to obey, and promises that he will punish them if they do not. Yahweh the transcendent author of all reality decides whether, at this particular juncture, the people of Israel will or will not obey their God. And it is Yahweh, the transcendent author of all reality, who creates in their hearts the inclination or disinclination to do so. In the first case, Yahweh is an actor within the drama. He is Yahweh the lawgiver. In the second case, he is the ultimate author of all that is. The latter is who Yahweh is, in and of himself; the former is who he is in his role in cosmic history. With respect to his nature and being, Yahweh is the transcendent author of all reality. But with respect to the part he is playing in the cosmic drama, Yahweh is Judge of all mankind, the exalted King over all creation. God's part is performed within the warp and woof of our reality; God's being lies above, beyond, and apart from it. Yahweh is never a being within created reality, existing

as a permanent, distinct being on our level of existence. Rather—even as he plays out his role as Judge and exalted King—Yahweh is the transcendent God himself, revealing himself to humankind in his self-determined role. While he plays the particular part that he has assigned to himself, his being lies outside our reality, sufficient unto itself.

We can illustrate this distinction this way: If you took the aforementioned Acme Super-Deluxe Metaphysical Eraser and erased created reality, you would erase Yahweh the Almighty King. But Yahweh himself would remain. If created reality ceased to be, Yahweh's role within it would cease to have any meaning; indeed, it would cease to exist. What could it possibly mean to be the Almighty King over the entire universe if there were no universe? But the self-existent, transcendent Yahweh exists whether he has a role in cosmic history or not. Our eraser could never touch Yahweh-the-transcendent-author.

## JESUS AND TRANSCENDENCE

As I stated above, there is a second way an author can write himself into a story he is creating. He can create a character within the story to be identical to himself.

I am writing that aforementioned mystery. I decide that I want to be the detective, and not the informant, within the story. It would be absurd, of course, to think that I—a human being—could literally be absorbed into the reality being created in my novel. It would be absurd to think that I—a flesh and blood human being—could be a fictional character within it. But I could create a character to be me. This character would exist alongside all the other characters, but my intention would be for that particular fictional character—the detective—to be me.

While this fictional character is me, he would be different from me in a very important sense. His existence is tied to the fictional world I have created. He does not transcend it; he is a part of it. On the other hand, as the author, I transcend that imaginary reality, and my existence is in no way linked to it.

By creating a being in my novel that I identify as myself, I both transcend the reality I am creating and, simultaneously, exist and function within it. I function within it through the character I have made identical to myself; I transcend it as the human author that I am.

The second sense in which God has written himself into cosmic history is exactly analogous to this. God, the transcendent author, has created

a being within created reality to be identical to himself—a being who accurately reflects who he, the transcendent God, is. To be specific, he created Jesus.<sup>41</sup>

Jesus is a being within the same realm of existence we inhabit. He exists in exactly the same sense that we do. He has exactly the same kind of being that we have. His existence is as fully dependent on the will of his creator as ours is. In other words, Jesus is fully and unmistakably human. But, at the same time, Jesus is uniquely God himself. The transcendent author of all reality created a man to be him. For all eternity, that man Jesus—the transcendent creator’s representation of himself in human form—will be the eternal king of all the universe.

## THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Traditionally, the power and authority that God has over his creation has been designated by the term ‘sovereignty’. This term is too vague for our purposes. ‘Sovereignty’ designates God’s kingship over the cosmos. It describes God as the one who sits at the apex of the hierarchy of being. It is a fitting description of the King and Judge of all the earth. But it does not go far enough. To call Yahweh sovereign does not, in and of itself, necessitate his transcendence. It does not imply that he is a revelation of the transcendent author of all reality who exists wholly apart from the cosmos.<sup>42</sup> To conceive of a God who is sovereign while not being transcendent is entirely possible.<sup>43</sup> The term ‘sovereignty’, therefore, is inadequate to affirm all that the Bible teaches about God. God is not just infinitely more powerful than anything else in the cosmos. He is the very cause of its existence. He is the ground of its very being. It is in him that all things live and move and have their very being. (*cf.* Acts 17:28)

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41. This is why Paul can write of Jesus, “And he is the image of the invisible God.” (*cf.* Colossians 1:15)

42. I believe that to describe God as “wholly other” or as the “Wholly Other” can be helpful and accurate. But I do not agree with Karl Barth’s view. While I can accept Barth’s title for God, I do not accept his view that God’s otherness makes him unknowable. Hopefully, I will make it clear that, while God is wholly other, he is fully capable of making himself truly known to us.

43. This, I would argue, is how the Babylonians conceived of Marduk, for example. The Babylonians did not understand Marduk to be transcendent as I am defining that. Marduk was just as much a part of reality as the Babylonians themselves were. But Marduk was the most powerful force within our reality. He was literally at the apex of the hierarchy of being. As such, he had to be heeded. See appendix J for a more extensive discussion of ancient polytheism and its concept of a god.

This work, therefore, is not merely a defense of the absolute sovereignty of God; rather, it is a defense of his absolute transcendence—of his being the ground of all that exists and occurs. It is an affirmation that God determines all that is and all that happens. This is my thesis: *to reject divine determinism is to deny the transcendence of God*. Or, at the very least, it is to conceive of his transcendence as only a transcendence of the material world, not of reality itself.

## Common Sense

### DEFINITIONS AND A CONVENTION

‘Common sense’ can be used to mean very different things. One popular notion of common sense could be defined:

**COMMON SENSE** *is that set of beliefs widely (if not universally) embraced by mankind everywhere.*

This is not how I shall use the term. While my arguments presuppose the reliability of common sense, they are not based on the reliability of popularly-held belief. Therefore, I must distinguish common-sense-as-popularly-defined from common-sense-as-I-mean-it. Here is the convention I shall use: When I am referring to the popular notion of common sense defined just above, I refer to it as ‘kommon sense’. I will reserve ‘common sense’—which I define below—for the concept upon which the arguments of this book are based. My convention, therefore, is this:

**KOMMON SENSE** *is that set of beliefs widely (if not universally) embraced by mankind everywhere.*

**COMMON SENSE** *is that set of beliefs that any intelligent being could and should recognize as true, simply on the basis of his own personal mundane experience.*

A commonsensical belief will typically be a common belief. If one forms a belief through intelligent, intellectually honest, and responsible reasoning from the shared experience of all human beings, then he will, in all probability, hold that belief in common with every other intelligent, honest, responsible human being. But sometimes, beliefs that are eminent-ly commonsensical are very unpopular in a particular culture. In theory, a



commonsensical belief could be universally rejected by a culture. A commonsensical belief ought to have universal acceptance, but when it does not, it is nonetheless commonsensical. If a belief is commonsensical, it is so regardless of its popularity.

An appeal to common sense, therefore, is not an appeal to majority opinion. It is not based on the notion that the most popular idea is the truth, nor that the masses cannot be wrong. Rather, it assumes that vast areas of truth are accessible to every human being everywhere, and that—so long as other belief-shaping forces do not subvert the process—there will be wide agreement within such areas of truth. Some of these truths are readily accessible because they can be learned by induction from the everyday, mundane realities of universal experience. Others are readily accessible because they exist as intuitive assumptions foundational to the very existence of intelligence itself—commodities that no human being is without. But what characterizes every commonsensical belief is that no intellectually honest and responsible human being is without the requisite data from which he could know that it is true.

A commonsense belief, then, can be distinguished from a scientific belief, from a scholarly conclusion, and from a rigorously and systematically proven belief.

You do not need scientific research in a laboratory or space ship to establish the truth of a commonsense belief. It is drawn from man's universal experience of mundane existence. You do not need a microscope or telescope to check it out. The necessary observations come as a matter of course in everyday, ordinary experience. Neither do you need scholarship and research in libraries to substantiate a commonsense belief. Not scholarship, but ordinary, practical living is the genesis of commonsense beliefs. Furthermore, you do not need rigorous, systematic proofs using logic, mathematics, or philosophy to establish a commonsense belief. More typically, a commonsensical belief is the immediate, intuitive output of our reason, formed as a direct response to everyday experience.<sup>44</sup> Some intuitions are not derived from experience by induction so much as they are the built-in assumptions that constitute the foundation of human

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44. I call your attention to our prior discussion of the intrinsic rationality and provability of correct intuitions in chapter 3. I am not saying here that commonsense beliefs *cannot* be rigorously proved. They are provable in principle, of course. Rather, I am only suggesting that we do not typically accept them on the basis that they have been rigorously proved. We accept them as direct and immediate outputs of our rationality, that is, as intuitive beliefs. Furthermore, the proofs for many such beliefs would be so involved and so complex that most ordinary mortals would, in practice, be incapable of constructing an adequate proof. But as we saw in chapter 3, that is not a mark against the rationality of such a belief.

intelligence itself. These are so foundational that to deny them would be self-defeating, and perhaps silly. To deny them would be to deny the validity of knowledge itself. Such intuitions are included in common sense.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MISTAKING KOMMONSENSICAL FOR COMMONSENSICAL

Whether we base an argument on common sense or kommon sense makes all the difference. An argument from kommon sense (universal acceptance) is totally fallacious; an argument from common sense (rational self-evidence) is valid. Since kommon sense is merely what is universally accepted, an argument from kommon sense is nothing more than a thinly veiled argument from unanimous opinion. But unanimous consent is not the arbiter of truth. Kommon sense proves nothing!

Arguments from common sense can be dangerous, therefore, since common sense is so easily confused with kommon sense. Popular acceptance of a belief is so easily mistaken for the rational soundness of that belief. We must not be misled by an argument that purports to appeal to common sense but that, in actuality, is appealing to popular opinion (kommon sense).

## KOMMON SENSE, COMMON SENSE, AND SELF-EVIDENCE

Immersed in a particular culture as I am, two very different kinds of belief strike me as self-evident. Some beliefs strike me as self-evident precisely because they are *rationally* self-evident. Others strike me as self-evident because everyone around me takes their truth for granted; in other words, because they are cultural assumptions automatically accepted by everyone within my culture. Both kinds of belief qualify as kommonsensical. Regarding either sort, virtually everyone in my culture accepts them. But while both are kommonsensical, both are *not* commonsensical. Only beliefs that are rationally self-evident qualify as commonsensical, and not every widely-held belief is rationally self-evident. Some cultural assumptions, while widely-accepted, are not the least bit compelling to sound, unbiased reasoning. Some such beliefs are shaped by cultural prejudice, not sound reason.

There can be exceptions, but most commonsensical beliefs will enjoy

near-universal acceptance. If a belief is commonsensical, it will typically be kommonsensical as well. But the opposite is not necessarily true. A popularly-accepted (kommonsensical) belief may very well not be rationally self-evident (commonsensical). A belief's having near-universal acceptance, therefore, does not necessarily mean that it is a valid rational belief. A belief that is contrary to common sense can readily gain widespread cultural acceptance.

The antebellum South's widespread acceptance of the black man's inherent inferiority provides an excellent example. While the inferiority of the black man seemed self-evident to a significant portion of Southern culture, there was nothing rationally self-evident about it. It was a cultural prejudice, uncritically accepted, *not* the sound conclusion of responsible reasoning from experience.

If I forget that something can be self-evident because it is kommonsensical without being commonsensical, I will mistakenly assume that 'commonsensical' means nothing more than 'self-evident'. This mistake, in turn, can easily lead me to mistake a merely kommonsensical belief (one that is self-evident due to its being a widely accepted cultural prejudice) for a commonsensical belief (one that is self-evident due to its being manifestly rational). And that mistake, in turn, can easily lead me to accept a fallacious argument from kommon sense as valid—as if it were an argument from common sense. This sort of confusion can lead to one's embracing any number of rationally unsound and manifestly false beliefs in the name of common sense.

There is yet another source of confusion. Commonsensical beliefs, contrary to our expectations, are not necessarily self-evident. A commonsensical belief that is also kommonsensical will, of course, be self-evident. But a commonsensical belief that is not also kommonsensical will typically not strike us as self-evident. Belief that there exists an ultimate objective truth is no longer kommonsensical within our culture. Hence, it is no longer self-evident. But such a belief is, I would argue, commonsensical. The immediate, non-critical acceptance of a belief is more often a function of its near-universal cultural acceptance than it is of its rational self-evidence. That is, *self-evidence is more directly the result of kommon sense than of common sense*. Hence—if we mistake being commonsensical with being self-evident—a commonsensical belief can appear not to be commonsensical. If our culture rejects some truly commonsensical belief (thereby rendering it not self-evident to us), it may not seem commonsensical to us (for it is not self-evident). Therefore, when I describe a belief as commonsensical in this book, I do not mean that it is immediately self-evident. It may not be. While in ordinary speech we often use 'commonsensical' and

‘self-evident’ synonymously, I do not employ them as synonyms in this book.

## Free Will

When we speak of the human will, what do we mean? In popular theological discussion, one gets the distinct impression that the will of man is an actual organ of the body—not unlike the heart or liver. Not much sophistication is needed to realize that this cannot be right.

‘Free will’ is typically employed to describe a rather vague—but ultimately commonsensical—notion. Although vague, it is quite serviceable and should be adequate for the purposes of this book. The will of man can be described as follows:

*An individual’s will is that reality, whatever its form, that gives rise to his voluntary decisions and that explains why he voluntarily acts or thinks in one way rather than another. In other words, an individual’s will is the reality that gives rise to his free choices.*

Our philosophical curiosity wants to know exactly what form of reality the will has. Otherwise, we are not satisfied that we truly understand it. Is it a spiritual organ of some kind? A non-material counterpart to the heart or kidney?

I do not choose to satisfy our philosophical curiosity here. Such a level of understanding is not needed to make my arguments.<sup>45</sup> The vaguer concept of will typically employed in ordinary language should be adequate for my purposes. Therefore, I shall use ‘will’ as defined above.<sup>46</sup>

## FREE TO CHOOSE

The definition of the will offered above is dependent upon another problematic concept—that of being “free to choose.” We must be clear what we mean by that.

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45. I do not believe it is possible to reach that level of understanding of the human will that is wanted by our philosophical curiosity without first coming to terms with the arguments presented in this book. Consequently, if I did intend to formulate a rigorous definition of the human will, it would have to come at the end of the book, not the beginning.

46. However, in chapter 9 I will analyze our commonsense notion of free will even further than is represented by this definition.

Some things we do are out of physical necessity. I don't choose to pump blood with my heart. It just happens. The laws of physics are in control. My body is so constructed that my heart beats automatically—a result of the autonomic nervous system.

Can my decision to leave the house and go to the grocery store to buy a jar of pickles be explained in the same way? Is it—like the beating of my heart—the necessary outcome of physical laws? Common sense says “No!”<sup>47</sup> Some of my actions and some of my thoughts are not attributable to the inexorable outworking of the laws of nature. They cannot be explained in terms of biology or physics, for they are “free” from (independent of) physical causes that automatically lead to their results. When the physical cosmos does not dictate the choice I make, we say that I was “free to choose.” A FREE CHOICE, then, is one that is not a function of the mechanical outworking of the laws of physics; and a VOLUNTARY action is one that is independent of the material universe.

Further, a freewill choice happens neither out of physical nor logical necessity. It is neither mechanically inevitable nor logically required. It is not the mechanical outworking of inexorable physical laws, and neither is it logically impossible that it not occur. “Freedom to choose,” therefore, means that a person has before him more than one option that do not violate the laws of logic nor the physical universe. In the case of actions where an individual is not “free to choose,” one and only one option exists. Under normal circumstances, a healthy heart does not have the option to stop beating. It beats out of physical necessity. Likewise, there is no other option but for me to be me rather than not-me. I am me and not not-me out of logical necessity. For me to be not-me is logically impossible. Therefore, being me (and not not-me) is not the result of “free choice.”

## A ROBOT AND TWO BOOKS

Suppose we have a room with two identical books lying on a table. A robot comes into the room and, in accordance with its programmed

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47. Some philosophers would answer “yes.” For example, B.F. Skinner, in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, would answer “yes.” But most of us reject such theories; and we do so precisely because they are contrary to common sense. We do not deem it possible, with logical consistency, to live, act, and think in accord with them. And I cannot bring myself to authentically believe, in practice, what the theory requires in principle. Most of us cannot take seriously the suggestion that my choice to go to the grocery store is no different, in principle, from the automatic beating of my heart.

instructions, picks up the book on the left. Now you enter the room and pick up the book on the left. Is there any difference in these two events?

Absolutely! The robot is completely controlled by its engineering and programming—hence, by physical laws. The robot’s physical environment and its programming ultimately determine the result. In picking up the book on the left, it does not make a “free” choice, for its action is the inevitable mechanical result of what it was made to be. Given the particular hardware and software that constitutes the robot, it was physically impossible for the robot to pick up the right-hand book instead.

When it comes to you, on the other hand, the situation is different. It is just as possible for you to pick up the right-hand book as the left-hand book. You do not act out of physical necessity; both options are open to you. To pick up the book on the right will no more violate the laws of physics than to pick up the one on the left. You are “free.” Hence, you make what we typically label a “freewill choice.”

### THE POINT AT ISSUE—HOW FREE IS OUR WILL?

From a biblical perspective, there can be no question but that freewill choices do occur. The Bible rejects natural or physical determinism.<sup>48</sup> Some of our choices clearly cannot be the result of physical or logical necessity. Disagreement among Bible students arises with respect to this question: do choices exist that are *absolutely* undetermined? Granted, a freewill choice is not determined by the laws of physics. But could it be determined by something else? Could it be determined by God, for example? The divine determinist says “Yes, my freewill choices are determined by God.” The limited determinist says, “No, God does not determine my freewill choices. If he did, they wouldn’t be free.”

Consider the book-choosing example above. The divine determinist views it like this: While you did not choose the left-hand book out of either physical or logical necessity, you did choose it out of *theological* necessity. The will of God—which controls everything—necessitated that you pick up the book on the left. Since that is what God willed, that is what you had to do. Freewill choices are free with respect to the physical cosmos, but they are not free with respect to the will and purpose of God.

The limited determinist, on the other hand, views it differently: You did not choose the left-hand book out of any sort of necessity of any kind—so neither did you choose it out of theological necessity. Your

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48. See chapter 1 for a definition of natural (or physical) determinism.

choice was “free,” and no choice can be “free” unless it is totally and absolutely undetermined. If an action is free, then it must not be necessitated by anyone nor by anything outside your own will—including God. Freewill choices, therefore, are not free only with respect to the physical cosmos. They are free with respect to the will and purpose of God as well.

Herein lies an important ambiguity in the common phrase “free will.” Everyone can agree on one aspect of its meaning: free will refers to the experience of making choices that are free from logical and physical necessity. But others insist that free will must describe something more far-reaching than that. For them, free will refers to the experience of making choices that are free from *any and every* sort of necessity—free from theological necessity just as surely as from logical and physical necessity.

If the latter is an accurate and meaningful definition of free will, then obviously divine determinism and free will are mutually exclusive concepts. Free will—so defined—is precluded if divine determinism is true. *But divine determinism does not preclude free will* if, by ‘free will’, we mean only a will that is free from logical and physical necessity.

The point at issue between divine determinism and limited determinism, therefore, will often come down to this: What exactly is the nature of our free will? Is it free only from the physical cosmos—remaining subject to the determinative control of God, or is it free from God as well?

I will argue for the former. Therefore, when I argue for the reality of free will in the pages to come, I do not support a human will that is free and independent of God’s control. I mean, rather, a will that is free of the physical cosmos, a will whose choices are free of physical necessity.

I will analyze our commonsensical notion of free will further in chapter 9. Until then, the important thing to note is this: My notion of free will is different from the more typical notion of free will that exists among Christians today. Namely, modern Christians typically understand by “free will” a will that is autonomous from God. But my understanding of “free will” is a will that—while utterly dependent upon the will of God—is autonomous (FREE) from the physical cosmos.