

PART FOUR

MAJOR OBJECTIONS TO
DIVINE DETERMINISM

In the preceding chapters I outlined compelling reasons for accepting divine determinism. For many people, these reasons are countered by what seem to be decisive arguments against it. In the next three chapters I will discuss the most influential arguments against divine determinism, demonstrating that they are invalid.

Three different, but related objections constitute the most important challenges to divine determinism. The first is philosophical in nature, the second is theological in nature, and the third is ethical in nature. They can be briefly stated as follows:

THE PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTION

- To affirm both divine determinism and the existence of free will in a human being is a logical contradiction. Divine determinism is logically incompatible with human free will.
- We know beyond a doubt that human beings have free will.
- Therefore, since human beings have free will, it is logically impossible for divine determinism to be true.

THE THEOLOGICAL OBJECTION (VERSION 1)

- If God is perfectly good, then he could never be the ultimate cause of any evil; it would be contrary to his character.
- According to the Bible, God is not evil; he is perfectly good.
- Therefore, God could never be the ultimate cause of any particular event that was evil.
- If divine determinism is true, it follows that God must be the ultimate cause of every particular event that occurs in the world—evil as well as good. If God is not the ultimate cause of every particular event in the world—evil as well as good—then divine determinism is not true.
- Therefore, divine determinism cannot be true; for there are some events of which God cannot be the ultimate cause.

_____ or _____

THE THEOLOGICAL OBJECTION (VERSION 2)

- The evil that exists in the world is of such a nature and of such an extent that no perfectly good being with the power to eliminate it would allow it.
- Therefore, God cannot be both perfectly good and have the power to eliminate it.
- According to the Bible, God is perfectly good.

- Therefore, it follows that God must not have the power to eliminate the evil in the world; it must have some other source that is outside God's control.
- If divine determinism were true, it would follow that God would have the power to eliminate the evil that is in the world.
- Therefore, divine determinism cannot be true.

THE ETHICAL OBJECTION (FORMAL VERSION)

- If divine determinism is true, then God will accomplish his will regardless of what a human being desires or wills to do. If divine determinism is true, the desires and volitions of human beings are irrelevant with respect to human choice and action.
- Accordingly, if divine determinism is true, then it is futile for any human being to strive to desire and to will what is good; for to do so would not affect one's choices or behavior.
- It is clearly false to say that it is futile for any human being to strive to desire and to will what is good. The Bible, as well as common sense, clearly presupposes that it is not futile for humans to strive to desire and to will what is good.
- Hence, divine determinism cannot be true.

or

THE ETHICAL OBJECTION (INFORMAL VERSION)

- Insofar as divine determinism does and can result in moral laxity, it is a dangerous doctrine.
- Accordingly, since divine determinism is a dangerous doctrine, it should be ignored and assumed not to be true.

In the following chapters I will discuss each of these objections. I will clarify the nature of each objection. I will analyze the underlying arguments in support of each objection. And I will show that, contrary to popular belief, none of them constitutes a compelling refutation of divine

CHAPTER NINE

THE PHILOSOPHICAL
OBJECTION
TO DIVINE DETERMINISM

THE PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTION:

Divine determinism and the existence of free will in man are logically incompatible. We know beyond a doubt that man has free will. Therefore, since man has free will, divine determinism cannot be true.

If all we had to consider were natural, physical events, the arguments for divine determinism in parts 2 and 3 would be widely persuasive. Though not totally without problems, the absolute determination of every natural, physical event by God is a very plausible notion.¹⁵⁶ In fact, as we saw in the last chapter, sound reasoning from experience ultimately leads to a belief in some sort of absolute determinism. Philosophical reasoning is much more comfortable with determinism than with indeterminism or self-determinism with respect to physical events. The determinism of such events makes more sense.

Only when we consider choices made by free moral agents—particularly choices made by human beings—does philosophical reasoning begin to seriously balk at determinism. The divine determination of human choices appears, on the surface, to be logically incompatible with the notion that man has free will. And yet, absolute divine determinism (the viewpoint that I am espousing) entails that even an individual’s “free” choices must be divinely determined.

The fact of human free will is a strong philosophical commitment that nearly all of us share. Reluctance to embrace a theory that seems incompatible with human free will is, therefore, quite understandable. The seemingly obvious incompatibility of free will and divine determinism is what constitutes the essence of the objection under consideration here. We know that people have free will. That the divine determination of human choices is not logically compatible with our exercising free will is *clear* and *obvious*. Divine determinism, therefore, does not and cannot extend to

156. The only problem which arises in connection with the divine determination of physical events is a *theological* problem: if God is the ultimate cause of “evil” physical events—destructive earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, famine, *etc.*—then his causing such “evils” would seem to indict his character.

human choice. Hence, divine determinism is not total and absolute. This is the argument to which the divine determinist must respond.

A PREVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter can be roughly divided into two halves. In the first, I clarify the exact nature of the argument from free will. In the latter half I offer the divine determinist's response to this argument.

I begin by clarifying the philosophical objection—the objection from free will—in three very important respects:

1. I analyze the objection from free will into a cluster of four sub-arguments that, taken together, capture the substance of the objection from free will. I do this in order to bypass the thorny questions that surround the prospect of defining “free will.”
2. I demonstrate that the objection from free will is not a straightforward objection based on the clear dictates of common sense. Rather, it is in reality a deductive argument that extrapolates from the dictates of common sense with respect to ordinary experience to the transcendent reality of God. Such an extrapolation is not itself warranted by common sense. Rather, it relies on an implicit argument that involves a generalization from the nature of free will *vis à vis* ordinary reality to the nature of free will *vis à vis* transcendent reality. Such an argument may or may not be valid. Whether it is valid needs to be determined by careful reasoning, not by hasty assumption.
3. Finally, I articulate the logical structure of the four sub-arguments that—taken together—allegedly refute divine determinism by establishing the incompatibility of free will and divine determinism. In my articulation of their logical structure, I intend to make explicit the crucial and problematic step in each of the four arguments. Namely, each argument depends on the validity of identifying ordinary causation with transcendent causation. Each argument depends on extending the commonsense truths about ordinary causation, without qualification, to God as the transcendent cause.

In the second half of this chapter I offer a direct response to the four sub-arguments that constitute the philosophical objection. Having established that the philosophical argument is a deductive argument that

involves a problematic extrapolation from the incompatibility of free will with ordinary causation to the incompatibility of free will with transcendent causation, I then evaluate the validity of this extrapolation. I argue that it involves a fallacious generalization. Then, having shown that the philosophical argument is based on a fallacious generalization, I conclude that no valid philosophical objection can be made to divine determinism on the grounds that it is incompatible with free will. No form of this objection has ever demonstrated that free will and divine determinism are logically incompatible. The objection has always simply assumed that they are incompatible, and it has done so merely on the basis of a false analogy to natural determinism.

PART I — Clarifying the Nature of the Philosophical Objection

Before discussing the merits of the philosophical objection, I need to develop its exact nature more fully.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTION AS AN ARGUMENT FROM FREE WILL

What is it about the fact of “free will” that makes the determinism of human choice appear incompatible with it? It may seem that one should begin with a definitive definition of “free will.” But trying to formulate an adequate formal definition of free will would prove rather difficult. What is the “will”? Is it actually a metaphysical entity? If so, does it have an independent existence from the mind or rationality, or is it simply a part of rationality? Is it perhaps not an actual entity at all? Is it maybe nothing more than a logical construct, a short-hand verbal device for describing the network of choices that an individual makes. What is it?

I want to bypass these thorny and perhaps unanswerable questions. Given our purposes in this study, I think we can safely do so. Rather than offer a rigorous definition of “free will,” I shall analyze the argument from free will into four definable objections that I believe constitute its essence. If and when we object that divine determinism is incompatible with free will, essentially we are contending that divine determinism is incompatible with the four following convictions:

1. There exist many choices that men make that are “real” choices.¹⁵⁷
2. There exist many choices that men make that are significant choices in that they have a significant impact on reality and that serve as part of the basis for a man’s belief that he is significant.
3. There exist many choices that men make for which they are morally accountable.
4. There exist many choices that men make from which it is valid to infer the nature of their character and personality.

When people reject divine determinism because of the fact of free will, they are rejecting divine determinism on the basis of four distinct arguments: (i) divine determinism cannot be true because of its incompatibility with the fact that we experience “real” choices, (ii) it cannot be true because of its incompatibility with the fact that man is significant and makes significant choices, (iii) it cannot be true because it is incompatible with the fact of man’s responsibility for his choices, and (iv) it cannot be true because of its incompatibility with the fact that we judge a man’s character by his actions. I will elaborate on each of these in turn:

FIRST ARGUMENT CONSTITUTING THE FREE WILL OBJECTION

The first line of argument involves the conviction that people really do have choices in human experience—a real possibility to choose one of many alternatives. Divine determinism implies the absence of any real choice. If divine determinism is true, then the only alternative available to a person is what God has willed to happen. What God has determined to be is what will in fact be—indeed, what must be. Consequently, the human being is not exercising any real choice. He may have the illusion that he is making a real choice, but the fact of the matter is that his choosing does not really involve choice at all. Hence, if divine determinism is true, real choice is not a reality. But if real choice is a reality, then divine determinism cannot be true. Only if I am prepared to deny the reality of real choice in my experience can I accept divine determinism.

157. I place ‘real’ in quotes to indicate that this is the most likely everyday term to be used by the objector in making this objection. I admit that it is a vague, ill-defined, and therefore problematic term; but I believe the discussions which follow will serve to adequately define what the objector means by it in this context.

SECOND ARGUMENT CONSTITUTING THE FREE WILL OBJECTION

The second line of argument is closely related to the first. It involves the conviction that mankind is genuinely significant and that his significance is closely related to his ability to make significant choices. Divine determinism, it is argued, robs man of any significance because it denies the significance of his choices. How can divine determinism, which denies that man makes real choices, maintain the significance of his choices? Do human choices make any difference in the cosmos? How could they? According to divine determinism, what God wills reality to be is exactly what reality will be. Human choices are simply the mechanical outworking of the will of God. They do not significantly contribute anything to the course of the cosmos. The cosmos is on the course God has set for it and human choices do nothing to alter that. How, then, can human choices be anything other than insignificant reflexes that give flesh to the will of God? If divine determinism is true, then human choices have no significance. If we are prepared to deny the significance of human choices, then divine determinism is an option. But anyone who holds that human choices are significant can accept divine determinism only at the cost of contradicting himself.

THIRD ARGUMENT CONSTITUTING THE FREE WILL OBJECTION

The third argument involves the well-established conviction that people are accountable for their choices. We praise people for the good and noble deeds that they do. We blame people and hold them morally culpable for their evil deeds. How—so the argument goes—could we hold people accountable for their choices if those choices were determined by someone else? If God determined that I would choose to kill someone, then how could I be held to blame? It was not *my* will that led me to kill, it was God's. How can I be held responsible when it was not *my will* that was the cause of my action? The proponents of this argument think the answer is clear: "I can't." So, if divine determinism is true, there exists no action or choice for which a man can be held morally accountable. But this is directly contrary to everything we have come to believe from experience. Man is morally accountable for his deeds. Unless we are prepared to reject the reality of human accountability, we cannot embrace divine determinism, for they are logically incompatible. If divine determinism is true, then human accountability is not; if human accountability is true,

then divine determinism is not. Since experience teaches us that human accountability is real, divine determinism cannot be true.

FOURTH ARGUMENT CONSTITUTING THE FREE WILL OBJECTION

The fourth line of argument is closely related to the third. It involves another deeply imbedded conviction—that a person’s actions and choices are indicative of what kind of person he is; that is, that we can draw conclusions about a person’s character and personality on the basis of what he chooses to do, say, and think. Now, would that be possible if divine determinism were true? If my choices are not a result of my will, but of the will of God, then how could one legitimately draw any conclusions about *me* on the basis of my choices? My choices reflect the will of God, not the nature of my character. If divine determinism is true, then any inference from a person’s choices to his character is not possible. But experience teaches us that such an inference is valid. Therefore, divine determinism cannot be true. Unless I am prepared to deny the validity of this universal daily practice, I cannot believe in divine determinism.

THE ARGUMENT AGAINST DIVINE DETERMINISM FROM FREE WILL

These arguments, taken together, are the essence of what people mean when they say that they cannot accept divine determinism because they believe in “free will.” A belief in free will is the belief that (1) the choices men make are real rather than illusory, (2) man is a significant being who makes significant choices, (3) man is morally accountable for his choices, and (4) man’s choices genuinely reflect his own character and personality. All four of these convictions are alleged to be incompatible with divine determinism. If this allegation is correct—indeed, if divine determinism is incompatible with any *one* of these convictions—then divine determinism is unacceptable, for it would be logically incompatible with undeniable fact.

If any one of these four free will arguments were valid, we would be forced to doubt the biblical and philosophical arguments that we earlier advanced in support of divine determinism. But I shall argue that none of these is correct. Divine determinism is not incompatible with any of these four free will convictions. I do not challenge the indubitability of any of these aspects of human free will. What I challenge is that any of these aspects of free will is in conflict with divine determinism. Divine deter-

minism does not deny human accountability. It does not deny the validity of inferring a person's character from his choices. It does not deny the reality of human choice. And it does not rob man of his significance. These popularly accepted philosophical objections to divine determinism, I contend, are not valid objections at all. Divine determinism and free will are mutually compatible truths. Therefore, no indubitable truth from our experience makes it philosophically unacceptable to embrace divine determinism. Sound reasoning from experience offers no valid counter-arguments to the arguments we offered earlier in defense of divine determinism.

IS THE PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTION AN OBJECTION FROM COMMON SENSE?

The philosophical objection from free will rests on two very important assumptions. The first is that free will is an objective reality in human experience. The second is that divine determinism is logically incompatible with free will. Both of these assumptions need to be correct in order for this objection to work. That we humans have free will is commonsensical.¹⁵⁸ It seems equally commonsensical that divine determinism and free will are incompatible. Most of us immediately assume their logical incompatibility. It seems obvious to us. This nearly universal and automatic acceptance of its assumptions gives the philosophical objection its force:

*Do we have free will?
Of course, it's just plain common sense! Everybody knows that.
Are divine determinism and free will logically compatible?
No way! Everybody knows that. That's just plain common sense too.
Then, clearly, divine determinism can't be true!*

Is this really so? Are divine determinism and free will truly incompatible? That is the crucial question that remains to be addressed in this chapter. But first, I would like to concentrate on a more specific ques-

158. I would part company with Gordon Clark due to his apparent willingness to fly in the face of common sense by denying the reality of free will. See, for example, Gordon Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1961), 194-241. Although he has many helpful insights with regard to this discussion, he is too hasty in his willingness to jettison altogether the notion that free will is the basis for moral responsibility. See especially pp. 230-233.

tion— namely, is divine determinism’s incompatibility with free will an *obvious* conclusion, reached simply and directly by common sense?

Recall that earlier I differentiated between common sense and *kommon* sense:

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.*

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

It may well be that *kommon sense* teaches the incompatibility of divine determinism and free will. In modern American culture, this assumption certainly appears to have wide acceptance. I do not presume to know whether all modern cultures universally accept the incompatibility of free will and divine determinism. Perhaps that is not the case. But modern secular post-Christian cultures overwhelmingly embrace the philosophical dogma that divine determinism is incompatible with free will. In our culture, then, we could understandably conclude that divine determinism’s incompatibility with free will is *kommonsensical*. It is as taken-for-granted as any assumption can be in our culture.

Now if one were to confuse the concept of common sense with the concept of *kommon* sense, he might fallaciously conclude—on the basis of its *kommonsensicality*—that it is commonsensical to believe that free will and divine determinism are incompatible. But not all that is *kommonsensical* by virtue of its universal acceptance is truly commonsensical in the more meaningful sense defined earlier.¹⁵⁹

This brings us then to the question that must be discussed here: While free will and divine determinism seem to be self-evidently incompatible, does it seem self-evident because it is a commonsensical belief or because it is a *kommonsensical* belief? In other words, is the fact that this incompatibility seems so self-evident an illusion created by its nearly universal acceptance by the culture around us (i.e., its *kommonsensicality*)? Or is it because this incompatibility is truly commonsensical in the sense that it is an inescapably rational belief?

To answer this question, I will do the following: First, I will identify the criteria used by common sense to judge whether or not a choice is a freewill choice.¹⁶⁰ Second—for the sake of making an instructive

159. See my discussion of this point in chapter 4.

comparison—I will apply those criteria to human choice on the assumption that natural determinism gives an accurate description of human choice. Finally, I will apply those same criteria to human choice on the assumption that divine determinism gives an accurate description of human choice. By this process, we will be able to determine whether or not the criteria of common sense judge divinely determined choices to be freewill choices.¹⁶¹

FREEWILL CHOICES AND THE DICTATES OF COMMON SENSE

Most people intuitively recognize that natural determinism and free will are mutually incompatible. They do not typically couch their objections in exact or philosophically rigorous language; but the vague, everyday language they use provides important clues to the fundamental criteria that their ordinary common sense uses in discerning freewill acts from those that are not. When confronted by the determinist's claims, most people would respond, "Then you don't think people can be blamed for their crimes." When the determinist tries to insist that his determinism does not contradict the fact that people are morally accountable for their acts, most people would then respond, "But how could they be to blame? It's not their choice to commit the crime!" Or, alternatively, "But how could they be to blame? They didn't have any choice in the matter!"

These intuitive responses suggest the two most important criteria that people apply routinely to distinguish acts that involve free will from those that do not. These are commonsensical criteria learned through rational reflection on our experience. They are, I submit, the practical criteria that ordinary common sense acknowledges are determinative of free will.

160. This chapter is written in response to the commonly held belief that divine determinism is not commonsensical. My thesis is that it *is* commonsensical or, at least, that it is not incompatible with common sense. I contend that divine determinism only appears uncommonsensical due to the popularity of the DOGMA that divine determinism and free will are logically incompatible. It is not my purpose here to defend the criteria used by ordinary common sense in judging whether a choice is a free will choice. My assumption is that these commonsense criteria are readily recognized and immediately acceptable to the reader. To give a thorough defense of the validity of common sense and its dictates lies outside the scope of this work. It would require a thorough presentation of my entire theory of knowledge in order to defend it. My purpose in this chapter is merely to identify the criteria used by ordinary common sense and to show that such criteria do NOT judge divinely determined choices to be incompatible with free will.

161. The discussion in the following section relies on the important distinction between natural determinism and divine determinism. For an explanation of this distinction, see chapter 1.

Here they are more formally:

1. *An act did not involve a freewill choice unless that choice “belonged to” the person who did the act. If it was not his choice, then it was not his freewill decision and he is not morally culpable.*

2. *An act did not involve a freewill choice unless it was physically possible for that person to have acted differently from what he did. If he did not really have a choice, then it was not a freewill decision.*

Both of these criteria remain vague and need further explication. Specifically, what does our ordinary common sense understand by the concept of a choice “belonging to” a person? And what exactly does our ordinary common sense understand by it being “physically possible for an action to have been different”? To clarify these two concepts, it will be helpful to analyze our commonsensical evaluation of a number of hypothetical situations:

SITUATION #1—*Some dirty, low-down, no-good varmint comes and overpowers me. He takes hold of my hand and forces a loaded gun into my palm. Then he squeezes my finger and makes me pull the trigger while he aims the gun at someone to shoot and kill him.*

Now, under these circumstances, did I kill of my own “free will”? Am I morally accountable for the murder? My finger pulled the trigger. Can I be judged guilty of the crime? Did I have a real choice in the matter?

Ordinary common sense says “No!” Of course I’m not to blame. Of course I’m not a murderer. Why not? Very simply because the choice to kill was not “my choice.” It didn’t “belong to” me, and common sense dictates that I cannot be held accountable for a choice that did not “belong to” me.

As we can see, one of the first questions ordinary common sense asks is whether the choice was “mine.” Clearly, in this instance, the choice to shoot and kill someone belonged to the dirty, low-down varmint who overpowered me. I did not fire the gun as an act of free will. I, therefore, am not morally culpable. I am not the murderer, he is.

Nor did I have any real choice in the matter. I played no significant role in the murder. Why not? Because it was physically impossible for me to have acted any differently.¹⁶² It was physically impossible, under the circumstances, for me not to pull the trigger. My attacker had overpowered me. Ordinary common sense says that, if it was physically impossible for

me to act differently, then I did not have a “real” choice in the situation, and my role was not a significant one. I contributed no more and no less to the murder than the gun did. I was simply a tool in the real murderer’s hand.

As ordinary common sense evaluates this situation, both practical criteria identified above are employed: (1) Was the choice or action one that “belonged to” me? (2) Was it physically possible for my course of action to have been different?

From this example, we are able to identify what immediate criteria ordinary common sense employs to judge whether an act “belonged to” me and whether an action “could have been different”:

A choice or action “belongs to” someone if that choice or action is a function of his individual choice rather than a function of someone else’s individual choice being imposed upon him by means of overpowering coercion.

A choice or action “could have been different” if it were not the result of coercion by means of an overpowering physical force external to the person.

Note, in this particular case, the exact nature of the coercion that occurred. It is *physical* compulsion. Therefore, the specific criterion that ordinary common sense is applying in this situation is this: a choice or action involves a freewill choice only if it is *physically* possible for the act to have been different from what it was in exactly the same circumstances.

SITUATION #2—*A robot, operated by remote control by some human being (probably the same low-down varmint), shoots and kills a person.*

Did the robot kill of his own free will? No! Our common sense evaluates this situation in just the same way as the last one—with one very instructive exception. In this example the immediate criterion employed by our ordinary common sense to determine whether the act “belonged to” the robot is somewhat different from the one used in the last example. The human who is manipulating the robot by remote-control is not manipulating the robot by overpowering him, rather he is simply using his knowledge of the robot’s electronics to make the robot respond as he

162. Indeed, if more physical resistance on my part would have made a difference, then to the extent that I chose not to resist, to that extent I did make a real choice, did play a significant role, and am morally culpable.

wishes. The will of the human is what is reflected in the robot's actions, not the will of the robot. But yet the human's imposition of his will does not, in this case, take place through overpowering coercion. It takes place through the exploitation of general laws and principles of created reality. The robot's actions are not a function of its own individual contribution to the choice, rather they are a function of mechanical and electrical engineering—engineering that utilizes general laws and principles that operate according to physical necessity. We can see the import of this more clearly in the following examples.

SITUATION #3—*A robot has been pre-programmed to respond in any and every situation. This robot has been programmed to seek out and to shoot and kill a particular person. Having been programmed accordingly, the robot has been set loose to operate “on its own.” The robot finds and shoots the designated person.*

Unlike the last situation, there is no human controlling the robot's moment-by-moment action. The robot was pre-programmed to evaluate each situation and respond in accordance with its own programming. Is such a robot acting of its own free will? Is this robot morally accountable for the killing? Would we judge the robot a murderer? Is the robot making “real” choices and making a significant contribution to the flow of events? Common sense would say “No!”

Surely we would not judge such a robot culpable for this killing. We would not punish it for the evil it did, we would disable it. We would wish to stop the robot from destroying a human life, but we would not punish it or seek vengeance on it if it did. We might as well seek vengeance on a mountain for killing a friend in a landslide, or on a heat-seeking missile for downing a friend during battle. The robot, like the mountain or heat-seeking missile, simply does what it does out of physical necessity. We see this same thing in our next example.

SITUATION #4—*A Grizzly bear mauls and kills a camper.*

What does ordinary common sense say about animals like this grizzly? Does ordinary common sense suggest that this grizzly is acting out of free will? Does ordinary common sense dictate that we should hold animals morally culpable for their actions? That they are volitional creatures making “real” choices? No, it does not.

We do not punish bad or dangerous animals, we destroy them. We may

not want them around, but we do not blame them for acting as they do. Why not? Very simply because we identify them to be sophisticated, organic robots designed by God. In principle, they would be no different from the man-made mechanical robot in situation #3 above. No less than mechanical robots are, their lives and actions are dictated by necessary physical laws of the created order—by instinct. They do what they do as a reflection of those laws, not as a reflection of some independent, individual contribution that they make.¹⁶³ They are simply a unique convergence and manifestation of physical laws. We do not see the actions that animals take as “belonging to them.” An animal’s choice does not reflect the contribution of his individual will; rather, it reflects the unique convergence of physical circumstances and physical laws that make him a unique creature. But the animal is not making choices to become what it will become. There are no existentialists among the monkeys.

Therefore, the grizzly is not to blame, physical law and circumstances are to blame. The animal is not culpable, for the choice did not belong to him. Nor could the animal “help it.” He could not act any differently from the way he acted. He acted out of physical, biological necessity.

SITUATION #5—*A man finds himself in the position of being the only man alive who can prevent a terrorist’s bomb from exploding and killing thousands of people. To prevent the explosion, he must hold a plastic strip between two contact points until the bomb can otherwise be disarmed. Due to a complex set of implausible circumstances, no one is in a position to help him for several days. The man becomes so weary that he falls asleep in spite of his noblest efforts to stay awake. His hand drops the plastic strip, electrical contact is made, and thousands of people die in the explosion.*

What does ordinary common sense say about this situation? Is the man, despite his noblest efforts, guilty of a selfish and cruel act—choosing his own sleep over the lives of thousands of other people? Can we pass moral judgment upon this act? No, of course not. It is perhaps unthinkable for several reasons. But one of them is our awareness that falling asleep can be a semi-automatic response and that, once asleep,

163. It does not affect the force of my argument if the reader does not grant that an animal acts out of physical (specifically, biological) necessity. My point here is NOT to defend a particular view of animals. It is to defend a particular conception of free will. If one believes that animals act out of physical necessity, then he believes that they do NOT act out of free will. If, on the other hand, one believes that animals act freely and NOT out of physical necessity, then to that extent he also believes that animals do have free will. My point is the opposition of physical necessity to free will. Whatever one’s view of animal choice, I contend that we all can agree on this incompatibility of instinct and free will.

hand movement is an unconscious act. Once the man goes unconscious, his hand's movement becomes involuntary, and it makes no sense to hold someone morally culpable for an involuntary act.

Some aspects of human existence parallel our analysis of animal behavior. Some human actions are involuntary, the result of biological necessity rather than purposive choice. Why might a man be morally culpable for falling asleep while on guard duty, but not for falling asleep after several days of keeping a bomb from exploding? Because the latter case is arguably an automatic, involuntary response of the man's body. But the former case is not (assuming the first man is relatively well rested before his guard duty). Though the latter man has tried desperately not to fall asleep, he must eventually pass out from exhaustion. We would judge it unconscionable, in such a case, to hold the man morally blameworthy for something that was an involuntary response of his body. Why? Because the action is not a reflection of the individual contribution of his will. It is a reflection of general biological laws. He is not to blame; the laws of nature are to blame. So even within my own being, common sense recognizes a distinction between actions I take that "belong to me," and actions I take that do not "belong to me." If an action was involuntary, then it didn't really belong to me. It merely reflected biological laws. But if it was voluntary, it reflected an individual contribution I made and therefore it was a choice that "belonged to me." There is another reason this man is not to blame for his involuntary responses. His involuntary responses could not have been other than they were. Due to physical necessity, he had to fall asleep. He did not really even have a choice in the matter.

In these last four hypothetical situations, we have seen an additional immediate criterion being employed by our ordinary common sense to determine whether an action "belonged to" someone and whether it was "physically possible for an action to have been different"—namely,

A choice "belongs to someone" if and only if that choice is a function of some aspect of his being that is independent of the general laws of nature and, hence, only if that choice itself is not a function of general laws of nature and principles of physics.

It is physically possible for a choice or action to have been different only if that choice or action was not exclusively the result of the normal operation of general laws of nature.

Notice that our ordinary common sense understands these two things to be mutually exclusive: if a choice is the function of general physical laws and principles, then it cannot be a function of one's free

will; if it is a function of one's free will, then it is not a function of general physical laws.

We can summarize our conclusions thus far: In order for an action to satisfy our concept of a "freewill" choice, that action must (i) involve a choice that "belongs to me," and (ii) involve an action that could have been other than what it was. Furthermore, in order for a choice to qualify as one that "belongs to me," the choice must not be the result of necessary physical laws nor the result of overpowering coercive action on the part of another. Otherwise, any other choices that I make are my choices, they "belong to me," and they qualify as "freewill" choices for which I am morally accountable. And similarly, when we say that a freewill choice must involve a choice that could have been other than it was, we mean that it must have been physically possible for my actions in exactly that same situation to have been different. The key thing to notice is that *physical* possibility is the criterion we are applying.

SITUATION #6—*There is an alien from outer space who is an immaterial, non-physical, spiritual being who has mastery of natural laws that are not even in principle knowable to physicists, who study only the laws of the physical universe. By using such unknowable laws, the space alien is capable of completely enslaving the will of a particular human being such that that human being will and must do whatever the alien wills him to do. He thereby wills that a particular man murder another; and the man does so.*

What does common sense tell us about this situation? It tells us that the human is not morally culpable for murder. The one who is culpable is the space alien who willed the murder, not the human whose will was merely the reflection of the will of the space alien. Why do we judge the situation so? Although there is neither physical coercion nor a physical necessity born of physical laws, there is nonetheless a *natural* necessity born of *natural* laws. The natural laws in question may be neither knowable nor accessible to us, but that is not relevant to our judgment. The fact that some natural laws of the natural order necessitated a particular choice or action is sufficient for us to conclude that such a choice does not "belong to" that man. Likewise, it is sufficient for us to conclude that the choice could not have been other than it was. On both counts, we do not consider it a "freewill" choice by the criteria of common sense.

In the light of this final situation, we can revise the two immediate criteria that our ordinary common sense employs to judge both whether an

action “belonged to” someone and whether it was “physically possible for an action to have been different”—namely,

A choice “belongs to someone” if and only if that choice is a function of some aspect of his being that is independent of the general laws of nature in the broadest possible sense and hence only if that choice is itself not a function of those general laws of nature.

It is physically possible for a choice or action to have been different only if that choice or action was not exclusively the result of the normal operation of general laws of nature in the broadest possible sense.

I summarize the preceding discussion in the diagram that follows. As we can readily see from the diagram just below, the criteria for determining whether or not an act involves free will can be reduced to two specific criteria: an act can be judged to involve free will if and only if—

Commonsense Criterion #1: *the act was not the result of coercion by means of an overpowering external force; and*

Commonsense Criterion #2: *the act was not the result of inviolable laws of nature (construed in the broadest possible sense) operative within the actor himself.*

SUMMARY OF THE COMMONSENSICAL CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING A FREEWILL ACT

So, having established what common sense dictates must be the criteria for determining whether something involves free will or not, what can we

<p>What common sense would determine to be the necessary implications of an act's being a freewill act:</p>	<p>The immediate, corresponding, expanded criteria applied by common sense in order to determine whether an act involves a freewill choice:</p>		
<p>(1) The act involves a "real" choice.</p>	<p>An act involves (1) a real choice that (2) has significance as a choice if and only if that act is of such a nature that</p>	<p>It is physically possible for an act to have been other than it was if and only if-</p>	<p>(a) the act was not the result of coercion by means of an overpowering external force; and</p>
<p>(2) The act involves a truly significant choice.</p>	<p>(A) it was physically possible for it to have been other than what it was.</p>		<p>(b) the act was not the result of inviolable laws of nature operative within the agent himself.</p>
<p>(3) The agent of the act in question is morally accountable for the act.</p>	<p>An act involves (3) moral culpability and (4) the possibility for character inference from that act if and only if that act is such that</p>	<p>An act can justly be said to "belong to" the actor if and only if -</p>	<p>(a) the act was not the result of coercion by means of an overpowering external force; and</p>
<p>(4) It is valid to draw conclusions from an act about the character of the person who is the agent of the act.</p>	<p>(B) it can justly be said to "belong to" the actor.</p>		<p>(b) the act was not the result of inviolable laws of nature operative within the agent himself.</p>

say about freewill choices *vis à vis* natural determinism?

FREEWILL CHOICES, NATURAL DETERMINISM, AND THE DICTATES OF COMMON SENSE

I defined natural determinism as any variety of determinism that believes that the determination of human choice lies in some sort of natural force within his physical environment—whether biological, psychological, chemical, economic, sociological, mechanical, or whatever.¹⁶⁴ If one holds that one or another of these forces physically necessitates human choice, then he ascribes to a form of natural determinism. It is important to emphasize that natural determinism involves the notion of physical or natural necessity. Natural determinism holds that man's choices are necessarily what they are because of the inviolable control of some natural force or forces.

Applying the criteria of common sense, then, we can see that common sense immediately finds natural determinism to be a theory that excludes free will. Natural determinism, by definition, explicitly posits that all human choice is explainable in terms of inviolable natural laws operative within the human actor himself. But, as we have seen, this directly fails one of the criteria that common sense uses to determine whether an act is a “free” choice or not. Therefore, if natural determinism is true, no human choice is a “free” choice according to the dictates of common sense.

Many natural determinists insist nonetheless that natural determinism and free will are not incompatible. They cannot bring themselves to deny the reality of free will, so, rather than deny it, they incorporate it into their belief system—assuming uncritically that there exists no incompatibility between the natural determinism they espouse and the free will they are forced by common sense to acknowledge. They smuggle free will into their belief system without realizing—perhaps without taking the time to realize—that the notion of free will is logically incompatible with the implications of natural determinist theory.

Natural determinists who seek, inconsistently, to embrace free will typically try to cloak that inconsistency by proposing an inadequate analysis of common sense. Consider, for example, the philosopher David Hume. Hume rejects the notion that a free will must be an undetermined will. He proposes that we understand a freewill choice to be a choice that results from within my own volition rather than from the coercive influence of

164. For a description and definition of natural determinism, see chapter 1.

someone or something external to me. Hume has rightly identified and employed *one* of the two criteria of common sense. But the second criterion has completely escaped his notice—namely, that to be a freewill act, an act can never be the result of inviolable laws of nature operative within the actor himself. Because he ignores this second criterion, Hume can accept the compatibility of free will and natural determinism. Had he applied both of the criteria of common sense, it would be clear to him that such an assertion is patently false.

By Hume's analysis of free will, he would have to judge the grizzly bear and the two robots mentioned above as having "free will." In each case the bear and the robots acted in a manner consistent with the operations of their own inner "decision-making" processes. No external coercive pressure was operative. Each acted according to its own volition (such as it was). But surely this runs afoul of common sense, proving that Mr. Hume has not adequately analyzed our commonsensical notion of free will.

All natural determinists who insist that there is room in their theory for free will have similarly failed to give an accurate or complete analysis of the dictates of common sense. In the end, one thing should be clear: According to the dictates of common sense, natural determinism—the theory that all human choice is physically necessitated by some natural force or forces—excludes free will from human experience. If free will is a real phenomenon, as common sense suggests it is, then natural determinism falsely describes human choice.

FREEWILL CHOICES, DIVINE DETERMINISM, AND THE DICTATES OF COMMON SENSE

The situation is very different with divine determinism. If we apply these same criteria of common sense, we find nothing in the doctrine of divine determinism that excludes free will. Granted, neither does common sense demonstrate that they *are* compatible—i.e., divine determinism may very well be logically incompatible with a belief in free will, but common sense is not adequately equipped to pass judgment on the question.

We must remember exactly what divine determinism is positing. Divine determinism says there exists a creator God who creates absolutely everything—including each particular human choice. Therefore, what a man does is done out of the necessity of creaturely dependence. Every choice is absolutely controlled and determined by the creator of that choice. Every choice is what it is, not out of physical, logical, nor even natural necessity, but rather out of a sort of ontological necessity. If that partic-

ular choice is to have existence at all, it must be exactly what he who gives it existence created it to be.

What do the criteria of common sense say about this doctrine? Divine determinism is not positing a God who controls our every choice by external coercion, overpowering us and forcing us to do what we do not want to do. Hence, divine determinism is clearly not incompatible with free will by the first criterion.

But neither is divine determinism positing the existence of natural laws that create human choices out of physical or natural necessity. Divine determinism readily acknowledges that a choice that I might make could have been different, so far as physical and natural necessity is concerned. My genes, my social environment, my training, nothing in my physical or natural environment required that my choice be what it was. Rather, it was the creator God who made my choice to be what it was. In any given physical situation (i.e., genes, culture, personal upbringing, body chemistry, etc.), God could have caused my choice to be different from what it was—he could have created a different choice. He was free. His hands were not tied by my physical situation and natural circumstances. Therefore, there was no physical or natural necessity to my choice. There was only a divine, theological necessity—a necessity that transcends the physical and natural reality in which I find myself. Therefore, neither does the second criterion of common sense rule out the divine determination of freewill choices.

Divine determinism is not positing a kind of determinism that is immediately and obviously incompatible with our commonsensical notion of human freedom. Divine determinism sees me as a being who is ultimately, in very significant respects, free of the physical cosmos and of nature in the broadest sense. I am free of my genes; I am free of my environment. True, I am not free of my creator. But I am free of physical (natural) necessity. And this is all that is required in order for common sense to decide that, in a meaningful sense, “I have free will.” “Free of what?” we ask. “Free” of the physical cosmos; “free” of nature in the broadest possible sense. Therefore, divine determinism and the dictates of common sense are not in conflict. The kind of freedom that common sense insists we have, divine determinism allows.

Can we conclude therefore that divine determinism and free will are not logically incompatible—that they do not involve a contradiction? No, that concludes too much too soon. The criteria of common sense are adequate tools to use in everyday mundane life to establish blame and to make judgments with respect to character. But they are not adequate to the task of making a judgment about the larger philosophical question of transcendent causation. If a God who transcends all of reality absolutely

determines everything in that reality, what does that mean with regard to moral blame and the assessment of character? The criteria specifically honed to determine, within reality, which of our acts are free are simply not adequate nor appropriate tools to use in making judgments about a God who exists *outside of* all reality. You can't hammer a nail with a fingernail file. You can't determine the compatibility of divine determinism and free will using the everyday criteria of common sense regarding ordinary causation. We will need to educate ourselves and develop a new set of criteria that are useful and adequate to the task at hand—namely, to the task of judging whether a created reality that has been caused by a transcendent reality can be said, without logical contradiction, to involve free will.

Most people—if they entertain the question at all—assume that divine determinism and free will are logically incompatible by the dictates of common sense. Why do they assume so? Has their analysis of common sense resulted in a different set of criteria for assessing the status of human choice? Do they, in accordance with those different criteria, find that divine determinism is clearly and unmistakably incompatible with free will? I think not. Rather, the notion that common sense judges divine determinism and free will to be incompatible is not really an assessment of the dictates of common sense at all. Instead, such a conclusion is based on an implicit argument wherein one extrapolates from the dictates of common sense to a conclusion about divine determinism and transcendent causation. I will attempt to convey the exact nature of this implicit argument:

The Argument that Divine Determinism Is Incompatible with Free Will

PREMISE ONE: *Any human choice that is caused by the physical necessity of overpowering coercion or by the physical necessity of natural processes is not a freewill choice.*

- Premise 1 is justified by the dictates of ordinary common sense.

PREMISE TWO: *Any human choice that is caused by anything whatsoever (as opposed to being self-caused or uncaused) is not a freewill choice.*

- Premise 2 is justified by a logical extrapolation from premise 1 by means of generalization. If a human choice that is caused by a physical (natural) cause is not a freewill choice, then we can generalize and say that a human choice that is caused by *any cause whatsoever* is not a freewill choice.

PREMISE THREE: *According to divine determinism, every human choice is caused by God.*

- Premise 3 is justified by the definition of divine determinism.

CONCLUSION ONE: *According to divine determinism, no human choice is a truly freewill choice—i.e., free will does not exist.*

- Conclusion 1 follows by deduction from premise 2 and premise 3.

CONCLUSION TWO: *If free will does exist, then it is logically impossible for divine determinism to be true.*

- Conclusion 2 follows by logical deduction from conclusion 1.

In the next part of the chapter I will argue that this is a fallacious argument. My purpose here is to establish a prior point: If I maintain that divine determinism and free will are logically incompatible, whether I am right or wrong, I do not do so on the basis of plain common sense. Rather, I believe it on the basis of a much more complex logical deduction that is utterly dependent upon the validity of a generalization—namely, it is dependent on premise 2 above. As the following section will show, this problematical deduction or generalization plays exactly the same role in each of the four sub-arguments that, in effect, define the philosophical objection from free will.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTION — ANALYZING THE ARGUMENTS

We are now in a position to understand more thoroughly and accurately the philosophical objection to divine determinism. In our discussion thus far we have made three crucial discoveries:

1. The philosophical objection involves the conviction that divine determinism is incompatible with four indubitable beliefs:

- a) *belief in the reality of free choice,*
- b) *belief in the significance of men's choices,*
- c) *belief in the moral accountability men have for their choices and acts, and*
- d) *belief in the logical relation between men's choices and their character*

and personality.

2. It is a valid and true belief, handed to us by common sense, that a choice or act that is done out of physical necessity cannot be held to be truly free, nor significant, nor morally blameworthy, nor reflective of character or personality.

3. The philosophical objection, though based on the commonsensical belief in (2) above, is in fact a logical deduction from that commonsense proposition and may or may not be a valid deduction. It is not itself—as is usually supposed—a straightforward commonsensical belief.

Let us consider a formal presentation of the four sub-arguments that comprise the philosophical argument against divine determinism. We will deal at more length with the first sub-argument since it is the most commonly recognized of the four.

THE FIRST SUB-ARGUMENT AGAINST DIVINE DETERMINISM

STEP ONE: *Men do not make real choices if every choice they make is made out of physical necessity.*

If a choice is physically coerced or “programmed in” by the laws of nature such that it couldn’t have been otherwise, then it would be invalid to call it a real choice—that it involves a choice is mere illusion. This premise is deemed valid on the grounds that it is commonsensical (in the right sense of the word). It is a transparently sound induction from ordinary, mundane experience according to the laws of induction and the fundamental assumptions upon which all human knowledge relies. If this premise can be called into question, there is no aspect of human knowledge that cannot be called into question.

STEP TWO: *Men do not make real choices if every choice they make is made out of necessity.*

This conclusion is justified on the grounds that it is a valid generalization from the premise in step 1 above. If the physical necessity of a choice is incompatible with that choice being a *real* choice, it follows that the necessity of a choice—in any sense of necessity whatsoever—is incom-

patible with that choice being a *real* choice. This simply follows by generalizing from the first premise. The assumption, of course, is that what disqualifies choices that are physically necessary from being real choices is the necessity of those choices. The fact that it is *physical* necessity is incidental. Though we have little or no experience with any kind of necessity other than physical necessity, to generalize beyond physical necessity to other kinds of necessity (even though we have no direct experience of them) is nevertheless presumed to be valid.

STEP THREE: *Divine determinism asserts that all human choices are caused by God and hence every human choice is made out of necessity.*

This follows immediately from the definition of divine determinism as we have defined it.

STEP FOUR: *Therefore, if divine determinism is true, then the belief that men make real choices is not true.*

This follows by straightforward deduction from the conclusion in step 2 and the premise in step 3.

STEP FIVE: *If the belief that men make real choices is true, then divine determinism is not true.*

This follows by straightforward deduction from the conclusion in step 4. Formal logic teaches us that the contrapositive of a true statement is necessarily true. Step 5 is the contrapositive of step 4. Since step 4 has been established to be true, then step 5 is necessarily true.

STEP SIX: *The belief that men make real choices is true.*

This premise is justified on the same grounds as the premise in step 1—common sense. This is a basic induction from human experience. It relies upon fundamental assumptions of common sense and the principles of induction. If this premise can be questioned, there is no aspect of human knowledge and human intelligence that cannot be questioned. The alternative to accepting this premise is total skepticism.

STEP SEVEN: *Therefore, divine determinism is not true.*

This follows by straightforward deduction from the conclusion in step 5 and the premise in step 6.

THE OTHER THREE SUB-ARGUMENTS

The other three sub-arguments parallel this first one exactly. Rather than go through each one separately, I refer you to the charts on the following pages. The charts lay out the corresponding steps of each sub-argument. The defense for each step of each argument would be identical or analogous to the defense of the corresponding steps of the first argument discussed above.

THE FIRST TWO SUB-ARGUMENTS THAT COMPRISE THE PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT

THE OTHER TWO SUB-ARGUMENTS THAT

Sub-argument #1	Sub-argument #2
Step one: A person does not make REAL choices if every choice he makes is made out of physical necessity.	Step one: A person's choices are not significant if every choice he makes is made out of physical necessity.
Step two: A person does not make REAL choices if every choice he makes is made out of necessity.	Step two: A person's choices are not significant if every choice he makes is made out of necessity.
Step three: Divine determinism asserts that all human choices are caused by God and hence that every human choice is made out of necessity.	Step three: Divine determinism asserts that all human choices are caused by God and hence that every human choice is made out of necessity.
Step four: Therefore, if divine determinism is true, then the belief that human beings make REAL choices is not true.	Step four: Therefore, if divine determinism is true, then the belief that a human being's choices are significant is not true.
Step five: If the belief that human beings make REAL choices is true, then divine determinism is not true.	Step five: If the belief that a human being's choices are significant is true, then divine determinism is not true.
Step six: The belief that human beings make REAL choices is true.	Step six: The belief that a human being's choices are significant is true.
Step seven: Therefore, divine determinism is not true.	Step seven: Therefore, divine determinism is not true.

COMPRISE THE PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT

Sub-argument #3	Sub-argument #4
Step one: A human being is not morally accountable for his choices if every choice he makes is made out of physical necessity.	Step one: A person's character and personality cannot be judged on the basis of his choices if every choice he makes is made out of physical necessity.
Step two: A human being is not morally accountable for his choices if every choice he makes is made out of necessity.	Step two: A person's character and personality cannot be judged on the basis of his choices if every choice he makes is made out of necessity.
Step three: Divine determinism asserts that all human choices are caused by God and hence that every human choice is made out of necessity.	Step three: Divine determinism asserts that all human choices are caused by God and hence that every human choice is made out of necessity.
Step four: Therefore, if divine determinism is true, then the belief that human beings are morally accountable for their choices is not true.	Step four: Therefore, if divine determinism is true, then the belief that a human being's character and personality can be validly judged on the basis of his choices is not true.
Step five: If the belief that human beings are morally accountable for their choices is true, then divine determinism is not true.	Step five: If the belief that a human being's character and personality can be validly judged on the basis of his choices is true, then divine determinism is not true.
Step six: The belief that human beings are morally accountable for their choices is true.	Step six: The belief that a human being's character and personality can be validly judged on the basis of his choices is true.
Step seven: Therefore, divine determinism is not true.	Step seven: Therefore, divine determinism is not true.

SUMMARY

Although we commonly believe that divine determinism and free will are clearly incompatible by the dictates of common sense, I contend that such is not the case. Rather, it is the dictates of common sense that make this belief seem so clear and obvious.¹⁶⁵ A close examination of what common sense dictates relative to what divine determinism asserts reveals that, in fact, the seeming incompatibility of free will and divine determin-

165. I strongly suspect that the commonsensicality (i.e., the nearly universal acceptance) of the incompatibility of divine determinism and free will is, at least in part, a product of either the Enlightenment or of Romanticism. (But I must leave it to the intellectual historian to either vin-

ism (i.e., the kommonsensicality of their incompatibility) is actually based on a debatable logical deduction that may or may not be valid. It is not, in fact, based on a simple, direct application of the dictates of ordinary common sense.

This is an important point for those of us whose theory of knowledge credits highly the dictates of common sense. For us, if common sense ruled that divine determinism and free will were incompatible, then divine determinism would be decisively refuted. But if, in fact, common sense does not directly judge divine determinism and free will to be incompatible—if, instead, their incompatibility is the conclusion of a deductive argument that contains a controversial premise, a problematic generalization—then it behooves us to postpone our rejection of divine determinism until we can determine whether that logical argument is, in fact, sound. In the next section I will argue that the argument is, in fact, fallacious and that, therefore, the philosophical objection to our belief in divine determinism is not a valid objection. Common sense, as it turns out, will not oppose divine determinism. It will support it.

PART II — Answering the Philosophical Objection

To answer the philosophical objection to divine determinism, I must demonstrate that its four sub-arguments are not sound arguments. As I did in the analysis and exposition of those sub-arguments, I will concentrate on the first sub-argument in my response. My response to the other three sub-arguments would be essentially identical to my response to the first. Therefore, it will not be necessary to spell out my response to each of them explicitly. Looking at the first sub-argument, then, how should we respond?

dicare or refute this suspicion.) It seems likely that it is a philosophical dogma that has, as a legacy from history, become a part of the taken-for-granted assumptions of western civilization, and which no longer comes under any scrutiny—philosophical or otherwise—in our culture. It seems self-evident to us that divine determinism and free will are incompatible, because it is part of the cultural baggage we are handed as we enter the world. Since it is immune from examination, we never discover that its apparent self-evidence is an illusion, and that the actual logical basis for the belief is a rather problematic logical deduction based on a fallacious generalization.

It is part of my suspicion that other cultures in world history would not have been nearly so ready to assume the incompatibility of divine determinism and free will as modern western civilization. [Again, I must leave it to the historian to say for sure.] If so, Christians in other civilizations would not have had nearly the same degree of difficulty affirming divine determinism as does the modern Bible-believing church.

The crucial step in the argument is step 2—*men do not make REAL choices if every choice they make is made out of necessity*. Step 2 involves a crucial deduction from the commonsensical premise in step 1—*men do not make REAL choices if every choice they make is made out of physical necessity*. Is this a valid deduction? That is the crux of this argument. I have no quarrel with step 1, and I have no quarrel with steps 3 through 7 of the sub-argument. If step 2 is valid, then 3 through 7 follow out of logical necessity. The whole argument hinges on this conclusion in step 2. Is it a valid deduction from step 1?

In step 2, the objector to divine determinism concludes that just as common sense dictates that a choice that is necessary due to physical causation is not a REAL choice, so also a choice that is necessary due to *any sort of causation* is not a REAL choice. A cause is a cause is a cause—so the argument goes. The fact that the necessity of a choice is due to a physical cause in particular is not relevant. If a choice is caused, it is caused. If it is necessary, it is necessary. Consequently, since common sense tells us that a physically necessitated choice is not a REAL freewill choice, it follows that a choice necessitated by any cause whatsoever will not be a REAL freewill choice.

But this is exactly the point where this argument is unsound. One cannot, without independent supporting evidence or argumentation, generalize from physical causation to any and every sort of causation. One cannot validly conclude that because every house in Mill City is made of wood, every house everywhere is made of wood. Neither can one validly conclude that because a choice made out of physical necessity is not a real choice, a choice made out of any sort of necessity is not a real choice. This invalid generalization fails to account for the distinction between different kinds of causes. Its assumption that a cause is a cause is a cause is hasty and fallacious.

At least one crucial distinction needs to be made when we talk about causes. There are, on the one hand, those that I shall call “ordinary causes,” and, on the other hand, there are those that I shall call “transcendent causes.”¹⁶⁶ An ORDINARY CAUSE is any cause (whether an object, a force, or a state) that is a part of created reality. A TRANSCENDENT CAUSE is any cause that exists outside of some specific created reality such that it is

166. There are undoubtedly several important distinctions in the ordinary usage of the word “cause” and the corresponding network of concepts. A thorough and definitive analysis of causation would be helpful here, but it is outside the scope of this work. Furthermore, I do not think a thorough analysis of causation is necessary to the argument of this work. This one distinction between “ordinary” and “transcendent” causation is, I think, sufficient to advance my arguments.

not itself a part of that created reality.¹⁶⁷ In the biblical worldview, the only possible candidate for serving as a transcendent cause of the cosmos is the transcendent creator God. This distinction is a very simple and obvious one, but—as will become evident—it is a very important one.

Obviously, physical causes fall within the category of ordinary causes. But God, who—by divine determinist theory—is the ultimate cause of everything in the cosmos, must be classified a transcendent cause.

In step 2 of the first sub-argument against divine determinism, the deduction is made that since physical causes (a species of ordinary cause) preclude choices from being REAL freewill choices, then all causes—including God as the cause of everything (the unique transcendent cause)—preclude choices from being REAL freewill choices. This generalization involves an inductive leap across the ordinary and transcendent cause distinction. Is this leap valid or invalid? The argument against divine determinism hinges on this question.

This inductive leap presents itself as eminently commonsensical. Why? Primarily because it is barely even noticed. Indeed the distinction itself is seldom, if ever, recognized. Without acknowledging the distinction, all causes are treated the same. All are viewed as ordinary causes and our commonsense intuitions about ordinary causation are applied uncritically.

Furthermore, even if the distinction is recognized, one's first inclination is to understand a transcendent cause as being exactly analogous to an ordinary cause. At first glance, it appears that I have nowhere else to go in order to get any training in the nature of transcendent causation. If the only training my intuitions have received is in the rules and implications of ordinary causation, then understandably I could not be expected to understand a transcendent cause in any way other than by direct analogy with ordinary causation.

But both of these notions are mistaken. A transcendent cause is not exactly analogous to an ordinary cause. As I will show, there are some very crucial differences between them. Furthermore, that our intuitions are untrained in the nature of transcendent causation is simply not true. Certainly, our intuitions with respect to ordinary causes are much better trained and stronger. Ordinary causes abound whereas transcendent causes do not. But the fact remains that we do have experience with transcen-

167. What does it mean to exist outside of created reality? I mean more than simply existing outside of the material cosmos. I mean more than existing outside of the present age. I mean to literally be beyond created reality itself. Beyond heaven, beyond hell, beyond the angels, beyond the revelation of God himself as Yahweh, beyond Satan, beyond the whole spiritual realm of created reality. See diagram #4.1 and the accompanying discussion in chapter 4.

dent causes, and we can, in fact, understand exactly what is involved in the nature of transcendent causation. Our intuitions work with the concept of transcendent causation all the time—most notably, when we consider the relationship of a man to the creation of his imagination. For example, if we consider the relationship between the author of a novel and the imaginary reality that he creates in that novel, we are considering the nature of transcendent causation, for that relationship is exactly the relationship of a transcendent cause to its effect.

The creator God is not the only existing transcendent cause. Any human being who creates within his own imagination a reality that he himself is “outside of,” and not a part of, is functioning as the transcendent cause of that imaginary reality. Therefore, there is a useful and instructive analogy between a human author’s relationship to the works of his imagination and God’s relationship to the works of his creative will. This, in turn, means that the divine AUTHORSHIP of all reality is the all-important metaphor for understanding the relationship between God and the reality he creates and controls.¹⁶⁸ We must understand God to exist as the AUTHOR of reality and to have a sort of authorial control over that reality; only then are we understanding God’s providential control over reality appropriately—as its TRANSCENDENT cause. Any other conception of God’s providence and sovereign control—any other metaphor—will conceive of his providence as a kind of ORDINARY cause—a very misleading error. But the Bible—and divine determinism—contend that God is more than just the most powerful ordinary cause in the universe. He is the transcendent cause of everything.

With a little reflection, it becomes quickly apparent how apt the analogy is between God’s providence—as the divine determinist understands it—and the author’s relationship to an imaginary world he creates. What is a character (in an author’s novel) that he should resist the author’s

168. The Westminster Confession betrays the fact that it has failed to make a distinction between ordinary causes and transcendent causes—and even more importantly, that it has failed to recognize that an author is a transcendent rather than an ordinary cause—when it denies that God is the “author” of sin. (Westminster Confession, chap. 5, sec. 4) Indeed, my point in this book will be that a recognition that God is the *author* of evil rather than the *agent* of evil is the crucial distinction that allows both divine determinism and free will to be true simultaneously. The Westminster Confession, failing to make a distinction between these two very different relationships, is trying to deny that God is in any way the AGENT of evil by purporting that he is not the AUTHOR of evil. This same failure is evident among others in the Reformed tradition. The Reformed tradition’s failure to make this vital distinction—between ordinary and transcendent causation—has prevented it from reaching final clarity with regard to the nature of free will and human accountability in the light of their doctrines regarding divine sovereignty, divine election, and divine predestination.

will?¹⁶⁹ The author of a novel is the one in whom each character in his novel “lives, moves, and has his being.”¹⁷⁰ The character in a novel could not think a thought, make a move, nor even exist, but for the will of the author. Each character’s existence, and every minute detail of his life is completely, utterly, and unvaryingly a function of the author’s will. But this is exactly the relationship that the divine determinist (and, indeed—as we saw in earlier chapters—the Bible) purports to exist between God and the whole of created reality, including ourselves. To understand the nature of God’s relationship to reality, we can analyze a familiar situation that is indeed analogous—that of the author of a book in relation to the fictional reality he is creating within his book.

Let me summarize. The author of a novel is the transcendent cause of everything that happens in his book just as God is the transcendent cause of everything that happens in reality. To understand the implications of God’s being the cause of everything, I can turn to the only apt analogy to God’s providence that I have ever experienced: the author’s absolute determination of every detail of the imaginary reality of his novel. I must not turn to physical causation. A physical cause is not a transcendent cause. It is an ordinary cause. The analogy to physical or mechanical causation will only mislead me with respect to God’s control over his creation. It will lead to the sort of fallacious reasoning found in the philosophical objection to divine determinism outlined earlier in this chapter.

AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSCENDENT CAUSATION

What then is involved in transcendent causation? Or, more importantly, what is not involved? Let us consider some of those propositions that our common sense considers axiomatic for ordinary causation and consider whether common sense deems them equally valid for transcendent causation.¹⁷¹

IS THERE AN ANALOGY TO THE FIRST AXIOM OF ORDINARY CAUSATION?

169. Compare with the claim regarding God in Romans 9:19.

170. Compare with the claim regarding God in Acts 17:28.

171. The axioms to which I am referring are those commonsensical axioms that I argued earlier were the criteria used by common sense in determining whether a choice was a freewill choice or not: (a) a freewill choice is a real choice; (b) a freewill choice is a significant choice; (c) a freewill choice is one for which the person is morally culpable; and (d) a freewill choice is one from which the person’s character and nature can be validly inferred. There is a fuller discussion of these in the early part of this chapter.

The first axiom of ordinary causation is this: (i) *if a choice is caused by a physical cause (i.e., an ordinary cause) and is physically necessary, then it is not a REAL freewill choice because it is not a real CHOICE at all.* Does this same axiom hold true of a choice caused by transcendent causation? Is it axiomatic that if a choice is “transcendentally” necessary, then it is not a REAL freewill choice because it is not a real CHOICE at all? Does common sense dictate that if a human action is ultimately caused by a transcendent will then it does not involve a real freewill choice? No! It does not.

Consider the choices made by the characters in a novel. Such choices certainly qualify as choices that are ultimately caused by a transcendent cause; they are utterly under the control of the transcendent author who has willed them into existence. No character in a novel would act as he did, think as he did, nor be what he was apart from the will of the author. Furthermore, the author’s will is irresistible. Whatever the author wants a character to do, think, or be, that’s what he does, thinks, and is. Now, what does our common sense tell us about the choices made by these characters? Are their choices not REAL choices? Do we relate to these characters as beings who “had no choice”? No! We relate to them as beings with decidedly real choices, as beings who certainly could have done and thought differently.

That is why, in reading a novel, we alternately feel regret and joy at the choices these characters make. We do not typically respond in casual indifference because, after all, “they aren’t really making a choice.” We relate to them as characters who have freely chosen as they have. Therein lies the nobility, the tragedy, the poignancy, and the drama of what we are reading.

What are we thinking? We know the characters are nothing more and nothing less than the outworking of the will of the author. Why, then, do we allow ourselves to react to what they do as if they were free moral agents? Because—though they may not be free of the ever-present authorial will that has granted them existence in the first place—they are free in every other respect. Their choices are not physically or logically necessary in the context of the imaginary reality they inhabit. It is not as if—given the imaginary reality created in the novel—the choices these characters make are the only choices that were logically or rationally possible. That is not how we perceive their choices. The fact of the matter is, they could have chosen evil rather than good. They could have chosen selfishness over generosity. They could have entertained perverse thoughts rather than pure thoughts, and still the rational coherence of the author’s imaginary world would have remained intact. There truly were other alternatives for these characters. They were REAL choices before them, and they chose

what they chose in complete freedom and autonomy from all the other realities within the world of the novel. The real universe created in the novel had not rendered their choices a necessity. Hence, they were completely and utterly free within the world of that novel. Recognizing that, we readers do not hesitate to relate to their choices as REAL choices that could have been different.

Our common sense understands and is quite comfortable with a certain paradox here: the character in a novel is faced with very REAL choices and yet he must do exactly what the author wills him to do. The character chooses what he does, not out of some necessity inherent in the imaginary world of which he is a part, but rather, out of the necessity of doing what the author has decided he will do. The characters' choices are "authorially necessary" or "transcendentally necessary" (if you will), but they are not physically or logically necessary. Our common sense understands and is quite comfortable with this paradox. The character in a novel is faced with very real choices that he must freely make, and yet he must and will do what the author wills. The choices that he freely makes are utterly and completely determined by the author of his existence, and yet they are *free* choices that he freely makes.

IS THERE AN ANALOGY TO THE SECOND AXIOM OF ORDINARY CAUSATION?

Consider next the second axiom of ordinary causation: (ii) *if a choice is caused by a physical cause (i.e., an ordinary cause) and is physically necessary, then it is not a freewill choice because it is not a significant choice.* Does this same axiom hold true for transcendent causation? Is it equally axiomatic that if a choice is caused by a transcendent cause and is "transcendentally" necessary then it is not a freewill choice because it is not a significant choice? In other words, if a human action is caused by a transcendent will, does it fail to involve significant choice on the part of the human actor? No! That is not the determination of common sense.

Roughly the same thing can be said about this as about the first axiom. Whereas a choice done out of physical necessity is not deemed a significant choice by common sense, yet a choice done out of "transcendent" or "authorial" necessity *is* deemed a significant choice. Once again we can see this clearly in the transcendent causation exemplified in a novel. The choices made by the characters in a novel are genuinely significant. They are utterly determinative of the course of the fictional history being created in the novel. The plot could not and would not proceed as it does without the characters choosing as they do. The choices of each character

are absolutely determinative in shaping the story of which they are a part.

Again, common sense is quite comfortable with a paradox: The character in a novel is faced with significant, reality-shaping choices, and yet he will (and must) do exactly what the author wills him to do. According to common sense, it is not an either/or proposition. It is not a matter of choosing whether the author shapes the plot of his book or the characters, through their choices, shape the plot of the book. Clearly, it is both. The author shapes the story of the novel and the characters shape the story of the novel. To be exact, the author shapes the story of the novel in and through the freewill choices that the author determines his characters will make. The story cannot proceed as it does without the characters choosing as they do. Yet the characters cannot and will not choose as they do apart from the author's creatively determining their freewill choices. Our common sense has no trouble negotiating this paradox. The character in a novel is faced with significant, life-changing choices that he must freely make, and yet he must inevitably do what the author of his existence transcendentally determines.

ARE THERE ANY ANALOGIES TO THE THIRD AND FOURTH AXIOMS OF ORDINARY CAUSATION?

When we turn to the final two axioms of ordinary causation, the distinction between an "ordinary" cause and a "transcendent" cause becomes even clearer: (iii) *if a choice is caused by a physical cause (i.e., an ordinary cause) and is physically necessary, then it is not a freewill choice and the person making the choice is not morally accountable for that choice*, and (iv) *if a choice is caused by a physical cause (i.e., an ordinary cause) and is physically necessary, then it is not a freewill choice and nothing about the character or personality of the person making the choice can be inferred from that choice*.

Do analogous axioms hold true for transcendent causation? Is it equally axiomatic that a person cannot be held morally accountable for a choice that results from some transcendent cause? And is it equally valid to say that one cannot infer anything about the character or personality of a person whose choices have been determined by transcendent causation? Once again, the answer is "No!" These are not valid axioms when we have TRANSCENDENT causation in view.

If a character in a novel commits a murder, do we blame the character for his deed? Of course we do. We may find ourselves even hating him for his cruelty. And we most certainly pass judgment on his character; we may very well conclude that he is utterly evil.

How is it that we can do that? According to the logic of ordinary causation we shouldn't be able to respond to the character as we do. The character couldn't help it. He had to do whatever the author made him do. We can't blame the poor guy for a murder that the author made him do. And why should we judge the poor guy's character so harshly? He might be truly a nice guy. He acted cruelly because the author willed him to do so. And no character can resist the will of his author.

Such is the logic of ordinary causation. But that is not the logic that controls our commonsensical reaction to the characters in a novel. We blame and commend these imaginary characters for their deeds and choices. We find it right and natural to use their choices as the basis upon which to form a judgment about their characters and personalities. Why? How? How can we do so in such defiance of the logic of ordinary causation? There can be only one explanation: we are applying an entirely different logic to the phenomenon of transcendent causation from that which we apply to the phenomenon of ordinary causation. The logic of transcendent causation—the logic we intuitively recognize to be applicable in the case of an author's transcendent control over his characters—is radically different from the logic of ordinary causation. It has an entirely different set of axioms.

SUMMARY OF OUR ANALYSIS OF TRANSCENDENT CAUSATION

The implications of ordinary causation and the implications of transcendent causation are very different. Common sense tells us that ordinary causation (including primarily physical causation) is logically incompatible with the attributes of what we call freewill choices. A choice that has been determined by an ordinary cause is not real, not significant, not morally assessable, and not a valid datum for the determination of a person's character. But that same common sense tells us that a choice that has been determined by a transcendent cause is all of those things—i.e., real, significant, morally assessable, and a valid datum for the determination of a person's character. If so, then a choice's being determined by a transcendent cause is not incompatible with its being a freewill choice. A choice's being determined by an ordinary cause clearly is incompatible with its being a freewill choice, but no such incompatibility exists when its determinative cause is transcendent. Before we can proceed any further, we must pause to respond to a very natural and common objection.

AN OBJECTION: THE LOGIC

OF ORDINARY CAUSATION IS *NOT* DIFFERENT FROM THE LOGIC OF TRANSCENDENT CAUSATION

We have just contended that the logic of ordinary causation is different from the logic of transcendent causation. We noted that we do not naturally apply the logic of ordinary causation to cases that clearly involve transcendent causation—for example, to the case of characters in a novel whose actions are transcendentally caused by the author of that novel. Instead, transcendent causation has an entirely different logic of its own.¹⁷²

But someone may raise the following objection: True, the logic does seem to be different; but the difference in logic is not due to a fundamental difference between ordinary and transcendent causation. Rather, it is due to the fact that the characters in a novel are not real. They are imaginary.

Consider a specific example: an author, Arthur, writes a novel in which a character, Killroy, murders another character, Deadmore. Now, according to the argument I sketched above, our commonsense intuitions do not find it reasonable to convict Arthur or find him culpable for the murder. I offered an explanation for this: namely, the fact that Arthur's relationship to the fictional characters in his novel—to Killroy, to Deadmore, and to the whole imaginary world of his novel—is a TRANSCENDENT relationship. Arthur is the transcendent creator of these characters and of all their actions, including this murder. As the transcendent creator and cause of Deadmore's murder, he is not the one who is morally responsible for it. He did not *commit* the crime, he *created* it. Creating a murder is a significantly different action from committing one. They do not amount to the same thing.

But why? Why is he not morally culpable for what he transcendentally causes or creates? My contention is that it is due to the nature of transcendent causation. Transcendent causation, unlike ordinary causation, is not the kind of overpowering physical coercion that requires us to shift moral culpability. If the direct agent of a murder has been overpowered and

172. By “a logic of its own,” of course, I do not mean that there exists literally another kind of logic. From my discussion in chapter 3 it should be clear that I am convinced there is, strictly speaking, only one kind of logic. Here I refer to “logic” in the looser sense often used in everyday language. The point is that what logically follows from the fact that some choice has been “transcendentally” caused is not the same as what logically follows from the fact that some choice has been “ordinarily” caused. A common, short-hand way to say this is simply to say that the “logic of transcendental causation” is different from the “logic of ordinary causation.”

coerced (ordinary causation), then we shift blame from the agent committing the murder to the one whose coercion made him commit the murder. But transcendent causation leaves moral culpability intact. The character who commits a murder is morally accountable for that murder because he is the one who committed it. That, after all, is how the morality game is played: whoever commits a deed is morally accountable for it. The author, Arthur, who created the character and the murder, is not morally accountable for *committing* the murder. This is so precisely because he did not commit it, he only created it, and creation of this sort is an act of transcendent causation.

But one might object: Granted, our intuitions do find it unreasonable to blame the author of a novel for a murder committed by one of his characters. But it has nothing to do with the fact that the author is a transcendent cause. Rather, it is because the crimes committed in a novel are not real, but imaginary. The author cannot be blamed for a murder that has not really occurred—that is, for a strictly imaginary murder. Isn't this the real reason we do not blame an author for the crimes he creates?

According to this objection, I have based my argument upon sleight-of-hand illusion when I use the analogy of an author to describe God's relationship to his cosmos. It may appear to demonstrate that a transcendent cause is not morally culpable; it may appear to show that transcendent causation does not nullify the reality of free will. But, in fact, authorship does not demonstrate any such thing. In reality, there is no real crime in a novel for which the author could be culpable, and the free will that exists in his characters is as "imaginary" as anything else in his novel. Hence, an author's relationship to the fictional reality he creates in a novel has nothing at all to teach us about God. Certainly it cannot prove that transcendent causation does not preclude free will, for there is no analogy between God and an author. The author of a novel creates no REAL thing, only imaginary things, while the works of God's hands are REAL. Therein lies the significant, decisive difference between God's relationship to the world and an author's relationship to his novel. God is related to REAL things as their creator; the author's relationship is to merely imaginary things.

ANSWERING THIS OBJECTION

There are three things that need to be said in response to this objection.

PART ONE OF MY RESPONSE TO THIS OBJECTION

It is certainly true that the murder that occurs in a novel is an imaginary one. Why did I choose an imaginary—rather than a real—evil for my analysis of transcendent causation? Am I trying to deceive the reader? Am I claiming to prove a difference based on transcendent causation when the difference hinges on something else entirely—the difference between reality and fiction? It will help my case to explain why I chose an example that involves only imaginary realities.

As a matter of fact, I chose an imaginary murder precisely because there exists no other instance where we humans can experience and hence relate to the concept of transcendence. None of us does—nor ever possibly could—transcend the reality in which we exist. We are ourselves creatures, inextricably a part of this created reality. None of us has ever experienced—nor will we ever experience—being above or outside the creation of which we are inescapably a part.

Consider, then, the case of a murder. How could we ever know, first-hand, what are the moral implications of being the creator of a murder? Who of us has ever created (rather than committed) an actual, real murder? We most certainly understand the moral implications of committing a murder. That is a part of our direct experience. But who of us has the power to create the freewill choice to commit murder in another person? Such is an experience that none of us will ever have. Accordingly, in trying to determine whether the transcendent cause of a crime bears any morally accountability for it, we have no experience to draw upon. We have no experience upon which we could base any conclusion. We have never been a transcendent cause of anything in our reality.

We have, however, been the transcendent cause of things within imaginary realities of our creation. Indeed, that is the one and only way in which we ever could be a transcendent cause. We can create an imaginary murder. We could never create a real one.

This is why my argument must appeal to the case of an imaginary murder. I must analyze a *bona fide* instance of transcendent causation. But the only way I can be a transcendent cause is in relation to the products of my imagination. Hence, when my argument seeks to understand moral culpability relative to an imaginary murder, I do not introduce the element of its imaginary nature in order to create a specious, illusory argument. Rather, it is because no other scenario exists that could afford us the opportunity to understand the implications of transcendence. If we do

not analyze a situation in which transcendent causation does, in fact, occur—namely, over the creations of my imagination—then what situation are we going to find that will permit us to analyze transcendent causation?

PART TWO OF MY RESPONSE TO THIS OBJECTION

In the example above, I argued that we do not blame Arthur (the author of the novel) for Killroy's murder of Deadmore because holding the transcendent cause of an evil deed morally accountable for it is contrary to common sense. According to the objection under consideration, this is not right. The correct explanation (so the objection claims) lies in the fact that the murder of Deadmore is imaginary, not real. At first glance this sounds like a plausible explanation. But on closer examination, the imaginary status of the murder does not adequately explain why we hold Arthur blameless.

Look at it from “inside” the story. Suppose that the imaginary Killroy were to be apprehended by an imaginary police force and brought to trial before an imaginary jury. Would it make sense for this imaginary jury to acquit Killroy on the grounds that Killroy did not commit a real murder? Even if—from our perspective as readers—this sounds plausible, from the perspective of this imaginary jury, this would be ridiculous. From their perspective, they are trying Killroy for a real murder.

The “reality” of the murder is relative.¹⁷³ Relative to our author (Arthur) and the objective existence of which he is a part (including us readers), the murder is not real. But relative to the imaginary jury, the murder is very real. It is just as real as they are! Arthur did not write a fictional story about an imaginary murder. He wrote a fictional story about a real murder—a real murder within the fictional world he created. Relative to this imaginary jury that is a part of that imaginary world, the murder is a real one. Accordingly, it would be unthinkable—even bizarre—for the jury to acquit Killroy on the grounds that the murder he had committed was not a real one.

Now what if Arthur (the author) were to be brought to trial before this same imaginary jury. We have suggested that, commonsensically, Arthur should not be held culpable for the murder that he created. He is not the murderer. He is the author of the murder. But here is the crucial question: why not? Why should he not be found guilty? Because—as the objection

173. My point here hinges on the idea that reality can exist on different “levels,” that things can exist in “degrees.” For a further discussion of this concept of reality, see appendix D.

suggests—the murder was not a REAL one? No! Relative to the imaginary jury that, hypothetically, is trying Arthur, the murder he is being tried for is quite real. The not-real argument could never even arise in this imaginary jury's deliberations. Yet a guilty verdict would be bizarre and unthinkable just the same.

Why the not-guilty verdict then? It can only be because Arthur's state of transcendence relative to the novel renders him unimpeachable for the crimes he created in that novel. To create whatever he chooses is the author's prerogative. He cannot be judged accountable for his characters' actions for, as I said before, he creates those actions; he does not commit them. An author cannot create the world he chooses to create (the author's prerogative) without creating the characters and actions that that world requires. But the rules that make up the moral structure of objective reality implicate the agent or committer of a crime, not the transcendent creator of a crime.

We have made two important observations in this thought experiment wherein we imagine Arthur being put on trial by a jury within his novel: (i) the question of whether Deadmore's murder was real or imaginary would not even arise, it would be a non-issue to such a jury (they would take the "reality" of the murder for granted), and (ii) it is inconceivable that such a jury would convict Arthur of this crime. So, according to my own commonsensical intuitions, while I expect this jury to be reluctant to blame Arthur for Killroy's deed, yet I expect them not to hesitate with respect to the REALITY of Killroy's deed. Therefore, my reluctance to judge Arthur morally culpable for Deadmore's murder results not from the murder's lack of reality relative to me, rather it must result from an acknowledgement of Arthur's prerogative as the transcendent author. Common sense recognizes that a transcendent author (the transcendent cause) is not morally accountable for any particular deed which a creature might commit in the reality of which he is the transcendent creator.

This raises a further question. Am I suggesting that an author is above good and evil in the writing of a book? Is there no moral accountability for what an author writes? And by analogy, then, am I suggesting that God is above good and evil? Am I saying that God could do literally anything he wants to do in creating the history of the world and never in any sense whatsoever be morally accountable for what he creates?

My answer to both questions is "No." In the case of an author, I am not suggesting that Arthur is above good and evil. Like any human being, Arthur must and will be judged by the standards of goodness, and the act of writing his novel is one of the acts for which he will be judged. But, with regard to the novel, for what exactly will Arthur be judged? Will he

be judged for the crimes and evils that are committed by the characters in his novel? No. As we have seen, Arthur cannot be held morally accountable for the actions of his characters. Rather, moral judgment of his creation of the novel will be based on two things: (i) the purpose of and motive from which he wrote the novel in the first place, and—to some extent, at least—(ii) the overall impact of the novel on its readers. If Arthur’s purpose for writing the novel is consistent with what is good and right, then his act of writing the novel was, to that extent, a good thing. Similarly, if the overall impact of the novel on its readers was morally good, then, to that extent, the writing of the novel was a good act. But if Arthur’s purpose was evil and the overall impact on its readers was harmful, then writing it was evil; it ought never to have been written. So, while Arthur is not morally culpable for the deeds committed by the characters in his novel, he is nonetheless morally culpable for the novel’s creation, taken as a whole.¹⁷⁴ He is not above good and evil. He too is subject to moral judgment. But he must be judged only for that which he did, in fact, do. He must be judged only for that of which he was, in fact, the agent. Arthur was not the agent or the doer of any of the crimes he authored in his story. So he cannot be judged for those. But he was the agent of an act of creation. He created a reality—a reality that included a murderer, Killroy, within it. He must ultimately be judged for the creation of that world he authored. Taking that world as a whole, it was either morally good that he brought it into being, or it was morally evil that he brought it into being. For that Arthur must be judged.

The same is true of God. God is not above good and evil. He too is subject to moral judgment. Either God is good or he is evil. The standard by which we can legitimately judge God’s moral character is essentially the

174. Is my argument here that the “end justifies the means”? In one sense, “yes.” However, to argue that the end justifies the means is only fallacious if one is arguing that inherently unjust or evil means can be considered justified by virtue of some good end that they achieve. That is, of course, fallacious moral reasoning. But I am not arguing that an author who creates an act of murder is employing an inherently evil act as the means to a good end. Rather, I am contending that there is nothing inherently evil about the act of creating the deed of murder in the first place. It is morally reprehensible to BE a murderer; but it is not morally reprehensible to create murder as a part of some larger reality that one is creating—assuming that the reality you are creating is, overall, not morally objectionable. My contention, therefore, is that the creation of a murder in one’s novel can be a morally permissible means to a good end. This is not “the end justifying the means” in any morally problematic or fallacious sense.

175. This needs to be qualified. As the text goes on to make apparent, God, the creator, has prerogatives we do not have. Any moral assessment of God must take that fact into account. But it is outside the scope of my purpose here to enter into a thorough discussion of all the differences that exist between passing moral judgment on God *vis à vis* passing moral judgment on

same standard we apply to one another.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, it is ultimately the same standard he applies to us. But, as with Arthur, God must not be judged on the basis of deeds he did not commit. He must not be judged on the basis of the deeds committed by his creatures. Rather, he must be judged on the basis of the deed he did commit—namely, the deed of creating this reality in which we find ourselves. Would a morally good creator have created *this* reality, taken in its entirety? Is God’s motive and purpose in creating this reality consistent with goodness—even perfect goodness? Will the overall result of God’s having created this reality be consistent with what a perfectly good God would want? If so, then God is a good God. If not, then God is evil and we must not hesitate to judge him so. The moral structures of reality require it. Even God himself must be subjected to the scrutiny of moral judgment that he created us to engage in. God, then, is not above good and evil. But, in passing moral judgment on God, we must not ignore his role as the transcendent cause of everything. We must take into account his truly unique status. We must not apply moral judgment to him as if he were just one of us—as if he were merely another “ordinary cause” within the web of reality. As the transcendent creator he has a unique prerogative—the prerogative to make reality be whatever he wants it to be. While many of the people and deeds he creates are evil, God is

man.

176. Some want to argue that even as the transcendent creator whose prerogative it is to create both good and evil, a good God would never create evil. To do so implicates him in that evil. Not because he is morally accountable for the deed; but because, as its creator, it reflects poorly on his own moral character. For, in order for God to create an evil event, he had to have the ability to conceive of evil. Is the act of conceiving evil not an evil act itself; and is the ability to do so not already an indictment against God’s character? The reasoning seems to involve something like the following assumption: in order to create something, that which is created must already, in some sense, exist within the nature and being of the one who creates it. There may be some truth to this in the context of human creation. But clearly this cannot be so in the case of divine creation from out of nothing. God created yellow without being yellow; God created physicality and materiality without being either; God created the taste of sweetness without tasting sweet. Likewise, cannot God create moral evil without himself being morally evil? Furthermore, to conceive of evil is not the same thing as to have an “impure thought.” When a human being has an impure thought, he is actually *desiring* what ought not be desired, or *valuing* what ought not be valued. To create evil as a part of his creation, God need neither desire it nor value it. He can hate it and abhor it at the same time that he creates it and employs it to accomplish the overall good purposes that he intends.

177. Will it ever be possible, in principle, to form any judgment as to the propriety of the story God has created? I believe so. I believe that at the end of time—when all that can be known about this present age is known—anyone whose moral judgment is not stunted by the effects of sin will look at all that God has accomplished in the world and will praise him for his wis-

not guilty of evil for creating them. It is God's prerogative to create both good creatures and evil creatures. There is nothing evil in that.¹⁷⁶ If he is to be judged evil, it can only be because his creation, taken as a whole, is an evil story that should never have been conceived.¹⁷⁷

PART THREE OF MY RESPONSE TO THIS OBJECTION

Let us keep in mind the issue at hand: Why exactly do we not feel compelled to hold the author of a novel morally accountable for a murder that occurs within his novel? Is it because the murders contained in his story are not real, but imaginary? Or is it because it is his prerogative, as the author and transcendent cause, to create whatever realities he wants to create within his story?

I have offered one reason why the imaginary nature of the murder cannot adequately account for why we do not blame the author. There exists yet a second reason: moral culpability is not limited to objective realities. To put it another way, being merely imaginary is no defense against moral blame.

Take Jesus' teaching, for example—"every one who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."¹⁷⁸ Is Jesus suggesting that a man who lusts for a woman has committed an objectively real act of adultery? Of course not. His point is that to lust after a woman—to have an inappropriate desire to be sexually intimate with a woman other than one's wife—is the moral equivalent of adultery. But he is not suggesting that it is objectively real adultery. Clearly, it is adultery in the imagination—imaginary adultery.

Jesus' teaching is very significant for the issue at hand. Even though the lust of which Jesus speaks does not involve an objectively real act of adultery, a man is morally culpable for it nonetheless. A man can and will be held morally accountable for an act of adultery that exists only in his imagination. By this standard, then, Jesus could never let Arthur off the hook for a murder he created in his imagination on the grounds that it existed only in his imagination and not in objective reality. If he were to exempt Arthur from condemnation, it would have to be on some other basis.

Suppose that Arthur actually did have a perverse desire to kill—either someone in particular or someone in general. Let's suppose that his motive for including Killroy's murder of Deadmore in his novel was to give expression to this perverse murderous desire in his own heart. In

dom, for his creativity, and especially for the purity of his goodness.

such a case, the murder in his novel would be a true reflection of his own heart's desire. Would Jesus hold Arthur morally culpable for the creation of the murder in this event? Yes! I think so. The fact that it was not an objectively real murder would not make him any less culpable for it. Still, his culpability would not be for committing the murder. He did not do that. Neither would his culpability be for his creating the murder *per se*. Rather, it would be for the perverse murderous desires that gave rise to his creation of the murder. In our previous analysis—where we decided that Arthur was not culpable for Deadmore's murder—we were assuming that Arthur's story did not involve giving expression to some perverse desire in his own heart.

Pornography is another example of this same point. Am I morally culpable for reading about and perversely enjoying intrinsically immoral sexual experiences in my imagination? Or am I held blameless because those experiences are imaginary and not objectively real? Jesus, I think, would say "No!" I am not blameless. Never mind that they are not real acts. To enjoy perverse sexual encounters in my imagination reflects an evil and corrupt heart just as surely as would acting out those same desires in objective reality. The fact that, in such an instance, I do not engage in REAL acts does not exempt me from moral culpability.

Therefore, in light of Jesus' and the Bible's overall perspective on evil and moral culpability, the objection under examination is without force. Our reluctance to attribute moral accountability to an author is not due to the imaginary, not-real status of the novel. Biblically, such a fact by itself could never exempt Arthur from moral culpability. Our reluctance, therefore, arises from something else. What is that something else? It can only be what we have already suggested—Arthur's status as a transcendent cause. According to our commonsensical and rational understanding of the rules of morality, the author—the transcendent cause of an evil deed—is not the one who is morally culpable for any deed he creates. Rather, it is the creature who commits the crime, the character who perpetrates the murder. The author who conceives of it and creates it cannot reasonably be held accountable.

Our original contention remains valid. An author's relationship to the characters in his novel gives us important information about the nature and "logic" of transcendent causation. An author is the transcendent cause of the freewill choices that his characters make. His transcendent causation of these freewill choices does not preclude them from being genuinely free choices. It does not preclude our holding the characters accountable for their choices and judging their characters on the basis of those choices. Neither does it preclude our deeming their choices signifi-

cant, nor deeming them REAL. Accordingly, since God is the transcendent cause of human choices in a manner analogous to the way an author is the transcendent cause of his characters' choices, we can see that God's divine determination of all of our choices does not preclude our choices from being truly and genuinely free. In other words, once we have come to a correct understanding of the nature and logic of transcendent causation, we can see clearly that divine determinism and human free will are not at all incompatible.

SUMMARY OF OUR REFUTATION OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTION

We are now in a position to summarize what is fallacious in the four sub-arguments that comprise the philosophical objection to divine determinism. The second step in each of these arguments involves a fallacious generalization.¹⁷⁹ Failing to take into account the distinction between ordinary causation and transcendent causation, these arguments mistakenly generalize from the character of ordinary (physical and mechanical) causes to the character of all causes whatsoever (including transcendent causes). If a person's choice is caused by some ordinary cause, that ordinary cause would physically necessitate that choice and it would not therefore be a freewill choice. Generalizing from that commonsensical fact, they conclude that if a person's choice is caused by and necessitated by any cause whatsoever, then it would not be a freewill choice. But, as we have seen, this conclusion is simply false. Transcendent causes are of such a nature that they can necessitate a creature's choices without precluding the reality of them being truly freewill choices. At first glance, this seems implausibly paradoxical. But it is an inescapable truth. Examining the author's relationship to the characters in his novel is a helpful way to arrive at an intuitive grasp of this truth.

We saw earlier that the validity of the philosophical argument against divine determinism ultimately hinges on this crucial second step in all four of the sub-arguments. If this second step in each argument were valid, then divine determinism would be philosophically indefensible. But step two is fallacious; none of the sub-arguments is sound. As a consequence, there exists no problem with the doctrine of divine determinism from a philosophical point of view. Divine determinism is not refuted by the

178. See Matthew 5:28.

philosophical objection, for—contrary to the objector’s claim—it does not preclude free will. Divine determinism and free will are completely compatible concepts, so our earlier arguments in support of divine determinism still stand. In spite of the initial plausibility of the philosophical objection, divine determinism remains the most reasonable theory that can account for all the data and make the best sense out of reality, knowledge, and the Bible.

Conclusion

Much confusion results from a failure to separate our consideration of divine determinism from that of natural determinism. Many people rightly reject natural determinism on the grounds that it precludes free will. But mistakenly, they think that they are equally right to reject any and every form of determinism on the same grounds. As the arguments of this chapter have shown, the case against natural determinism cannot legitimately be generalized to refute all forms of determinism whatsoever. Most notably, it cannot be generalized to refute divine determinism. Divine determinism, unlike natural determinism, is compatible with free will. Therefore, the truth of human freedom does not stand as a refutation of divine determinism in the same way that it stands as a refutation of natural determinism. Ordinary causation—the causation assumed by natural determinism—is a fundamentally different sort of thing from transcendent causation—the causation assumed by divine determinism.