

In the Beatific Vision, Both Freedom and Necessity

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Abstract: According to Aquinas, the souls in heaven (hereafter, the *blessed*) are both necessitated (i.e., determined) and free in their choice to love God. But if Aquinas is right, it may seem that we cannot give an incompatibilist account of the freedom of the souls in heaven to love God. Roughly put, *incompatibilism* is the thesis that free will is incompatible with determinism. In this paper, I take inspiration from Kevin Timpe and Timothy Pawl’s account of the impeccability of the blessed to argue for a more refined view of incompatibilism, consistent with some of the literature, according to which free will is compatible with a certain kind of determinism. I then modify Timpe and Pawl’s account along Thomistic lines, removing a problematic character-based contingency, to argue that *anyone*, regardless of character, is necessitated to love God in the beatific vision—necessitated in a sense consistent with incompatibilism.

Keywords: Beatific vision, Aquinas, Free Will, Necessity, Incompatibilism

1. Aquinas on the Beatific Vision

Aquinas maintains that whosoever has the beatific vision will by natural necessity love God; he writes, “the will of him who sees the Essence of God, of necessity, loves whatever He loves” (ST I-II.4)¹, and God necessarily loves Himself. Call *inancarability* the property of being incapable of not loving God. As Eleonore Stump explains, for Aquinas, the blessed are both free and inancaritable; they are free but determined to love God. Stump writes, “their inability to will anything but the good stems not from any extrinsic coercion being exercised on their wills but rather from the clear view their intellects have of the nature of the good” (Stump 2005, 299). The blessed are determined by ‘natural necessity’. A person wills something by natural necessity if it appears good to him and if he cannot view it as in any way not good. One’s own happiness, and anything that one perceives is *necessarily* connected with it, is willed by natural necessity

¹ I use the text at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/>, the translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province for the *Summa*.

in this way (Stump 2005, 280–281). So God is loved, or willed, by natural necessity in the beatific vision, according to Aquinas.

Consider Stump's version of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP).

(PAP) A person has free will with regard to (or is morally responsible for) an action A only if he could have done otherwise than A (Stump 2005, 299).

According to Stump, Aquinas rejects PAP (regarding acts of will) (Stump 2005, 299). Since some kinds of necessity, such as the necessity of natural inclination, are compatible with freedom, Aquinas believes that it is possible for there to be cases in which a person has free will with regard to an action, but could not have done otherwise (Stump 2005, 300). Given Aquinas's views about the natural necessitation of the will and the nature of the beatific vision, PAP is false in the beatific vision since the intellect pellucidly establishes that willing the (specific) good (God) is in every respect superior to any other available option, and so the intellect necessitates that the will loves God. Tobias Hoffmann and Cyrille Michon also affirm that Aquinas regards the love the blessed have for God as a case of natural necessity:

Since the will as rational appetite is ordered to the good understood by reason, when something inevitably appears to us as good from every perspective, we cannot but desire it. Such a thing is happiness (ST 1a2ae.10.2 c., QDM 6 c. lines 429–35). Similarly, the blessed human beings and angels — who, according to Christian teaching, see God as he is — necessarily understand that God is the essence of goodness, and for this reason they cannot but love him (ST 1a.62.8, ST 1a.82.2) (Hoffmann and Michon 2017, 4).

For Aquinas it is the 'clear view' of the intellect that necessitates love of God in the beatific vision. Since *any* intellect in the beatific vision has a clear view of God, and since *all* persons have intellects, the love of God that is necessitated in the beatific vision does not depend on any contingent features of persons. Any person, just because of essential properties of personhood (such as intellect, will, and the power of rational choice) is necessitated to love God, by the very vision of God itself.

Is Aquinas, then, an incompatibilist or a compatibilist? This question is more complicated than it may appear—for instance, it just isn't clear how PAP relates to (in)compatibilism—and so I will address it at the end of the essay. For now, let's clarify Aquinas's 'rejection' of PAP. Notice an ambiguity in PAP, for it can be read, one way, as:

(PAP_{now}) A person has free will with regard to (or is morally responsible for) an action A only if he could have done otherwise than A *at the moment of choice*.

Call any incompatibilist-free action which satisfies PAP_{now} a *directly free* act. Then PAP can be read a second way as,

(PAP_{distal}) A person has free will with regard to (or is morally responsible for) an action A only if he could have done otherwise than A *had he performed, prior to the moment of choice, different directly free acts from those he actually performed.*

Some incompatibilists believe that PAP_{now} is necessary (but not sufficient) for freedom insofar as an act is free only if it is directly free. Call this view *leeway incompatibilism*. Other incompatibilists believe that an act is free as long as it satisfies PAP_{now} or PAP_{distal}. Call this view *sourcehood incompatibilism*. Although Aquinas's views are inconsistent with leeway incompatibilism, nothing I have attributed to Aquinas so far is inconsistent with sourcehood incompatibilism.

2. Proximal determinism and incompatibilism: Timpe and Pawl on impeccability

Kevin Timpe and Timothy Pawl seem to accept something like sourcehood incompatibilism in their attempt to show how there can be incompatibilist freedom² and an inability to sin—impeccability—in heaven. They start from James Sennett's proposal (Sennett 1999). Sennett argues that agents in heaven are *proximately determined* by their own characters, which were shaped by earlier *remotely undetermined* actions. This "self-imposed determinism," as Timpe and Pawl call it in their exegesis, does not, according to Sennett, rule out free will (Timpe and Pawl 2009, 404–405).

As Timpe and Pawl write, quoting Sennett, "an event is *remotely undetermined* just in case there is some time in the past such that the laws of nature and the state of the world at that time do not entail that the event will occur" and "an event is *proximately determined* just in case the laws of nature and the state of the world at some time immediately prior to the event entail that the event will occur" (Timpe and Pawl 2009, 405). If an act is proximately determined by "earlier free and undetermined activity" (Timpe and Pawl 2009, 404), it is free because its freedom "traces back" to the earlier, undetermined, activity (ibid.). Hence, for Sennett, "an agent can be free at time *t* only if that agent is undetermined at *t* or [is] such that what determines the agent's actions at *t* is the result of previous free and undetermined choices of that agent" (Timpe and Pawl 2009, 406). Among Sennett's remotely undetermined events are, I think, *directly free* acts.³ Timpe and Pawl advance a position "very much like Sennett's" (Timpe and Pawl 2009, 407). They say,

² See Timpe and Pawl (2009, 399), where they assume incompatibilism for the paper.

³ In fact, I believe Sennett would consider directly free acts to be *proximately undetermined* events; see Timpe and Pawl (2009, 405).

During pre–heavenly existence a person has the ability to form a moral character which later precludes that person from willing certain things... But it doesn't follow that we aren't free, particularly given that our evaluative conclusions are not necessitated products of causally external forces... our freely formed characters precludes us from doing morally bad actions insofar as those characters lead us to evaluate reasons for acting, or not acting, in certain ways (Timpe and Pawl 2009, 407).

How does one's character 'preclude' certain actions? Timpe and Pawl "think that one's character directs decisions by both influencing what one sees as reasons for actions and influencing how one weighs reasons for and against those actions," influencing both the 'weights' and the 'scales', so to speak (Timpe and Pawl 2009, 407). One's character influences what reasons would motivate one to act, and how one would weigh those reasons against other motivational reasons. The blessed are impeccable because "given the perfection of their character, they will see no reason to engage in sinful and wicked actions" (Timpe and Pawl 2009, 408).

In a later book (Timpe 2014), Timpe provides a more robust account of how character determines the wills of the blessed. Drawing out some implications from van Inwagen (van Inwagen 1989), Timpe argues that free choice is constrained by reasons: an agent *A* never freely chooses to do an action *X* at time *t* if *A* has no reason for *X*-ing at *t*. More formally,

Reasons–constraint on free choice: If, at time *t*, *A* has neither any motivational intellectual reasons for *X*-ing nor any motivational affective reasons for *X*-ing, then *A* is incapable, at *t*, of freely choosing to *X* (Timpe 2014, 23).⁴

Commenting on his and Pawl's earlier paper that the blessed are incompatibilist–free and impeccable, Timpe remarks that "though we did not put our initial defense of... the view in terms of the reasons–constraint on free will, it should be clear that something similar to it is at the heart of our earlier account" (Timpe 2014, 87). In particular, Timpe argues that the blessed, whose moral character is "perfected and whose motivational reasons perfectly align with the normative reasons for acting in a particular way (and not acting in others)" (Timpe 2014, 88), simply cannot see any reason for sinning. Given

⁴ Timpe contrasts *motivational* with *normative* reasons, where the former are "the reasons that an agent has for doing a particular action and are capable of explaining her choice if she were to perform that action" (Timpe 2014, 22), and the latter are those reasons "which would morally justify a particular choice by the agent at a particular time, regardless of whether the agent actually considers them" (ibid.). Timpe further distinguishes two kinds of motivational reasons: *intellectual* ("involves the agent judging that the content of the end is good, and thus desirable") (ibid.), and *affective* ("doesn't involve an intellectual judgment by the agent that the content is good, but rather an emotional response toward that content") (ibid.).

all the psychological facts about each of the blessed, it is “psychologically impossible” for each to sin (ibid.).

For Timpe and Pawl, an intellectually–determined act can be a free act, provided that the agent’s “evaluative conclusions are not necessitated products of causally external forces,” but are determined by the agent’s own (directly–) freely formed character (Timpe and Pawl, 2004, 407). This is a sourcehood incompatibilist view, since it affirms the PAP_{distal} or PAP_{now} requirement on any free act.

3.1. The Inancraritability of the Blessed

Based on the foregoing considerations, I assume that the following *Master Analysis of Free Will* is acceptable to at least some sourcehood incompatibilists.

Master Analysis of Free Will: A subject *S*’s choice ϕ is incompatibilist–free just in case (A1) it is not remotely determined, and (A2) *S* has the right kind of control over ϕ .

And so, the following *Master Account of the Beatific Vision* should be acceptable to at least some incompatibilists.

Master Account of the Beatific Vision:

(B1) Anyone who sees God necessarily chooses to love God.

(B2) The choice to love God is proximally⁵ but not remotely determined.

(B3) The subject has the right kind of control over the choice’s proximal determination to be incompatibilist–free in relation to the choice.

Hence, according to the *Master Account of the Beatific Vision*, anyone who sees God is incompatibilist–free to love God, and necessitated to love God.

⁵ Sennett defined *proximately* determined events; here I refer to *proximally* determined events. The difference is of minor concern. By ‘proximal determinism’ I mean to capture the idea that some event Ψ at time t_2 is necessitated by some event ϕ at some earlier time t_1 , where t_1 could be very close to t_2 . Thus, where L is the proposition completely describing the laws of nature, Q is the proposition that ϕ at t_1 occurs, and R is the proposition completely describing the way the world is at t_1 (so R will actually include or entail ϕ , but I include it for clarity), then event Ψ is *proximally determined* by an event ϕ =df. the conjunction of Q , R , and L entails that Ψ occurs after ϕ occurs. The main difference between proximately- and proximally-determined events is that proximately-determined events (Sennett’s) can only be determined by states of the world immediately prior to their occurrence, whereas proximally-determined events (my term) can be determined by states of the world that are more past-distant from them. The reason I prefer my term is that a person’s character could be formed in the way Timpe and Pawl suggest long before he enters heaven.

As I read Timpe and Pawl, they provide a compelling incompatibilist solution to the impeccability of the blessed. Timpe and Pawl's account is particularly important in its specification, at least to some degree, of what *the right kind of control* indicated in (A2) and, by extension, (B3), consists in. In particular, Timpe and Pawl give us a plausible account of *the right kind of control* in instances of *necessitated* free choice not to sin. I believe we can generalize that account as follows:

(Control): An agent *S* has the *right kind of control* over *S*'s necessitated choice ϕ not to do something in circumstances *C* just in case (C1) ϕ is not remotely determined; (C2) ϕ is proximally determined by features of *S*'s character *U*; (C3) *S* had the power, through directly free actions, to prevent *S*'s developing *U*, such that (C4) *S* had the power to render false the proposition that if *S* were in *C*, *S* would be necessitated to choose ϕ .

I should clarify immediately that *C* in (Control) is not a set of *fully-specified* circumstances (e.g., circumstances including the whole history of the world up until the relevant choice of *S*'s); otherwise (C4) would be false for the blessed, since the history of the world includes their directly-freely forming their characters. Rather, *C* is a subset of fully-specified circumstances pertaining to some event, excluding those events in the agential participants' histories which were directly free actions and which necessitated the event.

On Timpe and Pawl's account of the impeccability of the blessed, (C1) the choice not to sin is not remotely determined, (C2) the choice is proximally determined by features of the character of the blessed, according to which they simply cannot see any reason for sinning, (C3) the blessed had the power, in situations in which PAP_{now} was satisfied, to prevent their developing those features of character, such that (C4) the blessed had the power to render false the proposition that, in the beatific vision, they would always choose not to sin. Condition (C3) captures the PAP_{distal} (or PAP_{now}) requirement on any free act.

It is tempting to think that Timpe and Pawl's account of impeccability explains, or can be straightforwardly adapted to explain, inancaritability. However, there are two problems with a straightforward adaptation of their account. First, their account concerns *inaction* (not sinning), whereas inancaritability concerns *action* (loving God). Perhaps this is not problematic, since perhaps Timpe and Pawl's account of impeccability could just be rephrased. Or perhaps it would be a sin *not* to love God, however robust that action is, in which case Timpe and Pawl's account would explain inancaritability.⁶

⁶ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

However, the major problem with adapting Timpe and Pawl's account to cover inancaritability is that, on the adapted account, a person's response to the vision of God would be character-dependent. Yet it is overwhelmingly implausible that *anyone*, regardless of character, would fail to love God upon seeing Him. So there must be nothing *contingent* about an agent involved in the necessitated love of the beatific vision. But Timpe and Pawl seem to explain impeccability by a contingent feature of the blessed, namely their directly-freely-developed characters. It is possible, on Timpe and Pawl's account, that an agent could see God and yet fail to love Him by sinning. On a more plausible account of freedom in the beatific vision, this should be impossible.

According to Aquinas, God Himself, the *object* of love, necessitates that love through 'natural necessity'. It is the 'clear vision' of God had by the intellect—any agential intellect—and not the (contingent) character of a person, that necessitates in the beatific vision. If Aquinas's psychology is not convincing, just try to think of a reason to render intelligible someone's free refusal to love God upon clearly seeing God as the object of his eternal beatitude. Luke Henderson, in a recent paper critical of character-based impeccability, argues that character development is simply unnecessary for impeccability (Henderson 2014, 324–326). He notes that this was a common view among the medievals:

Many of the medieval theologians and philosophers who considered these issues also seemed to affirm that the blessed would be perpetually detained in their impeccable states by God's activity in heaven. Some thought that God somehow directly caused the blessed to be perpetually impeccable; some thought that God indirectly caused the blessed to be perpetually impeccable by producing an internal devotion or love or happiness that the blessed will find impossible to ignore or reject (Henderson 2014, 325).

Regarding God's 'indirectly causing' impeccability, Henderson remarks that when there is a psychological constraint, "the constraint is brought about by their [the blessed's] relation to God once they see him or are properly related to him in heaven" (ibid). This appears to be an accurate general characterization of Aquinas's position. Henderson gives two main reasons, independent of Aquinas, for thinking that character development is unnecessary for impeccability. First, he argues that it's consistent with libertarian freedom for a person to make just one directly free choice "to allow God to take responsibility for the impeccability of her future character" (Henderson 2014, 325). Second, most if not all mere humans do not develop impeccable characters prior to death (ibid). If our antemortem character traits do not render us us impeccable in this life, why should they do so in the life to come?⁷ To these I add a further consideration:

⁷ 'Purgatory,' you say? Perhaps you think that there is room for further postmortem character development. But either the souls in purgatory are impeccable or they are not. If they are, the problem of explaining why given antemortem peccability arises. If they are not, then I do not see how God can

given Biblical (Lk 23: 39–43) and historical evidence of ‘deathbed conversions’ which appear to be efficacious for salvation, we have some reason to think that not everyone in heaven developed his character along the virtuous lines necessary for impeccability prior to his death.

With these difficulties in mind, let’s start from Timpe and Pawl’s account of impeccability and see if we can come up with an account of inancaritability. I begin with a modified constraint:

Reasons–constraint on inaction: If, at time t , S is presented with a *forced choice*: if at t S has no reasons for doing anything other than ϕ (at t), and if S has reasons for doing ϕ (at t), then S necessarily does ϕ at t .

By ‘forced choice’ I refer to Jamesian–type forced options. According to William James, “every dilemma based on a complete logical disjunction, with no possibility of not choosing, is an option” (or choice) which is *forced* (James 2009, 550). There is no third option, unlike in, say, the case in which someone is presented with the choice whether to go outside with or without an umbrella. In that case, the person can refrain from making a choice; he can not go outside at all. If S is presented with a forced choice, however, then S *must* do something, must ‘make a choice.’ The basic thought underlying the *Reasons–constraint on inaction* is that if S is forced to choose to do something or other, and only has reasons for doing one thing, then—since in rationally choosing S must act *for reasons*— S will do the only thing that S has any reasons to do. There is no other way for S to exercise S ’s power of rational choice. Hence the necessity here is *de re*. The *Reasons–constraint on inaction* should seem quite plausible.

The blessed are in a position in which the antecedent elements of the *Reasons–constraint on inaction* are satisfied. In the first place, the blessed are presented with a forced choice, viz., whether to love God. There is no ‘third option’ here: either one chooses to love God or not. If one ‘turns away’ or does nothing, then one chooses not to love God. In this sense, Scripture (e.g., Revelation 19:6–9) suggests that the beatific vision can be likened to a marriage proposal. The analogy is not perfect, but in general, when a man proposes to a woman, the woman has two, not three, options. It might seem that she can accept, reject, or perhaps ‘turn off’ her will and do nothing. But the last option is unrealistic; how or why would the woman ‘turn off’ her will? Given the immediacy and directness of the proposal, if she does not accept it, then she rejects it. In the beatific vision, God proposes a kind of marriage, an indelible union; the choice is whether to accept or reject.

guarantee that they freely form their characters so as to become impeccable. (For instance, God can’t determine their characters, since doing so would compromise their freedom.) Then God has the same problem in purgatory that He had on earth, viz., trying to ensure (without determining) that everyone freely loves Him.

Secondly, anyone in the beatific vision—regardless of character—has reasons for loving God, and has no reasons for doing anything other than loving God. In Timpe and Pawl’s account of impeccability, the fact that the blessed have no reasons to sin seems to be explained most directly by their contingent, developed characters: they have, through Sennett’s remotely undetermined acts, formed their characters in such a way that they are so virtuous that nothing will count, or count with any weight, to them as a reason to sin. But we must rid ourselves of the contingency in Timpe and Pawl’s account; and I think we can do so by telling a slightly different story, one inspired by Aquinas.

Consider a general characterization of the vision of God. The beatific vision is *superintelligible*: a person who sees God knows the truth (the whole truth) and all of his ignorance is dispelled (nothing but the truth!). Since God is in fact, according to Aquinas,⁸ every person’s final end, and the satisfaction of every human desire, those who see God know this. They know that there is a necessary (in the strongest, broadest, most unconstrained modal sense!) connection between God and their own happiness. Aquinas says,

They who are already blessed in heaven apprehend the object of true happiness as making their happiness and last end: otherwise their desire would not be set at rest in that object, and they would not be blessed and happy. The will of the blessed therefore cannot swerve from the object of true happiness (SCG IV.92, paragraph 4, quoted in Timpe 2014, 83).

In light of the superintelligibility of the beatific vision, there cannot be any normative, motivational, or explanatory reason (or apparent reason) whatsoever not to love God; moreover, there must be overwhelming reason (and apparent reason) to love God. This story satisfies the antecedent parts of the *Reasons–constraint on inaction*. It also entirely removes the, in my view, exceedingly implausible contingency from the choice to love God in the beatific vision: any person having the vision of God necessarily loves God because of the reality he perceives, along with features essential to his personhood, viz., his agency, and in particular, his intellect, will, and power of rational choice. Anyone having the beatific vision loves God by *natural necessity*, “the sort of necessity by which the will wills, for example, those things whose goodness is overwhelmingly apparent to the agent” (Stump 2005, 298–299).

3.2. Control, the beatific vision, and two problems

But by removing the contingency within the beatific vision—by making the necessitated choice to love God entirely independent of a person’s character—have I given an

⁸ “Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence” (ST I.II.3.8).

account which the incompatibilist will reject? It seems so, since it seems that (C4) in (Control) is no longer satisfied! The blessed, on my suggestion, do *not* have the power to render false the proposition that, if they were in the beatific vision, they would love God. No one has that power! Timpe and Pawl's account of impeccability seems to suggest that the blessed have the right kind of control for freedom over their heavenly actions because they could have developed their characters such that they would have acted otherwise in the beatific vision. On their account, the blessed control their decision not to sin (and perhaps, by extension, to love God) insofar as it is determined by their own characters, which they formed in choice-situations involving indeterminism. Timpe and Pawl could follow Robert Kane (Kane 1996), for instance, at least inasmuch as they could argue that the relevant choice-situations involved 'self-forming actions' regarding which the actors had incompatibilist-friendly alternative possibilities. It is this control, in virtue of directly-freely self-formed character, that explains the freedom of the blessed.

Now, I think this initially plausible account of Timpe and Pawl's is just unacceptable. Even an abjectly vicious person, if he sees God, will necessarily love God. How could someone, with eyes fully opened, possibly refrain from loving God, the object of his every desire? But in dropping character from the equation, I seem to have dropped the control that most (perhaps all) incompatibilists will demand for an account of free action. It is unclear that the blessed have any more control over their love of God, in view of its proximal determinism, than they would relative to an alternative in which their love is remotely determined. Call this the *Control Problem* for my account of inancarity.

Fear not, however; there's a way of getting control back into the equation. Before showing you the way, I want to consider another apparent problem for my account. I think that, given God's infinite love for each individual person, and given that if a person doesn't end up in heaven he ends up in (traditionally 'grim') hell, most Christians should be committed to,

Inexhaustible divine effort: God saves (ensures the salvation of) every human person it is possible for God to save.

On *Inexhaustible divine effort*, if any person is damned, it is absolutely impossible for God to save him. In my view, given its Biblical warrant,⁹ Christians should at least be committed to affirming a second relevant proposition, viz., that hell is an epistemic possibility. For all we know, some persons end up in hell. One way of consistently affirming both *Inexhaustible divine effort* and the possibility of hell is to tell a story about how free will is required for salvation, and how even God cannot force or, more

⁹ E.g., Revelation 21:8; Matthew 25:41-46; Matthew 13:50; Mark 9:43; etc.

accurately, *guarantee* that someone freely do something. For Aquinas, for example, the (free) love of God, which is called *charity*, is necessary for salvation.¹⁰ So in order to affirm the possibility of hell, were I a good Thomist, I would have to tell a story according to which even God cannot guarantee that someone freely love Him. Timpe and Pawl could tell some such story, if they wished, since they could say that the necessitated love of God in the beatific vision is, like impeccability, ultimately dependent on a person's freely-formed character. Plausibly, Timpe and Pawl could tell a story according to which inancaritability satisfies (Control). But a similar story does not appear to be available to me. In fact, it looks like I am committed to universal salvation, since all God has to do to guarantee that anyone—regardless of his character—love God, is to grant that person a vision of the divine essence. Since this seems possible for God to do for every person, and since it necessarily leads to loving God, and hence to salvation, then it seems impossible, given *Inexhaustible divine effort*, that any person go to hell. Call this the *Universalism Problem* for my account of inancaritability.

The solution to both the *Control Problem* and the *Universalism Problem* is that the vision of God in some sense presupposes what it necessitates. Here's an overview of the solution. First, I'll turn to Aquinas for some exposition regarding what is required for the beatific vision. It will turn out that an agent must make a particular directly free act in order to see God. Then I will offer two proposals for why this implies freedom in the beatific vision. On the *Policy Proposal*, the idea is that the directly free act involves the maintenance of a psychological state that 'counts' for the agent's agency, and that has necessitated love of God as its object. On the *Mystical Proposal*, the idea is that the directly free act concerns an act-token numerically identical with the token act of loving God in the beatific vision. Antemortem, the act is contingent and requires faith; postmortem, sight necessitates it.

3.2.1. What is required to see God?

Describing how the blessed actually 'see' God, Aquinas laboriously explains that God cannot be seen or known in the way anything else is seen or known, e.g., by the intellect's 'abstracting' God's essential features in order to form a concept of God, or by there being an 'impression' of God in the intellect. These standard methods of perceiving, seeing, or knowing are strictly impossible in relation to God, since, e.g.,

¹⁰ See, e.g., ST I-II.5.6, in which Aquinas says that the beatific vision (there referred to as 'Happiness') is the reward of works of virtue. But true virtue, according to ST II-II.23.7, is impossible without charity. Charity is the 'benevolent friendship' that consists in love of God (St II-II.23.1), and it must be a free act, since God will not unilaterally make a human will having "a right tendency" to God (ST I-II.5.7). The 'right tendency' is charity, love ordered to God (see ST II-II.26.1). One can only have charity through, and because of, the reception of sanctifying grace (see ST I-II.110.4 ad 1).

God’s essence cannot be abstracted and knowledge of any concept or impression would not be knowledge of God Himself (ST Suppl.92.1). God cannot be seen *through* any medium whatever (ST Suppl.92.1 ad 15). The only possible way for a human person to see God, according to Aquinas, is for God Himself to be “united to our intellect as its form, so as to be both that which is understood, and that whereby it is understood”. Aquinas continues, “When therefore intellectual light is received into the soul, together with the indwelling Divine essence... the Divine essence will be to the intellect as form to matter” (ST Suppl.92.1). God is seen through Himself, as He sees Himself. Thus in the beatific vision a person’s intellect and God become, not one thing simply-speaking, but “one as regards the act of understanding” (ST Suppl.92.1 ad 8).

So, Aquinas is quite clear that the beatific vision does not just involve the blessed’ knowing *about* God. Propositional knowledge of that sort is the product of standard cases of perception. The blessed know *God*, in Himself, through Himself, by uniting themselves with God, so that it can truly be said that the entire divine essence—the three person of the Trinity¹¹—dwells inside the blessed.

Can God unilaterally decide to take up residence ‘inside’ of a person, to ‘unite’ God’s entire being with that person’s? The answer must be ‘no.’ A union of this all-embracing, absolutely comprehensive sort—like a nuptial union—is necessarily bilateral: it requires an act of will on the part of both parties. The vision of God is not a passive affair, a mere perceptual exchange. Aquinas is unambiguous about this too. Responding specifically to the objection that God could simply unite with the intellect and that the will would ‘follow,’ Aquinas replies that certain acts of the will are necessary antecedently to certain acts of the intellect (ST I-II.4.4 ad 2). Referring to the beatific vision as ‘Happiness,’ Aquinas states definitively,

Rectitude of will is necessary for Happiness both antecedently and concomitantly. Antecedently, because rectitude of the will consists in being duly ordered to the last end. Now the end in comparison to what is ordained to the end is as form compared to matter. Wherefore, just as matter cannot receive a form, unless it be duly disposed thereto, so nothing gains an end, except it be duly ordained thereto. And therefore none can obtain Happiness, without rectitude of the will (ST I-II.4.4).

We can say even more, since Aquinas tells us *which* free choice is necessary (and sufficient) for salvation (for ‘Happiness’): the choice to cease resisting God’s offer of *sanctifying grace*, to permit God’s grace to enter the soul and thereby to form an intimate union of love with God. For it is through the freely-accepted gift of grace that God begins to dwell within the human person, beginning the process of “regeneration or re-

¹¹ “Therefore, since we are made lovers of God by the Holy Spirit, and every beloved is in the lover as such, by the Holy Spirit necessarily the Father and the Son dwell in us also” (SCG IV.21 paragraph 3).

creation” (ST I-II.110.4), of rectification of the will; and only then can a person love God with charity,¹² making his soul fit for the beatific vision:

there is one special mode belonging to the rational nature wherein God is said to be present as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved in the lover. And since the rational creature by its operation of knowledge and love attains to God Himself, according to this special mode God is said not only to exist in the rational creature but also to dwell therein as in His own temple. So no other effect can be put down as the reason why the divine person is in the rational creature in a new mode, except sanctifying grace (ST I.43.3).

It is fairly difficult satisfactorily to explain how a person welcomes God’s grace into his soul.¹³ I’m just going to assume two things about it. First, I assume that a person’s doing so involves his making an act of will that satisfies PAP_{now}. Thus, God’s indwelling a person—which is necessary (antemortem) and sufficient (postmortem) for the very possibility of the beatific vision—is under the control of the person in a robustly incompatibilist sense, since it is directly free. Second, whatever the details of how a person welcomes God into his soul, it is true to characterize him as performing, in some sense, an act of love for God.

Here, then, is a general picture of how someone sees God: while on earth she makes a directly free act of union with God, by which she receives God’s sanctifying grace into her soul and the Godhead begins to dwell inside of her. As long as she does not reject God’s indwelling union, her will—her entire soul—is “rectified” by God, is fitted to an absolutely comprehensive union with God in heaven. This rectification is only completed after death. After she dies, she is *able* to see God, as He sees Himself, because of the fitness of her soul to be comprehensively united with God. Had she not made a directly free act of union with God, or had she subsequently severed that union, she would not have been able to see God after death.

But this picture still does not explain why the blessed are free in heaven. It looks like the blessed have antemortem control (sufficient for free action) over whether they love God, which control is necessary for a love–necessitating postmortem vision. But why should we think that exercising past–control over some present event renders an agent free regarding the present event? Why should past power or control bestow present control, and hence present freedom?¹⁴ Timpe and Pawl make some headway here: the

¹² Sanctifying grace is necessary for charity; see ST I-II.110.4 ad 1.

¹³ See Stump 2005, 399-402. Stump’s account is complicated by anti-Pelagian concerns and by Aquinas’s intellectualism.

¹⁴ Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this important objection, in words quite similar to those I’ve used here. Thanks to the same referee for helpful remarks clarifying my position vis-a-vis Timpe and Pawl’s.

relevant past power is over the agent's own character, and (their suggestion is) actions whose ultimate source is one's own freely-formed character are free, even if they are necessary. I've rejected Timpe and Pawl's character-based account of freedom in heaven, so I need to say something about *why* past control bestows present control. I'll give two independent proposals, both highly tentative and cursory.

3.2.2. The Policy Proposal

The first proposal, the *Policy Proposal*, presupposes a kind of reductionism. The presupposition has to be either that an agent is identical to some set (or subset) of his motivations, or that his agency is, such that the motivational set 'counts,' in some sense, for the agent (cf. Franklin 2018, ch. 1, §2). For instance, on the latter view, the right sort of motivation to want to love God 'speaks' for the agent, counts as the agent's wanting to love God, rather than counting merely as one motivation or desire among others. It is an authentic expression of the agent's own agency. The right motivational set 'counts' for the agent, or his agency, regardless of his settled dispositions or fixed character traits. On Michael Bratman's account of agency, self-governing policies or quasi-policies, such as an ideal to love God, seem to fill a role like this. Bratman holds a kind of 'Lockean' view of 'temporally extended agency,' and self-governing policies play an organizing role in supporting past- and forward-directed Lockean psychological connections (Bratman 2000, 50). In virtue of their role, and the agent's 'satisfaction' with them (something like their consistency with the agent's other self-governing policies), these policies count as the agent's taking "a stand in favor of or against certain motivations, a stand that can itself be subject to reexamination and revision" (Bratman 2000, 50–51).¹⁵ It would be natural for an incompatibilist agent- or agency-reductionist to maintain that any action indeterministically caused by the relevant set of motivations 'counts' as a free action of the agent's. My first proposal is that we could eschew the causal connection in every case and regard actions which are the *objects* of the right motivations as free actions. The idea is that anyone who opens himself to God's indwelling grace, rendering himself capable of the beatific vision, has at least a policy-like ideal to love God above all things (and conversely). Part of the 'object' of this ideal, perhaps implicit, is that the person be incapable of failing to love God. In the beatific vision, of course, the self-governing policy does not necessitate the agent's love of God; but the necessitated action is that at which the self-governing policy is aimed. Since the action is, as it were, the natural completion of the self-governing policy, it counts as the agent's own. We could say that the agent is 'satisfied' with the action, similarly to the way he is satisfied with his self-governing policies, since the action is the object of a

¹⁵ Bratman spells out in some detail what it is for one policy to be consistent with another; I've tried to give a less technical gloss. See Bratman 2000, pp. 50, 59-60.

self-governing policy with which the agent is satisfied. As such, the action is an expression of the agent's own agency; it can truly be called 'free'. Past control bestows present freedom because the agent controls the agent's self-governing policies, and the present act is an object of one (or more) such policies with which the agent is satisfied.

3.2.3. The Mystical Proposal

My second proposal, the *Mystical Proposal*, is rather more spiritualized. It begins with the intuition that a person is free, even if necessitated, if he performs an act, say A_2 , of the same type as an act, say A_1 , that was performed earlier, and if A_2 would not have been performed if A_1 had not been performed. But this is not enough for freedom: what difference does it make whether the necessitated act is of the same type? So suppose instead that the necessitated act is the same act *token*. That is, suppose that at some time an agent is necessitated to do what he was doing, but was not necessitated to do just prior to that time, so much so that what he does at both times is numerically the same act. We can imagine cases like this. Consider, for instance, a modification to Frankfurt-style counterexamples to PAP involving counterfactual interveners. The modification is that the intervener appears midway through the extended action the necessitation of which the intervener wants to ensure *only if* the agent contingently initiates it. For instance, suppose that whether Jones drives to DC is undetermined (prior to Jones's choice), that Jones chooses to drive to DC, and that the intervener wants Jones to drive to DC. Once Jones chooses to drive to DC, and begins to do so, the intervener (and his method of intervention) magically appear. Since Jones's action is extended across time, Jones can begin to, or try to, or give a sign that he is going to cease driving to DC; he can try to decide that he made the wrong choice or he can try to choose to do something else. If Jones does anything like that, the intervener intervenes and necessitates that Jones continues his action of driving to DC, carrying it through to completion. If, on the other hand, Jones does not try to choose to cease driving to DC, the intervener remains dormant. Regardless of what Jones tries to decide to do *after* he initiates the drive, he is necessitated to carry it through to completion.

Now most, if not all, acts are temporally extended. If we don't insist on an implausibly fine-grained analysis of human acts, some acts have a significant temporal duration—for instance, the act of playing a game, making dinner, or driving from New York to DC. Some of these acts are composite. It is not inconceivable that there are composite acts which can last for a significant portion of one's life. I suspect these will be acts best described in more 'abstract' terms, such as the act of loving one's wife. Is this one act, or merely a series of acts that takes place within a commitment? The latter doesn't seem quite right: to love seems to involve an element of perpetual dynamism or activity, rather than a mere intentional commitment, and a person seems capable of loving another person even when he is not doing anything more 'concrete' for that

person. Perhaps, then, the former is closer to the reality. Now consider the act of loving God. On the Thomistic view that I endorse, love of God, or charity, is effected by “the infusion of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and the Son, and the participation of Whom in us is created charity” (ST II–II.24.2). Once we welcome God’s sanctifying grace, such that He indwells us, we have charity, which Aquinas variously describes as a formal property of the soul, friendship with God, love for God, and the Godhead itself. I am mainly concerned with the “act of charity,” which Aquinas portrays as a perpetual act (see, e.g., ST II–II.23.2). For Aquinas, God is charity, and our participating in Him is the ‘act of charity’. On a strong reading, it is the very same thing—the Godhead—that constitutes and effects every act of charity. It is a consequence of this view that *everyone* who loves God performs, mystically, numerically the same act, not in welcoming God into his soul, but in subsequently loving God. It is as if God were in each and each, in some sense, participated in the other, just as the first person of the Trinity is in the second, and “I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (Jn 14:20).¹⁶ Some people have more charity than others, but this is not because their act of loving God is distinct. Rather it is attenuated, since they ‘participate’ less in Divine Charity, which is nothing less than God Himself (ST II–II.23.2 ad 1). This is why Aquinas says that charity can increase, not in essence, but because “it is yet more in its subject” (ST II–II.24.2 ad 3). This increase is what Aquinas’s talk of ‘rectification’ of the soul refers to. And, finally, God is “pure act, without the admixture of any potentiality,” such that “it is impossible for God to be in any way changeable” (ST I.9.1; cf. I.2.3). Charity, considered in itself, is one pure, immutable, eternal act.

Here a question arises: if the ‘act of charity’ is ‘God Himself,’ is an agent’s act of love for God the *agent’s* act, or God’s act? For clearly God Himself, even if He is ‘pure act,’ is not an act of anything, *a fortiori* of a creature. In Part 3.2.1, I said that the relevant directly free act of love for God involves a choice to cease resisting God’s offer of indwelling, sanctifying grace. But that act is certainly not ‘God Himself’. I shall now have to elaborate. The act is, in a sense, both the agent’s and God’s. It is the agent’s insofar as the agent, by ceasing to resist, willfully and freely opens the gates of his will, so to speak, to a force whose work he welcomes in him. The agent ‘participates in’ God and His work. But the work, the charity, is strictly speaking God’s. An imperfect, sublunary analogy may help. Suppose Gideon is pumping water into a hose, but Guy is holding a finger over the spout, preventing the water from flowing out. If Guy ‘welcomes’ Gideon’s activity by removing his finger, is the subsequent act of watering Guy’s or Gideon’s? Strictly speaking, Gideon is the one who pumps the water out. But the act is also Guy’s inasmuch as he welcomes it, and he can place his finger back over the spout to prevent it at any time. The act can truly be characterized as a directly free act of Guy’s, but a joint

¹⁶ This, I suspect, might be the ground of a metaphysically irreducible ‘second-personal’ relation; but that is the subject of a different paper!

act, with Gideon's necessary assistance. This is no less true if we suppose that Gideon just is the water.

My *Mystical Proposal* is that the blessed continue the act–token of loving God which they performed, by participating in God's self, immediately prior to death (and the beatific vision). The sight of God 'perfects' this charity such that, in heaven, it is indefectible and necessary. But because it is the very same act that was undertaken contingently (and that remained contingent) on earth, the blessed are free. Anyone who sees God was in the state of having contingent charity immediately prior to death, since he could not see God if he did not have charity. God's 'intervention' in the beatific vision is not counterfactual, like the Frankfurt intervener, but it is relatively mild. God does not necessitate an act that was not already being performed, and given the *Reasons constraint on inaction*, the necessitation mainly involves God's giving the blessed full knowledge of the reasons there are. The blessed already had reasons to love God, reasons on which they acted. The sight of God gives them all the reasons there are to love God, and removes any of the false or confused reasons they may have had to cease loving him. There is no manipulation involved, if manipulation involves some sort of deceit or fundamental alteration of a person's agential or motivational structure. Furthermore, there is no character development necessary here: any good thief who opens himself to God, and does not subsequently close himself off, will be in paradise. Another (Control)–like condition can help to capture the thinking about freedom on display here.

(Control*): Where *S* is necessitated to (continue to) perform act–token *A* in *C*, *S* has the *right kind of control* over *A* in *C* just in case (D1) *A* is not remotely determined; (D2) a necessary condition of *S*'s being in *C* is *S*'s *A*–ing immediately prior to *S*'s being in *C*; (D3) *S*'s *A*–ing immediately prior to *S*'s being in *C* is directly free, such that (D4) *S* had the power, through directly free actions, to prevent *S*'s being in *C*.

Past control bestows present freedom since the control is over a past part of the token act whose present part is necessitated, and had the agent not perform the token act immediately prior to its necessitation, it would not have been necessitated. On this account of inancaritability, (D1) the choice to love God in the beatific vision is not remotely determined, since (D2) it depends on the choice to do so immediately prior to the beatific vision, (D3) which is directly free; and so (D4) the agent could have prevented being in the beatific vision by refusing to open himself to God's indwelling grace, or by resisting that grace after having welcomed it. This account of inancaritability satisfies (B3) of the *Master Account of the Beatific Vision* by providing plausible applicability conditions for the 'right kind' of control referenced in (B3). But I have also clearly satisfied each of (B1) and (B2), meeting, therefore, every condition of

the master account. On my Thomistic-inspired account of inancaritability, therefore, the blessed are both necessitated to love God in the beatific vision, and incompatibilist-free in their choice to do so.

Much more work would have to be done fully to explain my two proposals, but I believe that either of them blunts the sting of the *Control Problem*. Since I reject agent- or agency-reductionism, I am rather partial to the *Mystical Proposal*. What about the *Universalism Problem*? Well, if God cannot guarantee a directly free act, then he cannot guarantee the directly free act of openness to His indwelling grace. But since that act is required for salvation, God cannot guarantee salvation—even though anyone who has the beatific vision necessarily loves God. This dispenses with the *Universalism Problem*.

There is a lingering question, which I promised in Part 1 to answer. Is Aquinas (as I've interpreted him) an incompatibilist or a compatibilist? Let's ask two more specific questions first. Does Aquinas believe that free will is compatible with determinism? No, in that free will is not compatible with an agent's *every* act being determined; but yes, in that free will is compatible with certain special cases of an act's being determined, as in the beatific vision. Does Aquinas believe that free will requires the ability to do otherwise? Yes, in that it requires PAP_{distal}, but no, in that it does not require PAP_{now}. So I believe that Aquinas is an incompatibilist of a certain stripe, since free will is only compatible with libertarian-friendly determinism. That is, Aquinas is a sourcehood incompatibilist. It would be interesting to consider whether, given the unique 'superintelligible' conditions of the beatific vision, the blessed are free but deserving of no merit or praise regarding their love of God.

Conclusion

As I see it, the account of inancaritability I've given has several advantages over the account of impeccability given by Timpe and Pawl. First, it's a better account of impeccability. It entails impeccability (necessarily, anyone who cannot cease loving God cannot sin), and it explains impeccability by love of God, not by more generic reference to, say, virtuous character traits. This seems to be the right kind of explanation of the impeccability of the blessed. Second, my *Reasons-constraint on inaction* is explicit about how an *action*, and not merely an *inaction*, can be both free and necessitated on incompatibilism. Third, my account is explicitly consistent with (B1), the exceedingly plausible Thomistic thesis that whosoever sees God in heaven—regardless of his character, past choices, etc.—cannot fail to love God. Without further elaboration, Timpe and Pawl's account seems to imply that someone who sees God *could* sin, if he had the right character; but my account has the resources to block that highly implausible implication. In addition to these advantages, if my account is correct, then I may be able to contribute to the broader debate on free will by helping to clarify what sort of control over free actions incompatibilists should be willing to accept. In

particular, incompatibilists should consider the view that agents might have the right kind of control over act–tokens necessitated in circumstances which are brought about by those agents through the same non–necessitated ‘parts’ of those act–tokens. Finally, I think I’ve provided an intriguing avenue of exploration in relation to the theological problem of hell. I’ve tried to give a plausible reason to think that, despite infinite divine resourcefulness, God might not be able to guarantee everyone’s salvation—the reason, namely, that human persons have to be ‘active’ (have to perform directly free actions) in order to be beneficiaries of the most potent elements of divine resourcefulness in this regard, the elements pertaining to the necessitating vision of God Himself. Human beings can unfit themselves to see the truth, and it may be impossible for God to show it to them.

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¹⁷ Abbreviated ‘SCG’ in the notes.

¹⁸ Abbreviated as ‘ST’ in the notes.

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