

experiential proof or verification in religious faith. In other words, we can touch God only by opening ourselves to him, we can enter into an interactive relationship with God only by willing his will. If then we want an experimental knowledge of God, argues Farrer, we must submit our will to God. The familiarity needed for interaction represents the extension of the empirical principle applied to spiritual realities. The way to reach God is through obedience, not through logical argumentation. Interaction and estimation lead to the affirmation of the existence of God as a personal reality with whom we have to do. And this, perhaps, is the synthesis that gathers up all of the philosophical work of a thinker of the stature of Austin Farrer.

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**Kevin Timpe: *Free Will in Philosophical Theology*. Bloomsbury 2014.**

Kevin Timpe's *Free Will in Philosophical Theology* is an impressive and scholarly book that ought to be read by all those with an interest in free will and philosophical theology. The premise of the book, as the title suggests, is to investigate free will in philosophical theology. Somewhat disappointingly the book only concerns free will in Christian philosophical theology. Timpe is explicit that his book will only be concerned with *Christian* philosophical theology, but it seems that the title of the book could easily have included this qualification without becoming cumbersome. This doesn't take away from the fact that Timpe's book is still very much still worth reading. It is, as far as I know, the only book to focus exclusively on the role that free will plays in Christian philosophical theology. It is not only of interest to scholars of free will and philosophical theological, but might also serve as a good introduction for those who wish to know more about free will in (Christian) philosophical theology.

Timpe's goal in the book is to 'tell a theological story philosophically' (p. 3) — that is, he wishes to show how a particular understanding of free will helps to solve certain puzzles in Christian theology. These are: primal sin (the first sin or act of evil), the role and nature of God's grace, freedom in heaven and hell, and divine freedom.

Timpe uses the methodology of *clarification* in this book. According to this methodology, one need not argue for one's central assumptions; rather, the goal is to show that the claims made by Christian theology are consistent with one another. So this work does not attempt (for the most part) to *argue* for its central assumptions; it rather takes them for granted with the aim of showing that they form a consistent set. Thus this book is not a work of natural theology — that is, it doesn't attempt to argue for (or against) the existence of God.

In what follows, I'll start by setting out the main themes and arguments of Timpe's book. After that, I'll present one main criticism. I shall argue that Timpe hasn't succeeded in showing that the claims of Christian theology form a consistent picture; that is, his clarification project is unsuccessful.

Timpe's account of free will is an incompatibilist one; that is, he rejects the claim that free will is compatible with either causal or theological determinism. He calls his account *virtue libertarianism*. As with other libertarian accounts of free will, it requires that free actions are not causally or theologically (divinely) determined. And as with other libertarian accounts, it requires that an agent is able to do otherwise than she actually does — that is, she has access to modal alternative possibilities. But Timpe's account is a *source* libertarian one. It does *not* require that every free action is one that the agent is able to have not performed. All that is required is that an agent is able to do otherwise *at some point* in her causal history.

We can divide free actions into two sorts, on this view: direct and indirect free actions. The former sort require that an agent can do otherwise in a robust sense — viz. that she can choose between good and evil courses of action, i.e. she can choose whether to sin or not. The latter sort do not require that an agent be able to choose between good and evil; but they must stem back to an action (or actions) where an agent chose between a good over an evil course of action. Actions where an agent lacks alternative possibilities must stem from a free action where the agent had alternative possibilities (a directly free action) for those former actions to count as (indirectly) free actions. What is distinctive about Timpe's form of libertarianism is that it claims that moral responsibility depends on whether our actions stem from genuine moral virtues or vices.

So the picture we get on Timpe's view is this: we start off with the (robust) ability to do otherwise — that is, to choose between good and evil courses of action. By choosing between these courses of action we thereby come to 'set'

our characters. Those who choose good actions become good people — that is, they become morally virtuous. And those who choose bad actions become bad people — that is, they become morally vicious. Eventually, it is possible for a person to only choose to do bad things or to only choose to do good things, and still come out as free and morally responsible.

With this account in hand, Timpe applies it to several puzzles in Christian theology. Timpe's approach is to tackle these puzzles according to the order Christian theology says that persons come into contact with god. These four stages are:

- Before the Fall (status integritatis)
- As Fallen (status corruptionis)
- Under Grace (status gratiae)
- In Glory (status gloriae) (pp. 14-15)

The first puzzle that Timpe considers is at the stage of status integritatis. This puzzle concerns *The Fall*. There are two Falls in Christian Theology: the Fall of Lucifer and the Fall of Adam and Eve. Timpe focuses on the former because this results in one of the biggest puzzles for Christian Theology (and perhaps for any perfect being theology): *primal sin* — namely the introduction of evil into the world. Primal sin presents a difficult problem for Christians: given that God is supposedly perfect, how could the imperfection of sin have entered the world?

Timpe considers two responses to the problem of primal sin. The first is Katharine Rogers', and the other is Scott MacDonald's. As Timpe sees it, Rogers' is a *voluntarist* account, and MacDonald's is an intellectualist account. The central difference is that Rogers says that evil results purely from Lucifer's misuse of his free will, whereas MacDonald attributes the introduction of evil into the world to an intellectual failing on Lucifer's part. Timpe finds both accounts wanting, and for good reason. Rogers explicitly accepts that there is no explanation for primal evil. But, as Timpe notes, on Rogers' account, '[primal sin] is not just unexplained, but inexplicable.' (p. 41) MacDonald's account doesn't fare much better. All it does is push back the problem. On Rogers' account, we have to accept that primal sin is unexplained and inexplicable at

the level of actions. On MacDonald's account, we have to accept that primal sin is unexplained and inexplicable at the level of the character. According to MacDonald, Lucifer performed an evil action because he didn't consider all the reasons and information available to him. But that's a failure of his character. If he had a better character, he *would* have considered all the reasons and information he had available to him. So now we have to ask who created his character. It can't be God because that would make God responsible and blameworthy for evil; God can't be responsible and blameworthy for evil in the world because he is perfectly good. But if God's not to blame for Lucifer's character flaws, then who is? If we don't have an answer, then we don't have an explanation for the introduction of evil into the world. Unfortunately, it seems there is no answer; so there's no explanation for the introduction of evil in the world. Indeed, it seems, as with Rogers' account, there can be no explanation for primal sin on MacDonald's account. Hence both accounts of primal sin are unsatisfactory.

In the end, Timpe accepts that perhaps any account of primal sin will feature the inexplicability that haunts Rogers' and MacDonald's accounts. But he hopes that this problem will be balanced by the further features of his account. This, however, is a major problem of Timpe's whole consistency project. I will return to this issue later.

From status integritatis we get to status corruptionis — existence as fallen and separated from God. The puzzle now is how persons go from beings separated from God to being on the way to being in union with God. The nature of this process depends on a longstanding debate about the concept of God's *grace*. Timpe helpfully distinguishes between four possibilities. The first two are deterministic accounts of grace. On the first of these accounts, divine grace is necessary and sufficient for the human response of faith in God; on the second, divine grace is sufficient but not necessary for the human response of faith in God. The second two are non-deterministic accounts. On the third, divine grace is neither necessary nor sufficient for the human response of faith in God; and on the fourth, divine grace is necessary but not sufficient.

Because of Timpe's commitment to incompatibilism, he rejects both deterministic accounts. As he sees it, God can't simply will that person have faith in him; if he did, the person's faith would not be authentic, in some sense. So Timpe

favours a non-deterministic account — namely the fourth account, according to which divine grace is necessary but not sufficient for the human response of faith in God (that is, for a human to become aligned with God again, and so be on the road to redemption). The third account amounts to Pelagianism — a view deemed heretical by the Catholic Church because it claims that a person could come to have faith in God *without* God willing it. This, it seems, is deemed to undermine God's perfection in some way because it implies a person could save themselves — that is, enter heaven — without God willing that this be so. Timpe thus contends that any satisfactory account of grace must satisfy an 'anti-Pelagian constraint':

(APC) No human individual in the status corruptionis is able to cause or will any good, including the will of her coming to saving faith, apart from unique grace. (p. 57)

'Unique grace' here means the grace offered by God, and not the grace offered through creation. APC entails, contra Pelagianism, that a person cannot save themselves; they always require God's help. This leaves a puzzle for grace: how can we accept God's grace without it either determining our wills or us determining that God wills that we receive it.

Timpe develops an interesting account of divine grace in response to this puzzle. He bases his account on Eleonore Stump's. On her view, we can accept grace without God forcing it upon us by making our wills *quiescent*. If our wills are quiescent, then we neither assent nor reject grace; we become passive, and this allows grace to influence us without either determining us or us determining that God provides us grace. Timpe develops this account by endorsing the thesis that omissions can't be causes. On a standard event-causal view, the relata of causation are events. But omissions are not events; they are absence of events, if anything. But we can still be said to control whether or not we omit something; so it seems there can be control *without* causation. This, in turn, helps to show how we can accept — or as Timpe puts it 'refraining from resisting' — grace without causing it to be the case that we receive grace. The idea, I take it, is that God provides everyone grace, but we don't always accept it. Once our wills become quiescent, however, we stop refraining to resist, and come to accept grace without causing God to give us grace.

Before considering the afterlife for agents who have realigned themselves with God, Timpe considers what the afterlife is like for those continue to resist grace until they die. Such persons, according to Timpe, are consigned to hell. Timpe

avoids committing to all aspects of what he calls the ‘traditional doctrine of hell’; in particular, he avoids committing himself to theses that hell is a place of punishment and suffering, and that punishments in hell are retributive in nature. Instead, he focuses on the following three theses:

- a. once a person is in hell, it is not possible for that person to escape,
- b. hell is not empty and among its inhabitants are contingent creatures, and
- c. those in hell retain their free will. (p. 70)

These three theses are what Timpe calls the ‘Minimal Traditional Doctrine of Hell’. These three theses seem *prima facie* inconsistent. How can a person in hell be unable to escape if they have free will? Doesn’t having free will mean that one is free to change oneself, and thereby come refrain from resisting God’s grace? Timpe’s virtue libertarianism is applied explicitly here. On Timpe’s view, persons in hell have, through repeated directly free actions throughout their ante-mortem lives, ‘set’ their characters such that it is not psychologically possible for them to align themselves with God; they have even apparently set their characters such that it’s not psychologically possible for them to change themselves such that they might then consider realigning themselves with God. Thus, even though persons in Hell cannot change their characters, they still have free will according to Timpe; that is, persons in Hell can perform indirect free actions. Moreover, it’s not the case that God doesn’t offer the damned grace; it’s rather that the damned have set their characters such that they are blind to God’s grace. This thereby shows that c, d, e are jointly consistent.

Timpe then turns the freedom of the redeemed — that is, of persons in Heaven. The traditional view of heaven, according to Timpe, is encompassed by the two following claims:

- (i) the redeemed in heaven have free will, and
- (ii) the redeemed in heaven are no longer capable of sinning. (p. 84)

These two claims generate the Problem of Heavenly Freedom, however: if people have free will in heaven, then it seems they are capable of sinning. In response to this problem some reject either (i) or (ii), or they endorse com-

patibilism. Timpe aims to provide a response that is neither concessionary — that is, doesn't reject (i) or (ii) — nor compatibilist.

Again, Timpe applies his virtue libertarianism, which is a development of his previous response to this problem in joint work with Timothy Pawl. On this view, the redeemed have set their characters such that they cannot sin. But even though they cannot perform evil actions, the redeemed retain their free will as they are still capable of performing indirectly free actions. Thus, on Timpe's view, the redeemed have free will and they are incapable of sinning; so Timpe has rescued the traditional view of heaven. One additional feature that is worth noting is that Timpe appeals to the notion of purgatory. He invokes this partly because it is Catholic dogma, but partly because it helps to explain how person who, while they have aligned themselves with God, died before they have perfected themselves. It is in purgatory, according to Timpe, that persons are completely sanctified and, thus, transformed into perfected beings worthy of heaven

Finally, Timpe shows his account of virtue libertarianism can make sense of divine freedom. There seems to be *prima facie* tension between human and divine freedom. It seems that because God is perfectly good, he cannot do other than choose the good. Humans, however, are not perfectly good and so can choose to do evil. This seems to imply that humans have more freedom than God does. Timpe disagrees. As he sees it, God has the truest freedom there is. For God, evil is not even an option. This doesn't restrict his freedom, according to Timpe, because God has his moral character necessarily and it doesn't depend on events or factors external to God. Humans, on the other hand, do not have their moral characters necessarily. It is because of the difference in nature between humans and God that the former must forge their own characters through directly free actions, and the latter enjoys freedom without having developed his own character.

I will now develop one main line of criticism in what follows, one which I think undermines Timpe's entire project. Again, I want to note here that I think Timpe's book is impressive. While I'm neither a libertarian nor a classical monotheist, his attempt to make Christian theology consistent through his virtue libertarianism is admirable. But it seems to me that the entire consistency project he attempts hinges on his account of primal sin — namely the explanation of how evil first entered in the world, despite the world being created

by a perfectly good being. As I discussed earlier, Timpe finds both Rogers' and MacDonald's accounts of primal sin wanting because they leave it unexplained and, moreover, inexplicable how Lucifer sinned — that is, how evil entered into the world. I agree with Timpe. But Timpe doesn't have a better account to offer. Rather, he simply accepts that, 'It looks then as if a Christian account of primal sin cannot avoid all arbitrariness,' and then tries to render this position more palatable, 'Whether or not this amounts to an insurmountable objection to the philosophical respectability of Christian accounts of free will and sin will depend, among other things, on the positive merits that those accounts can offer' (p. 48). I certainly think that there are positive merits to his own Christian account of free will and sin, but this isn't enough to save the day.

The problem is that Timpe leaves primal sin unexplained. Thus how or why primal sin occurred remains mysterious. Moreover, Timpe seems to accept that it is inexplicable. Thus he seems to accept that primal sin is *always* going to be mystery. The trouble with mysteries is that they can pop up elsewhere. If something mysterious or inexplicable occurs at t1, then what's to stop the same mysterious or inexplicable thing occurring at t2? Given that the mystery cannot, perhaps in principle, be explained, there's nothing a priori that can rule out that mystery occurring at another time, or elsewhere.

This is currently quite abstract. But let's make things more concrete. Timpe's account of heavenly freedom states that the redeemed *cannot* sin. These claims are true, according to Timpe, because the redeemed have set their characters such that it is not psychologically open to them to sin. But if it's mysterious and inexplicable how or why *primal sin* occurred, then it seems that it's possible that those in heaven could sin. That is, the possibility of mysterious and inexplicable *heavenly sin* hasn't been ruled out. Timpe might contend that they have set their characters such that they cannot sin. But mysteries and the inexplicable can just happen; they are, after all, mysterious and inexplicable.

It also makes no difference that the redeemed are in a different stage of their relationship with god; again, mysteries and the inexplicable can just happen — that's what makes them mysterious and inexplicable! So, the problem can't be avoided by simply labelling the stages that people are at in their relationship with God, and that's all Timpe has at this point. Consider an analogy. We know that old people can't grow new teeth. But suppose it were mysterious and inexplicable how babies grew teeth. If this were true, we wouldn't be able



to rule out old people growing new teeth; after all, the process by which babies grow teeth is (we have assumed) mysterious and inexplicable, so we can't rule it occurring with old people. It simply doesn't help to point out that babies and old people are at different stages of development.

Thus, Timpe's account of primal sin actually undermines his account of heavenly freedom. He cannot accept the traditional view of heaven, because he cannot accept the redeemed can both have free will and be incapable of sinning. As I've argued, the process by which sin enters the world is mysterious, so there's no way to rule that it could enter the world again even via apparently perfected human agents. It won't help to distinguish between good and perfected human agents, and then to claim that humans are created good but not perfected in the hope that this will ensure that 'perfected' human agents can't sin. This, again, just labels the stages of development. Without an account that renders primal sin non-mysterious and explicable, there is nothing to rule out the possibility of even 'perfected' human agents sinning in heaven. As I've argued, the mysterious and the inexplicable can pop up anywhere; they do not play by our rules; they are unpredictable by nature. Since heavenly sin is just as mysterious and inexplicable as primal sin, it remains possible that it occurs.

This problem also infects Timpe's account of damned freedom. This account runs parallel to his account of heavenly freedom. On Timpe's account, the damned have free will, but cannot escape hell because it is not psychologically possible for them to turn back towards God. But if it's mysterious and inexplicable how sin and evil entered the world, then it seems plausible that goodness can enter the world in an equally mysterious fashion. So it seems possible that one of the damned choose to perform a good action, choose to turn herself back towards, chooses to refrain from resisting grace, or some such. Hellish goodness, then, seems possible, even if it is mysterious and inexplicable. Given this, Timpe cannot accept the Minimal Traditional Doctrine of Hell — something has to go.

This objection isn't devastating for Timpe qua Christian or qua monotheist. There is ample room for him to modify his account of heaven or hell to accommodate the possibility of people leaving heaven and hell. But this will run counter the traditional doctrine and views that he sets out to show is consistent. So this objection is devastating to this consistency project.

Despite his project not being successful, Timpe's book is still worth reading. There is no other source that so expansively catalogues a wide variety of literature in both free will and philosophical theology.

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**Aaron Rizzieri: *Pragmatic Encroachment, Religious Belief and Practice*. Palgrave 2013.**

Consider a person with strongly held religious convictions. Suppose these convictions are based, to a large extent, on religious experiences that this person has undergone — experiences that he finds difficult to articulate or explain, but in which he took himself to be in direct contact with God. Suppose this person puts these convictions into action — stridently expressing them, urging others away from alternative religious views, acting in ways that seem intolerant, judgmental, self-righteous, etc. While we might condemn such actions as immoral, we may also criticise them for being *epistemically* irresponsible or negligent; this person doesn't know that his religious experiences are genuine, or even have any evidence for thinking so. As such, he ought to be less *presumptuous* — perhaps in his beliefs, certainly in his actions.

When we criticise such actions as epistemically negligent, though, we typically take it for granted that the believer's experiences are not genuine or, at the very least, are unlikely to be genuine. Now suppose, for a moment, that there really *is* a God, that this person really *has* been in direct contact with God and that his religious beliefs are all *true*. In a world like this — which may be very different from how we take the actual world to be — would it still be negligent for this person to act as he does? Or, to ask this in another way, are this person's actions negligent *even by his own lights*? The answer, I think, is not straightforward. This is one of the questions that Aaron Rizzieri addresses in *Pragmatic Encroachment, Religious Belief and Practice*. He answers with an emphatic 'yes'.

'Pragmatic encroachment' in epistemology is the idea that whether a belief counts as knowledge or as justified can depend on pragmatic factors