Asymmetric Dual-Frame Compatibilism

Asymmetric Antecedence and the Refusal of an Impossible Demand

Gerald Milton Smith, Jr.

Written for my grandson Samuel, and Drs. Maddox and Thomas in partial completion of the requirements of the PhD program at North American School of Theology

A Letter to Samuel

Samuel, in my continuation of addressing problematic issues you will surely question and ponder when you're older, I have written the following as an attempt to assist you in your thought process. The Bible is clear on two facts: God is sovereign, and man is free and responsible. Later theologians have juxtaposed these to the point of becoming rivals, refusing to leave them both strongly stated and held while allowing their reconciliation to remain in the secret counsel of God. Efforts to resolve what has never been an actual tension have led to numerous errant approaches that deny one or the other of these equally plain truths of Scripture. Here, I have added to those proposals in an attempt to say to you that if you need a resolution that goes beyond leaving this with God, here is one approach.

Remember that I love you, and am thinking of you in these months prior to your birth. When you arrive and grow up, I hope the knowledge that you have been a focus in my prayers and pursuits daily will bring you great confidence and strength.

Your grandfather, Milton Smith.

Abstract

Libertarian accounts of desert responsibility quietly demand a freedom no creature can have: control over the conditions of one's own existence. That demand asks too much. This paper keeps the diagnosis intact, then offers a constructive reply. One and the same creaturely act may be infallibly determined relative to the divine antecedent order while remaining ontologically non-necessitated relative to the creature's proper antecedent order—provided those orders are genuinely asymmetric, the creaturely contingency is metaphysical rather than epistemic, and no illicit transfer of modal status between frames is assumed. Under that asymmetry, what Scripture and the older Reformed hinge already marked can be stated without emptying second causes: creaturely freedom, even in a strong experiential sense, is freedom in and sustained by the sovereign decree—libertarian second-cause contingency via hypothetical necessity—rather than freedom from it, and rather than aseity for the creature. The proposal does not invent a third logic. It states, in plain terms and with indexed respects, that the same act may be necessary and free in different respects, without handing the creature the Creator's seat.

Note to the Reader

Parts I through III are written for a general reader—someone with a high-school or college-freshman education who is willing to think carefully. The prose aims to be clear and strong, not technical for its own sake. Part I is the diagnosis: why the libertarian desert program asks for more than creaturehood can bear. Part II is the constructive proposal: asymmetric dual-frame compatibilism, or what I also call asymmetric antecedence. Part III is a short bridge to the technical appendices. A vocabulary note: “libertarian” is used here in two indexed senses (L1 / L2)—see the Glossary (Appendix F). Part I targets (L1) desert-ultimacy; Part II’s constructive claim affirms (L2) second-cause contingency under the decree, never (L1) by sales language.

The appendices are for readers who want the operators, the worked sensu composito / sensu diviso distinction, the tool scorecard, and the older hinge locations checked. They are not a second paper in academic costume. If you are content with the main argument, you may stop at the end of Part III. If you want the apparatus tested, the appendices are there.

Contents

A Letter to Samuel 3
Abstract 4

Note to the Reader 4
Part I — Diagnosis: They Ask Too Much 6
I.1 The Freedom They Want 6
I.2 Control of Existence as the Hidden Price of Libertarian Desert ... 7
I.3 The Moral-Monster Charge Rebound 10
I.4 Sustaining the Order: Causation They Cannot Escape 10
I.5 They Ask Too Much 13
I.6 The Coherent Alternative Frame 17
I.7 Why Part I Is Not Enough Alone 22
Part II — Constructive Proposal: Asymmetric Dual-Frame Compatibilism ... 23
II.0 Biblical Steering Before the Map 23
II.1 Thesis at the Hard Edge 30
II.2 What Flat Modal Talk Gets Wrong 32
II.3 Principle of Antecedent Asymmetry 33
II.4 Dual-Frame Realism Without Illusion 37
II.5 Counterfactual Power and Localized Causal Dependency 40
II.6 Four Causes of Creaturely Decisions 44
II.7 Indexed Necessity and Possibility in Plain English 45
II.8 Foreknowledge, Decree, and Concurrence 47
II.9 Sensu Composito and Sensu Diviso Planted Early 48
II.10 Defining Indifferentia and What Libertarian Freedom Means Here ... 49
II.11 Two Necessary Conditions for Desert Responsibility 50
II.12 Test Cases in Plain Voice 51
II.13 Federal Headship and the Two Frames 52
II.14 Relation to They Ask Too Much 54
II.15 What This Is Not 54
Part III — Bridge to the Apparatus 56
III.1 Continuity with the Turretin Hinge 56
III.2 Modest Novelty Claim 56
III.3 Tool Scorecard Summary for General Readers 58
Appendix A — One-Page Formalism 58
Appendix B — Sensu Composito / Sensu Diviso Worked (Adam) 59
Appendix C — Tool Scorecard (Full) 60
Appendix D — Hinge Sources Cited 61
Appendix E — Remaining Questions 62
Appendix F — Glossary for Freshmen 62
Appendix G — On the Necessity of Libertarian Freedom 63
Appendix H — The Enclosed-Brane Analogy 70

Part I — Diagnosis: They Ask Too Much

I.1 The Freedom They Want

The kind of freedom that those who pursue, demand, and defend libertarian freedom of the will (here and throughout Part I, “libertarian” = L1—desert-ultimacy; see Glossary), based on what either Arminian foreknowledge, or Molinist middle knowledge, want and demand is a type of freedom impossible on every level. That is not an overstatement. It is the plain conclusion that follows when their own standards for desert responsibility are pressed consistently, without the usual exemptions that keep God, creation, and the sustaining of the natural order out of the ledger. They are demanding an autonomy they do not fully get even in their own systems, because—though they have not realized it—the only way to have that freedom is to have overseen one's own existence. Let me be plainer. By "overseen," I mean that one must have participated in creation, or at least been consulted over it, and then involved in sustaining that creation.

Some softer version of determinism is necessary, if they will allow the word or concept at all, unless they can figure out how to create and sustain themselves in creation. This holds for both the Arminian and Molinist views. It is subject to the same deterministic claims: God chose to create this particular world by his foreknowledge, or middle knowledge of what creatures with complete libertarian freedom would do. If God chose to actualize this world and not some other, how is he not ultimately responsible for the choices and decisions of those he will judge and hold accountable in this world? Those advocating libertarian free will (LFW) within these frameworks can claim to explain by referring to God’s maximal greatness in choosing the world where the most of humanity would be saved, but that claim and attempted explanation falls of deaf ears when spoken to those who do not presently believe. The lost hear only the words the LFW camp is fond of using toward Calvinists, i.e. “moral monster”, but it is now directed at them. And based on the conditions and stated purposes of the LFW camp, the accusation would be legitimate because the next question will be “then, why did he create me at all, or why did I not get the benefit of being consulted on it if I am to be held responsible?”.

I mean this in the ordinary sense in which a person is held answerable for what he has done. Libertarian accounts of free will typically insist that desert responsibility—praise and blame, reward and punishment, condemnation and acquittal that the agent truly *deserves*—

requires a kind of ultimate self-determination. The agent must be the decisive source of the choice beyond what is actually required to be the decisive choice. The past, the environment, the divine decree, and the created nature itself must not settle or be involved in the matter. Something like an uncaused or self-caused turn of the will must remain, or else responsibility collapses into excuse according to their scheme. That is the demand in its bare form. And once it is stated that way, the question is not whether the demand sounds noble. The question is whether any creature can meet it.

They cannot. The difficulty is not merely that libertarian freedom is hard to square with providence, or with a fallen will enslaved to sin, or with the federal headship of Adam. Those are serious matters, and they matter. But the deeper difficulty is prior. Before anyone deliberates, chooses, sins, or stands under judgment, someone other than the agent has already brought that agent into being. Existence itself is given. The stage is set. The agent did not authorize his own appearance in the story. And if the standard for desert is that nothing outside the agent may determine the conditions under which he becomes answerable for the agent to be answerable, then creation itself already breaks the standard.

Call this the existence problem for libertarian desert. It is easy to miss because debates about free will usually start midstream: with a formed agent already standing at a fork, already able to speak, already inside a moral world. The libertarian then asks whether that agent's choice is determined, and with no willingness to consider any nuance in defining that word. But the more searching question is how that agent got into the situation at all, and whether a desert theory that refuses every determining condition outside the will can tolerate the determining condition of having been made and currently being sustained—made and sustained by a being who is himself outside of time (atemporal), able to comprehend all of time at a moment by being outside of it, and who has perfect knowledge. If the theory cannot, then the freedom the theory is defending was never available to creatures. It was a freedom fit only for a being who needs no Creator.

I.2 Control of Existence as the Hidden Price of Libertarian Desert

In essence, you cannot say that libertarian freedom of the will is necessary for desert responsibility without also requiring control over existence. That means control over whether you exist at all, control over how that existence presents itself circumstantially, and so on. Why?

Because if someone had not created you, you would not be in the position to be held responsible in the first place. The position of responsibility is not a pure product of the will. It is a position occupied by a creature who did not invent himself, did not choose his nature, did not arrange the world into which he was born, and did not decide whether there would be a moral order at all.

Press the libertarian requirement honestly. If desert requires that the agent be the ultimate source of what makes him blameworthy, then the agent must also be the ultimate source of the fact that there is an agent to blame. Otherwise the chain of conditions that make blame possible begins outside him. Creation is not a minor preface. It is the first and most decisive condition. Without it, there is no choice, no fall, no guilt, no condemnation. With it, there is already a Creator whose act places the creature in the arena where desert is even thinkable. Under the libertarian requirements as I see them, God at least bears some level of responsibility because he chose to create—to create this specific world—and did.

So the libertarian who makes libertarian freedom of the will (LFW) necessary for desert responsibility has already, without noticing it, made control over one's own existence necessary as well. That is the autonomy they want and do not get—not even on paper in their own systems. They describe a will that must be free of determining causes; they do not mention in that description a will that authored or sustains its own being. Yet the second follows from the first if the first is treated as a strict condition of desert. A freedom that begins only after creation has already happened is a freedom that begins too late for the kind of ultimate freedom they demand.

Look more carefully at what ultimacy actually costs. When the demand is that the creature be the uncaused source of his own choices—not merely a real chooser, but the final originator—the demand has already crossed from creaturely agency into something else. Self-existence belongs to the uncreated. Classical Christian metaphysics has long marked that as aseity: God alone is from Himself; the creature is from Another. To insist on libertarian ultimacy as the price of desert is, in effect, to insist that the blamed agent possess an attribute that belongs only to a being who needs no Maker. The freedom they want is not simply undetermined choice. It is a freedom that would require the agent to stand where only the self-existent stands.

The antecedents make the same point from the ground up. The creature did not choose his DNA, his time or place of birth, his first inclinations, the structure of his mind, or the stream of inputs that form his desires. If choices flow from character and desire, and the creature did not fashion that character and those desires from scratch, then—on the sense of ultimacy their desert

theory requires—the chain of what settles the choice is already grounded outside him. To be the ultimate source of the choice in the sense their desert theory requires, he would have to be the ultimate source of himself—a cause of himself. That is not an exaggeration. It is what "ultimate" does when it is not watered down. Either the creature is “causa sui” in the relevant respect, or ultimacy fails before the first deliberated act is ever named. The demand for control of existence remains load-bearing here on its own terms; the scholastic refusal of self-origination only corroborates the impossibility. Turretin, proving a first unproduced Being from the subordination of causes, states the point without ornament: nothing can be the cause of itself—"nihil potest esse causa sui”.[1] That reference is cosmological, not a dedicated treatise on libertarian ultimacy. It is enough, narrowly, to mark that self-causation is already absurd on the page where the first cause is demonstrated. The creature who must be causa sui in order to deserve blame under their standard is asking for what that demonstration already rules out. That is not to say that the libertarians admit or even recognize this, but it is to iterate that their qualifications for desert responsibility require it.

Would it not be better for the person held responsible and condemned never to have been created? That question is not a joke, and it is not a sentimental dodge. It is the moral pressure their own standard generates. If condemnation is intolerable unless the agent controlled every decisive condition of his culpability, then the creation of a being who can fall, be judged, and be punished looks like the first injustice. The person who ends under wrath did not ask to exist under the conditions that make wrath possible. On their terms, that is enough to reopen the charge they so often bring against God according to the compatibilists' understanding.

Notice how far the logic travels once it is allowed to move. It is not only that a particular bad choice was not "up to" the agent in the libertarian sense. It is that the whole career of responsibility—being someone who can be praised or blamed—was never up to him in the sense their desert theory requires. He did not vote for creaturehood. He did not consent to the possibility of fall and judgment. He was placed. In their sense of liberty, placement by another is already enough to void desert, so no placed creature is ever justly condemned. That is the hidden cost of making libertarian freedom necessary for desert responsibility: either the creature controls

1 Franciscus Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae*, Pars Prima (Edinburgh: John D. Lowe, 1847), 154 (Loc. III Q.I §VI): "Nam si certum esse debet et indubitatum, nihil a seipso fieri, et nihil esse sui ipsius causam, quia sic foret seipso prius et posterius;… Non a se quia ut jam dictum, nihil potest esse causa sui;"

existence, or desert never gets off the ground. If it does, the claim of being a "moral monster" leveled at those who take a compatibilist view still lands on them, too.

I.3 The Moral-Monster Charge Rebound

So again, God is to blame—and the moral monster these critics have claimed—if they are denied their version of freedom. Notice what has happened. The accusation that a determining God is a moral monster is supposed to force the conclusion that libertarian freedom must be real, or else divine justice collapses. But if libertarian desert-freedom demands the level of control they require, that control would necessarily include existence, and creatures do not have that control, so the same accusation lands whether or not one grants them their preferred metaphysics of the will. Deny them LFW, and God is the monster for holding them responsible even with the freedom they demand. Grant the logic of their desert requirement consistently, and God is still the monster for creating them into a position of responsibility they did not authorize. The charge does not vanish when their freedom is affirmed in theory. It relocates to the act of creation itself.

That rebound is not a clever trick. It is what their standard does when it is not selectively applied. They want to say: no desert without libertarian freedom. They do not want to say: no desert without self-creation. But the second is the unacknowledged twin of the first. If ultimate sourcehood is the price of desert, then ultimate sourcehood of existence is part of the price. They ask for the first and quietly assume the second can be ignored. It cannot.

And they can’t argue accurately that God owes no one salvation as a way of shrugging off the difficulty. God owes no one salvation; that remains true. Punishable guilt remains real where the creature sins. The point here is narrower and sharper: the libertarian desert criterion, taken at full force, cannot stop at the moment of choice. It reaches backward into the conditions that make choice and condemnation possible. And once it reaches that far, the "moral monster" objection becomes a weapon that cuts the hand that wields it. The demand that was meant to protect the creature from unjust blame ends up indicting the Creator for having made any blameable creature at all.

I.4 Sustaining the Order: Causation They Cannot Escape

Additionally, some level of causation is absolutely necessary, given that humanity cannot begin and sustain the natural order. This is not a speculative theology point. It is a plain fact

about creatures. We do not start the world. We do not keep the world running. We do not hold atoms together, preserve the regularity of nature, or maintain the continuity of our own lives from one moment to the next by an independent power. Whatever account one gives of secondary causes, the creature is not the first cause of the created order, and the creature is not its final sustainer.

Their accusation of a moral monster lands again at this point, because God sustains the created order. Creation is not a wound clock left to tick on its own. The powers of intellect and will by which a human being deliberates and chooses are finite powers, upheld moment by moment by the Primary Cause. Continuous preservation is itself a form of divine causal involvement without which there would be no agents left to choose. To be consistent, God's ongoing causation is treated as disqualifying for desert—because it means the creature's life and powers depend on Another—so desert is already impossible in any world God keeps in being. If, on the other hand, sustaining causation is allowed while determining decree is not, the distinction needs a reason that does not simply beg the question. Why is the God who upholds the sinner's existence compatible with desert, while the God who also orders the ends of that existence is not? The selective outrage is doing more work than the principle.

Absolute self-determination independent of divine concurrence would therefore require more than an undetermined flick of the will at the point of decision. It would require self-sustaining existence. Otherwise the very ability to choose at this moment is contingent upon God sustaining the chooser in existence at this moment. The libertarian who wants ultimacy without dependence has already asked for aseity again, only now under the heading of preservation rather than origin. Same demand. Same impossibility for a creature. Reformed orthodoxy, speaking of providence rather than of desert theory, already refuses the inference that divine concurrence empties the second cause. Providence does not take away the contingency of things with respect to the second cause, nor overturn the liberty of the will: the hypothetical necessity of the decree inflicts no coaction on the will, but permits it to exercise its motions most freely, though inevitably; and the concurrence of the first cause does not exclude the concurrence of second causes—it draws them after itself.[2] That is not a license for libertarian ultimacy. It is the older

2 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI Q.I §IX): "Providentia Dei, nec contingentiam rerum tollit, quia remanet semper indifferens respectu causae secundae, quod necessarium fit per Providentiam, respectu causae primae. Nec libertatem voluntatis evertit, quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." And: "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit;"

grammar in which dependence on the Primary Cause and real second-cause agency are held together without pretending the creature sustains himself. The simultaneity of the adverbs "freely" and "inevitably" is not a contradistinctive concept as the libertarians would have us believe.

In order for their version of libertarian freedom to work under their own desert requirements, they would need to sustain that created order themselves, or to be brought into the deliberation over whether to maintain a creation where fallen humanity could be judged responsible, condemned, and eternally punished—or pack it up. That is the honest extension of the demand. Either the creature must occupy the Creator's seat as sustainer, or the creature must sit at the table where the decision is made: keep a world in which the fallen can be held to account, or shut the whole thing down. Short of that, the conditions of responsibility remain conditions the creature did not choose and cannot maintain.

How is it fair that we can be condemned when God is responsible for maintaining this working order to begin with? How can we be held responsible when this is His fault, if their requirements for desert responsibility are kept? Those questions are theirs, once their standard is followed out. I do not grant the conclusion that God is at fault. I grant that *their* criteria force that conclusion. The injustice they claim to detect in divine judgment is an injustice generated by a requirement no creature can meet and no Creator can satisfy without ceasing to be Creator. If desert requires that God neither create nor sustain the one who will be judged, then desert requires that there be no judged creature at all. That is not a defense of human dignity. It is the abolition of the moral world under the banner of fairness.

Put the two pressures together—creation and sustenance—and the pattern is the same. The libertarian desert criterion keeps discovering divine causation wherever a creature lives long enough to be judged, and then treats that discovery as a scandal. But a world without that causation is not a freer moral world. It is no world. Humanity cannot begin the natural order and cannot keep it. Some level of causation above the creature is not an optional theological extra; it is the condition of there being human agents at all. To suggest that condition as a moral defect in God, while demanding in a courtroom for human desert that the only alternative is to deny or ignore or reject that condition, is to want the fruit after cutting down the tree. It is more than that. It is the rejection of that which is necessary for existence, that which is necessary for God and for creation, and the subsequent rebuilding of God in our own image. What seems clear is that the

libertarian is suggesting some of the same that the serpent suggested in the garden—namely, how can God hold you accountable if you eat the fruit? "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"[3] is an accusation of God not being fair or reliable in his pronouncements, of God overstepping his boundaries, of God taking on an authority that free creatures should have left to themselves. Can anyone hear that hissing sound coming out of the demands for libertarian freedom? I can. "You will not surely die."[4] is an accusation that God will not and cannot hold you responsible for that. Can you hear the hissing now?

I.5 They Ask Too Much

Hence it begins to be obvious that they ask too much; they demand too much. Desert responsibility, according to LFW demands, cannot be had with a creator or a sustainer other than the human being held responsible. That is the end of the road for the libertarian desert program when it is not softened by special pleading. As long as there is a Creator distinct from the creature, and a created order the creature did not begin, and was not consulted on, and cannot sustain, the ultimate-sourcehood condition for desert is already broken before the first free choice is ever described. The only world in which their desert-freedom would be coherent is a world in which the responsible party is also the author and keeper of his own existence. That is not our world. It is not any world of creatures. It is the world of pride, the world the serpent demanded, the world of the original rebel against God as he exalted himself against the Most High.

What they are demanding, when the demand is stated without mercy to their own vocabulary, is not merely a robust freedom of choice. It is the shift from creature to Creator. Creaturely freedom, on any sober account, is derived, bounded, and dependent. A creature can be truly responsible, voluntary, and contingent—under a compatibilist grammar, or the older Thomistic humanist grammar—while remaining a secondary cause. Only the Creator possesses ultimate, uncaused, self-originating freedom, because only the Creator possesses self-existence and sustains all that is. Demanding absolute libertarian independence as the prerequisite for meaningful desert is, in short, demanding to be God. It insists on creaturely status while claiming the uncreated, self-sustaining autonomy that belongs exclusively to the One who is from Himself. That is too much for a man, and it is not what justice requires of a man.

---

3 Genesis 3:1 (ESV): "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

4 Genesis 3:4 (ESV): "You will not surely die."

The confession that orders Reformed churches does not treat eternal ordination as a solvent of creaturely agency. God, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordained whatsoever comes to pass—yet so as neither to author sin, nor to offer violence to the will of the creatures, nor to take away the liberty or contingency of second causes, but rather to establish them.[5] That is not a polite softening of decree. It is the confessional refusal of the very dilemma the libertarian desert program forces: either ultimate creaturely independence, or else emptied wills and canceled contingency. The confession keeps the Creator as Creator and the creature as creature, and it establishes second-cause liberty inside that order rather than outside it. The same providence that brings all things to pass immutably with respect to the First Cause orders them to fall out according to the nature of second causes—necessarily, freely, or contingently.[6] Creaturely modes remain. What is refused is the demand that the creature occupy the First Cause's seat before desert can be just. What is established alternatively, by adherence to the Biblical explanation, is a dual-frame causal roadmap that recognizes the atemporal/temporal distinctions that exist between the creator and creature.

The point of citing that confessional grammar here is not to change the subject from desert to systematics. It is to show that the tradition already had a way to refuse the false choice the libertarian desert criterion keeps offering. Eternal ordination established; creaturely will unviolated; liberty and contingency of second causes established rather than erased. If that formula is coherent—and Reformed churches have confessed it as coherent—then the demand that desert require independence from the First Cause is not the only serious moral option on the table. It is a demand that treats confessional orthodoxy as if it had already conceded the monster charge. It has not. It has located justice inside creaturehood, not beyond it.

I do not say this to make light of the pastoral weight of condemnation, or of the terror of eternal punishment, or of the ache in the question whether it would have been better never to

---

5 *Westminster Confession of Faith* 3.1, in *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms… with Proof Texts* (PCA/OPC reprint; © 2005, 2007 OPC), 12: "God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

6 *Westminster Confession of Faith* 5.2, in *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms… with Proof Texts* (PCA/OPC reprint; © 2005, 2007 OPC), 21: "Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently."

have been born. Mercy without softness can still hear that ache. What it cannot do is rewrite the terms of creaturehood to soothe it. We are not puppets in the crude sense that libertarian polemics often invent—mindless toys jerked by invisible strings. Nor are we self-existent wills who floated into being already armed with ultimate autonomy. We are creatures: real agents, real choosers, real sinners with punishable guilt, and yet never the ground of our own being. Federal headship, secret counsel, God's permissive will, the bondage of a will enslaved to sin—these belong to the full Christian account of how responsibility and grace actually work. But even before those doctrines are opened, the libertarian demand based on the Arminian or Molinist foundation has already overreached. It asks for a freedom that would require us to be gods in order to be justly judged as men, because it makes God's decisions subject to the creature's decisions in an attempt to justify desert responsibility and frankly, to justify God.

They want desert without dependence. They want blame without a Giver of existence, unless possibly they were consulted on the existence. They want a moral court in which the defendant authorized the courtroom, the law, the life he lived under that law, and the continued ticking of the clock that brought him to the courtroom. That is too much. It is impossible on every level—metaphysically, morally, and theologically. And the impossibility is not a defect in divine justice. It is a defect in the demand. It is a defect caused by a refusal of revelation, of Scripture—one not unlike the condemnation found in Romans 1:18, when Paul describes those "who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."[7]

LFW advocates need to earn the necessity they demand, not only name it. The opponent will grant dependence and still say: desert needs control of the choice, not control of existence. That reply only works if "control of the choice" can be sealed off from the conditions that make there be a chooser, a nature, a history of desire, and a sustained power to act. Under their own ultimacy grammar it cannot. If blame requires that the agent be the unconditioned source of what settles the act, then every prior condition that settles the act—and that the agent did not settle—is already a defeat if not understood according to the revelation of Scripture. Existence, nature, and continual sustenance are not optional scenery around an otherwise self-originating will; they are among the originators. So, either "ultimate sourcehood" is watered down to proximal voluntariness (and my target has moved), or the existence-condition is load-bearing on their standard. Those two choices are an either/or that ignore the Biblical explanation and thereby

7 Romans 1:18 (ESV): "who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

create a false dilemma. The target is desert that treats any unchosen foundation of the act as a defeat. Real Biblical desert, desert that meets the requirements of justice, desert that asks only uncoacted proximate choice has left that target; Part II will say what remains once ultimacy-as-aseity is refused. Modest leeway or compatibilism views that already deny self-creation are not refuted by the existence problem as such; they are pressed to show how sourcehood of the choice survives the unchosen foundation they also admit, but this is not an agreement with their modern presentations either. The problems for modern compatibilism treatments need a separate treatment, but suffice it to say that these press the language of the confessions and the supposed agreement of the Reformed Orthodox heirs of Calvin too far.

Nor does the liberty the LFW advocates demand deliver the moral value they advertise. Even if every choice were undetermined in their favorite sense, the chooser would still wake inside a creation he did not author and under a providence that sustains him without his vote. He remains subject to circumstances, events, and responsibilities he neither chose nor was consulted about. The value LFW was supposed to purchase—authorship deep enough to silence every complaint—never arrives, because the creature never escapes being creature. That is why the information-objection has the shape it has: "Woe to you, Chorazin!" becomes, in the mouth of Sodom, "If I had seen what Chorazin saw, I would have repented—but I was not allowed that information." The grievance is a misplaced fairness claim. It treats unequal revelation and unequal circumstance as if justice required a consultation table no creature was ever owed. Part I's diagnosis already named the ache; it will not rewrite creaturehood to soothe it.

Push the demand one inch further and its edge shows. The cry for libertarian freedom, when it will not rest until the creature stands unconditioned by Creator and Sustainer, is not a cry for a larger human freedom. It is a demand for what only God has—aseity, self-existence, underived willing. In that sense it is older than the garden quarrel and deeper than a philosophical preference: it asks for the creature what can be true only of the Creator, and in asking it edges toward wanting something more than God, as if the throne itself were not enough unless the petitioner sat there. That is not moral seriousness. That is the old idolatry wearing the mask of fairness.

I.6 The Coherent Alternative Frame

If the libertarian desert requirement of LFW advocates collapses into an impossible demand for control of existence, what remains is not fatalism and not the puppet theater of popular caricature. The coherent alternative is a compatibilist-like frame in which creature and Creator are not confused, but this is not the compatibilism of any modern treatments I have found. The creature remains a secondary cause—responsible, voluntary, contingent—without being handed the aseity that would make him the uncaused ground of his own acts. The Creator alone retains ultimate freedom, because the Creator alone is not derived.

But is that statement too strong? Is there a non-compatibilist and non-incompatibilist path? Have the Reformed Orthodox of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries already explained this or at least hinted at it? Has further work been done to present their attempts honestly? What other considerations might there be both philosophically, but more important theologically that need further consideration? I want to make a few more remarks before I attempt to answer some of these questions I believe are crucial and pivotal. Neither compatibilism or incompatibilism as currently being presented in the modern discussion may be the way.

On the creature's side, contingency is real in two related ways. Diachronically, human life moves through time: earlier moments give way to later ones, and the future unfolds in sequence relative to what has gone before. Synchronically, at the moment of choice, the creature's nature retains a real structural potency—an alternate possibility in the order of the nature itself—even when that alternate is not what comes to pass. The agent is not a stone. The will is not an empty name. Contingency of this creaturely sort is not canceled by providence; it is the mode in which providence concerns rational agents.

On the creaturely side, I would argue a more Biblically narrated approach, one that is not new, but one often seemingly overlooked in both the compatibilism of modern treatments and their detractors in the Arminian and Pelagian and Molinist critiques. To do that, I will argue that "libertarian freedom of the will" (L2), in the sense that God does not determine the creature to sin or to choose evil or to do evil, but rather determines the "libertarian freedom of the will" experiment, for lack of a better terminology, and its resultant consequences, such that LFW properly understood is obviously a true reality. This is LFW (L2) via "hypothetical necessity" wherein the connection between God's decree (i.e. the process by which God's purpose is worked out by decree) and the event purposed is necessary (here I will be distinguishing between

the event purposed being any specific decision but rather the proof that LFW is a weight unbearable by creatures, and one necessitating gracious, merciful redemption and reconciliation). This is not a new approach. It was, I contend, the argumentation of Antoine de Chandieu in the post-Calvin period.[8] Separately, it was also that of a number of the Thomistic humanists of the 13th and 14th centuries, and of Aquinas, as Charles Trinkaus points out: "Nor is divine providence in any way a limitation of human freedom, because freedom of the will is in itself a participation in the providential government of the universe."[9] The real value of these lines of argumentation is in their accurate reflection of the Biblical portrait of Providence rendering the outcomes of history infallible according to the purposes of God while not destroying the contingent or voluntary nature of human decisions and willing. This did not and does not mean "freedom from God's sovereign decree", but "freedom in and sustained by God's sovereign decree", i.e. freedom guaranteed and made possible by the sovereign decree—not different than modern demands for LFW in experience but different in foundation, and (L2) rather than (L1).

On God's side, the frame is different because God is not a temporal item among others. God is atemporal: not one more actor waiting in the timeline for the creature's turn, but the One whose decree does not compete with creaturely moments as if it were another event of the same kind. What theology has long marked as the necessity of the consequence—*necessitas consequentiae*—names the necessity of the *link*: if God decrees that a free creature chooses thus, then the creature does choose thus. The connection does not fail. What that necessity does *not* require is the necessity of the consequent—*necessitas consequentis*—as if the choice itself were stripped of contingent character and the nature robbed of its synchronic potency. The decree secures the outcome; it does not flatten the creature into a forced mechanism. The libertarians should consider the difference between the two—necessity of the link versus necessity of an

---

8 Antoine de Chandieu [Antonio Sadeele], *Opera theologica* ([Geneva]: Jean Le Preux, 1592), 489–90 (*Responsio ad Fidei [quam vocant] Professionem, a Monachis Burdegalensibus editam*, Art. XLV): "Quanquam enim, secundum naturalem volendi facultatem, voluntas sit libera: homo tamen, in natura sua consideratus, delectatur malo, & hoc appetit tantopere (**non coactè** quidem, hac enim impossibile, sed **libentissimè**) ut eius voluntas tota serviat & mancipetur peccato. Itaque necesse est ut Spiritus sancti vis & efficacia nos boni cognitione instruat, efficiatque ut hoc velimus"; "…quae non libera esse non potest: alioquin non esset Voluntas, si cogeretur: siquidem opponuntur **Coactio & Voluntas**. Nam **Cogi est Nolle**"; "Libertatem dicere possumus **à Necessitate** eò quòd Necessarium videtur esse Contrarium Voluntario"; "Doctrina autem haec Bernardi ex Augustino desumpta est, qui expressis verbis ait, **Gratiam non tollere Liberum Arbitrium**…" Art. XLV continues; only pp. 489–490 are cited here.

9 Charles Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 1 (January 1949): 51–62, at 53 (quoting Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, cap. 113, English Dominican Fathers trans.).

emptied consequent. But the distinction I am arguing is even more nuanced because both necessity of the consequence and necessity of the consequent have been used in a way that focuses on specific events without consideration of directing purpose, in this case the purpose of God to show his multi-faceted wisdom in proving the overwhelming weight of absolute freedom such that its allowance results in the need for the deliverance found in salvation, or the outworkings of eternal justice, or both.

Turretin draws the pair with scholastic exactness under the doctrine of divine knowledge. Given foreknowledge of future contingents, all things come to pass by a necessity of the consequence—*necessitate consequentiae*—in a qualified sense, with respect to infallibility; not by a necessity of the consequent absolute—*non consequentis et absoluta*. The distinction between necessary and contingent things therefore remains.[10] Liberty of will is overturned by physical necessity and coaction, which fight the formal reason of liberty; it is not overturned by hypothetical necessity and the infallibility of the event. The same act can be free and necessary in different respects. Foreknowledge brings the infallibility of futurition and *necessitas consequentiae*; it does not bring coaction or violence, nor strip the will of intrinsic liberty.[11] That necessity of the link—not an emptied consequent—is exactly what is necessary for there to be a creation in the first place, and what continues to be necessary in sustaining the creation that exists.

The same taxonomy governs the decree. The question is not absolute and physical necessity with respect to second causes in themselves—some are necessary, some contingent—nor necessity of coaction, because the decree inflicts no force on second causes but decrees that things come to pass agreeably to their own natures. What is asserted is hypothetical necessity and necessity of the consequence, with respect to the certainty of the event and its futurition from the decree.[12] What establishes determination to one by physical necessity or coaction takes away

---

10 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 191 (Loc. III Q.XII §XXIII): "Si datur praescientia futurorum contingentium, omnia fient necessario necessitate consequentiae, secundum quid, infallibilitatis; non consequentis et absoluta. Manet ergo discrimen semper inter necessaria et contingentia,"

11 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 191 (Loc. III Q.XII §XXIV): "Libertas voluntatis evertitur quidem per necessitatem physicam et coactionis, quae pugnat cum formali ratione libertatis; sed non per necessitatem hypotheticam et infallibilitatis eventus, idem enim hoc respectu potest esse liberum et necessarium: Unde quamvis actiones hominum sint liberae, quia sponte fiunt et previo rationis judicio, non desinunt esse necessariae ratione decreti et praescientiae Dei. Praescientia autem Dei infert quidem futuritionis et eventus infallibilitatem, et necessitatem consequentiae, non tamen infert coactionem aut violentiam, nec aufert voluntati intrinsecam libertatem."

12 Turrettinus, *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* (Edinburgh: Lowe, 1847), 287 (Loc. IV Q.IV §III): "Non quaeritur

liberty and contingency; what establishes it only by hypothetical necessity does not, because the certainty arises extrinsically from the immutability of the decree, which so determines the futurition of the event that it does not change the nature of things, but lets necessary things act necessarily and free things act freely.[13] The necessity of the decree takes independence-liberty, not the liberty of spontaneity and indifference: Adam sinned necessarily with respect to the decree and the futurition of the thing, and freely with respect to his will and the mode, because whatever the necessity of the decree, he sinned willing, and therefore most freely.[14] Be clear about the nuance I am arguing here by quoting Turretin. The statement "Adam sinned necessarily with respect to the decree and the futurition of the thing" is directed at the necessity of God's purpose to show that creatures cannot and will not behave in a praiseworthy manner under the weight of absolute freedom, but will rather require deliverance from the epic catastrophe of their choices and misuse of such freedom.

Notice what these distinctions do *not* do. They do not hand the creature the independence-liberty the decree expressly takes. They do not pretend that, given the decree, an alternate choice can be actualized. They do not relocate ultimacy from God to man. What they do is refuse the caricature that determination must mean coaction, emptied contingency, or a will stripped of its formal liberty. Free acts freely; necessary acts necessarily; the mode of futurition is itself decreed. That is the older hinge, now stated in its own tongue, for the compatibilist-like

---

de Necessitate absoluta et physica, respectu causarum secundarum in se, quia fatemur alias esse necessarias, alias contingentes; Sed respectu Dei et in ordine ad ipsum. Non de necessitate coactionis, quia decretum nullam vim infert causis secundis, sed futuritionem rerum decrevit fieri convenienter naturae ipsarum; Sed quaeritur de necessitate hypothetica et consequentiae, respectu certitudinis eventus et futuritionis ex decreto; quam asserimus."

13 Turrettinus, Institutio (Lowe, 1847), 287–288 (Loc. IV Q.IV §VI): "Quod statuit determinationem ad unum per necessitatem physicam, vel coactionis, tollit libertatem et contingentiam; sed non quod eam statuit tantum per necessitatem hypotheticam; quia certitudo non oritur ex causarum secundarum natura, quae liberae sunt et contingentes, sed extrinsece ex decreti immutabilitate, quod ita determinat futuritionem eventus, ut rerum naturam non mutet, sed res necessarias necessario, liberas libere agere sinat. Unde patet necessitatem et immutabilitatem decreti tollere quidem contingentiam respectu causae primae, quia cum omnia necessario eveniant, nihil potest contingenter fieri; sed non tollere eam respectu causarum secundarum, quia idem decretum quod praestituit futuritionem rerum, statuit etiam modum futuritionis, ut quae necessarias causas haberent necessario fierent, quae vero contingentes, contingenter: Atque ita effectus bene dicitur, et necessarius et contingens simul, sed [κατ' ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο]; Illud a parte Dei et relate ad decretum; Istud a parte rei et relate ad causas secundas et proximas, quae aliter se habere potuerunt."

14 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 288 (Loc. IV Q.IV §VIII): "Necessitas decreti tollit quidem libertatem independentiae,… Sed non tollit libertatem spontaneitatis et indifferentiae, quia necessitas est tantum hypothetica, quae eventus certitudinem ponit, sed causarum secundarum naturam et proprietates non tollit. Hinc est quod recte dicatur, Adamum necessario, et libere peccasse: Illud quidem respectu decreti, et rei futuritionis; Istud respectu voluntatis ejus, et quoad modum, quia qualiscunque fuerit necessitas decreti, Adamus tamen volens peccavit, et per consequens liberrime."

frame already argued in plain English: the necessity of the link without the necessity of an emptied consequent, secondary cause without aseity, responsibility without self-creation.

Put that in the plainest terms. Under compatibilist-like freedom ordered by the necessity of the consequence, God determines the *relationship* as necessary according to a specific purpose —not the outcome as something intrinsically necessary in itself. The necessity sits in the connection: given the decree, the choice follows. It does not sit in an emptied will, as if the act had no contingent character left once God had spoken. That is why the human agent remains fully contingent, fully voluntary, and uncoerced. He acts from real internal desire. He chooses what he chooses because he genuinely wants it. His nature still holds the structural capacity to do otherwise—the synchronic potency already named. Nothing in this frame turns him into a pushed object. The divine guarantee is that his free choice will match what God has decreed, not that an external force overrides his will and stuffs an alien act into his hands.

And still this is not libertarian freedom in the sense that Arminian and Pelagian and Molinist advocates are requiring. Given the decree, the choice will occur. Our future is fixed. The connection does not leave room for the decree to stand and the choice to fail. The creature may retain capacity in the order of nature; he does not retain the power to *actualize* an alternate choice while the decree stands. If the freedom they want means that the ultimate variable determining the act rests solely in human self-determination, independent of prior causes and independent of God's counsel, then the necessity of the consequence does not give them that. God's decree remains the ultimate primary cause. This keeps the creature free as a creature. It does not hand him the Creator's seat. The older works agree: decree and providence establish second-cause liberty and contingency in their own mode; they do not grant the independence-liberty that would make the creature a god.

That combination—creaturely diachronic and synchronic contingency together with divine atemporality and the necessity of the consequence—remains compatibilist-like, not libertarian in the Arminian or Pelagian or Molinist sense. It does not hand the creature ultimate independence from God's counsel. It does not pretend that desert requires self-creation or self-sustenance. It locates responsibility where responsibility belongs for creatures: in what they are and what they do as real agents under a Creator who owes no one salvation and yet justly holds sinners to account. The libertarian asks for more than creaturehood can bear. This compatibilist-like hinge asks for what creaturehood actually is—and the confession and the elenctic institute

say the same in their own tongues: second causes remain free and contingent under a decree that secures futurition without coaction.

This end section is not offered as a borrowed authority stack meant to replace the argument. The load-bearing claim remains my own: they ask for control of existence, and that is too much. The older sources corroborate the hinge already named—compatibilist necessity of the consequence, aseity demand, secondary cause—without inventing a freedom that would make us authors of our own being. The creature remains contingent in time and in nature. God remains God—atemporal, not one more link in the temporal chain. The necessity that matters on the divine side is the necessity of the link, not a necessity that empties the creature of potency. And the whole remains inside a compatibilist grammar. That is enough to show that refusing libertarian desert-freedom in the sense opposed is not the same as refusing responsibility, contingency, or moral seriousness.

They ask too much. The answer is not to invent a freedom that would make us authors of our own existence. The answer is to refuse the demand.

I.7 Why Part I Is Not Enough Alone

Part I refuses an impossible demand. That refusal matters. If desert responsibility is made to require control of existence, then no creature is ever justly condemned, and the moral world is abolished under the banner of fairness. A form of determination for creation and sustenance and the fulfillment of God's purposes remains necessary. And Molinist actualization of this world, though the best of the three possibilities here opposed, does not buy the creature a seat at the consultation table. The older hinge—*necessitas consequentiae* without *necessitas consequentis*, Adam necessarily and freely in different respects—already shows that refusing libertarian desert-freedom is not the same as refusing responsibility, contingency, or moral seriousness.

But a diagnosis is not yet a full constructive answer. A careful reader can grant that they ask too much and still ask: can true ontological determination relative to the divine order and true creaturely contingency relative to the creature's own order both be affirmed without one of them collapsing into ignorance, appearance, or polite fiction? Part I lands on the hinge. Part II develops the asymmetric dual-frame proposal that makes that hinge explicit without softening Part I's force. The demand for control of existence remains refused. What follows is not a back

door for the freedom they wanted. It is an account of how determination and contingency can both be real under asymmetric antecedent orders.

Part I's refusal does not, by itself, select the dual-frame. A reader can grant that they ask too much and still go hard incompatibilist (no desert), or keep one flat deterministic frame and call freedom only desire-consistency, or thin second causes until occasionalism remains. Part II is therefore not "what is left after Part I." It is a constructive claim: determination and contingency are both real under asymmetric antecedent orders, with metaphysical (not merely epistemic) creaturely contingency, and with second causes that are not shadows. The next chapters must earn that claim. Part I only clears a false price of admission; it does not yet prove which house to build. The remaining fork is narrow: reject the aseity-demand; reject merely epistemic freedom; reject emptied second causes; then ask how dependence and real creaturely causality can both stand—the dual-frame is the proposal Part II will earn.

Part II — Constructive Proposal: Asymmetric Dual-Frame Compatibilism

II.0 Biblical Steering Before the Map

The dilemma that confuses this discussion is not only the common-sense defeaters already named—creatures created and sustained without consultation. It is also an improper reading of the asymmetry between God's relation to time from outside time and the creature's relation to time from inside time. Add to that the misrepresentations of Reformed Orthodox thought after Calvin that arise when the philosophical paradigm of that tradition is missed—correctives Richard Muller, Antonie Vos, and their associates have pressed for decades—and the fog thickens. I would therefore begin where the fog lifts: with biblical considerations, then with a proper Reformed Orthodox philosophical paradigm as contained in the confessions (even if not contained in the RO heirs of Calvin or Calvin himself), then with conclusions that can be tested, and only then with the possible appeal of Molinist middle knowledge as a fit—or a misfit—with that older work. Without theological and exegetical steering, the confusion deepens. With it, the confusion begins to disappear.

First, God's revealed purpose in creation. Few passages are as clear as Ephesians 3:10, John 4:23–24, Colossians 1:15–20, Romans 3:25–26, Romans 11:33, and Isaiah 45–46. From them it is obvious that God has purpose, plans, desires, and good pleasure, and that this purpose

focuses on and presents Christ as central in everything. Ephesians names the disclosure: "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."[15] John names the audience and the goal: true worshipers worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people. Colossians sets Christ as image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation, head of the body, reconciling all things by the blood of his cross. Romans 3 shows righteousness displayed in the propitiation put forward by God, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Metaphysically, a new kingdom and a new creation come alongside the original creation; any full account must face that reality as well as the asymmetry of time perspectives. I do not develop those metaphysics here. What I reaffirm is simpler and harder: God has a purpose; he is central to it; Christ specifically is central to it; he has a stated audience; and any consideration of the freedom of our choices must be subject to God's stated goals and plans. Much of the present debate on determinism and libertarian freedom focuses on the creature as if the One who has revealed himself to be “like no other” could be left offstage. Without first admitting the accuracy of Paul's doxology—"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"[16]—one should not hope for clarity. We are thinking about what defies our categories. As Paul told Corinth: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."[17] That should guide us and caution our conclusions—especially accusations that the God of a disagreed position is a "deity of deception" or a "moral monster." Such speech makes my skin crawl. I find myself wanting to crawl under the nearest table on my knees in worship, adoration, repentance, and prayer for mercy on those who use it so easily. God has a purpose and a way of carrying it out. Our greatest goal is to discover that purpose so that we may worship him in spirit and in truth. Analyze these passages and let them speak.

Notice next the asymmetry the biblical texts themselves declare. Isaiah 45 uses Cyrus to demonstrate it, warning: "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among

---

15 Ephesians 3:10–11 (ESV): "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,"

16 Romans 11:33 (ESV): "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

17 1 Corinthians 1:25 (ESV): "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"[18] One chapter later: "for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,"[19] Romans 11:33, already quoted, is among the clearest. We see time, creation, and causal chains radically differently than God does and must. There is need for a perspectival honesty in our understanding. Lest anyone accuse me of calling freedom an "illusion," I deny that charge. Still, consider Cyrus—what is said to him and of him in Isaiah 45–46—and ask how he saw himself and his actions. There God's perspective is spelled out without apology. There is no indication that Cyrus was a puppet, that he conquered without the freedom of his own will, or that he decided otherwise than what seemed best to him; yet God plainly declares that he would use him and was using him. Pharaoh is often pressed as if it were the only case; Cyrus is another, and its declarations of sovereignty surround God's description of himself as "like no other." Is it not possible that both perspectives—God's and the creature's freedom—second-cause liberty in its own order—are simultaneously active and true? Is it not wrong to dismiss that possibility without considering it? Perhaps what is needed is not another slogan war between bare compatibilism and bare incompatibilism, but a disciplined perspectivalism that keeps both frames without pretending they are the same set of grounds. Humility is not optional here. Our understanding will never fully grasp God's.

Then consider the condition of man under the curse. The Reformed confessions agree with Scripture's verdict here, even where I do not pause to quote their wording. That reality is worse than most incompatibilists seem ready to admit. The scriptural presentations—especially Romans 1:18–28, 3:10–19, 5:12–19, and 9:11–16, together with Ephesians 2:1–4—present humanity in the hardest terms: blind, deaf, dead, part of an old creation, enslaved to sin, and incapable of understanding or positively responding to truth. Ephesians 2 leaves no room for extricating ourselves from that bondage or for preparing ourselves for the salvific work of God. Any account of sovereignty and freedom that softens this condition has already changed the subject.

This condition of humanity is wholly explained by a proper understanding of Romans 5. Federal headship is not a side chapel to the decree–liberty problem; it is Scripture's own schema

---

18 Isaiah 45:9 (ESV): "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"

19 Isaiah 46:9 (ESV): "remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,"

for naming what mutable creaturely freedom does when it is given room to stand and fall. The references above, and the dual-frame already argued under that head are developed below in II.13. What must be said here is only the pointer: without Romans 5, demands for a return to garden-style libertarian stewardship misplace both the problem and the remedy. Still, I am not denying human libertarian freedom if it is founded in the providence of God and according to the Biblical parameters above. An argument against libertarian freedom of the will is simply not Biblical in the sense that it doesn't take seriously the Biblical portrait of humanity and the history declared in Scripture. A parenthetical aside is in order here.

Only libertarian second-cause contingency (L2)—freedom from coaction under the decree, not aseity and not L1—properly accounts for a cluster of biblical and theological pressures that a decree emptying creaturely liberty cannot bear. Temptation and the activity of the enemy; God's permissive will in the church's historical theology; passages that stage counsel, counterfactual outcomes, and dual causation (1 Kings 22; 1 Samuel 23; Genesis 50:20); the flood's moral presentation; the non-generic force of Romans 9:17; Adam's veiled accusation; Romans 8:28's "through and around"; Nehemiah's juxtaposed faithfulness and wickedness; the depth of mercy and grace; Ephesians 3:10's multi-faceted wisdom; and the insistence that Christ, not the decree as such, remains central—these and like pressures belong together. I could multiply them, but God's revelation does not rob humanity of libertarian freedom of the will (L2), and a decree that would do so cannot carry the weight of what Scripture actually shows. The numbered inventory and the fuller case for each item are developed in Appendix G; here they only steer the map that follows.[20]

Finally, the metaphors for regeneration and salvation must be taken seriously if the conflict is to be resolved. The language is stiff. From "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."[21] to "even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—"[22] these images emphasize inability to hear, understand, or respond positively to the truth of God. Any understanding of sovereignty and freedom with regard to salvific realities must comport with these descriptions.

---

20 Richard A. Muller, "Calvin & the Problem of Divine Will, Permission, & Contingency" (lecture, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, March 2, 2023), YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek12ebuA0EI.

21 John 3:3 (ESV): "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

22 Ephesians 2:5 (ESV): "even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—"

Soft determination that leaves the dead self-raising is not biblical softness; it is a different anthropology.

From that biblical steering I move toward the philosophical paradigm of the Reformed Orthodox. Here Muller is decisive, and I take his point as he states it. The older Reformed were neither modern compatibilists nor modern incompatibilists—not because they ducked the hard cases, but because they were not using the current philosophical categories those labels assume. They ask too much who force that tradition into today's isms. Muller refuses the isms as a measuring stick: "I find the modern terminology of "isms" to be imprecise and confused. Nor, in what follows, do I advocate a determinist or indeterminist, a compatibilist, incompatibilist, or libertarian perspective. I do not make assumptions about what Reformed theology must claim—rather I attempt to identify what Reformed theologians have claimed.[23]" He states his program without apology: "I hope to shed light on the concept of synchronic contingency as well as question somewhat its revolutionary character, to illuminate the relationship of the early modern Reformed to the older tradition, and to describe the nature of Reformed thought on freedom as something other than what moderns reference under the terms "compatibilism" and "libertarianism."[24]" The historiographical habit he resists is familiar: "Calvinist or Reformed thought has been described, almost uniformly, by both opponents and advocates, as a kind of determinism, often compatibilism or soft determinism—with little or no concern for the possible anachronistic application of the terms.[25]" At the hinge Muller reports the thesis advanced by Van Asselt and his associates in Reformed Thought on Freedom: "As will become clear in what follows, the point made by Van Asselt and his associates in Reformed Thought on Freedom that the older Reformed approach is neither a form of compatibilism nor a form of libertarianism,

---

23 Richard A. Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 12: "I find the modern terminology of "isms" to be imprecise and confused. Nor, in what follows, do I advocate a determinist or indeterminist, a compatibilist, incompatibilist, or libertarian perspective. I do not make assumptions about what Reformed theology must claim—rather I attempt to identify what Reformed theologians have claimed."

24 Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought*, 13: "I hope to shed light on the concept of synchronic contingency as well as question somewhat its revolutionary character, to illuminate the relationship of the early modern Reformed to the older tradition, and to describe the nature of Reformed thought on freedom as something other than what moderns reference under the terms "compatibilism" and "libertarianism.""

25 Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought*, 22: "Calvinist or Reformed thought has been described, almost uniformly, by both opponents and advocates, as a kind of determinism, often compatibilism or soft determinism—with little or no concern for the possible anachronistic application of the terms."

nor, indeed, a kind of deterministic incompatibilism, but a theory of "dependent freedom," itself occupies a significant place in the discussion. The significance of the point is that it refuses the standard modern paradigm for discussing the issue of human freedom and divine determination and accordingly alters the terms of the discussion itself—over against a tendency to assert the modern paradigm and its terminology and to reduce the argument for synchronic contingency to a version of libertarianism.[26]" That is the neither/nor I need before the map of Part II is drawn: "dependent freedom" under older categories, not a forced vote under modern ones. Muller himself flags the further task: "In this context, moreover, there will also be a need to critique the somewhat anachronistic application of the modern language of compatibilism, incompatibilism, and libertarianism to the medieval and early modern materials.[27]" From that corrective I turn to the constructive conclusions of this Part II. The possible appeal of Molinist middle knowledge will be weighed briefly against that same hinge: whether it can fit the older insistence that the decree secures futurition without coacting the will, and without handing the creature the control of existence Part I refused. The compatibilist literature in modernity is extensive; I do not inventory it author by author here. The load-bearing work remains biblical steering into asymmetric dual-frame realism—now with Muller's neither/nor as the warning light against anachronism.

The same Muller, answering Paul Helm in the *Journal of Reformed Theology* in 2019, clarifies the orthodoxy against modern isms. In "Neither Libertarian nor Compatibilist: A Response to Paul Helm," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 13 (2019): 267–286, he states: "the Reformed approaches to human free will or free choice (liberum arbitrium) do not coincide either with modern compatibilism or modern libertarianism."[28] Against novel talk of "synchronic

---

26 Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought*, 28: "As will become clear in what follows, the point made by Van Asselt and his associates in Reformed Thought on Freedom that the older Reformed approach is neither a form of compatibilism nor a form of libertarianism, nor, indeed, a kind of deterministic incompatibilism, but a theory of "dependent freedom," itself occupies a significant place in the discussion. The significance of the point is that it refuses the standard modern paradigm for discussing the issue of human freedom and divine determination and accordingly alters the terms of the discussion itself—over against a tendency to assert the modern paradigm and its terminology and to reduce the argument for synchronic contingency to a version of libertarianism."

27 Muller, *Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought*, 34: "In this context, moreover, there will also be a need to critique the somewhat anachronistic application of the modern language of compatibilism, incompatibilism, and libertarianism to the medieval and early modern materials."

28 Richard A. Muller, *Neither Libertarian nor Compatibilist: A Response to Paul Helm*, Journal of Reformed Theology 13 (2019): 269: "the Reformed approaches to human free will or free choice (liberum arbitrium) do not coincide either with modern compatibilism or modern libertarianism."

contingency," he prefers the older vocabulary: "My preference is to hold, as much as possible, to the language used by the Reformed orthodoxy, namely 'simultaneity of potency,' as a more precise way of referencing the concept."[29] He presses the preference further under the Latin of the sources—*simultas potentiae* over the newer label: "My preference for simultas potentiae over synchronic contingency rests, moreover, on the issue that, in the act of human willing, one potency is actualized, bringing about a contingent effect while the contrary potency remains (in the divided sense) as a potency, incapable of being actualized."[30] And the two-level causality he describes closes the point: "This understanding of two levels of causality, the higher both rendering the lower or secondary order possible and actively bringing about necessities, contingencies, and free acts that are also brought about by finite agents acting according to their own natures, is a consistent understanding throughout both the late medieval and the early modern eras—and it is neither libertarian not compatibilist."[31] I take that 2019 clarification as confirmation of the neither/nor already drawn from his larger study: historical orthodoxy is not a vote under modern compatibilism or libertarianism, and Part II's constructive label must not pretend otherwise.

One firewall on the title. When this paper calls the proposal a species of compatibilism, that is a contemporary analytic handle for "determination and creaturely freedom both affirmed under asymmetric orders", and one that I do not necessarily agree to or intend, simply using the title as a form of distinction from the Arminian, Pelagian, and Molinist positions disagreed with, thus using the language of the proverbial "nearest cousin" to the position I am advocating. It is not a claim that the Reformed orthodox were modern compatibilists, nor a denial of Muller's neither/nor as history. Historical description and constructive appropriation are different jobs.

---

29 Muller, *Neither Libertarian nor Compatibilist: A Response to Paul Helm*, 273: "My preference is to hold, as much as possible, to the language used by the Reformed orthodoxy, namely 'simultaneity of potency,' as a more precise way of referencing the concept."

30 Muller, *Neither Libertarian nor Compatibilist: A Response to Paul Helm*, 285–286: "My preference for simultas potentiae over synchronic contingency rests, moreover, on the issue that, in the act of human willing, one potency is actualized, bringing about a contingent effect while the contrary potency remains (in the divided sense) as a potency, incapable of being actualized."

31 Muller, *Neither Libertarian nor Compatibilist: A Response to Paul Helm*, 286: "This understanding of two levels of causality, the higher both rendering the lower or secondary order possible and actively bringing about necessities, contingencies, and free acts that are also brought about by finite agents acting according to their own natures, is a consistent understanding throughout both the late medieval and the early modern eras—and it is neither libertarian not compatibilist."

Muller's warning stands; the label remains a present-day tag, not a sixteenth-century self-description.

Chandieu's sixteenth-century answer to the Bordeaux monks already presses the same in a similar if not identical fashion. The will, as a natural faculty of willing, is free; yet man in his nature delights in evil and seeks it so greatly—*non coactè* but *libentissimè*—for coaction and will are opposed, and to be compelled is to will-not—while grace, on the Augustinian line he quotes, does not take away free choice. That reference does not give this Dual Frame proposal its indexed map; it does confirm that Reformed scholastic polemics could hold freedom-without-coaction without handing the creature modern libertarian ultimacy by distinguishing libertarian freedom from libertarian ultimacy.[32]

II.1 Thesis at the Hard Edge

I am standing at the hard edge where most treatments quietly pick a side and redefine the other. That is not a flourish. It is where the debate actually lives. One side presses divine determination until creaturely freedom becomes a polite name for ignorance of the decree. The other presses libertarian freedom until the decree becomes a forecast that does not determine, or a permission that does not ordain. Both moves attempt to purchase peace by changing the subject. I refuse that bargain.

Here is the thesis in one sentence. One and the same creaturely act may be infallibly determined relative to the divine antecedent order while remaining ontologically non-necessitated relative to the creature's proper antecedent order, provided those orders are genuinely asymmetric, the creaturely contingency is metaphysical rather than epistemic, and no illicit transfer of modal status between frames is assumed. In plain English: *The creature's own prior nature, history, motives, and powers did not force that choice; God did not empty the will*. (In this statement, I am reflecting reality as it is revealed Biblically. I am not conflating possibility with real power by suggesting that this state of affairs is epistemically possible to an observer simply due to ignorance of the underlying causes, while being metaphysically impossible because the necessary causal structure for it does not exist. I am also not conflating

32 Antoine de Chandieu [Antonio Sadeele], *Opera theologica* ([Geneva]: Jean Le Preux, 1592), 489–90 (*Responsio ad Fidei [quam vocant] Professionem, a Monachis Burdegalensibus editam*, Art. XLV): "Quanquam enim, secundum naturalem volendi facultatem, voluntas sit libera"; "opponuntur Coactio & Voluntas. Nam Cogi est Nolle".

existence with evidence by saying that just because an event or relationship is metaphysically certain means it is epistemically obvious or knowable to finite human intellects. I view the created order God has actualized via decree metaphysically necessary because this is the creation God actualized according to his purpose, a metaphysical necessity that involves libertarian freedom of the will (L2) that the purpose of God is accomplished through, such that if God had had a different purpose, the reality could have been otherwise.)

What I.6 already named as the older hinge—necessity of the link without an emptied consequent—Part II now states as indexed orders: a token-complete creaturely matrix, metaphysical rather than epistemic contingency under that matrix, a ban on transferring modal status or blame-voiding unavoidability across asymmetric causal roles, and a four-cause overlay that keeps formal and efficient causes from being replaced by the decree.

"Frame" in this paper is a teaching word for an order of grounds—not a second observer, and not a fifth kind of thing beside God, creature, decree, and second causes. Strip the metaphor and the thesis remains: determination relative to divine antecedents, non-necessitation relative to creaturely antecedents, and no illicit transfer of modal status between those orders. If that sentence stands without the word "frame," the architecture is doing the work; the label is only a handle.

Call the public label *asymmetric dual-frame compatibilism*. Call the technical spine *asymmetric antecedence*. The frames are not two equally ranked observers staring at one sequence with unequal information. They are two real orders of grounds and causal roles—God's antecedent matrix and the creature's antecedent matrix—that are not identical and cannot be made identical without confusing Creator and creature. Determination under one order and contingency under the other is not a contradiction unless someone smuggles in a bridging rule that transfers modal status unchanged from one matrix into the other. That bridging rule is exactly what I deny.

Why call it a hard edge? Because the easy papers pick. The easy deterministic paper redefines freedom as "doing what you want," then quietly drops alternate possibility and sourcehood until the libertarian hears only a verbal consolation. The easy libertarian paper redefines providence as "God knows but does not determine," or "God determines circumstances but not wills," until the Reformed ear hears a God who does not ordain whatsoever comes to pass. I am not interested in easy peace. I want both determination and contingency to remain

load-bearing words—indexed to asymmetric orders, not flattened into one silent list of antecedents.

This does not hand the creature the freedom Part I refused. Creatures still do not control existence. Molinist actualization of this world still does not consult them. Soft determination for creation and sustenance remains necessary. What Part II claims is narrower and harder: that the same act can be necessary with respect to the decree's securing of futurition and free with respect to the creature's own grounds—without turning freedom into "I did not know I was going to do it."

If you came here hoping for a slogan that lets you keep full-strength unindexed libertarianism and full-strength unindexed determinism about one act under one total antecedent set, you will not find it. That conjunction is blocked. What you will find is a proposal continuous with the older hinge: necessary and free in different respects, now stated as asymmetric antecedent matrices with a ban on illicit transfer.

II.2 What Flat Modal Talk Gets Wrong

Much of the historical stalemate is conducted in a notation too coarse to display the difference that matters. Someone writes that the act is necessary. Someone else writes that the act is contingent. Each treats "necessary" and "contingent" as if those words floated free of any specified set of antecedents. Then each declares victory.

That is what I mean by flat modal talk. It is not that careful logic is useless. It is that unindexed operators—bare necessity and bare possibility applied to one act under one silent list of antecedents—force a false choice. If the silent list includes the decree as a necessitating condition among the creature's own causal springs, libertarian leeway looks impossible. If the silent list excludes the decree entirely and treats the creature as if no First Cause had ordained the world, determination looks like a myth. The dispute is often not a contradiction. It is two parties talking past each other while using the same words.

Watch how the fallacy runs in ordinary conversation. A determinist says, "Given the decree, Adam could not do otherwise." A libertarian says, "Adam could have done otherwise." Neither states what is being held fixed. The first is usually holding the decree fixed and asserting necessity of the consequence. The second is usually holding Adam's nature and situation in view

and asserting a power of the will in its own order. Those can both be true. Flat talk makes them sound like P and not-P.

The problem is not that we need exotic logics to save the day. The problem is that flat operators hide the antecedent base. Once you make the base explicit—necessary *relative to* this set of grounds, possible *relative to* that set—the apparent contradiction often dissolves into two different claims about two different relations. That dissolution is not a trick. It is ordinary honesty about what is being held fixed when someone says "could have done otherwise."

I should also say what I am *not* claiming about logic. I am not claiming that standard modal logic is obsolete, or that only a new logical system can speak here. Relativizing necessity to a body of antecedents is available inside careful classical tools. "Necessary relative to these grounds" can be read as necessity of the link: if those grounds hold, the event follows. That is already close to *necessitas consequentiae*. The indictment falls on flat, single-context *use* of modal talk in the debate—not on the existence of logic as such.

Geometry helps as pedagogy, not as proof. A square drawn on a plane and a cube in space can both be accurate descriptions of what a three-dimensional object presents under different cuts. On a single plane, a three-dimensional cube presents as a square. The disanalogy matters too: God's order contains and ranks the creature's order; the frames are not peer dimensions of one egalitarian object. Still, the image teaches the right lesson for beginners: two accurate descriptions of one thing need not be rivals if they answer different questions under different relations. Flat talk pretends there is only one question.

II.3 Principle of Antecedent Asymmetry

The load-bearing plank is this: God's antecedent matrix and the creature's antecedent matrix are not the same set.

God's order includes the eternal decree, the divine comprehension of the whole, and the Primary Cause's relation to what comes to pass. It is not one more temporal push among others. The creature's order includes nature, prior temporal history, present deliberation, motives, and the creaturely powers by which a will acts. It does not include the decree as a datum inside the temporal stream, as if Adam consulted a written transcript of Loc. IV before he stretched out his hand.

That asymmetry is not mainly a difference in how much each party knows. If the only difference were informational—God sees the end; the creature does not—then creaturely "freedom" would collapse into ignorance of a fixed script. Part II refuses that collapse. The asymmetry is a difference in grounds and causal roles. Certainty of the event's futurition arises extrinsically from the immutability of the decree; it does not arise from the nature of the second causes as if those causes had been emptied of contingency and liberty. Different grounds yield different legitimate modal assessments. That is antecedent asymmetry.[33]

Prefer this language over "two observers." Observer talk invites the charge that I have described a difference in *knowing*. Grounds talk is a claim about *being*: what necessitates what, and under which order. God as First Cause and the creature as second cause are not two cameras. They are ordered causal roles in one providence that establishes second-cause liberty rather than erasing it.[34] [35]

Notice the ranking. Dual-frame does not mean equal-frame. God's order is metaphysically prior. The creature's order is a real creaturely mode of the same act, not a second universe in which the decree is false. If both frames were peers with no ranking, blameworthiness would either float with the observer—which Reformed judgment cannot accept—or collapse into contradiction at a meta-frame. Asymmetry blocks that. God's frame measures what is ordained; the creaturely frame measures what second causes are and do in their own

---

33 Turrettinus, Institutio (Lowe, 1847), 287–288 (Loc. IV Q.IV §VI): "Quod statuit determinationem ad unum per necessitatem physicam, vel coactionis, tollit libertatem et contingentiam; sed non quod eam statuit tantum per necessitatem hypotheticam; quia certitudo non oritur ex causarum secundarum natura, quae liberae sunt et contingentes, sed extrinsece ex decreti immutabilitate, quod ita determinat futuritionem eventus, ut rerum naturam non mutet, sed res necessarias necessario, liberas libere agere sinat. Unde patet necessitatem et immutabilitatem decreti tollere quidem contingentiam respectu causae primae, quia cum omnia necessario eveniant, nihil potest contingenter fieri; sed non tollere eam respectu causarum secundarum, quia idem decretum quod praestituit futuritionem rerum, statuit etiam modum futuritionis, ut quae necessarias causas haberent necessario fierent, quae vero contingentes, contingenter: Atque ita effectus bene dicitur, et necessarius et contingens simul, sed [κατ᾽ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο]; Illud a parte Dei et relate ad decretum; Istud a parte rei et relate ad causas secundas et proximas, quae aliter se habere potuerunt."

34 *Westminster Confession of Faith* 5.2, in *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms… with Proof Texts* (PCA/OPC reprint; © 2005, 2007 OPC), 21: "Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently."

35 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI Q.I §IX): "Providentia Dei, nec contingentiam rerum tollit, quia remanet semper indifferens respectu causae secundae, quod necessarium fit per Providentiam, respectu causae primae. Nec libertatem voluntatis evertit, quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." And: "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit;"

nature. Desert tracks voluntariness, rationality, and absence of coaction in the creature—not a standpoint-dependent shrug.

Anti-transfer follows from that causal-role asymmetry, not from a slogan. The divine matrix G and the creaturely matrix C are different relata. G answers what the First Cause has ordained concerning futurition—that this world and this act obtain. C answers which way the creaturely act goes as a second cause—nature, history, deliberation, motives, and powers. Because the orders differ in kind, modal status does not travel unchanged between them. I reject both illicit bridges: from necessity under G one may not infer necessity under C; from possibility-otherwise under C one may not infer possibility-otherwise under G. In plain English: Not forced by the creature's own prior causes. In plain symbols: $\Box_G$ e does not entail $\Box_C$ e; $\Diamond_C \neg$e does not entail $\Diamond_G \neg$e.

One more bridge to refuse, because modern objections often run on unavoidability rather than bare logic. From "e is fixed relative to G" one may not infer "e is unavoidable for the agent in the sense that voids blame under C." Unavoidability talk must carry its index. Fixed futurition under the decree is not the same claim as coaction, emptied second causes, or C itself necessitating e. Transfer of unavoidability across asymmetric orders is as illicit as transfer of bare necessity. Indexing without that ban would be a verbal shelter, not an answer to the Direct Argument family of worries (cf. Peter van Inwagen, An Essay on Free Will (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983)). The positive reply remains the causal-role asymmetry already stated: G secures futurition; C is where voluntariness, potency, and blameworthiness are assessed as second-cause realities—not a second total world that can veto G.

The Direct Argument would transfer non-responsibility from the decree to the creaturely act only if the decree functioned as one more past link in the same temporal chain that already settles what the agent does. That is not this paper's claim. God is not a temporal item among creaturely antecedents; the decree is atemporal counsel that establishes a temporal theater in which second-cause libertarian contingency (L2) is real. Creating this world, with that liberty built in, does not by itself necessitate what creatures do within it any more than building a field necessitates which way a runner cuts. Relative to G, futurition is secure (necessity of the consequence). Relative to C, the will is not coacted and the creature's proper antecedents do not necessitate the choice. Desert tracks that creaturely order: agents bear the weight of the freedom the decree itself constituted. So non-responsibility for the decree does not transfer onto

uncoacted formal and efficient performance under C. The argument's transfer step assumes a single-series necessitation this dual-frame refuses—and replaces with two asymmetric orders.

This paper does not derive a failure of responsibility-transfer from the indices alone. It denies that non-responsibility for the decree transfers onto the creaturely act, because blame is assessed by whether the act is the agent's uncoacted formal-and-efficient performance, not by whether futurition was secured from another order. Readers who treat that as a restatement of compatibilism are not being evaded; they are being told where the refusal sits.

The cheap-index objection says: you excluded the decree from C only to save the thesis —gerrymandering the partition. I answer: the decree is excluded from C because it belongs to a different causal order. Certainty of the event arises extrinsically (extrinsece) from the immutability of the decree; it does not arise as one more spring inside the second cause's own nature.[36]

First Cause and second cause are ordered roles in one providence, not two peer lists I trimmed for convenience. Ranking remains one-way: God's order is metaphysically prior; the creaturely order is a real mode of the same act, not a veto over what God has ordained. That is causal asymmetry argued, not index shopping.

Creation and sustenance already displayed this asymmetry in Part I. The creature did not invent the arena. The Primary Cause upholds the powers by which the creature chooses. That dependence is not a minor preface. It is the standing reminder that creaturely antecedents never were the whole story. Antecedent asymmetry is not a modern gimmick laid on top of providence. It is providence spoken in the vocabulary of matrices and grounds. Scripture itself presses the same ranking. Isaiah's potter-clay warning and the Cyrus oracle do not erase creaturely decision;

36 Turrettinus, Institutio (Lowe, 1847), 287–288 (Loc. IV Q.IV §VI): "Quod statuit determinationem ad unum per necessitatem physicam, vel coactionis, tollit libertatem et contingentiam; sed non quod eam statuit tantum per necessitatem hypotheticam; quia certitudo non oritur ex causarum secundarum natura, quae liberae sunt et contingentes, sed extrinsece ex decreti immutabilitate, quod ita determinat futuritionem eventus, ut rerum naturam non mutet, sed res necessarias necessario, liberas libere agere sinat. Unde patet necessitatem et immutabilitatem decreti tollere quidem contingentiam respectu causae primae, quia cum omnia necessario eveniant, nihil potest contingenter fieri; sed non tollere eam respectu causarum secundarum, quia idem decretum quod praestituit futuritionem rerum, statuit etiam modum futuritionis, ut quae necessarias causas haberent necessario fierent, quae vero contingentes, contingenter: Atque ita effectus bene dicitur, et necessarius et contingens simul, sed [κατ' ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο]; Illud a parte Dei et relate ad decretum; Istud a parte rei et relate ad causas secundas et proximas, quae aliter se habere potuerunt."

they refuse the clay's right to put the potter in the dock. Antecedent asymmetry is not a modern invention laid on providence. It is providence spoken where God is like no other.[37][38]

Frames are not relabelings of one deterministic sequence. The asymmetry test is simple and load-bearing. The frames differ if and only if (a) G and C answer different causal questions —First Cause versus second causes; (b) modal operators do not transfer ($\Box_G$ e does not entail $\Box_C$ e); and (c) blame and desert are assessed under C's order, not waved by G. If indexing were mere redescription, $\Box_G$ would already settle $\Box_C$; this paper denies that bridge. Redescription cannot forbid a valid inference; only a real difference in grounds can.

Honesty about failure conditions belongs with any realist claim. This proposal fails if creaturely antecedents alone necessitate e, or if "contingency" reduces to ignorance of the decree, or if desert is assigned by G alone. A mere relabeling has no such falsifiers. Dual-frame realism does—and must keep earning the right column against those failures.

II.4 Dual-Frame Realism Without Illusion

Both sides must be genuinely real under their own orders. I will not sell determination as the only metaphysical fact with freedom as a useful fiction for creatures who cannot see the decree. I will not sell creaturely contingency as the only metaphysical fact with the decree as a later theological overlay. Dual-frame realism means both descriptions track something real.

On the divine side, atemporal reality, the decree infallibly secures futurition. Given that God has ordained that a free creature chooses thus, the creature does choose thus. The connection does not fail. That is necessity of the consequence—*necessitas consequentiae*—not absolute necessity of the emptied consequent.[39] [40] The decree so determines the futurition of the

---

37 Isaiah 45:9 (ESV): "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"

38 Isaiah 46:9 (ESV): "remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,"

39 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 191 (Loc. III Q.XII §XXIII): "Si datur praescientia futurorum contingentium, omnia fient necessario necessitate consequentiae, secundum quid, infallibilitatis; non consequentis et absoluta. Manet ergo discrimen semper inter necessaria et contingentia,"

40 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 191 (Loc. III Q.XII §XXIII): "Si datur praescientia futurorum contingentium, omnia fient necessario necessitate consequentiae, secundum quid, infallibilitatis; non consequentis et absoluta. Manet ergo discrimen semper inter necessaria et contingentia,"

event that it does not change the nature of things, but lets necessary things act necessarily and free things act freely.[41]

On the creaturely side, contingency is metaphysical in this sense: relative to the creature's proper antecedent matrix—the token-complete creaturely grounds of the act—the act is not necessitated by those creaturely grounds alone. I stipulate C here so the claim is not slippery. C is the token-complete creaturely matrix for the act in question: the creature's nature, prior temporal history, present deliberation, motives, and the creaturely powers by which a will acts. Those slots are the formal and efficient causes of the decision in the indexing I will name in II.6. $\Diamond_C \neg e$ means ontic potency relative to that matrix C: the proximate second causes were able to be otherwise. It does not mean ignorance of the decree. The agent is not a stone. Alternate possibility here means power relative to creaturely grounds, not a gap in the creature's information about what God has ordained. If "I could have done otherwise" only means "I did not know I would not," then libertarian language has already surrendered and should say so. I am not saying that.

One fixed inventory, so the index cannot drift. C is the token-complete creaturely matrix for the act: nature, prior history, present deliberation, motives, and creaturely powers as they stand prior to the resolution of e. C does not include the decree and does not include token e. When the efficient cause is named as intellect, deliberation, and choosing, that names the power and exercise-structure of willing, not e itself. If deliberation-plus-motives already entailed e, $\Diamond_C \neg e$ would fail and the second cause would have been emptied. The claim is that they do not; the will's exercise remains the mode of a free second cause.

Say it as Turretin says it, then cash it in English. Certainty of the event does not arise from the nature of the second causes, which are free and contingent; it arises from outside them —extrinsece—from the immutability of the decree, which so determines the futurition of the

41 Turrettinus, Institutio (Lowe, 1847), 287–288 (Loc. IV Q.IV §VI): "Quod statuit determinationem ad unum per necessitatem physicam, vel coactionis, tollit libertatem et contingentiam; sed non quod eam statuit tantum per necessitatem hypotheticam; quia certitudo non oritur ex causarum secundarum natura, quae liberae sunt et contingentes, sed extrinsece ex decreti immutabilitate, quod ita determinat futuritionem eventus, ut rerum naturam non mutet, sed res necessarias necessario, liberas libere agere sinat. Unde patet necessitatem et immutabilitatem decreti tollere quidem contingentiam respectu causae primae, quia cum omnia necessario eveniant, nihil potest contingenter fieri; sed non tollere eam respectu causarum secundarum, quia idem decretum quod praestituit futuritionem rerum, statuit etiam modum futuritionis, ut quae necessarias causas haberent necessario fierent, quae vero contingentes, contingenter: Atque ita effectus bene dicitur, et necessarius et contingens simul, sed [κατ᾽ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο]; Illud a parte Dei et relate ad decretum; Istud a parte rei et relate ad causas secundas et proximas, quae aliter se habere potuerunt."

event that it does not change the nature of things, but lets necessary things act necessarily and free things act freely. The same effect is well said to be necessary and contingent at once, but in different respects (κατ᾽ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο): necessary on God's side and in relation to the decree; contingent on the side of the thing and in relation to the second and proximate causes, which were able to be otherwise—quae aliter se habere potuerunt.[42]

That last clause is a power claim, not an ignorance claim. The proximate causes could have been otherwise in their own order. Denial of epistemic-only freedom is not enough by itself; the positive case is that contingency tracks the second causes' real potency, while certainty tracks the decree from outside those causes. Three contrasts must stay distinct: (1) epistemic-only openness—mere not-knowing; (2) grain-relative non-entailment—C does not by itself entail e; (3) ontic potency—the proximate causes were able to be otherwise. This paper claims (2) and (3) under C, and refuses to reduce them to (1).

Name the fork so no one can smuggle a fourth reading back in. This paper's metaphysical contingency under C is non-necessitation by creaturely antecedents plus real potency of second causes in their own order, with certainty of futurition arising extrinsically from the decree. It is not mere ignorance of the decree. It is not the claim that, with this decree held fixed in the composite sense, the creature retains power to bring about ¬e. That last claim is the PAP/Molinism trap Part II refuses. Dual-frame realism is asymmetric orders of grounds—not peer alternate actualization under one total world-description.

Illusion is the enemy of this proposal. Epistemic-only dualism—determination downstairs, appearance of freedom upstairs—is exactly what Part II refuses. The cost of refusal is precision. Creaturely contingency is real as non-necessitation by the creature's own antecedents. It is not real as the power to actualize the contrary while the decree stands fixed in the composite sense. That last demand is the Molinism trap returning through the back door.

---

42 Turrettinus, Institutio (Lowe, 1847), 287–288 (Loc. IV Q.IV §VI): "Quod statuit determinationem ad unum per necessitatem physicam, vel coactionis, tollit libertatem et contingentiam; sed non quod eam statuit tantum per necessitatem hypotheticam; quia certitudo non oritur ex causarum secundarum natura, quae liberae sunt et contingentes, sed extrinsece ex decreti immutabilitate, quod ita determinat futuritionem eventus, ut rerum naturam non mutet, sed res necessarias necessario, liberas libere agere sinat. Unde patet necessitatem et immutabilitatem decreti tollere quidem contingentiam respectu causae primae, quia cum omnia necessario eveniant, nihil potest contingenter fieri; sed non tollere eam respectu causarum secundarum, quia idem decretum quod praestituit futuritionem rerum, statuit etiam modum futuritionis, ut quae necessarias causas haberent necessario fierent, quae vero contingentes, contingenter: Atque ita effectus bene dicitur, et necessarius et contingens simul, sed [κατ᾽ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο]; Illud a parte Dei et relate ad decretum; Istud a parte rei et relate ad causas secundas et proximas, quae aliter se habere potuerunt."

Section II.9 plants the flag against it. Isaiah's Cyrus material belongs here as well: the creature acts from what seems best to him, and God declares the use without turning that freedom into a stage illusion. Dual-frame realism is the refusal of that "illusion of freedom" charge—not a surrender to it.[43]

A reader may ask: if God's order is prior and complete, is the creaturely side not just incomplete description? Only if you treat the creaturely order as a failed attempt to state the whole. That is not what I am doing. The creaturely order is the right order for asking what second causes are like—whether the will is coacted, whether contingency remains with respect to proximate grounds, whether the agent acts spontaneously from judgment and desire. Those are real questions with real answers. They are not a substitute for the decree question. Complementary here means ordered complementarity of grounds, not two equal novels about one murder.

One further fence: modal status is relativized to an antecedent order; truth is not. Indexing necessity and contingency does not make gospel truths frame-relative, nor suspend bivalence or the law of non-contradiction. What God has ordained comes to pass; second-cause liberty and contingency are established rather than erased—without turning truth itself into a standpoint.

II.5 Counterfactual Power and Localized Causal Dependency

Some effort toward a claim of libertarianism in the LFW sense turns out to be a work of Perspectival Compatibilism, or Dual-Horizon Determinism, or God's subjection to the creature—three possibilities that do not work. The first two will not work because you cannot square the attempt with analytical philosophy, as attempts by Molina and others show. If God is the creator of this world without consulting the humans created, and if God is the sustainer of this world without consulting the creature, the reality and possibility of unfairness or injustice for desert responsibility being applied remains. The only way to address the problem completely is as we are suggesting here: to prove that creatures possess counterfactual power relative to secondary causes, specifically and explicitly as the major Reformed confessions have stated, even if and

43 Isaiah 45:9 (ESV): "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?"

when the ultimate act is decreed—as in the case of God's decree to create and sustain created reality as we experience it, and could not experience it without his decree.[4445]

What is clear is that this issue cannot, as I have labored to show, be about "ultimate originative ability." It must focus on only what is possible in a creator/creature matrix: localized causal dependency. Creaturely choices are the necessary intermediate links in the causal chain such that if the creature had willed otherwise, the secondary temporal effects would have been strictly different, even though the entire chain—cause, choice, and effect—is comprehensively grounded in the primary divine decree. One must understand the distinction between causal power and causal origin by separating counterfactual efficacy from ultimate independence. Counterfactual power does not require that an agent be the un-decreed first cause of their act. It only requires that the agent's act is the salient counterfactual pivot for the secondary event.

In the realistic case, state the modal condition plainly:

An agent A has counterfactual power over secondary event E at t1 if and only if: if A had not willed the act, E would not have occurred. The truth of this counterfactual conditional remains intact even if or when God decreed both the willing of A and E totum simul in eternity.

Keep two claims apart. Claim One: E counterfactually depends on A's willing—if A had not willed the act, E would not have occurred. That is localized causal dependency of the secondary effect on the creaturely will. Claim Two: A had power not to will the act under the same indexed sense at issue. Claim One can be true while Claim Two is still disputed. This section argues Claim One: the decree does not bypass or empty the creaturely link. It does not, by the same conditional, smuggle in unindexed PAP or composite power to bring about ¬e under a fixed decree. Where Claim Two appears later, it appears only as ontic potency relative

---

44 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI Q.I §IX): "Providentia Dei, nec contingentiam rerum tollit, quia remanet semper indifferens respectu causae secundae, quod necessarium fit per Providentiam, respectu causae primae. Nec libertatem voluntatis evertit, quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." And: "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit;"

45 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI Q.I §IX): "Providentia Dei, nec contingentiam rerum tollit, quia remanet semper indifferens respectu causae secundae, quod necessarium fit per Providentiam, respectu causae primae. Nec libertatem voluntatis evertit, quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." And: "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit;"

to C (II.4; II.7)—not as a second proof smuggled through the counterfactual about E.

In essence, the decree does not bypass the creature's will; it decrees the outcome through the creature's counterfactual power. God does not merely decree what happens. He decrees how it happens by specifically choosing to give secondary causes real, operational efficacy. This primary-and-secondary causation structure is the only structure that comports with the reality we know—the reality within which we exist. God sustains the total metaphysical reality of the agent, the act, and the lawlike order of the universe. The creature or agent is the secondary cause, operating as a genuine, rational cause relative to other created entities.[46]

If an author of a story with a character decrees that the character write a letter, then within the narrative frame—the world of secondary causes—the letter exists because the character chose to write it and actually wrote it. If the character had refused, the letter would not exist. The author's decree does not render the character's pen-stroke powerless; it grounds the reality of the character's power.

It is not necessary to utilize "middle knowledge" if you place the counterfactuals within the decree itself instead of prior to the decree. The value of this begins to be obvious when you consider how, as already argued, placing the decree subsequent to consideration via middle knowledge leaves the creator subject to the criticism of not consulting the creature who has found himself in the situation of desert responsibility. There is no reason to apologize for the fact that God decrees a world populated by rational agents whose secondary choices carry real counterfactual weight—especially when the explanation that God chose the world where the most would be saved offers no comfort to the creature not in that group, even though he is not in that group by his own choice. Had he been consulted on the situation prior to the situation, and with the same knowledge of outcome, he would have vetoed his own participation.

Locally there is real second-cause efficacy: the secondary event depends on the willing. Composite power to bring about ¬e while G is held fixed is not granted here; see II.9. Even where the contrary willing is not co-actualizable with this decree, the decree does not bypass the creaturely link. I am arguing by virtue of the asymmetric counterfactual that if the agent's

---

46 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI Q.I §IX): "Providentia Dei, nec contingentiam rerum tollit, quia remanet semper indifferens respectu causae secundae, quod necessarium fit per Providentiam, respectu causae primae. Nec libertatem voluntatis evertit, quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." And: "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit;"

immediate desires or choice had been different at t1, the temporal outcome would have changed accordingly. The fact that God eternally decreed the agent's actual desire does not destroy the logical link between the hypothetical desire and the hypothetical outcome.

If the LFW advocate objects that if the act is decreed, the counterfactual is impossible, I remind him that the situation itself exists in the same dilemma. There is an allowable distinction between impossible hypotheses and counterfactual value, regularly used in counterfactual logic, where counterfactuals with impossible antecedents are routinely evaluated. Even if the counterfactual is metaphysically impossible given the decree, it remains logically intelligible to defend that E depends directly on A's choice.

When those advocating LFW claim this turns the creature into a puppet, I remind them of the same reality for the stage itself—because the puppet has no influence over the stage upon which it plays. More importantly, the crucial distinction is that creatures possess internal intellect and volition, where a puppet lacks rational deliberation and internal desires. When God executes his decree by means of human rational deliberation, he makes the creature's choice an authentic, non-coerced secondary cause. As the biblical corpus presents, and the Reformed confessions recognize and express, God offers no apology for the state of affairs or the stage upon which and through which the drama of reality is played out. In this reality, creatures possess real and genuine counterfactual power over secondary causes because God has chosen to give creatures the only freedom that a finite creature can of necessity have—by operating via intermediate concurrence rather than divine bypass. If, as the reality is, the agent's ultimate choice is eternally grounded in the sovereign divine decree, the secondary event remains counterfactually dependent upon the creature's authentic volition—such that if the agent had willed otherwise within the temporal order, the secondary effect would not have occurred.

In desiring and demanding the "principle of alternate possibilities" (PAP) (cf. Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," Journal of Philosophy 66, no. 23 (1969): 829–39) under certain definitions , the LFW advocates are demanding an un-decreed open branch point which destroys the exhaustive nature of the divine decree necessary for sustaining created reality in accordance with his purpose in Christ—with Christ as the redemptive hero worshipped for eternity, thereby declaring the manifold wisdom of the God who created and decreed. Such explanations concerning God's purposes as found in Ephesians 3 and Hebrews 1 can only be fulfilled under the guarantee of the exhaustive divine decree. Those that

deny this as God's right line up with those who deny this reality in demanding and theoretically creating a possible eternal reality where Christ is not the complete Savior of all who exist in the eternal state. Scripture's own touchstones are plain enough: "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,"[47]

and again: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."[48]

Open theism and LFW potentially end with the same result because they will not allow God to be God, but choose to create a god of their own making—one who must bow to their distorted sense of reality by making the creature supreme and the focal point of God's purpose rather than the supreme Chief and Best of Beings who has created and spoken by decree. The LFW claims against some versions of Calvinism fail because of the ultimate stage objection pointed out above. If the claim is to hold and be tied to a document that claims revelatory authority, it may be better to consult the Bhagavad Gita than the Bible.

II.6 Four Causes of Creaturely Decisions

I need a causal map that keeps Creator and creature in their places without emptying either side. What follows only resembles Aristotle in that it counts four real causes with real explanatory work. It is my indexing for the creature's decisions—not Aristotle's glossary, and not a claim that Aristotle meant these slots this way. No borrowed Aristotle pages are being waved here. The four labels are mine for this paper's work.

For a creature's decision I index four causes as follows. The ultimate cause is God, operating by decree. The formal cause is the creature's nature. The efficient cause is the creature's intellect, deliberation, and choosing. The final cause is God's purpose—the purpose to which and for which God has created all things and set them in motion.

---

47 Ephesians 3:10–11 (ESV): "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,"

48 Hebrews 1:1–2 (ESV): "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."

Again the inventory: C is the token-complete creaturely matrix—nature, prior history, present deliberation, motives, and powers prior to the resolution of e—not the decree, and not token e. Naming intellect, deliberation, and choosing as efficient cause names the power and exercise-structure of willing; if those creaturely slots already entailed e, the second cause would have been emptied, and $\Diamond_C \neg e$ would fail.

Overlay that map onto the dual-frame and onto counterfactual power. Ultimate and final track the divine side: decree and purpose secure futurition and the end for which the world is ordered—the G-side securing already argued. Formal and efficient track the creaturely matrix C: nature, together with intellect, deliberation, and choosing—the localized causal dependency and counterfactual power of II.5. The decree does not empty the formal and efficient slots. God ordains that free things act freely according to their natures; he does not replace the nature or the choosing with a blank shove.

This is why Part I's attack on ultimacy-as-aseity does not cancel the ultimate-cause slot here. When libertarian desert demanded that the creature be ultimate source of himself, that was a demand for the Creator's seat. When I say God is ultimate cause by decree, I am naming the First Cause's role—not handing the creature aseity under a friendlier label. Formal and efficient remain creaturely. Final remains God's purpose. The asymmetric frames are those roles spoken as matrices: G carries ultimate and final securing; C carries formal and efficient dependency.

Counterfactual power sits where it must: in the efficient and formal order. If the creature had not willed as he did, the secondary event would not have occurred—even though the whole chain is grounded in the decree. Ultimate and final causes explain why the chain is secured and unto what end; they do not cancel the pen-stroke's real efficacy in the narrative of second causes. They ask too much who demand that formal and efficient be aseity, or that ultimate and final be dropped so the creature can sit where only God sits.

II.7 Indexed Necessity and Possibility in Plain English

You do not need to love symbols to follow the point. When I say an act is necessary relative to the divine antecedents, I mean: given God's decree and the divine order—ultimate and final in the four-cause map—the event's futurition is infallibly secured. When I say an act is possible-otherwise relative to the creaturely antecedents, I mean: given the token-complete creaturely matrix C (nature, history, deliberation, motives, powers—formal and efficient), those

creaturely grounds do not by themselves necessitate only one outcome. In plain English: Not forced by the creature's own prior causes. $\Diamond_C$ is ontic potency relative to C, not a report of what the agent failed to know about the decree.

Consider:

• Necessary-under-the-divine-order: the decree entails the act's futurition (necessity of the link).

• Possible-otherwise-under-the-creaturely-order: nothing in the token-complete creaturely matrix C alone rules out the alternate as ontic potency of the nature and its powers (quae aliter se habere potuerunt).

Those two claims are not of the form "P and not-P." They become a contradiction only if someone assumes the two orders are the same, or assumes that whatever is necessary under one order must also be necessary under the other. That assumption is the illicit transfer I refuse.

Think of it as two different questions, not two votes on one ballot. Question D: Relative to God's decree, is the futurition of this act secured? Answer: yes. Question C: Relative to the creature's own nature and history alone, do those creaturely antecedents necessitate the act? Answer: no—they leave the mode of a free second cause. Flat talk merges D and C into one question and then wonders why the answers fight.

The confession already speaks this grammar without symbols. In relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God as First Cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; by the same providence they fall out according to the nature of second causes—necessarily, freely, or contingently.[49] That is ordered dual description. It is not egalitarian relativism in which blameworthiness floats with the observer.

Scholars who want the operators written with indices, and a short proof that no derivation yields flat necessity-and-possibility-otherwise under one and the same index, should turn to Appendix A. Here, I only want to say this: indexing is honesty about antecedents, not a magic wand that creates aseity.

---

49 *Westminster Confession of Faith* 5.2, in *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms… with Proof Texts* (PCA/OPC reprint; © 2005, 2007 OPC), 21: "Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently."

II.8 Foreknowledge, Decree, and Concurrence

Two problems live in this neighborhood, and they must not be collapsed.

The first is the foreknowledge problem. If God knows what I will do, is my doing already fixed by that knowledge alone? Classical answers distinguish knowing from causing. God's knowledge is not one more temporal event earlier than mine. Eternity helps here: God is not waiting in the timeline for my turn. Foreknowledge brings the infallibility of futurition and necessity of the consequence; it does not bring coaction or violence, nor strip the will of intrinsic liberty.[50] But eternity does not, by itself, answer the second problem.

The second is the decree problem. The decree is not mere cognition. It is God's free determination to actualize this world. Moving the decree outside time does not make it less a determination. An eternal choice is still God's choice, and it still settles which world obtains. Anyone who uses atemporality to dissolve foreknowledge and then silently takes credit for dissolving determination has changed the subject.

I will not invent a second God-frame by saying "God enters time" as if the Primary Cause became one more intramundane agent among others. The right language is already at hand: concurrence and providence. The concurrence of the first cause does not exclude the concurrence of second causes—it draws them after itself. Providence does not take away contingency with respect to the second cause, nor overturn the liberty of the will: the hypothetical necessity of the decree inflicts no coaction, but permits the will to exercise its motions most freely, though inevitably.[51]

So: split eternity and foreknowledge from determination by decree; keep determination; refuse the cartoon in which God must "enter time" to influence creatures as a rival second cause. One God. One decree. Real second causes under concurrence. That is enough divine framing.

---

50 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 191 (Loc. III Q.XII §XXIV): "Libertas voluntatis evertitur quidem per necessitatem physicam et coactionis, quae pugnat cum formali ratione libertatis; sed non per necessitatem hypotheticam et infallibilitatis eventus, idem enim hoc respectu potest esse liberum et necessarium: Unde quamvis actiones hominum sint liberae, quia sponte fiunt et previo rationis judicio, non desinunt esse necessariae ratione decreti et praescientiae Dei. Praescientia autem Dei infert quidem futuritionis et eventus infallibilitatem, et necessitatem consequentiae, non tamen infert coactionem aut violentiam, nec aufert voluntati intrinsecam libertatem."

51 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI Q.I §IX): "Providentia Dei, nec contingentiam rerum tollit, quia remanet semper indifferens respectu causae secundae, quod necessarium fit per Providentiam, respectu causae primae. Nec libertatem voluntatis evertit, quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." And: "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit;"

Multiplying divine vantages—God outside time, God inside time as a second influencing frame, creature inside time—only asks which divine vantage is veridical. Any answer damages either the doctrine of God or the proposal. Keep God as God. Keep concurrence as concurrence. Let asymmetry of grounds do the work that "God enters time" was trying, badly, to do.

II.9 *Sensu Composito* and *Sensu Diviso* Planted Early

"Adam, decreed to sin, can refrain" is false *in sensu composito*—in the composite sense that tries to hold the decree fixed and still actualize the contrary. Given the decree that he sins, he does not refrain. The connection does not fail. Anyone who demands that composite power is demanding what Part I already refused under another name: a creaturely veto over the ordained futurition of the world.

The tradition allows a divided sense. Consider Adam's will and mode apart from illicitly packing the decree into his creaturely antecedent matrix as if it were one more intramundane push. In that divided respect, he sins freely: willing, not coacted; contingent in the order of second causes; not emptied of the liberty of spontaneity and indifference the decree leaves intact while taking independence-liberty.[52]

This blocks the Molinism trap from re-entering. Molinism still has God actualizing this world by middle knowledge of what libertarian creatures would do. The creatures were not consulted. Dual-frame language must not smuggle back the demand that, with the decree fixed, the creature retains total-world power to do otherwise. That demand is *sensu composito* again. Appendix B works the distinction with Adam as the running example. The main body only needs the warning: composite leeway under a fixed decree is not what asymmetric antecedence grants.

Asymmetric dual-frame compatibilism is not a clever way to say: "The decree stands, and Adam might still have refrained in the same total world." That sentence is the composite falsehood. What is granted is different respects: necessity of futurition from the decree; freedom and contingency in the creaturely mode. Confuse those, and Part II becomes a contradiction machine. Keep them, and Part I's refusal of impossible desert remains untouched.

---

52 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 604–605 (Loc. X Q.III §XII): "Principium electionis sua natura potest esse indifferens et indeterminatum in sensu diviso, et quoad actum primum, et simultatem potentiae; Sed non in sensu composito, et quoad actum secundum, seu potentiam simultatis. Electio, ut sit libera, debet esse immunis a coactione et necessitate physica; sed non a necessitate extrinseca dependentiae a Deo, et intrinseca determinationis ab intellectu."

II.10 Defining *Indifferentia* and What Libertarian Freedom Means Here

After Part I, "libertarian" cannot mean ultimacy-as-aseity. Desert that requires control of existence is refused. What, then, is left of the word?

In this paper, creaturely freedom on the live side means at least this: freedom from coaction, together with rational spontaneity—the act proceeding from the will with prior judgment of reason; and divided-sense potency of the nature aligned with the efficient cause (intellect, deliberation, and choosing). It does not mean unindexed PAP under a fixed decree. Liberty of will is overturned by physical necessity and coaction, not by hypothetical necessity and the infallibility of the event. The same act can be free and necessary in different respects.[53]

Indifferentia, as I stipulate it here, is not indifference in the compound sense that would make the will a blank lottery ticket even under the decree. It is the liberty of spontaneity and indifference that hypothetical necessity does not take—while independence-liberty is taken. I am not introducing a separate free-choice locus beyond the sources already cited. The stipulation is systematic for Part II: freedom from coaction plus rational spontaneity and divided-sense potency of the nature on the efficient-cause side—not unindexed alternate possibility with every actual antecedent, including the decree, held fixed. Part II does not rehabilitate the desert program Part I killed. It defines creaturely freedom inside dependence, not beyond it.

What Scripture and the fall of the angels press further is how dangerous that libertarian ideal is when it is pressed on creatures. Given the biblical portrayal of what Adam and the fallen angels did with a freedom that approached the libertarian shape, such freedom is an extremely dangerous thing for any and every creature, and it ends badly. It is as if that reality can be held safely only by an infinite, perfect, self-existent Being. The only creaturely state in which anything LFW-ish can even be imagined without immediate self-contradiction is innocence joined to mutability under covenantal probation—the garden posture, not the present one. Advocates who demand a return of that posture for every chooser today necessarily drag the discussion back into a misplaced probation and inherit every error that misplacement brings.

---

53 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 191 (Loc. III Q.XII §XXIV): "Libertas voluntatis evertitur quidem per necessitatem physicam et coactionis, quae pugnat cum formali ratione libertatis; sed non per necessitatem hypotheticam et infallibilitatis eventus, idem enim hoc respectu potest esse liberum et necessarium: Unde quamvis actiones hominum sint liberae, quia sponte fiunt et previo rationis judicio, non desinunt esse necessariae ratione decreti et praescientiae Dei. Praescientia autem Dei infert quidem futuritionis et eventus infallibilitatem, et necessitatem consequentiae, non tamen infert coactionem aut violentiam, nec aufert voluntati intrinsecam libertatem."

If someone insists that "libertarian" must mean ultimate sourcehood plus total-world alternate possibility with every actual antecedent including the decree held fixed, then this paper is not libertarian in that sense and should not be sold as such. It is asymmetric dual-frame compatibilism. The creaturely side is ontologically non-necessitated by its own proper antecedents. That is strong enough to refuse epistemic collapse and modest enough to refuse aseity.

I use "libertarian" sparingly on purpose (see Glossary L1/L2; Appendix F). The word carries a desert program Part I rejected. When I speak of creaturely contingency and freedom here, I mean the real second-cause mode the confession establishes—not the autonomy that would require overseeing one's own existence. Readers who need the word "libertarian" for marketing should know they are stretching it. I would rather be clear than catchy.

II.11 Two Necessary Conditions for Desert Responsibility

After Part I, this paper will not treat desert as requiring control of existence or unindexed alternate possibility under a fixed decree. What it does treat as necessary are two conditions: epistemic fitness, and uncoacted creaturely freedom in the formal-and-efficient order already named. That is a hinge, not a completed desert theory. It does not by itself answer every sourcehood or manipulation argument.

First, epistemic conditions must be fulfilled: knowledge of the relevant facts. The creature held answerable must know what bears on the act. That is ordinary epistemic fitness for judgment—not a demand to author one's own existence.

Second, metaphysical freedom conditions must hold: creatures properly freely choose, and are not coerced or manipulated. That freedom is the formal-plus-efficient reality already named—localized counterfactual power in the creaturely matrix, uncoacted voluntary choice under asymmetric dual-frame. It is not control of existence. It is not unindexed PAP under a fixed decree. Those remain Part I's refusals, not Part II's requirements.

These two conditions—epistemic fitness, and uncoacted creaturely freedom under the asymmetric dual-frame—are what this paper needs for desert responsibility after Part I's refusal. They are not yet a completed theory of every condition of moral desert, and I do not claim exhaustive sufficiency against every rival account. "Uncoacted" here means: the act is the creature's voluntary act as formal-and-efficient second cause, not produced by bypassing,

violating, or emptying the will as will. "Manipulated," in the objection's sense, means an alien intramundane controller substitutes its intention for the agent's practical identity. Primary causation by decree is not manipulation in that sense, or every ordained act becomes manipulation by definition and the objection has assumed what it must prove. If a later reader wants a thicker desert psychology, this section does not forbid it; it forbids reimporting aseity and unindexed PAP as the price of blame.

More can be said; this is the hinge.

II.12 Test Cases in Plain Voice

Adam in mutable innocence. Adam could stand and fall. His liberty in innocence was not confirmed impeccability. Mutability belonged to that state. Relative to the decree and the futurition of the thing, he sinned necessarily. Relative to his will and the mode, he sinned freely, because whatever the necessity of the decree, he sinned willing, and therefore most freely.[54] Nothing in that double respect requires us to say he authored his own existence, or that he retained composite power to refrain while the decree that he fall stood. The first sin remains the hard case for every account. Dual-frame talk does not invent a new mechanism that dissolves the mystery. It refuses two false exits: coaction caricature on one side, aseity-demand on the other.

Why start with Adam? Because mutable innocence is where both sides feel the pressure. The libertarian wants a clean undetermined turn in a good nature. The crude determinist wants a push that makes willing look like falling rocks. The older hinge says: necessarily and freely—respectu decreti et rei futuritionis; respectu voluntatis et quoad modum. Asymmetric antecedence is that hinge stated as matrices: divine order securing futurition; creaturely order not necessitating from its own grounds alone; Adam willing, not coacted.

Judas and Peter, briefly. Judas betrays; Peter denies and later is restored. In both, the divine order secures what comes to pass without turning either man into a pushed object emptied of will. Judas wills his path. Peter wills his denial and, by grace, his return. Creaturely contingency and culpability sit in what they are and do as agents. The decree does not become a

54 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 288 (Loc. IV Q.IV §VIII): "Necessitas decreti tollit quidem libertatem independentiae,… Sed non tollit libertatem spontaneitatis et indifferentiae, quia necessitas est tantum hypothetica, quae eventus certitudinem ponit, sed causarum secundarum naturam et proprietates non tollit. Hinc est quod recte dicatur, Adamum necessario, et libere peccasse: Illud quidem respectu decreti, et rei futuritionis; Istud respectu voluntatis ejus, et quoad modum, quia qualiscunque fuerit necessitas decreti, Adamus tamen volens peccavit, et per consequens liberrime."

second Judas behind Judas. Concurrence draws second causes; it does not replace them.[55] If someone asks whether Judas "could have done otherwise" in the composite sense with the ordained betrayal fixed, the answer is no. If someone asks whether Judas was a coacted puppet with no will of his own, the answer is also no. Flat talk cannot hear both answers. Indexed respects can.

Ordinary choice. You choose a word in a conversation, a path home, a yes or no in a small matter. Relative to God's ordaining providence, what you freely do does not fall outside what he has ordained. Relative to your own deliberation, motives, and powers, you are not a stone and not a puppet. You act because you want what you want. Flat talk asks you to pick: either your choice was necessary in every respect, or it was undetermined in every respect. Asymmetric antecedence refuses the pick. Necessary under one order; contingent under the other; no illicit transfer; no claim that you oversaw your own existence before you spoke.

These cases do not prove the metaphysics by story. They show what the proposal is *for*: ordinary Christian speech about providence and responsibility without the puppet theater and without the demand to be God before one can be blamed as a man.

II.13 Federal Headship and the Two Frames

The Adam case in the last section is not a private illustration. Romans 5 takes that first man's fall and sets it under federal headship: one man stands for the many, and the many stand under that one. Scripture's own framing is plain: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—"[56] That is not a detour from the decree / liberty problem. It is God's own schema for naming what mutable creaturely freedom does when it is given room to stand and fall.

God's use of federal headship indicates what he already knows about creatures with libertarian freedom and mutability: they are fallible. Subsuming all humanity under one federal head is his declaration of the problem with mutable creaturely freedom—a problem only

---

55 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 442 (Loc. VI Q.I §IX): "Providentia Dei, nec contingentiam rerum tollit, quia remanet semper indifferens respectu causae secundae, quod necessarium fit per Providentiam, respectu causae primae. Nec libertatem voluntatis evertit, quia necessitas hypothetica decreti, nullam infert coactionem voluntati, sed eam liberrime, licet inevitabiliter, sinit motus suos exercere." And: "nec concursus causae primae excludit concursum secundarum, imo eum post se trahit;"

56 Romans 5:12 (ESV): "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—"

solvable by some form of redemption, and a redemption that maintains and expresses absolute justice and infinite grace at once. The parallel runs the other way as well: "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men."[57] "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."[58] Justice is not softened to make grace possible. Grace is not reduced to make justice look cheap. The one Head who falls declares the problem; the one Head who obeys solves it.

Adam's opportunity under libertarian freedom—mutable innocence, real stewardship of a will not yet confirmed in impeccability—proves the weakness and fallibility of any creature's stewardship of such freedom. If that is the verdict of the first head, then garden-style self-headship is not the standing terms of desert for the many. Federal headship does not invent the dual-frame, and it does not by itself prove it. What it shows is that mutable creaturely freedom, given room to stand and fall in one head, is not a stewardship Scripture invites every later chooser to rerun as a self-head. Complaints that ignore representation misfire. The dual-frame already argued is one way to keep that verdict without emptying second causes.

The biblical steering named above converges here. The condition under the curse—deadness, enslavement, inability—is not an optional preface to Romans 5; Romans 5 is the apostle's explanation of that condition under federal headship. Regeneration's metaphors (new birth; made alive together with Christ) presuppose the same verdict: the many in Adam do not self-raise into the kingdom. What II.0 set as biblical steering, this section names as the hinge already opened: one man's disobedience, one man's obedience, and two frames that keep justice and grace from canceling each other. Further exegesis can thicken the point later; the argumentative load here is already carried by the verses set above and by the dual-frame they confirm.

Among humanity, Adam alone stood nearest what libertarian advocates want. He was created in innocence, placed under covenantal test, and left mutable—and that mutability proved too weighty for him, and for us in him. Our testing with that LFW-ish stewardship happened in the garden under Adam our federal head; that is the plain teaching of Romans 5. Advocates who

---

57 Romans 5:18 (ESV): "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men."

58 Romans 5:19 (ESV): "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

forget or never see this ask for the return of something completely, irretrievably lost. We should be thankful that our existence is not a re-running of the garden as self-heads. If it were, we would no longer stand represented by Adam, but would represent ourselves under another old creative order—doubled old, and finally doomed—because, under the federal-headship schema as Scripture gives it, Christ saves those subsumed under Adam's headship, not a race of independent probationers reinventing the first trial one by one. LFW misplaces its claims of injustice and unfairness when it does not understand Romans 5 and federal headship.

More can be said; this is the hinge.

II.14 Relation to *They Ask Too Much*

Part II does not soft-pedal Part I. Creatures still do not get control of existence. Soft determination for creation and sustenance remains necessary. Molinist actualization of this world still does not buy libertarian desert. The serpent's fairness-hiss—how can God hold you accountable?—still sounds like a demand that the moral world be abolished unless the creature sits where only the Creator sits.

What Part II adds is coherence for responsibility without granting the impossible demand. Responsibility remains where it belongs for creatures: in real agency under a Creator who owes no one salvation and yet justly holds sinners to account. Determination relative to the divine order does not empty second causes. Contingency relative to the creaturely order does not relocate ultimacy from God to man. The diagnosis stands. The constructive proposal explains how the hinge Part I already named can be held without epistemic collapse and without redefining one side into silence.

If Part II ever sounded like a rescue of the desert program—"see, you can have libertarian ultimacy after all, once we index"—then Part II would have failed. Read it again. Indexing saves consistency for asymmetric respects. It does not mint aseity. The existence problem remains. The moral-monster rebound remains for any theory that makes desert require control of existence. The constructive paper is not a soft ending to a hard diagnosis. It is the grammar in which the hard diagnosis can be true and responsibility still make sense.

II.15 What This Is Not

I should say plainly what I tried and what this proposal is not.

I tried pressing standard flat modal logic as if an event's fundamental modal status had to be frame-invariant across every antecedent base; that press forces a false choice. I tried physics and complementarity metaphors, and paraconsistent tolerance of a true contradiction, as if exotic tools could replace indexing. Those were the wrong instruments. I do not have a contradiction to tolerate; I have a distinction to draw. Used modestly, relativized modal talk can state indexed respects over asymmetric grounds; used as an engine to mint a new metaphysics, it distracts. The live tool is asymmetric antecedence plus indexed necessity and contingency, continuous with the older hinge of necessity of the consequence versus necessity of the consequent. Full scorecard and traps sit in Appendix C; the main body stays brief.

So this paper is not a quantum foundation. It is not a paraconsistent true-contradiction view. It is not observer-relativism that makes freedom an illusion downstairs. It is not a third logic replacing the Turretin and Westminster hinge. It is asymmetric dual-frame compatibilism under a four-cause indexing of creaturely decisions: determination and contingency both real under asymmetric orders; creaturely contingency metaphysical rather than epistemic; no illicit transfer; no aseity for the judged; no emptying of formal and efficient second causes.

Nor is this paper rescued by a Molinist detour. For those who embrace Molinism, the LFW issues remain in one sense the same as for the compatibilist: God has still decreed a determined world—a specific version among possible contingent worlds—and has determined the future. They simply place the reason for the decree on the foreseen or middle-known decision of the individual. The decree is still a decree. The creatures are still unconsulted in their existence. Dual-frame language that treats Molinist actualization as if it restored libertarian desert has stopped telling the truth about what Molinism itself still holds fixed.

Nor may a later, fuller Molinism section be treated as architecture already earned here. Exhaustive decree plus asymmetric grounding makes decree-independent counterfactuals of creaturely freedom either false, otiose, or a reopening of alternate-possibility sourcehood that would undo Part I and the asymmetry. This paper therefore does not lean on an unwritten Molinist repair. What II.15 states is only the negative: middle knowledge, as usually sold, does not escape the decree, does not consult the creature into existence, and does not grant composite leeway under fixed actualization. If Molinism returns as a constructive chapter later, it must reopen or abandon that fork in the open—not patch it in silence.

They ask too much. The answer is still to refuse the demand—and to keep both sides of the hinge without quiet redefinition.

Part III — Bridge to the Apparatus

III.1 Continuity with the Turretin Hinge

This proposal does not invent a rival system. It formalizes and defends what the hinge sources already give. Necessity of the consequence versus necessity of the consequent; liberty overturned by coaction but not by hypothetical necessity; the same act free and necessary in different respects; Adam necessarily and freely; providence that leaves contingency with respect to second causes and draws their concurrence after the first cause—these are the spine. In plain English under the creaturely order: Not forced by the creature's own prior causes.

Asymmetric dual-frame compatibilism is a way of stating that spine so that modern flat modal talk cannot quietly erase it. Indexed antecedent matrices are the contemporary grammar for older *respectus*. If the proposal drifted into a third logic that replaced the hinge, it would have failed. Continuity is the point.

III.2 Modest Novelty Claim

What is earned here, and what is not, should be stated without inflation.

Earned: the explicit indexing of necessity and contingency to asymmetric antecedent orders; the four-cause overlay for creaturely decisions (ultimate and final on the G-side; formal and efficient as C); the stipulation of C as token-complete creaturely matrix and of $\Diamond_C$ as ontic potency; the insistence that creaturely contingency is metaphysical rather than epistemic, argued from the extrinsic certainty of the decree and the proximate causes' power to have been otherwise; the ban on illicit transfer as causal-role asymmetry; the early planting of *sensu composito* / *sensu diviso* so Molinist composite leeway cannot re-enter; and the refusal to multiply divine frames under "God enters time."

Not earned: a claim that every scholastic dispute about free choice and indifference has been settled; a claim that full-strength unindexed libertarianism and full-strength unindexed determinism have been reconciled; a claim that sources beyond those already cited have been newly introduced here. Novelty here is indexed matrices, four-cause overlay, and non-epistemic

creaturely contingency under asymmetry—not a replacement of the confession or the elenctic institute.

Still, the claim to any novelty here may be an overstatement. The constructive hinge is already present in Aquinas: divine causality and providence are precisely what enable and establish human freedom and genuine contingency in the created order. God is first cause of being and motion, yet does not compete with secondary causes on their own level; he acts in and through them. Providence decrees not only that an event occurs, but the *mode* of its occurrence—necessary causes necessarily, contingent and voluntary causes contingently and freely. Human free will is a secondary cause created and sustained by God, not a bypass of intellect and volition. The classical distinction between necessity of the consequence and necessity of the consequent keeps divine certainty from converting a contingent act into a naturally necessary one. Trinkaus marks the same kinship when he notes that providence is no limitation of freedom, because freedom of the will is itself a participation in providential government.[59]

What later polemics sometimes lose is not that hinge, but its balance. Humanist and Molinist heirs can so stress moral agency that the agent crowds the Creator; deterministic compressions can so stress divine monergy that second-cause desert is thinned until it barely remains. The present proposal does not pretend to settle every historical quarrel. It refuses both emptied second causes and creaturely aseity, and it keeps the older equilibrium under asymmetric indexing.

If there is any modest novelty beyond a simpler four-cause map, it is this: the purpose passages (not least Ephesians 3:10) require a created field—a petri dish, if the image helps—in which libertarian second-cause contingency (L2) is real, fallible, and weight-bearing, so that God's multi-faceted wisdom is displayed with Christ at the center, and creatures come to know grace in a deliverance that does not purchase mercy by sacrificing justice.

Nearest neighbors help locate the claim without inflating it. Classical eternal-now accounts in the Boethian and Anselmian line secure divine knowledge of temporal acts without treating an exhaustive decree as the determining overlay this paper affirms. Dominican physical-premotion traditions secure exhaustive decree while typically refusing libertarian second-cause

59 Charles Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10, no. 1 (January 1949): 51–62, at 53 (quoting Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, cap. 113, English Dominican Fathers trans.).

contingency. Molinist and kindred schemes keep a strong libertarian reading inside time while denying that the decree itself determines the choice from above.

Contemporary defenses of an atemporal God with libertarian agency in time come nearest on the eternity-and-freedom pairing, yet ordinarily stop short of indexing exhaustive decree-determination and genuine second-cause contingency (L2) under one asymmetric dual frame. This paper does not claim that no theologian ever touched any piece of the puzzle. Its modest novelty is the indexing itself: decree-constituted L2 under necessity of the consequence, with a ban on transferring modal status or non-responsibility across the frames—neighbors, not twins.

III.3 Tool Scorecard Summary for General Readers

For the main-body reader, the scorecard is short.

Use: relativized necessity and possibility tied to asymmetric grounds; contextual clarity about what is held fixed when someone says "can"; geometry as a teaching image for complementary descriptions under different relations.

Limited: indexical or "from where I stand" language for the lived temporal side only—not as a substitute for ontology; complementarity metaphors as illustration, never as proof.

Avoid as foundation: quantum logic as if physics settled providence; paraconsistent "true contradiction" as if indexing were not enough; observer-relativism that makes freedom an illusion.

Details and rationale sit in Appendix C. The summary is enough to keep the main argument from being mistaken for a physics paper or a contradiction paper.

Appendix A — One-Page Formalism

This page is for readers who want the shape checked.

Let e be a creaturely act. Let G be the divine antecedent matrix (decree and the First Cause's order—ultimate and final securing). Let C be the token-complete creaturely antecedent matrix (nature, history, deliberation, motives, and powers as they stand prior to the resolution of e—formal and efficient in the second-cause order; not the decree; not token e). Write:

- $\Box_G e$ for: relative to *G*, *e*'s futurition is necessitated (necessity of the consequence: the decree secures that *e* occurs).

• $\Diamond_C \neg$e for: relative to C, ¬e remains ontic potency (the token-complete creaturely grounds alone do not necessitate e; proximate causes were able to be otherwise).

Claim: $\Box_G e \wedge \Diamond_C \neg e$ is not of the form $P \wedge \neg P$, because the operators are indexed to different antecedent sets.

Illicit transfer would be a bridging rule such as: from $\Box_G$ e infer $\Box_C$ e, or from $\Diamond_C \neg$e infer $\Diamond_G \neg$e. Dual-frame realism without illusion denies those bridges because G and C are different causal orders (extrinsece), not because the indices were trimmed for convenience. Scope reminder: from □(G→e) and G one may infer e—the necessity of the link—not bare □e as necessity of the emptied consequent.

Flat contradiction would be $\Box_X e \wedge \Diamond_X \neg e$ under one and the same index X. No derivation from the dual-frame premises yields that flat formula. If someone assumes $G = C$, the dual-frame thesis has already been refused. If someone assumes transfer, the thesis has been refused another way.

Reading reminder: $\Box_G$ is actualization/futurition security from the decree, not a claim that the will is coacted. $\Diamond_C$ is ontic potency relative to token-complete C, not "the creature does not know the decree." What would make $\Diamond_C$ fail is coaction or emptying of the second cause so that C itself necessitated e. Appendix A states consistency of the indexed pair and the anti-transfer ban. It does not mint aseity.

Counterfactual power (plain modal condition, mirrored from II.5). Agent A has counterfactual power over secondary event E at t1 iff: if A had not willed the act, E would not have occurred. The conditional remains intact even when God decrees A's willing and E totum simul. This is localized causal dependency—causal power without ultimate independence—not a composite veto under a fixed decree.

Appendix B — *Sensu Composito / Sensu Diviso* Worked (Adam)

*Composite sense (*in sensu composito*).* Hold fixed: God has decreed that Adam sins. Ask: can Adam refrain? Answer: no. Given the decree, he sins. Necessity of the consequence holds. Demanding yes here is demanding a creaturely veto over ordained futurition—the Molinism-adjacent trap Part I already refused under desert language.

Divided sense (in sensu diviso). Consider Adam's will and mode in the creaturely order—nature (formal), intellect, deliberation, and choosing (efficient)—spontaneity, judgment, absence

of coaction, contingency of second causes—without packing the decree into C as if it were one more intramundane antecedent among Adam's springs. Ask: does he sin freely? Answer: yes. He sins willing. The necessity of the decree takes independence-liberty, not the liberty of spontaneity and indifference.[60]

Molinism trap blocked. "God actualizes this world knowing what Adam would libertarianly do" still does not consult Adam into existence, and still does not grant composite power under a fixed actualization. Dual-frame language that reintroduces composite leeway has stopped being dual-frame and started being a contradiction under one total-world index.

Pedagogy. Composite: decree + refrain together—false. Divided: freedom of mode under creaturely respects—affirmed. Keep the labels on the fridge.

Appendix C — Tool Scorecard (Full)

Use — relativized / multi-agent style indexing over asymmetric grounds. Buys: a clean way to write necessity-of-decree and contingency-of-second-causes without forcing flat contradiction. Cannot buy by itself: the metaphysics of grounding; that must be argued in Part II. Trap: reading creaturely possibility as merely epistemic. State at definition that $\Diamond_C$ is power-relative, not knowledge-relative.

Use — contextual clarity about modal bases. Buys: explains why competent people talk past each other for centuries when "can" shifts background sets. Cannot buy: ontology alone. Pair with antecedent asymmetry and dual-frame realism.

Limited — indexical / centered "from here" talk. Buys: lived temporality, the open future as experienced. Cannot buy: a second metaphysical possibility-space that omits the decree while remaining fully real. Keep for phenomenology; keep away from replacing ontology.

Limited — geometric analogies. Buys: teaching image for complementary accurate descriptions under different relations; ranking reminder that a higher-dimensional whole contains

60 Turrettinus, *Institutio* (Lowe, 1847), 603 (Loc. X Q.III §IV): "Non hic quaeri de indifferentia in actu primo, seu in sensu diviso, quoad simultatem potentiae, quae passiva et objectiva dicitur; An scilicet voluntas absolute spectata ex naturali sua constitutione, sepositis requisitis ad agendum, sit determinabilis ad varia objecta, et indifferenter se ad ea habeat: … Sed de indifferentia in actu secundo et in sensu composito, quoad potentiam simultatis, quae activa et subjectiva dicitur; An voluntas, positis omnibus ad agendum requisitis, v. g. decreto Dei, et ejus concursu, judicio intellectus practici, &c., ita semper sit indifferens et in equilibrio posita, ut possit agere vel non agere? Hoc Adversarii pertendunt… Nos negamus."

a lower cut. Cannot buy: proof. Disanalogy: God's order ranks; frames are not egalitarian peer dimensions.

Avoid as foundation — quantum logic / physics foils. Buys: essentially nothing needed for providence and will. Indeterminacy is not agency; luck is not liberty. Cost: borrowed prestige; second controversy; distraction (see II.15).

Avoid as foundation — paraconsistency / dialetheism. Buys: tolerance of $P \wedge \neg P$ without explosion. Cannot buy: what this paper wants—a distinction, not a contradiction. Theological cost: spends the principle that contradictions defeat heresy.

Pedagogy-only — complementarity metaphors. One sentence of illustration; next sentence names the disanalogy. Never as argument that frames are "mere descriptions."

Appendix D — Hinge Sources Cited

The following sources are those already used in this paper.

*Turretin (Lowe 1847), p. 154 (Loc. III Q.I §VI) — nothing can be the cause of itself (*nihil potest esse causa sui). See footnote 1.

Turretin (Lowe 1847), p. 442 (Loc. VI Q.I §IX) — providence does not take contingency with respect to second causes, nor overturn liberty of will; hypothetical necessity inflicts no coaction; concurrence of the first cause draws second causes. See footnote 2.

Westminster Confession of Faith 3.1 — eternal ordination; no violence to the will; liberty or contingency of second causes established. See footnote 5.

Westminster Confession of Faith 5.2 — immutably and infallibly as to the First Cause; according to the nature of second causes necessarily, freely, or contingently. See footnote 6.

Turretin (Lowe 1847), p. 191 (Loc. III Q.XII §XXIII–XXIV) — necessitas consequentiae vs consequentis; free and necessary in different respects; foreknowledge without coaction. See footnotes 8–9.

Turretin (Lowe 1847), pp. 287–288 (Loc. IV Q.IV §III, §VI, §VIII) — hypothetical necessity of the decree; certainty extrinsic from the decree's immutability; Adam necessarily and freely. See footnotes 10–12.

Genesis 3:1; 3:4; Romans 1:18 (ESV) — as quoted in Part I. See footnotes 3, 4, and 7.

Appendix E — Remaining Questions

- Fuller definition of *indifferentia* against compound-sense confusions.
- Expanded test cases (ordinary providence narratives).
- Cousin contemporary views are reserved for later work and are not treated in the footnotes here.

Appendix F — Glossary for Freshmen

In this paper, "libertarian" is used in two indexed senses and must not be collapsed: (L1) Libertarian desert-ultimacy = the demand that the creature be the unconditioned source of the act and of the conditions of answerability (control of existence / aseity). Refused in Part I. (L2) Libertarian second-cause contingency = freedom from coaction and from necessity of the emptied consequent, such that relative to the creature's proper antecedents the act is not necessitated, while still falling under hypothetical necessity of the decree (necessitas consequentiae). Affirmed under dual-frame indexing in Part II. When the paper says "libertarian freedom" without a tag, Part I means (L1); Part II's constructive claim means (L2)—never (L1) reintroduced by sales language.

Libertarian (L1). Desert-ultimacy / aseity demand. Refused in Part I.

Libertarian (L2). Second-cause contingency: freedom from coaction and from necessity of the emptied consequent under hypothetical necessity of the decree. Affirmed in Part II under dual-frame indexing.

Decree. God's eternal ordaining will concerning what comes to pass.

Concurrence. The First Cause's working with second causes so that they act according to their natures; not a replacement of them.

Second cause. A creaturely cause under God—real agency, not aseity.

Necessitas consequentiae. Necessity of the link: if the decree holds, the event follows. Does not empty the consequent of contingent character in its own order.

Necessitas consequentis. Necessity of the emptied consequent as if the thing were absolutely necessary in itself. Denied of free creaturely acts in the older hinge.

Antecedent matrix. The set of grounds relative to which necessity or possibility is assessed (divine order vs creaturely order).

Epistemic contingency. "Open" only because the agent does not know the outcome. Refused as the meaning of freedom here.

Metaphysical contingency (creaturely). Non-necessitation by the creature's proper grounds; real power in the second-cause order.

Sensu composito / sensu diviso. Composite vs divided reading—especially whether the decree is held fixed while asking for the alternate.

Asymmetric antecedence. The thesis that divine and creaturely antecedent orders differ in kind, so modal status may differ without flat contradiction and without illusion.

Four causes (my indexing). For creaturely decisions: ultimate = God by decree; formal = creature's nature; efficient = intellect, deliberation, and choosing; final = God's purpose. Resembles Aristotle only in counting four real causes—not Aristotle's glossary.

Token-complete C. Antecedent creaturely matrix for a particular act: nature, history, deliberation, motives, powers. Does not include the token act e under evaluation. Aligns with formal + efficient as powers/structure, not as the completed choice.

$\Diamond_C$. Ontic potency relative to C—not ignorance of the decree.

Extrinsece. From outside: certainty of futurition from the decree's immutability, not from the second causes' nature.

Appendix G — On the Necessity of Libertarian Freedom

As promised earlier, this appendix deals with several items I claim make libertarian freedom of the will necessary. Before beginning to address these items in the order listed earlier, I need to define what I mean throughout the paper by libertarian freedom of the will (LFW). For this definition, I take the work of Tim Stratton where he defines this terminology: “If a person’s choice, action, evaluation, or judgment is neither random nor determined by something or someone else, then this person possesses libertarian freedom. It can also be expressed this way: Libertarian freedom is the ability to choose or act such that antecedent conditions are insufficient to causally determine or necessitate one’s choice or action.”[61] Stratton adds that this is “That’s a fancy way of saying the ability to do otherwise” (same page). I agree with that definition within the confines of the parameters of the created universe within which we live, what we call reality,

61 Timothy A. Stratton, *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2026), 6.

so one can say that is what I mean in the use of the term and concept. I deny the accusation that this definition means creatures do or can operate independently of divine control.

Throughout this appendix, “libertarian freedom” / LFW means (L2)—second-cause contingency under the decree: relative to the creature’s proper antecedents the choice is not necessitated, and the will is not coacted—*sensu diviso*, not composite power to overturn a fixed decree (*sensu composito*). That is the freedom Stratton’s definition names inside the created order; it is not Part I’s refused (L1) desert-aseity, and it is not Molinist middle-knowledge architecture.

This understanding of LFW (L2)—I will utilize Dr.Stratton's acronym—is necessary for the list I point out earlier in the main body of the paper. There I begin with the issue of temptation. In order for temptation to be a reality, and to involve an enemy of our souls as a tempter, we must have the ability to do otherwise in choosing an alternative possibility. To deny such a definition of freedom makes the subject of temptation nothing more than theater, illusion, and an unnecessary plot mechanism in the story of God's dealings with humanity. This seems to be little more than common sense. Theologically, temptation is an "inner or outer inducement, trial, or enticement that incites a moral agent to rebel against God's law, distrust his goodness, or choose a lesser, creaturely good" over God's stated will and purpose. The classic example is also the original example found in the temptation of the first pair in Genesis 3. No one reading that interprets it in any way other than that Eve, then Adam, had the ability to do otherwise. The later Biblical narrative gives too much weight to the results of the pair's failure there to view their temptation as anything other than real, thus not just theater. The same is true of the other temptation that serves as a classic example, that of Christ in Matthew 4, Mark 1, and Luke 4. There Christ is correcting the original failure as the "second Adam", thereby through his active obedience and resisting of temptation, securing for those who come in faith to him, a status of righteousness by which we may be appropriately clothed in God's presence in eternity.

A second reality that best fits with LFW (L2) as defined here is the reality of God's permissive will. In order to correctly deny that God is the author or cause of sin, nor that he coerces human agents to sin, Augustinian thought developed the idea of God's permissive will that would be further developed in the later history of the church (note the appropriate cites in the Enchiridion and the City of God). Augustine would assert that God's permission is not a failure of power when he says, "Nothing, therefore, happens but by the will of the Omnipotent,

He either permitting it to be done, or Himself doing it" (Enchiridion, chapter 95). Calvin and the later Reformers would further develop this concept, but my point here is that it is a concept at all. This fact that it is a concept fits only with LFW and the Biblical portrayal that God intended such liberty on the part of his creatures in order to accomplish his multi-faceted and dynamic purposes. Why does there need to be a "permissive" will if God's decree negates LFW? Again, this is little more than common sense.

A third reality or question that necessitates LFW (L2) surrounds the question God asks in 1 Kings 22:20 (CSB), "who will entice Ahab to march up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?" If God has not decreed a set of circumstances wherein LFW are a reality on every creaturely level, where does this question come from. The question supposes a genuine interaction, and the development and acceptance of a genuine plan to influence Ahab. How can one make sense of such passages without LFW? It is an impossibility. That is not to say that most compatibilist accounts come close by logically maneuvering concepts to fit, but that does not seem necessary if we stay with the text. That is not to say that the logical explanations are unnecessary, but it is a claim that they have not been pressed far enough by not being required to take into account both the purposes of God and the creator/creature distinction. If I was pressed to choose a side, I would choose one of the compatibilist camps because of their emphasis on the priority of God in their understanding, but I find they all fall short regarding LFW, so I disagree. This passage, and the others like it, i.e. Job 1, etc., would be more theater and not reality.

Another related reality that requires LFW (L2) is the hypothetical circumstances showcased in 1 Samuel 23:10-13. What God essentially says there is that if the circumstances are changed, an alternative possibility will prevail. In the passage, David prays asking God if Saul would come to the city of Keilah where he was staying, and if the people of the city would hand him over. In both questions, God answers in the affirmative, that is Saul would come to the city and the people in the city would hand him over to Saul. Yet, when in response to the answered prayer David leaves the city, none of what God said in his answers to David happened. This hypothetical and/or theoretical situation serves to show how God governs and is not challenged by LFW, and also how LFW might be exercised in alternative possibilities.

A fifth reality surrounds the Noahic flood and the necessity for that reality. If divine determinism negates LFW (L2), why was there the need for that event? I know that the answer most compatibilists will give is that it was simply the decreed plan of God, and I agree, but look

at how it is presented to the reader in God's Scriptural revelation of himself. Genesis 6:3,5-8, says "And the LORD said, My spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt. Their days will be 120 years...When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved. Then the LORD said, I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky-for I regret that I made them. Noah, however, found favor with the LORD."(CSB) A couple of things leap out here, things which are hard to explain without LFW, and a different understanding of the divine deterministic decree. One is the "regret" language. You can't legitimately explain that away just because it doesn't fit your chosen systematic narrative. A second is the statement that Noah "found favor with the LORD", a statement that has the force of being juxtaposed against God's regret over the rest of humanity.

Another issue arises with the statement in Romans 9:17 (CSB), saying "For the Scripture tells Pharaoh, I raised you up for this reason so that I may display my power in you and that my name may be proclaimed in the whole earth." That very important verse describing the authority of God in election and pursuing his purposes makes no sense if it is true of every agent's every choice as it would be in the sense it is here if LFW (L2) were not reality, and if divine determinism negates LFW. Now, you can say that this same statement is true of every agent's every choice, but you cannot say it with an equivalence with this passage, because this passage shows a unique redemptive-historical intensification of providence—not the ordinary dual-frame pattern in which God normally governs without becoming a rival intramundane second cause, but an exceptional bringing-about of his purpose through this individual, in whom he forms the decisions that led him to do what he did. That is part of the point of the passage: God is sovereign and has the right to do as he chooses. II.8 still refuses the cartoon that God must ordinarily "enter time" as a second influencing frame; it does not forbid rare, purpose-driven special providence within the temporal theater he created.

If LFW (L2) is not true or reality, then Adam's veiled accusation in Genesis 3:12 misses the bigger better accusation by a mile. Scripture says there (CSB): "The man replied, the woman you gave to be with me-she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate." Adam was blaming the woman, but he was also blaming God for giving her to him. This classic approach to our sin that we all experience and express was and is the best opportunity to make the real and more obvious

accusation if there were no LFW. If that were the case, Adam could have and should have said, "well you ordained this, so how is it my fault?" Again and again, LFW is the only position that makes complete sense of the Scriptural revelation.

Then one might ask, "why the example of dual causation found in Genesis 50:20? There we read, "You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result-the survival of many people."(CSB) Showcased there is the causation of the brothers as well as the simultaneous causation of God. This is unlike the example with Pharoah in my opinion, but more like the statement of Paul in Romans 8:28 where Paul promises, "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."(CSB) In these verses, God reveals himself to be working behind the scenes of free choices, intervening and contravening where necessary, to bring about that which is best for his people in the pursuit of his purposes. How does that square with a determination that negates LFW (L2)? How does the decree have to work around anything if it is indeed a decree that negates LFW? These verses seem to clearly indicate that God is not only working through creaturely actions, but also around those actions. It seems this is how he has chosen to showcase and fulfill his purposes.

A ninth consideration is the juxtaposed comparison found at Nehemiah 9:33 quoted earlier in the body of the paper. I won't quote that again, but there God's complete faithfulness is juxtaposed with our complete wickedness, a comparison that is gutted of its full significance without LFW (L2). Without LFW, we are also in danger of gutting the reality of the repentance being expressed. More thought and consideration should be given to this than I am prepared to give it here, but without LFW, this verse and the surrounding passage makes little sense.

Then consider the realities of justice, and mercy, and grace. If LFW (L2) is anything less than the above definition, if it's some version of modern compatibilism, then we find ourselves possibly undermining the definitional depth of these realities. At this point, I will say what I did not make clear in the body of the paper, namely that I do not believe the Westminster or 2nd London Confessions did this in their language of God establishing the necessity of secondary causes. That language allows for, and in my opinion even demands, the interpretation that I am proposing. Keep in mind that my proposal comes from the perspective of fully embracing Dort's five points in my soteriology, and I embrace a full Reformed view of God's sovereignty. I just do not believe that modern compatibilists, nor Luther and Calvin, nor the RO, ever gave a full

treatment to these realities that added anything to our understanding beyond what we can find in the apostolic fathers through to Augustine. More importantly, I believe the position I am proposing is Biblical, taking into account all of the Biblical revelation and seeking to understand that in terms that best account for the whole corpus. Justice and mercy and grace are definitionally deeper than we can imagine, such that the life and death and resurrection of Christ alone fully plumbs their depths, and without LFW I don't see that.

Denying LFW (L2) would also seem to require a rewrite of purpose passages like Ephesians 3:10. There Paul writes, "This is so that God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens."(CSB) I could say the same about other purpose passages pointing out different but similar realities, but here Paul describes God as deliberately showcasing his "multi-faceted wisdom". If divine determinism, a reality I fully embrace, determines human decisions without LFW, then it seems to me the passage should have said that God was deliberately showcasing his "great power", and not "wisdom", because the wisdom required to work through and around and contrary to creatures with LFW is obviously much greater than the wisdom required to deterministically bring about the decisions that he alone wants. That would be much easier and showcase his power more than showcasing his wisdom. I believe LFW more fully expresses God's wisdom and power in the reality he has created. And I believe that the wisdom required to accomplish this is so beyond fascinating that the angels are curious and fascinated by it as Peter says in 1 Peter 1:12 "angels long to catch a glimpse of these things."(CSB)

Finally, denying or limiting LFW (L2) seems to make God's decree the central issue of the discussion without considering the primary focus of the decree. All of the argumentation on both sides of this debate focus on the substance, and timing, and extent of the decree, consistently without focusing on the purpose of the decree in Christ. There is a very real sense then in which it feels as if the decree replaces Christ in our thinking. My point is that Christ is central and not the decree in the same sense, i.e. the decree is central in that and because it is God's work to showcase and eternally focus on Christ.

I accept Stratton’s definition of libertarian freedom (L2) within the parameters of the created order already argued in this paper. I do not accept the Molinist framework from which he often deploys it. The constructive claim here is different: the decree itself establishes the environment in which creatures possess that freedom, so that God’s purposes are carried through real second-

cause liberty rather than through middle-knowledge management of what undetermined creatures would do. In that sense the proposal is a compatibilism—but not the modern soft-determinist kind that thins freedom to unforced desire, and not a forced re-labeling of older Reformed Orthodoxy under today's isms. It is decree-constituted libertarian second-cause contingency (L2) inside a determined order of providence.

Appendix H — The Enclosed-Brane Analogy

Part A — Gerald Milton Smith, Jr., "Nested Created Orders: An Enclosed-Brane Analogy"

Nested Created Orders: An Enclosed-Brane Analogy

Gerald Milton Smith, Jr.

September 23, 2026

Purpose. This note proposes a more rigorous *analogy* for nested created orders—one order enclosed inside a larger one—so that lower creatures cannot peer into the higher order, while the higher order can reach the lower. It is offered for conceptualization, not as a proof of Asymmetric Dual Frame (ADF), and not as laboratory physics.

Bar. Mathematical possibility. String / brane / extra-dimension language is used as a tool for leaving the observational bubble of our 3+1 spacetime. Analogy ≠ proof. Nested created orders ≠ the Creator's atemporal decree.

1. What this is for

ADF needs a picture of *asymmetric access* between created frames: the lower cannot see or resolve the higher; the higher can access the lower. The older phase-space / symplectic overlay used in Appendix H invited a Laplacean reading (a state that already contains the whole history). That reading is the wrong kind of "whole." This note replaces that machinery with an Enclosed-Brane Model (EBM): our intact 3 space + 1 time worldvolume nested inside a larger bulk with extra *spatial* dimensions.

Soft one-way mutualism is allowed: the higher may leave a *felt mark* on the lower. Access still stays one-way. The lower cannot resolve the source. Peer / equal-frame mutualism is refused.

2. Picture in plain words (Flatland first)

Imagine Flatland: beings of a plane. A three-dimensional visitor can see their whole plane—including "interiors" they cannot see of one another—while they see only cross-sections. That is already one-way *sight*.

Now harden the picture for nested *created orders*:

• Lower order (W). Our familiar world: 3 space + 1 time. Matter and light of this order are *pinned* to this worldvolume (think open-string / Dirichlet endpoints). They do not roam freely through the higher dimensions.

• Higher order / Bulk (M). A larger spacetime with extra spacelike dimensions. Observers or agencies native to the Bulk can, in principle, resolve lower observables.

• Blindness. Lower instruments only ever register lower observables. Distinct Bulk states can agree on every lower measurement. Inference from odd marks is not perception of the source.

• Felt mark without resolved source. Coupling from higher to lower may leave a mark the lower feels. The lower still cannot peer-access the higher frame.

This is eyesight / access, not ground. Ground (decree) is a different register and must not be smuggled in as geometry.

3. Formal skeleton (axioms of the sketch)

These are design axioms of a consistent sketch, not theorems that "prove heaven."

1. Bulk. Smooth Lorentzian manifold (M,G) of dimension $n \geq 5$ (one time, at least four space). Extra dimensions are spacelike. No second time dimension.

2. Lower worldvolume. Smooth 4-manifold W with a smooth timelike embedding $\iota : W \hookrightarrow M$. Induced metric $h = \iota^{*} G$ has signature (-,+,+,+). Lower history is the image of W.

3. Pinning (preferred). Lower light/matter degrees of freedom are intrinsic worldvolume fields on W (Dirichlet / support pinning), not ordinary smooth Bulk fields sitting only on a thin set. Tunneling of lower matter into the Bulk is excluded *by postulate* for the strict-confinement reading of this analogy. A finite potential well is at most a toy; exact confinement is not derived from a generic finite barrier.

4. Observable algebras. Unital C*-algebras $\mathcal{A}_W \subsetneq \mathcal{A}_M$ (common unit), with an explicit embedding or common representation. $\mathcal{A}_M$ is generated by $\mathcal{A}_W$ together with at least one surplus Bulk generator not in $\mathcal{A}_W$. Proper inclusion is by construction, not a universal claim about every proper C*-inclusion.

5. Blindness (existential). Because surplus generators exist, there exist distinct Bulk states that restrict to the same lower state. Lower instruments cannot tell them apart. The claim is existential, not "every Bulk degree of freedom is forever unreconstructible under all dynamics."

6. Soft one-way access. Every lower generator is available upstairs; surplus Bulk generators are not available downstairs. Algebraic reach is not the same as causal reach. Soft one-way mutualism: mark allowed; peer mutualism refused. Gravity-leak is demoted as the one-way *channel* (it may still illustrate mark-without-resolved-source).

7. Dual time without two-time physics. One Bulk time t. Lower proper time τ is induced from the worldvolume metric. For a warped product with brane locus y = Y(t), use $d\tau = \sqrt{n(Y)^2 - \dot{Y}^2}\, dt$ only under the axiom $n(Y)^2 - \dot{Y}^2 > 0$ so induced time stays timelike. Static brane is the safe default. This is not a second independent time dimension.

8. Optional causal widening. Warps that let Bulk curves connect brane events outside the *induced* brane light-cone are optional decoration, gated on energy/chronology conditions. Drop them and the model still stands.

9. Symplectic secondary layer (repaired). If a phase-space toy is kept, the lower sector is a symplectic submanifold of a larger phase space (second-class / confined sector), not "the whole lower order = one static Lagrangian." Symplectic repair blocks a bad *identification*; it does not by itself prove an anti-Laplace ontology. Reading discipline still does that work.

4. What this blocks

• Peer / equal-frame mutualism

• Using gravity-leak as the one-way access channel

• Treating the whole lower order as one static Lagrangian (wrong totum-simul invitation)

• Claiming geometry *proves* anti-Laplace or supplies divine ground

• Pantheism-by-containment (the Bulk stays created)

• Free lower matter roaming the Bulk under the strict-confinement reading

• Losing lower time by a bad embedding signature

5. What this still does not do

• Does not prove ADF.

• Does not equate nested creation with the Creator's atemporal decree.

• Does not rewrite ADF's main body or rename "L2."

• Does not supply *ground*—only *eyesight / access*.

• Does not claim laboratory confirmation of extra dimensions, warps, or "heaven = Bulk."

6. Relation to the older Appendix H overlay

The older symplectic overlay was vulnerable exactly where my good friend pressed (since I was only intending an analogy for visualization, I warned that it could not be pressed too far, but he did press it, so I have fixed it with a better theoretical model, one that doesn't violate the rules): phase space as Laplacean totum-simul, overlay doing little geometric work, bifurcation language misused, alternatives sitting in the wrong modal place. Those hits were largely right and forced a rebuild of the *access* picture.

The rebuild keeps the teaching aim (asymmetric access; anti-transfer of modal status) and refuses to treat every totum-simul image as Laplace, or to treat a drafting fault in an analogy as a thesis fault in ADF. Nested access and decree-first structure are separate pictures and must stay so.

7. Closing

If the Enclosed-Brane sketch is coherent as mathematics of *possibility*, it gives a cleaner illustration than the old overlay: lower 3+1 intact and nested; higher can reach; lower cannot resolve; soft mark allowed; peer mutualism refused; analogy still not proof.

Gerald Milton Smith, Jr.

Part B — Risley W. Mabile, "On the Enclosed-Brane Analogy: Pressing the Mathematics"[62]

On the Enclosed-Brane Analogy:

Pressing the Mathematics

Risley W. Mabile

September 2026

Milton, thank you for the note [16]. You've done the thing I cared most about: access and ground are now separate pictures, and the note says so plainly and more than once. So I'm not going to re-argue the theology here, except for one section near the end, and I close with a proposal for Appendix H itself. You asked whether the sketch is coherent as mathematics of possibility. It is. My question is a different one: which parts of the mathematics are doing work, and which are carried along. I'll go axiom by axiom and then say what I think survives.

As before, mathematical terms are defined in the footnotes where they first appear, formal definition first and a plain gloss after. Sources are under References.

1 The geometry of the embedding (Axioms 1, 2, and 7)

This part is right. Take a five-dimensional warped bulk[63]

$$G = -n(y)^2\,dt^2 + a(y)^2\,\delta_{ij}\,dx^i\,dx^j + dy^2,$$

and a brane at $y = Y(t)$. The embedding[64] $\iota(t,x) = (t,x,Y(t))$ has $dy = \dot{Y}\,dt$, so the induced metric is

$$h = \iota^{*}G = -\left(n(Y)^2 - \dot{Y}^2\right)dt^2 + a(Y)^2\,\delta_{ij}\,dx^i\,dx^j.$$

---

62 Risley W. Mabile, M.D., unpublished response to the author, 24 September 2026; printed with permission.

63 *Lorentzian manifold, signature.* A smooth manifold M with a metric G that at each point is a symmetric nondegenerate bilinear form on T_xM with exactly one negative eigenvalue; its *signature* is written $(-,+,\dots,+)$. Vectors v with $G(v,v) < 0$ are *timelike*. *Warped product.* A metric of the form $G = -n(y)^2\,dt^2 + a(y)^2\,\delta_{ij}\,dx^i\,dx^j + dy^2$, in which the scale of the t and x directions depends on the extra coordinate y. Plain gloss: a spacetime whose clocks and rulers are stretched differently at different depths in the extra dimension.

64 *Embedding, pullback.* An embedding $\iota : W \hookrightarrow M$ is a smooth injective map that is a homeomorphism onto its image and whose derivative is injective at every point. The *induced metric* is the pullback $h = \iota^{*}G$, defined by $h(u,v) = G(\iota_{*}u, \iota_{*}v)$. The embedding is *timelike* if h is Lorentzian. Plain gloss: the brane inherits its clocks and rulers from the bulk it sits in.

This has signature $(-,+,+,+)$ exactly when $n(Y)^2 - \dot{Y}^2 > 0$, and a brane observer at fixed x has proper time[65] $d\tau = \sqrt{n(Y)^2 - \dot{Y}^2}\, dt$. That's your formula in Axiom 7, and your positivity condition is the right one.

The mathematics does make one thing plain that the prose understates. τ is a monotone function of t. The lower order's time is a reparametrization of the higher order's time, not a second time. Your "no second time dimension" is correct, and it means the bulk is temporal in exactly the way we are: it has one time, and ours is a slice of it. I come back to this in section 7.

2 Pinning leaves only one channel (Axiom 3)

Axiom 3 makes lower fields intrinsic to W, like open strings with Dirichlet endpoints on a D-brane.[66] Postulating that is fine. But look at what it does to the dynamics. The most general action[67] consistent with the axiom splits as

$$S = S_{\text{bulk}}[G, \Psi] + S_W[\varphi; \iota^* G],$$

where Ψ are bulk fields and φ are brane fields. There is no cross term in Ψ and φ, because a cross term would be a bulk field coupling directly to lower matter, which is what the axiom rules out. So the Euler–Lagrange equations for φ depend on the bulk only through $h = \iota^* G$, together with the extrinsic curvature[68] of the embedding if S_W is allowed to depend on it.

That's gravity. Once lower matter and light are pinned, the only way anything in the bulk can register on the brane is through the geometry the brane inherits, which is the gravitational channel. This is the channel Axiom 6 demotes. So with Axioms 3 and 6 taken together, the model has no channel by which the higher can reach the lower at all. Either gravity comes back as the channel, or you add a coupling that Axiom 3 forbids.

---

65 *Proper time.* Along a timelike curve c, $\tau = \int \sqrt{-h(\dot{c}, \dot{c})}\, dt$: the time a clock carried along the curve would actually record.

66 *Dirichlet boundary condition, D-brane.* In string theory, an open string whose endpoints satisfy Dirichlet conditions (their positions held fixed in the transverse directions) must end on a fixed submanifold, called a D-brane. Open-string modes, which include gauge fields like light, are then confined to the brane. Closed strings have no endpoints; their modes include the graviton, and they propagate through the bulk [19, ch. 15].

67 *Action, Euler–Lagrange equations.* In classical field theory the *action* S is a functional of the fields whose stationary points are the physical solutions. The conditions for stationarity are the *Euler–Lagrange equations*, the field equations of the theory [8].

68 *Extrinsic curvature.* For a submanifold $W \subset M$, the second fundamental form K measures how W bends inside M; for a normal vector field N, $K(u, v) = G(\nabla_u N, v)$ for u, v tangent to W. Plain gloss: how curved the brane is as seen from the bulk, as distinct from how curved it is from inside.

3 The algebra carries the analogy (Axioms 4 and 5)

This is the heart of the note, and it's stronger than you've claimed. Axiom 5 is a theorem, not an axiom, and the "surplus generator" clause isn't needed.

Let $\mathcal{A}_W \subsetneq \mathcal{A}_M$ be unital C*-algebras[69] with a common unit, and let $\mathcal{A}_W$ be norm-closed and closed under *. A *state*[70] of $\mathcal{A}_M$ restricts to a state of $\mathcal{A}_W$. Call the restriction map $r : \omega \mapsto \omega|_{\mathcal{A}_W}$. Both halves of your asymmetric access are properties of r.

Proposition 1. *Let $\mathcal{B} \subsetneq \mathcal{A}$ be a proper unital C*-subalgebra. Then the restriction map r from states of $\mathcal{A}$ to states of $\mathcal{B}$ is*

(i) surjective: every state of $\mathcal{B}$ is the restriction of some state of $\mathcal{A}$; and

(ii) not injective: there are distinct states of $\mathcal{A}$ with the same restriction to $\mathcal{B}$.

Proof. (i) Let φ be a state of $\mathcal{B}$. By the Hahn–Banach theorem[71] it extends to a functional $\tilde{\varphi}$ on $\mathcal{A}$ with $\| \tilde{\varphi} \| = \| \varphi \| = 1 = \tilde{\varphi}(1)$. A bounded functional on a unital C*-algebra with $\| \tilde{\varphi} \| = \tilde{\varphi}(1)$ is positive [10], so $\tilde{\varphi}$ is a state.

(ii) Pick $a \in \mathcal{A} \setminus \mathcal{B}$. Since $\mathcal{B}$ is closed, Hahn–Banach gives a bounded g with $g|_{\mathcal{B}} = 0$ and $g(a) \neq 0$. Put $g^\dagger(x) = \overline{g(x^*)}$ and split $g = g_1 + i\, g_2$ with $g_1 = \frac{1}{2}(g + g^\dagger)$ and $g_2 = \frac{1}{2i}(g - g^\dagger)$. Both are hermitian,[72] and both vanish on $\mathcal{B}$ because $\mathcal{B}$ is closed under *. Since $g(a) \neq 0$, at least one of them is nonzero; call it f. By the Jordan decomposition[73] $f = f_+ - f_-$ with $f_\pm$ positive. Because $1 \in \mathcal{B}$, $0 = f(1) = f_+(1) - f_-(1)$, so $f_+(1) = f_-(1) = c$, and $c > 0$ since $f \neq 0$. Then

---

69 *C*-algebra.* A complex algebra $\mathcal{A}$ with an involution $a \mapsto a^*$ and a complete norm satisfying $\| ab \| \leq \| a \| \, \| b \|$ and $\| a^* a \| = \| a \|^2$. It is *unital* if it has a multiplicative identity 1. The bounded operators on a Hilbert space form the standard example. In quantum theory, self-adjoint elements ($a = a^*$) represent observables [10].

70 *State.* A linear functional $\omega : \mathcal{A} \to \mathbb{C}$ that is *positive* ($\omega(a^* a) \geq 0$ for all a) and normalized ($\omega(1) = 1$). Plain gloss: an assignment of expectation values to every observable, which is what a physical state of the system amounts to. For a positive functional on a unital C*-algebra, $\| \omega \| = \omega(1)$ [10].

71 *Hahn–Banach theorem.* A bounded linear functional on a subspace of a normed space extends to the whole space with the same norm. It also gives, for any closed subspace V and any vector $a \notin V$, a bounded functional vanishing on V but not at a [10].

72 *Hermitian functional.* One with $f(x^*) = \overline{f(x)}$ for all x; equivalently, real-valued on self-adjoint elements.

73 *Jordan decomposition.* Every bounded hermitian functional f on a C*-algebra can be written $f = f_+ - f_-$ with $f_\pm$ positive and $\| f \| = \| f_+ \| + \| f_- \|$ [10, 13]. It is the analogue of splitting a signed measure into positive and negative parts.

$\omega_\pm = f_\pm / c$ are states of $\mathscr{A}$. For every $b \in \mathscr{B}$, $\omega_+(b) - \omega_-(b) = f(b)/c = 0$, so they have the same restriction. And $\omega_+ \neq \omega_-$ because $f \neq 0$. □

Three consequences follow.

First: blindness needs nothing beyond proper inclusion. Axiom 4's surplus Bulk generator is automatic, since any $a \in \mathscr{A}_M \setminus \mathscr{A}_W$ serves, and Axiom 5 follows from Axiom 4 by Proposition 1(ii). I'd state it as a result, since it's stronger than a design axiom and costs nothing.

Second: no geometry is involved. The smallest example is two qubits.[74] Take $\mathscr{A}_W = M_2 \otimes 1 \subsetneq M_2 \otimes M_2 = \mathscr{A}_M$. The entangled Bell state $|\Phi^+\rangle\langle\Phi^+|$ and the product state $\frac{1}{2}1 \otimes \frac{1}{2}1$ are different states of the pair, but both restrict to the maximally mixed state $\frac{1}{2}1$ on the first qubit. Everything Axioms 4 and 5 are after is already present in a four-dimensional matrix algebra, with no bulk, no warp, and no branes.

Third: the inclusion is stipulated, not derived. That the higher order's observables include the lower's is the content of $\mathscr{A}_W \subset \mathscr{A}_M$, and nothing in the brane geometry produces that inclusion. So the load-bearing claim of the analogy ("higher can resolve lower; lower cannot resolve higher") enters the model as an assumption about algebras. The branes then illustrate an assumption that has already been made.

4 Reach, marks, and mutual coupling (Axiom 6)

You write that "algebraic reach is not the same as causal reach." That's right, and it's where the model is thinnest. Axioms 1–6 contain no dynamics linking the two orders, so the felt mark isn't modeled at all.

To model it you need an interaction. In the quantum picture, let the Heisenberg dynamics[75] of the combined system be $\alpha_t(a) = e^{itH} a e^{-itH}$ with $H = H_W \otimes 1 + 1 \otimes H_B + H_{\text{int}}$. If $H_{\text{int}} = 0$, then α_t maps $\mathscr{A}_W$ into itself and the lower order evolves autonomously: no mark. If

---

74 *Qubit, tensor product,* M_2. M_2 is the algebra of 2×2 complex matrices, the observables of a two-level quantum system (a *qubit*). The observables of two qubits form $M_2 \otimes M_2 \cong M_4$, and $M_2 \otimes 1$ is the subalgebra of observables on the first qubit alone. $|\Phi^+\rangle = (|00\rangle + |11\rangle)/\sqrt{2}$ is the standard maximally entangled (Bell) state [12].

75 *Heisenberg dynamics, automorphism.* Time evolution represented as a one-parameter family α_t of *automorphisms* of the observable algebra (structure-preserving bijections), $\alpha_t(a) = e^{itH} a e^{-itH}$ for a Hamiltonian H. Observables move; states stay fixed. Plain gloss: the rule for how every measurable quantity changes with time.

$H_{\text{int}} \neq 0$, the lower order's reduced dynamics is in general a family of completely positive maps[76] that isn't unitary. That non-unitarity is a good mathematical picture of a mark without a resolved source: the lower order registers a disturbance and can't reconstruct what did it.

The problem is that coupling of this kind is mutual. Classically it's one line.

Proposition 2. *Let* $H(x, p, y, \pi) = H_W(x, p) + H_B(y, \pi) + V(x, y)$ *with* V *twice continuously differentiable, where* (x, p) *are lower and* (y, π) *are bulk coordinates. If the force on the lower order,* $-\partial V / \partial x$*, depends on the bulk configuration* y*, then the force on the bulk,* $-\partial V / \partial y$*, depends on the lower configuration* x*.*

Proof. The first condition says $\partial^2 V / \partial y \, \partial x \not\equiv 0$. By the symmetry of mixed partial derivatives[77] $\partial^2 V / \partial x \, \partial y \not\equiv 0$, which is the second condition. □

The quantum version is the same in substance: an interaction $H_{\text{int}} = \sum_k A_k \otimes B_k$ generates evolution on both factors at once, and back-action[78] is generic.

Strict one-way influence does exist in the mathematics, but it has to be built in. In quantum information it's called a *semicausal* operation: one party can signal the other but not the reverse [2]. Eggeling, Schlingemann, and Werner proved that semicausal operations are exactly the *semilocalizable* ones, those that can be carried out by the first party acting and then passing a system one way to the second [6]. So your "soft one-way mutualism" has a precise mathematical name. But it is an extra postulate about the form of the coupling, and it isn't delivered by the brane. The physically natural couplings in brane-world models, gravity above all, are two-way.

5 Axioms 8 and 9

Axiom 8, bulk shortcuts between brane events, is real mathematics. Geodesics through a warped bulk can connect brane points outside the induced light-cone [4]. You mark it optional, and the model loses nothing without it. I'd drop it, since it invites the reader to ask what it's for.

---

76 *Reduced dynamics, completely positive map.* The evolution of a subsystem's state obtained by evolving the whole system and then restricting. It is given by *completely positive, trace-preserving* maps, the most general physically allowed transformations of a quantum state, which need not be reversible [3]. Plain gloss: how a part of a system changes when it is being disturbed by the rest.

77 *Symmetry of mixed partials (Schwarz's theorem).* If V has continuous second derivatives, then $\partial^2 V / \partial x \, \partial y = \partial^2 V / \partial y \, \partial x$.

78 *Back-action.* The disturbance a measured or coupled system exerts on the system it's coupled to; the quantum counterpart of Newton's third law.

Axiom 9 should go. Second-class constraints do cut out a symplectic submanifold[79] [5, 9], so "symplectic, not Lagrangian" is the correct repair of the identification. But a symplectic submanifold preserved by the flow is itself a Hamiltonian system: the Hamiltonian vector field restricts to it, and by Picard–Lindelöf there is exactly one trajectory through each of its points. The lower sector is exactly as Laplacean as before. You concede that it "does not by itself prove an anti-Laplace ontology." Then it earns nothing, and it's a way back into the Appendix H problem.

6 What survives

Strip out what's idle and the model reduces to three statements.

(1) The lower order's observables are a proper subalgebra of the higher order's: $\mathcal{A}_W \subsetneq \mathcal{A}_M$.

(2) Hence, by Proposition 1, every lower state is realized upstairs, and the lower is blind to some differences upstairs. Both are theorems.

(3) The higher leaves a mark on the lower through a coupling postulated to be semicausal, higher to lower; the lower's reduced dynamics then registers a disturbance whose source it cannot reconstruct.

Flatland can go on top as the picture. That's a sound model of asymmetric access, and it passes your own Appendix C rule, one sentence of image with the disanalogy named. The extra dimensions, the warp, the Dirichlet pinning, the proper-time formula, and the second-class sector can all go. They're consistent, and none of them does any work.

7 What the mathematics can't settle

One point, and then I'll leave it. The model's higher order is a created, temporal, spatially extended bulk, with our time a slice of its time. Mathematically that makes it a larger creature. The note says, rightly, that nested creation is not the Creator's decree. So the analogy needs to say what the higher order stands for. If it's the heavenly council and the enemy (1 Kings 22, Job 1–2), then it's a picture for Appendix G and not for ADF's G/C asymmetry. If it's meant to picture God's access to the creature, then the created, temporal bulk works against it: a bigger

79 *Second-class constraints, Dirac bracket.* In Dirac's theory of constrained Hamiltonian systems, constraints $\chi_a = 0$ are *second-class* when the matrix of their Poisson brackets $\{\chi_a, \chi_b\}$ is invertible. The constraint surface is then a symplectic submanifold, and the *Dirac bracket* is the Poisson bracket it inherits [5, 9].

spacetime with more dimensions is the "one more agent, only larger" picture that II.8 rejects. The mathematics fits either reading equally well, which is exactly why it can't settle the question.

8 A proposal for Appendix H

Everything above is subtraction, so I owe you an addition. The reason the containment pictures keep going idle is, I think, structural. Phase space around a slice and a bulk around a brane both put the higher order in a bigger space, and however the axioms are tuned, containment makes the higher a larger thing of the same kind: one more region of reality, with its own time and its own causes, reaching into ours. The asymmetry ADF needs isn't one of size. It's one of level: two complete explanations of one act that don't compete. No number of extra dimensions pictures that, because the relation you want is one in which the higher isn't located in the lower at all.

The oldest image for that relation is the author and the story, and it does in one picture what your email said needed two. What follows is drafted as a replacement for Appendix H, in something close to the paper's register, so you can lift whatever is useful.

Appendix H — Asymmetry Pictured

The image. Ask why Macbeth killed Duncan. One true answer is ambition, a wife's pressure, and a prophecy half-understood; that explanation is complete inside the play, and no reader thinks Macbeth didn't really choose. Another true answer is that Shakespeare wrote it. The second answer doesn't subtract anything from the first. Neither is a partial cause waiting for the other to finish the job. They answer two different questions, and that is the grammar of II.7: Question D asks whether, relative to the decree, the act's futurition is secured; Question C asks whether the creature's own antecedents necessitate it. The author image makes the grammar visible. Two answers, two levels, no ballot.

What it shows. First: ground without rivalry. Everything in the play exists because it was written, and the writing is not one of the causes in Scotland. Aquinas states the rule directly: the same effect is not attributed partly to God and partly to the natural agent, but wholly to both, in different orders [1, III, c. 70]. Farrer called this double agency [7]; Tanner calls it non-contrastive transcendence, meaning that God's agency is not on the creature's plane and so cannot compete with it [17].

Second: one-way access. The author knows every line. Macbeth could search Scotland to its last stone and not find Shakespeare, not because Shakespeare is hidden well but because the author is not a place in the story. The lower cannot resolve the source, and nothing has to be postulated to make that so.

Third: a mark without a rival cause. The author can shape events from within (a prophecy, a providence-shaped coincidence) without becoming a character, and nothing Macbeth does acts on Shakespeare as a cause. The influence is one-way by the nature of the relation, not by a condition placed on a coupling.

Lastly: the author can write himself into his own story. Sayers built a book on this [14], and Lewis used the same image to explain why God would not be found as one more object inside the world [11]. This is where the image earns its place in ADF: the decree is not the center of the story; the author's entry into it is. That is the point Appendix G makes about Christ, and the image carries it without strain.

What it does not show. Characters are not real agents; creatures are. A critic will say the image makes creaturely freedom a fiction, or that "Shakespeare wrote it" is determinism with good manners. So the image is restricted to what it teaches: that the two levels don't compete, and that access runs one way. It does not picture the creature's contingency and must not be asked to. That work belongs to the figure below, and to the indexed operators of Appendix A.

The figure. Let Γ be the field of possible world-histories, the object of God's knowledge of simple intelligence. The decree G selects one history γ^*, the object of the knowledge of vision. At a choice point p on γ^*, let $\mathrm{Opt}_C(p)$ be the outcomes not excluded by the creature's token-complete antecedents C.

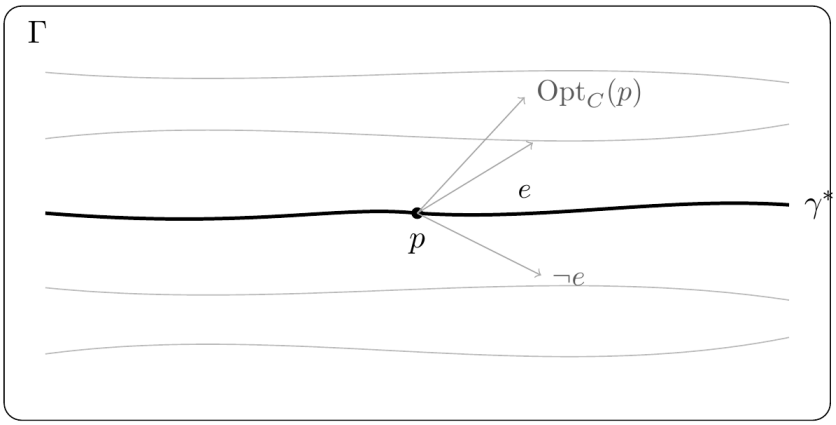


Figure 1: Possible histories (light), the decreed history γ^* (heavy), and the creature's options at p (fan). $\Box_G e$: e lies on γ^* and is secured there by G. $\Diamond_C \neg e$: $\neg e \in \mathrm{Opt}_C(p)$. The heavy line is G's; the fan is C's.

The anti-transfer ban of Appendix A can now be seen rather than stated. Membership in $\mathrm{Opt}_C(p)$ is a fact about C. Membership in γ^* is a fact about G. Neither is read off the other. The composite sense of Appendix B is the attempt to hold γ^* fixed and walk down $\neg e$ anyway, which the figure shows to be impossible; the divided sense is the fan itself, which is real.

A formal note for readers who want one. The one-way access in the author image has a precise and very small formal core. If the lower order's observables are a proper subalgebra of the higher order's, then every lower state is realized in the higher, and distinct higher states are indistinguishable from below. (This is Proposition 1 of this note.) Nothing further in the way of geometry is needed, and none is offered.

What this appendix does not claim. It does not prove ADF. It does not make creatures fictional, and it does not make the decree a script that empties second causes; the confession's grammar governs the image, not the reverse [18, 3.1, 5.2]. It borrows no physics. Consistent with Appendix C, it offers one image, names its disanalogy, and hands the work of contingency to the figure and to Appendix A.

That's the whole of it: about two pages in the paper's format, against the six the old appendix and the brane note together would need. It also keeps what you told me you didn't want to lose. Access is one-way, the mark is soft, peer mutualism is excluded, and nested access stays distinct from decree-first grounding, the first in the image and the second in the figure.

The brane note is a better model than the old overlay, and I'd rather see this proposal in the paper than either. Happy to go through it with you.

References

[1] Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Book Three: *Providence*. Translated by Vernon J. Bourke. 2 vols. New York: Hanover House, 1956; repr. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975. Cited by book and chapter.

[2] Beckman, David, Daniel Gottesman, M. A. Nielsen, and John Preskill. "Causal and Localizable Quantum Operations." *Physical Review A* 64, no. 5 (2001): 052309.

[3] Breuer, Heinz-Peter, and Francesco Petruccione. *The Theory of Open Quantum Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

[4] Chung, Daniel J. H., and Katherine Freese. "Can Geodesics in Extra Dimensions Solve the Cosmological Horizon Problem?" *Physical Review D* 62, no. 6 (2000): 063513.

[5] Dirac, P. A. M. *Lectures on Quantum Mechanics*. Belfer Graduate School of Science Monographs Series 2. New York: Yeshiva University, 1964.

[6] Eggeling, T., D. Schlingemann, and R. F. Werner. "Semicausal Operations Are Semilocalizable." *Europhysics Letters* 57, no. 6 (2002): 782–788.

[7] Farrer, Austin. *Faith and Speculation: An Essay in Philosophical Theology*. London: A. & C. Black, 1967.

[8] Goldstein, Herbert, Charles P. Poole, and John L. Safko. *Classical Mechanics*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Addison-Wesley, 2002.

[9] Henneaux, Marc, and Claudio Teitelboim. *Quantization of Gauge Systems*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

[10] Kadison, Richard V., and John R. Ringrose. *Fundamentals of the Theory of Operator Algebras*. Vol. 1, *Elementary Theory*. New York: Academic Press, 1983; repr. Providence, RI: American Mathematical Society, 1997.

[11] Lewis, C. S. "The Seeing Eye." In *Christian Reflections*, edited by Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967.

[12] Nielsen, Michael A., and Isaac L. Chuang. *Quantum Computation and Quantum Information*. 10th anniversary ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

[13] Pedersen, Gert K. *C*-Algebras and Their Automorphism Groups*. London Mathematical Society Monographs 14. London: Academic Press, 1979.

[14] Sayers, Dorothy L. *The Mind of the Maker*. London: Methuen, 1941.

[15] Smith, Gerald Milton, Jr. “Asymmetric Dual-Frame Compatibilism: Asymmetric Antecedence and the Refusal of an Impossible Demand.” Unpublished manuscript, 2026.

[16] Smith, Gerald Milton, Jr. “Nested Created Orders: An Enclosed-Brane Analogy.” Unpublished note, September 23, 2026.

[17] Tanner, Kathryn. *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

[18] *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as Adopted by the Presbyterian Church in America, with Proof Texts*. Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education & Publications, 2007. Cited by chapter and section.

[19] Zwiebach, Barton. *A First Course in String Theory*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.