

arguing that strong impartiality results in deliberative vertigo. One promising response in cases of defeated belief is nondoxastic commitment. While nondoxastic commitment has its value, Pittard argues that it requires beliefs about the practical or functional benefit that a religious outlook could entail. Conjoining this with epistemic impartiality prevents rational commitment to any religious or irreligious way of life, often resulting in the assignment of nontrivial credences to outlooks one finds implausible or undesirable. Strong conciliationism likewise results in practical vertigo, where normative uncertainty undermines religious decision-making. When one lacks a symmetry-breaking rationale for accepting one religious outlook over others, higher-order normative uncertainty leaves one nowhere to stand.

In sum, though I remain skeptical that *all* theists and atheists would see Pittard's conciliationism as decisive, the account is designed for such persistent disagreements. At places, disagreement-motivated skepticism can seem secondary to the broader discussion of disagreement. Yet, the depth and scope of the book's many arguments facilitate a fecund account that clarifies central issues for future disagreements about religious disagreement. It is essential reading for scholars of disagreement and religion alike.

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Peter Furlong, *The Challenges of Divine Determinism: A Philosophical Analysis*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019, 246pp.

Peter Furlong describes his new book, *The Challenges of Divine Determinism: A Philosophical Analysis*, as “an exploration of philosophical topography” (3) which investigates the most significant objections to divine (or theological) determinism, the possible responses that have been, or might be, made to those objections, and the various “costs” associated with such responses. It is a careful and thorough investigation, turning, as he says, “common and often vague worries into nuanced objections” (3) and leaving no philosophical stone unturned in consideration of replies and counter-replies. Furlong is fair in his analysis, and modest in his conclusions, noting that an ultimate determination of the plausibility of divine determinism lies outside the purview of the book,

depending on myriad factors not discussed therein; and he even refreshingly admits how his views have changed, so that he no longer thinks divine determinism, or compatibilism, is obviously false. The book is an excellent example of intellectual rigor combined with epistemic humility about a topic so enigmatic as the providence of God. Below I summarize Furlong's major arguments and conclusions, and point to a few places for further exploration.

After laying out his definition of divine determinism, noting the difference between two versions of the view, and briefly summarizing some motivations for holding it in Chapter One, Furlong begins in Chapters Two and Three to consider challenges to the view. He starts with two arguments for the conclusion that divine determinism undermines human freedom: the consequence argument and the manipulation argument. Furlong notes that the standard consequence argument, for the incompatibility of natural determinism and free will, may be reformulated to rely on a similar transfer of powerlessness principle that rules out human freedom in a divinely determined world. Thus, he concludes, "Consequence-style arguments — which are currently considered among the strongest arguments for incompatibilism — seem to threaten both [natural determinism and divine determinism] equally" (59). His conclusion regarding the manipulation argument is different. Since this line of reasoning depends on judgments of relevant similarity between different cases in which an individual is determined in his actions, and since God's determination is different in significant ways from determination by natural causes, the divine determinist may have more reason to be skeptical of the conclusion. Furlong's discussion is quite sensitive to the uniqueness of divine determinism; it is clear he has listened attentively to the accounts put forward by divine determinists.

In Chapter Four, Furlong considers whether divine determinism entails that God is the *cause* of sin. While he rejects one prominent response which he calls the "modest" privation solution, since even if the key claims of this response are granted, they are insufficient to establish that God does not cause sin, he seems to endorse another — the "robust" privation solution. According to both responses, "sin is 'composed' of two elements: the act of sin and a defect"; but whereas the first response "does not deny that privations can be caused" altogether (87), the second does. In Chapter Five, Furlong moves on to consider whether divine determinism entails that God is *blameworthy* for sin. He explains lucidly how this objection is distinct from the standard problem of evil: whereas the latter "is often considered in terms of God's ability

to have created a world better than this one,” the blameworthiness objection “suggests that no matter which alternatives are possible, it was impermissible for God to create this one, since doing so includes an impermissible cooperation with evil” (107). The blameworthiness objection thus relies on a kind of Pauline principle, according to which it is wrong to do evil that good may come. The responses considered reject this principle, either in general (the consequentialist reply) or as applicable to God (because of his authority over creation, and/or transcendence over the moral realm). Furlong’s discussion of the various possible responses and their respective costs is especially thorough. He ultimately recommends a “noncommittal strategy,” according to which the divine determinist simply points to the plurality of possible responses and maintains that at least one of them is correct. He notes, “If each individual reply brings a cost, then the disjunctive proposal has its own price tag. We might think of this cost as being itself disjunctive.... The blameworthiness objection, then, is powerful insofar as it lays bare additional costs of divine determinism” (133).

Furlong’s conclusion regarding the problem of evil is complex. In Chapter Six he considers multiple compatibilist-friendly versions of free-will-based responses to the logical, and evidential, problem of evil, and finds them wanting, relying on assumptions most divine determinists would reject. Yet he views the logical problem of evil as less of a threat to theism than the evidential, and notes that while the free will defense is a widely supported solution to the logical problem, there is no such solution to the evidential. So in one case the divine determinist simply loses “a great response to a mediocre objection,” and in the other, “a mediocre response to a powerful objection” (155). He concludes that “the loss of the [free will defense] and some freedom-based replies... are dialectical costs, rather than theoretical ones,” meaning they do not saddle divine determinists with any “theoretical baggage,” but their denial of libertarian freedom makes certain common argumentative “moves” unavailable to them (159).

In Chapter Seven, Furlong considers two questions about divine determinism and love: whether divine determinists must give up the image of God as a loving parent, and whether divine determinism entails that humans cannot love God. He finds the second question less concerning. For (again) divine determination of human actions and intentions is unique in significant ways and so may not be thought to violate the conditions necessary for meaningful human love of God (the autonomous surrender of some of one’s autonomy).

Or perhaps even natural determinism does not violate these conditions. Or perhaps these conditions do not apply to humans' love of God, since "union with God is not, in the end, just one more interpersonal relationship alongside others" (185). With respect to this last point, Furlong insightfully suggests that "The human yearning for union with the divine cannot be thought of as that of a perfectly autonomous creature freely and spontaneously surrendering some of its autonomy, but instead of a radically dependent being seeking a return to its source and natural end" (185). Regarding God's love for (all) created persons, Furlong finds especially troubling the combination of divine determinism with the doctrine of hell. He deals patiently here with responses to the problem that he considers totally unsatisfactory, including some that other authors might not have patience for, such as the idea that God determines some people to eternal damnation out of respect for their autonomy. Included among the not-totally-unsatisfactory responses he canvasses are a skeptical "greater good" defense according to which the evils we suffer (including those we perpetrate) are for our own good — possibly combined with an embrace of universalism — or a rejection of the parental image of divine love. He judges all possible responses to the problem of divine love costly, for one reason or another.

In the eighth and final chapter, Furlong considers a number of problems related to the divine will, the two most significant of which he thinks are the possibility of divine deception, and the problem of human contrition over past sins. The first problem is that divine determinism would seem to imply that God is deceptive, in giving us commands that He sometimes determines us not to follow. If God gives us a command, He would seem to intend us to believe that He wills that we (always) obey it; but evidently He does not will this, since sometimes He determines us to violate His commands. Furlong is doubtful that simply drawing a distinction between God's antecedent and consequent will solves the problem, and instead suggests that divine determinists maintain that "divine commands are given not merely to make clear the divine will, but... to instill the belief that obedience to the command will aid in the pursuit of fulfillment" (193) — a belief that is not incompatible with divine determinism. The second problem is that the wish that one had not committed past sins seems to be in tension with the hope that God's will should be fulfilled, if one's sins were determined by God (198). In response, Furlong suggests understanding repentance in terms not of wishing the past

had been different, but of “having a set of responses — notably, recognition and abhorrence of the past sin, asking for forgiveness and working for restitution, and an intention to avoid all such further actions” (200). While he finds such a response reasonable, he notes that it “sacrifices something that nondeterminists can easily secure” (203).

I agree with most of Furlong’s conclusions, including those regarding the relative strength of the consequence and manipulation arguments when applied to divine versus natural determinism, and the plausibility of freedom-based replies to the problem of evil. And I appreciate his novel discussion of other issues, such as the blameworthiness objection and the various responses that might be made to it. With respect to other challenges, I think more needs to be said before a final determination of the costs of divine determinism can be made. Consider, for instance, the privation response to the charge that God is the cause of sin. Furlong spends most of Chapter Four criticizing the “modest” version of the response, and only lays out the “robust” version in the space of three pages at the end. But nowhere does he consider the plausibility of the fundamental claim on which this response, in both versions, depends: that sin is composed of an act and a privation, the latter of which does not have being. Moreover, regarding why it matters whether God is the cause of sin, he writes, “The core worry seems to be that [the claim that God causes sin] involves God far too closely with evil. If God is wholly good, the idea goes, that must involve not only an innocence of moral wrongdoing, but also a kind of purity that would be sullied by causing sin” (104). The problem is, denying God’s causation of sin in the way the robust solution does may not get to the heart of this worry. For one implication of the robust solution is that *no one* is the cause of sin — not God, but not creatures either. But, one might think that any purported solution to the problem that distances creatures from sin as much as it distances God is really no solution at all. So more must be said about the core worry and how the proposed solution is supposed to help, as well as the plausibility of the solution itself, before we can assess the cost of divine determinism with regard to this problem.

My suspicion is that the problem of divine causation of sin is a significant one, and that the privation solution is both intrinsically implausible and unhelpful in resolving the problem. I also think the problem of contrition is more serious than Furlong seems to, and that the “cost” is not simply that divine determinists must slightly amend their view of what repentance in-

volves. Recall that Furlong suggests replacing the wish that the past had been different — that one had not sinned — with, among other things, abhorrence of the past sin. But this seems equally “in tension” with divine determinism’s other commitments. For how can one abhor something that was (consequently) willed by God, as part of the eternal plan? In a separate section of the book, Furlong notes that love involves adoption of the beloved’s “values, cares, concerns, and desires as one’s own” (198). But then love of God would seem to involve valuing the divine plan as it has been revealed to us, so far, in the history of the world. So, just as Christians think of Jesus’s crucifixion (an act of torture by a corrupt state), so must divine determinists think of *all* sin and evil: as something, ultimately, to rejoice and be glad in, as God-given and for the greater good. This is deeply troubling.

So at least two problems Furlong discusses I think are not strongly enough put. In other cases, Furlong simply mentions implications of certain responses, labels them “costly,” and moves on, where it is not clear to me whether there is any cost at all, and if so, how significant it is. For instance, in considering the universalist response to the problem of divine love, Furlong notes that “Many Western theists have hesitated to adopt universalism,” and then quotes one such theist who suggests the scriptural support for the position is thin, and that it could “trivialize the moral experience of life,” among other concerns. Furlong goes on to admit he has “no interest in evaluating these concerns,” but then concludes by saying, “universalism brings with it significant costs” (169); and he later calls the problem of divine love “the greatest difficulty for divine determinism” (221). But such a conclusion seems premature, without some serious evaluation of the concerns to which he alludes. Similarly, his assessment that the rejection of libertarian freedom comes at “some cost” to the divine determinist faced with the logical problem of evil (155) is difficult to assess, without a more thorough investigation of the seriousness of the problem and the plausibility of other possible solutions to it. Furlong admits that a thorough investigation of even one such alternative response — skeptical theism — “would take a volume” (155); and he also emphasizes that the weighing of costs is relative to what other commitments one might have. Yet it seems to me that in such cases where space is lacking for further investigation, the label of “cost” is best avoided altogether.