I. INTRODUCTION

I believe, and so do you, that there is an awfully significant distinction between these two states of affairs:

(A) I went to the movies, instead of working on my thesis
(B) I was hit by a truck, so I cannot work on my thesis

In (A), I did the wrong thing and I can be held responsible for it. In (B), I suffered bad luck, and there is nothing to blame me for. One merits blame, the other merits sympathy. These distinctions reflect the division in my daily experience between things that I do and things that merely happen to me—but to make this distinction requires the deployment of an extensive conceptual framework for my actions. Clearly anything which is my action requires some movement from within me, but it is not enough for motions to occur within my body. If a truck smashes into me, my body will certainly move, but this movement is not my action. My actions must also originate from within me in some way. Yet there are other motions that do originate from within my body—a fever, or a kick reflex—which are also events I suffer rather than actions I perform. If going to the movies were an event of this sort, I would observe my legs pushing me toward the door, my hand closing around the knob, my foot pushing down on the gas pedal, and so on, without any further involvement on my part. It would not be my action at all; it would only be a queer example of something happening to me, as if my body were possessed by
a demon.

For an event to count as my *action*, then, it must involve movements in me, and it must originate from within me, but it must also have the involvement of my conscious will. I must have made some *choice* in the matter. I went to the movies, but I *could have* worked on my thesis instead. I must have some deliberative choice between possibilities, or else enterprises of great pitch and moment lose the name of action.

But with the introduction of modal terms, we have run ourselves right into the familiar controversies over modality. It has often been claimed that there is no way to make this aspect of agency intelligible. In particular, a genus of arguments about the past, including an argument from God’s foreknowledge and an argument from true predictions, claims that all future happenings, including my choices, are already fixed and there are no alternatives for me to choose. The arguments are structurally equivalent, and they depend on a general problem at the intersection of temporal and modal logic that endangers our ability to make our experience of agency intelligible to ourselves. But there is truth in Hölderin’s words:

> But where danger is, grows
> The saving power also.

The arguments *must* fail, since agency is an inescapable element of human experience. The process of showing *how* the arguments fail will also help us to make sense of the paradoxical claim that *there are* acts which were not *actually* performed, and understand what must be true of a world where we can intelligibly distinguish (A) from (B).

**II. THE FOREKNOWLEDGE ARGUMENT**

It seems clear that (A) is an instance of the sin of sloth. But if there is an omniscient God, then, as Evodius says in Augustine’s *On Free Choice of the Will*, “It would be an irreligious and completely insane attack on God’s foreknowledge to say that something could happen otherwise
than as God foreknew” (III.2). God knew from the depths of eternity that I would go to the movies, and I can only act within the bounds of a history that God has already foreseen. Given this, Evodius wonders “how God can have foreknowledge of everything in the future, and yet we do not sin by necessity” (III.2). For God has always known that I would choose entertainment over academic diligence, and since whatever God foreknows must come to pass, Evodius argues, “his sin necessarily had to happen” (III.2), and “How, then, is the will free when such inescapable necessity is found in it?” (III.2). If there is a God who knows everything we will do, then it seems that we can do nothing other than whatever we are, in God’s knowledge, already predestined to do. And thus it seems like my ‘sin’ of going to the movies is no sin at all. I had no more choice over it than over being hit by a truck in (B), so no blame attaches to it. It is not an action of mine at all, but rather something that I was compelled to by necessity, a preordained twitch of my body that God foresees in full.

III. THE PARALLEL ARGUMENT

If the foreknowledge argument is sound, then a Christian must admit either that there is no omniscient God, or that there is no volitional action. Since Christianity is committed to both doctrines, if Evodius succeeds, then Christianity fails. This seems like a worry that will only trouble those with a prior commitment to Christianity, but appearances here are deceiving. A parallel argument in the Ancient literature demonstrates that Evodian worries cut deeper than it would seem at first glance.

Let us suppose that 100,000 years ago, two people, Og and Grog, were arguing about laziness in the future, and Og said, “In 100,000 years, Charles will go to the movies.” Grog, who is more of an optimist, disagrees: “In 100,000 years, Charles will forego the movies.” In §9

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1 Translated from the original Caveman
of *On Interpretation*, Aristotle observes that, if in every pair of contradictories, one must be true and the other must be false, it follows that “clearly it is necessary for one of them to speak truly” (599). If I do go to the movies, then Og spoke truly and Grog spoke falsely. If I don’t, Grog spoke truly and Og spoke falsely. One or the other prediction must be true, by the law of the excluded middle, and if a statement is true, then necessarily it follows that the state of affairs expressed by the statement obtains. Thus if Og spoke truly 100,000 years ago, it necessarily follows that I would go to the movies—100,000 years before I ever made my decision.

At this point, it seems as though a crucial error discloses itself. The argument seems to have been:

a) If a statement is true, then necessarily the state of affairs it expresses is also true.

b) If it was true to say that “In 100,000 years, Charles will go to the movies,” then necessarily Charles goes to the movies.

c) If necessarily Charles goes to the movies, then it is not possible that Charles does not go to the movies (i.e., it was predetermined).

But if this is the argument, then it has obviously fallen prey to the fallacy of distributed necessity. It is true that the following *conditional* is necessarily true:

\[(a) \quad \square (\text{“X will be the case” was a true statement} \implies X)\]

But it seems as though we have wrongly tried to go from this to some sort of modal ontological for the necessary truth of the consequent:

\[(a’) \quad \text{“X will be the case” was a true statement} \implies \square X\]

And to go from the obvious truth of (a) to the dubious (a’), is merely to exploit an ambiguity in grammatical role for ‘necessarily’ in the original sentence. If the statement is properly segmented, then the inference is justified by nothing. It is necessarily the case that: if Og spoke truly, then the state of affairs he expressed *actually* obtains. But there is no reason to say that it *necessarily* obtains, or that there are no other possibilities that *could have* obtained, and the fatalist has no more argument.
However, we cannot deal with Og and Grog’s conversation in such an expeditious manner if we conjoin these observations with the celebrated ‘Master Argument’ of Diodorus. According to Epictetus (38A), Diodorus argues that three statements form an inconsistent triad, one of which must be rejected:

1. ‘Every past truth is necessary’
2. ‘Something impossible does not follow from something possible’
3. ‘There is something possible which neither is nor will be true’

If our actions are choices amongst possible alternatives, then (3) must be true. (2) is an axiom of modal logic. And (1) seems to be justified by the fact that part of what it is for a fact to be past is that it is fixed and cannot change, or as Cicero writes in On Fate (38E5) “all past truths are necessary ... because past facts are immutable and cannot change from true to false.” On the face of it, this seems to be a modal statement: it is not possible for what is true of the past to be otherwise than it is, i.e., it is necessary that what is true of the past is true. What it is for the past to be past, is that what has happened, has happened, and there is no other way for it to be.

Epictetus and other commentators do not elaborate how Diodorus found these three initially plausible propositions to be inconsistent. However, Aristotle’s observations can provide the hidden premise we need: “it was always true to say of any thing that has happened that it would be” (599). Introducing the premise here will also deflect the earlier charge against it that necessity was being unjustly distributed. Since we now have the premise that past truths are necessary, it follows that the past fact that it was true that Og spoke rightly, like all other past facts, is necessary. Because of this, it would be impossible that Grog’s contradictory statement was true. And if I didn’t go to the movies, then it follows that Grog’s statement was true. Since the impossible consequence—that Grog’s statement was true—cannot follow from a possible antecedent, it is impossible for me not to have gone to the movies, if I actually did go to the movies. Let us reconstruct the Master Argument as follows, with the Aristotelian premise (call it
MA+A):

**Supposing:**

a) \( X \text{ was the case } \Rightarrow \Box(X \text{ was the case}) \) (1)

b) \((\Diamond p \land \neg \Diamond q) \Rightarrow \neg(p \Rightarrow q)\) (2)

c) \((\exists p)[\Diamond p \land \neg p]\) (3)

d) \( \Box(p \Rightarrow \text{“p will be the case” was true}) \) –hidden premise

**There is some statement p, such that:**

e) \( \Diamond p \) –simplification of (c)

f) \( \neg p \) –simplification of (c)

g) \( \neg p \text{ will be the case” was true } \Rightarrow \Box(\neg p \text{ will be the case” was true}) \) –from (a)

h) \( \Box(\neg p \Rightarrow \neg p \text{ will be the case” was true}) \) –from (d)

i) \( \neg p \Rightarrow \Box(\neg p \text{ will be the case” was true}) \) –from (g) and (h)

j) \( \neg p \Rightarrow \neg \Diamond(\neg p \text{ will be the case” was true}) \) –from (j)

k) \( p \Rightarrow \text{“p will be the case” was true} \) –from (d)

l) \( \neg \Diamond(\text{“p will be the case” was true}) \) –from (f) and (j)

m) \( \neg \Diamond p \) –from (b), (k), and (l)

n) \( \Diamond p \land \neg \Diamond p \) –conjunction of (e) and (m)

By conjoining the hidden premise with Diodorus’s three statements, we derive a contradiction.

At least one of the original premises must be rejected.

**IV. THE GENERAL PROBLEM**

In both Evodius’s foreknowledge argument and MA+A, a true prediction of events seems to narrow the field of chosen action to a vanishing point. It was rightly predicted ahead of time that I would go to the movies, and if it was rightly predicted, there’s nothing else to be done, and how can anyone say I had a choice in the matter? We can ensure a right prediction through the device of God’s foreknowledge (since for God to know it in advance, it must be true in advance).

But since for any pair of contradictories one and only one of the speakers spoke truly, we can just as easily use two contradictory predictions, even if neither person knew which one was true.

As Aristotle observes, we do not actually need either God’s foreknowledge, nor an actual pair of statements, except as illustrations to point the way. It does not make a difference “whether or not anyone made the contradictory statements; for clearly things are thus even if
someone did not affirm it and another deny it. For it is not because of the affirming or denying that it will be or will not be the case” (600). If a state of affairs S obtains, then it was true that S would obtain. And if it was true that S would obtain, and past truths are necessary, then it cannot be that it was true that S would not obtain. If S did not obtain, then it would follow that it true that S would not have obtained. And since the consequent is impossible, and impossible consequences cannot follow from possible antecedents, it is also impossible that S not obtain, and necessary that S obtains. Both Evodius’s argument and MA+A point to the same general problem, which emerges from the modal logic of temporal statements, regardless of the interlocutor’s religious commitments, and regardless of whether any contradictory predictions were made. If the generalized argument is sound, then I must reject one of the inconsistent triad, and if I agree with Evodius and Diodorus that what should be rejected is alternative possibilities for action, then time itself prevents me from choosing whether or not to go to the movies.

V. DIODORUS’S SOLUTION

What would the world be like if there were no alternative possibilities for action?

According to Epictetus, “Diodorus saw this conflict and exploited the convincingness of the first two to establish the conclusion that ‘Nothing which neither is nor will be true is possible’” (38A). But that seems to take agency off the table. How can we say that we act if what will happen is always already set in the past?

Diodorus attempts to introduce some room for maneuvering by redefining our modal terms, so that there might be ways in which I can act, but do not, in some sort of Compatibilist sense. Boethius attests:

Diodorus defines the possible as ‘what is or will be’, the impossible as ‘what, being false, will not be true’, the necessary as ‘what, being true, will not be false’, and the non-necessary as ‘what either is now, or will be, false’. (38C)
Perhaps Diodorus thinks that with such a redefinition, we can still make modal statements about actions, as long as we make the statements without temporal qualification. For example, I can say “I can choose not to go to the movies” if I am not going to the movies now, or if there is any point in the future when I will not be going to the movies. So also I can say that “I can choose to go to the movies” if I am going to the movies now, or if there is any point in the future where I will go to the movies. Both of these cases are true, so I might argue that do, in some sense, have a choice about whether or not to go to the movies.

But surely this move cannot satisfy. On Diodorus’s redefinition, I have a choice about going to the movies full stop, but I have no choice about going to the movies now, at this instant, because the fact of the matter now (that I am going to the movies) will always be the fact of the matter at that moment in time. It, ‘being true, will not be false,’ that I am going to the movies at this time on this day, and from this it follows that the fully-specified ‘action’ is necessary—which is to say, not an action—and since I always act now, and not without temporal qualification, Diodorus’s solution cannot give us a right to say that I make choices. Semantic cavils about time-indexing will not save the rejection of non-actual possibles, and we must find another way out of the contradiction.

VI. AUGUSTINE’S OBJECTIONS

In *On Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine argues that sins are to be attributed to the free choice of the will, which presupposes that there is such a thing. How does Augustine respond to Evodius in order to show that agency is not undermined by God’s foreknowledge?

His primary response to Evodius is that the very structure of the foreknowledge argument

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2 And surely there is, unless I die at the cinema
betrays it. On attending to the argument, one should

Just notice how imperceptive someone would have to be to argue thus: “If God has foreknown my future will, it is necessary that I will what he has foreknown, since nothing can happen otherwise than as he has foreknown it. But if it is necessary, then one must concede that I will it by necessity and not by will.” What extraordinary foolishness! If God foreknew a future will that turned out not to be a will at all, things would indeed happen otherwise than as God foreknew them ... for by assuming necessity he tries to abolish will. (III.3)

While this response clarifies precisely what is at stake, it begs the question for Augustine to try to use it to resolve the dispute. If Evodius were thinking clearly, he should have immediately seen that while it is impossible that God should foreknow a future will that turned out not to be a will at all, that was not the question that was asked. Rather, the question was how we can be said to have a will at all if God foreknows how it will be with us in every detail. If God knew from eternity that I would go to the movies, how could I have done anything else? And then how is going to the movies any more a creature of my will than are my fevers, cough reflexes, or other involuntary conditions of mine? Augustine rightly sees that “by assuming necessity he tries to abolish will,” but gives no argument that foreknowledge does not abolish will in just this way.

Before his primary response, however, Augustine puts forward another argument which may provide a more promising answer to Evodius. Evodius concedes that “if I say that God foreknows all of my actions I can much more confidently say that He foreknows His own actions and forsees with certainty what he is going to do” (III.3). But if the original argument is sound, then Evodius ought to be “worried that someone might object that God himself will act out of necessity rather than by his will in everything that he is going to do” (III.3). Evodius responds that “I was thinking only of what happens in his creation and not of what happens within [God] himself. For those things do not come into being; they are eternal” (III.3). However, this response cannot work for the Christian God, because Christianity denies that “God does nothing in his creation” (III.3). The Christian God acts within human history even if He exists outside of
it, and so He is subject to temporal logic in the same way that human beings are, at least in certain aspects. On the other hand, the Christian God is also a personal being who acts according to His will. Thus, His foreknowledge of His actions cannot preclude alternate possibilities in such a way that He no longer freely chooses to act, if the Christian conception of God is to be coherent.

Again, this seems to be an argument which only applies for those who accept that the Christian God exists, since otherwise there is no particular demand that the conception of that God be made coherent. Nevertheless, we found before that Evodius’s argument has ramifications even for those who do not accept that the Christian God exists. If we accept the foreknowledge argument, then we also accept the equivalent MA+A, and even non-Christians are stuck with fatalism. Non-Christians would be well served to attend to the structure of Augustine’s argument in order to discover whatever resources it might be able to provide them.

Augustine’s response to Evodius goes something like this:

1. If Evodius is right, wherever God foreknows what a being will do, the being cannot be said to have willed its behavior.
2. God foreknows everything that God will do.
3. If Evodius is right, God cannot be said to have willed His behavior.
4. But God wills everything that he does.
5. Therefore, Evodius is wrong.

The general form is that of a Gaunilo response: if the argument presented is sound, then so is this other argument. But this other argument has an absurd conclusion. Therefore, the first argument cannot be sound, either. Attentive non-Christians can find any number of similar methods of responding to MA+A. If Evodius is right, then Diodorus is also right. And if Diodorus is right, then I did not choose to go to the movies just now, and it was impossible for me to do otherwise. But I did choose, and it was possible for me to do otherwise. So Evodius and Diodorus are wrong. The initial moment of Aristotle’s response to the fatalist is a very similar sort of
argument:

These and others like them are the absurd consequences if ... nothing happens as chance has it, but all things are and happen from necessity. ... But surely this is impossible. For we see that both deliberation and action originate things that will be; and, in general, we see in things that are not always in actuality that there is the possibility both of being and of not being: in these cases both being and not being, and hence both happening and not happening, are possible. (600)

There is something very right in such responses. 

We can certainly show that Evodius and Diodorus must be wrong. However, the Augustinian strategy, like all other Gaunilo arguments, refutes without providing any further insight. Nothing has been done to alleviate the feeling that our choices must be somehow narrowed by foreknowledge, because we have done no positive elucidation of the structure of what it is to act when there is foreknowledge of what you will choose. We have shown that we cannot resolve the inconsistent triad by rejecting non-actual possibles, but nothing has been done to show us what we should reject in order to regain consistency. The Augustinian argument leaves us a modus tollens seeking understanding.

VII. MIRACLES CAN HAPPEN

Perhaps we can proceed—as Epictetus tells us Chrysippus and his circle did—reject the claim that ‘Something impossible does not follow from something possible.’ In this case, we would have no problem, since the impossibility of the prediction’s falsity would not prove that the state of affairs it expresses is also impossible.

By adopting this strategy, we have avoided the need to sacrifice the intelligibility of

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3 However, unlike Augustine, Aristotle’s response goes beyond this strategy. His fuller is considered below in §IX.

4 The form of the argument is that of a Moorean “here is one hand, and here is another” refutation. Deductive arguments such as MA+A are by nature hypothetical: they only show us what follows from supposing certain premises to be true. The interlocutor claims to derive a counter-intuitive consequence (‘I did not choose to go to the movies tonight’) from her metaphysical premises (the triad of statements cited by Diodorus). In so doing, she has not proven her consequence; rather, she has only shown us that our common-sense understanding of the world logically conflicts with her ‘metaphysical intuitions.’ We can respond by inviting her to a plausibility comparison between the ‘metaphysical’ invited us to compare the plausibility of her ‘metaphysical intuitions’ with the plausibility of common-sense judgments. Unless she can give us some reason to see her ‘metaphysical intuitions’ as more plausible, the greater plausibility of common-sense judgments gives us a prima facie reason to reject at least
agency, but we have also sacrificed the axioms of modal logic. If an impossible follows from a possible, and the possible becomes actual, then what is impossible also becomes actual. And this is, well, impossible.

One might appeal to local miracles here. I reach into my hat and pull nothing out, but it was possible that I could have pulled a rabbit out. I can explain this in two different ways: either the rabbit was pulled out of thin air, or I had pre-loaded a rabbit in my hat before coming on stage. Now, I didn’t actually pre-load any rabbits, so it seems like the nearest state of affairs to actuality, which explains this possible result, is the (nomologically) impossible state of affairs in which I pull a rabbit out of thin air, and in that case, an impossible follows from a possible.

But this will not do either. To invoke a local miracle is precisely to say that, in this case, both the rabbit-pull and the miracle that it implies are impossible. The rabbit-pull is only possible in in those worlds where impossible consequences do not follow from it—as when I pre-loaded the rabbit in my hat. The modal accessibility of a state of affairs is based on the modal accessibility of the entire world in which it occurs, and so where the consequent goes, the antecedent must follow.

VIII. TWO ROADS DIVERGED IN A YELLOW WOOD

We are left now to reject the premise that ‘Every past truth is necessary.’ But won’t this destroy the very essence of what it is for the past to be past? Perhaps not. It is certainly true that the past cannot change. And this means that the past facts are not other than what they are. It is necessary that whatever happened, happened, and nothing else. But is it true of what it was that happened: that it is necessary that it happened and nothing else? In other words, does the fixedness of the past compel us to say that past truths are necessary, or is this merely another

one of the ‘metaphysical intuitions’ she has offered as contradictory evidence.
example of the fallacy of distributed necessity? The past is fixed in one and only one state, and is
unable to change, but this can be explained by the fact that we live only in this actual world, and
not in others. True predictions do not narrow the options, because they are only contingently
true, not necessarily true. Since we cannot reject either (2) or (3), by process of elimination we
have come to reject (1). We may call our solution Contingency of the Past (CP).

However, using this method of elimination should also alert us we do not necessarily
need to discard any of the three original premises. The Master Argument depends on the hidden
premise that “in every affirmation and negation ... it is necessary that one of the opposites be true
and the other false” (600). For Aristotle, the inconsistency that this premise introduces is no
reason to reject the necessity of the past, the axioms of modal logic, or the human freedom.
Rather, it is a reductio ad absurdam of the hidden premise.

Aristotle argues it was a mistake to assume that “every affirmation or negation is true or
false” (599), including the case of predictions about the future. It is necessary for “everything ...
to be going to be or not going to be.” 100,000 years ago it was necessary that: either Charles will
go to the movies 100,000 years from now, or he will not. The mistake comes when we try to
“divide the contradictories and say that one or the other is necessary” (601). Instead, Aristotle
rejects that in every pair of contradictories “it is necessary for one of them to speak truly,”
because he rejects that “it was always true to say of any thing that has happened that it would be”
(599). And this means that he rejects that “every affirmation or negation is true or false” (599),
i.e., that the predictions were even truth-valuable. Not only was it not necessary that Og was
speaking truly, but it was not even actual. Nor was it actual that he was speaking falsely. If I did
go to the movies, then Og’s statement is a true prediction. But the ‘is’ here is the ‘is’ of the
present tense, not the timeless ‘is.’ Under Aristotle’s view of time, some future states of affairs
are not yet actualized – and will not be until that future becomes the present.

Thus, for some predictions, while they are possibly true, and possibly false, the question of whether they are actually true or actually false simply does not belong to that game. There is a straightforward way in which true predictions do not narrow the range of choices. When Og made his prediction, there were two possibilities but no actuality as to whether or not I would go to the movies. The existence of the prediction itself makes no difference, since Og saying certain words has nothing to do with whether or not it happens to be that I went to the movies. The only thing that narrows the range of choices is when I actualize one by actually choosing to go to the movies.

Nevertheless, the past remains necessary and does not change. Og’s statement changed from non-factual to factual, but it remains non-factual then and it remains factual now. It was neither actually true nor actually false; now it is actually true. The past remains fixed in necessity, while the future can remain open to possibility. We can call the Aristotelian solution to the puzzle Non-Actuality of the Future (NAF).

IX. ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Both CP and NAF have the significant recommendation that they solve the puzzle of agency in time, and each provides a significant conceptual framework to explain how the puzzle is solved. However, precisely because they do advance significant teachings about time and modality, each can also create major metaphysical headaches.

Under CP, when Og uttered his statement, it was already actually true, but it was also possibly false. It is possible that I could have worked on my thesis rather than going to the movies, and so it was possible that Og was wrong. At first glance, this seems to commit us to rejecting libertarian accounts of free will, although careful consideration will show that they are
actually consistent. CP denies fatalism: the future is fixed in actuality, not in necessity; there are possibilities other than the one I actually choose. CP also does not commit us to determinism: a libertarian can posit that which of these future actions I actually will choose is not determined causally by the past facts about the world.\(^5\) Clear sailing so far. Nevertheless, libertarianism is often built up on top of a dynamical understanding of time,\(^6\) which does come into conflict with this conception of an actualized future. Even though the libertarian can keep her libertarianism under CP, she will probably have deep grounds for worrying about it.

NAF also raises thorny difficulties. In particular, we must give up the timeless Fregean Third Realm, and in exchange we must take on major headaches about the nature of possible worlds. For the thought expressed in Og’s prediction is now actually true, but then it was not true (or even truth-valuable). However, it was then possible that Og spoke truly, and also possible that Grog spoke truly. Since we individuate possible worlds on the basis of what is the case in them, it seems that this individuates two possible worlds:\(^7\) in one, I go to the movies; in the other, I choose not to. Which did Og and Grog inhabit? If it was the first world, then Ogg was actually right, and if the second, then Grog was actually right. But under NAF, neither can be the case. It is metaphysically impossible for us to individuate the two possible worlds and pick out the one that is actual.\(^8\) We are left with two options, neither of them pretty.

One might use Leibniz’s Law to say that that since the two worlds cannot yet be

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\(^5\) In order to provide for a libertarian account within CP, we will say that there are two (sets of) possible worlds for any given choice: either I will go to the movies, or I will not go to the movies. Before I chose, it was already true that I inhabited one of these possible worlds and not the other one. However, there are some possible worlds in which all the facts about the past causal state of the world are the same, and yet the fact about which of the two options I choose is different. Instead of being determined by the integrated whole of facts about the past causal state of the world, it is ‘determined’ according to whichever theory of rational action I endorse—for example, by future states of affairs which I intend.

\(^6\) On which events are actualized in serial fashion, one after the other. Any future states of affairs that can be said to be actual will only be so in virtue of being anticipated in present states of affairs.

\(^7\) Actually, two sets of possible worlds, but such considerations will only make the headache more painful.

\(^8\) Since there was no actual fact of the matter when Og and Grog spoke, we cannot say that this is merely a matter of
individuated, there are not yet two possible worlds at all, but rather one. Og and Grog inhabit an
Ur-world from which both possible worlds originate. At every actualized possibility two
different worlds propagate from a common source, each having a state of affairs which was not
yet present in the Ur-world, yet both numerically identical with the Ur-world and neither
numerically identical from the other—a sort of possible world mitosis. The progression of time
would then be the process by which new possible worlds would slip away from me as they
diverge from the facts that are actualized in the present. However, this undermines our ability to
use possible worlds in the first place as the principle of individuation for possible states of
affairs: either the Ur-world contains two contradictory possibilities within it—in which case we
return to Quine’s individuation problems—or else it contains neither possibility, in which case
there seems to be no way for either of the two to come about. Further, the Ur-world claim runs
afoul of the principle that worlds are the arenas within which change occurs, not things that
change themselves.

Such considerations may drive us to say that we were wrong to try to individuate possible
worlds on the basis of what is true in them now, but rather what ultimately will be true in them.9
Here we retain our ability to say that each possible world has only one possibility in it, but Og
and Grog could not inhabit only one actual world: they actually inhabited both of the possible
worlds. Then we must concede that, contrary to all assumptions, there is not one and only one
actual world @. Rather, I—not only possibly, but actually—simultaneously inhabit every world
which is possible given the past. On this account, the progression of time is the process by which
I slip out of some of the worlds that I inhabit and remain only in those where the actualized
present is the case.
Finally, NAF also sacrifices the pleasant equivalence between the foreknowledge argument and MA+A. Og and Grog are handily dealt with. But if God *foreknows* that I will go to the movies, then it *actually is* the case that I will go to the movies. And it *always actually was* the case—to say otherwise would do violence to the concept of foreknowledge. But now Evodian worries reassert themselves: if the past is necessary, and God foreknows the future, then I still cannot choose between available options, even if NAF is true for Og and Grog’s predictions. The friend of NAF might be able to finesse this problem through an eschatological response. As before, God’s eternity will not help us out here: NAF rejects the metaphysical possibility of a view of the world *sub specie aeternitatis*. However, if we follow the theology of Moltmann, God may be said to view the world from the Absolute Future—in which case His ‘foreknowledge’ is not part of the facts about the past or present state of the world, and so causes no difficulties for NAF or freedom of the will. But this solution cannot be enough on its own. According to Christianity, God gives revelations in time; if God revealed to one of His prophets that I would go to the movies, then wouldn’t the *prophet* foreknow it, and in past time? Further, when God became flesh, didn’t Jesus Christ, not just in His divine but in his human nature, *foreknow* the prophecies which He spoke? If a Christian wishes to accept NAF, then she will have to find some way in which revelation can fold a temporal consciousness into eternity, a sort of psychic counterpart to the bodily assumption into Heaven.

**X. QUO VADIS?**

For Augustine and anyone else committed to seeking understanding of their Christian faith, theological worries may well be decisive. NAF may have fatal conflicts with the doctrine of God’s omniscience, and with prophetic revelation. Further, inhabiting a plurality of possible

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*The temporal phrasing is necessary here. If we assume that we can view possible worlds *sub specie aeternitatis*.*
worlds may conflict somewhat with the doctrine of God’s Creation: it seems as though God
made one world, from its start to its finish in time, without the messy heap of worlds implied by
NAF. I do not think that these worries necessarily defeat a Christian defense of NAF, but the
work will certainly be difficult. Those of us who are not Christians can gladly consign such
worries to the flames, but the rest of the concerns remain pressing.

A friend of CP might urge that there are perfectly good independent reasons to reject that
the past is necessary. In particular, we can tell perfectly intelligible stories about, for example,
Sherlock Holmes in Victorian England. And there is no reason to suppose that such stories are
composed of impossible statements; Holmes’s adventures seem quite down-to-earth. But the
opposition to CP can easily respond that, sure, they are logical and physical possibilities, but that
is not the sort of ‘necessity’ that she had in mind in the first place. Rather, when she argued that
the past is ‘necessary,’ she meant something more like temporal availability: of all the worlds
which I may inhabit in virtue of what has happened so far, they all share the same past facts. And
since all possible worlds within this scope share the same past, that past can be said to be
necessary. CP would then lose in the scope of temporal availability, while NAF remains
compatible with other applications of non-actual possibilia. Stories about Holmes will not be
temporally possible, but they would not be temporally possible even if CP is true.

But if the anti-CPista tries to use this strategy for anything beyond a stalemate, she will
merely beg the question. All ‘temporally available’ worlds share the same past—if past
predictions about the future are not truth-valuable until the future is realized. In this case, the
openness of temporal availability is forward-looking and metaphysical: all the facts about the
past are fixed in temporal necessity, but it is not yet fixed in actuality what the future will be,

then we have already rejected NAF.
including future facts about the past. But if CP is true and not NAF, then when Og and Grog made their statements, one was already actually true, and there are two temporally available worlds which have different past facts. In the world where I go to the movies, it was then the case that Og was right. And in the world where I do not, it was then the case that Grog was right. Which of these two worlds I inhabit is fixed in actuality, but neither future, nor past facts about the future, is fixed in temporal necessity. Here the openness of temporal availability looks both ways: toward the future it is metaphysical, but toward the past it is epistemological. Under CP, Og and Grog inhabit one and only one of the two temporally available worlds, but they do not know which.

Original motivations also leave us indecisive. CP was motivated primarily in order to avoid rejecting the truth-valuability of predictions about the future—that is, to avoid NAF. And NAF was motivated primarily in order to avoid rejecting the necessity of the past—that is, to avoid CP. Elucidating the logic of each position shows us what is at stake, but not which horn of the dilemma we should grasp. That may depend on theological concerns, ontology of time, and further debates about the ontological status of possible worlds. Whichever we accept, much more conceptual work will need to be done, but in showing that there can be worlds enough and time, we have already taken a major step forward.