Richard Swinburne's False Dilemma

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Abstract

Richard Swinburne recently released a paper titled, "Causation, Time and God's Omniscience." In this paper, Swinburne argued that God's omniscience must be understood in a way that excludes divine foreknowledge. Swinburne deems this a necessary step in order to protect our freedom of the will. The purpose of my paper will be to refute Swinburne's central argument. The goal of refuting Swinburne's argument is to maintain the possibility of the compatibility of both divine foreknowledge and free human agency.

Introduction

Richard Swinburne recently released a paper titled, "Causation, Time and God's Omniscience." In this paper, Swinburne argues that God's omniscience must be understood in a way that excludes divine foreknowledge of human actions. Swinburne deems this a necessary step in order to protect our freedom of the will. Swinburne claims that if God possesses foreknowledge of our future actions and humans possess free will, it is possible to prove God's foreknowledge wrong. Therefore, because God's knowledge cannot be wrong, God must not possess knowledge of our future actions. The purpose of this paper will be to refute this central argument that Swinburne presents. By refuting Swinburne's argument, I will be defending the compatibility of God's divine foreknowledge of human actions and human freedom.

What Is at Stake? Scripture, Sovereignty, and Salvation

The purpose of this section is to explain the theological importance of claiming, as Swinburne does, that God does not know our future actions. Clive S. Lewis writes, "Everyone who believes in God at all believes that He knows what you and I are going to do tomorrow."[1] This quote captures how the vast majority

1. Clive S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1952), 148.

of Christians, including myself, understand God's divine omniscience regarding our future actions.

It is important to note that God's knowledge is considerably different than human knowledge. Human knowledge is often mistaken. However, God's knowledge is infallible, meaning, that God cannot be mistaken. William L. Craig and James P. Moreland write, "God is omniscient if God knows every true proposition."[2] To clarify, a proposition can be understood as the content of a statement. For example, a propositional statement might say, "The Canucks will win the Stanley Cup in 2022" or "Today is June 7th, 2001." These statements are either true or false, based on the content of the statement. As it was stated previously, God's knowledge is always correct and never mistaken. So, when God's knowledge is mentioned, it should be understood as infallible knowledge of all past, present and future propositional statements, including our future actions.

However, if God does not know our future actions, there are three major theological themes that every Christian will need to reconsider. The first of these areas is *scripture*. Traditionally, Christianity has held that God exhaustively knows the future, including our actions. This belief has primarily been built upon the Christian scriptures. As an example, Matthew 26:31-35 tells a story of Jesus predicting that his disciple, Peter, will publicly deny knowing him three times. Later on that night, Peter denies Jesus three times. This story appears to demonstrate that God knew Peter's future actions. In addition to this story, there are many other biblical passages that give warrant to the view that God knows the future exhaustively.[3] If one accepts that God does not know our future actions, many verses that support the traditional conception of God's foreknowledge would need to be reinterpreted.

The second area that would require reconsideration is the Christian idea of God as *sovereign*. There is a general consensus among Christian believers that God is in control, and that one should not worry about the future. Proverbs 16:9 states, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." This verse indicates that God has a plan and purpose for our lives, as he has already established our steps. The idea that God has made a purpose for all the things that will happen to us is extremely comforting to many Christians. That being said, the idea that God is sovereign over our lives becomes rather puzzling when one no longer holds that God knows our future actions. One might ask: How could God have a plan and purpose for my life if he does not know what will happen?

2. William L. Craig and James P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 524.

3. In the book, Bruce Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2000), Bruce Ware mentions other verses such as, Isaiah 40-48, Psalm 139, Daniel 11 and John 12-13. These verses would also need to be reinterpreted if one denies God's foreknowledge of human actions.

Lastly, there are questions that arise regarding salvation. As John Piper writes, "Open theism's[4] denial of God's exhaustive definitive foreknowledge renders uncertain the execution of God's plan of salvation through the delivering up of his son by crucifixion on the cross."[5] The arc of the biblical narrative points to the fact that God had a pre-orchestrated plan regarding how he would make salvation possible for all people. This plan involved a number of people who were involved in Jesus' crucifixion. These people include: Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, soldiers and the peoples of Israel (Acts 4:26-28). If God did not know that these agents would carry out the crucifixion of Jesus, God's plan of salvation might not have come to fruition, and Jesus may not have been crucified.[6] This is a conclusion that many Christians will be hesitant to accept. In this sense, God's plan of *salvation* is another area that Christians would need to reconsider, if one were to deny God's foreknowledge of human actions.

The three theological themes of scripture, sovereignty and salvation are some of many possible Christian beliefs that would need to be reconsidered if God does not know our future actions. As Sandra Visser writes, "This option is . . . something I think one ought not to take lightly."[7] Therefore, the Christian has much at stake regarding God's foreknowledge of human actions as it will inevitably impact many spiritual beliefs as well as personal convictions.

Divine Omniscience and Freedom of the Will

Before I begin to evaluate Swinburne's argument, it is important that the general problem of theological fatalism is properly understood. Anselm of Canterbury writes, "It certainly seems as though divine foreknowledge is incompatible with there being human free choice. For what God foreknows shall necessarily come to be in the future, while the things brought about by free choice do not issue from necessity. And if divine foreknowledge and human free choice cannot both exist, it is impossible for God's foreknowledge, which foresees all things, to coexist with something happening by free choice."[8] What Anselm is essentially saying is this: How can I have freedom in my future actions, if God knows what those future actions will be? If God knows what I am going to do tomorrow, am I free to do as I please? Within these questions, there is a tension between two fundamental principles. These fundamental principles are:

(1) God contains knowledge of future human actions.

4. Open theism is the theological term for the view that God does not know our future actions.

5. John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul K. Helseth, *Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Wheaton, Il: CrossWay, 2003), 320.

6. If the reader is unfamiliar with the story of Jesus' crucifixion, I would encourage them to read Matthew 27:1-54, Mark 15:1-40, Luke 23:1-48 or John 19:1-30.

7. Sandra Visser, "God's Knowledge of an Unreal Future," in *Philosophical Essays Against Open Theism*, ed. Benjamin H. Arbour (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 40.

8. Anselm of Canterbury, *The Major Work*, edited by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 434.

(2) Humans possess freedom of the will.

As one can see, there appears to be a contradiction between these two principles. This apparent contradiction, as mentioned before, is the problem of theological fatalism. Succinctly stated, theological fatalism is, "the thesis that infallible foreknowledge of a human act makes the act necessary and hence unfree."[9] Richard Swinburne acknowledges this problem and proposes a solution that entails that we reconsider the first principle. We will now turn to Swinburne's argument.

Swinburne's False Dilemma: Part One (God's Timelessness)

Swinburne has composed his paper in two major sections. These sections are (1) God as timeless, and (2) God as temporal. When one speaks of God as timeless, one typically means that God is beyond time, meaning, and that "he exists but does not exist at any point in time and he does not experience temporal succession."[10] In contrast, when God is referred to as being temporal, this means that God experiences temporal succession. In other words, God experiences some events before other events. An analogy I find helpful to distinguish between timelessness and temporality is to imagine an author and a book.[11] If God is timeless, imagine God being an author of a book. As the author, God sits outside the pages of the book and can see all the pages and contents at the same time. In reality, if God was timeless, he would sit outside our current timeline and see all events at once, without temporal succession. However, if God is temporal, his experience would be similar to the characters in the book, as they are limited to experiencing the book's contents in succession. The temporal characters experience page one before two and two before three and so on. In reality, if God was temporal, he would experience Monday before Tuesday, and Tuesday before Wednesday and so on.

Given that there are two major conceptions of God's relationship with time, Swinburne addresses both those who hold that God is timeless as well as those who hold that God is temporal. Swinburne proactively addresses a problem he might encounter if he were only to address one of the conceptions of God's relationship with time. For example, if Swinburne claimed that God could not know the future because he is temporal, one could easily refute Swinburne by simply claiming that God is timeless. However, Swinburne addresses both God as timeless and temporal in his paper, thereby, forcing everyone to respond to his argument.

9. Linda Zagzebski, "Foreknowledge and Free Will," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2017), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/free-will-foreknowledge/>.

10. Gregory E. Ganssle, "God and Time," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://www.iep.utm.edu/god-time/

11. This analogy is used in Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 147.

As many have argued, if God is outside of time, then God's knowledge is incapable of necessitating our actions. This particular response to theological fatalism is titled, *the Boethian solution.* Boethius' understanding of God being outside of time allowed him to claim that God's knowledge of events that are future to us, are actually present to God. Therefore, God's knowledge of our future events does not necessitate that we choose the action that he knows we will choose. Boethius writes, "So if you should wish to consider his foreknowledge, by which he discerns all things, you will more rightly judge it to be *not foreknowledge as it were of the future but knowledge of a never-passing instant* . . . And therefore this divine foreknowledge does not alter the proper nature of things, but sees them present to him, just such as in time they will at some future point come to be."[12]

Swinburne does not directly respond to this argument. Rather, he responds to the general conception of God being outside of time. Swinburne writes, "I conclude that it seems almost impossible to give any sense to the view that there could be a timeless God who knows what is happening in the physical universe and causes events in that universe."[13] Swinburne's argument claims that if God is timeless, and the world is in time, it is a contradiction to claim that God can be causally active in the world. The idea that God could cause an event in a temporal world entails that God is related to the world. But, if God is related to the world, then it appears he is in time. This argument can be summarized as follows:

> *Premise 1*: God is creatively active in the temporal world.
>
> *Premise 2*: If God is creatively active in the temporal world, God is really related to the temporal world.
>
> *Premise 3*: If God is really related to the temporal world, God is temporal.
>
> *Conclusion*: God is temporal.[14]

One could deny Premise 1 and hold that God is not creatively active in the temporal world. But, if one would like to maintain the idea that God is a *personal* God (as is the God in Christianity), then that is not a viable option. I am inclined to accept this argument, and agree with Swinburne that it does not seem rational to hold that a timeless God could have any causality in the temporal world. Therefore, if one is unable to refute the above argument, you must come to the conclusion that God is temporal (or, in other words, exists in

12. Boethius, *The Theological Tractates: The Consolation of Philosophy*, edited by Hugh F. Stewart and Edward K. Rand (London: Heinemann, 1918), 427. Emphasis added.

13. Richard Swinburne, "Causation, Time, and God's Omniscience," *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy* 36, no. 4 (2017): 683.

14. This argument was formulated in William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2001), 87.

time).

Swinburne's False Dilemma: Part Two (God's Temporality)

Swinburne's next step in his argument is to show why a temporal God is unable to know our future free actions. However, this time he is not going to attack the general idea of a temporal God (as he did with a timeless God), but the idea that a temporal God knows our future actions. Swinburne's argument can be summarized as follows:

> *Premise 1*: God knows at T^1 that Peter will deny Jesus at T^2.
>
> *Premise 2*: God's knowledge entails a belief of what Peter will do at T^2 as well as the truth of the matter of what Peter will do at T^2.
>
> *Premise 3*: At T^2 it is within Peter's freedom to deny or not deny Jesus.
>
> *Premise 4*: Based on *Premises 1-3*, Peter is able to prove God's knowledge at T1 to be false.
>
> *Premise 5*: *Premise 4* is a logical contradiction.
>
> *Conclusion*: Therefore, one of the premises must be wrong.

As stated in *Premise 5*, there is a logical contradiction based on the fact that Peter is able to prove God's knowledge wrong. If we apply the principle of the law of non-contradiction to the question at hand, it is nonsensical to say Peter will deny Jesus and Peter will not deny Jesus. The law of non-contradiction states that, something cannot at the same time be and not be. Therefore, these two statements cannot both be true in reference to the same event. God cannot hold a true belief that entails the truth that Peter will deny Jesus at T^2 at the same time as Peter not denying Jesus at T^2. These two statements are incompatible with one another.

Swinburne rightly recognizes this problem. In response to the contradiction, Swinburne concludes that *Premise 1* is the incorrect premise. Swinburne writes, "God's omniscience must be construed in the *weaker sense*."[15] The term "weaker sense," to Swinburne, means the elimination of the God's knowledge of future human actions. However, God's weaker sense of divine omniscience still includes all other propositional statements. So, as long as a propositional statement does not rely on the decision of a future human action, which could change the truth-value of the statement, God's knowledge would include that proposition. For example, the statement, "Peter will deny Jesus three times" clearly rests on Peter's future action to deny Jesus or not to deny Jesus. Therefore, God would not be able to know the truth of this proposition. But, the statement, "There

15. Swinburne, *Causation*, 683. Emphasis Added.

are currently 30,000 red cars driving in Vancouver" does not seem to rely on future human actions. So, God's knowledge would include that proposition.

Swinburne solves the problem of theological fatalism by understanding God's omniscience in the "weaker sense." In Swinburne's mind, he has now shown that God is unable to know the future regardless of whether one holds that God is timeless or temporal. However, as stated in the prior section titled "What Is at Stake?", there are theological reasons for the Christian to hesitate before accepting Swinburne's solution, especially when there are other possibilities available.

Responding to Swinburne's Dilemma: The Middle Road

My response to Swinburne is twofold. First, I will address the dilemma of God's relationship with time. Secondly, I will address which premise must be revised in order to resolve Swinburne's argument against a temporal God knowing our future actions. My response will also defend both principles that the problem of theological fatalism is premised on.

Swinburne presented us with the dilemma of God either being temporal or timeless. However, in my opinion, this is a false dilemma. It is a false dilemma because there is a third option, a middle road. There are many philosophers starting to accept the idea of God being both timeless and temporal. I am not suggesting that God is simultaneously timeless and temporal. Rather, I am suggesting that God *was* timeless and is *now* temporal.

In respect to which conception of God's relationship with time one adopts, they all appear to be equally valid assumptions. However, although they are all equally valid assumptions, one must carefully consider what follows from the conception one holds. For example, if one holds that God is timeless, it seems that God cannot be causally active in the world. That being said, I will assume the conception that God *was* timeless and is *now* temporal, and then demonstrate how this conception resolves the problem of theological fatalism.

William Lane Craig writes, "The most plausible view of God's relationship with time is that He is timeless without creation and temporal subsequent to creation."[16] However, simply appealing to God's changing relationship to time does not adequately address all of Swinburne's claims. Moving forward, I will use Craig's understanding of God's relationship with time as a framework to show the compatibility of God's knowledge of future human actions and human freedom.

The Middle Road: Part One (God's Timelessness)

As I suggested, the middle road entails that God was timeless before creation

16. Craig, *Time and Eternity*, 236.

and temporal subsequent to creation. If we consider God's knowledge of human decisions before creation, there is no implication of the necessity of those future decisions. What I mean is that the problem of theological fatalism has yet to arise, because there are no humans to apply the problem to.

In God's timeless state, it is plausible[16] to assume that God has knowledge of what would happen if he were to create a world (or possible worlds). Possible worlds refer to alternative worlds that are not in fact the case. For example, one could imagine a possible world where Stephen Harper won the 2015 Canadian election, rather than Justin Trudeau. However, in the actual world, Justin Trudeau won the 2015 Canadian election. The knowledge of possible worlds that God possesses would be based on what would happen if specific events were to be actualized. For example, in 2011 the Vancouver Canucks lost to the Boston Bruins in the Stanley Cup finals. However, in a possible world, one can imagine two different teams playing in the 2011 Stanley Cup finals. I am suggesting that God knows the outcome of all the possibilities of the 2011 Stanley Cup finals, regardless of the two teams playing one another. We can apply this knowledge of future hypothetical events to all possibilities of what could happen in the world, giving God knowledge of all possible worlds that he could have created. God's knowledge of possible worlds would also include what humans would do in various circumstances, if those circumstances were actualized.

One should take note that Swinburne's argument is unable to be used against a timeless God as long as there is no creation. This is because Swinburne's main contention is that a timeless God cannot be creatively active in the world. As a reminder, Swinburne argues that if a timeless God is creatively active in the world, then God is really related to the world. But, if God is really related to the world, then God is temporal. Therefore, a timeless God cannot be creatively active in the world, because that would deem God temporal. But, without a world to be creatively active with, the argument is irrelevant. Therefore, it seems that a timeless God could have knowledge of future human actions without necessitating what will come to pass. However, we have yet to address what happens subsequent to creation.

The Middle Road: Part Two (God's Temporality)

The difficulty appears after the initial time boundary of creation. Now that God has created a certain world, he possesses knowledge of the actual world. His knowledge of what would happen if he created a possible world has now become foreknowledge of what will happen. In other words, God had knowledge of all possible worlds in his timeless state. But, after creation, God also has knowledge of the actual world, including what will come to pass. We now need to respond

16. There are some who would not consider this knowledge plausible, which will be addressed in the section titled "Objections Part Two: The Grounding Objection."

to Swinburne's argument against a temporal God being able to know future human actions.

Before I continue, there is a distinction that needs to be made. The distinction is between chronological and logical priority. These two concepts often get confused when discussing the implications of God's foreknowledge of our future actions. For example, it is easy to assume that since God has knowledge of what will happen at T^1, his knowledge necessitates the action at T^2, which negates our freedom. However, the fact that God's knowledge is chronologically prior to our actions on a given timeline, does not entail that God's knowledge is logically prior to our actions. The truth of what humans would do in a given scenario is logically prior to God knowing what we will do in that scenario. For example, if Bob were to propose to Sally, and if Sally were to say yes, God's foreknowledge would include this. But, if Sally were to say no to Bob, then God's foreknowledge would include Sally's dismissal of the proposal. Either way, the truth of what one does in a given circumstance is the logical basis for God's foreknowledge. When God creates the world, his knowledge that was based on the logical priority of our actions will become chronologically prior to when we will carry out those actions. But, the chronological priority in God's temporal state, is founded on the logical priority of the truth of our actions. In other words, the truth of what we would do in certain circumstances determines God's knowledge, not the other way around. This distinction between logical priority and chronological priority demonstrates that God's chronologically prior knowledge of our future actions does not imply that our future actions are not free decisions.

To restate, in God's timeless state his knowledge is based on the truth of what would happen if he created a certain world. Therefore, since God's foreknowledge is based on our future acts, his knowledge does not necessitate what we do. Rather, what we will do necessitates God's foreknowledge, as we saw with the example of Sally's response to Bob's proposal. That being said, there is a sense in which one will act in accordance to what God knows we will do (regardless of why God knows what we will do). For example, since God knows at T^1 that Peter will deny Jesus at T^2, Peter will deny Jesus at T^2. However, the fact that Peter will do what God knows Peter will do, does not negate his freedom.

Are We Free? The Principle of Alternate Possibilities

Now that I have addressed Swinburne's false dilemma of God's relationship with time, I will now address which premise must be revised in order to sufficiently answer Swinburne's argument. In contrast to Swinburne rejecting *Premise 1*, which states, "God knows at T1 that Peter will deny Jesus at T^2," I suggest that *Premise 3* is the incorrect premise. *Premise 3* states, "At T^2 it is within Peter's freedom to deny or not deny Jesus." Rejecting *Premise 3* may appear to be at odds with the second principle of theological fatalism, which states, "Humans possess freedom of the will." However, I propose that one can have

free will without having the ability to do otherwise than what one did. In order to understand my proposition, we must consider the *principle of alternate possibilities* (PAP).[17]

> PAP: A person is morally responsible for what she has done only if she could have done otherwise.[18]

The principle of alternate possibilities is first and foremost concerned with moral responsibility. However, the principle can also be useful for understanding the concept of freedom of the will. For example, I will adjust PAP into a form that is concerned with freedom of the will. I will call this version of the principle of alternate possibilities PAP2 to avoid confusion.

> PAP2: A person possesses freedom of the will only if she could have done otherwise.

Most people will be inclined to accept both PAP and PAP2 on a prima facie basis. However, I am going to argue that upon further consideration, both PAP and PAP2 are highly questionable. PAP2 states that one possesses freedom of the will only if one could have done otherwise. Another way of putting the principle is to say that freedom of the will requires the ability to do the opposite of what one chooses. When we consider PAP2, it is often thought about in past events. For example, let's consider Peter's denial of Jesus. We are inclined to agree that if Peter could not have done otherwise than what he did, he was not free. However, if we consider future actions, the principle starts to become questionable.

For my example, I will use the loss of the Canucks to the Bruins in the 2011 Stanley Cup finals. After the game, I am approached by a few Bruins fans and am asked, if I am a Canucks fan. It appears I have two options. I can say yes, and risk the possibility of humiliation or I can say no and lose my integrity. However, there is an additional twist. When I was born, my father implanted a chip into my brain that forces me to say yes, whenever I am asked if I am a Canucks fan and I am about to say no to the question. So, if I were ever to say no to the question of whether I am a Canucks fan or not, the chip in my brain would kick in and force me to say yes. According to PAP2, it seems that I am not free to answer the question. However, what happens if I were to say yes voluntarily, under my own free choice? The implanted chip did not influence my decision at all. I chose by my own free will to risk the humiliation and say, "Yes, I am a Canucks fan." This sort of example is often used to show why one's freedom does not require the ability to do otherwise. Therefore, PAP2 seems to

17. The *Principle of Alternative Possibilities* was originally coined by Harry Frankfurt, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 829-839.

18. This phrasing of PAP was based on Peter van Inwagen, *Thinking About Free Will* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

be highly questionable.

Divine Omniscience and The Principle of Alternate Possibilities

The typical Frankfurtian examples do seem to have a fatal flaw. This flaw being, the causal mechanism (CM) that kicks in if you were to do the opposite of whatever it was programmed to prevent you from doing. The CM appears to limit our freedom, as it is possible that the CM kicks in and causally forces us to go against our free will. However, since we are discussing divine omniscience, it would be helpful to replace the CM with God's foreknowledge (GF) as the mechanism that could potentially disable us from doing what we will in fact do. There is a significant difference between GF and CM. This difference is rooted in causality. CM entails a physical cause that forces us to go against our will, which is a problem. However, God's foreknowledge does not entail any physical causation, but is simply knowledge of what we will do. In other words, God's foreknowledge has no causal implications whatsoever. As stated previously, the outcome of our actions is what God's foreknowledge is based on and is determined by. In other words, there will never be a possibility for our actions to be impacted by GF because our actions will always align with God's foreknowledge. Again, this alignment is due to God's knowledge being based on what we will do in the future (logical priority).

That being said, it is common for those who are engaging in this material for the first time to ask: Why must I still do what God knows I will do, even if his knowledge doesn't necessitate my action? The answer is quite simple really, that being, the question is mistaken. It is not a matter of what Sally must or must not do. It is a matter of what Sally will do freely. If it is true that Sally will say yes to Bob's proposal, then God's foreknowledge would account for that and vice versa. Sally will say yes to Bob's proposal not because God's foreknowledge entails that she will, but because that is what Sally will freely choose to do in that scenario. Thereby, as stated previously in this section, God's foreknowledge has no causal implications because it is rooted in the logical priority of what humans would do given various circumstances.

Freedom of the Will: What Does It Require?

However, one might still be hesitant to agree that one possesses freedom of the will even if they have the ability to choose freely and cannot be causally impacted by God's foreknowledge. One might claim that real freedom needs to be accompanied by the genuine option of alternate possibilities. In response, I argue that genuine freedom requires four components. These four components were originally argued for by St. Augustine, and later reformulated in David Hunt's paper, "On Augustine's Way Out" (1999). These four components include:

Possession: The act/decision belongs to the agent/person alone.

Approval: The agent approves or looks favourably upon the decision/act that they are performing.

Power: The causal power to perform the act belongs to the agent/person.

Lack of Compulsion: The agent's action is not necessitated by any coercive (or compulsive) causal force.

If one's decision at moment T is accompanied by all four of these components, it seems difficult to claim that the person did not make a free decision. That being said, adding the extra condition that this person must have had the ability to do otherwise seems irrelevant. It seems to me that these four components are sufficient for freedom. Those who claim that one needs the ability to do something they would not choose to do, seem to be desiring a sort of hyper-freedom of the will (HFW). HFW requires not only that one has possession of their decision, approval of their decision, power of their decision and lack of any compulsory forces but, also that they can do what they would not do in a given situation. It seems to me that this sort of free will is more than we normally deem necessary. Why does one need the ability to do something that they would not choose to do in a given scenario? It seems to me that both PAP and PAP2 can be refuted by demonstrating that freedom of the will can be met by the previously listed four components.

The End of the Road: Freedom and Foreknowledge

It seems to me that I have sufficiently answered Swinburne's argument, while defending the compatibility of God's foreknowledge of future human actions and human freedom. To restate my general argument, God in his timeless state possessed knowledge of our future actions based on the truth of what we would do in freedom-permitting circumstances. After the act of creation, God retained this knowledge as he entered into his temporal state. Despite God knowing what we will do in the future, we still possess freedom of the will for two primary reasons. First, his foreknowledge is based on how we would act; therefore, he is not determining our actions. Secondly, our freedom does not require alternate possibilities. Despite this solution solving many problems, there are still possible objections. The last portion of my paper will address two possible objections.

Objections Part One: Moral Responsibility

The first objection is in reference to the denial of the principle of alternate possibilities. In previous sections, I have argued that freedom of the will does not require the ability to do otherwise. However, traditionally, PAP is concerned with moral responsibility. Freedom of the will and moral responsibility are separate philosophical concepts that often get conflated. So, it is important to address them separately to avoid confusion. This portion of the paper will address moral responsibility and whether or not it requires the ability to do

otherwise. I will argue that it does not, and that humans can be held morally responsible without the ability to do otherwise.

There have been additional principles that have developed in order to weaken Frankfurtian-type examples. As I reminder, Frankfurtian-type examples are those which intend to demonstrate the reasonableness of denying PAP. In this paper, I used the example of a father implanting a chip into the son's brain regarding the Canucks, which can be found on pages fourteen and fifteen. These additional principles include PPA, PPP1 PPP2 (Van Inwagen 2011, 245):

> PPA: A person is morally responsible for failing to perform an act only if he could not have performed that act.
>
> PPP_1: A person is morally responsible for a certain event-particular only if he could have prevented it.
>
> PPP_2: A person is morally responsible for a certain state of affairs only if (that state of affairs obtains and) he could have prevented it from obtaining.[19]

These three principles are all very similar due to the fact that the requirement for moral responsibility is 'the ability to prevent your decision'. So, one could argue that if God knows Peter will deny Jesus, Peter cannot be held morally responsible if he could not have prevented his denying of Jesus from actualizing. As other philosophers have pointed out, there is an underlying more fundamental principle in all these other principles. As Immanuel Kant states:

> If it is morally obligatory for one to do something, then one can do it; and if it is morally obligatory for one to refrain from doing something, then one can refrain from doing it.[20]

This principle is attempting to formulate the very basis for what moral responsibility consists of. According to Kant and others, in order to be morally responsible, one must be able to actualize the moral obligation or prevent the morally reprehensible act from occurring. For example: If one should not lie, then one must be able to prevent oneself from lying. However, based on what meta-theory one uses to for their grounds of morality, one may come to a different conclusion. Michael McKenna denies this fundamental principle of moral responsibility and suggests another. McKenna writes, "A persons' moral responsibility concerns what she does do and her basis for doing it, not what else she could have done."[21]

19. Van Inwagen, *Thinking About Free Will*, 245.

20. Quoted in John Martin Fischer, "Frankfurt-Type Examples and Semi-Compatibilism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (2nd. ed.), ed. Robert Kane (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 293.

21. Michel McKenna and Derek Pereboom, *Free Will: A Contemporary Introduction* (New

I am inclined to accept Mckenna's principle (titled as *the L-Reply*) over Kant's because I am not sure that the possibility to do otherwise is needed in what we deem to be a free and morally responsible event. As we saw earlier, it seems to me that if one possesses the four components of possession, power, approval and lack of compulsion, then one is making a free decision. This free decision seems to align with McKenna's principle of what moral responsibility consists of. The four components will render the person not only free to act but also the ability to have reasons for the act itself. Therefore, the four components mentioned earlier (i.e., approval, possession, power and lack of coercion) are sufficient to allow the person to meet the criteria of Mckenna's *L-Reply.* In sum, if one were to raise the objection of moral responsibility, I think this objection fails as there is an adequate account of how one can be held morally responsible without the ability to do otherwise.

Objections Part Two: The Grounding Objection

As stated in my previous section titled "The Middle Road: Part One (God's Timelessness)", I make an assumption that the careful reader may have picked up on. In that section I stated, "In God's timeless state, it is plausible to assume that God has knowledge of what would happen if he were to create a world (or possible worlds)." This sort of knowledge contains what individuals would do in hypothetical scenarios, or counter-factual states of affairs. This sort of knowledge has come to be known as middle knowledge (MK). For the most part, theologians and philosophers agree that God has natural knowledge (NK) and free knowledge (FK). But, middle knowledge is not as widely accepted. These three categories of God's knowledge can be summarized as follows:

> NK: God knows the range of possible worlds (everything that could happen).
>
> MK: God knows the rang of feasible worlds (everything that would happen).
>
> FK: God knows the actual world (everything that will happen, after creation).

Those who are skeptical of middle knowledge base their skepticism on what is called *the grounding objection.* Steven B. Cowan writes, "The basic idea behind the grounding objection is the contention that God cannot have middle knowledge because the counterfactuals of freedom which are the objects of His middle knowledge have no truth-value. That is, there are no actual state of affairs to which such propositions correspond to in order to provide a truth condition for their truth or falsity."[22] According to Cowan, along with many others, counterfactual states of affairs do not have a truth-value, and therefore, God cannot know the truth of the statement. William Hasker, another opponent

York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 104.

22. Steven B. Cowan, "The Grounding Objection to Middle Knowledge Revisited," *Religious Studies* 39, no. 1 (2003): 93-102.

of Molinism,[23] states, "In order for a (contingent) conditional state of affairs to obtain, its obtaining must be grounded in some categorical state of affairs. More colloquially, truths about 'what would be the case . . . if' must be grounded in truths about what is in fact the case."[24] As you can see in both quotes, Cowan and Hasker are essentially saying that propositions must have a corresponding state of affairs to prove that proposition true or false. These claims are premised on what is known as truth-maker theory, which bears resemblance to the logical positivist movement. Truth-maker theory requires a state of affairs in the world to make a statement true. For example, the statement "it is snowing outside" would in fact be true, if it was snowing outside. The fact that there is snow falling is the truth maker for the statement, thereby, proving it to be true. However, a statement like, "If Q were in situation X, Q would do Y," does not have a corresponding truth maker to prove the statement true or false.

The Molonist (proponent and defender of middle knowledge) could begin their response to the grounding objection by stating that counterfactuals are for the most part assumed to be true or false for many reasons. First, we often use counterfactual statements in our everyday affairs, which presupposes that counterfactuals do have a truth-value. Second, the law of the excluded middle seems to indicate that many counterfactuals must be either true or false. For example, take the two following statement, "$(P \supset Q)$ or $(P \supset \neg Q)$," only one of these can be correct, seeming to indicate that counterfactuals do have a truth-value. Thirdly, there is also scriptural evidence[25] to support that God contains middle knowledge.[26] However, these three reasons are simply to support the idea that counterfactuals are a reasonable position to hold, and thereby seem to indicate that those who claim counterfactuals don't have a truth maker are the ones who carry the burden of proof.

However, there is even a greater reason to doubt the grounding objection, that being the insufficiency of truth-maker theory. For example, take the statement "Dinosaurs are extinct today." This negative statement does not seem to have a truth-maker, yet almost anyone would agree that it is true. But, how can it be true if it does not have a truth maker? Or take the statement, "The next Canadian Prime Minister will be a woman." This seems to either be true or false, but there is no current truth-maker or state of affairs that can prove this to be true or false. Ethical and aesthetic statements also pose a problem to truth-make theory. For example, the statements "The Mona Lisa is beautiful" or "Murder is wrong" do not seem to have an adequate truth-maker, but seem to be taken as brute facts. Why could not counterfactuals also be taken as brute facts in the way that aesthetic or ethical judgments are? There are many other

23. Molonists are the primary proponents for God containing middle knowledge.

24. William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 30.

25. 1 Corinthians 2:8, Acts 4:27-28, Galatians 1:4 are a few examples.

26. William L. Craig, "Middle Knowledge, Truth-Makers, and the 'Grounding Objection,'" *Faith and Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2001): 338-339.

example[27] that also illuminate the insufficiency of truth-maker theory to be the ultimate standard of what we consider true or false statements. Proponents of truth-maker theory have acknowledged that some statements may not need truth-makers, but if that is the case, why cannot counterfactual statements be considered part of this excluded group?

As William Lane Craig states, "I think it is evident that anti-Molinists have not even begun to do the necessary homework in order for their grounding objection to fly. They have yet to articulate their ontology of truth, including the nature of truth-bearers and truth-makers . . . Nor have they applied their theory to counterfactuals of creaturely freedom."[28] It seems to me that the Molonist has no reason to reject middle knowledge at this point, until it can be proven that counterfactuals require a truth maker. I myself agree with Plantinga when he states, "It seems to me much clearer that some counterfactuals of freedom are at least possibly true than that the truth of propositions must, in general be grounded in this way."[29] As stated previously in regards to the principle of alternate possibilities, my response here is simply trying to find a reasonable way to maintain both God's foreknowledge of future human actions and human freedom. There is clearly much work to be done in regards to middle knowledge and truth-maker theory. However, at this point, it seems far from determined that middle knowledge is false.

Conclusion: Resolving Richard's Dilemma

As I stated in my introduction, the purpose of this paper was to refute Swinburne's central argument that God's foreknowledge of human actions is incompatible with human freedom. Swinburne claims that God's knowledge must be understood in the "weak sense" which denies God's knowledge of future human actions. In response, I first laid out three reasons why Swinburne's argument is of great importance to the Christian. These three reasons were based on the Christian themes of scripture, sovereignty and salvation. I then proceeded to lay out Swinburne's argument.

Swinburne argued that since humans have freedom of the will, it is possible that a free human action could prove God's foreknowledge to be incorrect. But, since it is a logical contradiction to claim that God's knowledge can be proven wrong, one must deny God's foreknowledge of our actions. However, I took a different route and argued that humans cannot prove God's foreknowledge wrong, while maintaining their freedom.

My argument started by proposing that God in his timeless state possessed knowledge of our future actions based on the truth of what we would do in

27. See Craig, "Middle Knowledge, Truth-Makers, and The Grounding Objection," 341.
28. Craig, "Middle Knowledge, Truth-Makers, and The Grounding Objection," 348.
29. Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 529.

freedom-permitting circumstances. After the act of creation, God carried this knowledge over into his temporal state. Despite God knowing what we will do in the future, we still possess freedom of the will for two primary reasons. First, his foreknowledge is based on how we would act; therefore, he is not determining our actions. Secondly, we do not require the ability to do otherwise in order to have free actions.

Shortly after my main argument, I responded to two possible objections. These objections were concerned with moral responsibility and with God's middle knowledge. In regards to moral responsibility, I argued in favour of Michael McKenna's principle titled, the L-Reply. In response to the grounding objection, I argued that it is based on truth-maker theory, which seems to be unable to fully account for why God could not possess knowledge of our future actions.

In conclusion, it seems to me that I presented a thorough and well-reasoned rebuttal of Swinburne's argument that God's foreknowledge of future human actions and human freedom are incompatible. Therefore, the Christian has grounds to maintain the strong version of God's omniscience, which includes knowledge of future human actions

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