

A REPLY TO MORRISTON'S OBJECTION TO PLANTINGA'S FREE WILL DEFENSE

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Abstract

The logical problem of evil holds that the existence of the theistic God, who is considered omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent, is logically incompatible with the existence of evil. Since there is evil in the world, the existence of the theistic God is then logically impossible. Alvin Plantinga has argued that if God has a good reason to allow evil to exist, the logical problem of evil fails. And the good reason that God has might be the great value of significant freedom – the freedom to choose between moral good and evil. Wesley Morriston objects that Plantinga's free will defense is incompatible with one of the components of his ontological argument that God is omnibenevolent

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in every possible world. This paper aims to show that Morrision mistakenly assumes that the free will defense theorist holds the account of significant freedom for both human and divine freedom. If I am right, Plantinga's defense of free will can meet Morrision's objection.

Keywords: Philosophy of religion, defense of free will, ontological argument, Alvin Plantinga, Wesley Morrision

Introduction

In his book *God, Freedom, and Evil*,¹ Alvin Plantinga provides a strong version of the free will defense (hereafter, the FWD) against the logical problem of evil. He attempts to show that the existence of God is logically compatible with the existence of evils if God has a good reason to create some beings who may perform morally bad actions. He claims that one such good reason might be the great value of *significant freedom* – the freedom to choose between moral good and evil. If those beings had not had significant freedom, they would not have been morally responsible and could not have realized moral goodness. In his article, *Is God “Significantly Free?”*,² Wesley Morrision, however, argues that a serious problem arises from the FWD if we consider it alongside Plantinga's ontological argument (henceforth, the OA). According to the OA, God has omniscience, omnipotence, and moral perfection in every possible world. Morrision holds that even if the OA states that God has moral perfection in every possible world, when it is combined with the FWD, it entails that God is neither morally perfect nor significantly free. Given the OA, since God is omnibenevolent in every possible world, it is logically impossible for him to commit a morally wrong action in any possible world. However, since significant freedom requires that God commits a morally wrong action in at least one possible world, God cannot be significantly free provided that the OA is true. So, if the OA is true, the FWD is false. Given the FWD, since significant freedom is a necessary condition of moral goodness, God cannot be morally perfect in every

¹ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977).

² Wesley Morrision, “Is God “Significantly Free?””, *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 2/3 (1985), 257-264.

possible world. So, if the FWD is true, the OA is false. This means that either the OA or the FWD can be true, but not both. In this paper, I shall argue that Morrision mistakenly assumes that the libertarian theist, like Plantinga, holds the same account of freedom in both divine and human cases without considering any difference. I will attempt to show that the FWD does not maintain that God is morally perfect only if he is significantly free. In the first section, I will summarize Morrision's objection against the FWD. In the second section, I will claim that the theist who is committed to both the FWD and the OA does not have to give up one of those accounts to deal with the issue raised by Morrision. The theist only needs to provide two different conceptions of freedom, namely, creaturely freedom and divine freedom. In the last section, I will raise a possible objection (namely, the objection from the unified account of freedom) against my argument and will show why it fails.

1. Morrision's Objection to the Free Will Defense

Significant freedom, according to the FWD, has great value and requires the freedom to choose between moral good and bad. Even though God is omnipotent, it is logically impossible for Him to prevent free creatures from committing evil and, at the same time, give them significant freedom. This entails that if God wants to create free creatures, He cannot cause or determine them to perform only morally right actions. Plantinga's conception of freedom³ is as follows:

If a person is free with respect to a given action, then he is free to perform that action and free to refrain from performing it; no antecedent conditions and/or causal laws determine that he will perform the action, or that he won't. It is within his power at the time in question to take or perform the action and within his power to refrain from it.⁴

It is clear that Plantinga's conception of freedom is incompatible with determinism because if God or any antecedent conditions and causal laws determine an agent with regard to an action, then the agent is not free and morally responsible with respect to that action.

³ In this paper, I will claim that Plantinga thinks that this conception of freedom is the conception of creaturely freedom but not of God's freedom.

⁴ Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 29.

Plantinga's FWD, thus, presupposes two conditions: the sourcehood condition and the principle of alternative possibilities condition. Since there is not a widely accepted approach to understanding the necessary conditions of freedom, providing a standard libertarian account of freedom might not be easy. Regarding the sourcehood condition, the libertarian theorists hold a standard approach on the negative condition of the sourcehood: "True sourcehood—the kind of sourcehood that can actually ground an agent's freedom and responsibility—requires, so, it is argued, that one's action not be causally determined by factors beyond one's control."⁵ They, however, are not united in understanding a positive condition on sourcehood or self-determination. They are divided into non-causal libertarians, event-causal libertarians, and agent-causal libertarians. Non-causal libertarians hold that a free action is constituted by a mental action (or actions) where there is neither external nor internal causal structure. If our choice or action is entirely uncaused, then "it is free and under our control simply in virtue of being ours."⁶ According to event-causal libertarianism, a free action is nondeterministically caused by its causal antecedents (its prior events). If event-causal libertarians are right, self-determination requires that a free choice is a choice that is entirely reducible to causation by mental states and states of affairs.⁷ Agent-causal libertarianism, however, contends that a free action must be indeterministically caused by an agent, who is either a thing or substance, but not by mental events, prior circumstances, or states of affairs.⁸ As O'Connor has pointed out, the ontologically fundamental form of a free action is expressed by this agent-causal picture: *an agent S causes an intention i for reason r.*⁹

When it comes to the other necessary condition of libertarian freedom (the power to do otherwise or the principle of alternative possibilities), libertarians are united on the following categorical analysis:

⁵ Timothy O'Connor - Christopher Franklin, "Free Will", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Accessed on March 21, 2023).

⁶ O'Connor - Franklin, "Free Will".

⁷ O'Connor - Franklin, "Free Will". Also, Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 45.

⁸ Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, 45.

⁹ Timothy O'Connor, "Freedom with a Human Face", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29/1 (2005), 216.

Categorical Analysis: An agent S has the ability to choose or do otherwise than ϕ at time t if and only if it was possible, holding fixed everything up to t , that S choose or do otherwise than ϕ at t .¹⁰

Libertarian freedom, then, requires that an agent can be free with respect to an action only if he is able to choose or act otherwise than that action.

Morrison believes that, given the OA and the incompatibilist presuppositions of the FWD, God is neither significantly free nor morally perfect. If we sketch the relevant features of the OA, Morrison brings to our consideration the following premises given by Plantinga:

(27) A being has maximal greatness in a given world only if it has maximal excellence in every world.

(28) A being has maximal excellence in a given world only if it has omniscience, omnipotence, and moral perfection in that world.¹¹

Morrison claims that (27) and (28) together entail that God is morally perfect in every possible world. So, it is logically impossible for Him to commit a wrong action because He is determined by His perfectly good nature, necessarily excluding any morally wrong action. He reasons that it must be easy to see that the combination of the FWD and the OA entails that (a) God is not significantly free (the freedom requires that God commit a wrong action at least in one possible world) because it is impossible for Him to commit a wrong action in any possible world, and (b) God is not morally good or morally perfect because moral goodness presupposes significant freedom. Thus, he says, "A theist cannot consistently give the free will defense if he accepts the ontological argument, and *vice versa*."¹²

Morrison, however, thinks that there are two different strategies for dealing with this problem. First, it might be argued that even if God is not significantly free, He can still possess *maximal greatness* but not moral perfection. Even though He lacked moral perfection, he would still be essentially and perfectly good. So, we would be right to praise God for His goodness but not for His moral goodness: "In somewhat the way that we might praise a beautiful sunset, we can praise the

¹⁰ O'Connor - Franklin, "Free Will".

¹¹ Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 108.

¹² Morrison, "Is God 'Significantly Free?'" , 258.

absolute perfection of God's nature."¹³ Morrision, however, reminds us that the FWD entails that moral goodness produced by significant freedom is superior to any kind of goodness that could have been realized by innocent automata. This means that freely-chosen/freely-actualized moral goodness is superior to non-freely chosen goodness. If, unlike what the FWD theorist holds, significant freedom was not superior, then God would not have had sufficient reason to create significantly free creatures (who perform both morally right and wrong actions) instead of innocent automata (who always perform non-moral good actions). But it seems that if God is essentially and perfectly good without possessing moral perfection or goodness, then innocent automata are much closer to the image of God than significantly free creatures are. Thus, it appears that "the goodness of innocent automata is superior to the moral goodness of significantly free beings, contrary to what is required for a successful free will defense."¹⁴ Morrision, thus, thinks that the first strategy fails.

However, the proponent of the FWD, according to Morrision, does not have to give up the OA if the second strategy that he himself favors succeeds. According to the second strategy, we should revise Plantinga's (27) and (28) as follows:

(27*) A being is maximally great in a given world if and only if:

(i) it possesses maximal moral excellence in *that* world; and (ii) it possesses maximal nonmoral excellence in *every* world.¹⁵

(28*) A being has maximal *nonmoral* excellence in a given world only if it has omniscience and omnipotence in that world.¹⁶

And taken together, (27*) and (28*) entail the following:

(27**) A being is maximally great in a given world if and only if it possesses maximal moral excellence and maximal nonmoral *greatness* in that world.¹⁷

(27**), however, has a clear implication: no being could be maximally great in every possible world. Thus, the proponent of the FWD will have to accept that, though God is significantly free, He is

¹³ Morrision, "Is God "Significantly Free?"", 259.

¹⁴ Morrision, "Is God "Significantly Free?"", 262.

¹⁵ Morrision, "Is God "Significantly Free?"", 263.

¹⁶ Morrision, "Is God "Significantly Free?"", 262.

¹⁷ Morrision, "Is God "Significantly Free?"", 263.

not morally perfect or maximally great in every possible world. This, according to Morrision, will be a disappointing conclusion for the libertarian theist because it appears that he can endorse either the FWD or the OA but not both.

2. Two Different Accounts of Freedom

As stated previously, the FWD entails both that significant freedom is the freedom to choose between morally right and wrong actions and that moral goodness requires significant freedom. We have also seen that Plantinga's account of freedom entails that if a person is free with respect to a given action, then there should not be any antecedent conditions and/or causal laws determining whether he will perform or refrain from performing the action. In this section, I shall examine two main questions: (1) Does the FWD presuppose that significant freedom is applicable to God as well? and (2) Does it imply that God's moral perfection requires significant freedom? I will argue that an affirmative answer to either (1) or (2) would be implausible. If I am right, the theist can consistently hold both the FWD and the OA, for he can show that God can be morally perfect in every possible world even if He is not significantly free.

Quentin Smith, in his *Ethical and Religious Thought in Analytic Philosophy of Language*, claims that Plantinga's FWD entails three kinds of freedom:

A person is externally free with respect to an action A if and only if nothing other than (external to) herself determines either that she perform A or refrain from performing A.

... A person is internally free with respect to an action A if and only if it is false that his past physical and psychological states, in conjunction with causal laws, determine either that he perform A or refrain from performing A.

... A person is logically free with respect to an action A if and only if there is some possible world in which he performs A and there is another possible world in which he does not perform A. A person is logically free with respect to a wholly good life (a life in which every morally relevant action performed by the person is a good action) if and only if there is some possible world in

which he lives this life and another possible world in which he does not.¹⁸

Smith is right in claiming that Plantinga's version of the FWD entails that a person is free with respect to an action A if and only if he is externally, internally, and logically free.¹⁹ When Plantinga says that an agent is significantly free if there are no antecedent conditions and/or causal laws that determine the agent to perform A or to refrain from performing A, he means that there are neither internal nor external conditions that determine the agent to perform A or to refrain from performing A.²⁰ Further, as Smith has pointed out, though Plantinga does not explicitly claim that the agent also should be logically free, the FWD presupposes that "there are no possible creatures who are internally-externally free with respect to a morally good life but logically determined."²¹ So, according to Plantinga's version of the FWD, an agent is significantly free if and only if he is externally, internally, and logically free.²²

Given Smith's definition of significant freedom along with Morrision's objections to the FWD, the main problem with Morrision's objection to the compatibility between the FWD and the OA seems to be the following: the FWD presupposes that we shall have a unified account of moral goodness and freedom that can be applicable to both

¹⁸ Quentin Smith, *Ethical and Religious Thought in Analytic Philosophy of Language* (Michigan: Yale University Press, 1997), 149.

¹⁹ Following Kevin Timpe, one might suggest that internal and logical freedom are necessary for an agent to be free with respect to an action only if he has not yet formed a moral character by his previous choices in a way that the given action is no longer open to him. An agent, for example, might have formed a moral character by his previous choices in a way that he cannot refuse to believe in the existence of God but this should not mean that he is no longer free in his choice to believe in God's existence. It only means that he enjoys a derivative freedom with respect to the given action. I think Timpe's account of derivative freedom might be true regarding the inhabitants of the heavenly stage but not for the inhabitants of the earthly stage. I maintain that given that creatures have imperfect nature, a human agent with a morally virtuous character still has internal and logical freedom in a weak sense in the earthly stage.

²⁰ For Plantinga, as a proponent of the libertarian account of freedom, thinks that if a person is internally determined while he is externally free, then he can be neither free nor morally responsible. To my knowledge, however, he does not say anything about derivative freedom.

²¹ Smith, *Ethical and Religious Thought in Analytic Philosophy of Language*, 152

²² I shall note here that while external freedom is related to the sourcehood condition, both internal and logical freedom are related to the principle of alternative possibilities condition.

God and creatures.²³ Had Morrision been right in his assumption, the objections he has raised would have been plausible. However, we have good reasons to reject his assumption.

First, we need to clarify what Plantinga himself means by significant freedom. When asked if there will be free will in heaven, Plantinga's response entails that it is instrumentally valuable though significant freedom is a great good. For instance, he claims that it is not necessary that the inhabitants of heaven have significant freedom. It might be the case that God provided significant freedom to His creatures only on the earthly stage but not on the heavenly stage. This suggests that significant freedom is instrumentally valuable in the earthly stage because it is a necessary condition for the formation of a moral character for that stage.²⁴ The moral goodness in the earthly stage, thus, is produced by a kind of freedom (i.e., significant freedom) that is not necessarily realized in the heavenly stage, where we do not need to start from the most basic steps in order to form a moral character. Then, we might argue that the FWD requires external, internal, and logical freedom for an agent with respect to morally right or wrong actions because these three kinds of freedom are necessary for "the formation of a free moral character for any created agent."²⁵ The libertarian theist, thus, holds that since human beings have intrinsically developmental characteristics (including moral character), significant freedom is required for creatures. We can then claim that Plantinga's account of significant freedom is meant to show that human beings need to have external, internal, and logical freedom in order to be considered free in their actions and thus in forming their moral character.

Second, it must be obvious that if one wants to hold a unified account of freedom that can be applicable to two beings in every aspect, he cannot succeed unless he also considers the nature of those beings. He will have to assume that the natures of those beings share

²³ Edward Wierenga briefly refers to this confusion. In this paper, I will try to extend this point further. Please see Edward Wierenga, *The Nature of God* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 209-211.

²⁴ For a part of an interview with Plantinga on whether there will be free will in heaven, please see: Alvin Plantinga, "Will There Be Free Will in Heaven?" (Interviewer: Bart Ehrman, Video Recording, Accessed on March 21, 2023).

²⁵ Kevin Timpe, "God's Freedom, God's Character", in *Free Will and Theism: Connections, Contingencies, and Concerns*, ed. Kevin Timpe - Daniel Speak (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 286.

some basic features that make them ready to enjoy this kind of freedom. This means that if, let's say, Plantinga has meant to hold significant freedom not only as creaturely freedom but also as divine freedom, he is assuming that both God and creatures share some basic features with respect to having their moral character. However, as a proponent of both (27) and (28), Plantinga's position is obvious: unlike us, it is impossible for God to lack His essential attributes (such as omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence) in any possible world. He does not have those attributes accidentally, so they are not something that He achieves. This means that His freedom and moral character are not achieved either. Though we achieve our freedom and character over time, divine freedom and moral character are eternally complete. This leads us to the idea that since God's freedom, which is perfectly compatible with his goodness, is essentially valuable, it is essentially different from significant freedom that is instrumentally valuable.²⁶ So, even if Plantinga does not provide an account of God's freedom in particular, we have good reasons to believe that he does not hold a unified account of freedom that can be applicable to both God and human beings without considering any difference.

But why not to have a unified account of freedom for both God and human beings? Are not we invited by the theist to believe that God has created human beings in His image? Does not this idea provide a good reason to hold that both God and human beings are significantly free? Even though I think the theistic view that God has created us in His image provides a good reason to hold a unified account of freedom that can be applicable to both God and human beings, it does not necessarily entail that the given account should be applicable in every sense. As noted in the previous section, significant freedom requires the sourcehood condition and the principle of alternative possibilities condition in the sense that the agent chooses between morally right and wrong actions. I will argue that reflection on the difference between divine nature and human nature indicates that we need to hold only a weaker version of the principle of alternative possibilities condition for divine freedom though we should hold a strong version of the sourcehood condition in the divine case. The weaker version of

²⁶ Ferhat Taşkın, *The Problem of Divine Creative Freedom* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2023), 122.

the latter condition requires the agent to have alternative possibilities, but those possibilities cannot be immoral or irrational.

So, why not to have a unified account of freedom in every sense? Human beings are considered to be rational, powerful, and knowledgeable beings, but there is no doubt that we are far from having those attributes in a perfect sense. Our rationality does not prevent us from having conflicting desires or irrational motivations. We have power and knowledge, but they are limited in many aspects. Our imperfect nature, then, indicates that human freedom, as Timothy O'Connor has pointed out, "is always limited, fragile, and variable over time and across agents."²⁷ Our limited and imperfect nature and freedom also show that it is impossible for us to have a perfect moral character that is eternally complete. The moral character of a human agent, in general, is supposed to be formed by the agent's own free choices rather than being innate. The FWD, then, seems to entail that God gives significant freedom to His creatures so that those free beings can form and develop their characters in order to resemble God's character with respect to actions.²⁸

Given God's nature, however, it is hard to claim that God must have significant freedom of choice in order to possess moral perfection and goodness. Since God is omnirational, He has no irrational motivations. Furthermore, because He is omnipotent and omniscient, there can be no external or practical constraints on Him.²⁹ Thus, since God has His attributes (such as omnipotence, omnibenevolence, and omniscience) essentially, He does not need to have significant freedom (the combination of external, internal, and logical freedom) in order to have moral perfection and moral goodness.³⁰ Unlike free creatures, He does

²⁷ O'Connor, "Freedom with a Human Face", 208.

²⁸ See Taskin, *The Problem of Divine Creative Freedom*, 121. I think O'Connor is right in claiming that we should consider this as a form of rough analogy but not of a small-scale replica. Please see O'Connor, "Freedom with a Human Face", 226.

²⁹ O'Connor, "Freedom with a Human Face", 212; Timpe, "God's Freedom, God's Character", 278.

³⁰ It is worth noting that the moral goodness God has is fundamentally different from the moral goodness free creatures have. The former is true of a being that has perfect nature and freedom. Further, it does not need to have the freedom of choice between morally right and wrong actions. The latter, however, is supposed to be produced by a limited being that has imperfect nature, character, and freedom. Therefore, the latter requires significant freedom, the freedom to choose between morally right and wrong actions.

not need to have significant freedom to form or develop His moral character. If God has His attributes essentially, it seems that His moral character and freedom are perfectly compatible. This entails that God cannot have significant freedom that could threaten His moral perfection.

3. The Objection from the Freedom of Innocent Automata

It seems that if God is not significantly free, either the sourcehood condition (external freedom) or the principle of possible alternative possibilities condition (internal and logical freedom) is not satisfied in the divine case. God, thus, is unable to commit anything morally wrong. However, Morrision's objection regarding free human beings and innocent automata seems to arise again. As noted earlier, Morrision claims that if God is not significantly free, then innocent automata who are always performing non-moral good actions are much closer to the image of God than significantly free creatures, and if innocent automata who do not have significant freedom are closer to the image of God, then the FWD fails. For one of the most basic assumptions behind the FWD is that creating human beings with significant freedom is better than creating innocent automata with no freedom. I believe that Morrision is mistaken.

As stated previously, Plantinga contends that a person can be free and morally responsible with respect to a given action if and only if he has external, internal, and logical freedom. There is a consensus among the proponents of the libertarian account of freedom that one cannot be determined and free (and indeed morally responsible) at the same time with respect to an action. However, there is debate about whether one can be considered free and morally responsible with respect to an action if his character, as formed by his previous free choices, internally determines that he will perform the action or refrain from performing it. As a proponent of a libertarian account of freedom, Kevin Timpe, for instance, believes that significant freedom is a necessary condition for character formation. However, he also thinks that:

What seems central to a rational agent doing something freely is that the agent is not causally necessitated to do it by anything outside the agent and that it is done for a reason; not that it is both logically and psychologically possible for the agent to have

refrained from performing that action (holding everything constant).

... moral freedom [significant freedom] is instrumentally necessary for created agents to be (that is, become) 'independent and morally virtuous.' But once these agents have freely formed such a character, it's no longer the case that they require the ability to do otherwise.³¹

So, according to Timpe, it seems that even if external, internal, and logical freedom (i.e., the sourcehood and the principle of alternative possibilities conditions) are necessary for a rational agent to form and develop his character, after having an independent and morally virtuous character, only external freedom (i.e., the sourcehood condition) is central to that agent. If he is not determined by any external condition with respect to an action, then he can be considered free and morally responsible for his action.

Timpe argues that this is especially true when we consider God's agency. Given that God cannot be determined by anything outside of Him, it is clear that God is externally free with respect to an action. He is, thus, the ultimate source of all of His actions. However, given God's perfect nature and moral character, God never needs to have internal or logical freedom.³² His perfect nature and moral character determine His choices and actions, but this does not mean that He does not have perfect freedom. Timpe is right in asserting that external freedom holds greater importance than internal or logical freedom in the divine case. For it suggests that an agent who has freely formed and developed his character as morally virtuous is closer to the image of God than an innocent automaton who has never had significant freedom to form and develop such a character. Therefore, even if God and significantly free creatures are the ultimate source of their free actions, an innocent automaton cannot find the ultimate source of any action in himself. This shows that Morriston's objection suggesting that innocent automata, devoid of external, internal, and logical freedom, are closer to the image of God than significantly free creatures is unsuccessful.

If I am right so far, the assumption of the FWD that moral goodness requires significant freedom is true only for creatures but not for God. Since God, unlike creatures, does not need to form a moral character

³¹ Timpe, "God's Freedom, God's Character", 286.

³² Timpe, "God's Freedom, God's Character", 286.

but has it essentially, moral goodness in the divine case does not require significant freedom. One might, however, still wonder whether God's freedom entails that He is internally and logically free and thus not morally perfect in at least one possible world. I noted above that Timpe is right in contending that external freedom holds greater importance than internal or logical freedom in the divine case. But I think he is wrong in his view that God is not internally or logically free at all. For if God is considered to have moral perfection and perfect freedom, it is then necessary for Him to choose and to act with regard to His perfect moral character that is absolutely compatible with His perfect freedom. However, the question remains as to how one might comprehend this concept of compatibility. Notice that even if God's moral nature limits some alternatives for His creative choices, He is still the ultimate source of His choices and actions. So, the sourcehood condition is satisfied even if divine nature limits God's internal or logical freedom. As O'Connor has pointed out, "most theologians acknowledge that God's perfect goodness entails that any number of scenarios contrary to His moral nature are not genuine possibilities for Him."³³ However, this does not necessarily imply that God is determined by His nature for every choice He makes. It is indeed true that given God's perfect moral nature, He can have neither internal nor logical freedom with respect to morally wrong actions. For if perfect freedom required being open to all possibilities, then the agent who has such freedom would lack a perfect nature. God's moral nature, however, does not require that He have only one option regarding whether to create or what to create, for example. Since any essentially just world is open to God's actualization and since such actualization is compatible with His perfect moral nature, a weaker version of the principle of alternative possibilities is still satisfied in the divine case. Unlike the strong version of the principle of alternative possibilities, the weaker version does not require God to be internally and logically free in the Smithian sense.

Notice that this weaker version might be worrisome for a theist who endorses a bare voluntarist account of divine freedom. For, according to him, God can act without having any reason for that action. The bare voluntarist position, thus, is open to the idea that God can be internally

³³ O'Connor, "Freedom with a Human Face", 212.

and logically free in the Smithian sense. I will presume that given God's omniscience, omnibenevolence, and omnirationality, the bare voluntarist position is implausible. Notice also that the theist who endorses the weaker version of the principle of alternative possibilities does not hold an unusual view regarding traditional theism. For many theists believe that God's omnipotence does not require that God can do logically impossible things (such as making square circles). Similarly, it is not unusual to hold that God's perfect freedom does not require that God can do morally wrong actions or to maintain that God's omnibenevolence does not require that God's freedom entirely disappear. Given the perfect compatibility between God's omnibenevolence and freedom, God cannot be internally and logically free in the Smithian sense. This means that there cannot be any possible world in which God chooses to perform a morally bad action. However, unlike Timpe's view, the principle of alternative possibilities condition containing both internal and logical freedom does not disappear in the divine case. Even if the strong version is not satisfied in the divine case, the weaker version is. This entails that God's moral perfection does not threaten His perfect freedom.

Timpe is also wrong in claiming that free creatures do not need to have internal and logical freedom once they have freely developed their moral character. I agree that we do not need to have internal and logical freedom in the heavenly stage because the good of continued moral development in the heavenly stage is not connected to significant freedom. The good of continued moral development in the heavenly stage might be considered a separate good that strongly motivates continued internal freedom as a necessary good for the heavenly stage. Thus, even if it is possible to have continued moral development in the heavenly stage, it is still impossible for us to perform any evil action in that stage. However, the good of continued moral development in the earthly stage is connected to significant freedom because, in that stage, free creatures who have a limited and imperfect nature and freedom are supposed to develop their characters by performing significantly free actions to be closer to the image of God. In order to be considered free and morally responsible, it should always be possible for these imperfect creatures to have external, internal, and logical freedom with respect to their actions on the earthly stage. But this indeed does not mean that their moral characters

formed by their previous free choices have no influence on their moral choices. Rather, the FWD (or at least, as I consider it, Plantinga's version of the FWD) entails that the main goal of character formation and development is to become sufficiently morally virtuous that making a morally wrong choice or action will be highly improbable or almost impossible (but not impossible). This suggests that human beings are logically free, but when they form a morally virtuous character, the principle of alternative possibilities with regard to morally wrong actions gets weaker. If that is right, then human beings with virtuous moral character get closer to the image of God even if they are internally and logically free.

Further, as Plantinga points out, human freedom should not be confused with unpredictability or chance. An agent might be able to predict that he will perform an action A or refrain from performing it under certain set of conditions, but this does not mean that he is not free with respect to A.³⁴ His moral and rational character can limit alternatives by influencing him to think that there are no good reasons to choose morally wrong alternatives to act. His character, thus, can make the probability of performing some morally wrong actions almost impossible (say, 0.0001). However, as a being with imperfect motivations, desires, and intentions, he cannot develop to the point where this probability becomes strictly zero.³⁵ If the agent's character makes an alternative choice impossible, then he is not significantly free with respect to that choice or action. Once we have freely formed an independent and morally virtuous character, our character will strongly form our motivations. It will strengthen our good motivations and weaken our bad ones. Since, as beings who do not have perfect nature and freedom, we cannot have only good motivations in the earthly stage, after having a morally virtuous character, it is still possible for us to have some weak and bad desires or external reasons

³⁴ Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 29-30.

³⁵ Nevertheless, I do not claim that God cannot make this probability impossible for us. After deserving to be much closer to the image of God, He can prevent us from doing evil whenever we have a bad inclination or intention. I think we can have such a divine interference *in general* only in the heavenly stage but not in the earthly stage because if we are significantly free beings and if it is true that we have an imperfect nature and character, then it must be always possible for us to reject God's mercy and friendship until our death. This must be true even if we have independent and morally virtuous character. So, unlike God, the inability to choose or perform morally wrong actions is not intrinsic to our nature and character.

that influence our good motivations and thus our actions. Therefore, if I am right, the thing that makes significantly free beings (but not innocent automata) close to the image of God is not the lack of internal or logical freedom but instead their very presence.

4. Returning to Plantinga's Ontological Argument

I have argued that given God's perfect nature and our imperfect nature, it is implausible to hold a unified account that can be applied to both God and human beings in every sense. I have noted that though human beings need external, internal, and logical freedom in order to be considered free with respect to an action, God needs only external freedom in a strong sense and internal and logical freedom in a weak sense. And I have also claimed that, given our imperfect nature and psychological states, it would not be possible for us to freely develop our moral character without external, internal, and logical freedom. After considering these arguments, let's now turn to Plantinga's ontological argument (the OA). As we can recall, Morrision argues that a theist cannot consistently give the OA if he accepts the FWD, and *vice versa*. So, he believes that given the combination of the OA and the FWD: (i) God cannot be significantly free because it is impossible for Him to commit a morally wrong action in any possible world, and (ii) God is not morally good and perfect because moral goodness presupposes significant freedom. Therefore, he suggests that the theist should revise either the FWD or the OA.

Given my arguments on the difference between God's freedom and creaturely freedom, I believe the theist does not need to revise either. He only needs to show that God does not need to have significant freedom to possess moral perfection in every possible world. Morrision is right that the theistic God cannot be significantly free, but he is wrong that moral goodness in the divine case requires significant freedom. What moral goodness in the divine case requires is that (a) God is the ultimate source of His intentions and actions, and (b) God is internally and logically free in the sense that only morally good options (we can add *rationally* and *aesthetically* good ones as well) are open to Him. If that is right, the theistic God is perfectly good and free. Plantinga's (27) and (28) are then safeguarded.

Conclusion

I argued that Morrision's objection that Plantinga's ontological argument and defense of free will raise a divine moral perfection problem is incorrect. I showed that there are good reasons to believe that Plantinga provides his conception of significant freedom -the freedom to choose between morally right and wrong actions- only for creatures but not for God. I also emphasized that since we cannot treat God's freedom in the same way that we treat creaturely freedom, it is not plausible to suppose that God's moral perfection needs significant freedom. Therefore, I conclude that a theist can rightly hold both Plantinga's ontological argument and free will defense.³⁶

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