

## THE FREE WILL DEFENSE REVISITED: THE INSTRUMENTAL VALUE OF SIGNIFICANT FREE WILL

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### ABSTRACT

*Alvin Plantinga has famously responded to the logical problem of evil by appealing to the intrinsic value of significant free will. A problem, however, arises because traditional theists believe that both God and the redeemed who go to heaven cannot do wrong acts. This entails that both God and the redeemed in heaven lack significant freedom. If significant freedom is indeed valuable, then God and the redeemed in heaven would lack something intrinsically valuable. However, if significant freedom is not intrinsically valuable, then Plantinga's reply to the logical problem of evil fails. In this paper, we assess three contemporary solutions to the dilemma above. The first is the love solution, which proposes that significant freedom is necessary for agents to love, and loving others is intrinsically good. The second is the soul-making solution, which argues that significant freedom is necessary for self-developing one's moral character, and having a self-developed moral character is intrinsically good. The third is the derivative free will solution, which argues that significant freedom is necessary for derivative free will in heaven, and derivative free will is intrinsically good. We raise problems against all three solutions and instead defend a fourth solution – the ultimate responsibility solution. That is, SF is instrumentally valuable as it gives agents ultimate responsibility with regards to morally significant acts. Finally, we defend the ultimate responsibility solution against two major objections.*

**Keywords:** Free Will Defense; Problem of Evil; Heavenly Freedom; God's Freedom; Soul-Making

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Alvin Plantinga has famously responded to the logical problem of evil with his Free Will Defense (FWD). He argues that worlds with significantly free agents, who freely perform more good than evil, are more valuable than worlds without such agents.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, God would have a morally justifiable reason to create a world with significantly free agents, which would allow the possibility of evil. Therefore, there is no logical inconsistency between God's existence and the existence of evil.

A problem, however, arises because traditional theists believe that both God and the redeemed who go to heaven cannot do wrong acts. This entails that both God and the redeemed in heaven lack significant freedom, which undermines the value of having

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<sup>1</sup> Plantinga 1974, p. 359.



significant freedom which is essential for the FWD.<sup>2</sup> After all, if significant freedom is so great to justify evils, why is significant freedom both absent in God and the redeemed in heaven?

In this paper, we assess three contemporary solutions to the problem and argue that all are unsuccessful. We then defend a fourth solution which appeals to the idea of ultimate responsibility.

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE FREE WILL DEFENSE

In *Evil and Omnipotence*,<sup>3</sup> J. L. Mackie argues that belief in the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God is logically incompatible with the belief in the existence of evil. This means that there is no possible world where both can exist.<sup>4</sup> Mackie adds two other premises to show the contradiction: “A good thing eliminates evil as far as it can” and “There are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do.”<sup>5</sup> One can modify the latter premise to “An omnipotent thing can do anything that is metaphysically possible including prevent evil.”<sup>6</sup> If both propositions are true, it follows that an omnibenevolent and omnipotent being would prevent all evils (since it could and would want to). Thus, it would be impossible that both evil and such a being exists.<sup>7</sup> This is known as the logical problem of evil.

In response, Plantinga offers his FWD to show that a good thing does not always eliminate evil because there may be overriding goods.<sup>8</sup> Here, instead of offering a theodicy to say “what God’s reason for permitting evil really is,” Plantinga offers a defense which merely says “what God’s reason might possibly be.”<sup>9</sup> This, however, is sufficient because he would have shown a possible world where both God and evil exists, and hence shown that there is no logical contradiction. We will first modify some of Plantinga’s definitions for clarity:

Libertarian Freewill (LF): An agent has LF with respect to a given action iff (if and only if) “no antecedent conditions and/or casual laws determine that” one performs or refrains from the action.<sup>10</sup>

Morally Significant Act: An action is morally significant for an agent “if it would be wrong for him to perform the action but right to refrain or vice versa.”<sup>11</sup>

Significant Freewill (SF): An agent has SF with respect to a given action iff the agent has LF for that action and the action is a morally significant act.<sup>12</sup>

Notice how SF is a certain kind of freedom. A person can never have SF and yet still have LF with respect to only non-moral choices. For example, suppose I cannot choose to freely do any wrong acts but I can freely choose whether to listen to Beethoven or Mozart later. Here,

<sup>2</sup> By ‘heaven,’ we mean to refer to the ultimate destiny of those who are saved by God.

<sup>3</sup> Mackie 1955.

<sup>4</sup> A possible world can be thought of as what the actual world possibly could have been.

<sup>5</sup> Mackie 1955, p. 343.

<sup>6</sup> This modification comes because there are some things that it seems God cannot do such as sinning, or ceasing to exist. Only few philosophers hold that God can do what is metaphysically and logically impossible such as making  $2+2=5$ .

<sup>7</sup> One may further add omniscience and say that “an omniscient being would be aware of all possible and actual evils” (Rea and Murray 2008, p. 160).

<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere Plantinga has offered a theodicy. (Plantinga 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Plantinga 1974, p. 358.

<sup>10</sup> Plantinga 1974, p. 359.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



all that I require is LF with respect to non-moral choices. A person can also never have SF and yet still have LF with respect to only morally good choices. For example, it might be that a person is so compassionate that she cannot be unkind. She can only freely choose how she wants to show kindness to another person. She can choose to treat a person to a meal, or cook home cooked food for the person. She can choose to donate her money to the poor man across the street or to the old lady next door. So as long as nothing determines which morally good choice she makes, she is making a free choice between morally good choices. Thus, she has LF with respect to morally good choices. For Plantinga, it is SF which is valuable enough to justify the existence of evils – it is not LF with respect to non-moral choices or LF with respect to only morally good choices.

Plantinga argues that a world with agents possessing SF, who “freely perform more good than evil actions, is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no [agents] at all.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, God has justification for giving agents SF as long as these agents freely perform more good than evil actions. Now, if God creates agents with SF, then God cannot at the same time also, as a matter of logical possibility, “cause or determine them to do only what is right.”<sup>14</sup> If God gives agents SF, then there must be the possibility that agents choose to do wrong acts which results in evil. Hence, there is a possible world where both God and evil exists.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. SIGNIFICANT FREEDOM, GOD AND THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN

The FWD has been celebrated by many as a successful reply against the logical problem of evil.<sup>16</sup> At the core of the FWD is the idea that SF is valuable; so valuable that it can justify the existence of evils.

Two theistic beliefs, however, threaten the idea that SF is valuable. The first belief traditional theists often have is that they take God to be essentially morally perfect. On this view, it is both true that God *would* not do evil acts; and God *could* not do evil acts. For example, it is often thought that it is impossible for God to lie. God is thought to have a perfect moral character (PMC) which precludes Him from doing any evil.<sup>17</sup> Here, we can say that an agent has a PMC iff for all actions where it would be wrong to perform (or wrong to refrain from an action), the agent’s moral character entails that he cannot choose the wrong action. Therefore, since God has a perfect moral character (henceforth, PMC), God cannot do evil, and hence God lacks SF.<sup>18</sup> As Wes Morriston says, “God’s nature is such that it is logically impossible for Him to perform a wrong action. He is determined—in the strongest possible sense of ‘determined’—not to perform any wrong actions.”<sup>19</sup>

From this, Morriston raises the following objection, “If [SF] is such a great good in human beings, why is it not a grave defect in God that he lacks it? And if the lack of [SF]

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. To note, Swinburne (2010) offers various reasons for thinking that SF is valuable for us.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The following defense thus far only addresses moral evils committed by agents. One could of course propose that it is possible natural evil was introduced as part of punishment for sin, or that all natural evils are possibly moral evils committed by demons.

<sup>16</sup> There are some philosophers who have raised problems for accepting TWD (Howard-Snyder 2013, Pruss 2012, Manis 2006), while others raise problems for CCFs (Cowan 2003). In reply, some modified versions of the FWD do not use CCFs and TWD. See for example Bernstein and Helms 2015 and Pruss 2003.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Bergmann and Cover 2006, Mawson 2005 and Timpe 2015. For a non-traditional view of God’s freedom see for example Guleserian 2000 and Manis 2011.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Bergmann and Cover 2006, p. 383-391, Morriston 1985, Wielenberg 2016, p. 5-6.

<sup>19</sup> Morriston 1985, p. 258.



does not detract in any way from God's greatness, would it not have been better for us not to have it?"<sup>20</sup> So, theists who think that God lacks SF are stuck in a dilemma. Either SF is valuable, or it is not. If theists hold that SF is valuable, then God lacks something valuable. So, he is not so great after all. Even worse, agents who possess SF would have something valuable which God lacks. On the other hand, if theists hold that SF is not valuable, SF cannot be used to justify the existence of evils; hence the FWD fails.

Now, a theist may try to escape the problem by suggesting that it is valuable for us to have SF but not valuable for God to have SF. After all, God is a different kind of being from humans. This strategy however faces difficulties. First, while it may be true that humans are in some ways different from God, it is also true that humans are in many ways similar to God. After all, traditional theists hold that humans are created in God's image. Humans are not entirely different from God. So the theist is pressed to give an account of the differences between humans and God that would show that SF is valuable for humans but not for God. It is however unclear what difference (or differences) the theist could possibly use to explain why it is good for humans to have SF but not for God to have it. Second, even if we grant the claim that SF is valuable for humans but not for God, a further problem arises - if it is valuable for humans to have SF, then humans should also have SF in heaven. As we will see in the next paragraph, however, traditional theists think that humans in heaven will lack SF.

The second belief traditional theists often have is that the redeemed who go to heaven will have a PMC, and hence they would lack SF. If so, it is possible for created agents to be like God who has a PMC and lacks SF. From this, some have objected to the FWD.<sup>21</sup> If SF is so valuable, why do the redeemed in heaven lack it? After all, Heaven is supposed to be a better place than earth. So, theists are stuck in a similar dilemma as above. Theists must either hold that SF is valuable or hold that SF is not valuable. If SF is valuable, then the redeemed in heaven lacks this valuable thing. Heaven is not so great after all. If theists instead hold that SF is not valuable, then once again, SF cannot be used to justify the existence of evils; hence the FWD fails.

Some theists might try to escape this dilemma by giving up the traditional view regarding the redeemed in heaven. Some theists may want to hold that SF is valuable and the redeemed in heaven have SF. For example, John Donnelly holds that those redeemed who do choose wrong will be evicted from heaven.<sup>22</sup> This view, however, faces many Scriptural difficulties and we suspect few theists would accept this. Other theists propose that the redeemed have SF and *could* choose wrong, but *would* not for all eternity. A Molinist, for example, may say that God looks at the agent's counterfactuals of creaturely freedom and only actualises circumstances in heaven where one would freely choose right acts.<sup>23</sup> So while agents *could* choose wrong acts, they *would* not, since God never actualises the circumstances in which one *would* freely choose wrong acts.<sup>24</sup> This view, however, does no better at escaping the problem. If God can actualise the right circumstances to ensure agents with SF would never choose wrong acts in heaven, then God can do the same on earth. God can simply create agents with SF who would never do wrong by actualizing the right set of

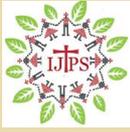
<sup>20</sup> Morrision 2000, p. 344.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Nagasawa, Oppy and Trakakis 2004, and Martin 2015, p. 436.

<sup>22</sup> See Donnelly 1985 and Donnelly 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Note that the circumstances do not casually determine how the agent would choose.

<sup>24</sup> Pawl and Timpe 2009, p. 402-403. Note that Zachary Manis proposes the same solution for God as well (Manis 2011).



circumstances. So, God can eliminate all evil while preserving the value of SF. This undermines the FWD.

In sum then, the two traditional beliefs of theists seem to show that SF is not valuable. After all, if God - the greatest being - lacks SF, and if the redeemed in heaven will lack SF, then it seems that SF cannot be valuable. If this is right, SF is not valuable and cannot be used to justify any evils. Therefore, theists must either concede that the FWD defense fails, or give up both traditional beliefs, or somehow explain why God and the redeemed in heaven lack SF even though it is valuable.

#### 4. SOME CONTEMPORARY SOLUTIONS

Rather than giving up the FWD or the two traditional beliefs above, theists might try to explain why God and the redeemed in heaven lack SF even though it is valuable. Philosophers often make a distinction between *intrinsic* value and *instrumental* value. Some things are *instrumentally* valuable in the sense that they do not have value in and of themselves. They are only valuable in that they help you to obtain something else of value. For example, if I pass you a ten dollar note but you are prohibited from using it, then it seems that the ten dollar note has no value. It would just be a piece of paper with printing on it. If you can use the ten dollar note, then the note would have value since it can get you something else. In this way, the ten dollar note is *instrumentally* valuable. Its value is derived from it being able to get you something else of value. In other words, the ten dollar note is just a means to something else. In contrast, things which are *intrinsically* valuable are valuable in and of itself. They are ends in and of themselves. They should be desired for their own sake. Using this distinction, theists can say that although SF is not intrinsically valuable, SF might be instrumentally valuable. This can explain why God and the redeemed in heaven lack SF, but God has good reason to give human agents SF initially. It is because it is necessary to give agents SF initially to achieve something else of value in heaven. Before defending our view, we will assess three other contemporary solutions in this section.

##### 4.1 The Love Solution

One might think that SF is necessary in order to love God, and loving God is a great good.<sup>25</sup> One motivation provided by Richard Tamburro is this: “un-free agents cannot really love God.”<sup>26</sup> We think this view fails. Here are two cases where theists are committed to the existence of un-free agents who can really love. First, theists hold that the different members of the trinity love each other essentially. That is, each member of the trinity does not have the freedom to choose between loving one another and not loving one another. So, each member of the trinity lacks LF regarding loving one another but is able to love one another. Next, God also loves humans essentially. He does not have the freedom to choose between loving humans and not loving humans. So, God lacks LF regarding loving humans but is able to love humans. Therefore, theists should think that un-free agents can really love. Now, even if we grant that each member of the trinity has the freedom to choose to love one another; and similarly that God has the freedom to choose to love us, recall that God does not have SF, and yet each member loves one another and God still loves us. Therefore, it is not necessary for an agent to have SF in order to love another agent.

<sup>25</sup> See for example Tamburro 2014, p. 142-145.

<sup>26</sup> Tamburro 2014, p. 142.



There is, however, a better defense along similar lines. Call this the love defense. Josh Rasmussen argues that SF is good because SF “may be required for the obtaining of certain good situations— namely, situations in which people love God without God making them do so.”<sup>27</sup> Consider two situations:<sup>28</sup>

*Forced-Love:* Jane wants Tom to lovingly propose to her. She gets a neuroscientist to hardwire his brain to cause Tom to have a sufficiently strong desire that determines Tom proposes to her.

*Unforced-Love:* Jane wants Tom to lovingly propose to her. Tom knows this and one day freely decides to propose to her.

Rasmussen suggests that situations like *Unforced-Love* are better than *Forced-Love* because “a value arises from the fact that someone gets to be loved without that *very person* having to resort to determining the very loving act directed toward him.”<sup>29</sup> A situation where someone makes a loving commitment to you without you causally determining that she does so is better than having that person make a loving commitment to you because you causally determined that she does so.<sup>30</sup> In other words, it is better that people show love and make commitments on their own accord rather than being causally determined by the receiver. Rasmussen thinks that this shows that a world in which God causally determines that humans express love to him would not be as good as a world in which people freely choose to express love to God. He concludes, “Thus, to permit the desired love from His creatures, God must not *make* His creatures love Him, which in turn implies that God cannot simply make his creatures essentially morally perfect; they must be morally free if God and his creatures are to enjoy unforced love.”<sup>31</sup>

While Rasmussen is right to point out that unforced love is better than forced love, his account seems incomplete. It is not clear why agents must have SF in order for there to be a world in which people freely choose to express love to God.<sup>32</sup> It seems that only LF with respect to expressing love is sufficient for people to freely choose to express love to God. Furthermore, there is a question of whether Rasmussen is thinking of freedom regarding the emotions of love or acts of love. Suppose first that Rasmussen has the emotion of love in mind. This is problematic because it seems that humans never choose to have emotions of love at will. So any kind of free will would be unnecessary to have emotions of love. Suppose instead that Rasmussen has acts of love in mind. This is problematic because God can still determine that humans have emotions of love towards him necessarily, but give humans LF in regards to choosing which acts of love to perform and also when to perform them. Therefore, SF is not necessary for acts of love either.

<sup>27</sup> Rasmussen 2013, p. 427.

<sup>28</sup> I have modified Rasmussen’s (2013, p. 424-425) example.

<sup>29</sup> Rasmussen 2013, p. 425.

<sup>30</sup> One may object that in *Unforced-Love*, although Jane takes no action to determine Tom proposes, Jane’s existence and properties causally determines that Tom proposes. Two things can be said in reply. First, while Jane’s existence and properties may play a role in making Tom propose, Jane’s existence and properties are insufficient to casually determine Tom’s action. Second, even if I grant that Jane’s existence and properties are sufficient to casually determine Tom’s action, what is important is that Jane does not *consciously choose* to take some action to causally determine so.

<sup>31</sup> Rasmussen 2013, p. 426.

<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the following argument can supplement his view. Theists hold that we ought to love God and failing to commit to love God is morally wrong. Therefore if God creates us without SF, he has to causally determine that we love him. Only by giving agents SF to develop their own moral characters will agents ultimately be able to express love to God without being causally determined by God to do so.



#### 4.2 Soul-Making Solution

Another strategy a theist might take is to appeal to the good of soul-making. Since both God and the redeemed in heaven have a PMC, theists can hold that having a PMC is intrinsically valuable. A world with agents who have a PMC would be better than a world without. There are three ways in which created agents can have a PMC:

*Determined-PMC*: A created agent's PMC is ultimately solely determined by God.

*Self-Developed-PMC*: A created agent's PMC is ultimately solely determined by the agent.

*Partially-Self-Developed-PMC*: A created agent's PMC is ultimately due to both God and the agent.

In *Self-Developed-PMC* and *Partially-Self-Developed-PMC*, God cannot fully determine the agent's PMC; the agent freely plays a role in developing her moral character. This is why the agent's PMC is ultimately due to her. So in *Self-Developed-PMC* and *Partially-Self-Developed-PMC*, the agent must have SF *initially* in order for the agent's PMC to be (at least partially) self-developed.

The theist can now argue that *Self-Developed-PMC* and *Partially-Self-Developed-PMC* is better than *Determined-PMC*. This is because it is valuable for people to freely decide what kinds of persons they are going to be and to develop their own moral characters through actions. This 'soul-making' is intrinsically valuable. To see this, imagine two worlds. In determined-world, parents program their children to be morally perfect. The ultimate reason why children cannot do wrong acts is because of their parents free choices. In self-developed-world, children have the freedom to develop their own moral characters and end up becoming morally perfect. Parents at most assist their children with moral teaching and additional motivation. Intuitively, it seems that self-developed world is better than determined-world. So soul-making seems to be a good. But to allow *Self-Developed-PMC* or *Self-Developed-PMC*, it is necessary that the created agent has SF initially. Therefore, God would have good reason to give humans SF now while humans are on earth. SF is instrumentally valuable for there to be *Self-Developed-PMC* or *Self-Developed-PMC*.

It seems to us however that the soul-making strategy merely pushes the problem back one step. Traditional theists hold that God is essentially good and this entails that God never self-develops his own PMC. God never had an imperfect moral character and had to go through a process to develop a PMC. He never chooses his character or nature.<sup>33</sup> This is why God never has SF. Therefore, God lacks the good of soul-making. The dilemma that was raised for the value of SF can be applied to soul-making. If the theist holds that soul-making is intrinsically good, then God lacks this good and is not so great after all. If the theist holds that soul-making isn't intrinsically good, then soul-making cannot be used to justify giving agents SF initially which would result in evils.

#### 4.3 Derivative Free Will Solution

Another strategy is to argue that God and the redeemed in heaven have freedom. Let's start with the redeemed in heaven. James Sennett argues that the redeemed in heaven have the proximate conception of freedom.<sup>34</sup> On his view, humans have SF on earth. By making certain significantly free choices, people freely develop their own moral character. When the

<sup>33</sup> For an assessment of a view that God is responsible for his nature, see Bergmann and Cover 2006, p. 392-394.

<sup>34</sup> Sennett 1999.



redeemed go to heaven, they would have a freely *Self-Developed-PMC*. Now, although the redeemed in heaven are determined not to do wrong acts, they are still free (in the proximate conception sense) because the reason why they cannot do wrong is heaven is traced back to their free choices on earth. Sennett is not alone in this view. Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe echo Sennett's solution, calling such freedom as 'derivative free will.'<sup>35</sup> The actions of the redeemed in heaven are derivatively free because it is determined by the agent's PMC which was freely self-developed earlier on earth. If having derivative free will is intrinsically valuable, and having SF is a necessary condition for derivative free will, then God would have good reason to give humans SF now while humans are on earth.

The idea of derivative free will, however, seems odd to me. With respect to which kinds of acts are the redeemed in heaven derivatively free? It seems that proponents of the derivative free will strategy have to say that the redeemed in heaven are derivatively free *with respect to morally significant acts committed in heaven*. Can we, however, say that the redeemed in heaven have a certain kind of freedom with respect to those morally significant acts? It seems not. Benjamin Matheson says, "It seems that any free will worthy of the name is one that promises the agent control over her actions –i.e. the ability [to perform acts] other than she actually does."<sup>36</sup> Given that the redeemed in heaven do not have control over whether to act wrongly in heaven, it would seem strange to say that they have any kind of free will with respect to morally significant actions committed in heaven. Here's an example that illustrates my point. Suppose Tom freely chooses to take a pill that will causally determine that he always hates his mother and wants her to get out of his sight. Perhaps, he believes that this is for his own good because he keeps allowing his mother to abuse him out of love. Suppose it is now Tom's 30th birthday. Tom's mother shows up at his party. Tom sees her and feels a rush of hatred and cannot help but scream at her to go away. In this example, proponents of derivative freedom would have to say that thirty year old Tom is in some sense free (i.e. derivatively free) with respect to doing hateful actions to his mother. It seems to us, however, that thirty year old Tom is not in any way free with respect to doing hateful actions to his mother. It is deeply unintuitive to say that at thirty years old, Tom has some sort of freedom over his hateful acts even though he has no control over those acts and could not have done otherwise *then*. Therefore, the idea of derivative free will is problematic.

## 5. THE ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY SOLUTION

Now, we want to turn to a view which we think is the best solution.<sup>37</sup> We will defend this view against a few objections in the next section. What we think is intrinsically valuable is that God creates agents who have ultimate responsibility when it comes to morally significant actions. To be ultimately responsible for an act or outcome, an agent needs to be the ultimate causal source of the act or the outcome. For example, suppose Tom pushes Sally, causing her to fall and injure herself. Suppose also that Tom only pushes Sally because Robert chose to go behind Tom and pushed Tom towards Sally. While Tom is in some sense responsible for Sally's injury, it does not seem that he is *ultimately* responsible for her injury because he is not the ultimate causal source; Robert pushed him. It is thus Robert who is *ultimately* responsible for Sally's injury.

<sup>35</sup> Pawl and Timpe 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Matheson 2018, p. 62.

<sup>37</sup> Morrision (2000, p. 347-358) considers this view but argues it fails.



It seems to us that a world in which God creates agents who have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant actions is better than a world in which God creates agents who never have such responsibility. One might not think that agents who possess ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant actions are intrinsically valuable. Perhaps one might think that having ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts is instrumentally valuable because it allows agents to share in the glory of eliminating evil in heaven; or because it makes agents' lives more significant since they are the source of valuable contributions. We remain open to such views. As long as one affirms that it is valuable (whether intrinsically or instrumentally) for agents to have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts is valuable, that would be sufficient to mounting a defense.

If having such responsibility is valuable, then God has good reason to give created agents SF. If God causes created agents to have a PMC, the created agents will not have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts. Instead, God would be ultimately responsible over the created agents' morally significant acts. SF ensures that created agents are the ultimate causal source of morally significant acts. Even the redeemed in heaven have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant actions committed in heaven. Suppose it is asked why the redeemed in heaven does not do hateful actions towards another person. The answer is because the redeemed in heaven have a PMC, which was self-developed while on earth. This self-development was based on the agents exercising their SF. So, the agents themselves are the ultimate causal source and hence they are ultimately responsible for not doing hateful actions in heaven. If this account is right, then SF has instrumental value. SF is necessary for agents to have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant actions.

## 6. OBJECTIONS

### 6.1 *If God Lacks SF, Then God Lacks Ultimate Responsibility*

Here is one objection. If SF is necessary in order to have ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts, and God lacks SF, then wouldn't God also lack ultimate responsibility? And if God lacks ultimate responsibility with respect to morally significant acts, then there will be the problem of God lacking something intrinsically valuable again.

This objection is easy to deal with. It is only necessary for *created* agents to have SF in order to have ultimate responsibility. If God creates an agent with PMC, then something external and prior determines the *created* agent's PMC and in turns determines how the *created* agent would act with respect to morally significant acts. Hence, the reason why the agent never chooses wrong is ultimately because of "the active role that God played in necessitating that the agent have the nature, beliefs, and powers that she has."<sup>38</sup> The *created* agent would not be ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts. God however is an *uncreated* agent. Although God lacks SF, he is ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts. This is because when tracing the causal chain backwards, it terminates in God. God cannot choose wrong as God has PMC essentially, yet nothing external or prior to Him determines that He has a PMC. Therefore, the ultimate reason why God cannot do wrong is based in God Himself. This makes God ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts even though he never had SF. As Timpe writes, "being determined to act in a certain way by one's moral character is not being determined to act as

<sup>38</sup> Franks 2015, p. 116.



you do by anything causally prior to yourself, provided that one's moral character is not itself causally determined by something outside of the agent in question."<sup>39</sup> This is why "[God] is able to be the source of His action given that His action is the result of His essential nature."<sup>40</sup>

The objector can however press a deeper problem along similar lines. The first objection is by Morriston.<sup>41</sup> He writes,

"If I simply chanced to exist, and if my nature determined me always to choose the good, then I would be no more responsible for my 'good' behaviour than I would be if someone had made me with that same nature. In either case, I would be doing only what my nature determined me to do. Something other than myself, viz., my nature, would be determining me to choose the good."<sup>42</sup>

Morrison's idea is that God has no control over his PMC (or his own nature). God is determined by his nature with respect to morally significant acts. If God created agents with a PMC, these created agents would also be determined by their nature with respect to morally significant acts. Since these created agents are not ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts due to them being determined by their nature, God cannot be said to be ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts because he is also determined by his nature. Erik Wielenberg raises a similar problem.<sup>43</sup> Consider the proposition <God exists>. This proposition is true and is entirely outside of God's control. This proposition entails that God has a certain nature and would never do wrong acts. Therefore, Wielenberg concludes that "if God exists then there is a true proposition outside of God's control that *entails* that He always does the right thing."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, "there are factors outside of God's control that causally determine that He always does the right thing."<sup>45</sup> God is not ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts.

Here, we can advance two replies. The first denies Morriston and Rasmussen's intuitions. Consider the following scenario.<sup>46</sup> Suppose Mother-Teresa-1 is programmed by Quine to have such a great moral character. Her great moral character causally determines that she does morally great acts. Mother-Teresa-2 has the exact same great moral character as Mother-Teresa-1. Mother-Teresa-2 however is not causally determined by any other person (or thing) to have such a character. Instead, Mother-Teresa-2 just popped into existence with such a character. Similarly, Mother-Teresa-2's great moral character causally determines that she does the same morally great acts as Mother-Teresa-1. Morriston and Rasmussen would think that both Mother-Teresa-1 and Mother-Teresa-2 would be equally responsible for their morally great acts.<sup>47</sup> Here, we readily admit that we do not share the same intuitions as Morriston and Rasmussen. When we consider the case of Mother-Teresa-1, it seems to us that it is Quine, her programmer, who is ultimately responsible for her morally great acts. Quine is the one who is praiseworthy. When we consider the case of Mother-Teresa-2, it seems to us that it is Mother-Teresa-2 who is ultimately responsible for her morally great

<sup>39</sup> Timpe 2012, p. 97.

<sup>40</sup> Timpe 2012, p. 98.

<sup>41</sup> Morrison 2000, p. 350-358. See also Rasmussen 2013, p. 419-421.

<sup>42</sup> Morrison 2000, p. 352.

<sup>43</sup> Wielenberg 2016, p. 4-6.

<sup>44</sup> Wielenberg 2016, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Wielenberg 2016, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> See Morrison 2000, p. 350-352 and Rasmussen 2013, p. 419-420 for a similar case.

<sup>47</sup> See Morrison 2000, p. 350-352 and Rasmussen 2013, p. 419-420.



acts. Mother-Teresa-2 is the one who is praiseworthy. True, she does not have control over her moral character. Still, the ultimate source of her actions comes from her. Even though it does not come from her choice, it comes from her character.

If one shares Morrision and Rasmussen's intuitions, here is our second reply. We think that the theist can deny that God's PMC *causes* him to be unable to do wrong acts.<sup>48</sup> Instead, the relationship between God's PMC and God being unable to do wrong acts is a *non-causal* relationship. Theists might think that God's PMC *entails* he is unable to do wrong acts, or that God is unable to do wrong acts *in virtue of* God having a PMC. Here is an example. Suppose that on Monday, Alice wants to kill Bob and stabs him. Bob is rushed to the hospital. Whether or not the act is a murder depends on whether or not Bob dies later on. Suppose that Bob dies on Friday. Does Bob's death on Friday cause Alice's act on Monday to be murder? No. That would amount to backward causation. Instead, we hold a non-causal relationship. It seems better to say that Bob's death entails that Alice's act is an act of murder, or that Alice's act is an act of murder in virtue of Bob's death. Another example is from Wielenberg's argument above. Wielenberg says that the proposition <God exists> *entails* that God is unable to do wrong acts. This seems right to us since neither propositions nor their truth values have causal powers. To complete the reply, we propose the following two plausible principles in tracing ultimate responsibility.

- (a) If nothing causes Y, and Y entails Z, then Z is not causally determined by anything.
- (b) If X causally determines Y, and Y entails Z, then Z is causally determined by X.

Given (a), since nothing causally determines that God has a PMC (or that God exists), and having a PMC entails that God cannot do wrong acts, nothing causally determines that God cannot do wrong acts. Therefore, God is still ultimately responsible with respect to morally significant acts. Given (b), if God causally determines that an agent has PMC, and if having a PMC entails that the agent cannot do wrong acts, then God causally determines that the agent cannot do wrong acts. Therefore, the agent would not be ultimately responsible if God gave them a PMC.

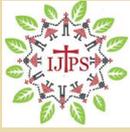
### **6.2 No One Self-develops a PMC in this Earthly Life**

Here is a second objection. If the redeemed in heaven have a PMC and our account holds that the redeemed self-develop a PMC, then our account entails that they must have self-developed a PMC in this earthly life. However, it seems that all (or at least most) of the redeemed do not manage to self-develop PMCs in this earthly life before they die. For some of the redeemed, they would have barely made any contribution to perfecting their own moral characters. For example, one might become a believer on their deathbed and so never had a chance to freely develop their moral character. So no one (or almost no one) goes to heaven with a self-developed PMC. Therefore, any account that says that agents self-develop a PMC is problematic.

There are two replies we offer. The first is to say that after our earthly life, humans will still be working on self-developing our own PMC. An advocate of one such view is Gary Black Jr. who draws from the ideas of Dallas Wallard. Black argues that heaven is a place where humans will still be working on our characters.<sup>49</sup> God does not suddenly change humans instantly. There is no 'cosmic car wash' where God suddenly gives humans a PMC.

<sup>48</sup> See Bergmann and Cover (2006, p. 394-397) for an argument along such lines.

<sup>49</sup> See Black 2015.



So, each of the redeemed will keep working on their moral characters until they develop a PMC. Eventually, everyone in heaven will end up with a self-developed PMC. Another advocate of such a view is Jerry Walls.<sup>50</sup> Walls proposes that upon finishing our earthly life, the redeemed go to purgatory where they can keep developing their moral characters until they have a PMC and are ready for heaven. If any of these theological accounts are right, then there is no problem. Our account would not entail that the redeemed must have self-developed a PMC in this earthly life.

A second reply is suggested by Sennett. Sennett suggests that God will complete the work for humans when they die. He says that by constantly acting in ways to develop one's own PMC, the person is giving consent to God completing the process for him or her.<sup>51</sup> One might worry here that this would make God ultimately responsible. On this view however, we can say that both God and the redeemed play a causal role ultimately and so both are ultimately responsible. This is like how a group of people can be jointly responsible for their collective efforts to save the environment by recycling. Another worry with this account is by Luke Henderson who says,

“what seems unnecessary here is the claim that the [redeemed] needed to develop their characters at all prior to heaven in order to hold some responsibility for the state of their perfected characters in heaven. I see no reason why [the redeemed] could not have made one decision that would have allowed God to perfect her character for her, whether prior to heaven or subsequent.”<sup>52</sup>

Henderson thinks that if the redeemed simply made one decision to allow God to do the rest of the work, then the redeemed would still be ultimately responsible. There is no need for an earthly life in which agents exercise their SF over time to develop a PMC. In reply to Henderson, we think that giving agents SF over time to develop their moral characters is valuable as it gives them a greater degree of responsibility. Within an agent's earth life, the agent might be able to fully develop certain virtues or set his character such that he would not be able to do certain wrong actions. For example, due to the agent exercising SF, he can fully develop the virtue of patience, or he may develop his moral character in a way that would preclude him from being able to say hate speech. Therefore, he would have ultimate responsibility when it comes to not being impatient and not being able to say hate speech. The more an agent develops his moral character, the more the agent is responsible for having a PMC as God has to do lesser work in order for the agent to have a PMC. Hence, God would have good reason to not just give the redeemed a PMC just based on one single decision.

## 7. CONCLUSION

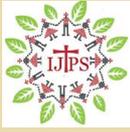
Let us take stock. Recall that Plantinga responded to the logical problem of evil using his FWD which required SF to be valuable. Traditional theists however believe that both God and the redeemed in heaven lack SF. So either SF is intrinsically valuable which entails that both God and heaven lacks something intrinsically valuable; or SF is not intrinsically valuable and there is difficulty explaining why SF can still justify evils in the world.

We have assessed and rejected three solutions to the problem: The love solution, the soul-making solution, and the derivative free will solution. Instead, we defend a fourth

<sup>50</sup> See Walls 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Sennett 1999, p. 77-78.

<sup>52</sup> Henderson 2014, p. 325.

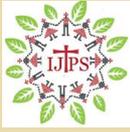


solution, the ultimate responsibility solution. We have argued that SF is instrumentally valuable as it gives agents ultimate responsibility with regards to morally significant acts. Finally, we have defended the ultimate responsibility solution against two major objections.

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